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Dear Ms. Field and Mr. Stone:

In June 2022, the United States Government Accountability Office observed, “U.S. Space Command’s strategic significance underscores the importance of a transparent and deliberate headquarters basing decision.”¹ Transparency is needed more than ever after a sudden reversal of the decision to locate the U.S. Space Command’s headquarters to Huntsville, Alabama.

On January 13, 2021, after a thorough vetting process that spanned almost two years, the Secretary of the Air Force selected Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama, as the preferred location for Space Command’s headquarters. According to the announcement, the Air Force evaluated six possible headquarters locations “based on factors related to mission, infrastructure capacity, community support and costs to the Department of Defense.”² These factors strongly favored Huntsville: “Huntsville compared favorably across more of these factors than any other community, providing a large, qualified workforce, quality schools, superior infrastructure capacity, and low initial and recurring costs.”³

Multiple independent reviews by your offices confirmed the Air Force’s decision that Huntsville was the best location for Space Command’s headquarters. After its 20-person team conducted nearly three dozen interviews and reviewed

¹ United States Government Accountability Office, *U.S. Space Command: Air Force Should Develop Guidance for Strengthening Future Basing Decisions*, GAO-22-106055, June 2022 (“GAO Report”), 56, available at <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-106055.pdf>

² United States Air Force, *SecAF selects Huntsville, Alabama as preferred location to host USSPACECOM*, Jan. 13, 2021, available at <https://www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/2471163/secaf-selects-huntsville-alabama-as-preferred-location-to-host-usspacecom/>.

³ *Id.*

numerous documents relating to the headquarters decision, the Department of Defense Office of Inspector General “found that the process Air Force officials used to select Huntsville, Alabama, as the preferred permanent location for the U.S. Space Command headquarters (USSPACECOM HQ) complied with law and policy, and was reasonable in identifying Huntsville as the preferred permanent location.”⁴ The Government Accountability Office similarly reported that Huntsville was clearly the preferred headquarters location:

We found that the Air Force’s revised selection process included an assessment of costs, benefits, and capabilities of the final six candidate locations, after which the Air Force determined Redstone Arsenal, Alabama, was the preferred location. Air Force analysis identified Redstone Arsenal as the highest scoring location in the Evaluation Phase, the highest ranked location in the Selection Phase, and the location with the most advantages in the decision matrix. Air Force officials, including the then Secretary of the Air Force, stated that the decision to identify Redstone Arsenal as the preferred location stemmed from Air Force analysis showing it was the strongest candidate location.⁵

After its investigation, the Government Accountability Office concluded that the selection of Huntsville “was consistent with the Air Force’s analysis.”⁶ The Huntsville headquarters should have cleared its final hurdle when the Air Force determined last year that the site “will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment.”⁷

Yet on July 31, 2023, government officials reported that President Biden had reversed the decision to locate Space Command’s headquarters in Huntsville and instead selected a location in Colorado. News reports credited General James Dickinson with convincing Biden to choose Colorado:

U.S. officials told The Associated Press on Monday that Biden was convinced by the head of Space Command, General James Dickinson, who argued that moving his headquarters now would jeopardize military readiness. Dickinson’s view, however, was in contrast to Air

⁴ Department of Defense Office of Inspector General, *Evaluation of the Air Force Selection Process for the Permanent Location of the U.S. Space Command Headquarters* (DODIG-2022-096), May 10, 2022, available at <https://www.dodig.mil/reports.html/Article/3027137/evaluation-of-the-air-force-selection-process-for-the-permanent-location-of-the/>; U.S. Department of Defense Inspector General, (U) *Evaluation of the Air Force Selection Process for the Permanent Location of the U.S. Space Command Headquarters*, May 11, 2022, Report No. DODIG-2022-096, 2, available at <https://media.defense.gov/2022/May/10/2002994298/-1/-1/1/DODIG-2022-096.PDF>.

⁵ GAO Report, *supra* note 1, at 46-47.

⁶ *Id.* at 57.

⁷ United States Air Force, *Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) Establishment of Permanent United States Space Command Headquarters*, Sept. 30, 2022, 8, available at https://www.afceec.af.mil/Portals/17/documents/Environment/USSPACECOM_EA/2022_Sept_USSPACECOMEA_FONSI_Final_signed.pdf?ver=10q9oAiTpsghTbOvtaoA4A%3d%3d.

Force leadership, who studied the issue at length and determined that relocating to Huntsville, Alabama, was the right move.⁸

General Dickinson's role understandably surprised Alabama officials. Just weeks earlier, on June 7, 2023, General Dickinson confirmed to Alabama's congressional delegation that "the headquarters of U.S. Space Command belongs on Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Ala."⁹ According to Rep. Dale Strong, "I was assured by [General Dickinson] that he couldn't envision any circumstance where he wouldn't recommend Huntsville as the permanent SPACECOM HQ. He had no concerns with the initial decision."¹⁰

Newly uncovered Colorado property records reveal that General Dickinson had at least 1.5 million reasons to recommend Colorado over Huntsville for the permanent U.S. Space Command headquarters. In April 2023, General Dickinson registered a deed to a \$1.5 million, 20-acre ranch near the Colorado headquarters location.¹¹ When he was assuring them that "he couldn't envision any circumstance where he wouldn't recommend Huntsville," General Dickinson did not disclose his Colorado purchase to Alabama officials. It is unknown whether General Dickinson disclosed his personal interests in the Colorado site to President Biden or any other superiors.

General Dickinson's personal interests may explain why the Secretary of the Air Force announced in May that General Dickinson "had recently changed his needs for a headquarters and that the 'fundamental changes' could affect the basing decision."¹² As the Government Accountability Office found, the Huntsville location was the highest scoring location at every stage of the decision-making process.¹³ It is unknown how General Dickinson's "fundamental changes" affected the scoring process or how much taxpayer money was spent to implement these changes during the decision-making process.

Other improper factors may have influenced the decision as well. Multiple government officials reported that the White House would not move Space Command's headquarters to Alabama because of partisan concerns about the

⁸ Lolita C. Baldor and Tara Copp, *Biden decides to keep Space Command in Colorado, rejecting move to Alabama*, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, July 31, 2023, available at <https://apnews.com/article/space-command-biden-colorado-alabama-382b12b57733848fd1d083227ae0fa0bf>.

⁹ Lee Roop, *Space Command general confirms headquarters belongs in Alabama, Britt and Strong say*, AL.COM, June 7, 2023, available at <https://www.al.com/news/2023/06/space-command-general-says-headquarters-belongs-in-alabama.html>.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ Lee Roop, *Space Command's Gen. James Dickinson bought Colorado ranch while arguing to keep HQ there*, AL.COM, Aug. 15, 2023, available at <https://www.al.com/news/2023/08/space-command-commander-gen-james-dickinson-bought-colorado-ranch-while-arguing-to-keep-hq-there.html>.

¹² Courtney Kube, *Space Command's leader is building out his Colorado HQ even as Congress tries to force the HQ to move to Alabama*, NBC NEWS, June 16, 2023, available at <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/space-command-builds-colorado-hq-congress-tries-force-alabama-move-rcna89504>.

¹³ GAO Report, *supra* note 1, at 46-47.

state's abortion law.¹⁴ The White House denied that claim but did not provide any evidence to substantiate the denial.¹⁵

Transparency is needed to understand these issues and any others that were part of the effort to reverse the decision to locate Space Command's headquarters to Huntsville, Alabama. I respectfully request that your offices investigate the process to select the Colorado location with at least as much thoroughness as you did with the initial selection of the Huntsville location.

Sincerely,



Steve Marshall
Attorney General

¹⁴ Courtney Kube and Carol E. Lee, *Biden administration may halt plans to move Space Command to Alabama over state's abortion law, officials say*, NBC NEWS, May 15, 2023, available at <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/military/biden-admin-may-halt-move-space-command-alabama-abortion-law-rcna84336>.

¹⁵ Katharine Jackson, *Space Command HQ decision not tied to senator or abortion, White House says*, REUTERS, Aug. 1, 2023, available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/alabamas-abortion-laws-not-behind-space-command-decision-white-house-2023-08-01/>.