

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

June 9, 2016

Honorable Deborah Lee James
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

General Mark A. Welsh III
Chief of Staff, United States Air Force
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Washington, DC 20330-1670

Secretary James and General Welsh:

We write as a follow-on to our letter dated June 7, 2016, which urged your consideration of the 115th Fighter Wing (115 FW) at Truax Air National Guard (ANG) Base for F-35 Ops 5 & 6. The purpose of this letter is to provide additional details on the strengths and capabilities that make Truax ANG Base an ideal location for the F-35A mission.

As you know, the 115 FW was among the top candidates in scoring during the 2009-10 Strategic Basing process which resulted in selecting the 158th Fighter Wing at Burlington Air Guard Station in Vermont as the initial ANG site. Today, the 115 FW is one of the few ANG bases that can execute the full-spectrum of Fifth Generation Fighter training requirements. Located just 60 miles from Madison, the Volk Field Combat Readiness Training Center (Volk CRTC) airspace and range complex is unique in that it provides a training area for all F-35A missions, in one centralized location. The extensive airspace is collocated with precision-guided munitions impact areas and advanced electronic warfare threat emitters.

Since the 2009-10 process, the capabilities of the Volk Field CRTC ranges and airspace in the Military Operational Area (MOA) have been significantly enhanced, including:

- Precision Guided Munitions (PGM) capability at Hardwood (2009)
- Moving target for Full Scale Weapons Delivery (FSWD) initiated (2011)
- A significant increase in airspace fidelity and system reliability, including the extension of the Range of Air Combat Maneuvering Instrumentation (ACMI) system 200 nautical miles north to include Big Bear Ontonagon (Fall 2011)
- Multi-million-dollar digital upgrade to Unmanned Threat Emitters, creating a tremendous increase in threat fidelity, and an upgrade to double digit Surface to Air Missile (SAM) threat replication (SA-15) (2014/2015)
- Live drop capabilities at Ft. McCoy coordinated and revisited (July 2015)
- Fully integrated data link (LINK16/Situational Awareness Data Link (SADL)/Gateway) airspace incorporated (Spring 2015)
- The addition of Common Electronic Attack Receivers to assess offensive/defensive jamming effects, which validates 115 FW's Joint Suppression of Enemy Air Defense (SEAD)/Destructive SEAD mission sets (expected August 2016)
- Charting of airspace modernization plan, increasing MOA area by approximately 1,325 square nautical miles, providing the 115 FW with a total of 12,000 square nautical miles of airspace under their control for the F-35A mission, within 60 miles of Truax ANG Base (expected October 2016)

- "Live Virtual Constructive" (LVC) training network connectivity is forecast for Fiscal Year 2017. This major increase in training fidelity is not robust enough yet for full 5th Generation LVC integration, but will be by the end of this calendar year.

These improvements—in combination with the previously existing organic assets that made Truax ANG Base such a successful candidate in 2009-2010—are particularly significant when viewed against USAF's published criteria for the Ops 5 & 6 selection process. It is in this context that we urge your favorable consideration of these strengths, some illustrative examples of which include:

MISSION

- Truax ANG Base is the only ANG candidate site that possesses, at one location (Volk Field CRTC), all the tools required to fully meet the F-35A Ready Aircrew Program (RAP) requirements and to conduct scenario based full spectrum training—all within 60 miles of Truax ANG Base, home of the 115 FW. This brings significant cost and operational effectiveness benefits to USAF.
- Volk Field CRTC provides a comprehensive, fully instrumented range training complex that supports the use of multiple electronic warfare emitters, laser and GPS guided munitions, and moving targets on a scoreable range, providing a realistic 5th Generation Fighter combat training environment.
- The entire 12,000 square nautical miles of Volk Field CRTC airspace and range training complex is controlled and scheduled by the Wisconsin Air National Guard, maximizing availability and providing guaranteed, timely access to the range by the F-35s.
- The 115 FW also provides its own Explosive Ordnance Disposal capabilities for the Volk CRTC (including Fort McCoy's live drop ranges), as well as medical staff for its Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP) mission.
- In addition to the uncontested quality of the airspace and ranges available at Truax/Volk Field CRTC, F-35A operations will benefit from the 9,000-foot runway at Truax Field for flight operations, as well as the presence of the 128rd Air Control Squadron located at Volk Field.
- In addition to the ability to access the Volk Field CRTC within minutes of departing Truax ANG Base, the 128th Air Refueling Wing's eight KC-135Rs based at Mitchell Field in Milwaukee provide an added Wisconsin Air National Guard asset to reduce costs. The close-by KC-135Rs' ability to refuel the F-35As while conducting their sorties at Volk Field CRTC compound flying hour cost efficiencies.

COST

- The current 115 FW mission is a F-16 Block 30 mission, and USAF's model affirms that mission conversion costs from F-16 Block 30s to F-35As will be the most advantageous for the Department.
- Construction and locality costs for the Madison metropolitan area will be well within the competitive range among the candidates identified by USAF for the Ops 5 & 6 Basing process.

CAPACITY

- Truax ANG Base has existing infrastructure, which could be cost-effectively modified in some cases, to meet the capacity category's infrastructure requirements. This includes space available and secure facilities required for mission planning and simulation.
- With the confirmation by Headquarters ANG to consider the assets of Truax and its Geographically Separated Unit (GSU) as a locality, the 115 FW also meets or exceeds the criteria for Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants (POL) and Munitions Storage.

ENVIRONMENTAL

- The Environmental Protection Agency has confirmed that Truax ANG Base and Volk Field CRTC have no air quality restrictions and neither are constrained by a non-attainment status.
- All of the Truax ANG Base 65 DNL noise contour boundaries are within the Dane County Regional Airport property, and the installation faces no physical encroachment within the Base's Accident Potential Zones or Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ).

For many of these reasons, in late August, the 33rd Fighter Wing from Eglin Air Force Base will operate fourteen of their F-35As at the Northern Lightning Exercise in Wisconsin. The main purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate the joint integration ability of fourth and fifth generation aircraft, but we are certain that these exercises will also demonstrate that the facilities, ranges, and training space will show the ability to support F-35A Ready Aircrew Program (RAP) training requirements. While other candidate installations have pieces of what is required to successfully train and operate the F-35, none of these bases has access to the training, refueling and operating space available at Truax ANG Base.

Truax/Volk Field CRTC's home base/auxiliary field runway/range complex mirrors the combination of full-spectrum ranges and airspace that led USAF to select Luke AFB/the Barry M. Goldwater Range (BMGR) and Hill AFB/the Utah Test and Training Range (UTTR) in the Department's initial F-35A Strategic Basing decisions. Combined with the other assets of the Wisconsin Air National Guard, the 115th Fighter Wing is a compelling candidate to be selected as the next Air National Guard F-35A Operational Wing.

We strongly urge your consideration of the 115th Fighter Wing, Truax ANG Base with its Volk Field CRTC, in selecting the site for Ops 5 & 6.

Please contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Ron Johnson
United States Senator



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Ron Kind
Member of Congress



Sean P. Duffy
Member of Congress

Cc:

General David L. Goldfein (Vice Chief of Staff, USAF)

Lieutenant General L. Scott Rice (Director, Air National Guard)

Honorable Miranda Ballantine (Assistant Secretary, Installations, Logistics & Environment)