

115th Fighter Wing (115 FW), Truax Field, Madison, WI Strategic Plan Initiative

F-35A Joint Strike Fighter Acquisition

1. **Purpose:** Secure F-35A Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) aircraft assignment to the 115th Fighter Wing (115 FW), Truax Field, Madison, Wisconsin.

2. **Recommendation:** Encourage USAF leaders to select the 115 FW as the next Air National Guard (ANG) organization to transition to the F-35A by emphasizing the strategic, economic, and objective benefits of the 115 FW.

3. **Background:**

a. The USAF is currently fielding the F-35A as the replacement aircraft for the F-16, A-10 and potentially the F-15. The next two USAF F-35A bases will be ANG bases selected this year, with aircraft fielding expected in 2023.

b. Bases will be selected through a two phased process outlined in the attachment. The first, which has been completed, examined all Air National Guard fighter bases against objective basing criteria which were approved by Air Force Leadership, leading them to identify the top 5 candidates for further analysis. This was completed in December 2016 when Truax was selected along with four other bases from among the 18 Air National Guard fighter aircraft bases. The second phase, now underway will consist of the USAF conducting site surveys, providing further objective analysis and the inclusion of "military judgement" in their selection of the top two candidates which the USAF will identify as their "Preferred Alternatives" for F-35 basing. That decision is projected for the fall of 2017. Additionally all five locations have started to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process in compliance with Federal Law. A Record of Decision which completes the EIS process should be reached in 2019.

c. It is essential for the 115 FW to be selected as the next ANG F-35A base. The 115 FW currently operates the oldest F-16 in the USAF inventory. If the 115 FW is not selected at this time for the F-35A, the service life of current 115 FW aircraft may expire prior to the next ANG F-35A basing selection, putting the 115 FW at risk.

4. **Discussion:** The 115 FW's experience, personnel, location, and infrastructure make it a premier choice for the F-35A. The 115 FW is only 70 miles from Volk Field Combat Readiness Training Center (CRTC), one of the most dynamic training airspace and range complexes in the United States, ensuring **high quality training and mission readiness while minimizing operating cost**. In addition, the military use only airfield at Volk Field, located within the confines of the training airspace, provides premier training opportunities.

a. **Quality of training:** There are few bases in the ANG that facilitate training to meet full-spectrum F-35A training requirements. The Volk CRTC airspace and range complex is unique in that it provides a training area for all F-35A missions in one centralized location. The extensive airspace is co-located with precision-guided munitions impact areas and advanced electronic warfare threat emitters. Fully instrumented airspace and ranges, provide real-time scenario based training, and optimize training utilizing live-virtual construct (LVC) and enhanced debrief capabilities.

b. **Cost effectiveness of training:** Compared to other ANG potential F-35A bases, the close proximity of the 115 FW to its primary training complex will provide **maximum mission readiness** for national defense at the lowest cost, **saving \$16M - \$32M annually**¹. To accomplish the full-spectrum F-35A training requirements at other ANG bases, costs will be significantly more or those units will have to accept reduced mission readiness. In addition, the 128th Air Refueling Wing (128 ARW), operates KC-135 air-

refueling aircraft at Milwaukee, WI, providing additional efficiencies for combat training for the 115 FW. Air-to-air refueling enables fighters to essentially double tactical training on every flight and reduces transit time. Currently, the 115 FW accomplishes air-to-air refueling on 40% of training sorties. This would provide an additional \$6M savings in F-35A annual operating costs.² The expected increased F-35A operating cost creates an imperative to maximize tactical training time and minimize transit time to/from the training airspace.

c. Strategic location: The 115 FW is a primary Aerospace Control Alert (ACA) unit and is centrally located between major metropolitan areas, providing the fastest response times to threats against these population centers (Chicago, Minneapolis and Milwaukee) and numerous nuclear facilities. North American Air Defense selected the 115 FW as a primary ACA site because of its strategic location, the United States' northern border and Central United States. The next closest ACA units are located in Toledo and Denver. Securing the F-35A at the 115 FW will provide a more capable ACA fighter presence in this region. The proximity of premier training airspace and ranges coupled with the 115 FW's strategic location for homeland defense requires significant consideration for selecting the 115 FW as the next F-35A base.

d. The 115 FW and its Airmen contribute significantly to the local and state economy. The 115 FW employs over 1,200 civilian and military employees (nearly 500 full-time employees and 700 drill status Guardsmen) with approximately \$62M in payroll. The 115 FW has an average **\$100M annual economic impact** in Wisconsin and supports over 1,650 in-state jobs.³ Approximately 1,000 115 FW employees reside in Wisconsin, many employed by local businesses. These citizen Airmen are a highly trained, technical, skilled, and dependable workforce for Wisconsin, committed to a culture of service and integrity. Finally, the 115 FW is a tenant user and valued partner with Dane County Regional Airport (DCRA), providing fire/crash rescue services in turn creating a mutually beneficial relationship for Dane County, the community and the 115 FW.

e. The 115 FW is postured for immediate support to civil authorities with unique emergency response capabilities including: Fire, Rescue & Emergency Medical Services, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Security Forces, Emergency Response Medical Unit, heavy equipment and power generation equipment, and mobile command, communication and control center. The 115 FW trains 1,200 personnel and maintains significant emergency response equipment for dual-role state and federal missions. Losing the 115 FW will negatively impact availability of military first responders and equipment available for the state domestic response missions.

f. Immediate economic impact: Any ANG base selected for F-35A will require extensive base improvements. If the 115 FW is selected for the F-35A, construction funds will be allocated for base improvements, providing an economic stimulus to the state. Bases currently in F-35A transition are expected to receive in excess of \$20M in order to prepare the base for the transition⁴.

5. **Summary:** The 115 FW is the premier location for F-35s given its strategic, economic and objective benefits. Strategic geographic relevance, access to unparalleled air space and cost efficient training make it the optimum choice for F-35A basing. Madison is the logical location for the F-35A because it is good for the Air Force, good for Wisconsin and good for the nation.

1. Based upon expected F-35A operating cost (\$32K per flying hour) of an annual flying hour program of 3,000 hours; \$16M savings for bases located 100nm from training airspace and \$32M savings for bases located 150nm from training airspace, compared to the 115 FW located only 50 nm from training airspace.

2. Based upon expected F-35A operating cost (\$32K per flying hour) & saving 10 minutes transit time on 1,200 sorties per year.

3. Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, "The Economic Impact of Wisconsin's Military Installations", Released 2015

4. \$20M current MILCON allocated for Burlington, VT F-35 transition.