

Suzanne Dunham
29 Dunham Rd.
Greenwood, Maine 04255
September 8, 2009

Lt. Col. Mike Milord
NGB Public Affairs
Jefferson Plaza One, Suite 1120
1411 Jefferson Davis Hwy
Arlington, VA 22202

[Submitting to The Bethel Citizen and Franklin
Journal as an open letter]

RE: Opposition to lowering flight altitude over western Maine by Mass. Air National Guard

Dear Lt. Col. Milord:

I am writing to express my deep concern and, frankly, anger over the possible lowering of altitudes down to 500 feet over western Maine by Massachusetts Air National Guard fighter jets, which would include a Vermont contingency.

My husband and I live near the top of one of the hills in Oxford County at the southern end of this proposed low-flight corridor (Condor), which covers a total area of about 4,000 square miles and includes three counties: Oxford, Franklin and Piscataquis.

This proposal, in my view, is one of the most dangerous, irresponsible and extremely intrusive actions to people, wildlife and the environment (Lake Christopher is on one side of us, Indian Pond on the other – with nesting Loons and Eagles, among other important wildlife and habitats; the 4-H camp (Maine Conservation School) land abutts ours in another direction, and the Mt. Abram Ski area is within our sight).

We have already experienced the military flights over us, for many years – at higher altitudes of about 2,500 feet – it is deafening. Our animals (pets and farm animals) are scared to death when the jets fly over, and it is absolutely unnerving to us; one cannot brace themselves for the noise as the jets fly so fast they are instantly upon us. How many households in the area have people and animals that are currently enduring these flights? The “corridor” is populated by many people! We live here specifically because we want and need peace and quiet. I cannot imagine what it would be like with these military jets (almost always two at a time) flying over us at 500 feet. I downloaded the study from <http://www.maine.gov/mdot/angcondor/docs.htm> - the Massachusetts Air National Guard Environmental Assessment. Language such as “intercept training”, and “combat maneuvering”, and “air to air” training makes this plan to fly at 500 feet even more irresponsible and unsafe. The assessment describes the noise as an “annoyance” which downplays the extreme impact the noise has on people and animals, and focuses on how much noise it takes for someone to go deaf, implying that as long as you don’t go deaf, the extreme noise is ok.

In addition to the horrific noise of the military jets, there is a serious safety factor that is not adequately addressed. As mentioned above, these flights aren’t just one aircraft flying straight and level – there are typically two jets practicing air combat – imagine at 500 feet? We live on almost 200 acres of woods that are mostly not accessible to fire equipment. If one of the jets crashed in the woods or into each other, our woods could be destroyed. And what if one of these jets crashed into someone’s home or school (Woodstock Elementary and Telstar High School, plus two other elementary schools are

Lt. Col. Mike Milord

Page 2

in our area– south of Rumford)? There is also a busy civil air community here with two small airfields close by, and sea planes frequently take off and land on the ponds and lakes in our area. Helicopter life-flights frequently travel to and from local ski areas in winter.

As the flight altitude of jets (or any aircraft for that matter) lowers, the potential for crashes goes up – especially aircraft flying at great speed. In addition, the combat practice flights, according to the assessment, would include releasing aluminum coated glass fibers and flares that are about 2,000 degrees when released. This is safe?!!!! We don't want anything released on us.

The military may need to practice, but not at the sacrifice of safety and health of citizens and the environment. It isn't worth the disruption to our lives, nor invading our wellbeing or our animals, or putting us and the environment in jeopardy. In my view, we need to stop these flights altogether. That's what flight simulators are for. Sophisticated technology today lends itself very well to simulating real flight conditions of combat fighters, which is much safer than endangering the lives, homes, schools and woods of Maine.

I hope this irresponsible plan is not approved – as was the case years ago when a similar request was made by the military to do low flights. It was a bad idea then and it's a bad idea now. As I learned in a Maine History class at the University of Maine, the state has a history of opportunists from other states coming here, taking or destroying our natural resources, and leaving the carnage behind. We must not let this legacy continue.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Dunham

cc: Governor John Baldacci