

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2600

September 2, 2014

The Honorable Deborah Lee James
Secretary, United States Air Force
Pentagon, 1670 Air Force
Washington, D.C. 20330-1670

General Mark A. Welsh III
Chief of Staff, United States Air Force
Pentagon, 1670 Air Force
Washington, D.C. 20330-1670

Dear Secretary James and General Welsh:

I am writing in strong support of maintaining the 819th Rapid Engineer Deployable, Heavy Operational Repair Squadron, Engineer (RED HORSE) at Malmstrom Air Force Base. The 819th squadron provides critical support to our national defense, both stateside and overseas, and I believe Malmstrom is exceptionally suited to continue to host this mission.

Malmstrom's location near Great Falls, Montana, provides an expansive area for mission training and its proximity to the Army Guard at Fort Harrison further strengthens its capacity to meet the training needs of the RED HORSE mission. The base's extensive operational facilities, including the dedicated 38 acre multi-building RED HORSE compound, indoor pallet/equipment storage, BASE-X training area, and heavy-weapons range, provide critical capabilities for the 819th squadron. The base also provides an unsurpassed level of support for its airmen, including premier housing and dormitories, new base exchange and community center, and state of the art services facilities. These operational, logistical and support assets are vital to the success of the RED HORSE mission and the airmen who execute it.

Further, the Montana Air National Guard (MANG) 219th RED HORSE collocated on Malmstrom with the 819th has created a synergistic environment between the active duty and Guard, providing the state of Montana with essential emergency response capabilities and improving the effectiveness of training for both. The economies of scale, resulting with shared resources between the 819th and 219th and the availability of backfill manpower, magnify the capability and readiness of both units. With that noted, I am concerned that the Guard mission could be adversely impacted by the Air Force's pending decision, notwithstanding your assurances to the contrary. The equipment and facilities provided by the active duty unit is essential to the 219th mission and is unlikely to be replaced were Malmstrom to lose the 819th squadron. This scenario, consequently, could jeopardize the sustainability of the 219th unit.

As you move forward with the RED HORSE consolidation process, I am confident that you will closely examine the capabilities and assets provided by Malmstrom AFB and appreciate your consideration of my perspective as Montana's voice in the House of Representatives. Thank you also for your service to our country and your commitment to the men and women of the United States Air Force.

Sincerely,



STEVE DAINES
Member of Congress