

Safe Skies Clean Water Wisconsin
safeskiescleanwaterwi.org
508 Elmside Boulevard
Madison, WI 53704

July 10, 2020

Maggie Gau, Chief of Staff
Office of Governor Tony Evers
115 East Capitol Drive, #1
Madison, WI 53702

Subject: Follow-up to July 8, 2020 Meeting with Safe Skies Clean Water Wisconsin

Dear Maggie:

Thank you for meeting with us from Safe Skies Clean Water Wisconsin on July 8th to discuss the environmental impacts of the Air National Guard at Truax Field in Madison. We represent the thousands of Wisconsin residents who have been exposed to the PFAS contamination caused by the ANG, endure the noise and pollution of current fighter jet training, and oppose the irresponsible and racist proposal to bring a squadron of F-35 nuclear-equipped fighter jets to Madison. Due to pandemic, a Zoom call was the best we could expect, but as Eugenia said during the meeting, it is disappointing that you and Governor Evers have not met face to face with the low-income and families of color that are forced to live adjacent to Truax.

We were pleased to hear about Governor Evers' commitment to clean air and water in Wisconsin and the selection of Adjutant General Paul Knapp based on his dedication to cleaning up the PFAS contamination at the base. We are asking that Governor Evers and Adjutant General Knapp demonstrate their commitment to a clean environment by taking the following steps:

1. Provide Transparency on PFAS Cleanup – High levels of PFAS contamination from Truax Field continue to discharge into Starkweather Creek, Lake Monona, and our groundwater, exposing residents who eat fish or swim in the polluted waters. Fortunately Madison's Municipal Well 15 has been shut down and warning signs posted along the creek, but the contamination grows and spreads each day. We and the public deserve to hear details and timelines for Dane County and the ANG's efforts to investigate and clean up this PFAS contamination. **We ask that Governor Evers direct DNR and WANG staff to provide us with an ongoing line of communication on these details, and to allow us to participate in your monthly meetings with DNR staff to discuss the status of PFAS cleanup efforts.**

2. Delay Construction at Truax Field – This fall, the ANG plans to begin construction to accommodate the proposed squadron of F-35 fighter jets. **We ask that Governor Evers and Adjutant General Knapp demonstrate their commitment to cleanup efforts by delaying all F-35 related construction until the ANG has completed a full investigation of its PFAS contamination and provided an approved cleanup plan. Additionally, the DNR should withhold any stormwater or wastewater approvals for construction at Truax Field until a thorough site investigation and proper treatment and disposal plan for contaminated soil and water are completed.**

3. Evaluate a New Mission for Truax Field – This spring the Air Force ignored local opposition and promoted environmental racism by selecting the 115th Fighter Wing at Truax Field to receive a squadron of F-35 fighter jets costing \$1.5 billion. If we want the 115th Fighter Wing to be an asset to our community, we should find a new mission other than training fighter jet pilots that is appropriate and compatible for our urban area. We need a mission that doesn't place its environmental and economic costs on the shoulders of those with low incomes or people of color forced to live adjacent to the base, or on the thousands of people who live on the east and north sides of Madison. **We ask that Governor Evers and Adjutant General Knapp begin the process of finding a new mission for the 115th Fighter Wing.**

The Air Force's decision to deploy a squadron of F-35A fighter jets at Truax Field was controversial, as thousands of Madison residents registered their opposition. Of the 6,419 comments submitted on the draft Environmental Impact Statement for five potential sites, 89% were submitted regarding Truax. Numerous local organizations, including our Common Council and School Board, opposed the beddown. The EIS concluded that Truax was one of two sites where "there will be disproportionate impacts to low income and minority populations, as well as children." Interestingly, the other site with disproportionate impacts, Montgomery, Alabama, was the second site chosen by the Air Force for the new jets. The EIS stated that Truax Field would experience the greatest environmental impacts of all sites, even though the statement did not even consider noise and safety impacts on the surrounding urban area and the 60,000 people living within three miles of the base.

By selecting Truax Field, the Air Force showed exceedingly poor and irresponsible judgement. Its decision ignored the values of Madison residents and our plans for a sustainable and livable city for ourselves and our children. The selection of Truax required the Air Force to ignore environmental justice and promote environmental racism. The Air Force ignored the current PFAS contamination of our groundwater, Starkweather Creek and Lake Monona by the ANG at Truax, and exposure of area residents to PFAS in our drinking water and fish.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and recent police killing of an unarmed, defenseless Black man in Minneapolis further accentuated a range of concerns regarding the recklessness and racism of the proposed selection of Truax for the F-35 squadron. We were unprepared to defend ourselves against the new virus, so why are we spending \$1.5 billion on a squadron of fighter jets? If we are committed to combating racism in Madison and Wisconsin, why will we continue exposing Black and other minority families of color living adjacent to Truax Field to the pollution and violence of these jets?

Since we cannot trust the Air Force to consider impacts on Madison and Wisconsin residents, we are turning to Governor Evers and Adjutant General Knapp of the Wisconsin National Guard to look out for us, promote Wisconsin values and end this disturbing example of environmental racism. The long-term mission of the 115th Fighter Wing at Truax Field has been training fighter jet pilots. **This mission is no longer suitable for our growing urban area, especially when the greatest impacts fall on those least able to defend themselves.** The Air Force currently has 44 possible missions for ANG units, most of which do not require fighter jet training. For your information, Table 1 summarizes these missions. Given these alternative missions, we ask that you evaluate and select a new mission for the 115th Fighter Wing that would be compatible with our residential area, one that supports and improves our community, rather than one that, according to the EIS, will sicken our residents, make us less safe, and reduce our quality of life.

The 115th should have a mission that provides us civil defense in times of catastrophe and emergency, rather than a mission that wages war with a first strike, nuclear-equipped offensive weapon like the F-35. Hosting such an offensive weapon seems ludicrous when our current security threats now come from cyber attacks and terrorism, neither of which the F-35 can counter.

There are several examples of ANG units which have changed their mission. In 2013, the New Mexico Air National Guard's 150th Fighter Wing changed from a fighter mission to training crews in special operations and personnel recovery. In 2016, the Montana 120th Airlift Wing switched from flying F-15 fighter jets to the C-130 and transport aircraft. In 2018, the *Air Force Times* reported on the increasing need for mobility aircraft to deliver critical equipment and supplies to military forces stateside and overseas, and for humanitarian and diplomatic missions. It found that during the 2017 hurricane season, Air Force mobility teams flew nearly 1,500 flights, delivering 28 million pounds of supplies to victims of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria. The Air Force estimated that the F-35 squadron would add only 64 jobs. Switching to another mission would provide far more jobs to Truax Field, jobs that would be beneficial to our community.

Other examples include scientific, engineering or weather missions for the 115th which would complement the enormous knowledge base available at the UW campus. In an April 1st news release, the Wisconsin National Guard explained all the ways it was helping combat the current pandemic. A permanent medical mission for the 115th would complement our forward-looking economy grounded in health services.

Rather than continuing the divisive proposal to bring F-35 fighter jets to Truax Field in Madison, let's work to find a new mission for the 115th Fighter Wing that benefits the entire community, one of which we can all be proud. The new F-35 fighter jets will not arrive until 2023 so we should begin the evaluation now to find a more suitable and compatible mission.

Sincerely,

Safe Skies Clean Water Wisconsin

Steven Klafka, P.E., BCEE
Eugenia Highland Granados
Tom Boswell
Vicki Berenson
Lance Green

cc: Madison Area Community Leaders

Table 1 - Mission Options Available to 115th Fighter Wing at Truax Field

Category	Mission
Flying	Airborne Battle Management Mission
	Air Mobility Mission
	Airborne Firefighting Mission
	Bomber Mission
	Fighter Mission
	Refueling Mission
	Remotely Piloted Aircraft Mission
	Special Operations Aircraft Mission
Ground Support	Air Support Operations Mission
	Air Traffic Control Mission
	Air Training Mission
	Band Mission
	Civil Engineering Mission
	Combat Communications Mission
	Command and Control Mission
	Engineering and Installation Mission
	Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mission
	Individual Training Mission
	Operations Support Mission
	Red Horse Mission
	Security Forces Mission
	Weather Mission
Intelligence, Surveillance, & Reconnaissance	Cyber Systems Mission
	Eagle Vision Mission
	Intelligence Mission
	Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Mission
	Network Operations Mission
	Space Mission
Special Operations	Combat Control Mission
	Combat Weather Mission
	Pararescue Mission
	Search and Rescue Mission
	Tactical Air Control Party Mission
	Battlefield Airmen
	Special Operations Aircraft Mission
Unique Missions	Air Sovereignty Mission
	Global Hawk Maintenance Mission
	Homeland Defense Mission
	Medical Evacuation Mission
	Scientific Mission
	Special Operations Aircraft Mission
	Centralized Intermediate Repair Facility (Cirf)
	Airborne Firefighting Mission
	Eagle Vision Mission