

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 13, 2022

General Mark D. Kelly
Commander, Air Combat Command
Office of the Commander
205 Dodd Boulevard, Suite 200
Joint Base Langley-Eustis, VA 23665-2788

Dear General Kelly:

As you know, RC-135 aircraft perform essential intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions that no other platform across the joint force is capable of performing. They are routinely tasked in support of our national intelligence community on time-sensitive missions with extremely limited advance notice, often in theaters where they are not prepositioned and in response to acute and emergent threats.

I was deeply concerned to see that the Air Force reduced funding for initial spares for this vital aircraft in its budget request for fiscal year 2023. The extent of the proposed reduction is severely troubling: In fiscal year 2022, Congress appropriated over \$51 million for initial spares for the RC-135. In its Future Years Defense Program (FYDP), the Air Force projects spending not less than \$55 million per year on initial spares for the RC-135 in fiscal year 2024 through fiscal year 2027. Yet, the Air Force proposes funding only \$25.661 million for initial spares for the RC-135 in fiscal year 2023.

Despite the RC-135's essential mission and proven value on the battlefield and to the national intelligence picture, it still relies on spare parts to maintain operations to the level required. I am further concerned about the level of analytical rigor behind this decision, and that the ramifications of not having parts available in the event of a time-sensitive tasking was not fully taken into consideration. Mission failure due in an unavailability of spare parts is both unacceptable and avoidable.

Troublingly, the Air Force's budget justification documents provided no rationale for the reduction in funding.ⁱ Therefore, I respectfully request you provide the analytical basis for the Air Force's decision to reduce funding for RC-135 initial spares in its budget for Fiscal Year 2023 by over 50 percent, and an assessment of the impact this level of funding will have on the fleet's availability for operations and training.

Sincerely,



Deb Fischer
United States Senator

ⁱ Exhibit P-18, Initial and Replenishment Spare and Repair Parts Justification: PB 2023 Air Force