

ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.
PENNSYLVANIA

COMMITTEES:
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LABOR, AND PENSIONS

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ON INTELLIGENCE

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 16, 2021

Kristi Kucharek, GS-13
Airspace NEPA Program Manager
Air National Guard Readiness Center
3501 Fletcher Avenue,
Joint Base Andrews, MD 20762

Major Jeffrey Andrieu
Maryland Air National Guard
175th Wing
Martin State Air National Guard Base
2701 Eastern Boulevard,
Middle River, MD 21220

Dear Ms. Kucharek and Major Andrieu:

I write regarding the Maryland Air National Guard's proposed Duke Low Military Operations Airspace (MOA) in North Central Pennsylvania. Many state officials, local leaders and community members have contacted me to express concerns about the proposal, such as potential impacts to the community's economy, quality of life and environmental resources. I urge the Air National Guard to ensure a transparent process by which there is ample opportunity for public education and engagement, as well as a thorough assessment of cumulative effects of the proposal in accordance with National Environmental Policy Act regulations.

The modification of the Duke MOA would lower the MOA floor from 8,000 feet above sea level to as low as 100 feet above ground level. These low-level training flights would operate four hours a day, two to three times a week for 170 days per year. For almost half of a calendar year, up to six fighter jets and close air support attack aircraft would fly simultaneously. The low airspace would fly over the Pennsylvania Wilds, an area incorporating numerous state parks and forests, two National Wild and Scenic Rivers, the largest elk herd in the Northeast and the Alleghany National Forest. The outdoor recreation and tourism economy of this region generates \$1.8 billion and supports the livelihood of many families and small businesses.

The U.S. military needs realistic training environments for all its mission sets, and Central Pennsylvania continues to support these training needs. Nonetheless, more than 180,000 Pennsylvanians live in the region affected by the Duke Low MOA. It is critical members of these communities are informed of the proposal and have sufficient time to review and provide public feedback. As the Maryland Air National Guard proceeds with the environmental review process, I strongly urge the Guard to engage in an active and transparent process with members of the affected communities, including hosting public meetings to provide invested parties the opportunity to ask questions provide feedback.

Further, I encourage the Maryland Air National Guard to extend the public comment period for the draft environmental assessment beyond December 31st and to consider whether an Environmental Impact Statement is necessary to fully assess cumulative effects of the Duke Low MOA proposal and assuage public concerns

As you consider the next steps for this proposal, I appreciate your consideration of my concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bob Casey".

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable Tom Wolf, Governor of Pennsylvania
Secretary Cindy Dunn, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources
Captain Ben Hughes, Maryland National Guard's Public Affairs Office
Captain Travis Mueller, Pennsylvania National Guard's Public Affairs Office
Lieutenant Colonel Devin Robinson, Air National Guard's Public Affairs Office