

**Comments from Steven Klafka on behalf of Safe Skies Clean Water Wisconsin  
to the Dane County Airport Commission**

**April 14, 2021**

My name is Steve Klafka. I'm speaking on behalf of Safe Skies Clean Water Wisconsin. We are a local non-profit group which represents over 2,000 residents and 60 organizations who are opposed to the beddown of the F-35 jets at Truax Field. I've lived in Madison for over 45 years, have been a professional environmental engineer for over 40 years, operating my own business for 30 years, and most significantly, have lived on the county airport's main runway flight path for over 25 years. I have firsthand experience of current fighter jet training flights over Madison. Though we shouldn't forget that, besides actually flights, the testing of the fighter jet engines on the ground is a rock concert continuous roar that is heard throughout our city.

We at Safe Skies hope the Airport Commission will stand with the community you serve and support the proposed county board resolution. Speaking as a longtime resident and environmental professional, the F-35 fighter jet squadron proposed for Truax Field does not belong in our community. The costs are too great and the benefits too small.

I hope you'll agree that the decision to bring these jets to Madison is controversial. Of the 6,419 comments submitted on the draft Environmental Impact Statement for five potential sites, 89% were submitted regarding Truax. Numerous local organizations opposed the beddown. Our Common Council and School Board both passed resolutions, similar to the county board resolution under consideration today, opposing the proposed jets.

It was a year ago that the Air Force completed its Environmental Impact Statement and selected the 115th Fighter Wing at Truax Field to receive a squadron of F-35 fighter jets costing more than \$1.5 billion. As much as we like to debate new developments in Madison, the Air Force didn't ask our opinion before selecting our city. They forced it on us with no concern for its impacts on current and future residents.

The EIS evaluated five possible sites for these new jets. It's safe to say the Air Force had made up its mind before the EIS was prepared, and ignored its findings that Truax Field in Madison is a terrible place for these jets. Of the five sites evaluated by the Air Force, Truax will have the greatest environmental impacts. This fact was ignored by the Air Force.

Of the five sites, two were selected for the jets. These were Madison and Montgomery, Alabama. These were the only two sites where the EIS concluded "there will be disproportionate impacts to low income and minority populations, as well as children." I hope you will agree that this past year has awoken the need to combat racism in our society. I think you'll also agree that the Air Force is promoting environmental racism by picking these two sites.

Besides training fighter jet pilots, there are 43 other missions available to Air National Guard units. Any of these could provide the same economic benefit without the extensive costs to the county airport and our community. A new mission could still provide the fire-fighting services to the county airport, perhaps even without contaminating our lakes. The Air National Guard units in Montana, New Mexico, Iowa and

Ohio have recently changed their missions from training fighter jet pilots to ones which the entire community can support. The Air Force did not consider alternative missions for 115<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing at Truax Field.

The EIS underestimates the impacts of the F-35 fighter jets on our community. To estimate noise impacts, the Air Force used the current FAA noise standard of 65 decibels DN which defines areas considered incompatible for residential use. This standard is over 50 years old. It is a daily average and doesn't account for the peak noise levels we actually hear. For example, the Richardson School which serves autistic children, is projected to have a peak noise level of 111 decibels, the average threshold at which a human will experience pain.

Despite using this outdated noise standard, the Air Force concluded the new jets at Truax would increase the number of Madison residents exposed to noise levels above this standard from 446 to 2,766 residents and 1,318 households. The second highest of the five evaluated sites.

The Air Force will provide no money for noise mitigation but expects the Dane County Airport and FAA to clean up its mess. If the 2,766 residents are relocated, a noise abatement procedure used by other airports, the cost to the county airport and the FAA could exceed \$200 million. We would also lose a great deal of affordable housing.

By using the 65-decibel noise standard, the Air Force did not consider noise impacts on the 60,000 people living within 3 miles of Truax Field. The Air Force assumed that no one lives in Madison outside the 65-decibel noise contour or will be impacted outside this fuzzy line. Anyone who experiences the ear shattering noise of the current F-16 jets knows this is absurd.

It is a coincidence, but today is the last day of the comment period for FAA review of its current 65 decibel DNL noise standard. As part of its review, the FAA conducted a noise complaint study at several national airports in 2015. This shows the current standard, which is only based on annoyance, is inadequate and should be significantly lowered. If this is done, far more of Madison would be considered "incompatible with residential use".

I hope you would agree that the current FAA noise standard doesn't account for many health and social impacts of noise exposure. Nor the educational impacts of noise exposure to the predominately low income students attending schools near Truax. It's not surprising our school board opposed the F-35 jets.

That 65-decibel noise contour used by the Air Force is a fuzzy line based on noise modeling that used many assumptions that have not and will not be verified. One of those assumptions is the frequency of afterburner usage. While the Air Force assumed 5% usage, internal Air Force memos show this was a vague unverified assumption. In response to our request for usage at other airports, the Air Force told us that the F-35 jets at Hill AFB use their afterburners for 100% of their takeoffs.

As you are likely aware, the Air National Guard at Truax Field has been identified by the Wisconsin DNR as a responsible party for PFAS contamination in our groundwater, Starkweather Creek and Madison chain of lakes. Area residents have already been exposed to PFAS in the drinking water from Well 15 that is currently shutdown. Exposure continues for people that continue to fish or swim in Starkweather Creek and our chain of lakes. While the Air Force EIS did acknowledge the existing contamination, the Air Force will provide no money to complete the required investigation and cleanup. It will soon start

construction in the contaminated soil and groundwater at Truax. This will likely cause further PFAS discharges into our lakes. Once again, the county airport and FAA are likely to be paying the bill for cleaning up the PFAS.

The county airport is currently sponsoring its 2nd annual Flight of Lights helping to cheer us up during this prolonged pandemic. Thank you for this program. I hope this shows the airport considers itself part of the Madison community.

By selecting Truax Field, the Air Force showed exceedingly poor and irresponsible judgement. It is acting like an occupying force and we are the collateral damage. The proposed county resolution brings us together to send a message to the Air Force that its fighter jet squadron does not represent the values of our community. We oppose environmental injustice, we oppose environmental racism, we want our city to be a healthy and safe place to live, we want our children to get a good education and find our city to be a desirable place to live.

On behalf of Safe Skies Clean Water Wisconsin, we ask that the Airport Commission stand with the rest of the Madison community and support the county resolution opposing the proposed F-35 fighter jet squadron at Truax Field.