



City of Winooski

Vermont's Opportunity City

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Winooski Vermont 05404
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Date: 9/15/2024

From: Mayor Kristine Lott

To: Senator Bernie Sanders, Senator Peter Welch, & Representative Becca Balint

Subject: Resolution Requesting Vermont's Congressional Delegation request the Secretary of the United States Air Force replace the current F-35 mission with one that causes no harmful noise to the people living around the airport, and one that is fully compatible with residential neighborhoods.

Dear Senators and Representative:

On September 3, 2024, the Winooski City Council unanimously passed a [resolution](#) requesting our delegation to request the Secretary of the United States Air Force replace the current F-35 mission with one that causes no harmful noise to the people living around the airport, and one that is fully compatible with residential neighborhoods. This resolution was drafted by community members and shared with the local governments of all towns with properties impacted by the 65-decibel noise level in the Burlington Airport's Noise Exposure Map to show our residents' shared concern and urge your action.

Since 2013, the City of Winooski, its residents and your constituents, have many times expressed opposition to the F-35 basing at the Burlington International Airport. This resolution is one of many that have been adopted urging Vermont's State and Federal leadership not to subject our densely populated community to unhealthy noise exposure. A history of multiple referendum votes and resolutions can be found on our website: <https://www.winooskivt.gov/1392/Learn-About-Airport-Sound-Mitigation>.

This new resolution contains numerous citations from the Federal Government and Airforce's own documents substantiating that the sustained noise exposure of the F-35 basing is harmful to residents, in particular children, and that minority and low-income people in the adjacent Vermont communities, in particular Winooski, would be disproportionately impacted by the F-35 noise. Thus, perpetuating systemic and environmental racism and classism. 43% of the ~8,000 residents of Winooski live within the noise impact zone and are exposed to dangerous levels of noise over and over again.

This resolution requests that you contact the Secretary of the United States Air Force requesting that the Air Force replace the current F-35 mission with a mission that causes no harmful noise to the people living around the airport, no substantively adverse economic impact to the airport or community, and a mission that is fully compatible with residential neighborhoods.

Sincerely,

Mayor Kristine Lott

Cc: Governor Phil Scott



Resolution Relating to

Requesting Vermont's Congressional Delegation request the Secretary of the United States Air Force replace the current F-35 mission with one that causes no harmful noise to the people living around the airport, and one that is fully compatible with residential neighborhoods.

Whereas, the Air Force reported that over 6,663 people in 2,963 households in the communities of Winooski, South Burlington, Williston, Burlington, and Colchester live in areas subjected to a day-night level average (DNL) of 65 decibels (dB) produced by the F-35A. {United States Air Force F-35A Operational Basing Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) 2013, page BR4-30};

Whereas, the U.S. federal government has determined that "Areas exposed to DNL above 65 dB are generally not considered suitable for residential use." {EIS page C-12};

Whereas, the Air Force found that minority and low-income people in these Vermont communities, in particular Winooski, would be disproportionately impacted by the F-35 noise {EIS, page BR4-83}, perpetuating systemic and environmental racism and classism;

Whereas, the Air Force found that there were 4,692 children under the age of 18 living in the cities of South Burlington and Winooski. {EIS, page BR4-82};

Whereas, the World Health Organization cited overwhelming evidence from large-scale studies that exposure to environmental noise had adverse effects on the health of the population. {World Health Organization (WHO) report "Burden of disease from environmental noise" 2011, pages xvii and 105};

Whereas, the federal government wrote, "A growing body of scientific knowledge demonstrates that children may suffer disproportionately from environmental health risks and safety risks. These risks arise because children's neurological, immunological, digestive, and other bodily systems are still developing ..." {Executive Order 13045: Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks. April 2003};

Whereas, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency wrote, "children may suffer disproportionately from environmental health risks and safety risks. Because their smaller ear canals magnify the sounds entering the ear canals, children's hearing may be particularly sensitive. For example, a 20-decibel difference can exist between adult and infant ears." {U.S. Environmental Protection Agency letter commenting on the Draft EIS for the F-35 Beddown at Eglin AFB, Florida. November 2010};

Whereas, the World Health Organization found evidence linking noise and cognitive impairment in children, writing "Exposure during critical periods of learning at school could potentially impair development and have a lifelong effect on educational attainment." And, "It would be realistic to assume that the impaired cognitive functions will carry over to the years after the schooling period." {WHO report "Burden of disease from environmental noise" pages 45, 52}; and

Whereas, the World Health Organization found that aircraft noise is likely to have a greater effect on children's reading than road traffic noise. {WHO report "Burden of disease from environmental noise" page 51};

Whereas, environmental and developmental experts found that children's health and cognitive development are negatively affected by chronic loud noise. Specifically, children's blood pressure and stress hormones increase, and their reading abilities, cognitive development, physiological indicators, and motivational tasks are adversely affected by exposure to noise. And that "...significant reading delays are found for children living near airports, regardless of income." {The Effects of the Physical Environment on Children's Development" Cornell University 2006};

Whereas, the Federal Aviation Administration advised regarding the noise of the F-35 in Burlington that "...noise impacts that cannot be mitigated could occur. Other unavoidable adverse impacts may be identified which cannot be mitigated to an acceptable level." {EIS, page 2-45};

Whereas, the City of South Burlington lost 200 affordable homes because of the noise of the F-16. {South Burlington Councilors Seek 'Seat at Table' on Airport Noise" Morgan Tre, VTDigger March 28, 2017};

Whereas, the Airport Noise Compatibility Planning report stated, "Land acquisition and relocation is the only alternative that would eliminate the residential incompatibility." {Burlington International Airport Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 150 Report, page 29};

Whereas, the Airport Noise Compatibility Planning report further stated, "Also, soundproofing does not address the problem of noise levels outside the residence, meaning that yard and outside leisure activities, including those of children playing, would be impacted by unacceptably high levels of noise. Therefore, soundproofing is considered the least desirable alternative for addressing sound in residential buildings." {Burlington International Airport 14 CFR Part 150 Report, page 46};

Whereas, Richard Doucette, the Federal Aviation Administration's New England Environmental Program manager, stated "The best way to mitigate noise, at high noise levels, is to buy homes and remove them... We have encouraged the airport to buy every home they can...That's the trouble with sound mitigation. Some people think it's a panacea; it is not. The sound insulation does not work as soon as you open your windows." {Burlington Free Press, February, 2017};

Whereas, the City of Winooski continues to pursue soundproofing, and the Director of the Burlington International Airport estimates that the airport will need \$5.5 million from the FAA every year for the next 46 years to soundproof all of the eligible homes. {"Sound Plan?" Cominey Lamdin, Seven Days, October 11-18, 2023};

Whereas, the City of Burlington, with the support of the Vermont Air National Guard, has used these funds to support noise mitigation efforts through a Noise Compatibility Program (NCP) and Implementation Plan approved by the FAA, whereby the City has been actively installing sound insulation in impacted residential properties, previously installed active noise monitors in surrounding communities, and constructed a Positive Ventilation and Sound Insulation project at the Chamberlin School in South Burlington;

Whereas, the Vermont Air National Guard has fully participated in the City of Burlington's noise mitigation efforts, including by, but not limited to, supporting the Technical Advisory Committee for the NCP and Implementation Plan, providing vital data for the development of a Noise Exposure Map, and continuously advocating through our Congressional Delegation and FAA for additional federal funds dedicated to noise mitigation;

Whereas, the Air Force found that over 27 times more people live in the 65 dB DNL noise area in the vicinity of the Burlington Air National Guard (ANG) station than live in the 65 dB DNL noise area in the vicinity of another Air Guard base that was being considered to base the F-35—McEntire Air National Guard

station in South Carolina. Specifically, 6,663 people and 2,963 households are in the Burlington Airport F-35 noise area compared with 245 people and 91 households in the McEntire F-35 noise area (EIS, page BR4-30);

Whereas, Air Combat Command leadership stated "...there is no operational benefit of Burlington ANG Base over McEntire ANG base, and that Burlington scored higher than McEntire overall due to incorrect scoring (Burlington scored higher than it should have been and McEntire scored lower than it should have ...)" {Air Force F-35 Basing Administrative Record #57838};

Whereas, Air Force basing experts wrote: "The environmentally preferred alternative for Air National Guard (ANG) basing locations is McEntire...This ANG represents the greatest decrease in the amount of acres, population, households, and receptors exposed to noise levels 65 dB DNL..." {Draft Review Document on the Environmentally Preferred Alternative, Air Force Administrative Record #57909};

Whereas, Air Force basing experts recommended selecting McEntire Air National Guard Base in South Carolina over Burlington Air National Guard base "Due to the overwhelming evidence provided by the EIS documentation." {Air Force F-35 Basing Administrative Record #57838}; and

Whereas, claims that if F-35s were not based at the Vermont Air National Guard Station, the Vermont Air Guard would lose a flying mission, were refuted by the Secretary of the Air Force and by Federal District Judge Geoffrey Crawford:

A. The Air Force wrote, "Therefore, if there is no F-35A operational beddown at Burlington AGS, the current mission would continue." {EIS, page PA-47};

B. Air Force basing officials wrote, "Had the Air Force not decided to base the F-35A at Burlington, the present F-16s could well have been replaced with other F-16s. But, had the F-35A not been selected to replace the F-16s, there could have been 'any number' of reasonable alternatives available to the Air Force on how to configure Burlington." {Air Force F-35 Basing Administrative Record #64410, and Federal court records-Civil Action No 5:14-cv-132, Defendant's Memorandum in Opposition to Plaintiffs' Motion, March 7, 2016, pages 59-60};

C. The Secretary of the Air Force testified as part of a lawsuit that "...it expected Burlington to continue to fly military aircraft if it was not selected to host the F-35A." {Federal court records-Civil Action No 5:14-cv-132, Defendant's Memorandum in Opposition to Plaintiffs' Motion, March 7, 2016, pages 59-60};

D. Continuity for a flying mission for the Vermont Air Guard was reinforced by U.S. Federal District Court Judge Geoffrey Crawford. He stated in his ruling in a lawsuit filed against the Secretary of the Air Force that "...there is no reason to believe that the base will close and the squadron disbanded even if the F-35 aircraft are based elsewhere ... there is no evidence of a plan to close the base or to use it for purposes other than flying aircraft." {Federal court records-Civil Action No 5:14-cv-132, Decision on Cross-Motions for Summary Judgement, August 10, 2016, page 27-28};

E. U.S. Federal District Court Judge Geoffrey Crawford further stated in his ruling that "...the scheduled retirement of the F-16 aircraft currently stationed at Burlington does not inevitably lead to 'empty hangars at Burlington'. Burlington's history proves that. Through the years, particular aircraft have come and gone, but the military mission has remained. (See AR 33541 recounting eight different airframes flown by the VTANG over its 70-year history.)" {Federal court records-Civil Action No 5:14-cv-132, Defendant's Reply Memorandum, May 13, 2016, pages 21-22};

Whereas, there are other flying missions for the Vermont Air National Guard that will not cause harm to the people in the local area. Some include mobility aircraft. For example:

A. The Air Force reports that demand for mobility aircraft (transports, cargo, and refueling aircraft) is increasing and expressed the need for mobility aircraft by stating, "The demand for mobility aircraft, which includes transport aircraft, is trending upwards. Transports deliver critical equipment and supplies, as well as expertise to forces stateside and overseas. Transports play powerful humanitarian and diplomatic roles, especially during times of natural disasters. Air Force transports help others and enhance U.S. global reputation and build trust. Transport pilot skills are ideally and best suited to fly big body commercial airliners." {Air Mobility: A Clear Need for Future Environments" Col Chris Karns, Director for Public Affairs Air Mobility Command, Force Times, January 29, 2018};

B. Air Force advisors say they need more transport missions, "Transport aircraft will likely be in high demand supporting inter-and-intra theater mobility and other missions..." {Timothy Walton, senior fellow at the Hudson Institute April 3, 2023};

C. The Air Force has a growing need for Aeromedical Evacuation (medevac) missions, stating that certain conflicts "will increase the need for flying ambulances to save the lives of their fellow service members" and that "medevac units will need to fly longer, triage more injuries and illnesses in midair, and work more closely with their international partners than ever before." {Getting Patients to Safety" Rachel S. Cohen, Air Force Times, September 2023};

D. In 2012, the Burlington Air Guard was on the list of bases being considered to base the KC-46A tanker. {Air Force F-35 Basing Administrative Record #56929};

Whereas, twenty-six state Air Guard units fly transport/airlift missions, and 19 units fly the C-130 transport aircraft. {2023 Wikipedia using data from 103 Air Force and Air National Guard websites};

Whereas, other Air Guard units have switched military missions; for example:

A. The Great Falls Air Guard Base in Montana changed from an F-15 fighter aircraft to a C-130 transport aircraft {120th Airlift Wing Prepares to Deploy" Jenn Rowell, Air Force Times, October 17, 2016};

B. An Air Guard Base in New Mexico changed from an F-16 fighter unit to a special operations training unit in 2013 {150th Special Operations Wing official website, 150sow.ang.af.mil};

C. An Air National Guard Base in Michigan changed from the C-21 aircraft to flying drone missions in 2013 {Drone Missions to Operate from Battle Creek Air National Guard Base" Kalamazoo News, 3-14-2013};

D. A North Dakota Air National Guard Base changed from C-21A aircraft to an intelligence mission in 2013 {Last Aircraft Departs as N.D. Air National Guard Ends Flying Mission, Transitions to Intelligence Mission" Courtney Story, 8-28-2013};

E. An Air Guard Base in Ohio changed from a C-130 aircraft to a cyberspace mission in 2023 {"179th Airlift Wing Becomes First Cyberspace Wing in the Air National Guard" Air National Guard website, ang.af.mil}; and

Whereas, Lt Gen Clarke, former head of the Air National Guard, said, "dual-mission equipment is gold for the ANG. A perfect example is its fleet of C-130 cargo planes. It can do anything from tactical airdrops to fighting fires at home... So we are trained to do the federal mission, but we try to leverage all of that to do the state mission." {"Sequester sharpens Guard's challenge to meet dual missions" Air Force Times, August 25, 2014}; and

Whereas, a military transport mission would allow the Vermont Air Guard to support Vermont state needs, thus fulfilling dual roles—civilian and military missions—as other state Air Guard units do. {"Sequester sharpens Guard's challenge to meet dual missions" Air Force Times, August 25, 2014}; and

Whereas, a military transport mission would retain the Vermont Air Guard fire-fighting services to the Burlington airport. {Air Force Fire Emergency Service "Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting Response Guide," March 2018}; and

Whereas, a transport mission would increase the number of Air Guard jobs as transport aircraft require more people to accomplish their missions. For example, switching from the F-35 to a transport would triple the number of onboard crew. A Medevac mission requires at least five times more crew than the F-35. {Air Force Accelerates Changes to Save Lives: How Aeromedical Evacuation Mission Advances in 20 Years"- Shireen Bedi, Air Force General Public Affairs, December 21, 2021}; and

Whereas, military transport aircraft would not result in any 65 dB DNL noise zones. {"Military Aviation and the Environment: Historical Trends and Comparison to Civil Aviation" Journal of Aircraft, March 2005; "Noise Comparisons" Purdue University}; and

Whereas, housing lost because of military fighter aircraft noise, which has exacerbated the region's acute housing crisis, could be rebuilt, and if so, would add much-needed affordable housing. {FAA Advisory Circular, "Land Acquisition and Relocation Assistance for Airport Improvement Program Assisted Projects," 7-10-2017}; and

Whereas, adults and children suffering from fighter-bomber noise, and schools and businesses disrupted by fighter-bomber noise, would find relief from an alternative mission that results in no 65 dB DNL zone; and

Whereas, since it was originally recognized in 1946, the Vermont Air National Guard has flown more than eight different missions and Vermonters have consistently appreciated and been grateful for their dedication to the defense of our nation and local communities, the community stewardship exhibited by hundreds of service members and their families, and the essential contributions they have made to the capital infrastructure and operations of the airport; and

Whereas, Vermonters living in the areas around Burlington have also consistently opposed the basing of the F-35. For example:

A. During the first EIS comment period in 2012, of the 1,126 oral and written comments received, 822 (73%) were in opposition to the F-35 basing. {EIS, BR4-15/16}

B. During the second EIS comment period in 2013, of the 809 letters, handwritten notes, and emails received, 644 (80%) were in opposition to the F-35 basing. {EIS Table BR2.5-1}

C. In March 2018, a Burlington city-wide 6,482-5,237 vote called for the cancelation of the F-35 basing decision. This vote was followed by a Burlington City Council 9-3 vote which requested the F-35 be re-based. {Seven Days and Burlington Free Press, March 2018}

D. In May 2012 and July 2013, the Winooski City Council passed two Resolutions against the basing of the F-35. {Burlington Free Press, May 2012 and July 2013}

E. In April 2015, a Winooski city-wide 572-475 vote called for the City to join the federal lawsuit against the Secretary of the Air Force which opposed the basing of the F-35. {VTDigger and Seven Days, April 2015}

F. In March 2021, Winooski voters overwhelmingly voted 723-354 to approve an advisory resolution demanding to halt the F-35 flights. {VTDigger, Burlington Free Press, and Seven Days, March 2021}; and

Whereas, Congressional Delegations have the authority and ability to request the Air Force replace existing missions and aircraft with new missions and aircraft; and

Whereas, some Congressional Delegations have successfully exercised this authority, for example:

A. The Minnesota state's Congressional Delegation was involved in successful efforts to get the C-130 transport mission. {Minnesota Air Guard will get Super Hercules transport planes" John Corman 9-16-2023}

B. Efforts by Ohio's Congressional Delegation succeeded in getting the Air Force to transition to a new cyber mission. {"Ohio's Lawmakers Applaud Air Force Decision to Name Mansfield-Lahm as the Preferred Location for New Cyber Warfare Wing" Press Release from Congressman Balderson. 8-26-2021}

C. Gov. Sisolak and Nevada's entire congressional delegation were successful in getting the Air Force to assign them a new regional aeromedical evacuation squadron to respond to emergencies and disasters. {"Nevada Touts Reno for New Squadron" Air Force Times, 1-20-2020}

D. Alaskan Senator Mark Begich was successful in his request to the Air Force to abandon its plans to move F-16s from Eielson AFB to Joint Base Elmendorf. {"F-16 transfer debate highlights flaws in Senate's decision-making" Robert F. Dorr, Air Force Times, July 9, 2012 page 5}; and

Whereas, the Vermont Congressional Delegation is aware of the facts of the F-35 basing process, the harms being done to thousands of Vermonters from the presence of the F-35, and their authority to request and urge the United States Air Force to replace the F-35 mission with a mission that is compatible with residential neighborhoods;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Winooski City Council requests the Vermont Congressional Delegation contact the Secretary of the United States Air Force requesting that the Air Force replace the current F-35 mission with a mission that causes no harmful noise to the people living around the airport, no substantively adverse economic impact to the airport or community, and a mission that is fully compatible with residential neighborhoods; and

Be it further resolved that this resolution be delivered to the Vermont Congressional Delegation and to the City Councils of Burlington and South Burlington and the Selectboards of Colchester and Williston by the Clerk/Treasurer's Office within five working days of the adoption of the resolution.

Affirmative Vote:



Mayor



Councilor



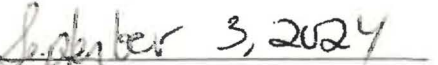
Councilor




Councilor

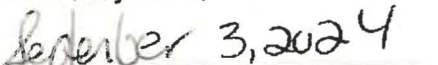


Councilor



Adopted

Rejected


Attest (City Clerk)


Approved Date