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February 9, 2010

Tim Amalong
President
162nd Fighter Wing Minuteman Committee
6971 South Apron Drive
Tucson, Arizona 85706

Dear Tim,

The Minuteman Committee's efforts to bring F-35 aircraft to the 162nd Fighter Wing at Tucson International Airport has my full support. The 162nd Fighter Wing is uniquely qualified to carry out the Joint Strike Fighter training mission, and I commend recent actions taken by the Committee to inform the community about how this will benefit our region and the nation.

As a longstanding member of the Minuteman Committee, I know firsthand that the Committee has provided the foundation on which we have built strong community support for the men and women of the 162nd and their important mission. The Committee now has an essential role to play in the process through which the Air Force will determine where to base the F-35.

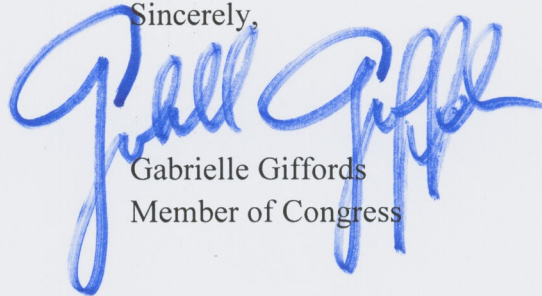
Public hearings and environmental impact studies will soon be underway at potential F-35 bases around the country and here in Southern Arizona. It is critical that the Air Force hear from the Committee and others in our community about our support for the F-35. During this process we must also work effectively to hear and respond to questions and concerns that will be raised about basing the F-35 in Tucson. The greatest impediments to basing the F-35 in Tucson are the questions that remain unanswered and the upcoming public review process provides an opportunity to learn about community concerns and get factual information into the discussion.

My staff and I have examined the ongoing development of the F-35, and we have scrutinized the operational data gathered through system testing and modeling. This information has been helpful in understanding how to mitigate any potential effects of noise or encroachment.

Additional data on noise has not yet been made public but, when it is, I believe it will show that the F-35 noise levels are comparable to other aircraft that have long flown over Tucson. This information will help answer some of the community concerns.

I am confident that a full and transparent public discussion of all aspects of this basing decision will confirm the importance of this mission for the 162nd and our community. I look forward to working with you and neighborhood groups to ensure that this process resolves any issues that are identified so that we can soon welcome the F-35 to Tucson.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gabrielle Giffords". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being particularly prominent.

Gabrielle Giffords
Member of Congress