

United States Senate

February 26, 2014

The Honorable Deborah Lee James
Secretary of the Air Force
U.S. Department of the Air Force
1160 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1160

General Mark Welsh
Chief of Staff of the Air Force
U.S. Department of the Air Force
1160 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1160

Dear Secretary James and General Welsh:

I am writing in response to the Air Force's intention to divest the A-10 Thunderbolt II and to express my concern regarding the impact this decision could have on the future mission of the 122nd Fighter Wing (FW) in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The A-10 has served this country well in providing close air support to our ground forces and special operators, and has played a vital role in our operations in Afghanistan. The Air National Guard Airmen in Fort Wayne have been proud to support this effort.

I understand that the Air Force must cut costs and that to do this successfully, it must weigh significant changes to force structure and equipment. However, I strongly encourage you to consider the Air Force's existing investments in Air Guard personnel, training, and infrastructure, as well as the significant investments made by local communities when making strategic decisions regarding existing A-10 missions or the transition to new combat missions.

Any decision to divest the A-10 should be accompanied by a responsible plan to transition the 122nd FW to another air combat mission. Financially, the investments we have made in our pilots, technicians, and infrastructure should not be squandered. From a personnel perspective, maintaining combat missions in the Air Guard is critical to retaining qualified Airmen, providing a role for those who wish to transition away from active duty and ensuring an effective homeland defense.

I appreciate your efforts to confront the fiscal challenges we face, and I thank you for considering my views on this matter.

Sincerely,



Joe Donnelly
United States Senator