



SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE  
WASHINGTON

JUL 02 2014

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murkowski:

Thank you for your letter dated May 30, 2014, to Secretary Hagel regarding the response of the scientific community to the Air Force's decision to decommission the High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program (HAARP) facility in Gakona, Alaska. I am responding on his behalf.

The Air Force recognizes HAARP is a unique facility that can contribute to research into the nature of the ionosphere, as identified by the recent letters from the academic community forwarded by your office to the Department. Since the 1990's, the DoD has received significant value from the HAARP facility in fields as diverse as underwater communications, radar propagation, and reductions to the space radiation belts. However, the Air Force, Navy and Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) have all concluded that they have completed the applied research that has motivated the use of HAARP in the past. Given the realities of our current fiscal environment, the Air Force notified your office of the decision to decommission the HAARP facility and to begin repurposing as much DoD equipment as possible.

Notwithstanding this decision, the Air Force recognizes the potential for HAARP as a user facility for fundamental ionospheric research. The Department has expended considerable effort over the last two years reaching out to the government and scientific community, including meetings under the auspices of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy's Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee and the National Research Council. We have sought partnerships, transfers to research agencies and novel uses for HAARP. To date, we have not seen sufficient interest from any agency to fund the operations nor a viable plan from government, industry, or academia to take ownership of the facility, preserve the equipment and provide good research value to the Nation.

The DoD remains open to a proposal that provides a sustainable option for another entity to take ownership and provide for the facility without the DoD continuing to pay for the overhead and maintenance costs. Your letter indicates the University of Alaska or a consortium of academic or research institutions are interested in taking ownership of the facility in the near

future. In response, the Air Force is willing to slow the closure process and defer irreversible dismantling of the transmitter site until May 2015. We will proceed with removal of government property not essential to operations and will seek to reduce maintenance costs through additional storage of equipment and winterization; however, we will retain critical hardware to maximize the potential to reactivate the site should it be transferred to another federal government agency or a private entity next year. This would provide the University of Alaska more time to complete a proposal or plan to acquire the facility and cover operation costs from a user base or other non-DoD sources.

While we are willing to modify our decommissioning plans to provide further time for the scientific community to organize, it is important to realize that the nature of the facility and its environment require us eventually to move forward with closure if acceptable alternatives cannot be developed within the next year. The Air Force will continue to maintain an open dialogue with the University of Alaska or a consortium of interested scientific research institutions should they wish to develop and assess alternative plans in a timely manner.

Thank you for your continued support of the Air Force's science and technology programs as we make difficult funding prioritizations while striving to be good partners with the wider scientific community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deborah Lee James". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Deborah Lee James  
Secretary of the Air Force