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The Honorable Ted Stevens
222 West 7th Avenue No. 2
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Dear Senator Stevens

I am writing as the President of the Eleventh Air Force Association, **which is composed mostly of World War II veterans who served and fought in the Aleutians during World War II.**

I am not part of the World War II generation; but I was born immediately prior to the war and served two tours in Vietnam as an Infantry officer and recently retired as an Air Force historian. The veterans felt a need for someone to keep the dues paying association active and look after their interest. I have been associated with them since 1980.

We are concerned over the recent decision by Gen. Paul V. Hester, **Commander**, Pacific Air Forces, to activate the **525th Fighter Squadron** as one to two F-22 squadrons on Elmendorf AFB, in lieu of the proposed **54th Fighter Squadron**, which has a rich Alaska history.

General Hester served in the **525th** as an F-15 flight examiner and instructor from January 1977 to June 1979. Naturally, he probably has a personal desire to bring his old unit back on active duty as one the first overseas F-22 squadrons.

Unfortunately, the **525th** has no Alaska history. It served in the European Theater and elsewhere after the war.

The Air Force generally follows a heritage ranking system for activating squadrons. In the current listing of 845 squadrons on active and inactive status, the **525th** ranks 232 and the **54th** ranks 759. Ranking is based in part on unit awards, length of service, number of aces and Medal of Honor winners and other significant achievements. There are exceptions of course, and the Air Force does deviate from accepted policy.

General Hester selected the **525th** over the 43 inactive squadrons ahead of it on the heritage list. He apparently ignored the fact that Paragraph 3.2 of the Air Force Instructions 38-5 governing the selection process, provides for bringing back inactive units "with records of unique historical achievement."

The **54th Fighter** Squadron certainly qualifies in that category. It was activated 15 January 1941 at Hamilton Field and was one the first units to be equipped with the **Lockheed P-38** Lightning, a revolutionary fighter for its time, similar to the F-22 currently being operationally deployed.

The squadron deployed to Alaska in early June 1942, moved to the Aleutians shortly afterwards and remained there until the end of the war. It introduced the **P-38** to combat for the first time, and two of its pilots achieved the first **P-38** aerial victory.

It also flew some of the longest range fighter combat missions of the war. Its pilots used cruise control to extend the range of the fighter long before Charles **Lindberg** introduced the practice in the Southwest Pacific.

Since the **54th Fighter** Squadron possessed the only twin-engine, long range fighter in the Aleutians, it drew all the difficult missions and suffered a high casualty rate. Of the 25 original pilots deployed to Alaska, 12 were killed within a year.

These are some of the intangibles left out in the heritage rankings. The Eleventh Air Force during World War **II** failed to take care of its own, and the **54th** and its men did not achieve various unit citations and honors that it deserved, hence its low ranking.

I think it is time to make amends. While the **54th Fighter** Squadron's guide-on flies few streamers and it produced no aces Medal of Honor winner, it has a unique Alaskan heritage. In addition to serving in the Aleutians, it served on active duty from May 1987 to April 2000 when it was inactivated because of internal Air Force politics.

The Air Force should follow the Army's lead in stationing units in the state whose heritage is rooted in Alaska.

The Air Force Association Northwest Region president supports this as does the state and local chapter presidents. The State Historic Preservation Officer has also voiced her support. It is a right thing to do, and your support would be much appreciated. I have sent copies of this letter to other members of the Alaska Congressional delegation.

Sincerely

Electronically Signed

John H. Cloe

President, Eleventh Air Force Association