



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AIR FORCE SELECTS LUKE AIR FORCE BASE AS PREFERRED LOCATION FOR F-35 PILOT TRAINING CENTER

GLENDALE, Ariz. – Arizona’s local and state government officials, as well as the Arizona congressional delegation, are delighted with today’s decision that the Air Force has selected Luke Air Force Base as the preferred location for the new F-35 Pilot Training Center.

With today’s decision by the Air Force, Luke is poised to transition from its current F-16 training mission to become the Air Force’s F-35 “school house,” subject to completion of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process that is currently underway.

“Today’s announcement is great news for our region and our state and represents a major milestone and the most critical stage in the F-35 site selection process,” said Glendale Mayor Elaine Scruggs.

“Although we realize there is more work ahead of us, we are extremely grateful to our state’s congressional delegation, the Arizona Legislature, Governor Jan Brewer, Attorney General Terry Goddard, and citizens and businesses for working closely with us to champion and support the F-35 coming to Luke Air Force Base through our *Luke Forward* campaign,” Scruggs said.

The campaign was developed locally to send a clear, strong message to the Department of Defense that Arizona supports Luke Air Force Base continuing to serve as one of the country’s premier fighter pilot training facilities and to raise awareness of the critical role Luke plays in our national defense and the state’s economy. --more--



The campaign was created by the West Valley Partners and Fighter Country Partnership. The West Valley Partners include Avondale, Buckeye, Glendale, Gila Bend, Goodyear, Litchfield Park, Maricopa County, Peoria, Phoenix, Surprise, Tolleson, Wickenburg and Youngtown.

Gov. Brewer said the Air Force's decision is, in part, the result of all levels of local and state governments, as well as the private sector, working in partnership on a common vision.

"We all know that Luke is the ideal location for this next generation fighter, but I also believe that today's decision demonstrates Arizona's ability to roll up our sleeves and work together for the betterment of our state," she said.

"It's critical that we continue to do all we can to preserve current and future missions at our military installations in order to keep this very important industry viable in our state."

Luke Air Force Base and other military installations in the state collectively represent one of the largest industries in Arizona and generate more than \$9 billion annually in economic impact statewide. Luke alone contributes more than 8,000 jobs and \$2.17 billion annually to Arizona's economy, according to a recent study commissioned by the state.

Fighter Country Partnership (FCP) Chairman Charley Freericks, who is co-chairing the *Luke Forward* campaign with Scruggs, credits community support for today's decision.

"Local community support of military bases is very important back in Washington, and we know the tremendous Valley and statewide support for Luke Air Force Base really helped us," said Freericks, a senior vice president at DMB Associates.

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“We reached literally tens of thousands of Arizonans through our citizen and business outreach initiatives, and community support for Luke Air Force Base was overwhelming. There is no question that this strong level of support was a significant factor in the Air Force’s decision to site the F-35 at Luke.”

Today’s announcement is being made prior to the release of the Air Force’s draft F-35 basing EIS document, which is anticipated to be published in the next 30 days. The Air Force is required to conduct an environmental assessment of each potential F-35 site before making its final basing decision.

This federally mandated assessment, which is referred to as the EIS process, allows individual citizens and communities around candidate bases to provide input during the formal evaluation of each base.

The Draft EIS will serve as the Air Force’s notice of intent to proceed. Once the Draft EIS is released, in which Luke will be identified as the Air Force’s preferred site, public hearings will be held later this year.

Once the public hearings are held and the comment period concludes, the Air Force will release its final EIS document that will provide responses to comments received from the public.

After the Final EIS document is published, there will be an additional 30-day public review period. After reviewing comments received during this time frame and after considering any environmental impacts, the Air Force will making its final basing decision. It is anticipated the Air Force’s final “Record of Decision,” which will conclude the EIS process, will be made in early 2011.

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