

Congress of the United States
Washington, D.C. 20510

September 27, 2021

The Honorable Frank Kendall
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Dear Secretary Kendall:

We write to bring your attention to the critical state of the F-16 Block 30 aircraft, which are assigned to the 120th Fighter Squadron, a unit of the 140th Wing of the Colorado Air National Guard at Buckley Space Force Base in Aurora, Colorado. The 120th Fighter Squadron—as one of the few remaining units still flying the aging F-16 Block 30—merits strong consideration for rapid fighter recapitalization.

Buckley Space Force Base and its 120th Fighter Squadron are critical national security assets. The Squadron is home to the only aerospace control alert mission in the central United States and is an active partner of two combatant commands. The unit also supports an array of ground forces including a U.S. Army infantry division, a Special Forces group, and an Air Support Operations Squadron. Buckley offers a unique joint and multi-domain environment for F-35 training.

Since its inception, the unit has consistently demonstrated combat readiness and mission excellence. Its multiple deployments include post-Gulf War missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as agile combat employment in the North American Arctic. Its proximity to one of the nation's busiest airports facilitates the retention of experienced Air Force pilots who are pairing a career in commercial aviation with continued service in the Air National Guard.

Both large-scale combat operations and low-intensity conflicts remain an unfortunate reality in today's geopolitical climate. Fighter recapitalization will allow the 120th Fighter Squadron to continue to draw from the expertise of collocated assets from space to Special Forces. This integration facilitates the development of next-generation capabilities to help our nation retain an advantage over near-peer adversaries.

Buckley also has unique access to diverse training airspace in the surrounding area and a Class A bombing range at Fort Carson. The airspace allows pilots to train for a variety of combat in urban

and rural environments including mountains, plains, deserts, and forests. Additionally, 300 days of sunshine minimize weather impacts on training.

Buckley stands ready to receive fighters today, and already is home to a regional simulator center. The Air National Guard presence on an active duty base provides multiple layers of base security, and the operations building was built with 5th generation security requirements included in the design.

As the first federally recognized Air National Guard unit, the 120th Fighter Squadron has 75 years of excellence on which it continues to build. The opportunity to ensure these dynamic partnerships continue into the future should be a top priority as part of a diversified national security posture.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to hearing from you as you outline your plan for the future of the 140th Wing as they continue to train and protect critical national security assets in Colorado. Please let us know if we can facilitate a visit or answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Jason Crow
United States Representative