

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 29, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

President Biden:

We write to request that your administration conduct a comprehensive review of the Air Force's decision in the final days of the Trump Administration to host the U.S. Space Command headquarters in Huntsville, Alabama. Initial reports of the Air Force's selection process raise serious questions of political impropriety and demonstrate clear violations of the Air Force's own standardized process for selecting locations to host organizations of this size. We believe New Mexico is uniquely positioned to support Space Command's mission and that a close review of the merits of the January 13, 2021 decision will warrant reconsideration.

In May 2020, the Air Force announced an open bidding process wherein communities from around the country were welcomed to self-nominate to host the Space Command headquarters. The New Mexico delegation welcomed the Air Force's decision to widen the candidate search because the original list of locations excluded non-traditional defense communities like Albuquerque that are home to growing public and private space organizations.

The Air Force's subsequent process was severely flawed and not in line with the more deliberate approach the service has taken in the past with regard to basing decisions of this magnitude. More specifically, we are concerned that the Air Force circumvented its own Strategic Basing Process (SBP), the objective and reproducible approach the service has used to manage significant basing decisions in the past. Our staff has been informed that the Air Force used a subjective evaluation scale that has still not been provided to our offices in place of the SBP's standardized point scale.

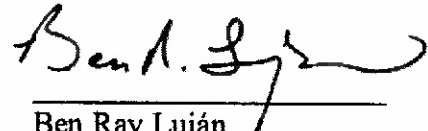
The speed with which the Air Force finalized their decision also raises serious questions. In late November 2020, the Air Force announced that Albuquerque was one of six final locations under consideration for the new headquarters. After postponing the original site visit to Albuquerque in December, the Air Force evaluation team collected data on Albuquerque's candidacy less than a week before the January 13, 2021 announcement that the service had selected Huntsville. We find it difficult to understand how the Air Force can properly evaluate one of the most important aspects of a candidate's bid in less than a week.

We believe New Mexico presents a unique opportunity for Space Command to build a headquarters from the ground up while leveraging existing organizations like the Space Rapid Capabilities Office and the Space Vehicles Directorate along with a robust national lab infrastructure and a thriving private sector space economy. We ask that your administration suspend all efforts to plan and execute the standup of the new headquarters while a thorough review of the Trump Administration's decision is being conducted.

Sincerely,



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator



Teresa Leger Fernández
United States Representative

CC:
The Honorable Lloyd Austin, Secretary of Defense