



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC

JUL 3 2012

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Ms Ferguson, SAF/IEI
1665 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1665

Councilwoman Rosanne Greco
63 Four Sisters Rd
South Burlington, VT 05403

Dear Councilwoman Greco:

It has come to my attention that you have concern over how the Air Force scored Burlington Air National Guard Station (ANGS) as part of the F-35A Strategic Basing process. I want to assure you that Burlington ANGS was scored correctly in 2009 and that the Air Force's Strategic Basing Process is working as designed and will provide our senior leaders all relevant data, to include noise issues identified in the Environmental Impact Statement, as they make a final basing decision.

In the Fall of 2008 the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) directed basing decisions take place at the Headquarters Air Force level and established a Strategic Basing process to ensure a standardized, transparent and repeatable methodology is used in making basing decisions. The Strategic Basing process uses criteria based analysis and the application of military judgment to link mission and Combatant Commander Requirements to installation attributes to identify locations that are best suited to support any given mission. The results of this analysis inform the basing decisions made by the SecAF and Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF).

The first step in the basing process is to develop basing criteria. Air Combat Command (ACC), as the lead major command, led the effort to develop the F-35A basing criteria. Once approved, the weighted criteria were applied to 205 Air Force bases in an Enterprise-Wide-Look (EWL) and the results of the criteria application, based on information available at the time the bases were scored, were used by the SecAF and CSAF to develop a list of candidate bases. I have carefully reviewed your concerns on the environmental scoring at Burlington and want to assure you that I believe no scoring error was made.

With respect to the Decibel (dB) Contour Development score under the encroachment portion of the overall environmental score, the specific question asked was "Is there incompatible development in noise contours above 65dB DNL?". The Air Force used the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approved Part 150 Noise Compatibility Program (NCP) for Burlington Regional Airport. In accordance with FAA land use compatibility guidelines, the NCP identified no incompatible development issues below the 65 dB DNL noise contours and put mitigations in-place for areas above 65dB DNL contours. Burlington's NCP was endorsed by the Airport and the City of Burlington in April of 2008. Based on the in-place FAA Part 150, Burlington ANGS was correctly awarded the three points in the environmental section of the initial basing criteria scoresheet. Regarding the F-35A scoresheets, the containers next to the four statements under the

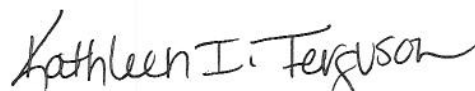
environmental section are checked only if the question was answered in the affirmative. For both the "Clear Zone Development" and the "dB Contour Development", the answer was negative, i.e., there was not an identified existing issue, so the container was not checked in the database and Burlington was correctly awarded the six points for those two categories (three points per category).

Once the candidate bases were selected, ACC-led site survey teams conducted detailed on-the-ground, evaluations at each candidate location covering a range of operational and infrastructure requirements. The results of the site surveys were vetted through the Strategic Basing process and briefed to the SecAF and CSAF who then selected preferred and reasonable alternatives F-35A basing. During the detailed site surveys, it was identified and briefed to Air Force senior leaders that there was some residential encroachment and sensitive noise receptors adjacent to the airfield. This information was considered during the selection of preferred and reasonable alternatives.

Once the preferred and reasonable alternatives were released in July 2010, the Air Force began the Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As part of the on-going F-35A EIS at Burlington, sophisticated noise modeling produced noise contours for the range of potential F-35A beddown actions at Burlington--these are the impacts that you are referencing in your recent press engagements. The draft of the final EIS completed the required 45-day public comment period on June 20, 2012. ACC is now addressing all the comments received, and we expect to complete the final EIS in November 2012 to support a final Record of Decision in late 2012 or early 2013. As part of the Record of Decision briefing to Air Force senior leaders all of the key findings at Burlington, to include the impact to the local community based on the projected noise contours, will be provided for their review and consideration.

The Air Force values the mission capabilities and sustained local and community support at Burlington ANGS. Again, I want to assure you that the Strategic Basing Process is working as designed and Burlington was accurately scored in 2009. I am confident the Strategic Basing process and the resultant final information from the EIS will lead to a well-informed basing decision.

Sincerely,



KATHLEEN I. FERGUSON, P.E.
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force
(Installations)

cc:

Senator Leahy
Senator Sanders
Representative Welch