



**COLORADO**  
Governor Jared Polis

February 1, 2021

The Honorable Lloyd Austin  
Secretary of Defense  
Department of Defense  
1400 Defense Blvd.  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Austin:

We write to you to bring an important matter to your immediate attention regarding the permanent basing of the U.S. Space Command Headquarters (SPACECOM). We respectfully request that you pause the move of SPACECOM so that you may conduct a thorough review of the previous administration's last-minute decision to move SPACECOM from Peterson Air Force Base (AFB) in Colorado Springs, Colorado, to Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama. Without a review, this hasty decision will undermine our country's ability to respond to national security threats in space. We have concerns about the transparency, impartiality, and bias of the process that the previous administration used when coming to a final decision that should be addressed prior to any final decision on permanent basing.

As you know, Congress re-established SPACECOM in 2018. The Air Force began the selection process in 2019, conducting site visits and environmental reviews. In May 2019, the Air Force announced six finalists: Peterson AFB, Schriever AFB, Cheyenne Mountain Air Station, and Buckley AFB in Colorado; Redstone Arsenal in Alabama, and Vandenberg AFB in California. In August 2019, the Air Force re-established SPACECOM and named Peterson AFB the provisional headquarters until 2026. Notably, Peterson AFB was the home of SPACECOM from 1985 to 2002. The finalists expected the final basing decision in October 2019. However, by the end of 2019, the selection process inexplicably slowed. Then, in March 2020, the Air Force announced it would start the process over with new methodology and selection criteria. This represented a significant departure from the standard Air Force strategic basing decision process. Despite these changes in process, Peterson AFB was nonetheless still named a finalist location in November 2020. The other five finalists were Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico; Patrick Air Force Base, Florida; Redstone Army Airfield, Alabama; Joint Base San Antonio, Texas; and Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska. Then, on January 13, 2021, with one week left in President Trump's term, the Air Force announced the decision to move SPACECOM to Huntsville. Before the Air Force even announced its decision, Alabama press and politicians indicated that the administration intended to move SPACECOM to Huntsville.

It is unclear why there was a basing process to reestablish a command with an existing and concentrated mission. In addition, it is unclear why the Air Force slowed, and eventually stopped, its standard strategic basing process in 2019. Press reports have suggested this came at the behest of certain members of Congress who argued that their state should have been included in the process. Finally, there is evidence that President Trump's political considerations influenced the timing and final decision. Reps. John Garamendi, D-Calif., and Jim Cooper, D-Tenn., said the decision pulling the command to Huntsville, Ala., "appears to be untethered from national security and military judgment." This decision and this process cannot stand unreviewed without the risk of stain on this new administration.

The Air Force's decision was outlined to be based on specific criteria, including incentive packages that states and communities offered. This, unfortunately, created significant ambiguity in community presentations that the administration never made public. Further, it prevented clear, public evaluation of the scoring criteria. Similarly, since May, the Air Force has told our staff that it was using a detailed point system to evaluate the bases. However, it seems the final decision was made instead with a plus/minus baseline evaluation scale rather than a point system referred to as a "relative comparison." These apparent inconsistencies raise concerns about how the administration rendered the final decision.

In June 2020, the Air Force published its "Support to Military Families Report." The report provided a ranking of every Air Force base in the nation based on how well it supported military families. In vetting the ratings, we have several concerns with the report's analysis. For instance, the authors used an incomplete state dataset to calculate the student learning rate and omitted the measure of grade-level attainment. It also failed to account for the state's extended graduation timelines to ensure students are college and career ready. Assuming these flaws are explainable, the Air Force didn't include Army Base Redstone Arsenal in this report. It is, therefore, unclear how the Air Force evaluated Huntsville's ability to support military families.

There is significant risk that this hastily made and nontransparent decision will be disruptive to the service members and civilians who are conducting the current mission. Colorado is home to unique military and intelligence space assets and is currently the nexus of military and intelligence space operations. Experienced personnel with appropriate skills and expertise and proper resourcing are successfully conducting their mission here in Colorado Springs. Furthermore, Colorado Springs, and Colorado's existing way of life and workforce will both attract and retain workforces, while our local institutions of higher education will train the space workforce of tomorrow. We must remember that when the U.S. Government chose to relocate the Missile Defense Agency to Huntsville, 80% of its civilian workforce opted not to relocate. This nation cannot afford such disruption to the mission in the face of current threats.

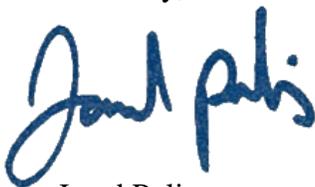
Colorado served as the original home of the SPACECOM from 1985 to 2002 and became the home of the Joint Forces Space Component Commander and Air Force Space Command. The National

Space Defense Center (NSDC) at Schriever AFB, Cheyenne Mountain Air Station, and the satellite communication capabilities at Peterson AFB represent the nation's premier military and intelligence space coordination entities. It is not an accident these entities are co-located. The NSDC's recent budget justification underscores that the Air Force appreciates the national security benefits of the proximity. The communications infrastructure in the Colorado Springs area -- unlike Huntsville -- is specifically designed to support the space mission.

In closing, Colorado Springs is already home to critical Department of Defense space assets to include the Global Positioning System and the Wideband Global Satellite System. Colorado is also home for the Space Based Infrared System and eight of the nine current Space Force Deltas. Our state also boasts the nation's largest aerospace economy on a per capita basis and has demonstrated an unflinching commitment to service members, veterans, and their families. Before any final decision can be made on the permanent basing of SPACECOM, a thorough review of the facts, processes, and execution of this decision must be completed in the interest of Colorado Springs residents and service members as well as every American taxpayer. This will ensure that SPACECOM is based in the most transparent way possible, and be least disruptive to the mission and national security.

We appreciate in advance your time and consideration, and would be happy to meet with you to discuss this in further detail.

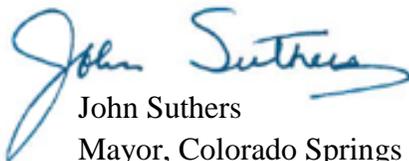
Sincerely,



Jared Polis  
Governor  
Chair



Dianne Primavera  
Lt. Governor & Colorado Space Coalition



John Suthers  
Mayor, Colorado Springs

Sen. Bob Gardner  
Senator, Colorado State Senate  
Co-Chair, Aerospace & Defense Caucus

Sen. Jeff Bridges  
Senator, Colorado State Senate

Sen. Dennis Hisey  
Senator, Colorado State Senate

Sen. Pete Lee  
Senator, Colorado State Senate

Sen. Larry Liston  
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