

HERSETH SANDLIN STATEMENT ON NEW MISSION FOR ELLSWORTH AIR FORCE BASE

June 21, 2010- Today, Rep Stephanie Herseth Sandlin released the following statement in response to the Air Force's announcement to base the operators for one squadron of remotely piloted vehicles at Ellsworth Air Force Base.

"This decision is a recognition of the irreplaceable value Ellsworth holds for our national defense, and also of the strong level of community support the base receives from Box Elder, Rapid City and the entire state. Remotely piloted vehicles are and will continue to be a crucial part of our nation's arsenal, and Ellsworth is a premier installation that is perfectly situated to receive this important mission. I look forward to working with the Air Force and the other members of South Dakota's congressional delegation to ensure Ellsworth has all the resources it needs in order to make this mission a success," said Herseth Sandlin.

The new mission will bring approximately 275 new personnel to Ellsworth to operate the drone squadron, which will be composed of both Predators and Reapers. The actual drones would not be based at Ellsworth, but rather near their assigned areas of operation, likely in either Iraq or Afghanistan.

Ellsworth was announced as a finalist in late April. The other finalists were with Langley Air Force Base, Virginia; Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho; and Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri. Whiteman also received a squadron of operators. Site surveys were done on each facility in May and the Environmental Impact Analysis Process will continue at Ellsworth and Whiteman.

In recent months, Rep. Herseth Sandlin has spoken with Air Force Secretary Michael Donley, Under Secretary of the Air Force Erin Conaton, and General William Fraser, head of Air Combat Command, about the importance and value of Ellsworth to our national defense.

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