

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

David H. Bieter

June 12, 2017

Dear Citizens for a Livable Boise,

Thank you for submitting this petition regarding a potential F-35 mission at Gowen Field's Idaho National Guard base. Input from community members is vital and we greatly appreciate your interest in this issue and taking the time to send us this petition. While the City of Boise does support a replacement flying mission at Gowen Field, the decision to base a replacement flying mission at Gowen Field will be made by the United States Air Force. The City of Boise has no say over what aircraft can or cannot fly in and out of Gowen Field. However, we noticed several inaccuracies about Gowen Field and the current proposed replacement flying mission that we feel compelled to correct.

The U.S. Air Force's current deliberations solely revolve around stationing two F-35 missions at two of five Air National Guard bases around the country. The U.S. Air Force base located at Mountain Home is an active duty base, not a National Guard base, therefore it is ineligible for a National Guard mission the Air Force is trying to place.

If selected, the Idaho Air National Guard mission would be largely the same as the existing mission at Gowen Field, only with F-35s rather than the A-10 Warthog. It would include approximately 18 to 24 F-35s to replace the same number of A-10s currently stationed at Gowen Field Base. The number of flights for the proposed mission would remain roughly the same as the current mission. The majority of flights currently take place between Monday and Friday during daylight hours, with takeoffs usually around mid-morning and again in early afternoon. During the last five years, the Idaho Air National Guard on average has flown fewer than ten sorties per flying day with approximately 20 flying days per month. This results in less than 10 minutes of audible IDANG aircraft activity per day. The Idaho Air National Guard expects their mission with F-35s would remain largely the same.

No homes would become "uninhabitable," condemned or placed under eminent domain due to an F-35 mission at Gowen Field. Noise contours have

expanded and contracted over time since the Boise Airport began operating at Gowen Field in the 1930s. In the mid-1990s, the City of Boise implemented zoning around the airport to ensure future compatible development, and homes that were already in the area were grandfathered in as allowable use. Our community has adapted, continued to grow and supported the base while the noise contours have expanded and contracted due to the changing flying missions. For example, in 1994 when the F-4 was based at Gowen Field, over 1,000 homes were within the area where the average daily noise is 65 dB or greater (DNL 65+ dB noise contour). The 2015 noise study forecasted an F-35 mission and determined that approximately 270 homes would be within the DNL 65+ dB noise contour.

Once again, the decision about any long-term flying missions for Gowen Field will be made by the United States Air Force, not the City of Boise. If Gowen Field is selected as a preferred or alternative base location for the F-35, an independent third party will conduct an environmental impact study (EIS) based on the proposed mission. It will be a thorough study that will include public input opportunities. Such studies are governed by the National Environmental Protection Act and is coordinated by the National Environmental Protection Agency and the United States Air Force. Community members will have ample opportunity to participate in the EIS process and express support or concerns on any proposal that comes from the U.S. Air Force. The purpose of the EIS is to gather and analyze data on the impact that such a mission would have on surrounding neighborhoods. This federal process is entirely transparent and could take up to two years. Included with this letter is an infographic that shows the U.S. Air Force's EIS process.

Regarding the economic benefits that Gowen Field has on our community's economy, these benefits are based off an economic impact study that analyzed and estimated the *current* contributions that the Idaho National Guard has on the Idaho economy. These contributions are significant and important to keep in mind during the U.S. Air Force's deliberations. Gowen Field is the fourth largest employer in Idaho, supporting nearly 1,400 jobs and making approximately \$155 million total economic impact to the community from the Air National Guard alone. Overall, the Idaho National Guard has an estimated \$485 million economic impact on our community.

This study did not analyze the benefits or effects that an F-35 mission would have if Gowen Field was chosen for the replacement mission. However, because the A-10s will inevitably retire which will leave Gowen Field without a mission, the economists who authored the economic impact study said that it is accurate to say that an F-35 mission would sustain, or slightly enhance, the current economic impact by backfilling the impacts left by the loss of the A-10. This economic impact study did not measure property tax losses or decreased property values

because in a benefit-cost analysis, economic impacts are a completely different concept than the net changes in social welfare. The environmental impact study that will be completed if Gowen Field is selected should contain a comprehensive accounting of the positive and negative effects on the Treasure Valley.

As mayor, I support any effort that will ensure Gowen Field's future in Boise. Our Idaho National Guard's long-standing role in national security over the decades and the economic impact it has on our community is substantial. In 2014, I wrote to President Barack Obama and congressional delegation members urging them not to retire the A-10 in order to help secure Gowen Field's future. However, the United States Air Force seems determined to move forward with the decommissioning of the A-10 aircraft, which would put the future of the Idaho Air Guard in question. Because of the impact to so many of our residents and neighbors, and because of the significant impact Gowen Field has on our economy, it is a primary priority for the City of Boise to do all it can to secure a new mission for Gowen Field. We have worked with a coalition of Idahoans, including all four of our Congressional members, Governor Otter, Lt. Governor Little, the Department of Commerce, State Legislators, the Chamber of Commerce, Treasure Valley Mayors and Council members, many local businesses and community members who are all equally passionate about the Guard.

We do understand the concern some residents have for this current proposed flying mission, and we are working on ways to mitigate those challenges if Gowen Field is selected. One thing that can be prominently seen by both those who are in support of the proposed mission and by those opposed is just how passionate and caring the people of Boise are for their city and its future. Throughout this ongoing process, I hope that everyone will remain respectful towards other community members, regardless of whether they support or oppose the proposed F-35 mission. I would also like to encourage the continued support of the National Guard members at Gowen Field, who are not directly involved in this decision but are still putting their life on the line to defend our country and our community.

Again, thank you for submitting this petition and your continued passion for Boise.

Sincerely,



David H. Bleter
Mayor

Environmental Study

The Idaho Air National Guard is 1 of 5 Air National Guard units being considered as a preferred or reasonable alternative location to receive approximately 18 F-35 aircraft at Gowen Field. If selected, these new aircraft would replace the current A-10 aircraft and would be expected sometime in the year 2021/22. Before any final decision is made, an in depth Environmental Impact Study would be conducted to gather & analyze information and request public input. The study could take up to two years.

