

Alaska Congressional Delegation

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Murkowski, Begich, Young Press Air Force to Base F35 at Eielson *Military Value of Eielson Increasing*

The Alaska Congressional Delegation was united today in urging Air Force leadership to strongly consider basing the F-35 at Eielson Air Force Base.

Following the Air Force's recent decision to forgo their transfer proposal and leave the F-16 Aggressor squadron stationed at the base, Sens. Lisa Murkowski, Mark Begich and Representative Don Young wasted no time in pressing Air Force brass on bringing new missions to Eielson.

In a letter sent Tuesday to Acting Secretary of the Air Force Eric Fanning and Air Force Chief of Staff Mark Welsh, the Delegation ensured that the Air Force understands the military value of Eielson and its future role in the National Security of the United States of America.

Murkowski, Begich and Young write:

“In a recent briefing on the Asia-Pacific rebalance, General Carlisle said: "As far as next generation technology goes, we (Pacific Air Forces) need it first." The General also highlighted the most recent Red Flag-Alaska where Australia, Japan, and the Republic of Korea participated in building partnerships and learning interoperability, both crucial components to an aircraft such as the F-35, which is forecast to be operated by many coalition partners in the future. We wholeheartedly agree the latest 5th Generation technology should be forward-based first in the Asia-Pacific Area of Responsibility.”

“...The military value of Eielson AFB is ever increasing with its unique geographic location, close proximity to the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC), and capability to project power in the Pacific Theater of Operations while on home soil... These strengths, coupled with other available infrastructure, and continued investment make Eielson AFB a clear choice to base the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter in the Asia-Pacific Theater. We look forward to working with the Air Force and local communities throughout the process to ensure Eielson AFB is best equipped to support F-35 operations in the near future.”

In August, Air Force Chief of Staff General Mark Welsh visited Eielson at the request of Murkowski, Begich and Young. After his visit he spoke publicly about Eielson's

advantage over other bases in the Pacific to host the new generation fighter. The Air Force is expected to make the initial candidate bases in late November with preferred and reasonable alternative bases to be announced in February of 2014.

The full text of the letter is attached.

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