



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC 20330

9 DEC 2009

HQ USAF/CC
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-6050

Dear Senator McCain

Sir,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide further details regarding ongoing Air Force concerns about residential development near Luke Air Force Base (AFB) and the impact of that development on the ongoing training and operational missions.

Since 1941, Luke AFB has been a premier fighter training base for the Air Force, having produced over 55,000 fighter pilots. Today, over 95% of the Air Force's F-16 pilots are trained at Luke – well over 50% of our fighter force. Many of those pilots serve in combat within weeks of graduation. Luke AFB is an ideal location with excellent infrastructure, temperate flying weather, close proximity to the Barry M. Goldwater Range and two auxiliary airfields providing substantial training flexibility.

Arizona has been a valuable Air Force partner and supporter of military training and operations, and I applaud your personal efforts as that superb partnership continues. However, while much has been accomplished, vigilance is still required. We have expressed our concerns to you and local elected officials regarding the residential development within the "High Noise and Accident Potential Zones" near portions of Luke AFB. This type of development is incompatible with military flight operations. While many of the surrounding cities and towns have ensured managed growth compatible with our training and operational flying missions, we are concerned that Maricopa County does not appear to be making compatible development a priority near the base and auxiliary fields. Regrettably, this has cast a bit of a shadow on what has been an otherwise long-standing harmony between Luke AFB and its neighboring communities.

The visionary efforts and tough decisions made by you, together with state and local elected officials, to preserve the unique training capabilities at Luke AFB are deeply appreciated. However, we cannot afford to take our eyes off the ball. A holistic approach balancing the Air Force's operational requirements with compatible local real estate development will ensure that Luke AFB can sustain its mission in harmony with the surrounding communities well into the future.

As always, thank you for your stalwart support of our Air Force, our mission, our Airmen and their families.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "NASchwartz", with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end of the signature.

NORTON A. SCHWARTZ

General, USAF

Chief of Staff