

Air Sovereignty Alert

What is it? The Air Sovereignty Alert (ASA) is composed of systems designed to quickly detect, identify, and engage air, land, and sea threats to the United States. ASA is executed under the auspices of Operation Noble Eagle (ONE).

What has the Air National Guard done? ANG fighter aircraft and crews charged with ASA identification and engagement are positioned at 16 of 18 sites across the United States. Currently, there are approximately 1,085 positions at 16 ANG sites. In addition to the fighters, the ANG provides tanker ASA support 24 / 7 at four sites across the United States.

ANG fighter units are typically located near critical infrastructure and dense population areas providing this vital defense at the fraction of the cost of an active duty Air Force unit. During normal, peacetime operations, ANG fighter units run on a “skeleton” crew of full time personnel.

What continued efforts have the Air National Guard planned for the future? The ANG operates legacy platforms that require an increasing amount of maintenance support, training opportunities, and complex upgrades to keep the aircraft, manpower, and support facilities viable in current and future combat environments. The recent increase in the ESL (Economic Service Life) of the F-16 pre-block aircraft (Block 25, Block 30, and Block 32), will give approximately 5 years of additional service life to 9 ANG Squadrons operating these aircraft. The F-15 fleet will be incrementally upgraded with the advanced AESA radar as budgetary constraints allow. Additional upgrades to avionics and weapon systems will continue in order to keep ANG aircraft viable and compatible with USAF and joint partner capabilities. The ANG will maintain a quantity of aircraft commensurate with the USAF roadmap.

The Air National Guard (ANG) supports the basing decisions produced by the Air Force Strategic Basing Process. Currently, Secretary of the Air Force Donnelly and Air Force Chief of Staff Schwartz has announced Burlington ANGB, VT as the first ANG F-35 basing candidate. During future continental United States basing announcements, the ANG anticipates the announcement of other ANG bases as F-35 candidates. Recapitalization of the ANG in a concurrent and balanced approach with the Active Component is the best way to ensure the ANG remains a viable component of the United States Air Force.

Why is this important to the Air National Guard?

The ANG operates 42% of the USAF F-16 fleet, 52% of the USAF F-15 fleet, and 11% of the USAF F-22 fleet.

Operating costs are increasing; aircraft are aging quickly and becoming more expensive to fly. In 1967, the average age of our force structure was 8.5 years; now it's 23.5 years and getting older. Aging aircraft alone is not the issue—it is the decreasing military utility of some aircraft. Readiness hasn't suffered, but we're paying a high cost to remain ready.

The ANG can continue to fly the ASA mission under current authorizations and appropriations. Historical analysis of execution has indicated potential future shortfalls in manning, facilities, and airfield construction. The ANG will make every attempt to mitigate shortfalls and prevent any breaks in coverage. Unplanned operational necessities have also become more apparent as the mission matures, and the ANG will continue to pursue authorizations and appropriations sufficient to address all planned and unplanned contingencies.