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Salud O. Carbajal
24th District, California

January 12, 2026

The Honorable Troy E. Meink
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330

General B. Chance Saltzman, USSF
Chief of Space Operations
2020 U.S. Space Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330

Dear Secretary Meink and General Saltzman,

Thank you for your continued commitment to supporting the Space Force and advancing our national security space programs. Vandenberg Space Force Base, located within my district, plays a critical role in our national space ecosystem, and it is an honor to represent the service members and civilians who work there to protect our national security. As you know, Vandenberg has experienced a significant increase in space launch activity in recent years, from just a handful of launches annually to 66 in 2025, and this tempo is projected to continue growing.

Reliable and affordable access to space is essential to both our national security and economic growth. My district, and the entire state of California, have benefited from the recent growth in the space industry. The launch cadence achieved at Vandenberg is a significant operational and technological achievement. However, this rapid increase in launch activity has also resulted in noise impacts on the local community and surrounding environment.

On December 30, 2025, the Department of the Air Force released a request for information (RFI) to lease Space Launch Complex-14 (SLC-14) at Vandenberg Space Force Base, seeking information regarding the operation and maintenance of a heavy/super-heavy launch capability at the site. While the development of SLC-14 will strengthen our national security capabilities and benefit the local economy, my constituents and I have concerns regarding a super-heavy vehicle launching from the Central Coast.

The Central Coast has experienced a notable uptick in sonic boom disturbances as launch cadence has increased in recent years. I appreciate the efforts that Vandenberg leadership has made to minimize these impacts, including noise monitoring, trajectory changes, launch alert messages, and shifting non-critical launches to waking hours when feasible. These actions have helped mitigate impacts from current launch vehicles, but a super-heavy vehicle will produce substantially greater sonic boom effects. Vehicles launched from Vandenberg travel south, and

as they proceed down the coast, sonic booms affect communities far down range, as opposed to Cape Canaveral, where launches travel east and away from land. As a result, a greater number of communities in my district experience more sonic boom impacts, and a super-heavy vehicle would likely increase both the severity and geographic reach of those impacts.

I am also worried about the effect super-heavy launches could have on the local environment. Vandenberg supports exceptional biological diversity, with approximately 395 animal species and 455 plant species across its nearly 100,000 acres.¹ Of these, 17 animal species are federally listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Vandenberg remains largely undeveloped due to its long-standing use for missile testing and space launch, which has allowed these species to thrive. The land has been managed so effectively that biologists are still discovering new species on the base that are believed to be endemic to this region. Vandenberg has been a responsible steward of this land, helping to conserve and protect this delicate ecosystem. As more of the base is developed and sonic booms become more frequent, it is vital that these species receive the full protection afforded under federal law.

My final concern is the effect that super-heavy launches will have on overall base operations. The greater explosive potential associated with a super-heavy launch vehicle will require a larger blast danger area than that required for small and medium launch vehicles. Many other vital space operations are concentrated on the south side of the base, near the proposed site. The boat dock, which is essential to transporting launch vehicles and other large components, is only about a mile away from the proposed site of SLC-14. I am concerned that a regular cadence of super-heavy launches will cause base operations in the area to be regularly paused, which could lead to delays for other launches, limit use of the boat dock, or cause other disruptions to mission-critical base activities.

I respectfully request written responses to the following questions within 30 days of this letter being sent.

- Will a super-heavy launch pad result in additional closures at Jalama Beach County Park? Will the area in which public spaces are closed be expanded further than those associated with current launches?
- How is Vandenberg working to minimize noise disturbance from sonic booms today? Will super-heavy launches make noise mitigation efforts more challenging?
- Have any models or analyses of how sonic booms from a super-heavy vehicle will travel south along the Central Coast been conducted? If so, what were the outcomes?
- Will the Department of the Air Force work closely with relevant federal agencies to ensure threatened and endangered species are protected to the maximum extent possible?

¹ <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/0018feaf74744b99a4a70b9ea555bed8?utm>

- Will a super-heavy launch pad at SLC-14 have an impact on the ability to consistently use the boat dock?
- Will a super-heavy launch site have any impact on the operations of nearby launch sites, whether active or in development?
- How will super-heavy launches affect operations across the base?

I do recognize the advantages that super-heavy launch vehicles provide to civil, commercial, and national security space missions. However, advancements in space technology must not impose undue burdens on nearby communities or come at the expense of the local environment. We must work to find a balance and compromise. As you move forward with plans to develop a heavy/super-heavy launch pad at SLC-14 or other sites at Vandenberg, I ask that you provide regular updates to my office and the community, and that you give full and careful consideration to the concerns outlined in this letter. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Thank you,



Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress