

Vance Airscoop
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Sen. Inhofe visits Vance leadership, tours base

**Story and Photo by Capt. Tony Wickman
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Vance Air Force Base hosted U.S. senator James Inhofe Tuesday as he swung through the area during a campaign fundraising event.

Senator Inhofe, the senior ranking U.S. senator for the state, visited with wing leadership and toured the base as a routine visit to one of the three major Air Force installations in Oklahoma.

"I like to come out here every couple of months or so just to be up on everything," said the senator. "I like looking at these things that we spent a lot of time making a reality."

The senator visited the new Consolidated Logistics facility, the base fuel cell shop, family housing and took a windshield tour of the base.

As for his impressions on how Vance is progressing, the senator said the trip was notable.

"I'm here quite often so I have been watching the base develop," said Senator Inhofe. "Being the second ranking member on the Senate Armed Services Committee—and soon to be the chairman—allows me to stay on top of all the MILCON projects here, so I watch them as they go up. This was the first time I have been inside one of the new family houses, though, and it was most impressive."

According to the senator, the recent Base Realignment and Closure activity illustrated how well the state succeeds at remaining viable for the military.

"I think first of all, most people aren't aware of the fact that we have gone through five BRAC rounds and we are the only state that has benefited from each one of them," said Senator Inhofe. "Almost everyone else has had a closure or reduction or restructuring."

As for why Vance fared well in the recent BRAC round, the senator pointed to the support from the local area.

"Here's the deal, every time we've had a BRAC process, and I've been there on the SASC during all of these, one of the major considerations for expanding as opposed to closing is community support," said Senator Inhofe. "No one is able to rival the community support that Enid Oklahoma does for Vance Air Force Base."

When asked about the future military presence in the state, the senator said he was involved in a program to bring U.S. forces out of Western Europe back to the U.S. and he was working to ensure things continued to get better for Oklahoma.

For Col. Richard Klumpp, Jr., 71 Flying Training Wing commander, hosting the senator was an opportunity for the base to showcase itself.

"Any time we can get our congressional leadership to visit the base, it's a win for us because they are our best advocates for needed improvements to the base—especially Senator Inhofe as the number two member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and soon to be ranking member," said the colonel. "He's proven to be a difference-maker for Vance in the past, as evidenced by the Consolidated Logistics facility among other projects, and we need to take every

opportunity we can to show him how he's improving where we live and work."

Colonel Klumpp thought the visit was well received by the senator and may help the base in getting some of its needed projects funded in the future.

"I think the senator was very pleased to see the logistics facility. He got us the (congressional) insert that resulted in that building and it was great for him to see what a fantastic facility he helped procure," said Colonel Klumpp. "We also showed him our fuel cell and he clearly understood the need to fund a replacement facility in the very near term."

Another source of pride for the senator was the recent B-52 Stratofortress test at Edwards AFB using alternative fuels.

"The fuels on the B-52 were developed here in Oklahoma and we had a party about two weeks ago in Washington to celebrate," said the senator. "Alternative fuel is something we have to look at...we don't have a choice with the energy crisis. This is one thing that could help relieve the crisis."