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The USAF will stay at RAF Mildenhall for at least two years longer than planned, it was revealed today. The Americans had planned to leave Mildenhall, along with Alconbury and Molesworth in Cambridgeshire, by 2022 but base commander Squadron Leader Rick Fryer said: "Late on Tuesday afternoon the US Embassy formally updated MOD on the revised US Visiting Forces deadlines for their base withdrawals at RAF Mildenhall and RAF Alconbury/Molesworth. James Waters "Accordingly, instead of 2022, MoD has been advised that the full divestitures of RAF Mildenhall and RAF Alconbury/Molesworth will now occur no earlier than 2024. "The revised dates are due to delays in commencing project design and construction for the move of assets from RAF Mildenhall to Germany, and are dependent on the completion of the Joint Intelligence Analysis Center (JIAC) at RAF Croughton." James Waters, leader of Forest Heath District Council said: "The reality is that while the time frame for the closure of RAF Mildenhall has changed, the statement reaffirms the commitment to close the RAF Mildenhall base. "We will continue to work on behalf of our local communities, working with the Government, the Homes and Communities Agency, and a host of other partners, to deliver a future for Mildenhall that brings with it jobs, skills, industry, homes as well as all of the supporting infrastructure that our area and West Suffolk as a whole, will need to thrive long after the base closes." Matt Hancock tries out the KC-135 Stratotanker flight simulator at RAF Mildenhall (USAF photo/Karen Abeyasekere) West Suffolk MP Matt Hancock said: "We in West Suffolk are proud to host the US Air Force, who do such important work in defending our shared values and interests. "This delay will give yet more time to prepare for any US departure, and we must prepare for all eventualities." The USAF announced it would be leaving RAF Mildenhall in January 2015 as part of an effort to save £500 million. The USAF anticipated about 2,600 personnel from RAF Mildenhall would be moved to other locations in the UK and Germany. However, RAF Lakenheath would be expanded with new F-35 squadrons arriving by 2020. RAF Mildenhall is estimated to contribute £200 million a year to the Suffolk economy. Government proposals for the site included up to 5,000 new homes, though Cllr Waters said when that was announced that it was not practical to have so many new homes without new jobs.

Read more at: <http://www.buryfreepress.co.uk/news/usaf-postpones-raf-mildenhall-closure-1-8168683>