

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 5, 2019

Dr. Heather Wilson  
Secretary of the Air Force  
1670 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Dear Secretary Wilson,

As the Air Force continues with its strategic basing process to establish a new Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron (AES) within the Air National Guard, we respectfully request your careful consideration of the 165<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing (AW) at Savannah Hilton Head Air Guard Station as a top candidate to fulfill basing criteria.

The September 18, 2018, approval of the enterprise definition and criteria emphasizes the operational, manpower, and capacity requirements of the AE mission. The 165<sup>th</sup> AW is uniquely qualified to excel in all of these areas, but has particularly proven itself in regards to mission compatibility with an AES. Since 2017, the 165<sup>th</sup> AW's flying squadron, the 158<sup>th</sup> Airlift Squadron (AS), has supported the 156<sup>th</sup> AES based out of Charlotte, North Carolina. The 158<sup>th</sup> AS has a standing contract with the State of Florida to provide transport for the 156<sup>th</sup> AES to medevac patients from the Lower Keys Medical Center (LKMC). In order to maintain mission readiness, the 158<sup>th</sup> AS routinely conducts ongoing flying and static trainer missions with the 156<sup>th</sup> AES.

Proximity is a vital component to mission compatibility. The 165<sup>th</sup> AW is the closest tactical C-130 base to provide support to the Southeastern coast, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the Caribbean, all prone to hurricanes. Over the past two years, as category 4 and 5 hurricanes wreaked havoc on these regions, the 165<sup>th</sup> AW played an extensive role in providing critical support to affected areas. For instance, during Hurricane Maria, the 165<sup>th</sup> AW operated as an airlift hub for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) operations to and from the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. It also conducted support operations during both Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma.

Manpower is also essential to the success of an AES. Importantly, the 165<sup>th</sup> AW boasts an outstanding 98.7% retention rate. With regards to recruiting, within a 100-mile radius of Savannah Hilton Head Air Guard Station are ten accredited nursing schools offering at least a bachelor's degree in nursing (BSN). This includes a top-25 in the U.S. nursing school, the Medical University of South Carolina – Charleston, as well as high-achieving local schools like Georgia Southern University School of Nursing – Armstrong. Savannah Technical College's Medical Assisting program can also provide worthy applicants an opportunity to fill AE technician positions.

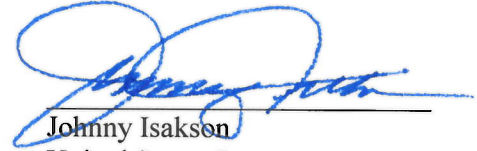
Finally, capacity, in terms of both operations and logistics facilities, makes up the last major criteria for AES basing requirements. The 165<sup>th</sup> AW is collocated with the Savannah Combat Readiness Training Center, providing it a unique, two-ramp capability, as well as giving it access to additional facilities. Furthermore, due to the construction of a new Airlift Squadron Operations building this past June, there is presently 14,829 sq. ft ready for immediate occupancy for an AES. This will eliminate the need for any major MILCON funding, providing critical cost savings.

We are grateful for your long-standing service to our Air Force and hope you will consider the unique qualifications of Savannah Hilton Head Air Guard Station as you continue forward with the strategic basing process for this critical mission.

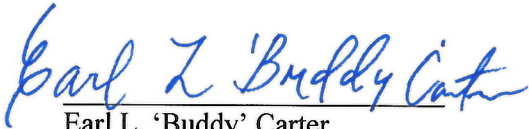
Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "David A. Perdue".

David A. Perdue  
United States Senator

A large, stylized handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Johnny Isakson".

Johnny Isakson  
United States Senator

A large, stylized handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Earl L. 'Buddy' Carter".

Earl L. 'Buddy' Carter  
Member of Congress