



Mission Sustainability- Related Articles

30 July 2010

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CONTENTS

Page

ALASKA

Four killed in Air Force plane crash in Alaska..... 1
Fatal C-17 crash also disrupts railroad service..... 3

ARIZONA

Statement By Senator McCain Regarding The Announcement By The
Department of Air Force 6
Air Force taps Luke AFB as preferred training base for F-35..... 8

FLORIDA

That's all folks: Air Force limits F-35s to 59..... 10
Officials recommend Eglin as preferred alternative F-35 base..... 11
59 F-35s coming to Eglin: First two Joint Strike Fighters expected in
November..... 13
Jacksonville Unlikely To Get New Air Force Fighters..... 14

IDAHO

F-35's Not Coming to Idaho -- For Now 15

UTAH

Hill Air Force Base closer will get F-35s 17

VERMONT

Air Force prefers Burlington for F-35 fighter jet 19
Airport Neighbors Concerned About F-35 Noise..... 21

WASHINGTON

Navy To Hold Two Meetings On Radar..... 22

OVERSEAS-AUSTRALIA

Williamtown RAAF noise rethink: council..... 23

ALASKA



Four killed in Air Force plane crash in Alaska

ANCHORAGE | Thu Jul 29, 2010 8:50pm EDT

Alaska (Reuters) - All four crew members were killed in a U.S. Air Force cargo plane that crashed in flames while practicing for an aviation show at Elmendorf Air Force Base, the Air Force said Thursday.

The C-17 Globemaster went down Wednesday evening in a wooded area near airfield in Anchorage shortly after taking off, the military said.

The accident is believed to be the first crash of a C-17, manufactured by Boeing, since the massive jet joined the Air Force fleet in 1995 as its newest cargo plane.

"We are confirming four dead," said Lieutenant-Colonel Karen Platt, an Air Force spokeswoman.

A fireball and plume of smoke over the area were visible to nearby residents shortly after the crash. Some eyewitnesses said the plane appeared to be making a strange turn while flying low over the area just before it crashed.

Three of the dead were members of the Alaska Air National Guard, and the fourth was on active duty at Elmendorf, the base said in a statement.

The plane was assigned to the 3rd Wing at Elmendorf, a unit consisting of 6,000 Air Force personnel who fly fighter jets and other military aircraft.

The base said a board of officers would investigate the crash. The names of the dead were being withheld pending notification of next of kin, base spokesman Bob Hall said.

Lieutenant General Dana Atkins told a news conference on Wednesday the plane was "doing a practice demonstration profile" it was to perform at the annual Arctic Thunder air show this weekend when it crashed.

In light of the accident, Atkins said, the military was considering whether to go on with the aviation show, which also features precision-flying demonstrations by the Air Force's Blue Angels and the Canadian Forces Snowbirds.

The crash occurred during damp, cloudy weather.

Elmendorf's worst air crash was in September 1995 when several geese were sucked into the engine of an AWACS plane just after takeoff. That plane was on a training mission as well. All 24 crew members were killed.

The first C-17 squadron went into operation in 1995. The aircraft is 174 feet long, has a wingspan of nearly 170 feet and can carry up to 170,900 pounds (77,500 kg), according to the Air Force.

Aviation analyst Richard Aboulafia of the Teal Group said Boeing has built about 200 of the planes, most of which went to the Air Force.

He said the Elmendorf accident was the only crash he knew of involving the plane since it went into service. "It's got a very good reputation," Aboulafia said.

(Editing by Greg McCune and Mohammad Zargham)

Fatal C-17 crash also disrupts railroad service

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The Boeing C-17 cargo plane that crashed and burned Wednesday evening on Elmendorf Air Force Base damaged the Alaska Railroad tracks running through the crash site, according to the railroad.



C-17 Globemaster cargo plane

The U.S. Air Force's C-17 cargo plane can carry 85 tons of tanks, helicopters, cargo and troops and land on relatively short runways.

- **Max. speed:** 515 mph
- **Range without refueling:** 3,225 mi.
- **Engines:** Four jets similar in power to those on Boeing 757
- **Runway required:** As little as 3,000 ft.



Can carry variety of loads

- 102 paratroopers and equipment
- 3 Apache helicopter gunships plus 50 troops and cargo
- 1 mobile 155-mm howitzer and its ammunition vehicle, 2 Humvees,
- 2.5-ton truck and 32 troops



Length: 159 ft. Wingspan: 169.8 ft.

© 2001 KRT Source: Boeing, U.S. Military Loads Cargo Compartment Versatility, Jane's All the World's Aircraft. Graphic: The State (Columbia, S.C.)

The railroad, which goes through the base on the way north to Wasilla and beyond, has suspended freight traffic and is rerouting passengers by motor coach, said Stephanie Wheeler, Alaska Railroad spokeswoman.

Did the plane hit the tracks? "We know there's debris on both sides of the track and on the track. It could have," Wheeler said. "We haven't been able to get out there and really make that determination."

The crash killed all four crew members and appears to be the first fatality involving a C-17, according to the Alaska Air National Guard. The crew was practicing for this weekend's air show on Elmendorf.

The railroad needs four to six hours to repair the tracks and is coordinating with the military to get access to the area, Wheeler said.

The wreckage damaged both the main line and a parallel siding, the railroad said. Passengers are being rerouted by a motor coach between Birchwood and the historic railroad depot at Ship Creek. The railroad can't say when service will resume.

Passengers can call 265-2494 or 1-800-544-

0552 for more information on train schedules. Trains traveling between Anchorage, Whittier, Portage, Grandview and Seward are not affected.

Three of the crew were members of the Alaska Air National Guard and the other was active-duty Air Force from Elmendorf, the Air Force reported this morning. Their names have not yet been released.

The military is "working through the family notification process," Col. Jack McMullen, commander of Elmendorf's 3rd Wing, said at a news briefing early this morning outside Elmendorf's Boniface gate.

At this morning's briefing, McMullen offered few new details about what happened other than to say the crash occurred about a minute after takeoff as the crew practiced for the hugely popular air show.

"It happened very quickly after takeoff is what I do know," McMullen said. The C-17 had flown earlier Wednesday with a different crew, he said.

The C-17 is commonly featured in air shows, particularly highlighting the aircraft's ability to take off and land in short distances.

The huge, four-engine jet, known as the most advanced cargo aircraft in the world, crashed in what witnesses described as a huge ball of flame.

Emergency crews worked all night to secure the crash site and preserve the evidence for the Air Force investigation, McMullen said. Members of a safety team that will do the investigation should arrive on base within 24 hours, he said.

Boeing said it would help if needed.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends of the four crew members who were lost aboard the Pacific Air Forces C-17 that crashed at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, last night," Boeing said in a written statement today. "Boeing stands ready to provide technical assistance to the U.S. Air Force with the investigation into this tragedy."

Brig. Gen. Chuck Foster, commander of the Air National Guard's 176th Wing, said a Guard squadron and active-duty squadron jointly operate C-17s. Officials said the investigation will determine who was flying the jet.

"One of our deep priorities right now, not only caring for the families of those we lost, but also those squadron mates," Foster said. "Of course, we tell them what we know when we know it and help them work through the grieving process."

The military offers help from counselors and chaplains to families and squadrons, which also take care of their own, Foster said.

"The squadrons themselves kind of surround each other and they care for one another," he said.

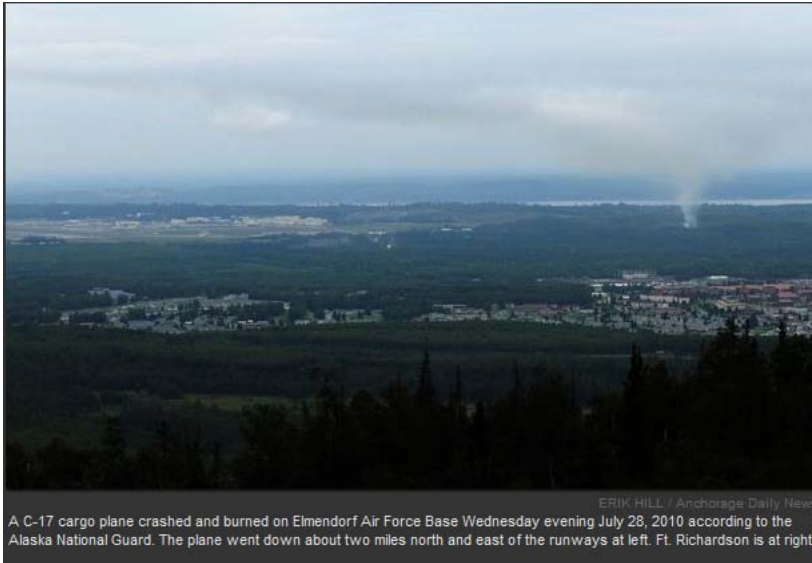
"Absolutely. The squadrons, the wing, the base is a huge family. So we're going to lean on each other to work ourselves through that," McMullen said.

Air Force Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins, the highest-ranking military official in Alaska, told reporters Wednesday night that the crew was practicing for the Elmendorf air show planned for this weekend when it crashed at 6:14 p.m.

Initial reports indicated the plane had gone down in a wooded area about two miles northeast of the runway.

A plume of black smoke rising from the base was visible from across the city.

Military acts have been gathering on base this week to prepare for the air show.



ERIK HILL / Anchorage Daily News
A C-17 cargo plane crashed and burned on Elmendorf Air Force Base Wednesday evening July 28, 2010 according to the Alaska National Guard. The plane went down about two miles north and east of the runways at left. Ft. Richardson is at right.

The Boeing C-17 is a large military transport aircraft. It can "carry large equipment, supplies and troops directly to small airfields in harsh terrain anywhere in the world day or night," according to a description on Boeing's Web site of the C-17 Globemaster III. "The massive, sturdy, long-haul aircraft tackles distance,

destination and heavy, oversized payloads in unpredictable conditions."

The C-17 holds more than 20 world-class airlift records, including one in which one of the aircraft took off and landed in less than 1,400 feet carrying a payload of 44,000 pounds, according to TheAviationZone.com.

The worst crash at Elmendorf happened in September 1995 when an AWACS jet hit a flock of geese. Twenty-four airmen were killed when the radar plane went down. It was the first ever crash for an AWACS jet.

Some 218 C-17s are in service around the world, including 199 used by the U.S. Air Force and National Guard, according to Boeing.

Foster said he knew of no fatal C-17 crashes.

One crash-landed on its belly in Afghanistan in January 2009, but it was due to pilot error, according to a military investigation. The crew failed to lower the landing gear and turned off an alert system, according to the Air Force Times. The repair bill for the \$200 million plane was \$19 million, the story said.

Wednesday evening's crash is the second this summer near downtown Anchorage. A light plane went down in June after taking off from Merrill Field in June, killing one young child and injuring four other people.

ARIZONA



STATEMENT BY SENATOR McCAIN REGARDING THE ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AIR FORCE

**Applauds the Air Force for Stationing the F-35 Lightning II at Luke Air Force Base
July 29, 2010**

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator John McCain (R-AZ) today made the following statement regarding the Department of Air Force selection of Luke Air Force Base as their preferred base for stationing of the F-35 Lightning II (Joint Strike Fighter) and the decision not to select the 162nd Fighter Wing at Tucson International Airport (IAP):

“I am pleased with the selection by the Department of the Air Force of Luke Air Force Base (AFB) to be the preferred alternative for the home of pilot training of three F-35 Lightning II (Joint Strike Fighter) squadrons. While I had hoped to welcome the F-35 Lightning II (Joint Strike Fighter) to both Luke AFB and Tucson International Air Port (IAP), I understand the decision by the Department of the Air Force to defer consideration of assigning the F-35 to the 162nd Fighter Wing at Tucson IAP until a future time given the base’s critical current mission of training foreign pilots in the F-16.

“The Air Force has recognized that the unparalleled capabilities inherent to Arizona – from the Barry M. Goldwater Range, to great flying weather, and strong support from state and local governments and communities, serve to provide the best environment and the finest quality of life for our military personnel training in the Air Force’s next generation fighter. In return, Luke AFB offers the West Valley and the State of Arizona a strong economic engine contributing more than 8,000 jobs and \$2.17 billion annually to the state’s economy.

“This decision today recognizes the extensive support and proactive land management by local city, county and state governments over the past years to sustain military operations at Luke AFB. I am proud of the cooperation we have fostered in Arizona to bring this outstanding opportunity to the West Valley and will continue efforts in the future to maintain this long-term, mutually beneficial relationship. I would also like to

congratulate and thank the Fighter County Partnership and the West Valley Partners for their continued support of Luke AFB.

“While this is an important day for the future of Luke AFB, we are not finished. I will continue to work on behalf of all citizens in Arizona to ensure the Air Force conducts a fair, transparent and comprehensive environmental impact analysis over the next 12 months to address legitimate concerns with the operation of this aircraft. This analysis is absolutely critical for the support of the Air Force at Luke AFB over the long-term.

“We also cannot overlook that the Tucson community has received great news over the past six months with decisions by the nations of Singapore and Holland to move their F-16 pilot training to Tucson. Given the critical nature of support for the foreign military sales program and training support for our allies, I am confident that the F-35 will be stationed at Tucson IAP at some point in the future. Until then, training of F-16 foreign pilots remains a robust and vital mission for many years to come, and Tucson IAP will continue as the base of choice for our foreign allies who purchase F-16 aircraft, due to the unparalleled range capabilities and the strong support of the Tucson community.

“In the meantime, I will continue to work with the Department of the Air Force, the Air National Guard, and representatives of the community as well as the Tucson Airport Authority to ensure we position the base for future favorable consideration.”

July 29, 2010,

Air Force taps Luke AFB as preferred training base for F-35

Phoenix Business Journal - by Patrick O'Grady

The U.S. Air Force has selected Luke Air Force Base as the preferred secondary training location for the new F-35.

It is a move that could prolong the base's lifespan as well as bring jobs and other economic benefits to the region.

Glendale officials praised the Air Force's decision to make the West Valley base the potential training site for the military's newest fighter plane.

"We are obviously extremely pleased, and from a personal standpoint, relieved," said Glendale Mayor Elaine Scruggs.

Glendale and Fighter Country Partnership led a regional push to extend Luke's mission from its current job of training pilots to fly the F-16 to a new mission where it would bring in the F-35.

Air Force officials said Thursday a final determination on Luke as the training base would hinge on an environmental impact assessment, which likely would be completed by next year.

The move, if ultimately approved by the Air Force, could land three squadrons of F-35s at Luke for about 75 training planes. The base currently has about 165 aircraft in several fighter wings, including Air Force Reserve units.

Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer said the selection was part of a unified effort to bring the training base to Arizona.

"It's critical that we continue to do all we can to preserve current and future missions at our military installations in order to keep this very important industry viable in our state," she said in a statement.

Maricopa County Supervisor Max Wilson, in a statement, echoed Brewer's comments.

"This Air Force decision wasn't caused by just luck," said Wilson, whose district includes Luke and its main auxiliary airfield that pilots use for practice approaches "There was a lot of hard work and sacrifice that went into this and the West Valley should be very proud. I want to thank Gov. Brewer for her leadership in stepping up to protect the taxpayers of Maricopa County and bringing this follow on mission to Luke Air Force Base."

Luke has been pushed by West Valley communities as vital to its economic interests. The base is responsible for more than \$2 billion in economic impact to the region and state and is responsible for more than 7,000 jobs.

The move could mean more jobs for the state's aerospace and defense sector, already an industry with thousands of employees. David Drennon, a spokesman for the Arizona Department of Commerce, said the announcement could spur employment and contracts to support the F-35.

"I think it certainly highlights that Arizona is a leader in aerospace and defense," he said.

The industry in Arizona gets about \$10 billion in federal contracts annually, but with the new base it could grow higher, Drennon said.

"This is great news," he said. "It really will aid our efforts to build a pipeline in Arizona."

The move still has its hurdles. El Mirage, which has much of its city located beneath Luke's flight path, has questioned the move believing the new fighter will generate more noise than the F-16.

Noise problems already have cropped up at the first training base selected, Eglin Air Force Base near Destin, Fla. The Air Force announced Wednesday it would limit the number of F-35s at the base to 59, a drop of 48 planes originally planned for the base.

While El Mirage and other West Valley cities squabbled about the noise factor, the environmental impact study will be the time to determine what the plane's effect will be on the surrounding communities, Scruggs said.

"Our position has always been that the environmental impact statement period is when El Mirage's concerns should be brought forward," she said.

FLORIDA

nwfdailynews.com
news & information for the emerald coast

June 28, 2010

That's all folks: Air Force limits F-35s to 59

Mona Moore

EGLIN AFB - The Air Force will limit the number of Joint Strike Fighters based at Eglin to the 59 aircraft that were assigned to the base in last year's Record of Decision.

In a press conference this afternoon, Maj. Gen. C. R. Davis, Air Armament Center Commander, said additional aircraft would interfere with current missions.

"It was a decision based on the congestion of the airspace," Davis said.

Until today, there had been talk of up to 107 aircraft at Eglin.

After Valparaiso filed the Freedom of Information Act lawsuit and threatened to file a second suit, the Air Force issued a Record of Decision for only total 59 aircraft, a squadron each for the Navy, Air Force and Marines.

"Yes, the community issues have always been in the background," Davis conceded, but insisted the main reason was the airspace. "These folks just ran out of light in the day at anything much above the 59 aircraft level."

Davis said the base had been working on models that would include 107 aircraft but the models had JSF operations competing with the base's current installations. If that were to happen, Eglin would lose missions.

By the time the 59th aircraft is to be delivered, additional F-35 bases will be operational. The 48 aircraft will be assigned to one or more of the new locations.

Davis said the Air Force will announce the new F-35 bases in the next two days.



Daily Report eNewsletter

Thursday July 29, 2010

USAF Limits Eglin to 59 F-35s: Air Force officials announced Wednesday that, for the time being, USAF will seek to base no more than 59 F-35 strike fighters at Eglin AFB, Fla. Up to 107 had been considered for the training schoolhouse being established there. Further, Eglin's main base is the preferred location for operating the F-35s, but nearby Duke and Choctaw Auxiliary Fields will be used for half of all F-35 flights, officials said. Both decisions emerged from the service's supplemental environmental impact study, due out in draft form in September. The Air Force agreed to conduct the supplemental EIS after residents around Eglin raised concerns in 2009 about the noise levels the F-35s would generate. Kathleen Ferguson, USAF's lead for installation issues, said these moves will minimize F-35 operations at Eglin, "to the maximum extent practicable, to reduce noise impacts on the surrounding communities."

Officials recommend Eglin as preferred alternative F-35 base

Posted 7/28/2010

by Master Sgt. Russell P. Petcoff
Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs

7/28/2010 - **WASHINGTON (AFNS)** -- Air Force officials announced July 28 its proposal for basing 59 F-35 Lightning IIs at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.

The draft supplemental environmental impact statement, which Air Force officials plan to release in September, includes the preferred alternative of basing the 59 F-35 aircraft at Eglin AFB. Flight operations will also be conducted at Duke and Choctaw Auxiliary fields.

"The Air Force has completed its initial analysis of a full range of alternatives and determined that basing 59 F-35s at Eglin main base is the preferred alternative," said Kathleen Ferguson, the Air Force deputy assistant secretary for installations.

"This is not a final basing decision; it is the alternative we believe will fulfill our mission responsibilities while considering economic, environmental and technical factors," Ms. Ferguson said. "The community will be invited to comment on the alternatives presented in the SEIS."

This decision, approved by Air Force Secretary Michael Donley and Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz, supports the recommendation of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission to establish the F-35 Initial Joint Training Center at the base located on the far western end of the Florida panhandle.

"A significant amount of analysis has taken place over the course of the last 18 months and will continue through the completion of the SEIS," Ms. Ferguson said. "Our goal has been to ensure that Eglin can support the BRAC-directed F-35 training mission to the greatest extent possible with a minimal amount of negative impact to existing missions, the environment and the surrounding communities," she added.

The decision to limit the number of F-35s to 59 was based on airspace limitations highlighted in the modeling efforts of the Gulf Region Airspace Strategic Initiative, Ms. Ferguson said. The GRASI modeling indicates Eglin-managed mission airspace couldn't accommodate aircraft above that number.

"However, once GRASI is completed and recommendations are implemented there is potential to increase airspace capacity in the future," Ms. Ferguson said.

Air Force officials will conduct half of the flight operations from Duke and Choctaw fields.

This will minimize the effect on other missions on Eglin Reservation while also taking advantage of the Initial Joint Training Site, Ms. Ferguson said.

"This alternative minimizes the impact on the Air Force Special Operations Command mission, 7th Special Forces Group and preserves the critical test and training missions," Ms. Ferguson said.

"Further, this alternative minimizes operations, to the maximum extent practicable, to reduce noise impacts on the surrounding communities," Ms. Ferguson said.

The record of decision is anticipated to be announced spring 2011 following the completion of the final SEIS, Ms. Ferguson said.



59 F-35s coming to Eglin

First two Joint Strike Fighters expected in November

Bart Jansen • News Journal Washington bureau •

July 29, 2010

WASHINGTON — The Air Force plans to base 59 of its new F-35 Joint Strike Fighters at Eglin Air Force Base, the Pentagon announced Wednesday.

The Air Force initially planned to bring more than 100 F-35 aircraft to the base. But last year, following concerns from surrounding communities about noise from the new jets, officials lowered the initial number to 59 aircraft, and ordered additional research be conducted before more aircraft were assigned to Eglin.

The announcement confirms the Air Force's cap of 59 aircraft, and brings the base one step closer to finalizing staffing levels and details of the F-35 training program — a move which is expected by spring.

The first two planes are expected to arrive at the base in November. Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Chumuckla, said he toured construction at the base about two months ago for the schoolhouse and for the pilots, and that "everything is on schedule."

"It is something that was expected," Miller said of the decision, although other studies still must be completed. "In these economic times, getting close to finality is very important."

Flight operations will also be conducted at Duke and Choctaw fields.

The planes will be used by the Air Force, Navy and Marines. The base-closing commission decided that instructor pilots and support staff should be moved to Eglin from Luke Air Force Base in Arizona, Sheppard Air Force Base in Texas, Marine Corps Air Station Miramar in California and Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia.

Some staff will also relocate from Naval Air Station Pensacola. The community there recognized that consolidation at Eglin was the best move for the Gulf Coast region.

Jacksonville Unlikely To Get New Air Force Fighters

July 29, 2010

Timothy J. Gibbons

The Jacksonville Air National Guard Station is unlikely to get the military's newest jet fighters after the Air Force said Thursday it wants to put the planes at Hill Air Force Base in Utah and Burlington Air Guard Station in Vermont.

Located near the runways at Jacksonville International Airport, the air guard station was one of five locations being considered as operational bases for the F-35 Lightning II aircraft — a fifth-generation fighter that very stealthy, highly networked and extremely maneuverable.

Right now, the Florida Air National Guard in Jacksonville uses F-15s, one of the aircraft types being phased out as the F-35 enters the fleet.

In a release Thursday, the Air Force said it had surveyed the five bases and preferred to place operational groups at the Utah and Vermont bases and a training group at Luke Air Force Base, Ariz.

The Air Force believes those bases best fulfill its mission and responsibilities, taking into consideration environmental, operational, technical and other factors, it said, although officials cautioned the final decision has not been made yet.

“The preferred alternatives with other reasonable alternatives will continue to be evaluated in the environmental impact analysis process,” said Kathleen Ferguson, deputy assistant secretary for installations. That decision is expected in coming months.

Having the new jets could become vital in coming years, as the older aircraft are phased out, making the local air guard station less vital.

Florida Guard officials will continue fighting to get some of the aircraft based here, although it is unclear when additional locations will be selected.

“We knew that not being selected during the initial step was a possibility, but we remain convince that Jacksonville is still the best choice for stationing the F-35, and we fully expect to be the next location selected,” Guard Lt. Col. Ron Tittle said. “We’ll press on with our current aircraft and prepare for the next go-around.”

IDAHO

fox12idaho.com KTRV-TV

F-35's Not Coming to Idaho -- For Now



Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho -- They're not coming to Idaho, at least this time-around.

The United States Air Force has decided to not include the Gem State as a place to house a new fighter mission. While the decision was met with disappointment, there's still optimism some of those planes could be stationed here in the future.

The roar of the Air Force's new fighter jet, the F-35 will not be heard over Idaho's skies for the foreseeable future. Mountain Home Air Force Base was not on the first round of the preferred alternative list to become a base of operations for three squadrons of the new fighter.

Idaho's leaders have been working hard to bring them here. In a statement, Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter had this to say: "We're disappointed, but by no means are we defeated. It's a long process for deploying an aircraft that will be in use for decades to come, and this is just round one."

That was a sentiment echoed by his lieutenant governor who happened to be at Mountain Home for an orientation flight.

"The necessity of this range will continue to be very important to not only Idaho, but to America and the world," said Lt. Gov. Brad Little.

One of the reasons the Air Force gave for not choosing Mountain Home this time around was the extra cost involved, meaning new construction, because the new squadrons would be an addition to the fighter operations already there.

"There are some buildings that would have to be built here on the base in order for us to house three squadrons of F-35s," said Base Commander Col. Ron Buckley.

Despite the disappointment of not being on the preferred alternative list, the base commander says the F-15 missions are here to stay for a long time.

"We have a great mission here in Mountain Home with our F-15s." said Buckley.

The biggest beneficiary from the new squadrons would have been the people who live the nearby community. The construction industry would have been the first to get a shot in the arm.

"Over the long term, adding more squadrons to the base was certainly going to help out economic standpoint here in Mountain Home. That's what we were primarily looking for," said Mountain Home Mayor Tom Rist.

Even though they didn't make the first cut, there's a sense of optimism that at least some F-35s will be based there in the future. It's likely 1,700 will be bought and Thursday's decision only involved 250 to 300 planes.

"The Air Force is looking to go through this process every two to three years as they look for where they're going to base the rest of those F-35s," said Buckley.

Meanwhile, Boise's Gowen Field was also shut out of the first round. The Idaho Air National Guard Station at Gowen Field would have served as a training base for the new fighters.

Luke Air Force Base outside Phoenix, Ariz., and the Burlington Air National Guard Station in Vermont were chosen this time around. Like Mountain Home, the folks at the Idaho Air National Guard are hopeful they'll come up for consideration again once more planes are produced.

"The Air Force is going to need, we figure, 11 training squadrons. So, if one base has been selected as one of the training squadron locations, there's still room for several more squadrons to be put," said Col. Timothy Marsano, Spokesman for the Idaho Air National Guard.

The F-35 is out for now, but Gowen Field could become home to a new troop transport squadron. It's one of two candidates to become a base of operations for the C-27-J that's still in its preliminary stages. The Air Force will do site and environmental impact analyses

Hill Air Force Base closer will get F-35s

By Matthew D. LaPlante

The Salt Lake Tribune

July 30, 2010 07:11AM

Thunder rumbled over northern Utah on Thursday as Air Force officials made their latest military-industrial forecast:

Lightning is coming to Hill Air Force Base.

The state's largest military facility had already been named as a likely base of operations for the U.S. Armed Forces' \$100 million-plus, next generation precision fighters, the F-35 Lightning. But now, for the first time, Air Force planners are talking details.

Seventy-two of the jets will be stationed at Hill, which is also slated to have a substantial role in maintaining the fighters, according to Utah political leaders. The first squadron of aircraft is expected to arrive in Utah in 2013, with a second and third operational unit due to begin shaking windows over Ogden and northern Davis County by 2019.

The announcement came just weeks after the closure of one of Hill's most storied units, which had been flying the Air Force's decades-old workhorse, the F-16 Fighting Falcon, since the 1970s.

Air Force bases in Florida and Vermont were also named as likely hosts for deployable Lightning squadrons, while Luke Air Force Base in Arizona would be home to a training wing.



**** FILE ****This undated photo provided by Northrop Grumman Corp., shows a pre-production model of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. South Carolina is one of six sites the Air Force has chosen to host the new supersonic and stealthy F-35 fighter plane, U.S. Rep. John Spratt, D-S.C., announced Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2006. Shaw Air Force Base and McEntire Air National Guard Base will get the aircraft, dubbed "Lightning II" in 2009, the congressman announced in a news release. The F-35 is a single-seat, supersonic, stealthy aircraft that is to be used in a variety of missions, such as air-to-air combat, ground attacks, and the suppressing of enemy air defenses. (AP Photo/Northrop Grumman, File) **** NO SALES **** ORG XMIT: WXS119

In making the announcement, the Air Force also eliminated seven other facilities that were completing to house a squadron of the single-engine fighter jets, including Mountain Home Air Base in Idaho.

All of the decisions, however, remain contingent upon the completion of environmental impact assessments and continued congressional support for the one of the costliest weapons programs in the world. But unlike a sister project, the even more expensive F-22 Raptor — production of which has been curtailed by the Obama Administration — the Lightning has enjoyed broad bipartisan support.

It has, however, also met with a share of criticism, including from influential “light fighter” pioneer Pierre Sprey, who helped launch the F-16 as the Air Force’s premier fighter in the 1970s. In an article for Jane’s Defense Weekly in 2008, Sprey called the Lightning an over-budget “dog,” complaining that, when completed, it would be overweight and under-powered. The Lightning’s manufacturers and military supporters have vociferously contested those claims, noting that the days of air-to-air warfare, in which highly maneuverable jets were a strategic imperative, are in the past.

At one time it was thought that the jet, also known as the Joint Strike Fighter, could be built for \$30 million each. Congressional auditors found in March, however, that the F-35 could cost upward of \$113 million each.

Nonetheless, Utah’s senior Congressional Republicans were quick to crow over the military’s decision to bring Lightning to the Beehive State.

“For nearly two years, I have been meeting with senior Air Force officials to call attention to Hill’s ideal location and unparalleled capabilities to handle F-35 operations,” Sen. Orrin Hatch said in a press release issued jointly with outgoing Senate colleague Bob Bennett and Rep. Bob Bishop, whose district includes Hill.

For his part, 388th Fighter Wing Commander Scott Zobrist stressed that location and capabilities were the most important factors in the military’s decision to base the jet in Utah.

Zobrist noted that Hill pilots have easy access to one of the world’s largest bombing ranges, the Utah Test and Training Range. He also noted that Hill provided “fantastic ramp space, awesome air space, and incredible support for aviation in the community.”

“Utah is certainly a great place to fly combat aircraft,” said Zobrist, who has more than 2,000 hours of sticktime in the F-16.

Hill has slowly been reducing its inventory of F-16s and, earlier this month, shut down an entire squadron of Falcons as part of a plan to transfer the aerial assets to National Guard units.

“It was bittersweet that the 34th Fighter Squadron was deactivated,” Zobrist said, noting the success of the 65-year-old unit’s final mission to Afghanistan, where it helped provide aerial attack support to ground forces.

But, Zobrist said, “we look to the future,” and the F-35 “is the fighter jet for the next generation

VERMONT



Air Force prefers Burlington for F-35 fighter jet

July 29, 2010



Burlington and the Vermont Air National Guard took a big step today toward landing the next generation of American jet with the Air Force announcement of its preferences for a base of operations for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

The Secretary of the Air Force said the Vermont Air Guard and Hill Air Force Base in Utah are preferred alternatives for operations and Luke Air Force Base in Arizona is the preferred site for training.

According to the Air Force news release "the preferred alternative is an alternative which the Air Force believes best fulfills its mission and responsibilities, taking into consideration environmental, operational, technical and other factors."

"This is not a final basing decision," said Kathleen Ferguson deputy assistant secretary for installations. "The preferred alternatives with other reasonable alternatives will continue to be evaluated in the Environmental Impact Analysis Process."

Final basing decisions will be made later in the ongoing selection process. Under the current production schedule, the planes could begin arriving in Vermont in the 2018 federal fiscal year.

Last year the Air Force conducted a system-wide review of more than 200 locations before selecting Burlington and nine other bases as finalists for either the training or primary operations of the F-35.

Vermont's congressional delegation made the announcement this afternoon.

Sen. Patrick Leahy said, “Just as cream rises to the top, the Vermont Air National Guard’s stellar tradition of quality and performance has carried Vermont to the top of this rarefied list. The Air Force’s rigorous review of personnel and facilities across the country has confirmed the Vermont Guard’s superb performance and capabilities.” Leahy chairs the Senate National Guard Caucus and is a senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

He has also asked the Air Force to provide him with information about the noise profile for the developmental F-35 engine and how the Air Force will work to minimize any potential increased engine noise during take off and landing.

Sen. Bernie Sanders said, “It is a sign of the great national respect and admiration for the Vermont National Guard that it was selected by the Air Force in a very competitive process.”

Rep. Peter Welch said, “Today’s announcement speaks to the Vermont Air National Guard’s outstanding reputation and tradition of excellence. I hope that, as the process moves forward, all parties will work together in a collaborative manner to resolve outstanding concerns.



Airport Neighbors Concerned About F-35 Noise

Friday, 07/30/10 7:50am

Mitch Wertlieb - South Burlington, VT



Vermont National Guard officials are thrilled at the prospect of the new F-35 fighter jet being stationed at the Air National Guard base at Burlington's International Airport.

That designation moved closer to reality when it was announced yesterday that the Air Force decided the jets should operate out of the Burlington airport and from an air force base in Utah, even though a pending environmental impact study has yet to be completed.

But not everyone is welcoming the news, especially some people who live near the airport's flight path, including Juliette Buck, a South Burlington resident who's been voicing opposition to the F-35.

Buck says she and many others in the area near the airport are concerned about a number of issues regarding the F-35, not the least of which is noise.

[Listen](#) *Click listen to hear the interview.*

WASHINGTON



Navy To Hold Two Meetings On Radar

The community outreach events will offer information about the sea-based x-band radar possibly coming to everett for repairs.

July 27, 2010 - Debra Smith

EVERETT -- The U.S. Navy wants to give you an opportunity to ask its experts about the SBX radar platform.

It's hosting two community outreach events -- one today at Everett Community College and one Thursday at Langley Middle School in Langley on Whidbey Island. Both events begin at 5 p.m.

The Navy and the Missile Defense Agency are talking about temporarily bringing the Sea-Based X-Band Radar to Naval Station Everett for repairs. They're not saying how long repairs might take.

The \$900 million platform is part of a national defense system designed to track incoming ballistic missiles.

In Everett, experts from the agency and the naval base should be on hand to answer questions at the open house, said Naval Station Everett spokeswoman Kristin Ching.

In 2003, the Department of Defense considered permanently anchoring the SBX at Everett.

After an outcry from local residents, Pentagon officials instead decided to homeport the SBX in the small Aleutian Island town of Adak, Alaska.

A decision won't be made until after an environmental assessment is completed, probably late in the fall, she said.

Everett and Naval Air Station North Island at San Diego have the only military ports on the West Coast deep enough to accommodate the mobile radar stations. The agency is also considering a civilian location, Todd Shipyards in Seattle.

The SBX vessel's thrusters, which help move it through the water, require periodic maintenance to retain certifications required for operations. Other needed work includes repainting, inspecting and repairing vessel components and upgrading some internal systems.

The Navy is aware that people are concerned about the potential health hazards associated with operating a powerful radar station in port, Ching said.

If the SBX did come here, it would not emit any energy while under maintenance in port. It would use operational navigation radar while traveling into the area, just as any other vessel would, she said.

OVERSEAS—AUSTRALIA



Williamtown RAAF noise rethink: council

BY NIKKI TAYLOR

28 Jul, 2010 12:00 AM

PORT Stephens Mayor Bruce MacKenzie believes the council may have "pushed forward too early" with housing restrictions linked with the RAAF's incoming JSF aircraft.

The statement follows months of controversy over the council's decision to restrict development in some areas of the Port.

At Tuesday night's council meeting Cr MacKenzie tabled a mayoral minute asking councillors to meet with members of the Safe Ears group and to consider removing certain development restrictions. The restrictions, including the inability to build in some areas, fall into line with Australian Standards on aircraft noise and were recommended by council head planner David Broyd earlier this year.

"I'm not saying David Broyd was wrong, I'm saying I think we might have pushed on too early and perhaps we can come up with something better," Cr MacKenzie said.

Cr MacKenzie said extensive insulation could allow for development in areas where council restrictions prevented homes being built. He said concerns over the inability to rebuild an existing home should it be destroyed also needed to be addressed.