COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
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MARK BEGICH
ALASKA

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON OCEANS, ATMOSPHERE, FISHERIES AND COAST GUARD
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

June 13, 2012

The Honorable Leon E. Panetta
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Panetta:

I write to follow up on our recent meeting concerning the Department of the Air Force's proposal to relocate the F-16 Squadron from Eielson Air Force Base (AFB) in order to significantly reduce base operations support at one of our nation's most strategically located installations. As we discussed during our meeting, the Air Force had not yet provided Congress with factual information required to ensure affordability, feasibility and executability of the proposal. To date, the Air Force still has not provided a factual and comprehensive analysis or long-term plan for Eielson AFB – information to which you and I agree Congress is entitled.

Since our meeting, the Air Force did provide the results of Pacific Air Force's Site Activation Task Force (SATAF) on the Eielson proposal. Although the Air Force said it would provide thorough and complete information, several significant issues remain unresolved. The ambiguity, lack of credible data and overall incompleteness of the SATAF report continue to raise questions regarding affordability, feasibility and executability of this proposal.

For instance, available housing and dorm space for military families and unaccompanied personnel transferring from Eielson is unknown. Although the SATAF report concluded adequate housing was available in the community, the conclusion was drawn using sources such as "Craig's List" rather than conducting an appropriate housing analysis based on reliable data. The preferred course of action is to house unaccompanied enlisted Airmen in Army barracks at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, yet Army occupancy was later disclosed by the SATAF in subsequent information provided to my office to be "unknown." A formal housing study will not be complete for six weeks.

Additionally, the SATAF only validated cost and savings for Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13). Implementation costs beyond FY13 were not assessed, nullifying projected savings in the out years. The Air Force initially led Congress to believe there would be $3.5 million

SUITE 750 510 L STREET ANCHORAGE, AK 99501 (907) 271-5915
SUITE 328 101 12TH AVENUE FAIRBANKS, AK 99701 (907) 456-0261
SUITE 308 ONE SEALASKA PLAZA JUNEAU, AK 99801 (907) 586-7700
SUITE 101 805 FRONTAGE ROAD KENAI, AK 99611 (907) 283-4000
SUITE 230 1900 FIRST AVENUE KETCHIKAN, AK 99901 (907) 225-3000
SUITE 309 851 EAST WESTPOINT DRIVE WASILLA, AK 99654 (907) 357-9956
SUITE SR-111 RUSSELL BUILDING WASHINGTON, DC 20510 (202) 224-3004

cost savings in FY13. However, the SATAF concluded there will be no savings and identified implementation costs of $5.6 million for FY13. This cost of implementation is not reflected in the President's budget request for FY13. Finally, ambiguity regarding the need for an Environmental Impact Statement may further impact the cost and execution of this ill-conceived plan and an Environmental Assessment will not be completed until December.

Despite glaring obstacles and lack of facts which hinder sound execution in FY13, the Air Force has indicated it intends to proceed with the proposed action at Eielson. I strongly urge you to consider the adverse impact hastily implementing a plan without the facts will have on more than 500 military members and two communities. In the interest of our military families and the Department of Defense's relationship with communities across the country and with Congress, I implore you to issue a one-year delay so a comprehensive analysis can be completed as was adopted by the Senate Armed Services Committee in the National Defense Authorization Act for FY13.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I appreciate your consideration and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Mark Begich
United States Senator