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What is happening to our small Vermont cities speaks of what is plaguing the whole country. The quality of life of middle and low-income people is being sacrificed in order to generate wealth for local big business interests and large, out-of-state corporations like Lockheed-Martin.

The F-35 was designed decades ago, when the Soviet Union was a threat, and drones and cyber-warfare were the stuff of science fiction. If we want to protect the vitality of the Vermont National Air Guard, we need to understand that it needs missions with value for the future. The F-16 works well, though its noise already has displaced citizens from their homes.

The F-35, which may become the most expensive weapon system in human history, appears to be technically flawed. A Department of Defense study group has recommended scrapping the project entirely. In order to pay for this aircraft, the military is preparing to cut military jobs, eliminate benefits for military personnel, and reduce health care for veterans.

The planes the Air Force is planning to send us will be new, sent up over flying zones and crash zones that the Air Force initially was told had no "incompatible development" within them. The Air Force subsequently was told that there is

incompatible development, which significantly weakens the case for bringing these planes to Chittenden County and makes other sites more viable.

Moreover, the Air Force report details a host of negative impacts on the people who live around the airport, from children's health issues to safety concerns about deploying a still not fully tested aircraft, to the disproportionate effect the planes will have on people of color (including newly arrived refugees) and low income families.

Many middle class families (including veterans) will see their beloved, well-lived in homes devalued as a consequence of the plane's significant noise level. Since these homes are the heart of these families' net worth, the effect of the devaluation would be a crushing blow.

Inexplicably to many of us who have great respect for Vermont's representatives in Congress, all three answer that the decision rests with the Air Force, though it is common knowledge that their influence in Washington, D.C. is immense, and the military in the United States answers to Congress, not the other way around.

The appeals to patriotism used to generate support for bringing the planes were based on misinformation: that the Vermont Air National Guard would disappear if the F-35 did not come. And the folks who spread this false report accuse others of fear mongering!

The noise of the F-16s already has forced the condemnation of homes near the airport, threatening a stable neighborhood of modest homes. How many more homes will be condemned if the F-35s arrive, and what will become of the land upon which they stand? The vast majority of Burlingtonians will not benefit.

The F-35 is not good for the Burlington brand and, God forbid, one of these technically challenged planes crashes, it will be more than our brand that suffers.

Please join with others in local governments and many citizens who live in the impacted cities in doing what you can to ask the Air Force to skip Burlington in this first round of base assignments. Much thanks for your consideration.

Rabbi Joshua Chasan

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