September 17, 2019

The Honorable Matthew P. Donovan  
Acting Secretary  
United States Air Force  
1670 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20330

Dear Acting Secretary Donovan:

I am writing to you today to relay concerns expressed to me by my constituents about the proposed F-35A operational beddown at Truax Field in Madison, Wisconsin. According to the most recent Environmental Impact Statement, roughly 1,000 homes in my district will experience aircraft noise levels above 65 decibels, leaving a large proportion of these homes as “incompatible for residential land use.” Additionally, the EIS states that the proposed beddown will have a disproportionate impact on low-income minority communities on the North Side of Madison.

As a dedicated representative of one of Madison’s most vibrant communities, it is my job to ensure that the voices of my constituents are being heard. Many of my constituents are concerned that they will lose their homes as a result of the proposed expansion, or be forced to relocate as a result of unbearable noise levels. Please provide answers to the following questions regarding the negative effects on housing and equity in the 48th Assembly District:

- How does the U.S Air Force define “incompatible for residential land use?”
- One of the closest communities to Truax field is a neighborhood of mobile homes located on the West side of the base. Since the FAA does not consider these homes as permanent structures, they do not qualify for FAA sound mitigation programs. What options will these individuals have for mitigating this increase in noise, and what role will the USAF play in addressing this injustice?
- Please provide examples of how the USAF has worked with other communities to mitigate the extensive noise associated with the F-35As.

In Wisconsin, our precious natural resources are a cornerstone of our collective identity. With that in mind, our community has already seen extensive environmental loss as a result of human expansion, including the shutdown of Well-15 as a result of extensive PFAs contamination. As we move forward with this possible placement of the F-35A at the 115th Fighter Wing, we ask you to truly consider all of the negative impacts outlined in the EIS draft, while providing our community with extensive mitigation tactics and strategies. Please answer the following questions with respect to concerns about the possible instances of environmental degradation, as a result of this operation:

- To what extent would the proposed expansion of the F-35As at Truax increase the likelihood of further degradation of Madison’s already crippled natural resources?
- What specific strategies does the Air National Guard plan on utilizing when it comes noise abatement? Could the institution of flight simulators and changing flight patterns significantly decrease instances of incompatible noise and negative environmental impacts, and to what extent?

As potential impacts of this proposed operation have become an incredibly important to many residents of the City of Madison, I have heard varying opinions regarding the future of Truax Base if the F-35A operational
beddown was not granted to the 115th Fighter Wing. To many, the 115th FW has been a valuable neighbor of the 48th Assembly District for over 70 years. Many of my constituents are concerned that without the F-35A expansion, the base will no longer be able to sustain its nearly 1,300 on-site jobs. Please answer the following questions about the future of Truax base, and the proposed F-35A mission:

- If Truax field were to not be chosen for the F-35A operational beddown, would the Air National Guard continue operations at the field? Will the 115th FW maintain their current status of employment?
- In what capacity will operations continue at Truax Base if the 115th FW were to be denied the F-35A proposal? Please provide examples of possible operations if the 115th FW was denied this specific proposal.
- Many of my constituents have expressed concerns involving the F-35As nuclear capabilities, and see this expansion as detrimental to the safety of our community. Are the proposed F-35As equip to handle nuclear warheads in any shape or form? Would the new facilities at Truax field be designed to maintain a nuclear arsenal?
- If Truax field were to be chosen for this operation, when can the city of Madison expect this expansion to be fully operational?

At this time, for many people in my district there are more questions than answers to the proposed beddown, specifically concerning housing inequality, environmental hazards, and the future of the 115th FW in Madison. As this project continues to develop, I ask that you truly consider the well-being of these hard-working Americans, while providing meaningful and comprehensive mitigation tactics that will protect our city’s natural resources and quality of life. Thank you for taking the time to examine this matter further, and I look forward to hearing your response to these inquiries.

Sincerely,

Melissa Sargent
State Representative
48th Assembly District