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From Burlington to Boise, How to Fight the F-35

I'm writing from the Burlington, Vermont area to tell the people of the Boise, Idaho area that you are not alone. Although we are thousands of miles apart, we are close in our shared concern about a threat to our cities: the basing of the F-35. This is not hyperbole. We have seen here in South Burlington the destruction of entire neighborhoods solely because of the noise of Air Force jets. Our airport tore down over 200 homes because of the noise produced by the currently based F-16s. The F-35 is over four times louder, and it's scheduled to arrive here in 2019. In 2013, the Air Force selected us to be the first Guard base to house the F-35.

Here is what I wish I had known about the F-35 basing process back in 2011 as the selection effort was beginning. First the bad news: you are in a David and Goliath battle. Just about everything is stacked against you. You are going up against the military-industrial-political complex. It's exactly what President Eisenhower warned us about decades ago. They are

slowly taking over our communities. You will likely be lied to, as we were. Your patriotism and support of our military women and men will be questioned. They will promulgate disinformation. Uninformed people will choose to believe the incorrect but catchy phrases: "F-35 noise is the sound of freedom" "F-35 noise lasts only a few minutes a day" "F-35 is good/necessary for the economy and it brings jobs" "People who oppose the F-35 are NIMBYs (not in my back yard)" -- rather than scientific and medical facts. You will likely lose more battles than you win. Many folks will give up after experiencing a few losses. (This happens in just about every social justice cause.) And most importantly, most folks will grossly underestimate their power.

Now for the good news. You have the power to stop the F-35. Use your voices, your pens, your fingers, your feet. Tell the truth and keep telling it. Don't give up. Take turns doing the work to avoid individual burnout. Let the lost battles be les-

sons. Move on and continue to speak up loud and often. And, know that you are not alone. Momentum is growing. There are other communities across the U.S. who are also fighting against the basing of the F-35 in their areas. I have been in contact with people in grassroots groups in AZ, NM, SC, FL, ME, WI, and even the in UK. There are other groups fighting Navy fighters in WA and AK. Our numbers are growing. David prevailed over Goliath. You can lose battles and still win the war.

Not only is the F-35 incompatible with residential neighborhoods, it is dangerous and lethal to families living near the runway. Its noise harms peoples' health. The damage done to children's health and cognitive development may last a lifetime. There are far more suitable places to base the F-35. The planes can easily go elsewhere. The people cannot.

Colonel Rosanne Greco retired from the Air Force in 2003 after serving 30 years on active duty. In 2011, Greco was elected to the South Burlington City Council and became its chair in 2012. She currently leads a grassroots coalition, stopthef35, which opposes the basing of the F-35 in the Burlington, Vermont area.