

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 1, 2007

The Honorable Michael W. Wynne  
Secretary of the Air Force  
1660 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington DC, 20330-1660

Dear Secretary Wynne:

We are writing to share our interest in the Air Force's efforts to address the impacts of encroachment on testing and training activities at Air Force and Air National Guard bases, ranges, and critical military airspace around the country. We see accelerating development, population growth, and loss of habitat on non-military lands as a growing threat to the readiness of the Air Force and to the development and fielding of future weapon systems.

This issue is not new. The Department of Defense and Congress recognized several years ago that the long-term challenges that encroachment poses to readiness demanded new policies and programs to better protect the missions of our military installations. Accordingly, Congress provided the Secretary of Defense and the Secretaries of the Military Departments new authorities to partner with state and local governments and conservation organizations to establish buffer zones to protect testing and training areas around the country. The Secretary of Defense implemented this authority by establishing the Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI).

REPI has already proven to be a great success. In fiscal years 2005 and 2006, DoD used REPI authority to provide over \$49 million to support installation projects and leveraged over \$106 million in partner funds. An additional \$40 million in FY 2007 funds is being allocated to protect key installations, ranges, and airspace, and will leverage significant additional funding from partners. Since FY 2005, REPI-funded projects have been or are being implemented at 31 installations throughout the country.

Two June 2007 reports, one from DoD and one from the RAND Corporation entitled "The Thin Green Line," confirm that the REPI program has yielded positive results. These reports, however, also highlighted several areas where DoD and the services need to strengthen their efforts to curb the impacts of encroachment. The reports make it clear that DoD needs additional resources, staffing, and policy direction in its encroachment programs.

The reports also noted that the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps all have well- established, centrally managed and funded encroachment partnering programs to allow those services to take full advantage of the authorities that Congress provided and of the DoD-wide REPI program. It appears to us that the Air Force, while acknowledging the availability of the REPI program as another “tool in the toolbox”, has not as yet taken equivalent action to establish an encroachment partnering program with efficient and effective policies and procedures in order to allow local commanders to take full advantage of the REPI program.

Perhaps as a consequence, the Air Force has applied for and received far fewer funds through the REPI program than have the other services. Furthermore, it is our understanding that, despite the September 14<sup>th</sup> deadline for project submissions established by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Air Force base commanders may not have as yet received through their command channels a formal call from the Department of the Air Force to submit applications for REPI funding for FY 2008. If this is accurate, does the Air Force intend to submit the same list of projects that it submitted in FY 2007? If so, or if the Air Force does not intend to apply for REPI funds for FY 2008, we respectfully ask that you provide us with a justification for that decision.

Establishing an effective and efficient Air Force encroachment partnering program under the overall REPI program would provide base commanders more flexibility and more tools with which to work with local stakeholders and local and state governments to help ensure that development and natural resource management planning and actions are compatible with the long-term mission effectiveness and sustainability of Air Force and Air National Guard installations and ranges.

As always, we thank you for your service to the nation. We are eager to support the missions and long-term sustainability of our Air Force and Air National Guard installations and ranges and look forward to working with you on this and other matters.

Sincerely,



Ken Salazar  
United States Senator



Wayne Allard  
United States Senator