



STATE OF VERMONT
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
789 Vermont National Guard Road
Colchester, Vermont 05446-3099

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22 October 2013
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BURLINGTON CLERK
TREASURER'S OFFICE

Burlington City Council
149 Church Street
Burlington, VT 05401

Dear Burlington City Councilors,

I am writing this letter to express my support for basing the F-35 at the Burlington International Airport. I have been involved with the basing process since the beginning and am confident the basing of the F-35 in Vermont is in our best interest as an organization, as a state and as a community. The basing will provide continued levels of emergency capability for the governor, support national defense, secure current level of jobs, preserve economic benefits, and secure the Vermont Air National Guard's future for years to come.

Throughout the process, I have directed my staff to be open and transparent. I believe they have done so in a professional manner that reflects the core values of the Vermont National Guard. Countless hours have been spent reaching out to communities, the press and local governments. We have helped sort through the thousands of pages of the Environmental Impact Statement and we have provided information on how we fly and operate the F-16 aircraft.

The potential basing of the F-35 has created a level of discussion not normally seen in Vermont. We have done our best to provide in context information. Each of the 4,000 men and women of the Vermont National Guard have taken an oath to support and defend the United States Constitution and the Constitution of the State of Vermont. Freedom of speech is guaranteed and whether someone chooses to support the basing of the F-35 or not is a personal decision and we respect those that might not agree.

As you consider whether or not to support a resolution against the basing of the F-35 in Vermont or delaying that basing, I ask you to carefully review the abundance of information and opinions that are being used against the basing of the F-35. In the age of instant communications and mass media, the amount of misinformation can be overwhelming and the accuracy of that information can, at times, be questionable. Many hours, perhaps days, of independent research could be spent sorting out all the details.

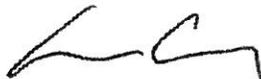
My writing you is not intended to rehash all the key issues regarding the F-35. Rather I want to leave you with a few key points to consider when making your decision:

- The Vermont Air National Guard has been flying out of the Burlington International Airport for 67 years with the last twenty seven being with the F-16. The 1,100 men and women of the Vermont Air National Guard proudly serve our communities, our state and our nation.

- The F-16 aircraft, like all aircraft, has a finite life span and is being replaced by the F-35. We are fortunate to be on the initial list of candidate bases. As the Department of Defense adjusts force structure to live within the Budget Control Act and Sequestration, there is no guarantee Vermont would be considered for the F-35 at a later date. Without a follow on mission to the F-16, the size and the future make-up of the Vermont Air National Guard is uncertain. The time for basing the F-35 in Vermont is now, not later.
- We are all concerned about the growing debt in our country and as citizens, we expect our government to be held accountable for how our tax dollars are spent. We encourage our elected officials to ensure that not only defense contracts, but all national contracts provide a good value to the citizens. With that said, saying no to basing the F-35 based on costs alone will have negative impacts locally. F-35s are the fighter of the future and will be based elsewhere if not Vermont.
- In 1986, we received the F-16 12 years after its first flight. If selected, we are projected to receive the F-35 14 years after its first flight. As a former F-16 pilot and commercial airline pilot with almost 20,000 flight hours in military and civilian aircraft, I have no safety concerns. The 158th Fighter Wing has a proven safety record.
- I am confident the overall impact of F-35 operations at Burlington will be similar to that of the F-16 which has flown successfully in and out of Burlington for twenty seven years. We will continue to work with all our neighbors and local government officials to minimize the impacts of our operations. We are and will be a strong community partner for decades to come.

In conclusion, we are still the named preferred alternative in the Environmental Impact Statement and want to move forward together as community partners in a constructive manner. For the men and women of the Vermont Air National Guard, for our neighbors and for the safety and security of our state and nation I ask you to support the basing of the F-35 at the Burlington International Airport.

Respectfully,



STEVEN A. CRAY
Major General
The Adjutant General

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