# Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

September 26, 2016

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

General David L. Goldfein
Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Dear Secretary James and General Goldfein,

We write as a follow on to our letter dated June 7, 2016, which urged your consideration of Whiteman Air Force Base, and the Air Force Reserve Command's 442nd Fighter Wing, for selection as the Air Force's preferred alternative site for the seventh F-35 operational location (Ops 7).

Since our last letter, the delegation has reviewed, and been briefed on, the strategic basing criteria and scoring. We agree that Whiteman offers a tremendous lack of encroachment; access to quality, extensive, and unencumbered airspace; first-rate infrastructure; and protected access to ranges. However, we are not convinced that the metrics used in the evaluation process fully capture a number of additional, unique advantages that Whiteman offers. Whiteman would also provide a number of other operational benefits and efficiencies above and beyond the strategic basing criteria that we ask you to consider.

First, Whiteman is the only candidate you are considering that has experience operating, maintaining, and planning for missions involving low-observable technologies. These unique low-observable skill sets, facilities, and equipment can generate tremendous synergies with the F-35. Second, Whiteman's B-2 total force integration team would provide F-35 operators and maintainers with an experienced cadre of Guard and Reservists. Third, assigning the F-35 to the 442nd would achieve the Air Force's stated desire to preserve close air support (CAS) expertise and combat experience into the future. With over six aviation package deployments and multiple unit task code deployments since September 11, 2001, the 442nd is one of the most experienced CAS units in the Air Force. It was disappointing to learn that units under consideration for Ops 7 that currently perform an A-10 mission were reduced instead of positively scored.

Furthermore, we understand the requirement for a great deal of unencumbered air space for the F-35 mission. The state of Missouri is currently working to combine the Lindbergh and Salem Military Operations Areas with the Cannon Range at Fort Leonard Wood in order to provide the Air Force with an unparalleled amount of airspace to conduct training. This was studied, determined feasible, and received Federal Aviation Administration approval in 2005. In addition to the Cannon Range that the 442nd uses, the 442nd also uses the Smoky Hill Air National Guard Range in Kansas. The combination of abundant air space and multiple ranges allows the Air Force to conduct all necessary training required for the F-35.

The Missouri delegation and state officials also recognize the need for military construction investments at Whiteman to support F-35 Ops 7. State leaders are discussing a strategy to provide economic development resources to support capital improvements needed at Whiteman. Currently, the state is taking a close look at the possibility of funding construction of the required simulator facility and new apron to accommodate the F-35 if Whiteman is selected. While this is in the early stages, we feel it is important to let you know of the state's strong commitment to, and established record of, reducing Air Force and Department of Defense costs. For example, the state recently approved funding for land acquisition for the new National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency in St. Louis, Missouri.

For all of the reasons listed in our previous letter and those you find above, we strongly urge you to select Whiteman Air Force Base for F-35 Ops 7. Missouri is proud to be a partner to the United States Air Force and our state leaders join us in our shared commitment to working with you to make Whiteman the best possible home for the Joint Strike Fighter. We look forward to the Air Force's decision.

Thank you for your distinguished service to our nation.

Sincere regards,

Roy Blunt
United States Senator

Claire McCaskill
United States Senator

Sam Graves
Member of Congress

Ann Wagner
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver II
Member of Congress

Jason Smith
Member of Congress

William Lacy Clay, Jr.
Member of Congress

Billy Long
Member of Congress

Vicky Hartzler
Member of Congress

Blaine Luetkemeyer
Member of Congress

Cc:

General Stephen W. Wilson, Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force
General Herbert J. "Hawk" Carlisle, Commander, Air Combat Command
Lieutenant General James M. "Mike" Holmes, Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Plans and Requirements
Lieutenant General Maryanne Miller, Chief of Air Force Reserve
The Honorable Miranda A.A. Ballentine, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Installations, Environment, and Energy