

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20510**

October 15, 2013

Honorable Eric K. Fanning  
Acting Secretary of the Air Force  
1670 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20330-1670

General Mark A. Welsh III  
Chief of Staff  
1670 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20330-1670

Dear Secretary Fanning and General Welsh,

We write regarding your upcoming decision to base the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter in the Asia-Pacific Theater. This is an issue of critical importance and remains one of our top priorities. The strengths of Eielson Air Force Base (AFB) are consistently recognized by Pacific Air Forces (PACAF), United States Pacific Command, and joint and coalition partners around the world. We believe that Eielson is the perfect staging location for F-35 operations in the Asia-Pacific Theater and recommend giving it strong consideration.

You made the right decision to forego the proposed relocation of the 18th Aggressor Squadron from Eielson AFB. From the beginning, we stated the proposed relocation was not feasible, affordable or in the best interest of our National Security Strategy. We are pleased you reconsidered this proposal and reached the same conclusion. We commend your leadership and willingness to work with us in revisiting this ill-conceived proposal. The Aggressor squadron will be a critical training asset for the first combat F-35 squadron in the Asia-Pacific.

In a recent briefing on the Asia-Pacific rebalance, General Carlisle said, "As far as next generation technology goes, we (Pacific Air Forces) need it first." The General also highlighted the most recent Red Flag-Alaska where Australia, Japan, and the Republic of Korea participated in building partnerships and learning interoperability, both crucial components to an aircraft such as the F-35, which is forecast to be operated by many coalition partners in the future. We wholeheartedly agree the latest 5th Generation technology should be forward-based first in the Asia-Pacific Area of Responsibility. Highly capable adversaries in the Asia-Pacific Theater are rapidly evolving their 5th Generation capability and our nation must stand ready to counter this threat should conflict erupt.

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The military value of Eielson AFB is ever increasing with its unique geographic location, close proximity to the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC), and capability to project power in the Pacific Theater of Operations while on home soil. We were also pleased to hear the Air Force will move forward with the construction of a 168-room dormitory which was appropriated in FY 2012. This will increase the housing capacity at Eielson AFB and will serve the base well into the future. These strengths, coupled with other available infrastructure, and continued investment make Eielson AFB a clear choice to base the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter in the Asia-Pacific Theater. We look forward to working with the Air Force and local communities throughout the process to ensure Eielson AFB is best equipped to support F-35 operations in the near future.

It is our understanding the F-35 Pacific candidate basing announcement will be made in late November with preferred and reasonable alternatives announced in February 2014 after on-site evaluations of the candidate bases are conducted. Should these dates change, please update our offices immediately with the newly anticipated timeline and reason for the delay.

Thank you for your continued service to our nation. We look forward to your response and working with you throughout the remainder of the basing process.

Sincerely,

  
Mark Begich  
United States Senator

  
Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator

  
Don Young  
Congressman for all Alaska