

**Presentation by Retired Air Force Colonel Rosanne Greco**  
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My name is Roseanne Greco.

I'm a retired air force colonel. But I wasn't always one.

I was born a coal miner's daughter in Scranton, Pennsylvania where my father worked in the coal mines.

At the age of 12, I entered the convent. And after 6.5 years I left and then I joined the United States Air Force where I served on active duty for close to 30 years. I held top secret plus security clearances.

All of my career I was a strategic intelligence officer specializing in nuclear weapons uh that uh long range strategic nuclear weapons. I was also an arms control negotiator and I was on the delegation, the start delegation that strategic arms reduction talks uh in Geneva Switzerland with the Soviet Union. We did sign that treaty, unfortunately just abrogated, but that resulted in the reduction of thousands of nuclear weapons.

I retired from the Air Force and moved to South Burlington Vermont where I currently live. A few years after I moved here, I was elected to the city council. And then the next year I was elected the chair of the city council that brings me to the F-35.

When I was on the city council, the residents had already been informed that the Air Force was considering basing their newest fifth generation fighter bomber, the F-35 at the Roman Air National Guard, uh which is um in geographically located in South Burlington.

They are on the opposite side of the commercial section of the Burlington International Airport. We have one runway and the airport and the runway actually bisected South Burlington and two other small municipalities are on the other sides of the runway.

The residents had been told that the F-35 was going to be very, very loud and they were concerned and they came to the city council asking for our help with it. In all honesty, as a retired military officer, I was unconcerned about noise. I actually thought at the time that there was much ado about a small amount of noise. But I promised my constituents that that I would look into it.

In March of 2012, the Air Force published their environmental impact statement, the EIS that outlined the consequences of this decision.

In 15 different categories, the document ran about 6,000 pages. And I read it, although I think at the time, I may have been the only person that did read it.

But in nine of the 15 categories ranging from what you consider environmental impacts, such as pollution, they also assessed property values, dangers of a crash impacts on minorities. That's what the Air Force calls people of color. And low-income people and a host of other things.

And to me, after reading the [EIS] document, it was very clear that this weapon system did not belong in a residential neighborhood. If it belonged anywhere, it should be on an active-duty Air Force base that in most cases are in more remote areas, but it definitely didn't belong in in South Burlington, Vermont.

So that's when I started talking about this and thinking that if the decision makers and in reality, the decision makers are senior members in our political parties, our senators and upper echelons in the Air Force.

Once that information became known, the facts would stand on their own and pointed dramatically that this kind of weapon system didn't belong where there are thousands of people. I was naive to think that that they would go with the facts. They did not. And ultimately, the decision was made to base it in South Burlington, Vermont.

That sort of brings me to where we are today and perhaps what the Madison, Wisconsin people might experience.

The Air Force started deploying the F-35s to our area in September of 2019. And they came over a series of months, a few aircraft at a time.

**The Air Force told us in the EIS that the F-35 would be considerably louder than the aircraft it replaced, which is the F-16. And the Air Force was correct. Decibel levels are difficult perhaps to understand but what the Air Force told us the number of decibels increase that it would sound approximately four times louder than the F-16s. Once again, they were correct.**

People ask. What does it, what does it sound like there? How bad is it? And I'll tell you what the Air Force wrote in their EIS about noise, the definition of which is unwanted sound. And that is that noise is very subjective. So some people are irritated by noise, some are incredibly bothered by noise, some experience pain with the noise and some people enjoy the noise. However, that's an emotional reaction to something which is very different than the physical impacts of the noise vibrations on the human body.

And that's what I learned in the EIS that absolutely turned me around in my opinion on whether this ought to be based in South Burlington, Vermont. And there are other factors like safety, which was really high in reasons for opposing this.

**What research has shown, and the Air Force provided multiple links to studies, scientific studies and medical studies, is that noise at the decibel level of the F-35 cause physical harm to our internal organs.**

In almost all cases, you do not know, that it's like smoking. You can't feel your lungs congesting or the other ill effects of tobacco. Noise is very similar. You can't feel it, but it is happening.

**The other thing that they said is that noise is cumulative. While it is totally possible that one blast of noise could deafen a person either temporarily or permanently, that's not really what the Air Force was talking about. It was damage to our hearts, damage to our cholesterol and our stress hormones, and over time that damage builds up in the body.**

**The thing that I found really most disturbing is the harm it does to children, especially infants, because children's bodies are smaller, their internal organs cannot absorb the kinds of vibrations.**

And it's not that you have heart attacks and stuff right away like an adult male, but the effects on children are far more pronounced.

There are many studies done not just on the physical harm, meaning primarily to our hearts, but also what they called cognitive impairment.

**There were a number of studies that show that children who live around noisy airports suffered from cognitive impairment, meaning they lost their ability to learn. Some of the studies showed that some children lost their ability to learn for the rest of their lives.**

Other studies show that once the children moved out of the noisy area, they recovered the ability, but cognitive impairment was definitely something that the Air Force pointed to in the research.

So that's some of the harm that the noise produces without anybody knowing about it because it's going on internally and with their children, with their brains. The issue with these physical and mental consequences are that they don't show up instantaneously. They take time to manifest in the body.

And so if you say to me: How is South Burlington doing? How's the Burlington area doing? Do you see any of these things? Not yet? Well, we haven't looked for them, so we haven't gone and done any studies. But the aircraft have been here just a handful of years and they break down so frequently, they don't fly as much as the F-16, which was a very reliable air aircraft. So we have not found any of those impacts yet, but then we haven't looked either. Because of the cumulative effect, it may be too soon.

**Once again, I keep using the analogy of smoking, it takes a while for you to destroy your body by smoking, and it takes a while for noise vibrations to destroy your body as well.**

I mentioned the F-16, and I think it's important to talk about the differences between the two aircraft because there are lots of differences. The F-35 is fifth generation. It's got all kinds of bells and whistles. It is an incredibly sophisticated aircraft. Much more dangerous than the F-

16, both in the ordinance it can deliver to the enemy, but also to the danger of the people on the ground where it is based.

It is far less reliable than the F-16. I mean, for decades. There have been reports coming out of the GAO office and other government bodies that review the performance of weapon systems. That it [F-35] is really underperforming.

It's way behind schedule, it has millions of lines of software code that I don't think even to this day have been fully integrated.

One of the things we learned about the F-35 that is dramatically different than the F-16, and by the way, let me just throw this in one talk about the F-16. The F-16s came to South Burlington back in the mid-eighties.

They are definitely a proven technology, incredibly safe aircraft from the standpoint of incredibly reliable, in fact, so much so that the Air Force made a decision a few years ago to extend the life of the F-16 for decades into the future because it does the job, it does it well. It's a reliable source of firepower. There were fly offs. I know that some of the results were tried to be kept under wraps between the F-35 and the F-16 and I believe the F-16 won most of those fly offs. So that just goes to show you what a difference there are between the two aircrafts, one of the major differences.

**Well, the two major differences from a standpoint of human beings on the ground where aircraft are stationed is the stealth coating. The F-35 has a stealth capability that comes with a lot of classifications and stuff that cannot be disclosed. But what is certain is that this is a chemical coating that is very toxic. I don't have time to go into the details, but there have been incidents of people dying after breathing in the particulates from burning these toxic chemicals. There's also really a concern about these chemicals getting into our drinking water and our soil as the plane is washed and then the chemicals re-applied.**

So there's a concern from the day to day presence of the aircraft in your location. The other really serious one is nuclear weapons and nuclear war. My job is that the Air force decided that the F-35 was going to be a nuclear weapons delivery vehicle, meaning it was going to carry nuclear weapons and they are designing and I believe it's completed, the gravity bomb unique to the F-35. And I can go into all kinds of details on this. You probably don't, if you want to sleep tonight, you probably don't want to hear them, but the F-35 has been designed to carry nuclear weapons.

It is not doing that yet. But and you won't know when it happens because that will be classified information.

Lots of things are concerning about that from many angles the first. And this comes from my experience as um in nuclear targeting is that adversaries generally target the delivery vehicles of nuclear weapons and other weapons for that matter rather than the weapons themselves.

**All aircraft have to take off from an airfield. These are soft targets, meaning they're very easy to take out, then the aircraft can't take off and can't deliver its weapons. So from that standpoint, any base, any F-35 base, is going to be a high priority target, especially now with carrying nuclear weapons.**

The other concerning thing about this is how the weapons are released. The F-35 is the only nuclear weapons delivery vehicle that only needs one person to make a decision or have the capability to launch the weapon or drop the weapon. Every other weapon system, nuclear weapons system, requires at least two people to actually conduct the launch. Which is very concerning the F-35 is a single seater. You can't even squeeze somebody else in there. The F-16 is a dual seater. So you now have a brand new nuclear weapons delivery vehicle with one human being on board.

So I would think that would be very concerning.

So let's go on with the question that I guess people ask and then almost automatically say, well, the answer is there is no answer and that is:

**Can you get rid of the F-35 if it's at your base, or any weapon system, any military weapon system for that matter? The answer is yes. It's not only theoretically possible, it has been demonstrated multiple times. And how is that done? It's done by political leaders. Our military is run by civilians, good. And the ultimate civilian control over the military and their weapon system is Congress. When a senator asks something of the military in my 30 years of experience, they always get what they ask for.**

I can tell you the ways they do that, but this would go on too long. So, if a senator, does not want a weapon system or wants a replacement for the weapons system, or a different mission for their state, all they need to do is ask the military to do it. They don't direct them, they ask them that's taken as a directive and it happens.

A few years ago, I did some online research about where this has happened. And at the time I found about four US states where the governing body, the senator of that state, asked the Air Force to replace, in almost all cases, it was a fighter aircraft because it wasn't compatible with their cities and towns, and the Air Force complied and they got a different aircraft. Sometimes they got another fighter, sometimes they got a cargo aircraft, sometimes they got a different mission, cybersecurity, and one place, I think it was New Mexico, got a training mission. So, it has definitely happened and it can happen again, but you need a senator, one of your senators to request that.

So I think that may cover the broad issue of the F-35. One thing that there were so many things.