

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 29, 2025

President Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

We would first like to thank you for your efforts to keep our nation safe, make our military the most lethal military force in the world and return peace through strength around the world. As Commander in Chief, you understand the critical role Florida plays in delivering on that mission and protecting our national security. From deterring and preventing the approximately \$2.7 trillion impact to American lives through fentanyl counternarcotics efforts to supporting Southern border operations and homeland defense alert missions along our coastlines, Homestead Air Force Reserve Base (HARB) is critical for our national security. Florida's strategic location makes it uniquely postured to counter Chinese, Russian, Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs), and transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) and their influence in the southern hemisphere. These regional threats are the largest contributor to the state of national emergency within the United States over illegal aliens, infiltration of Tren de Aragua and MS-13 gangs, and illicit opioids.

Under your leadership as both our 45<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> president, Florida continues to fight the cartels and drug traffickers, leading to South Florida being named the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area of the Year. We dismantled or disrupted 54 drug trafficking organizations in 2023 and seized an estimate value of \$748 million in illicit drugs, including 23 metric tons of cocaine, 248 kilograms of methamphetamine, and 224 kilograms of fentanyl.

Through U.S. Southern Command, appropriately headquartered in Florida, we are tracking and thwarting Chinese efforts to expand their Belt and Road Initiative in Latin American Countries to monopolize natural resources, such as 20% of the world's oil reserves, 25% of the strategic metals, and 31% of the fishing areas. We are working to claw back the \$358 billion amassed by 35 TCOs in the region in 2023 through interdiction and counter trafficking efforts to help stabilize South America, preventing their problems from reaching our shores. The Russian Surface Action Group, led by the frigate Admiral Gorshkov and cruise missile submarine Kazan docked in Havana, Cuba, passed within 30 miles of the Florida Keys last June. Florida is uniquely postured to support the border alert mission to deter these acts of aggression.

Within Florida, HARB serves a foundational role in supporting the most critical national defense missions. HARB generated \$364 million for the local economy in 2023 alone. It is the home to the 2,500-member 482<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing and its reserve associate, the 367<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, responsible for F-16 alerts across the coastline in support of Operation Noble Eagle. It houses the Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Branch, operating Blackhawks and turbo-prop

airliners like the DHC-8 to interdict smugglers and prevent illegal aliens from crossing into the United States. Special Operations Command South Headquarters is also resident at HARB, executing special operations as assigned to U.S. Southern Command, spanning 31 countries and 10 overseas territories across Central and South America and the Caribbean.

Florida's Gulf of America, Atlantic Ocean access, and its proximity to Central and South America is what drove the 125<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing Air National Guard (ANG) unit selection for the F-35A Lightning II. Starting with an initial batch of aircraft to Jacksonville ANG in March of this year and expanding to the 125<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing Detachment 1 at HARB in 2027. The Air Force Reserve also planned this F-35A modernization to replace the aging F-16C fleet within the 482<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing. This would create a common fighter platform between the Reserves and National Guard at HARB, reducing costs for base operations through shared maintenance efforts. Together, these units would provide a considerable increase in readiness for the North American Aerospace Defense Command Alert mission across both the Southern and Eastern U.S. border as well as downrange multi-role operations through short-notice worldwide deployments.

Together, we ask your administration to ensure that the F-35A goes to Homestead Air Reserve Base and the F-35A production quantities remain undeterred. There is no real trade when comparing other airframes and locales to a multi-role fighter aircraft capable of countering Russian, Chinese, VEOs, and TCOs operations across the entirety of the Southern and Eastern U.S. border and throughout the Southern Hemisphere. HARB is a vital asset for our national security and power projection, and critical for your Peace through Strength agenda. Thank you again for your leadership and we hope you will consider, within all applicable rules and regulations, our input on the matter.

Sincerely,



Rick L. Scott  
United States Senator



Ashley B. Moody  
United States Senator



Mario R. Díaz-Balart  
Member of Congress



Gus M. Bilirakis  
Member of Congress



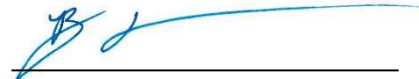
Daniel A. Webster  
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Brian J. Mast  
Member of Congress



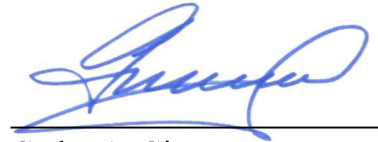
John H. Rutherford  
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Carlos A. Gimenez  
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María E. Salazar  
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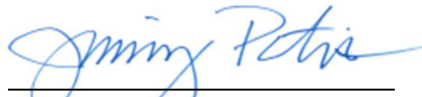
Laurel M. Lee  
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Cory L. Mills  
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CC: National Security Advisor Marco Rubio  
Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth  
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