



LANDING THE F-35

THE BEST PLACE IN AMERICA IS IN ATLANTIC COUNTY

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INTRODUCTION

As the United States Air Force (USAF) enters the third selection phase of Air National Guard (ANG) units to operate the 5th Generation fighter, the F-35 Lightning II, New Jersey's 177th Fighter Wing (FW), stationed at the Atlantic City Air National Guard Base, is ideally situated to defend and protect the United States with this new technology.

In addition to supporting the nation's security, there is a natural synergy among the F-35 mission, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) William Hughes Technical Center, the National Aviation Research & Technology Park, and the Atlantic City Airport. Bringing the F-35 to the 177th FW will increase the full-time workforce and drive millions of dollars in economic impact in the region.

As a community, we understand that the 177th FW is the ideal location to place this technology against a challenging and potential threat to our nation's security and we support the decision to bring the F-35 to New Jersey.

THE F-35 LIGHTNING II

The F-35 Lightning II is a 5th Generation fighter, combining advanced stealth with fighter speed and agility, fully fused sensor information, network-enabled operations, and advanced sustainment. Three variants of the F-35 will replace the A-10 and F-16 for the U.S. Air Force, the F/A-18 for the U.S. Navy, the F/A-18 and AV-8B Harrier for the U.S. Marine Corps, and a variety of fighters for at least ten other countries.¹

The Lightning II is a single-seat, single-engine fighter aircraft designed for many missions with advanced, integrated sensors built into every aircraft. Missions that were traditionally performed by small numbers of specialized aircraft, such as intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance and electronic attack missions can now be executed by a squadron of F-35s, bringing new capabilities to many allied forces.

¹ F-35 Lightning II. "About" <https://www.f35.com/about>

Lockheed Martin's F-35 is delivering more than just air combat superiority to the men and women of the United States armed forces. As an added benefit for the nation's economy, it's simultaneously delivering tens of thousands of high paying, high quality jobs to American workers across the country and around the world. According to standard industry accepted economic forecasting, the multirole 5th generation stealth fighter is responsible for more than 220,000 direct and indirect U.S. jobs.

Equally impressive to the program's job creation prowess is the sheer size of its economic footprint. The Lockheed Martin F-35 program teams with nearly 1,400 domestic suppliers in 45 states and Puerto Rico to produce thousands of components from highly sophisticated radar sensors to the aircraft's mid fuselage.²

THE 177TH FIGHTER WING: "COMMUNITY BASED, GLOBAL IMPACT"

The 177th Fighter Wing is responsible for protecting America's skies and responding to foreign threats. Known as the "Jersey Devils," the Wing has served several missions both at home and abroad,



Atlantic City is within driving distance to 40% of the nation's population.

² F-35 Lightning II. "Economic Impact" <https://www.f35.com/about/economic-impact>

encompassing the missions of air sovereignty, combat/irregular air patrols, strategic air defense, and defensive counter-air and air-to-ground attack. The 177th FW is currently equipped with the Block F-16C+ Fighting Falcon, a compact, multi-role fighter aircraft, flown by highly trained and skilled pilots.³

Strategic Location

Entering the third selection phase, we believe there is no better place in the United States for bedding the F-35. The 177th FW is strategically located between New York City and Washington D.C., an area that accounts for almost one-third of the nation's population. It is the ideal location to put the most advanced weaponry to combat any challenging threats to our country's most targeted cities. There are several other geographic factors that make Atlantic County, New Jersey the ideal location:

- Ideally suited for 5th Generation Integration with F-22s at Langley Air Force Base.
- Jumping off point for launching to coalition nations in Europe and South West Asia.
- Critical for the F-35 to operate in a dense, urban, high air traffic environment.
- Excellent combat training with four ranges within a single flight distance.
- Optimal area for integrated Ground and Air Forces with an aerial gunnery range, restricted airspace, and a squadron of personnel that directs airstrikes from the ground.
- Moderate year-round weather.

Outstanding Track Record

The 177th FW has a strong record of worldwide deployment with tasking in Iraq 2010, Afghanistan 2012, Korea 2014, and Korea 2017.

- 2019 Outstanding F-16 Alert Unit of the Year.
- Routinely manned at 103% to 106%.
- Accepted no-notice challenge to defend Bedminster when the president visits.
- Improvised a tactic to cut renegade response time versus threatening aircraft by 90% while working through intense impact to jet fleet health.
- Passed every inspection for more than a decade including Air Combat Command Inspector General Passes and Homeland Defense Evaluations.

Low Cost Transition

Minimal investment is required to make the 177th FW operation to accept the F-35. Newer facilities at the installation have already been designed to meet the needs of the F-35, and its older facilities require only limited modifications to become 5th Generation capable. For example, there is covered parking for the entire fleet of F-35s, a state-of-the-art maintenance facility integrated with 5th generation capability, and space readily available for simulator upgrades. The base also has a recently constructed air support

³ Air National Guard. Atlantic City Air National Guard Base. <https://www.goang.com/locations/new-jersey/atlantic-city-air-national-guard-base.html>

operations squadron building ready for F-35 air-to-ground integration. Infrastructure in place is as follows:

- Indoor parking for 33 aircraft (not operating); 21 aircraft when operating.
- Capable 10,000 ft. runway with cables, lights, approaches and 24-hour control tower.
- 12,000 square feet of space readily available for networked simulators.
- Newly renovated flight line maintenance building which simplifies classified conversion.
- A new corrosion control and fuel cell facility to be completed in June 2020.

Proximity to the William J. Hughes Technical Center

The FAA William J. Hughes Technical Center is the nation's premier air transportation system laboratory. The Technical Center's highly technical diverse workforce conducts test and evaluation, verification and validation, and sustainment of the FAA's full spectrum of aviation systems and develops scientific solutions to current and future air transportation safety challenges by conducting applied research and development. Technical Center engineers, scientists, mathematicians, and technical experts utilize a robust, one-of-a-kind, world class laboratory environment to identify integrated system solutions for the modernization and sustainment of the National Airspace System (NAS), and for delivering NextGen operational capabilities.

OPERATIONAL BEDDOWN CRITERIA

The United States Air Force conducts an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which analyzes the potential environmental impacts associated with proposed beddown of F-35A aircraft at Air National Guard locations. The EIS for five ANG locations was conducted in 2018 and the Executive Summary was released in August of 2019.

Three factors drive the need to beddown and operate the F-35A in the USAF.⁴

1. Existing and anticipated enemy air defense systems have reached levels of effectiveness sufficient to pose a significant threat to current fighter attack aircraft. In addition, worldwide prevalence of sophisticated air-to-air and surface-to-air missiles continues to grow, increasing the number of threats to which existing USAF fighter attack aircraft are vulnerable. In its role to support the Combat Air Forces (CAF), the ANG needs to identify locations for the F-35A beddown so that their pilots can be trained and combat-ready. Additionally, basing the F-35As at an ANG installation that already supports an Active Duty Associate Unit would allow both active duty and ANG pilots the opportunity to train together. The Active Duty Associate Unit is a squadron of active duty members stationed with an ANG host unit and tasked with flying and maintaining aircraft under the operational control of the host ANG's command (Sjostedt 2010).

⁴ United States Air Force F-35A Operational Beddown Air National Guard Environmental Impact Statement. http://www.angf35eis.com/Resources/Documents/Draft_F-35A_EIS_Executive_Summary_August_2019.pdf (August 2019)

2. The CAF needs to efficiently and effectively maintain combat capability and mission readiness. However, it faces increased difficulty in maintaining an aging fighter attack aircraft inventory. These fighter aircraft need to be replaced as a result of attrition, decreasing service life, and the lack of manufacturing additional fighter aircraft. Therefore, the ANG must replace the aging fighter attack aircraft and aging infrastructure and integrate operational F-35A squadrons into the existing USAF structure.
3. The ANG F-35A must support CAF core competencies of air and space superiority, global attack, precision engagement, and agile combat support. To do this efficiently and effectively, the aircraft need to be based at existing locations offering compatible base infrastructure and providing ready access to existing airspace and ranges suitable for the F-35A. Beddown and operation of the F-35A at such locations form a critical priority for the USAF.

The initial screening of ANG bases yielded a defined enterprise of 18 alternative installations to be evaluated for the 5th and 6th Operational Beddowns. The following criteria was used during the screening process to identify the capacity of each ANG base to successfully support the F-35A mission.

1. *Ability to meet the mission requirements.* Under this criterion, the location should be within reasonable proximity and access to operational training ranges and airspace.
2. *Capacity.* The alternative location should have hangar capacity; runway length and weight-bearing capacity; ramp space; installation operation support capacity; squadron operations facilities with aircraft maintenance units; aircrew, maintenance, and fuselage training capabilities; and the necessary communications infrastructure.
3. *Environmental Constraints.* The location should be able to:
 - a. demonstrate conformity with the respective State Implementation Plan (SIP);
 - b. meet the local community's zoning or other land use controls adopted to limit encroachment and protect the public's health, safety, and welfare;
 - c. have an absence of incompatible development such as tall structures in the airport's runway protection zones (RPZs)/installation's clear zone (CZ) and/or accident potential zone (APZ) that create flight safety hazards; and
 - d. have an absence or limited amount of noise-sensitive development located in areas near the airport/installation that are exposed to Day-Night Average Sound Levels (DNL) at and above 65 decibels (dB) and considered by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and DoD as incompatible land uses (USAF 1999; 14 CFR Part 150).
4. *Cost.* Given budgetary constraints, it is important for the USAF to select installations that have a favorable area cost factor based on Unified Facilities Criteria (UFC) 3-701-01, Change 6, DoD Facilities Pricing Guide\2\2/ (2014).

The Secretary of the Air Force considered the objective screening results as well as qualitative operational factors in determining the alternative installations for the 5th and 6th F-35A Operational Beddowns. These factors included:

- Plans and Guidance
- Global and Regional Coverage
- Combatant Commander Support
- Total Force

- Beddown Timing
- Force Structure
- Training Requirements and Efficiencies
- Logistic Supportability
- Resources/Budgeting

F-35 ANG DEPLOYMENT HISTORY

The F-35 is the first fighter weapons system to be fielded concurrently across components of the Air Force. The Active Duty Components are responsible for most portions of acquisition and sustainment, while the Reserve Components generally operate and maintain the aircraft.

Traditionally, the Air Force has given new aircraft to the Active Duty Components first, then flowed the older aircraft to the Reserve and ANG Components. However, for the F-35, it is being fielded to the Active, Reserve, and ANG at the same time and in roughly the same numbers.

The basing of F-35s for the USAF occurred in the following order:

Ops 1: The first operational F-35As arrived at Hill Air Force Bases, Utah in September 2015 and received their final F-35A Lightning II fighter jets bringing their total number of aircraft to 78.⁵ Hill AFB was chosen to be the home of the Air Force's first F-35A units because of the Total Force partnership of the 388th and 419th FWs, its proximity to the Utah Test and Training Range, the Ogden Air Logistics Complex and the base's weather, zoning and air space.

Ops 2: Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, was selected as the second home of the F-35A Lightning IIs after a lengthy analysis of the locations operation considerations, installation attributes, environmental factors and cost.⁶ "Alaska combines a strategically important location with a world-class training environment. Basing the F-35s at Eielson AFB will allow the Air Force the capability of using the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC) for large force exercises using a multitude of ranges and maneuver areas in Alaska," said Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James. "This, combined with the largest airspace in the Air Force, ensures realistic combat training for the (Defense Department)." The first of 54 total F-35A Lightning II fighter jets are scheduled to arrive in April 2020.

Ops 3: Burlington, Vermont Air National Guard Base (see below)

Ops 4: "The 48th Fighter Wing at Royal Air Force Lakenheath was announced as the first U.S. Air Forces in Europe-Air Forces Africa until to permanently home the F-35A Lightning II in January of 2015," per 48th Fighter Wing Captain Elias Small. The first F-35s are scheduled to arrive in late 2021.⁷

Ops 5 and 6: Madison, WI and Montgomery, AL Air National Guard Bases (see below)

⁵ Garbarino, Michah. "Hill AFB fighter wings receive final F-35A lightning II." <https://www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/2044258/hill-afb-fighter-wings-receive-final-f-35a-lightning-ii/> Official United States Air Force Website. (December 19, 2019)

⁶ U.S. Air Force Public Affairs. "Eielson selected to receive Operational F-35A Aircraft." F35.com. <https://www.f35.com/news/detail/eielson-selected-to-receive-operational-f-35a-aircraft> (April 4, 2016)

⁷ Forces Network. "RAF Lakenheath Gets \$150 Million Of Investment for F-35A." <https://www.forces.net/news/raf-lakenheath-gets-150-million-investment-f35a> (August 16, 2018)

Ops 8 and 9: Air National Guard Bases are TBD

First ANG Selection Phase: In 2013, the USAF carefully sorted through 83 military bases around the country before deciding where to assign the first Air National Guard squadron of F-35s.⁸

The USAF selected Burlington Vermont, home state of one of the National Guard's most powerful political allies in Washington, Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy. Leahy has been among the most prominent cheerleaders for basing F-35s at the Vermont Air National Guard. Strong support also came from the governor, the state Legislature, local business leaders and groups, and Leahy's fellow senator, independent Bernie Sanders.

Preparations began in 2013 for the F-35s arrival in Vermont with the expectation that the earliest the squadron could be flying would be late 2015. The first two F-35 fighters to be permanently assigned to the Vermont ANG arrived in September 2019. Eighteen more F-35 fighters will arrive at the base over the next 10 months.⁹

Second ANG Selection Phase: Unfortunately, in December 2016, NJ's 177th FW was eliminated from the list of units the Air Force considered housing the new F-35 fighter jets. NJ's 177th FW was among the top eighteen (18) locations in final consideration.¹⁰

The five bases that were in consideration were as follows:

- Montgomery Alabama's 187th FW at Dannelly Field
- Jacksonville Florida's 125th FW
- Madison Wisconsin's 115th FW at Truax Field
- Boise Idaho's 124th FW at Gowen Field
- Detroit Michigan's 127th FW at Selfridge ANG

In March 2017, the USAF selected Dannelly Field AGS in Montgomery, AL, and Truax AGS in Madison, WI as the second and third Air National Guard bases to receive the F-35.¹¹

"Putting F-35s at these two Air National Guard bases continues our transition into the next generation of air superiority," said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein. "It helps ensure we can always offer the Commander-in-Chief air power options and be ready to penetrate any enemy air defenses, hold any target at risk and go when and where the president tells us to go."

⁸ Bender, Bryan. "Selection of Vermont Guard base of F-35 jets was based on flawed data, raising questions of political influence." <https://www.boston.com/news/national-news/2013/04/14/selection-of-vermont-guard-base-for-f-35-jets-was-based-on-flawed-data-raising-questions-of-political-influence> (April 14, 2013)

⁹ Bradley, Pat. "First F-35's Based at Vermont National Guard Base Arrive." WAMC Northeast Public Radio. <https://www.wamc.org/post/first-f-35-s-based-vermont-national-guard-base-arrive> (September 19, 2019)

¹⁰ Sherman, Ted. "Why did the Air Force decide not to give N.J. new fighter jets?" NJ.com https://www.nj.com/news/2016/12/air_force_rejection_of_nj_on_f-35_questioned_by_co.html (December 15, 2016)

¹¹ Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs. "AF selects locations for next two Air National Guard F-35 bases." <https://www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/1402425/af-selects-locations-for-next-two-air-national-guard-f-35-bases/> (December 21, 2017)

We're the options folks. The F-35 is critical to the family of systems we need to accomplish this mission for the nation now and in the future."

Following the USAF decision to eliminate the 177th FW from the selection process, U.S. Senators Bob Menendez and Cory Booker joined Congressman Frank LoBiondo (N.J.-02) and the full New Jersey Congressional delegation in a letter to Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James urging consideration of the Air National Guard 177th Fighter Wing for future basing decisions of the F-35 fighter jets.

The letter was also signed by U.S. Representatives Frank Pallone, Jr. (N.J.-06), Bill Pascrell (N.J.-09), Chris Smith (N.J.-04), Albio Sires (N.J.-08), Rodney Frelinghuysen (N.J.-11), Bonnie Watson Coleman (N.J.-12), Leonard Lance (N.J.-07), Donald Payne, Jr. (N.J.-10), Tom MacArthur (N.J.-03), Donald Norcross (N.J.-01), and Scott Garrett (N.J.-05).

The text of the letter is as follows:¹²

December 14, 2016

*The Honorable Deborah Lee James
Secretary
United States Air Force*

Secretary James:

In light of the decision for the Operations 5 and 6 beddown of the F-35A Lightning II to be based at five candidate military installations around the country, we are writing to express our disappointment in the Air Force's exclusion of the Atlantic City Air National Guard Base, home to the 177th Fighter Wing (FW).

In future basing decisions for next generation aircraft, including upcoming F-35A basing decisions, we hope the following qualities are considered for selecting the Atlantic City Air National Guard Base:

Low Cost/Ready Now/Sustainable: Base infrastructure and facilities postured

Newer facilities at the installation have already been designed to meet the needs of the F-35, and its older facilities require only limited modifications to become 5th generation capable. For example, there is covered parking for the entire fleet of F-35s, a state-of-the-art maintenance facility integrated with 5th generation capability, and space readily available for simulator upgrades. The base also has a recently constructed air support operations squadron building ready for F-35 air-to-ground integration.

Strategic Location: Centrally positioned

Located in Egg Harbor Township, the Atlantic City Air National Guard Base is strategically situated halfway between Washington D.C. and New York City. The area surrounding the base

¹² Senator Bob Menendez. "Menendez, Booker, LoBiondo Lead NJ Congressional Delegation Response to Air Force on Future Basing of the F-35s at 177th Fighter Wing." <https://www.menendez.senate.gov/news-and-events/press/menendez-booker-lobiondo-lead-nj-congressional-delegation-response-to-air-force-on-future-basing-of-f-35s-at-177th-fighter-wing> (December 15, 2016)

is predominantly agricultural, low-density residential with more than 50 percent of Atlantic County located within the New Jersey Pineland National Reserve. The base is also a primary launching point for missions to Europe, located near Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst for active duty support functions, and has optimum weather conditions year-round.

Combat Ready Track Record: Recent combat mission execution

The 177th FW has the distinction of having an operations group that is comprised of a fighter squadron, an air support operations squadron, and a bombing range all under a single command. The unit has more than 14 years of homeland defense experience; including three combat deployments: Operation Iraqi Freedom (2006, 2010) and Operation Enduring Freedom (2012). The 177th FW also plays a critical role in both the Air Combat Command's Aerospace Expeditionary Force structure and NORAD's Air Force Aerospace Control Alert mission.

We believe these qualities demonstrate strategic military value for the Air Force, and that the Atlantic City Air National Guard Base would be an ideal location for the F-35A looking forward.

We also look forward to any comments regarding changes the Atlantic City Air National Guard Base can make to improve its candidacy for future F-35A basing decisions. Thank you.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

In 2011, Lockheed Martin's Mission Systems and Sensors complex, based in Mount Laurel, hosted dozens of suppliers, elected officials, and invited guests to an F-35 cockpit demonstrator. Lockheed Martin officials stressed the economic benefits of the multibillion-dollar F-35 program. At that time, it was estimated that the program would provide more than 950 direct and indirect jobs and have a \$63 million economic impact in New Jersey.

"These are highly skilled jobs, well-paying jobs," stated Steve Callaghan, director of the F-35's Washington operations.¹³

Currently, Lockheed Martin estimates the F-35's economic impact in the State of New Jersey is 1,710 direct and indirect jobs equating to \$143,800,000. This is a result of New Jersey being the home to 51 supplier locations.¹⁴

The local economic impact, prior to and post receipt of the F-35s, is TBD.

Economic impact estimates for Truax Wisconsin and Montgomery Alabama vary significantly.

¹³ McHale, Todd. "Lockheed Martin hosts fighter jet demonstration." Burlington County Times. <https://www.burlingtoncountytimes.com/article/20111104/news/311049713> (November 4, 2011)

¹⁴ F-35 Lightning II. "Economic Impact" <https://www.f35.com/about/economic-impact>

The twenty new F-35 jets at Truax will add an estimated 64 jobs to the base, accounting for \$1.8 million a year in local economic activity. Truax already generates more than \$99 million in economic activity and supports more than 1,650 in-state jobs, according to a 2015 University of Wisconsin-Extension report.¹⁵

In Montgomery, officials estimate an additional 1,000 jobs over the next few years, a surge of \$70 million in upfront investment — money that local and state contractors can bid on — and a \$24 million-a-year long-term increase in the unit’s direct economic impact on the area. It also means about \$3 billion in new capital investment.¹⁶

CURRENT EFFORTS

Third ANG Selection Phase: The USAF is now beginning the third ANG selection process for the F-35.

The 177th FW is expected to complete a data call within the next six to twelve months. Approximately 18 months from that date, the USAF will decide on which Air National Guard bases will be awarded the F-35. The first F-35s jets are expected to arrive approximately four years after the announcement.

A coalition of public and private entities, showing overwhelming support, is currently underway and will be a critical element in the selection process.

In addition, Congressman Jeff Van Drew took a four-hour tour of the 177th FW in early August of 2019. His biggest takeaway was how desperately the 177th needs new jets.¹⁷

The 177th is flying the 1986 model Block F-16C+, the oldest in the USAF inventory.

*“Despite its coverage of two of the nation’s largest cities (New York City and Washington D.C.) and a wide swath of Atlantic coast, this is an F-16 Squadron. It was passed over for the newer F-35 jets that have been deployed elsewhere. This vital upgrade should be expedited, and I will do everything in my power to make sure that this facility gets what it needs,” said Congressman Van Drew.*¹⁸

Later in August of 2019, Congressman Donald Norcross also supported efforts to land the F-35 fighter jets at the 177th FW.

“Currently, the 177th Fighter Wing supports our homeland defense utilizing the oldest F-16s in our inventory,” Norcross wrote in his August 16 letter to Acting Secretary Matthew Donovan.

¹⁵ Schmidt, Mitchell. “What if Truax doesn’t get the F-35?” Wisconsin State Journal. https://madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt-and-politics/what-happens-if-truax-field-doesn-t-get-the-f/article_e917baf6-e10b-5936-9ab3-d59ac30ca714.html (September 13, 2019)

¹⁶ Klass, Kym. “It’s ours! F-35 Lightning lands in Montgomery.” Montgomery Advertiser. <https://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/story/news/local/f35/2017/12/21/its-ours-f-35-lands-montgomery-decision/747285001/> (December 21, 2017)

¹⁷ Brunetti-Post, Michelle. “Van Drew to push for newer jets at 177th.” The Press of Atlantic City. https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/politics/van-drew-to-push-for-newer-jets-at-th/article_5e73e78b-226b-5f5b-83a0-795efc19c3c0.html (August 1, 2019)

¹⁸ Representative Jefferson Van Drew. “Congressman Jeff Van Drew Kicks off August District Work Period with Tour of the 177th Fighter Wing.” <https://vandrew.house.gov/media/press-releases/congressman-jeff-van-drew-kicks-august-district-work-period-tour-177th-fighter> (August 2, 2019)

“With such a vital mission at stake, defending our nation’s most vital government and economic regions, the Wing must be considered for an upgrade to the newest technology and platform available – the F-35s.”¹⁹

In his letter to Acting Secretary Donovan, Norcross also mentioned the 177th’s strategic location on the eastern seaboard, its proximity to the Warren Grove Gunnery Range, the second-longest runway in the country, and ample space to house the new fighter jets.

Congressman Norcross requested a briefing on the Air Force’s process for selecting additional National Guard bases to house F-35s in the future.

On January 9, 2020, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy signed a measure ([NJSR83](#)) encouraging the United States Air Force to base some of its new generation F-35 fighters at the 177th Fighter Wing NJANG. The joint resolution was sponsored by Congressman Jeff Van Drew, Assemblymen John Armato, Vincent Mazzeo, and Wayne DeAngelo.²⁰

NJ’S COMPETITION

During the second selection phase, five Air National Guard units were seriously considered to land the F-35. This list was narrowed down from 18. In the next selection process, it is anticipated that twenty Air National Guard Bases will be making efforts to secure F-35s. The three that were heavily considered, and did not previously receive F-35s, were as follows:²¹

Gowen Field AGS (Boise, Idaho)

As recent as September of 2019, Boiseans overwhelmingly told the United States Air Force officials that they are not interested in a fleet of the F-35As coming to their town. More than 120 people showed up to a comment session on a draft environmental impact statement put out by the Air Force on the potential impacts of stationing the 18 fighter jets at Gowen Field.²²

Florida Air National Guard’s 125th Fighter Wing (Jacksonville, Florida)

¹⁹ Levinsky, David. “Congressman: South Jersey base will take new F-35 fighters.” Burlington County Times. <https://www.burlingtoncountytimes.com/news/20190819/congressman-south-jersey-base-will-take-new-f-35-fighters> (August 19, 2019)

²⁰ Brunetti Post, Michelle. “Murphy signs measure encouraging F-35s at ACY.” The Press of Atlantic City. (https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/news/murphy-signs-measure-encouraging-f--s-at-acy/article_de55daaf-ce32-5563-94a4-44308f9f9e54.html) (January 9, 2020)

²¹ United States Air Force F-35A Operational Beddown – Air National Guard Environmental Impact Statement. <http://angf35eis.com/Alternatives.aspx>

²² Harding, Hayley. “Boise is no place for urban war”: Dozens weigh in on F-35 fighter jets at Gowen Field. Idaho Statesman. <https://www.idahostatesman.com/news/local/community/boise/article234778822.html> (September 5, 2019)

U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio and U.S. Reps, John Rutherford, Matt Gaetz, Michael Waltz, and Mario Diaz-Balart are petitioning the United States Air Force to move F-35s to Jacksonville.²³

In late October, Rep. Rutherford got in the cockpit of an F-35 simulator just prior to Jacksonville's Sea and Sky show. The F-35 flew in the 2019 event.

Rutherford has been in contact with Air Force Secretary Barbara Barrett to bring F-35s to Jacksonville.²⁴

Selfridge Air National Guard Base (Detroit, Michigan)

On Nov. 25, a letter was sent from 14 lawmakers, members of the Michigan congressional delegation, to Secretary of the Air Force Barbara M. Barrett, urging her to select Selfridge Air National Guard Base in Harrison Township as one of the locations to host the Air National Guard's next F-35A operational base.

This comes two years after the Harrison Township base wasn't selected to house the F-35s. If the 127th Wing is selected, 18 F-35A aircraft would be based at the installation to replace 18 A-10s currently at the base.²⁵

²³ Gancarski, A.G, "Delegation renews push for the Air Force F-35s in Jacksonville." FLAPOL. <https://floridapolitics.com/archives/306638-push-renews-for-air-force-f-35s-in-jacksonville> (September 26, 2019)

²⁴ Inclan, Lorena. "Rep. Rutherford gets hands on with F35 simulator in push to bring jets to Jacksonville." Action News Jax. (October 25, 2019)

²⁵ Szwarc, Alex. "Lawmakers urge new Air Force secretary to select Selfridge for F-35s." C and G News. <https://www.candgnews.com/news/lawmakers-urge-new-air-force-secretary-to-select-selfridge-for-f35s-116081> (December 5, 2019)



CONCLUSION

As the USAF decides where the next F-35s will be stationed, the support of the community is critically important. We recognize that 177th Fighter Wing in Atlantic County has an unparalleled strategic location and that bedding the F-35s at the 177th FW will allow the USAF to maintain its air dominance against a challenging and potential threat. We support this mission.

Key Takeaways

- The 177th FW currently flies the Block 30 F-16s, manufactured in 1986, the oldest F-16 in the Air Force inventory. New technology is required to maintain air superiority in the most densely populated part of the country.
- There is widespread bipartisan support for bedding the F-35s at the 177th FW from federal, state, and community leaders who recognize and appreciate the importance of the 177th FW's missions.
- The 177th FW, the William J. Hughes Technical Center, the National Aviation Research & Technology Park, and the Atlantic City Airport are intricately linked and benefit from their proximity to each other, which would further increase the F-35's economic impact mission in the state of New Jersey.
- The 177th FW has deployed overseas to defend and protect our nation; mobilized in response to statewide emergencies and natural disasters; and in recent years has had an active role in the events of September 11, Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Southern Watch, Operation Northern Watch, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom.
- The data call for landing the F-35 is quickly approaching and the Greater Atlantic City Chamber will be at the forefront to rally community support to land the world's most state-of-the-art fighter jet at the 177th FW in Atlantic County New Jersey.

This document has been prepared by the Greater Atlantic City Chamber.

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