

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0908

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
FOREIGN RELATIONS
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

July 17, 2021

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services
240 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Reed and Ranking Member Inhofe:

As the Senate Committee on Armed Services is set to mark-up the Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), I urge the committee to withdraw, and/or deny, any provision or funding that would counter the U.S. Department of Defense's (DoD) commitment to rebuild Tyndall Air Force Base (AFB) as the F-35 base of the future.

As you know, on October 10, 2018, Hurricane Michael made landfall in Florida's panhandle as a Category 5 hurricane with sustained winds in excess of 160 miles per hour. The storm devastated much of Northwest Florida, including Tyndall AFB, and the community continues the process of rebuilding. While this storm was catastrophic, it provided the U.S. Air Force with a unique opportunity. Tyndall AFB is now being reconstructed as a strategic hub of the future for F-35 based air warfare. The installation will be a force multiplier to the skill and capacity of the Air Force's F-35 pilots. To date, this committee has been instrumental in securing the resources necessary to rebuild Tyndall, and I appreciate your leadership over the past three years.

It is my understanding that language is included in the Chairman's mark of the FY22 NDAA that would prohibit the divestment of 41 A-10 aircraft at the expense of Tyndall's F-35 squadrons. As you know, the A-10 is a close air support aircraft designed to operate in a non-contested air warfare environment. The F-35 is our fifth generation fighter designed to meet and beat our near peer competitors in kinetic air warfare. As the United States continues to pivot our forces to focus on a near peer conflict, we must prioritize our next generation capabilities. As such, I urge the committee to remove, or reject, any provision or funding that would jeopardize the strategic basing of three F-35 squadrons at Tyndall. Including such language would have significant impact on the Air Force's F-35 pilot output, our strategic capacity to field F-35s in the event of a conflict, and have grave, long-term implications for the national security of the United States.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator