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## Luke Forward takes flight

W. Valley leaders launch campaign to ensure future of Air Force base

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West Valley leaders are on a mission to secure the future of Luke Air Force Base, and have launched a campaign titled Luke Forward, which seeks to gain statewide support.

The Glendale base, which is home to the largest fighter wing and the only active-duty F-16 training site in the world, is on a quest to land the military's new F-35 Joint Strike Fighter jet.

"This mission is personal to me," Gov. Jan Brewer said Wednesday at a press conference announcing the campaign. "Luke Air Force Base is in my backyard. I hear the roar from those jet engines and the sound of freedom on a regular basis, and I love it.

"Frankly, no other area in the country can compare in size, scope and tactical training ability."

The F-35 jet will eventually replace at least 13 types of aircraft, including the F-16s stationed at Luke, which are scheduled to remain in service with the Air Force through 2025.

"The F-35 will be extremely lethal. It will have excellent aerodynamic performance and advanced integrated avionics," stated Lockheed Martin, the company developing the jet. "Its next generation stealth, superb situational awareness and reduced vulnerability will make the F-35 hard to find, hard to hit and hard to kill."

More than 200 potential sites will be evaluated to house the new jet. After the release of the candidate bases, a formal environmental impact analysis process will begin, allowing communities to participate and provide input.

"We fully expect Luke Air Force Base to be on that short list of preferred sites," Glendale Mayor Elaine Scruggs said.



GOV. JAN BREWER ANNOUNCES during a press conference in Phoenix Wednesday a special push by the state and Valley cities to urge the Air Force to name Luke Air Force Base as the training school for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

Based on the results, the Air Force expects to announce the preferred locations in late spring next year. A final decision could be made in early 2011.

"As the Air Force moves forward in this selection process, it's critically important for Arizonans to show our support for Luke and the state's military industry at large," said Charley Freericks, chairman of Fighter Country Partnership, an advocacy group for the base.

## Securing Luke's future

The Luke Forward campaign was developed by Fighter Country Partnership and the West Valley Partners, a coalition of 13 city and county governments.



**TWO F-16S COME IN FOR A LANDING side-by-side at Luke Air Force Base in Glendale Oct. 6.**

Through the initiative, government leaders plan to generate support from citizens across Arizona to position the state as a strong supporter of the F-35 mission.

They will spread the message with the campaign Web site, a speaker's bureau, presentations to businesses, electronic billboards, e-mails, cable programs and social mediums such as Twitter and Facebook.

"Through Luke Forward, we'll be reaching out to as many people as possible throughout the state, including local chambers of commerce, Rotary clubs, PTAs and other industry and community groups," Freericks said.

The Web site, [www.lukeforward.com](http://www.lukeforward.com), provides updated information about Luke, the Joint Strike Fighter and the process for selecting a home for the new jet.

As of Wednesday, about 6,500 residents and elected officials from across Arizona had already signed up as supporters on the site.

West Valley cities bordering Luke have protected the base by preserving almost 32,800 acres from development that would have been considered incompatible with Luke's training mission.

In 2003, Goodyear obligated \$3.5 million to buy land in the southern departure corridor of Luke that, by zoning, could have been developed by private interests.

"Our people are very excited about having Luke here," Goodyear Mayor Jim Cavanaugh said. "We've demonstrated historically that we're strong supporters of Luke."

With year-round flying capability, Luke performs more than 130 training missions a day. Since opening in 1941, the 4,200-acre base has graduated more than 56,000 fighter pilots.

The base employs 8,000 personnel and serves more than 100,000 active duty members, veterans and their families. It also contributes \$2.17 billion annually to the local economy.

"Given our state's current economic condition, this stable, recession-proof industry needs to be maintained and strengthened," Brewer said.

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