

Facts about the F-35 Fighter Jet

The Air Force and Wisconsin Air National Guard (ANG) propose to base a squadron of 20 F-35A jets in Madison at Truax Field, replacing the current fleet of F-16s.

- The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program is the largest and most expensive weapons system in US history. Each plane costs \$100 million.
- Tests of the F-35 jets have been plagued with failures, maintenance issues and cost overruns. “The F-35 program’s record has been both a scandal and a tragedy with respect to cost, schedule and performance,” former Senator John McCain reported to Congress in 2016.
- The Air Force has admitted that the crash rate for the F-35 in its early years of operation will be 3.6 times higher than the current crash rate for the F-16 fleet. Recent crashes of the F-35 include two at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida (2014 and 2018), one at Mountain Home Air Base in Idaho (2016), and two in South Carolina (2016 and 2018).
- Thirty-five percent of the weight of the F-35A is combustible military carbon composite with a combustible stealth coating. If it crashes, its 10,000 pounds of combustible material would burn in the inferno created by 2,700 gallons of jet fuel. According to a Naval Air Warfare Center report, highly toxic, mutagenic and carcinogenic fumes, particulates and fibers would be released before firefighters could arrive. Needless to say, it would be catastrophic for the Madison neighborhoods near the airport.
- The F-35 is designated as part of the US strategic nuclear bomber force. It is designed to carry what has been called the most dangerous nuclear weapon in America’s arsenal: the B61-12 guided nuclear bomb. It is the most dangerous because it can be set to deliver a blast of “only” a third of a kiloton, making it what war planners consider a “usable” nuclear weapon.
- Noise and air pollution from the F-35 will directly impact school children, workers and pedestrians in the vicinity of the airbase.
- The Air Force admits “that young children are more susceptible than adults to the effects of background noise.” Studies show that reading attention, problem-solving and memory are degraded by repeated direct blasting of children with aircraft noise.
- According to the Air Force, when the F-35 reaches 1,000 feet altitude, it hits people on the ground with a 115 dB noise blast, more than four times louder than the F-16.
- The Air Force has revealed that afterburner takeoffs will be much louder than the already intensely loud takeoff of the F-16, far exceeding the 130 dB extreme danger level. This sound level can produce “immediate and permanent hearing loss.”
- Although the noise produced by the F-35 will be intolerable, the air pollution will probably be far more damaging to the health of local residents. At the very least, the F-35 can be expected to annually emit:
 - 1.63 tons of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)
 - 1.62 tons of Carbon Monoxide
 - 1.30 tons of Nitrous Oxide
 - 13.26 tons of Sulfur Dioxide
 - 3.26 tons of large particulates
 - 3.16 tons of small particulates
 - 48.76 tons of Carbon Dioxide.

Here again, the health effects on our children will be worse than on other residents. All Madison residents will help pay for the jets, but will also bear a much greater cost in mental and physical health, safety and peace of mind.