

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 30, 2021

The Honorable Frank Kendall
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330

Dear Secretary Kendall:

Congratulations on your confirmation to serve as the 26th Secretary of the United States Air Force. On behalf of the people of Colorado, we thank you for your service and dedication to our country.

We write to request that you conduct an urgent and thorough review of the Trump Administration's decision to move U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM) from Colorado Springs, Colorado, to Huntsville, Alabama. This move undermines our ability to respond to the threats in space and is disruptive to the current mission. Additionally, significant evidence exists that the former president's political considerations influenced the final decision to relocate USSPACECOM to Redstone Arsenal. As such, we urge you to formally suspend any actions to relocate the USSPACECOM headquarters until the Department of Defense Inspector General (DoD IG) and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) have completed their respective investigations into the basing decision and you complete your review.

Our primary concerns with the methodology and potential implications of the decision are as follows:

Threat to National Security and Mission Readiness: National security is the most important consideration for any basing decision. As the epicenter of operational integration between military and intelligence space assets, Colorado is well positioned to fulfill readiness demands. Our state has the nation's largest aerospace economy on a per capita basis and several universities with top-tier aerospace and engineering programs. Colorado Springs is home to the National Space Defense Center (NSDC), U.S. Northern Command, North American Aerospace Defense Command, Cheyenne Mountain Space Force Station, the U.S. Air Force Academy, and communications infrastructure that is specifically designed to support the space mission. Ninety miles north, Buckley Space Force Garrison hosts the National Reconnaissance Office's Aerospace Data Facility-Colorado. These two communities alone host eight of the nine current Space Force Deltas. The robust co-location of space equities in Colorado is not accidental. In fact, the NSDC's recent budget justification to Congress underscores the premium that the Air Force places upon the national security benefits of this proximity. We were thrilled to hear that USSPACECOM has reached IOC in its current location. By equal measure, we are concerned that moving USSPACECOM away from this unparalleled network of existing capabilities would diminish our nation's ability to respond to a rapidly evolving threat landscape in space.

Opaque and Inconsistent Process: The Air Force began the selection process in 2019 and announced six finalists in May: Peterson Air Force Base (AFB), Schriever AFB, Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station, and Buckley AFB in Colorado (all recently renamed as Space Force installations); Redstone Arsenal in Alabama, and Vandenberg AFB in California. In August 2019, the Air Force named Peterson AFB the provisional headquarters until 2026, with the final decision expected in October 2019. By the end of the year, however, the selection process inexplicably slowed. In March 2020, the Air Force announced it would redo the process with new methodology and criteria, which represented a significant departure from the standard Air Force strategic basing process. The Air Force cited the creation of the Space Force as the ostensible reason for disregarding months of work and starting anew. Certain press reports have suggested, however, that this change occurred due to requests from various Members of Congress who argued their state should have been considered. The new process lacked transparency regarding proposed community incentives, as well as the mechanism by which the point system correlated with the eventual +/- baseline evaluation scale. These ambiguities continue to prevent clear, public evaluation of the scoring criteria. On January 13, 2021, with one week left in President Trump's term, the Air Force announced the decision to relocate U.S. Space Command to Huntsville. Before the Air Force even announced its decision, Alabama press and politicians indicated prior knowledge of the Administration's intended move.

Fiscal and Personnel Costs: Despite requests from Congress, no official estimates have been provided regarding the cost of relocating USSPACECOM from Colorado Springs to Huntsville. Additionally, we are concerned that renovating the current location for long-term use was not properly evaluated. [Reports](#) suggest that keeping USSPACECOM in Colorado Springs may save taxpayers \$1.2 billion and achieve full mission capability seven years earlier. Following the announcement that USSPACECOM has reached IOC in its current facilities, a costly proposed move that could jeopardize existing mission readiness becomes even more concerning. In addition, past experience shows that moving USSPACECOM, which has a higher percentage of civilians than military personnel, is likely to create unnecessary personnel attrition. For example, roughly 80 percent of the civilian workforce left the Missile Defense Agency when it moved from Virginia to Alabama. We cannot underestimate the value of the workforce to mission readiness. Capitalizing on the existing infrastructure and personnel is a more cost-effective basing solution and must be considered.

Serious questions remain about the cost of this decision and its effect on our ability to respond to critical and escalating threats in space. Our nation cannot afford disruptions to the current mission at this time, especially as China and Russia work to match or exceed U.S. capabilities in space. In view of the irregularities of the selection process and the effects on national security, we request you pause all actions related to moving USSPACECOM until thorough reviews by the DoD IG and GAO are complete.

We would also be happy to meet with you to discuss this in further detail.

Sincerely,

CC:
The Honorable Lloyd Austin, Secretary of Defense



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Doug Lamborn
United States Representative



Joe Neguse
United States Representative



Diana DeGette
United States Representative



Ed Perlmutter
United States Representative



Jason Crow
United States Representative



Lauren Boebert
United States Representative