



Statement for Public Hearing, November 14, 2009

This is a complex issue and I'd like to comment from a few different perspectives.

First, as the founder of the Western Maine Cultural Alliance, I want to speak on behalf of the thousands of creative people who like my husband and I were drawn to this magnificent landscape because the sight of it inspired their work. I consider the spectacular views I see every day to be a great privilege, especially in today's world, but the struggle to survive, as an artist, in western Maine is difficult when times are good. And, as we all know, these are not good times. There is more than enough talent in western Maine for a thriving cultural environment, but the marketing and promotion of it lags far behind the need and what support there is, evaporates in a depressed economy. Because of a down economy, artists and arts organizations are struggling more than ever in western Maine right now. The cumulative negative effects of low flights would only add to that considerable burden.

There is no way to deny the negative impact of low military flights on an economy dependent on the sounds of nature being louder than man. Visitors, seasonal residents and year round transplants are drawn to this region specifically because of its distance from the industrialized world. If you remove its virtues by shattering that silence and leave only the inconveniences of a rural location, an already fragile economy could collapse.

As an example, I live in Lovell, a small town constructed around Kezar Lake. Compared to many towns in western Maine, Lovell is relatively well to do. There is no industry in Lovell and there are less than 1,000 year round residents, but there are more than 3,000 summer residents. Most of these people own property on the lake where they're taxed by lakefront footage. Though Lovell isn't included on any of the Condor maps I've seen, some lakefront residents heard the noise of flights earlier this fall and were already making inquiries about the source of the noise. Lakefront property ownership, in Lovell, is coveted. The lake has growth restrictions that will not allow many new houses to be built. These property owners are quite affluent and have no other connection to the area beyond the view from their windows. The cost of their property is far higher than property off the lake, their taxes are very high but, until the economy collapsed last year, lakefront property moved well and always upward. Seasonal residents know their money supports the town and, with 70 percent of their tax dollars going to the schools, they know they're paying an outsized portion of that bill as well. Because they're seasonal, however, they don't get to vote at Town Meeting and, if they choose to attend, they can't speak without

permission. They put up with this system because Kezar Lake is considered spectacular scenery and an excellent financial investment. Every year, they voluntarily agree to maintain a ban on jet skis because the noise is considered so offensive. If you ruin this atmosphere, these people will leave even if they have to sell their property for less than they'd like. There is no way to absorb the depression of prime property values here and the significant loss of tax revenue will certainly cripple our economy.

I know there are people who consider such sacrifices as I've just outlined necessary to maintain our nation's security, and, if I believed that were the case, I would address it. However, I don't believe national security is well served by these flights. National security must begin with conservation and these flights are being conducted in defiance of certain economic realities. The United States has ignored its dependency on foreign oil as long as it can. The collapse of our national economy last year was directly due to gas that cost more than \$4. a gallon and all of us know any recovery must and will come with higher gas prices. I have been appalled to learn that domestic consumption of oil just for military aviation fuel exceeds 2.6 billion gallons a year and represents the largest use of fuel by any industry in the world. With such mammoth usage gobbling up finite resources, military aviation exercises do not protect our national security, they threaten it.

When our economy suddenly collapsed last year it dragged down much of the global economy as well proving just how interrelated our world is today. A nation the size of the United States cannot act unilaterally for its own selfish ends without considering the impact on everyone else. I'm not saying this from an ethical viewpoint though I believe that would be completely justified. Speaking purely from a practical standpoint, whenever we negatively impact the rest of the globe, the reverberations come back as giant waves that could sink us as well.

What I find far more frightening than threats to our national economic stability, however, is the threat from climate change which has already claimed countless innocent victims around the world and could reach a tipping point from which it cannot be stopped. Even if I believed these flights made me more personally secure, I couldn't be so stupid as to support such a gargantuan use of fuel when placed in the context of a planet threatened with survival. If the military wins this battle over flight exercises it will be a Pyrrhic Victory in light of the global cost. Flight simulators are never going to be the real thing, but the technology has improved a great deal and, in a time of monster deficits, they also save a lot of money. Why aren't simulators included in a discussion of alternatives? Like numerous other things missing from the EIS, simulators aren't considered.

These few points barely touch on the number of things missing from the EIS which I have to say does not deserve that designation because it contains little more than the previous EA. For starters, nowhere does it address the question why we have revisited a long since, decided issue. The EIS never even acknowledges that another, far more exhaustive document already exists when that fact should have been the very first subject it addressed.

Since this project was rejected in 1992, we've learned much more about the importance of Quality of Place on healthy economic development. If anything has changed since then, it's been a more complete understanding why this project is such a bad idea. Still, that earlier, much longer document which took two years to develop was thoroughly dismissed by then Governor John McKernan, in 1992, as showing "a fundamental disregard for (the) interests of the people of Maine."

As I close, I believe, before we explore any other aspect of what should be a complex process with numerous ramifications, we need to answer the question: Why are we here?

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