



April 6, 2026

The Honorable John C. Phelan  
Department of the Navy  
1000 Navy Pentagon, Room 4D652  
Washington, DC 20350

**RE: HOME BASING F-35C LIGHTNING II JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER  
SQUADRONS AT NAVAL AIR STATION LEMOORE  
SUPPORT**

*Brett Taylor*  
Mayor

Dear Mr. Secretary,

*Liz Wynn*  
Vice Mayor

We write to you to respectfully express our unified regional **SUPPORT** for the home basing of F-35C Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter Squadrons at Naval Air Station (NAS) Lemoore. Already the primary, established West Coast home base for F-35C Strike Fighter Squadrons, NAS Lemoore has the existing and planned necessary facilities and infrastructure to support the transition of FA-18E/F squadrons to F-35C squadrons over the expected 10-year period.

*Steven A. Nelsen*  
Councilmember

*Emmanuel Hernandez Soto*  
Councilmember

*Brian Pochigian*  
Councilmember

For sixty-five (65) years, NAS Lemoore has served as the vital link between California's seaport facilities and the Pacific Fleet's tactical needs, playing a critical role in national defense. Located in a rural, sparsely populated area, the station serves as a strategic location by offering "unimpeded training" and superior airspace for high-intensity training, away from major metropolitan areas. As the U.S. Navy's largest and only West Coast "Master Jet Base," NAS Lemoore serves as the premier training and operational hub for Pacific Fleet Strike Fighter Squadrons. The station currently provides critical training and maintenance for Strike Fighter Squadrons and features advanced facilities, including two (2) 13,500-foot parallel runways designed specifically for modern and next-generation jet aircraft operations.

NAS Lemoore is a focal point for next-generation military technology, including a recent partnership to build an AI-optimized data center to support advanced energy resilience and workload requirements. In addition, included in the recent passage of the Fiscal Year 2026 National Defense Authorization Act (Public Law 119-60) (FY26 NDAA) was nearly \$90 million, authorizing two (2) major Navy construction projects at NAS Lemoore to plan and prepare for the station's strategic support for F-35C Strike Fighter Squadrons, including \$55.542 million for the construction of the Strike Fighter Center of Excellence (cutting-edge training facilities for Navy



personnel to safely handle and load ordinance on Strike Fighter aircraft) and \$33.49 million for the planning and design for a new F-35 Aircraft Maintenance Hangar to improve operational efficiency and maintenance capacity for the F-35 program. As part of the Fiscal Year 2026 Continuing Appropriations, Agriculture, Legislative Branch, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Extensions Act (Public Law 119-37), the Strike Fighter Center of Excellence was fully funded. Planning and design funding was also included for the F-35 Aircraft Maintenance Hangar.

The California Central Valley region truly appreciates and highly values the tremendous economic impact that NAS Lemoore has on the Central Valley. As one of the largest regional employers, the station contributes significantly to the local economies, generating more than \$1 billion in economic impact and supporting thousands of jobs.

For the reasons discussed above and more, we collectively and enthusiastically **SUPPORT** the proposed transition of existing FA-18E/F squadrons and home basing of the replacement F-35C Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter Squadrons at NAS Lemoore. Thank you for your careful consideration and support for the nation's critical defense and the California Central Valley's citizens.

Sincerely,

Brett Taylor, Mayor  
City of Visalia