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Congress of the United States

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The Honorable Michael B. Donley
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force, Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20330.1670

General Norton A. Schwartz
Chief of Staff of the Air Force
1670 Air Force, Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20330.1670

Dear Sect Donley and Chief Schwartz:

Having carefully reviewed the initial list of basing options for the Joint Strike Fighter, I am pleased to see that the 162d Fighter Wing at Tucson Airport is being considered as an initial beddown site. As our nation's largest Air Guard Fighter Wing, they are uniquely qualified to perform the training mission for our pilots and those of our Allies. I also understand the reasoning behind the delayed evaluation of Davis-Monthan Air Force Base and believe that when the time comes to re-evaluate that site for future basing, it will be an excellent choice to house a strong fighter presence.

My primary reason for writing to you today is to assuage any hesitations that may have been raised over the last weeks and months by a small but vocal minority of residents in the Tucson area. I am concerned that recent news articles portray our community as an unwelcoming environment for the Joint Strike Fighter, but I assure you that is not a true or faithful representation.

Let me be clear, first and foremost, that I fully support the JSF program and that I, along with the vast majority of Tucson area residents, fully support a robust basing presence of Joint Strike Fighter aircraft at both Tucson Airport and Davis-Monthan Air Force Base as part of training and operational squadrons.

Regardless of assertions by some area residents, who do not represent the general public opinion, we look forward to welcoming as large a JSF presence to Southern Arizona as the Air Force may require.

As you know, our unprecedented access to airspace and the Barry M. Goldwater Range make both Davis-Monthan and the 162d Fighter Wing at Tucson ideal basing options that would create additional synergies with our Allies and permit persistent and continuous operations that will greatly benefit the Air Force's overall readiness posture.

Since the establishment of the airfield in 1927, Tucson has proudly served our nation's air forces. We stand ready to continue serving.

Sincerely,

Gabrielle Giffords
Member of Congress