

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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F-35 Opponents Blast Senator Baldwin on Funds for Noise Mitigation and Outreach

Several Safe Skies Clean Water Coalition leaders responded on Monday to Senator Tammy Baldwin's Friday news release announcing a grant from the Department of Defense "to conduct community outreach, noise mitigation planning, and prepare for the F-35s arrival at Truax Field."

"I've never seen a press release so deluged with hypocrisy," said Safe Skies organizer Tom Boswell.

"I don't have words to describe how dismissive and minimizing she is of the magnitude of the threats," remarked Safe Skies leader Ellen Magee.

Baldwin announced that the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs would receive a \$798,000 grant. "This is chump change," Boswell commented. "She must think everyone in our impacted community is a chump to take this seriously."

Mitigation

"Two years ago, the people in the Burlington, VT area got \$6.3 million from the FAA after the F-35s arrived, primarily to soundproof *one* school, the Chamberlin Elementary School," Boswell noted. "We have 59 schools and daycares within three miles of Truax. Can you even imagine how much it will cost to soundproof all those schools?"

According to Richard Doucette, the FAA point person in Burlington, the cost to soundproof one home in the 65 to 70 decibel area is about \$40,000. A low estimate for the total cost of sound mitigation for housing in Burlington is \$100 million. Doucette says the soundproofing "will take decades to complete."

Doucette said it would be optimistic for the FAA to soundproof 50 homes a year in Burlington. At that rate, it will take 52 years to complete all the homes in the affected area. For homes in

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the 70 to 75 decibel area, Doucette added that it's "questionable" the FAA would pay for mitigation because the benefits would be limited and the cost to soundproof doubles. "For areas exposed to more than 75 decibels, the FAA considers demolition the only option."

Here in Madison, about 1,320 acres around the airport would fall in the 65-70 dB zone, affecting 1,019 households and 2,215 people, according to the Air Force. About 132 households and 292 people would fall in the 70-75 dB zone.

The City has pointed out that there are 800 low-income housing units that the City has built right outside the 65 dB contour. About 70 % of the residents of that housing are people of color and a large percentage are elderly, disabled and children.

Of course, even if it were possible to soundproof every school, daycare and home on the north and east side of Madison, it is not possible to soundproof the outdoors. Ann Behrman, a pediatrician with Physicians for Social Responsibility, points out that kids spend more time outside than most adults and that kids need to be outside. Toddlers in day care and school-age kids need to be outside for part of the day, she says. There will be 16 or 17 takeoffs and landings of the fighter jets every day so babies in strollers, children on playgrounds and adults recreating will all be affected. The Air National Guard, for security reasons, does not reveal the schedule for its military flights, so there will be no way to avoid the damaging noise of the jets.

Community Outreach

"The most hypocritical and insulting part of Baldwin's press release," Boswell said, "was her claim that this government grant is to conduct community outreach. The community has been "reaching out" to the Senator for four years and she's refused to recognize us at all."

"Senator Baldwin has failed to respond to more than 6,000 postcards sent to her over the past two years by citizens around Wisconsin opposing the basing of the F-35 fighter jets at Truax," noted Jane Kavaloski, a retired school social worker and member of the Interfaith Peace Working Group.

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Prior to the pandemic, Safe Skies Clean Water held five large community forums where hundreds of Madison residents spoke out against the F-35s. They were aided in this community engagement by Madison alders, County supervisors and State legislators. The Madison City Council and Madison School Board have both passed resolutions against the F-35 basing, along with dozens of neighborhood groups, unions and other local organizations.

In August, 2021, seven Safe Skies leaders purchased tickets to a Tammy Baldwin fundraising event held in rural Stoughton. The day before the event, they were all notified by email that their donation was being refunded. In other words, they were all considered persona non grata at an event where their only desire was to have the opportunity to speak with the Senator.

“Does this sound like Baldwin and the Wisconsin Adjutant General are really sincere about ensuring “that the concerns of the communities around Truax are heard and addressed”?, Boswell asked.

“We are going to continue to oppose this despicable and totally inappropriate decision to base this squadron of nuclear-capable, stealth fighter jets in our community, while the Senator continues to lose the support of her constituents,” Boswell pledged.

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