

*Talking Points on Burlington Air Guard Station F-35A Basing Issues  
(May 2013)*

2012 Draft Environment Impact Statement (DEIS) Impacts to Burlington

1. DEIS states that taking no action (that is, not basing the F-35A) “would be the environmentally preferable alternative.” (Page 2-29)
2. DEIS states there is a negative impact to the Burlington area in the following categories: noise, air quality, land use, socioeconomics, environmental justice/protection of children, community facilities and public services, ground traffic and transportation, climate change, cumulative effects, and irreversible commitment of resources
3. Under both scenarios, noise levels (65 dB DNL or greater) would increase. The following additional areas (based on 2000 census data) would be subject to these noise levels
  - a. 672 additional acres would be added for a total of **2,635 acres**
  - b. Residential acreage would increase from 103 to **667 acres**
  - c. 2,863 more people would be affected for a total of **6,675 people** - {using 2010 census it would be over **7,700 people**}
  - d. 1,366 more households would be affected for a total of **2,944 households** - {using 2010 census it would be over **3,400 households**} (Pages ES-10, BR4-61, ES-11)
  - e. “Areas exposed to DNL above 65 dB are generally not considered suitable for residential use.” (Page C-14)
4. “The F-35A is a new type of aircraft; historical trends show that mishaps rates of all types decrease the longer an aircraft is operational and as flight crews and maintenance personnel learn more about the aircraft’s capabilities and limitations...” (Page ES-12)
  - a. “...there have not been enough flight hours to accurately depict the specific safety record for this new aircraft.” (Page 3-29)
5. “The total population (referring to minority and low-income people) affected by noise levels equal to or greater than 65 dB DNL would increase by 48 percent.” “When a comparison is made, the increases would be considered to affect these populations (minority and low-income people) disproportionately...” (Page BR4-77)
6. Of all other bases under consideration in the DEIS, **only Burlington has an increase in residential land use impacts.** (Page ES-70)

Economic Impacts to the Residents in the Noise Areas

1. “Areas exposed to DNL above 65 dB are generally not considered suitable for residential use.” (DEIS page C-14)

2. HUD, FAA, and VA recommend written disclosures to all prospective buyers or lessees of property within this noise area (DEIS page C-47)
3. Properties in noise areas over 65 dB DNL may not be eligible for federally guaranteed loans, program assistance, subsidy or insurance (DEIS C-46)
4. One study showed a 1.8 to 2.3 percent decrease in property values per dB (DEIS page C-47)
5. Another study showed decreases in property values usually range from 0.5 to 2 percent per dB increase of cumulative noise exposure (DEIS page C-47)
6. In South Burlington, 180 dwelling units were identified in the 65 and higher dB DNL noise zones (2008 FAA report, p 29)
  - a. The FAA Part 150 Update, dated April 2008, states "...the Air National Guard is one of the dominant noise contributors to the DNL contours, as documented in the August 2006 NEM Update..." (FAA, p 21)
  - b. "Land acquisition and relocation is the only alternative that would eliminate the residential incompatibility." (FAA, p 29)
  - c. "...noise barriers provide little, if any reductions, of noise from aircraft that are airborne and can be seen over the barrier." (FAA, p. 35)
7. To date, 55 affordable homes in South Burlington have been demolished. Another 81 are slated for demolition in 2013 because of aircraft (primarily military) noise

#### Scoring Sheet Problems

1. The Air Force devised a scoring methodology to explain how bases were chosen
  - a. This was done to preclude future disputes and lawsuits such as the one filed against the F-35 basing at Eglin AFB, in Florida
  - b. It was intended to bring more transparency to the process
2. The scoring sheet rated the bases in four areas: Mission, Capacity, Cost, and Environment
  - a. Mission related principally to whether the airspace around the

facility could accommodate the flying sorties of the F35A, and how the weather impacted visibility

- b. Capacity related to whether the existing facilities (hangers, maintenance units, simulator bays, munitions, runways, etc.) would be able to accommodate the F-35A
- c. Cost related to the cost of living of the area
- d. Environment related to **existing** air quality, and **existing** encroachment (meaning “incompatible development”)

#### Process Problem

1. Unlike the other criteria, which evaluated whether the airspace and facilities could accommodate the **future F-35A**; the encroachment area (under environment) was related to the **current aircraft—the F16**
2. Rather than ask if there **would be** incompatible development in the accident and noise zones around the airport for the F-35A; they asked if there was incompatible development **currently** for the F-16

Since there are different accident and noise zones for the F-16 and the F-35A, it is not logical to assume that the presence or absence of buildings, or the numbers of buildings for the current F-16 would be the same for the F-35A

#### Data Problem

1. Two questions in the ‘Encroachment’ area under the ‘Environmental’ category were answered incorrectly. Those questions were
  - a. “Is there incompatible development in clear zones and/or accident potential area?” and
  - b. “Is there incompatible development in noise contours above 65 dB DNL?”
2. The answer marked for both questions was ‘No’ meaning that there were NO incompatible buildings in either area (accident and noise). Burlington thus received 3 points for each question (6 total)
3. But, **there is** incompatible development in both areas (accident and noise), meaning Burlington should not have received 6 points
4. Burlington Air Guard Station received a total score of 91.021
5. Without seeing the scores of the other Air Guard Stations, especially Jacksonville Air Guard Station in Florida, McEntire Joint National Guard Base in South Carolina, and Dannelly Field, in Alabama, it cannot be

confirmed that another Guard base scored higher than Burlington

- a. South Burlington City Council requested this from the Vermont Congressional Delegates in July 2012
- b. The Delegates said the Air Force would not release it to them
- c. The Air Force did not respond to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to get the scoring sheets for other bases

*Fallacious Economic Arguments in support of basing the F-35A at the VTANG*

Economic Argument: It will benefit the area economically

1. DEIS states there is NO economic gain under scenario 1
  - a. There would be no increase in jobs (DEIS page BR4-72)
2. DEIS states there would be only “minor” economic effect from the 266 additional **military** persons (83 full-time and 183 part-time) that would be added under scenario 2 (page BR4-73)
  - a. The full-time military will be transferred here from other places around the U.S. (Page BR4-74)
  - b. Highly unlikely that any of them would be Vermonters
3. MG Dubie said that the Air Guard would actually LOSE maintainer jobs if the F-35A were to be based here (public hearing on April 19, 2010)
  - a. F-35A will not be maintained at the Burlington Air Guard Station, as the F-16 is. The F-35A will be maintained at a centralized location
  - b. Most of the full time VT Air Guard jobs are maintainer jobs
  - c. MG Dubie did not specify how many jobs would be lost, but he said the lost jobs would be worth it

Economic Argument: If the F-35A does not come here the Guard Station will close

1. No public official (military, government, or politician) has EVER said the base will close if the F-35A is not based here (lots of lay-folks have falsely said or implied the base will close)
2. The F-35 does not affect the Army Guard, which is the majority of the VT Guard (about 4,000 members)
3. The Air Guard numbers about 1,000 people. Some assume half are part time.  
NOTE: The VT Guard will not disclose how many Air Guard members are full or part time, and how many are Vermonters. Guard members often come from other states to serve their monthly weekend Guard duty
4. MG Dubie said in a press conference in July 2012, that if the F-35A does not come here, the base MAY get SMALLER (likely meaning the Air Guard)
5. There are other options/missions for the Air Guard
  - a. Other ANG bases have switched missions; e.g., to drones/other unmanned vehicles; anti-terrorism; cyber security missions, etc
  - b. Burlington was being considered (along with other Guard bases) for basing the new tanker aircraft: KC-46A
  - c. VT Air Guard seems to be focused exclusively on fighter aircraft, and seems reluctant to consider non-fighter aircraft missions
6. **The Air Force is extending the lifespan of all F-16's until at least 2030**
7. Comparison to the closing of the former Plattsburg AFB is absurd
  - a. Plattsburgh was an active duty base with over 5,000 full-time active duty personnel, in an area (Plattsburg) with a population of 20,000
  - b. The Burlington Air Guard Station is estimated to have 500 full-time personnel, in an area with a population (Burlington and South Burlington) of 60,000
  - c. The economy of Plattsburgh recovered in half of the time expected (12 years versus the estimated 25 years)
8. Even were the Air Guard Station to close, it's doubtful that it would have a significant economic impact on our area
  - a. It is unclear (because the VTANG will not disclose the information) how much of the reported \$53 million in salaries are paid to Vermonters
  - b. Our area added 4,250 new jobs over the past three years (1,400 new jobs per year)

Worse case scenario A: The Air Guard Station closes entirely **20 years from now** and **500 local** Air Guard members their full time jobs, and **500 non-local** Air Guard members lose their part time jobs

Worse case scenario B: The F-35A arrive here **five years from now**, and over **7,000 local residents** lose their quality of life, home values, and are trapped in houses that the

federal government labels unsuitable for residential use

### *National Security/VT Air Guard Support/Patriotism*

#### National Security

1. The current major threats to the U.S. are terrorism and cyber-warfare
  - a. Fighter-bombes have no role in countering these threats in the U.S.
2. The only threat from aircraft come from Russia and China
  - a. Vermont is a poor location to respond to these threats
3. The F-35A can and might carry nuclear weapons
  - a. This makes an F-35 base a huge target for terrorists/other enemies
  - b. AF has had recent problems with nuclear weapons security

#### Vermont Air Guard Support

4. Supporting the Guard means looking long-term
  - a. Experts say the F-35 is the last fighter to be produced
  - b. Sticking with fighters will insure the Air Guard's eventual demise
  - c. Accepting new missions which counter current and future threats will insure a longer future

#### Patriotism

5. Patriotism does not mean blindly accepting whatever weapon systems defense contractors propose and politician support
6. Patriotism means supporting what is best for its citizens
  - a. Bankrupting our country so huge defense contractors can stay in business is foolhardy
  - b. Defense contractor executives are the ones who profit most from weapon systems
7. Patriotism means supporting our troops and ensuring they and their families are taken care of financially and medically
  - a. To pay for weapon systems, such as the F-35, the Department of Defense freezes military salaries, cuts their benefits, slashes family benefits, increases veterans health care costs, and cuts programs for homeless, and disabled, and unemployed veterans