

United States Senate

March 13, 2013

The Honorable Michael P. Huerta
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Administrator Huerta:

As you know, the Glendale and Goodyear airports in Arizona are on the Federal Aviation Administration's listing of contractor-operated towers under threat of April 1, 2013 shut-down. In 2009, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approved a Special Air Traffic Rule (SATR) for Luke Air Force Base (AFB) to provide safe separation of tactical aircraft from Luke AFB and Glendale tower-controlled traffic. The SATR provides a comprehensive air traffic management system to ensure safety, as well as to get military aircraft originating from Luke AFB out of the more congested West Valley airspace and to the Goldwater Range for training.

In a March 5, 2013 letter, the FAA advised affected contractors and facilities that the agency expects to cease funding on-site air traffic control services at many contract towers. The FAA further explained that it may decide to continue operations at an affected tower if closing the tower would have a negative impact on the national interest.

On March 8, the FAA provided additional guidance to clarify "national interest" as referenced in the March 5 letter. National interest considerations include: (1) significant threats to the national security as determined by the FAA in consultation with the Department of Defense or the Department of Homeland Security; (2) significant, adverse economic impact that is beyond the impact on a local community; (3) significant impact on multi-state transportation, communication or banking/financial networks; and (4) the extent to which an airport currently served by a contract tower is a critical diversionary airport to a large hub.

With that in mind, please respond to the following requests as soon as practicable.

1. Has the FAA determined whether closing these particular towers would have a negative impact on the national interest?
2. If so, please provide a copy of the FAA's determinations in this regard.
3. If not, when will the FAA decide whether operations at these towers may continue?
4. Please provide a copy of the final decision memoranda when they are issued.
5. To what extent has/will the FAA consult the Secretary of the Air Force in making these "national security interest" determinations as to each tower?

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6. If a decision is made to discontinue operations at these towers, please explain—as to each tower—how any safety concerns that may arise from this decision will be mitigated.
7. What implications to civilian flight operations, if any, would arise from the closure of Glendale and/or Goodyear's air traffic control towers.

Please note, if a final decision on this matter is still pending, these questions are not intended to impinge on the integrity of the FAA's deliberative process. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John McCain". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

John McCain
United States Senate