



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Opening Statement of Chairman Roscoe Bartlett *Hearing on the Aerial Refueling Recapitalization Program***

Washington, D.C. – Today’s hearing will focus mainly on the current Air Force KC-135 airborne refueling force, the trends and status of those aircraft to meet future requirements, the KC-135 Recapitalization Analysis of Alternatives, and the associated budget request set forth in the President’s budget for fiscal year 2007.

The Department of Defense currently uses a number of aircraft for airborne refueling operations, including KC-10s, KC-135s, and KC-130s, as well as a number of relatively small tactical aircraft that can be configured as tankers. However, the KC-135E & R model fleets currently fulfill the majority of the Department of Defense’s airborne refueling requirements.

First acquired in 1956, the KC-135 fleet of aircraft has an average age of nearly 45 years. Before shutting down the KC-135E to KC-135R conversion line in June, 2005, the Air Force upgraded the majority of its newest KC-135Es to the KC-135R at a cost of approximately \$37 million per aircraft. The Air Force currently has a fleet of 531 aircraft which consists of 417 KC-135Rs and 114 KC-135Es.

With the increased operations tempo since 9/11, the KC-135E fleet is flying an annual average of 350 hours per aircraft and the KC-135R fleet is flying an annual average of 710 hours per aircraft. The KC-135 fleet is currently flying double its planned yearly flying hour program to meet airborne refueling requirements, and has resulted in higher than forecasted usage and sustainment costs.

Recently, two studies on the KC-135 aircraft have been released by the Department of Defense. The first study is the KC-135 Fleet Viability Board Report which assesses the current health and viability of the KC-135. The second study is the KC-135 Recapitalization Analysis of Alternatives, which assesses all available options for recapitalization of the KC-135 and provides the Department a recommendation on how to proceed with recapitalization. The Air Force is currently waiting for a decision by the Defense Acquisition Board to approve the Analysis of Alternatives and issue an Acquisition Decision Memorandum before they can proceed with their recapitalization plan.

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