Boeing responds to Chicago Tribune editorial

Boeing submitted the following letter today to the *Chicago Tribune*:

Dear Letters Editor:

Your editorial (Sept. 26) calling for Congress and the Pentagon to quickly compromise on how to field new aerial refueling tanker aircraft for the U.S. Air Force was spot on. The aged Eisenhower-era KC-135s are the brothers of the Boeing 707 that ushered in the jet age and now cost billions to maintain. When was the last time any of us flew on a 707?

However, I'd like to clarify one point in your editorial. The Air Force in fact did look at a solution offered by Airbus before choosing the Boeing 767 tanker for its modernization program. Just as Italy and Japan chose the Boeing tanker in prior competitions with Airbus, the Air Force decided the 767 best fit its needs. As previously reported in the spring of 2002, the Air Force detailed several financial, operational and technical reasons why the Boeing tanker is a superior product and a better solution. These reasons include, but are not limited to, Boeing's superior technical approach and preferred financial arrangement. Other discriminators include greater ramp flexibility, better fuel transfer capability, and savings on support facilities and equipment.

It's important to note that only Boeing has a modern jet tanker under construction. Boeing developed the "flying boom" for tanker refueling operations in the 1950s and has modernized the technology continually. Airbus has never even built a boom, which is key to Air Force tanker operations.

Clearly, the Air Force made the right choice as it focuses on quickly modernizing its tanker fleet.

Larry McCracken

Vice President, Communications

Boeing