

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

November 30, 2012

Honorable Michael Donley
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330

General Mark Welsh
Chief of Staff, US Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330

Dear Secretary Donley and General Welsh:

We write concerning the Air Force's announced plan to move forward with an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the proposed transfer of the 18th Aggressor Squadron from Eielson Air Force Base to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) and subsequently downsize the 354th Fighter Wing. As you are aware, Alaska Governor Sean Parnell recently requested the Air Force conduct more than one public scoping meeting and one public hearing in each of the JBER and Eielson communities, as well as holding meetings in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley.

Given the impact the transfer would have on the impacted communities we agree with Governor Parnell about the importance of robust community engagement and outreach. We therefore urge the Air Force to engage all impacted communities, including Matanuska-Susitna Valley and the city of North Pole, and ensure the public is able to fully participate in the EIS process through multiple public scoping meetings and hearings in each area.

It is particularly important to engage communities in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley on possible personnel movements affecting JBER given that the recent Housing Market Analysis has raised questions about the availability of housing in and near Anchorage to meet the demand of relocating military families. We believe that those unable to find housing in the Anchorage area, as well as those seeking more affordable housing, will seek accommodations in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley taxing roads and creating undue burdens on already crowded schools.

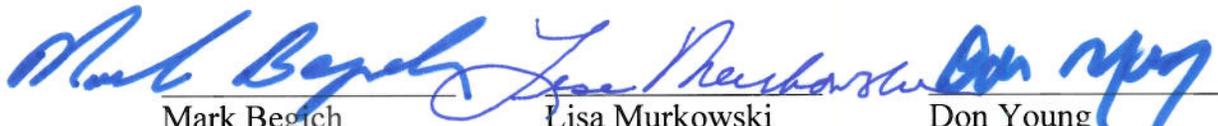
Finally, although we appreciate the Air Force's willingness to take a fresh look at whether the Eielson proposal is executable and makes financial sense, we remain concerned that the Air Force does not fully understand the tremendous upside potential that Eielson Air Force Base offers. We sincerely hope that the Air Force would use the opportunity of a "strategic pause" in the implementation of force structure changes to rethink whether Eielson's proximity to the Joint Pacific Alaska Range

Secretary Donley and General Welsh
November 29, 2012
Page 2

Complex (JPARC) and the US Pacific Command's area of responsibility merits an increase in responsibilities for the base, rather than a potential downsizing. A good faith study of these opportunities would be most welcome.

We appreciate your consideration of our requests and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich Lisa Murkowski Don Young
United States Senator United States Senator United States Representative