

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

July 1, 2019

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

General Joseph L. Lengyel
Chief, National Guard Bureau
U.S. Department of Defense
111 S. George Mason Dr.
Arlington, VA 22204

Lieutenant General L. Scott Rice
Director, Air National Guard
U.S. Department of Defense
111 S. George Mason Dr.
Arlington, VA 22204

Dear General Lengyel and Lieutenant General Rice:

We write requesting that you strongly consider transitioning the 183d Wing, Illinois Air National Guard, from its current mission set into a true operational wing with a flying mission. To ensure future sustainability and viability in accordance with the principals laid out in the National Defense Strategy, numerous Air Force statements and current Air National Guard Capstone Principals, Air Force leaders have stated that the total force must grow from its current level of 312 squadrons to 386 squadrons. The transition of the 183d Wing back to flying status can be a key component towards reaching that goal.

Originally established in 1948, the 183d Fighter Wing flew in support of national defense objectives for nearly 60 years until the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission. Since that time, the Wing served as a Centralized Repair Facility for F-16 engines and as an Air Operations Group. These activities, while adding value, are not truly codified Air Force missions, and they do not provide the Air Force with additional, and badly needed, combat coded squadrons. This Wing can easily transition back to a flying mission utilizing the current manpower and facilities to provide the Air Force additional combat capability. Facilities at Springfield Air Base are well suited for re-conversion to a flying mission given that F-16 aircraft previously flew from the base. Illinois Guard recruiting is more than up to the task of attracting, training and retaining the necessary human capital given the state's excellent recruiting rate over the last 5 years. Additionally, the State Partnership for Peace Program currently teams up Illinois and Poland. A return to flying for the 183d creates opportunities to deepen that long and productive relationship with this critical NATO ally. While we understand that the National Guard must carefully weigh each decision on future basing and missions, we feel strongly that the 183d Wing is a top candidate to return to a flying mission and our offices stand ready to support any efforts made to advance this initiative.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our request to plan and allocate resources for a return of the 183d Wing to flying status.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Rodney Davis
United States Representative



Cheri Bustos
United States Representative



Darin LaHood
United States Representative



Mike Bost
United States Representative