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New fuel distribution system being built at Guam base

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YIGO — A new aircraft fuel distribution system is under construction at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam.

The new system will reduce the base's maintenance and labor costs. It will also give Andersen, which has the Air Force's largest fuel-storage facility, better management of its fuel supplies, officials said Tuesday.

For Andersen, primarily a contingency support base in the middle of the western Pacific, the reduced costs and easier management means improved overall readiness, engineering flight chief Vern Tobey said.

"This gets us ready to fight a war," Tobey said.

Tobey said the Air Force had concerns that the old system's underground storage tanks were susceptible to leaking from corrosion. The Air Force also wanted an updated system designed to service its latest aircraft.

Inspection of adjacent areas after the removal of 10 underground storage tanks revealed no contamination problems due to leaks, Tobey said.

Master Sgt. Russ Steger said the existing fueling system was built in 1962, and its 32 underground tanks and 30 fuel pumps feeding 57 outlets had become difficult to maintain.

The new system, being built in five phases, requires only five pumps and eight tanks to feed 67 fuel hydrants, Steger, the fuel operations superintendent, said.

"There's about one-sixth of the amount of equipment to maintain,"

Steger said.

Because the new system is fully pressurized, an aircraft can be refueled by just one person. The old system required two people; one at the plane and one in the pumphouse. Because the new system uses fewer but much larger operating tanks, it's simpler to defuel aircraft as well.

Steger said the new system will also have fuel outlets on the base flightline center ramp. With the old system, planes on the center ramp were serviced with tanker trucks.

The new system also pumps fuel at twice the rate of the existing system's 550 gallons per minute, Steger said.

Russ Westlake of the Napa, Calif.-based Nova Group, Inc., said the project is part of a worldwide overall upgrade of Defense Logistics Agency-owned, Air Force-operated ground refueling systems. Nova has been awarded contracts for the first three phases of the project. The projected cost of the three phases is about \$43 million.

Work on the first phase began last September and is expected to be completed this September, Westlake said.

The Air Force awarded Nova two more contracts for two additional phases of the project on Dec. 29, Tobey said.

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