

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 6, 2012

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Chairman
Subcommittee on Defense
Senate Appropriations Committee
Senate Dirksen Building, 122
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Vice Chairman
Subcommittee on Defense
Senate Appropriations Committee
Senate Dirksen Building, 122
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inouye and Vice Chairman Cochran:

We write to follow up with our request to include language in the Department of Defense Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2013 explicitly prohibiting the Air Force from obligating or expending funds for relocation of F16s from Eielson Air Force Base (AFB) in order to drastically reduce base support operations and functions. This request is our priority for Fiscal Year 2013.

To date no comprehensive analysis has been conducted through the future years defense program to substantiate claims of cost savings. In fact, Air Force leadership initially claimed the proposal would achieve cost savings beginning in Fiscal Year 2013. Yet a recent Pacific Air Force Site Activation Task Force (SATAF) report disclosed implementation of the proposal in Fiscal Year 2013 will cost the taxpayers approximately \$5.65 million or more. These unexpected costs were not appropriately budgeted for in Fiscal Year 2013. The Air Force has indicated they will require reprogramming of operations and maintenance dollars to execute the proposal. Reprogramming such scarce funds may negatively impact overall readiness as these dollars will no longer be available for the requirements identified during the budgeting process.

Further, the SATAF found the initial estimated cost savings of the proposal would be less than half of what was projected in the "table-top" exercise they conducted to make the decision. The SATAF has acknowledged additional implementation costs, such as military construction, may arise beyond Fiscal Year 2013. Additional implementation costs will easily negate any savings associated with the ill-conceived proposal. In fact, in 2005 the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission rejected this very same proposal for Eielson AFB due to the lack of substantiated cost-savings and the high military value of Eielson AFB.

The Air Force's proposal for Eielson AFB compromises the viability of one of our nation's most strategic air bases and runs contrary to the new Defense Strategic Guidance renewing focus on the Asia-Pacific. Eielson AFB is home to the Air National Guard's 168th Air Refueling Wing (ARW), currently staffed around the clock by active Guard members. The 168th ARW is vital link in the Pacific tanker bridge fueling a range of aircraft in the North Pacific as well as fighter aircraft assigned to NORTHCOM's alert mission. The downsizing of Eielson AFB should not be

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allowed to go forward until the 168th ARW's contributions are definitively assessed and addressed in a transparent fashion.

Like the Air Force's BRAC proposal in 2005, the relocation of the F16s would allow for a planned reduction of the 400 plus civilian work force at Eielson AFB by half or more. This would leave the base unprotected by existing law which restricts the ability of the Air Force from closing a base with 300 or more people without a formal process. This attempt at a back-door-BRAC was rejected by the Senate Armed Services Committee. At our request, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 includes a provision placing a one-year moratorium on any action that would leave a base unprotected by Title 10 Section 2687, like the Air Force's proposal to relocate the F16s in order to reduce base operations support at Eielson AFB.

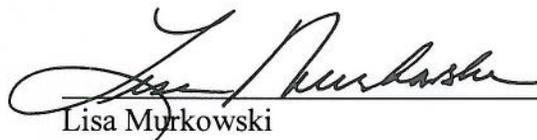
Not only does the proposal violate existing base closure and realignment law and policies, it creates the risk of economic turmoil in Interior Alaska. School districts are scrambling to address a near-term reduction in student populations and home values, including the values of homes owned by airmen assigned to Eielson AFB, are becoming distressed. During her testimony before the Military Construction, VA and Related Agencies Subcommittee, Defense Undersecretary Dorothy Robyn noted that the communities were forced to suffer before the BRAC process was created. The BRAC process was intended to help communities adapt to significant basing changes. There is no question that the Air Force's plan will affect the Interior Alaska community as profoundly as a BRAC realignment; however none of the benefits available through the BRAC process will be provided to the community or affected airmen.

We strongly urge you to consider explicitly prohibiting funds for this unjustified, costly and ill-conceived proposal. We appreciate your consideration of this request. Please contact our staffs, Nathan Bergerbest in the office of Senator Murkowski at (202) 224-2839 or Lindsay Kavanaugh in the office of Senator Begich at (202) 224-1924, for additional information. Thank you for your continued leadership on our nation's defense.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator