

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fighter Jet Noise Disrupts Lives, Children, and Working from Home

Results of the 2020 Fighter Jet Noise Survey have been released by Safe Skies Clean Water Wisconsin. Thus far, over 500 Madison residents responded to the on-line survey to explain how their lives and businesses are affected by noise from current Air National Guard F-16 fighter jet training flights based at Truax Field.

The loud, shaking roar of the fighter jets passing over the rooftops of city neighborhoods generated heartfelt responses from a wide variety of people living and working beneath the flight paths. Responses were submitted by grandparents, teachers, therapists, musicians and many people who now working at home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Here are excerpts from their responses:

“kids cover their ears, everything I’m doing comes to a halt, I have to stop conversations, have to stop teaching, scares the little kids, detrimental to my health, my entire body tenses up and my heart starts racing, feel afraid of the jets, dog went crazy barking, my house shakes, windows rattle, utterly jarring, I can't even hear with my noise-canceling headphones, mute out of meetings, negative impact on my income and career, have to stop talking and pause conversations, wakes me up and disturbs my sleep, people comment on how loud they are, impossible to make out dialog, suffers from PTSD, always startled and distressed, "You learn to live with this?", impossible to just continue any activity, reminds me of every innocent soul killed in a bombing in my home country, should be at least 25 miles away from any residential area, pausing conversation awkwardly for at least 20 seconds sometimes longer, set off the baby monitor, stop in the middle of important recording sessions, plug my ears to prevent hearing damage, grandchild holds her hands over her ears, shake my dining room chandelier and the glasses in the cupboards, causing broken windows and items falling off shelves, annoyed, not some patriotic presence, part of the terror of war”

“If I am in a zoom or skype meeting for my workplace, I have to stop speaking to the group mid-sentence and mute my mic to protect their ears,” says Donna Magdalina who lives near Truax Field, home of the Air National Guard.

Truax, adjacent to the Dane County Airport in the densely populated north-side of Madison, currently hosts the 115th Fighter Wing with a mission to train fighter jet pilots. Last spring, the Air Force selected Truax to receive a squadron of next generation F-35 fighter jets to replace the older F-16 jets. The new F-35 jets are estimated to be four times louder than the current F-16. The project Environmental Impact Statement estimates that

2,766 city residents will live with noise levels considered incompatible with residential development. The EIS makes no mention of the 60,000 people that live within 3 miles of Truax and the county airport who responded to the survey and are also impacted by noise from the current F-16 fighter jets.

Magdalena continues: "After the sound has stopped I have to ask everyone to repeat what they said because I didn't hear anything for about five minutes. Often I do not have the opportunity to ask people to repeat and it causes me to appear unprofessional and "out of it" when I don't know what people are talking about."

Seventy-one percent of the respondents called the noise severe, very severe, or unbearable. "When jets go over it is horrifying. The ground vibrates along with my whole body when I'm outside in my gardens! Heart rate increases until long after the roaring stops, which seems like forever!" reports Diane Farris.

"They drown out phone calls, conversation, or any other sound I am using in my home. They disrupt concentration and thinking processes. It is stressful physically and emotionally. If I am outside, I sometimes have to cover my ears from the volume and accompanying ear pain caused by the F-16s," explained another resident who prefers to remain anonymous.

"The louder F-35 jets will fly more often and make work and life more difficult for anyone who lives east or north of the Capitol," said Trish Haza who originated the survey with the Safe Skies Clean Water Wisconsin.

"In no way will the F-35s improve our lives," she continued. "Many people want to sell their homes or already have."

Parents report problems for their children and pets: "The F16 jets wake my toddler up from her nap, even with a white noise machine, closed windows, and good insulation (spray foam less than 5 years old). If we're outside when the F16 jets take off or land my toddler cries and needs to be picked up and comforted, it's scary for them," reports a mother who prefers to remain unnamed.

"I have worked for the past 40 years with individuals with autism and other sensory sensitivities," noted Sally Young.

"In recent years, we have seen an enormous increase in the number of children with these issues. Sudden, loud sound can trigger the whole host of physiological alarms that are hardwired in all of us as part of the fight/flight response. Individuals with autism can be seen as the "canary in the coal mine" warning us that we all experience this same physiological response pattern but in a more subdued way."

Fritz, who did not give his last name, wrote, "I am on the autism spectrum and the current noise of fighter jets have significantly decreased my quality of life and made functioning outside of the home harder. I have had to put off my plans of starting at MATC due in part to the intensity of fighter plane noises."

A third of the respondents said they would consider moving or selling their home

or business due to the existing aircraft noise if they could. One said, "I did sell my home on Union St. close to the airport because of this issue," wrote Jamie, who did not provide his last name.

"I love my home and my neighborhood. What good is a city if people don't want to live in it? I wish the jets would leave so that I don't have to!" another said.

Eighty percent "think the Dane County Airport and Truax Air National Guard base should pay for noise mitigation such as insulating or relocating homes and businesses."

Chadi Alhaj Kadoura, a Syrian American, said "everytime I hear the noise of a jet, and despite my admiration for the engineering, I feel so much pain, because it reminds me of every innocent soul killed in a bombing in my home country during the last ten years."

Many area residents have given up on complaining to the county airport. "I used to receive email responses/confirmation that my noise complaint had been received, but now I get no response when I file a complaint," wrote Susan Nelson, who described the noise as very severe.

"Once, I attended one of the semi-annual meetings the airport held about noise, but it was clearly just an FAA reporting exercise; the board expressed no concern about the community and were not at all concerned about the impact the community and were not at all concerned about the impact of the airport's activities on low-income communities."

Safe Skies notes this is the first time there has been a survey to help understand the impacts of fighter jet noise on Madison residents. The questionnaire was sent electronically to people who subscribe to the Safe Skies listserv or follow the group's Facebook page opposing the F-35 jets at Truax. The survey remains available for those wishing to add their comments, and a summary of the responses can be found at the Safe Skies web site:

safeskiescleanwaterwi.org

Safe Skies Clean Water Wisconsin is comprised of Madison area residents opposed to the basing of F-35 fighter jets at Truax Field and promoting the clean-up of existing water contamination caused by the Air National Guard. Recent group actions include filing a lawsuit against the Air Force for failure to comply with environmental impact study laws. The Air Force provides 44 different missions for the Air National Guard. Safe Skies has asked Governor Evers to change the mission of the Air National Guard 115th Fighter Wing from training fighter jet pilots to a mission which is less harmful to Madison residents.

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