



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

One East Main, Suite 301 • Madison, WI 53703 • (608) 266-3847 • Fax: (608) 267-6873
Email: fiscal.bureau@legis.wisconsin.gov • Website: <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/lfb>

May 25, 2023

Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #560

Air Refueling Wing Consultant (Military Affairs)

[LFB 2023-25 Budget Summary: Page 420, #19]

CURRENT LAW

The Wisconsin Air National Guard, 128th Air Refueling Wing (128th ARW), which operates out of General Mitchell Field in Milwaukee, currently utilizes ten assigned KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft to complete aircraft refueling operations for the United States Air Force. The average age of the 128th ARW's KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft, first produced in 1957, is over 40 years.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. In April, 2006, Air Force completed an analysis of alternatives to determine the most appropriate strategy for modernizing the existing aerial refueling tanker aircraft fleet, and determined that the KC-46A Pegasus would replace its aging fleet of aerial refueling tankers. Since then, Congressional authority funded the purchase of 179 KC-46A aircraft to be phased into Air Force operations by 2029 to enhance operations, and increase mission effectiveness.

2. Bases across the country are in the process of competing to be main operating bases for the KC-46A aircraft. The Department anticipates that Wisconsin will be in the running to be the eighth or ninth bases in the "bed down" phase. If Wisconsin is selected, the 128th ARW would receive KC-46A aircraft to use for refueling operations and transportation needs. The Air Force has contracted to purchase 175 KC-46A aircraft with the last to be delivered in 2029 followed by the purchase of potentially 75 more "bridge" tankers that could be additional KC-46A aircraft. According to DMA, bridge tankers are additional aircraft that may be allocated in the future but has not been fully authorized by Congress.

3. In the past, DMA has worked with a consultant to better prepare the 128th ARW as a viable candidate for a KC-46A bed down site. In a six-month period, the agency spent \$87,500 GPR

for initial preparatory services. The costs for the consultant were reallocated from within the agency due to a long-term vacancy (the incumbent had been on military deployment for several years). The position has since been filled.

4. According to DMA, its current KC-135 aircraft fleet is at its end-of-life, and failing to secure the KC-46A aircraft or “bridge” tankers could result in an increased likelihood of the 128th ARW base being closed or transitioned to a non-flying mission by Air Force in the future.

5. The Department indicates that it does not have the specific expertise or knowledge to adequately navigate the bed down process and provide the technical support to position the 128th ARW to receive the new KC-46A aircraft. A consultant who consistently engages with aircraft bed downs, could promote the 128th ARW as a viable location, and could assist DMA with technical and policy needs could help Wisconsin better compete as a KC-46A bed down site. The consultant would do site reviews, read reports, and provide and present information.

6. Funding for the consultant would be one-time funding for two years. The Department determined the funding amount needed by estimating 800 hours of consulting at \$125 per hour. Given that a fleet of KC-46A aircraft would modernize the 128th ARW's aircraft for refueling operations, the Committee could provide \$100,000 GPR annually for a consultant to help position Wisconsin as a location for the Air Force to place new refueling aircraft. [Alternative 1]

7. Alternatively, the Committee could provide \$50,000 GPR annually for a consultant to help place new refueling aircraft. [Alternative 2] This funding amount would support the cost of a consultant for 400 hours at \$125 per hour. Funding for the consultant would be one-time funding for two years.

8. The Committee could take no action. [Alternative 3] As a result, DMA could still compete for the KC-46A aircraft bed down but without the assistance of a consultant.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Provide \$100,000 GPR annually on a one-time basis for a consultant to assist DMA in competing as a potential location for the Air Force to place new refueling aircraft.

ALT 1	Change to Base
GPR	\$200,000

2. Provide \$50,000 GPR annually on a one-time basis for a consultant to assist DMA in competing as a potential location for the Air Force to place new refueling aircraft.

ALT 2	Change to Base
GPR	\$100,000

3. Take no action.

Prepared by: Brianna Murphy