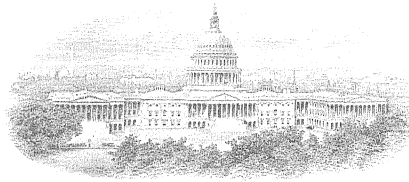


DON YOUNG
CONGRESSMAN FOR ALL ALASKA
WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2314 RAYBURN BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
202-225-5765



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE
REPUBLICAN
POLICY COMMITTEE

January 9, 2014

The Honorable Deborah Lee James
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20330

General Mark Welsh
Chief of Staff, Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20330

Dear Secretary James and General Welsh,

Every year Eielson Air Force Base (EAFB) and Joint-Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) play host to RED FLAG-Alaska (RFA), which is one of the greatest aerial training exercises in which the U.S. Armed Forces participate. For over two weeks, each day, twice a day, our nation's best aircraft and pilots fight realistic mock battles in the largest training range in the U.S. and one of the most terrain-diverse training areas in the world. In 65,000 square miles of available airspace, a training space the size of multiple states, the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC) provides an extremely unique training environment and allows our commanders to train for a full spectrum of engagements, both large and small.

During 2013, the U.S. Air Force (USAF) canceled and significantly reduced USAF participation in RED FLAGS in Alaska. As a direct result of this downsizing, I have become increasingly concerned that the readiness of Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) has already been adversely impacted and could be further impacted by additional RED FLAG-Alaska cancellations or reductions. I understand that these are tough budget times and I recognize that due to Sequestration and other budget shortfalls, difficult and sometimes painful decisions have to be made. I also understand that, as of yet, no final decision has been made on the size and scope of future RED-FLAGS in Alaska, scheduled for 2014.

Over the years, I have heard from countless pilots that the training provided during each RED FLAG-Alaska engagement is irreplaceable, as the training space in Alaska provides them with the most realistic combat situations possible. It would be a shame to lose any more RED FLAG-Alaska exercises, as these exercises are a critical part of our continued ability to project complete air superiority over the battlefield. Additionally, due to the uncertain leadership of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and the increased instability in the Northern Pacific, it is important that we continue to not only train our forces, but also we continue to project a credible threat so that we can best deter hostile aggression. Large training exercises like RED FLAG-Alaska are a

critical part of our deterrence strategy and they are vital to bolstering the capacity of the Republic of Korea Air Force (ROKAF) and the Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF), as well as the forces of partner nations in the Pacific.

Furthermore, given the participation of the Royal Canadian Air Force, the Royal Air Force, and the Royal Australian Air Force, I am equally concerned that the cancellation of further RED-FLAGS exercises in Alaska may have an adverse and unintended impact on existing agreements with our partner nations, specifically involving our Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programs. As you know, these partnerships strengthen our bilateral and multilateral defense relations and are vital in furthering our national security and foreign policy objectives and enhancing interoperability between U.S. forces and the forces of friends and allies.

Following the Vietnam War, where the air-to-air kill ratio averaged an alarming 2.2 enemy aircraft lost to 1 U.S. aircraft lost, and the subsequent release of the report Project Red Baron II, the Air Force rightly began to utilize realistic training exercises to improve pilot survivability in combat. Large, modern-day exercises reduce risk, keep our nation's pilots safe, and help ensure that both pilots and aircraft make it home in one piece. These large exercises simulate, to the greatest degree possible, the ground and air-based threats that exist in real combat situations and provide invaluable training to our nation's airmen. I respectfully ask you do everything possible to ensure that the RED FLAG-Alaska exercises this year are not canceled or downsized and that we continue to foster strong mil-to-mil relations with our partner nations.

Sincerely,



DON YOUNG
Congressman for All Alaska