

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

June 7, 2016

General Mark A. Welsh, III
Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Dear General Welsh,

We write to express our support for the selection of Whiteman Air Force Base, and the 442nd Fighter Wing, in conjunction with the Air Force's strategic basing process under way for an Air Force Reserve F-35 operational mission designation.

Whiteman and the 442nd have a proud tradition of flying a variety of specialized Air Force aircraft. As you know, Whiteman hosts the 442nd's A-10 mission, as well as the B-2 Spirit, thus offering a unique, proven experience in supporting and sustaining low-observable technologies in stealth aircraft such as the F-35.

Whiteman's infrastructure also meets key requirements identified in the Main Operating Base 7 (MOB 7) criteria. This includes a robust inventory of hangar space; specialized facilities for operations, such as a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility; highly capable back shop functions; significant munitions storage; and critical petroleum, oil, and lubricants capacity, all available within the Whiteman fence line.

Importantly, the 442nd possesses extensive and unencumbered airspace, along with protected access to the Cannon and Smoky Hill ranges currently used by the 442nd for their air-to-ground and close air support requirements. These ranges, which are located within 250 miles of Whiteman, provide moving strafe, live fire, and inert options, to include integrated stationary and mobile threat emitters capable of replicating enemy air defense systems. The 442nd's network of Cannon and Smokey Hill ranges enable scenario based training to fulfill F-35 Ready Aircrew Program requirements. With access to some of the best ranges in the country, which have consistently been rated at the very top of the range capability and encroachment score, we are confident that the Air Force will agree that Whiteman and the 442nd are well suited for the F-35 MOB 7 mission.

In addition, Whiteman is ideally located in close proximity to numerous Air Force and Air National Guard tanker units and Army installations. When combined with the 20th Attack Squadron's Remotely Piloted Aircraft mission and the Missouri Army National Guard 1-135th's mission, Whiteman brings a unique combination of assets on location, and nearby, to provide extensive joint training opportunities.

We take great pride in supporting our military members and work hard to continually protect and strengthen our military installations. As representatives of a pro-military state, we have worked together in a bipartisan and bicameral way to support our military service members and their families. We understand how important Whiteman is to our national defense – and to our state – and we are proud to represent it in Congress.

The men and women who proudly serve in the 442nd continue to prove that Whiteman is critical to maintaining the capability of the United States Air Force to meet world-wide air expeditionary forces requirements. We strongly urge you to consider Whiteman Air Force Base as the strategic basing process continues, and believe it merits the Air Force's selection as the Main Operating Base 7 for the F-35 mission.

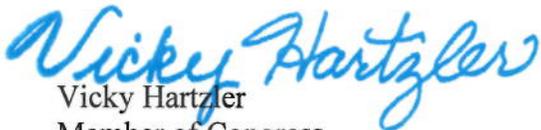
Sincere regards,



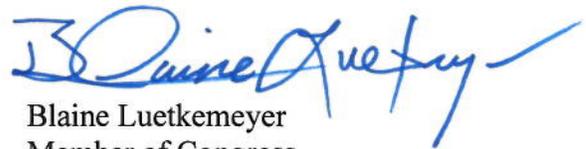
Roy Blunt
United States Senator



Claire McCaskill
United States Senator



Vicky Hartzler
Member of Congress



Blaine Luetkemeyer
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver II
Member of Congress



William Lacy Clay, Jr.
Member of Congress



Billy Long
Member of Congress



Ann Wagner
Member of Congress



Sam Graves
Member of Congress



Jason Smith
Member of Congress

Cc:

General David L. Goldfein, Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force
General Herbert J. "Hawk" Carlisle, Commander, Air Combat Command
Lieutenant General James "JJ" Jackson, Chief of Air Force Reserve
Lieutenant General James M. "Mike" Holmes, Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Plans and Requirements
Major General Maryanne Miller, Deputy to the Chief of the Air Force Reserve
Honorable Miranda A.A. Ballentine, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Installations, Environment, and Energy