



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
158TH FIGHTER WING (ACC)
SOUTH BURLINGTON VERMONT

17 April 2020

Colonel David W. Shevchik, Jr.
158th Fighter Wing Commander
105 NCO Drive
South Burlington, Vermont 05403

Burlington City Council
South Burlington City Council
Winooski City Council

Dear City Council Leaders,

The 158th Fighter Wing is proud to serve our state and nation in this unprecedented time. The global COVID-19 pandemic presents new challenges, but our call to serve is unwavering, no matter the issue. We stand ready to meet every request of the Governor until we defeat this virus. I am writing to provide you with a brief update on our operations. Our work here in Vermont in response to COVID-19 and our federal F-35 mission are being executed thoroughly and effectively in tandem. In the midst of the crisis, we will continue flying operations in order to maintain our federal mission readiness requirements. Our Airmen play a pivotal role in defending our Nation and protecting national security. State and federal mission demands are not new to us, and they are not mutually exclusive.

We appreciate that the City of Burlington's recent resolution states the City is "*strong supporters of the men and women in the Guard in their proper role of protecting the people of Vermont.*" Our proper role in protecting Vermonters means answering the call here at home and maintaining our federal responsibility and obligation to ensure we are a ready fighter wing when we are called on to serve. Just as it is ill-advised to be unprepared for a global pandemic, it is also ill-advised to be unprepared for a global conflict. We are grateful for the overwhelming support we are receiving from our community and across the state. It is the greatest honor for our members to serve their communities and our state in these very difficult times.

With respect to our Vermont COVID-19 efforts, through the Vermont National Guard, we have leaders embedded with the State Emergency Operations Center and the Governor's Office. Airmen are supporting the COVID-19 response across our great state in these ways:

1. Serve as coordinators, planners and logisticians with the State emergency Operations Center and the Governor's office;
2. Support the Vermont Department of Health with logistical operations and warehouse management at the Strategic National Stockpile Warehouse distributing essential personal protective equipment and ventilators to hospitals and medical offices in Vermont;
3. Established a mobile COVID-19 sample site to support the VT Department of Health with Soldiers from the Vermont Army National Guard in Putney, VT;
4. Airmen helped build a 400 bed Alternate Health Facility (AHF) in less than six days at the Champlain Valley Exposition in Essex Junction with Soldiers from the Vermont Army National Guard and they continue to support sustainment needs;
5. Airmen are staffing and managing the 400 bed AHF at the Champlain Valley Exposition in Essex Junction along with Soldiers from the Army National Guard.

With respect to our federal F-35 mission, we are making significant progress to be a ready fighter wing and strictly following established schedules to minimize impact on communities. We currently have 15 of our expected 20 aircraft, with the remaining aircraft scheduled to arrive by late summer. All aircraft are being utilized to train and build fundamental mission readiness capabilities.

Our flying schedule remains similar to the schedule flown until two years ago as an operationally ready F-16 fighter wing. We fly approximately four days per week, Tuesday through Friday, morning and afternoon, and are adhering to a schedule of between 4-8 aircraft each time. We continue to fly on our monthly drill weekends to ensure our traditional members fulfill their training requirements. Once per quarter we fly on Sunday of drill – with a no earlier than noon takeoff. Night flights are also necessary to meet training requirements, and we alert the public in advance through media releases when those are expected. We are committed to fulfilling our mission requirements and adhering to operational security, while transparently providing mission updates and community mitigation efforts. We value our community relationships and remain committed to a respectful, productive, and professional dialogue as your dedicated Airmen execute this critical mission for our state and nation.

In an effort to provide updates within the current environment, our team has provided some information below to help answer recent questions regarding our operations. We have also provided information regarding our social media and DIVIDS pages so you can follow the work of our professional team, your Vermont Air National Guard.

When we get through the immediacy of this health crisis as a community, state and nation, I hope to have an opportunity to connect with you in person and invite you to the base to see our operations. Constructive, professional and productive conversations are important to us. We remain committed to serving our communities, state, and nation – and proudly continue the legacy and dedication of service expected by Vermonters. On behalf of the women and men of the 158th Fighter Wing, thank you for what you do as community leaders, especially during these challenging times.

We will get through this together!

Sincerely,



DAVID W. SHEVCHIK, Jr., Colonel, VTANG
Commander, 158th Fighter Wing

Attachments:

1. Q&A
2. Follow Your Airmen

ATTACHMENT 1

Q – How are members of the 158th Fighter Wing supporting the State in the fight against COVID-19?

A – The whole-of-government approach is critical as we strive to halt the spread of the virus, flatten the curve, and avoid the overflow of hospitals in order to save lives. Not all members from the 158th Fighter Wing are required to support the COVID-19 response at this time. All members stand ready to support if called on. 50+ Airmen are supporting the State in the fight against COVID-19. Leaders from the Vermont Air National Guard are currently serving as coordinators, planners and logisticians with the State Emergency Operations Center and the Governor’s Office. 15+ members from the 158 Logistics Readiness Squadron and Civil Engineering Squadron are supporting the Vermont Department of Health with logistic operations and warehouse management of the Strategic National Stockpile. This mission is important as the SNS serves as the central hub for distributing personal protective equipment and ventilators to hospitals and medical offices in Vermont. Airmen and Soldiers from the Vermont National Guard Civil Support Team (CST) established a mobile COVID-19 sample site to support the VT Department of Health in Putney, VT. Airmen from the Mission Support Group and Maintenance Group built a 400 bed Alternate Health Facility (AHF) in less than six days at the Champlain Valley Exposition in Essex Junction, VT with Soldiers from the Vermont Army National Guard. Finally, Airmen from our Medical Group, many who work in our communities as medical specialists, are currently staffing and managing the 400 bed Alternate Health Facility (AHF) at the Champlain Valley Exposition in Essex Junction with soldiers from the Vermont Army National Guard. Finally, many of our full-time force is teleworking aside from a small footprint who continue to execute the federal mission. Together we will flatten the curve.

Q – Why is the 158th Fighter Wing flying during the COVID-19 pandemic?

A – The 158th Fighter Wing is in a unique position as the first F-35 Wing in the Air National Guard. Our dedicated women and men, those who live, work and have families in our communities, are proudly, professionally and successfully meeting both State and Federal mission demands. We can do both missions concurrently – they are not mutually exclusive. We are committed to serving Vermont and our communities in whatever State missions we are tasked with by the Governor. We also play a pivotal role in our Nation’s national security and must continue flying operations as scheduled in order to maintain our federal mission readiness requirements. Just as it is ill-advised to be unprepared for a global pandemic, it is also ill-advised to be unprepared for a global conflict. Many aspects of our State and Federal missions cannot be worked from home. Currently, we are focused on maintaining a safe work environment so we can protect our team and families. While our maintenance and operations teams launch, fly, maintain and recover aircraft, our medical and mission support teams are building alternate healthcare facilities, conducting ongoing medical operations and managing medical supplies. Our dedicated members are always available to respond, if called upon, to provide additional assets should the State of Vermont or nation request them. We remain a ready force to meet any mission we are called upon to execute – and will do so with pride, professionalism and passion as we’ve proven throughout our history.

Q – What is the schedule of arrival of additional F-35's for the rest of the year?

A – We have currently received 15 aircraft that are assigned to the 158th Fighter Wing. A total of 20 aircraft will be assigned to the 158th Fighter Wing with the remaining aircraft arriving this summer. We anticipate all aircraft will arrive by September 2020.

Q - What flying schedule should residents anticipate?

A - Residents should anticipate the flying schedule to mirror the flying schedule of the F-16s. Standard flying operations take place Tuesday – Friday. We take-off in the morning and again in the afternoon. We also fly on drill weekends, which typically takes place during the first weekend of each month. We primarily fly on Saturday – morning and afternoon take-offs. We also fly once a quarter on Sundays and will not fly before noon. If time and operational conditions permit, we will notify the community through a press release for anything outside of the above schedule (i.e. Night Operations). A takeoff will typically consist of 4-8 aircraft.

Q – What is the expectation for use of afterburners?

A – We are maintaining the 5% or less afterburner take-off, as stated in the final EIS. To date, we have only conducted a single (less than 1%) afterburner take off from Burlington.

Q – What efforts is the Guard already taking to mitigate noise and impact on our community?

A – We have two main noise abatement procedures in place for local flying. During the takeoff phase, we use reduced power settings on the climb out over the local area. This procedure is both safe and effective in mitigating our noise footprint during the initial phase of flight. On arriving back into the local area for landing, we have done two things: we have raised our pattern altitude by 500’ over previous F-16 procedures, and we fly an extended pattern that avoids direct overflight of Winooski High School for landings on runway 15. In addition, we attempt to complete traffic pattern practice work at other airports, primarily Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield at Ft Drum near Watertown, NY.



158 FW App



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