

Following the decision of the House Armed Services Committee to eliminate initial funding for TTTS, Kassebaum and Dole wrote to Sen. Sam Nunn, chairman of the Senate committee, to emphasize the importance of the program and to urge its approval.

While noting "a parochial interest" in the new program, the two senators outlined what they called the "compelling, sound reasons to move forward with TTTS this year."

"First, TTTS will implement a much-needed change in Air Force pilot training by providing an off-the-shelf, twin engine business jet for specialized training of those students who will go on to fly tanker and transport aircraft," Kassebaum and Dole wrote. "Student pilots who later will fly fighters and bombers will continue to be trained with the existing fleet of supersonic T-38 aircraft.

"This new, dual-track system will provide better, more specialized training for future tanker and transport pilots while reducing the current strain on the T-38 system and allowing its high-cost resources to be devoted to the particular needs of pilots who must operate in a supersonic environment.

"A second and equally important reason for approving TTTS is that it will provide an increased capability to produce skilled Air Force pilots. The current T-37/T-38 system is operating at maximum capacity and is not capable of increased pilot production should the need arise.

"Third, and finally, TTTS provides an opportunity to achieve significant, real savings over the life of the program by reducing the use rate of the T-38 approximately 50 percent. This will produce a corresponding increase in the service life of existing T-38s and greatly delay the need for a T-38 replacement, which as you know will be very expensive. Additional savings will be achieved through the far lower operating costs of TTTS aircraft compared with the T-38.

"In short, we believe TTTS makes sense for pilots on the flight line, for the Air Force as a whole, and for the taxpayers."

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