

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 18, 2018

Great Falls City Commission
2 Park Drive South, Room 201
Great Falls, MT 59401

To the Members of the Great Falls City Commission,

As you consider proposals for the annexation, rezoning, and residential development of agricultural land from Cascade County, we urge you to carefully weigh any decisions that would adversely impact Malmstrom Air Force Base or limit its potential for future mission growth.

Malmstrom Air Force Base has played a pivotal role in our national defense since its earliest days in World War II as a heavy bomber training base. Throughout its rich history, it has supported a variety of operational, strategic, and support missions and graced Montana's skies with a range of notable aircraft including the A-20, B-17, B-25, C-47, C-54, EB-57, F-84, KB-29, KC-97, P-39, KC-135, and the UH-1N. Today, Malmstrom controls and sustains one third of the nation's ground-based strategic nuclear arsenal.

Together, we are united in our belief that Malmstrom Air Force Base is a national asset, relevant and essential to maintaining a decisive advantage over the competing powers threatening our way of life in the 21st century. For 76 years its people, capacity, and location have demonstrated continuous strategic worth, even as individual missions have come and gone with changes in technology and shifts in foreign policy. And while the existing runway sits idle in a deactivated status, it remains certified as a Class B runway capable of supporting 47 different attack, fighter, bomber, refueling, cargo, training, and remotely piloted aircraft missions (including nuclear and stealth) as soon as the need arises. And history suggests that it will.

Further, Montana hosts two Military Operating Areas—together forming the largest training airspace in the continental United States. The 7,200 square mile Hays MOA provides valuable training opportunities to fighter jets and cargo transport aircraft; and the massive 35,000 square mile Powder River Training Complex (PRTC) is the preferred training area for long range bomber aircraft. In Congress, we are working with senior Air Force leaders to increase the airspace's value to the military and the state, which includes a flying mission at Malmstrom. Either training area can be accessed within minutes of Malmstrom AFB.

The uncertainty over prospective missions and basing decisions has been an understandable frustration for community stakeholders and Members of Congress alike. Yet, the Department of Defense (DoD) is in a period of intense growth and modernization that will replace aging aircraft like the B-52 and B-2 bombers with B-21s, and F-16s with F-35s. DoD is also increasing its remotely piloted inventory, and planning for the emergence of an increased presence in space. As Members of Congress with oversight of DoD's programs and funding, we monitor these closely and actively promote priorities of mutual interest to DoD and Montana.

What is certain, is that for Malmstrom to remain competitive alongside other U.S. Air Force installations, it must maintain an environment that prioritizes safety to its residents and opportunity for its Airmen and their families. Any residential development that violates the Air Force's Restrictive Easement Agreements, Clear Zones, or Accident Potential Zones introduces a significant degree of risk into any future basing decisions, and may signal to Air Force leaders that future missions are not a priority for the city. Any increases in light pollution and noise restrictions in those areas will only further frustrate those decisions. The Joint Land Use Study conducted in 2012 discusses these areas and suitable uses at great length.

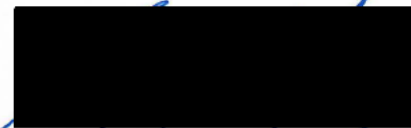
Any such decision that limits Malmstrom's potential would be shortsighted, as discussions have taken place in recent years of reducing the number of intercontinental ballistic missile bases from three to two; as well as the prospect of eliminating the ground-based leg of the nuclear triad altogether. While defense spending is currently rising, there is no guarantee that it will maintain the same trajectory throughout the mid-2020s when the first Ground Based Strategic Deterrent missiles are scheduled to be delivered to Montana's facilities. If the bases' sole mission is once again called into question, it may put Malmstrom at risk.

Together, we are greatly appreciative of your ongoing efforts to ensure the City of Great Falls remains a valued treasure to our nation and generations of service members, veterans, families, friends to come. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



STEVE DAINES
United States Senator



GREG GIANFORTE
Member of Congress