

Dear,

U.S. Senator Andy Kim, New Jersey
U.S. Senator Cory Booker, New Jersey
U.S. Representative Donald Norcross, 1st Congressional District, New Jersey
U.S. Representative Jefferson Van Drew, 2nd Congressional District, New Jersey
U.S. Representative Herbert Conoway, 3rd Congressional District, New Jersey
U.S. Representative Christopher Henry Smith, 4th Congressional District, New Jersey
U.S. Representative Josh Gottheimer, 5th Congressional District, New Jersey
U.S. Representative Frank Pallone, 6th Congressional District, New Jersey
U.S. Representative Thomas Kean Jr., 7th Congressional District, New Jersey
U.S. Representative Rob Menendez, Jr., 8th Congressional District, New Jersey
U.S. Representative Nellie Pou, 9th Congressional District, New Jersey
U.S. Representative LaMonica McIver, 10th Congressional District, New Jersey
U.S. Representative Mikie Sherrill, 11th Congressional District, New Jersey
U.S. Representative Watson Coleman, 12th Congressional District, New Jersey

Knowing your genuine concern for your constituents and eagerness to be informed about local and national issues affecting our military lives, we write as members of the New Jersey National Guard Officer and Enlisted Associations regarding the effects of recent US Air Force decisions. Decisions regarding the missions of the New Jersey Air National Guard's (NJANG) 108th Wing located at Joint Base, McGuire/Dix/Lakehurst (JBMDL) and the 177th Fighter Wing located in Atlantic City have had an adverse impact on our Airmen.

Prior to the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) in 2005, the 108th had a total of twenty (20) KC-135 tanker aircraft supporting both cargo and air refueling needs of all military components globally. The 2005 BRAC reduced the 108th to nine (9) KC-135Rs. The 108th continued its mission and operations with the remaining aircraft. By Spring 2022, the 108th lost those remaining aircraft as the 108th became a Classic Associate merged with the Active Duty. This gradual dismembering of the NJANG has not only impacted our livelihood, but gravely reduced national security strategic readiness.

Aside from the dramatic losses suffered by the NJANG, the Air Force Reserve's 514th AMW unit has also lost their 32 KC-10s, rendering JBMDL with an abysmal total of twenty-four (24) KC-46As. Strategically, for trans-Atlantic missions, this represents a 60% reduction overall of refueling capability, a cargo capability reduction of 53% and a reduced number of employment authorizations on JBMDL by 551!

Furthermore, in addition to the issues identified above, the 177th, located at the Atlantic City International Airport is perhaps in a more volatile state. The 177th flies the oldest Block 30 F-16s in the USAF inventory. These aircraft are slated to be divested beginning in FY 2029. To date, there is still not a definitive plan to replace this aircraft, risking a devastating loss for our nation's overseas combat capability, as well our homeland strategic defense and the local

economy. Since September 11, 2001, the 177th has been heavily involved in overseas power projection and continues to prove to be ideally situated to provide homeland defense, especially for major cities such as New York City, Philadelphia, Washington DC, and Boston. This unit was the last Air Force squadron in Afghanistan, as well as the first unit to deploy into the Middle East after the events of October 7, 2023. The basic inability to develop and disseminate a mission transition for the 177th is simply unacceptable to the citizens of the Nation and the State.

The bed down of cyber capabilities at the 108th Wing, including the 140th Cyber Operations Squadron and a soon-to-be sister cyber squadron, leverages the professional population within New Jersey. The close proximity to a well-educated workforce in this region is a significant advantage for recruiting personnel with cyber, aviation, intelligence, and other high-valued skillsets. This, in turn, helps to fulfill state and national security objectives.

However, the reduction of NJANG manpower and mission sets would be detrimental to the protection of state assets, industrial control systems, voting systems, healthcare systems, telecommunication networks, and emergency services. Deploying cyber capabilities in NJ is crucial to counter current and future threats to these critical infrastructures. Any action that negatively impacts cyber operations will compound the challenges the community is already facing; to include retention, military/civilian compensation disparities, and state versus federal mission title authorities.

The livelihood of your constituents is being capriciously pawned. Dollars are always a concern, but the ANG has historically proven that we are much more cost effective in comparison to our Active Duty counterparts, particularly because the USAF's plan for addressing the gap needs in fuel, cargo, and homeland defense missions is to re-locate another unit as a detachment. This is a much more costly option and does not pass the logic test. Our association stands ready to meet and assist you in re-examining this flawed USAF strategy in New Jersey. We ask for your powerful engagement with all that is at stake.

Respectfully submitted,

Member of the New Jersey National Guard

Signed