

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 21, 2020

The Honorable Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

The KC-46 aerial refueling tanker modernization program, currently assessed at a cost of about \$43 billion, is one of the Air Force's highest acquisition priorities. The Air Force contracted with Boeing in 2011 to develop, test, and produce up to 179 aircraft. The first 18 KC-46 tankers were expected to be delivered by August 2017. However, the program experienced significant delays due to a variety of issues, including several critical deficiencies with the remote vision system and boom that affect aerial refueling operations. The Air Force started accepting aircraft in January 2019 with these critical deficiencies. While the Air Force has already accepted over 30 aircraft, U.S. Transportation Command has decided not to use the aircraft in operations until the critical deficiencies are fixed, which is not expected to occur until 2023. Instead, it plans to use legacy KC-10 and KC-135 aircraft, some of which are over 60 years old.

I am concerned about the progress Boeing is making on fixing the critical deficiencies and the effect program delays are having on aerial refueling operations. Therefore, the committee requests that GAO provide periodic assessments of the program until the critical deficiencies are fixed. The assessments should include topics such as: (1) the status of Boeing's efforts to fix critical deficiencies; (2) steps U.S. Transportation Command is taking to mitigate the operational effects of delays in KC-46 full operational capability; (3) considerations the Air Force is receiving from Boeing because of the delays; and (4) any other topics the Comptroller General believes would be useful for subcommittee consideration.

Please work with Melissa Reilly-Diakun, 202-228-1043, in Senator Hassan's office and Allison Tinsey, 202-228-0176, on the Federal Spending Oversight Subcommittee staff with the specifics of your evaluation, and they will coordinate with the other offices.

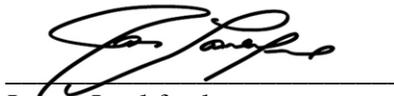
Sincerely,



Margaret Wood Hassan
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Federal Spending Oversight
and Emergency Management
Committee on Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



James Lankford
United States Senator