

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 11, 2021

The Honorable Lloyd Austin
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Austin,

Congratulations on your confirmation to lead the Department of Defense. We write you today to request increased transparency in the Department's basing acquisition processes, especially related to Air Force and Space Force equities.

Our offices have been following the Air Force's process for selecting the future headquarters of U.S. Space Command. In 2019, Senator Feinstein, Congressman Carbajal and then-Senator Harris sent letters in support of the nomination of Vandenberg Air Force Base (AFB), located in Lompoc, California, to become the permanent headquarters for Space Command. That year, the Air Force selected Vandenberg AFB as a finalist location, in addition to sites in Alabama and Colorado. We believed then, as we do now, that Vandenberg AFB's existing space-related missions and assets, in conjunction with its proximity to the Space and Missile Systems Center at Los Angeles Air Force Base, make it a prime candidate.

However, after public protests from the governors of Texas and Florida, the Air Force announced it would begin a new selection and evaluation process. During the second review process, Vandenberg AFB was left off the finalist list, with bases in Texas and Florida joining the new finalists. California was the only state to be included in 2019 and then subsequently excluded under the new selection process in 2020. Senator Feinstein and Congressman Carbajal wrote to then-Secretary of the Air Force Barbara Barrett requesting information regarding the evaluation metrics used to determine the finalists and for the specific scores in order to objectively compare how Vandenberg AFB compared to the new slate of finalists. Our offices never received that information despite multiple requests.

While we understand that the Department of Defense Office of Inspector General has announced it will review the basing decision due to concerns from multiple states about the methodology used and the potential of political bias, we urge you to personally commit to working with Congress to ensure transparency in future basing decisions so Congress and the public will have full confidence that the Department's decisions are made in the best interest of the country's national security.

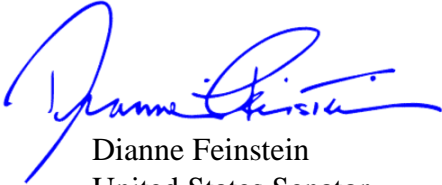
We understand that the Department will be conducting a basing selection process for the new training and readiness unit, Space Training and Readiness Command (STARCOM). We believe that Vandenberg AFB will be a top-tier candidate due to its existing training assets,

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

including the 533d Training Squadron. We look forward to learning more about the methodology that will be used in this basing decision and respectfully request that you give Vandenberg AFB all due consideration during the evaluation process. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions, and thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



Alex Padilla
United States Senator