

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 28, 2026

The Honorable Dr. Troy E. Meink
Secretary
Department of the Air Force
Washington, D.C. 20301-1010

Mr. Secretary:

On behalf of a grateful state, we thank you and your airmen for your service to our nation. We write in support of the 148th Fighter Wing for the OPS 16/17 strategic basing decisions.

The United States is at the precipice of challenging and uncertain times. Global threats and near-peer competitors are testing our deterrent capabilities. As such, our nation requires an effective Air Force capable of projecting power to discourage bad actors from attack and to defeat them in the unfortunate event of conflict. As elected members of Congress, it is our duty to ensure your airmen have the capabilities required to meet these needs.

As highlighted by Operations Midnight Hammer, Absolute Resolve, and recent operations in the Middle East, the Air National Guard is no longer merely a reserve force. Simply put, there is no current or future fight in which the Air National Guard will not play a critical role. Further, the Air National Guard is uniquely positioned to support USNORTHCOM's homeland defense mission through Aerospace Control Alert (ACA). Therefore, we are excited that the two ongoing strategic basing decisions support the Air National Guard.

As Minnesotans, we are immensely proud of the total force contribution our state's National Guard is providing to overseas operations and to defend the homeland. This is especially true of the 148th Fighter Wing. Thus, it is our firm belief that including the 148th Fighter Wing on the OPS 16/17 Preferred Alternatives List is in the best interest of the total force and the United States. Further, the 148th's consistent involvement in ongoing operations, overall performance, and various other factors merit consideration in the OPS 16/17 strategic basing decisions.

The 148th Fighter Wing is a vital component of the Air Force's CONUS and OCONUS operations. It recently completed an overseas deployment to the Middle East and has again deployed to this area of responsibility; this demonstrates an impressive and unrivaled ability to rapidly return, reintegrate, prepare, and execute on minimal notice. During the prior 12-ship overseas deployment, the unit executed over 220% of its programmed flying hours. Between FY21 and FY25, it executed an average of 147% of its normal Flying Hour Program, fulfilling deployment cycle commitments and covering ACA mission gaps nationwide.

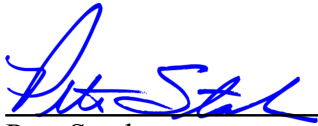
Despite the challenges that arise from such a high operational tempo, the 148th Fighter Wing consistently executes all assigned missions to the highest standard. This demonstrates the Wing's exceptional stewardship of personnel, fleet health, and its overall extraordinary mission capabilities.

The 148th Fighter Wing is also a strategic asset. It is the closest fighter wing in the Lower-48 states to the People's Republic of China and Russia. Moreover, it boasts successful and active State Partnership Programs (SPP) with trusted and capable allies, Norway (Tier 3 F-35 partner) and Croatia, that enables multi-lateral and arctic training. Lastly, it proudly possesses the largest and most accessible airspace in CONUS, allowing the 148th Fighter Wing to conduct a wide variety of missions in diverse settings.

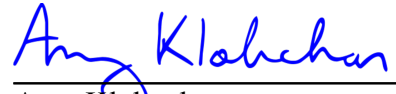
As you and your staff review scoring criteria for OPS 16/17, we ask that you consider the 148th Fighter Wing's stellar performance during such an intense operational tempo, its overall contributions to recent OCONUS operations and homeland defense, strategic location and SPP partners, and Congressional and local support for these strategic basing decisions.

In closing, we encourage you to include the 148th Fighter Wing on the OPS 16/17 Preferred Alternatives list. Again, thank you for your service to the United States.

Sincerely,



Pete Stauber
Member of Congress



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Brad Finstad
Member of Congress



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Angie Craig
Member of Congress



Kelly Morrison
Member of Congress

CC: General Steven S. Nordhaus, Chief, National Guard Bureau
Major General Randal K. Efferson, Acting Director, Air National Guard
Major General Troy D. Havener, Commander, Air National Guard Readiness Center