

SHELBY CLAIMS TO RELENT; STILL HOLDS MILITARY NOMINATIONS HOSTAGE FOR AIRBUS

The WaPo reports, mistakenly, that Richard Shelby has released his holds on Obama's nominees.

But as Shelby's own statement makes clear, he is still holding up some of the military nominations to benefit Airbus.

The purpose of placing numerous holds was to get the White House's attention on two issues that are critical to our national security – the Air Force's aerial refueling tanker acquisition and the FBI's Terrorist Device Analytical Center (TEDAC). With that accomplished, Sen. Shelby has decided to release his holds **on all but a few nominees directly related to the Air Force tanker acquisition** until the new Request for Proposal is issued. The Air Force tanker acquisition is not an 'earmark' as has been reported; it is a competition to replace the Air Force's aging aerial refueling tanker fleet. Sen. Shelby is not seeking to determine the outcome of the competition; he is seeking to ensure an open, fair and transparent competition that delivers the best equipment to our men and women in uniform. Sen. Shelby is fully justified in his concern given the history and current status of this acquisition. [my emphasis]

Now, how can he claim that he is ensuring an "open, fair and transparent competition" when he is holding key military nominations hostage until ... what? Until he gets the RFP France's

Airbus wants? What if they don't like the RFP?
Will Airbus ask Shelby to keep those nominations
hostage until they rewrite the RFP?

Call me crazy, but I don't see how taking
hostages contributes in any way to open, fair,
and transparent competition.

Update: Here are the three people he still has
holds on:

- Terry Yonkers, Assistant
Secretary of the Air Force
for Installations,
Environment, and Logistics
(Nominated August 4, 2009)
- Frank Kendall, Principal
Deputy Under Secretary of
Defense (PDUSD) for
Acquisition and Technology
(Nominated August 6, 2009)
- Erin Conaton, Under
Secretary of the Air Force
(Nominated November 10,
2009)