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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

COMMITTEE ON  
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 8, 2010

Honorable Michael B. Donley  
Secretary of the Air Force  
United States Air Force  
1670 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20330-1670

General Norton A. Schwartz  
Chief of Staff of the Air Force  
United States Air Force  
1670 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Dear Secretary Donley and General Schwartz:

I commend the Department of the Air Force's decision to re-examine the most efficient strategy for basing the F-22 in order to alleviate challenges associated with insufficient inventory to support combat operations and training at five locations. Maintaining the Air Force's combat readiness to meet combatant commander requirements demands stationing the optimal number of F-22 primary assigned aircraft (PAA) at deliberate, strategic locations. Nowhere is the need for additional PAA more evident and valid than Elmendorf Air Force Base in Alaska, currently home to thirty-six F-22s.

In 1935 Brigadier General Mitchell called Alaska "the most important strategic place in the world." Alaska's strategic importance in defense of our nation still stands today. Located in the U.S. Northern Command and U.S. Pacific Command areas of responsibility, Alaska's persistent military missions include Alaskan NORAD Region, Alaskan Command, Joint Task Force Alaska, and the Eleventh Air Force. With the divestiture of the 19th Fighter Squadron, in addition to maintaining a combat ready force for worldwide deployments, the 90th and 525th Fighter Squadrons in Alaska will assume all responsibilities associated with these vital missions.

Due to insufficient PAA, F-22 aircraft availability for these missions and training exercises is limited. Scheduled and unscheduled maintenance, as well as providing backup aircraft inventory to Nellis Air Force Base, further impacts aircraft availability. This situation can cause challenges with fulfilling all combatant commander requirements, particularly the Air Sovereignty Alert Mission, and maintaining a ready force. Despite these challenges, the 3rd Wing maintains Elmendorf Air Force Base as a combat ready war fighting platform and deploys combat ready mission power. However, an increase in the PAA assigned to each F-22 squadron would significantly decrease the difficulty and stress on airmen associated with insufficient resources.

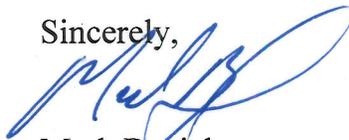
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As you know, the 3rd Wing hosts an Active Association with the 477th Fighter Group (FG), which is the first Air Force Reserve unit to operate and maintain the F-22. The Active Association is a leading example of the Total Force Integration successes in the Air Force. As a result of Base Realignment and Closure 2005, the 176th Air National Guard Wing will relocate from Kulis to Elmendorf Air Force Base in October, further enhancing Total Force Integration.

Total Force Integration combined with Alaska's military missions makes Elmendorf Air Force Base a prime candidate for additional F-22s. Again, I commend the decision to achieve optimal basing for the F-22 and appreciate your consideration of this request. An optimal number of F-22 PAA will ensure Alaska's Arctic Warriors continue to provide combat ready airmen and aircraft to meet combatant commander requirements on time and on target.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you on this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (202) 224-3004 should you require additional information.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich  
U.S. Senator