

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 13, 2011

Lt. Governor Phil Scott submits the following op-ed on the F-35 program. He hopes you will consider publishing it in an upcoming edition. Thank you for your consideration.

F-35's are a great opportunity

By Lt. Governor Phil Scott

Siting the F-35 program in South Burlington is a great opportunity for Chittenden County and the state, and an important recognition of the first-class personnel and facilities that comprise the Vermont Air National Guard base.

It is no accident that this elite squad of pilots bears the name of Ethan Allen's own band that fought for Vermont against the British during the Revolutionary War - the Green Mountain Boys. This legacy is a part of Vermont's heritage, and bringing the F-35 program here is certainly a distinction of honor for the Vermont Air National Guard.

There has been much talk on the Federal level about reducing costs. If the F-35 is not located in South Burlington, there is a very real chance that the Vermont Air National Guard base could be reduced in size, or closed altogether.

This would have a profound impact on the city of South Burlington, the Chittenden County region, and the state as a whole.

In total, there are approximately 400 jobs connected with the Vermont Air National Guard, which could be lost if the F-35 does not come to Vermont. The Vermont Air National Guard also provides - free of charge - critical fire and rescue services to the Burlington International Airport. These services ensure the safety of passengers, and save the airport \$2 million in annual expenditures. Losing the base may lead to increased travel costs and actually discourage visitors from coming to the Green Mountain State.

Let's not forget that the F-35s stationed in South Burlington are stationed there for defensive purposes. The Vermont base holds an important strategic position to defend the eastern seaboard. After the attacks on September 11, 2001, the Vermont Air National Guard patrolled New York City and Washington D.C. for 122 days. These brave pilots defend our nation's borders domestically and that is something we should all be grateful for and jobs we should work to preserve.

The F-35 coming to Vermont makes good economic sense, and our base being chosen as a site is an acknowledgement of the long tradition of Vermonters who have defended our nation. In the spirit and tradition of Ethan Allen's own Green Mountain Boys, I support siting these planes in Vermont.

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