

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 9, 2023

Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1400

Secretary Austin,

We write regarding our steadfast support for Israel, and their efforts to secure KC-46A Pegasus aerial refueling tankers.

Following the horrific terrorist attack by Hamas on October 7th, the United States has shown the world that we stand side-by-side with Israel, our greatest partner in the Middle East. Yet, in addition to the ongoing threats posed by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad from Gaza, Israel faces rising threats from Hizballah in Lebanon and Iranian-backed proxies in Syria. To complicate the situation, the Iranian regime has threatened, “Iran cannot stand idly by and watch this situation unfold” signaling additional confrontation will occur. Conflicts on multiple fronts would put even more civilians in harm’s way and weaken the Israeli Defense Forces’ ability to defend their country.

We applaud the Administration’s decision to deploy two carrier strike groups and other assets to the eastern Mediterranean Sea to serve as a deterrent, provide additional support if necessary, and symbolize our nation’s military readiness. However, there is more to be done in the air domain. We respectfully urge the Administration to consider the following options:

1. In order to strengthen long-term deterrence, the Administration should announce the expedited delivery of the KC-46As purchased by Israel to the Israeli Air Force and begin training personnel to operate the KC-46 platform as soon as possible.
2. To meet current operational requirements of the ongoing war and potential multi-front conflicts involving Iran and Hizballah, the Administration should forward deploy KC-46As to the CENTCOM area of operation to enable U.S. and Israeli pilots to utilize their refueling capabilities in support of ongoing military operations.

If taken, these actions would dramatically increase our ability to help deter further aggression, project power, and improve our posture in the region. Air superiority, of not only American forces but of our partner's, is a critical component to regional security and stability. We urge consideration of these actions and standby ready to assist in any way necessary.

Sincerely,



August Pfluger
Member of Congress



Jake Ellzey
Member of Congress



Mike Garcia
Member of Congress



Scott Franklin
Member of Congress



Rob Wittman
Member of Congress