

September 17, 2019
Madison, WI

Dear Senator Johnson:

We are writing you on behalf of Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice (WVJ), Madison-area Urban Ministry (MUM), and the Interfaith Peace Working Group (IPWG). We represent communities of faith and conscience that are working for a peaceful, just and environmentally sustainable world. We write to express our strong opposition to the deployment of F-35 fighter jets at Truax Airforce Base.

We oppose this deployment because of our concern for the environment. The F-35s will increase air pollution by releasing volatile organic compounds, carbon monoxide, nitrous oxide, sulfur dioxide, carbon dioxide, lead and large and small particulates into the atmosphere.

These jets will also increase noise pollution. Noise pollution beyond a certain level is not merely unpleasant to many people. It also harms human health. That's why the EPA recommends an average noise level no higher than 55 decibels. F-35s are expected to generate 115 decibels of noise during takeoffs and flyovers.

Noise at this level is particularly harmful to children, as the Air Force itself has acknowledged. Studies have shown that repeated, direct blasting of children with aircraft noise degrades reading attention, problem solving and memory. There are seven schools on the periphery of Truax Airforce Base and all the children who attend those schools will be subjected to such blasting.

We oppose the deployment of F-35s at Truax because many of the neighborhoods near the base, which will be most impacted by this deployment, suffer from high levels of poverty. In addition, some have large minority populations. Deploying F-35s at Truax will perpetuate the widespread but unjust practice of ignoring the well-being of the most vulnerable among us.

We oppose this deployment because some versions of the F-35 can carry nuclear weapons. In 2017 the Department of Defense prepared a *Nuclear Posture Review* in response to President's Trump's request for an analysis of U.S. nuclear strategy and forces. That review states that, "the U.S. is incorporating nuclear capability into the...F-35." The Madison City staff has been informed that the planes to be assigned here will not be nuclear capable. However, the Air Force could change this strategic decision at any time, and it is not required to inform the public of such a change. If the F-35s deployed at Truax become nuclear-capable, Madison will become a target in nuclear war.

Finally, we oppose this deployment because it contributes to the ever-growing size and power of the Military-Industrial Complex. Sixty years ago, President Eisenhower warned us of the dangers of this Complex. It has now grown beyond anything he could have imagined. The 2019 Federal Budget appropriates 54% of the nation's discretionary funds for defense—an amount equal to the next seven highest military budgets combined. This enormous investment in the military and military-related projects deprives us of the resources required to address our nation's and the world's urgent needs in areas such as health care, social security, education, and the environment. Production and purchase of the F-35, which estimates predict is likely to

cost 1.5 trillion dollars over the weapon system's 55-year life span, will reduce even further the funds available to meet these needs.

Many people argue that deploying the F-35 at Truax will create jobs. Certainly, the deployment of F-35s at Truax will create some jobs in the Madison area. But numerous studies have shown that investment in military or military-related projects is a very expensive way to create jobs. In an article published by the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University, Heidi Garret-Peltier shows that one billion dollars of federal funds invested in the military or military-related projects creates 11,200 jobs. That same billion dollars would create 16,600 jobs in the clean energy industry, 17,200 in health care and 26,700 in education. Gerret-Peletier concludes that if the funds the U.S. invested in wars between 2001 and 2015 had been invested in civilian projects instead, that money would have created between one and three million more jobs. Those who support military-related projects because they create jobs must explain that support in light of this data, which demonstrates that military spending is one of the least cost-effective ways to create jobs. If job creation is the goal, it would be better to invest our funds in projects that address the needs of civil society.

We ask you to consider carefully these concerns, Senator Johnson, and we hope you will join us in our efforts to prevent these weapons from being deployed at Truax.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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Vicki Berenson, Member Madison Friends Meeting, Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice Board
Tom Boswell, community organizer, Interfaith Peace Working Group
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