

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 17, 2026

The Honorable Dr. Troy E. Meink
Secretary
United States Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Dear Secretary Meink,

We write today in support of the Indiana National Guard's eligibility for an upcoming F-35A basing decision. The Indiana National Guard has long supported critical air missions throughout the world, namely at the 122nd Fighter Wing in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Because of their current operational capabilities, demonstrated excellence, and strong recruiting and community support, the 122nd has all the tools needed to succeed in any F-35 mission.

Currently, the 122nd hosts the F-16, having completed their conversion from the A-10 earlier this year. During the conversion, the Wing exceeded Initial Operational Criteria in both aircraft available and airmen trained, in addition to meeting conversion timelines and other requirements. This successful conversion enabled the 122nd Fighter Wing to immediately assume active operational taskings, proving their ability to adapt, train, and overcome the immense challenges of modernizing combat capabilities. This record of operational excellence demonstrates the ability for a seamless transition to the F-35A, maximizing the Air Force's return on critical defense investments.

Since converting to F-16s, the 122nd Fighter Wing has continued to showcase their superiority, supporting training and combat missions throughout the world. Through the State Partnership Program, the National Guardsmen of the 122nd have conducted ongoing training operations with our Slovakian counterparts and continue to grow a relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Indiana's burgeoning strategic partnership with the KSA—a future operator of the F-35 platform—remains significant for future CENTCOM partnerships. This alignment underscores the strategic necessity of equipping Indiana and the 122nd Fighter Wing with the F-35, further strengthening an already compelling case for the unit's modernization.

The bond between the State of Indiana, City of Fort Wayne and the 122nd Fighter Wing is unmatched. These entities do not merely co-exist with the Blacksnakes—they aggressively champion them. The fierce, unwavering community support translates into an environment where the wing can recruit and retain elite talent from a local population deeply dedicated to national service. The state and community have consistently demonstrated their willingness to advocate for the wing, ensuring that the 122nd enjoys a secure, welcoming, and world-class home for its airmen and their families.

This strong relationship is represented most evidently by strong recruiting and retention numbers, especially through periods of low recruiting numbers nationwide. The 122nd is currently manned at 108% with a retention rate of over 90%. The unit has a strong track record, maintaining a manning rate over 100% for decades, that will ensure proper manpower for a F-35 conversion and beyond.

The value of this transition also extends beyond the proud heritage of the 122nd Fighter Wing. Indiana has grown to serve as a central hub for American uncrewed aerial systems (UAS) dominance. Driven by the state's FAA-designated test site, advanced manufacturing capabilities, and world-class military training infrastructure, Indiana has positioned itself as the Midwest's premier center for high-tech innovation and modern warfare capabilities. As the country continues to combat the national security challenges of the future, this FAA test site will be able to combine the work being done through by academia, private industry, and the federal government to rapidly integrate and field advanced technologies. This test site will not just work to integrate new systems already being developed, but help identify novel solutions to national security challenges of the future.

We remain committed to supporting the Indiana National Guard as they identify ways to fulfill for this important mission. We respectfully urge you to consider our request and support the stationing of these future F-35 units at the 122nd Fighter Wing in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Thank you for your attention to this important matter and we look forward to working with you to discuss this opportunity and other Air Force and Air National Guard modernization priorities.

Sincerely,



Todd Young
United States Senator



Marlin A. Stutzman
Member of Congress



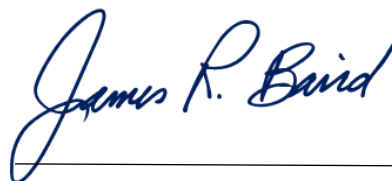
Jim Banks
United States Senator



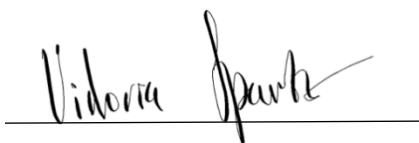
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