

# Jets

From A1

resolution at Tuesday's meeting because it takes a stronger stance. They cited the negative effects the noise would have on children, people with disabilities, people of color and those who live in low-income housing.

Only one person spoke in support of the F-35s being placed at Truax, with a few stating that they were neutral.

"You have a responsibility to the low-income, disabled people," said Elaine Pridgen, who said her home would be impacted.

Kathleen Wolf, a veteran who lives near the airport, said the noise from the current F-16 jets triggers her post traumatic stress disorder. She said she and others cannot afford to move to a different area of the city.

Jennie Capellaro, who lives near the Dane County Regional Airport, said even if homes receive sound-proofing, that won't help in residents' backyards or on school playgrounds. Capellaro said she knew the council did not have the power to prevent the F-35s from coming to Madison, but she urged council members to try.

"Please try to stop this from happening," Capellaro said.

## Pocan calls for noise testing

Meanwhile, U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan on Tuesday asked for further testing on the noise impact on nearby neighborhoods.

In a letter, Pocan, D-Madison, asked the Air Force to coordinate with the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 115th Fighter Wing, which is stationed at Truax, to conduct live flight tests in Madison so residents can hear the difference between the new class of fighter jets and the F-16s they would replace.

"As I hear from more members of the community, it has been brought to my attention that the noise impact is difficult to assess due to the Air Force's use of the Day, Night, Average Sound Level (DNL) metric," Pocan wrote to Acting Air Force Secretary Matthew Donovan, referring to a commonly used method of measuring noise over time.

"It's just hard to read a report and understand sound," Pocan said in an interview. "I think people have experienced F-16s for a number of years. Having both as a side-by-side comparison, so to speak, would be I think very helpful."

Pocan asked for the test to be completed before the Sept. 27 deadline for public comments on the Air Force's environmental impact study.

Rhodes-Conway said Tuesday she supports such a test, noting apparent contradictions in the environmental study.



ANDY MANIS, FOR THE STATE JOURNAL

Deborah Lofgren, from left, Bob Schaefer and Gail Hirn sign up to comment at Tuesday's Madison City Council meeting on the Air Force's plans to bring F-35 fighter jets to Truax Field. Lofgren, who lives in an area that would be most affected by the additional noise, opposes the jets.

"I am very disappointed in the U.S. Air Force and the Air National Guard's failure to provide adequate information about this project and its potential impacts on our community, and their failure to address misconceptions on the record," Rhodes-Conway said in a statement. "The public deserves better information."

The Wisconsin Air National Guard has said it does not have the authority to request such a test as the military's few F-35s are needed for national security missions.

## Noise levels debated

Truax Field is one of five locations — and among the Air Force's two preferred bases — under consideration to host two squadrons of the new jets, replacing the 32-year-old F-16s now flown by the 115th.

The new mission would result in up to \$120 million in construction, dozens of new jobs and assure the long-term viability of the

base, but also increased noise levels for nearby residences, especially in areas with low-income housing units.

According to the environmental study, take-offs and landings at the airport would initially surge by 47 percent as the existing F-16s are phased out. The new jets would ultimately fly about 6,222 operations a year, 27 percent more than the current flight volume.

The environmental study says adding the jets would subject more than 1,000 additional households around the airport to an average daily noise level above 65 decibels, or about as loud as a nearby vacuum cleaner. That number represents a daily average noise level in that area from all airplanes — the F-35s along with more than 81,000 annual civilian operations.

But for a few seconds during takeoff, the noise from an F-35 can reach 110 decibels or more. That's about 16 times louder than

actual noise the jets create is the problem Pocan said he wants to address with a direct comparison between the current jets and the new ones.

In her statement, Rhodes-Conway also noted the apparent contradiction between the Air Force's findings of an increase in average noise levels at several locations while also noting very little change in the "sound exposure level," which represents both the intensity of a sound and its duration, at the same locations.

Council members have received hundreds of public comments for and against the F-35s, most of which reflect comments made last week at a National Guard open house.

## Advocates, opponents

U.S. Sens. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, and Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, former governors Scott Walker and Jim Doyle and state lawmakers have supported the F-35s. They say

it would ward off the possibility of eventually losing the base, although an Air Force spokeswoman said it would be "speculative" to assume the mission would be in jeopardy without the new jets.

State Rep. Chris Taylor, a Madison Democrat, has vehemently opposed the new jets and has said supporters such as the Badger Air Community Council don't represent the people who would be most affected.

Zach Brandon, president of the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce and an ardent supporter of the project, believes the environmental study overstates the noise problem. He argues the benefits of supporting the base, with its \$100 million annual economic impact, outweigh any concerns.

Acting Air Force Secretary Donovan is expected to issue a final decision in February. If approved, the first F-35 jets could arrive in 2023.

State Journal reporter Mitchell Schmidt contributed to this report.

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