

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 17, 2017

The Honorable Deborah L. James
Secretary of the Air Force
3000 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20350-1000

Dear Secretary James:

This letter is to express my strongest support for the U.S. Air Force selecting Florida military installations as home bases for the MQ-9 Reaper Unmanned Aircraft System. Eglin AFB and Tyndall AFB are perfect homes for these aircraft, their mission, and the personnel who will operate and maintain them.

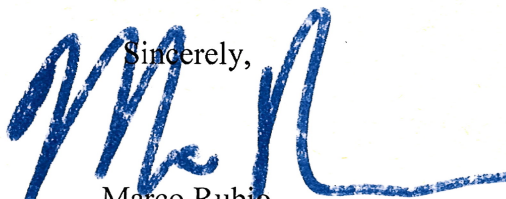
These bases meet all requirements for selection set forth by the U.S. Air Force. They offer direct access to overwater operating areas without land overflight, have airfields where MQ-9 Reaper operations are compatible with existing missions, and have the capability to meet construction and operational needs for the MQ-9 Reaper's mission. Eglin AFB and Tyndall AFB are not only the right choice because they best meet the requirements for selection. They are the right choice because of their unique position in regards to operations and complementary missions as well as quality of life for our airmen and their families.

As you know, the MQ-9 Reaper's mission is to provide constant intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance world-wide in support of national defense objectives in conjunction with other airborne assets within the Air Force inventory, some of which already reside in Florida. Basing these aircraft systems in close proximity will allow for more efficient training and operations.

While each Florida installation offers its own unique operational advantages that are unmatched by other facilities under consideration, these installations provide access to some of the best training and operational opportunities in the United States. Neither facility is overcrowded with other military or government units unrelated to the MQ-9 Reaper's mission, and offer military operating airspace not already clogged with additional aviation requirements.

Perhaps most importantly, both Florida bases are located within communities with long histories of support for the U.S. Air Force and military as a whole, and offer an incomparable quality of life for personnel and their families. I hope that the additional benefits Florida would bring to the U.S. Air Force operations will factor into your upcoming decisions. I appreciate your consideration in this matter and look forward to discussing more about your decision in the future.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator