



Thank you for contacting me about the possibility of F-35 Joint Strike Fighters being based in South Burlington, Vermont. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to your concerns on this very important issue.

Let me start off by saying that it speaks to the commendable character of the Vermont National Guard that the U.S. Air Force is strongly considering basing its newest generation of planes in South Burlington. Our National Guard responded admirably to Tropical Storm Irene in Vermont, and to Hurricane Katrina on the Gulf coast. Vermont Guard members served, often at great personal sacrifice, when they were called to active duty in the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. I believe that the recognition by the Department of Defense of the Vermont Guard's remarkable record of service to our state and nation is in part responsible for the consideration of basing F-35s in Vermont.

But we can and should consider other factors than our pride in the commitment and patriotism of the Vermont National Guard. I understand that a number of Vermonters are deeply concerned about the noise pollution that the new planes would create, a concern I fully understand. According to a U.S. Air Force report, homes surrounding the base could be adversely impacted by increased noise levels of F-35s. I have serious concerns about maintaining and protecting the environment and quality of life for people living near the Burlington Airport, where the planes would be based, and believe it is essential to learn what steps will be taken to manage noise pollution and environmental issues, should Vermont be selected for the deployment of F-35s. Senators Leahy and I, along with Congressman Welch, have asked the Air Force to examine both noise concerns and possible noise mitigating steps, and to include both in the final Environmental Impact Statement before a Record of Decision is issued.

I also understand you have concerns that homes within the high noise area (65 dB DNL or above) may no longer qualify for Federal Housing Administration (FHA) insured loans. My office contacted the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) about this

matter, and I was told that FHA does not set maximum acceptable noise levels for single-family properties. Like any lender or insurer, FHA appraisers do take into account all factors that could affect the market value of a property, including noise, but the location of a home in a 65 dB DNL area does not disqualify a property from FHA loan eligibility. My office received a similar response from Fannie Mae.

Knowing how important this is to homeowners adjacent to the airport, I will continue to monitor the issue of loan financing so that homeowners can and will be protected.

Again, thank you for contacting me about this important issue. Feel free to contact me again in the future about this or any other subject of interest to you, or for up-to-date information on what my office is working on please visit <http://www.sanders.senate.gov>. While there, I invite you to sign up for my e-newsletter, the Bernie Buzz, at <http://sanders.senate.gov/buzz/>. Please be aware that due to security screening procedures, postal mail to my office experiences delays that will lengthen the time it takes me to get back to you. The fastest way to contact my office is by calling 1-800-339-9834.

Sincerely,

BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senator