

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 30, 2015

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to express our concerns about the effects that recent action by the Department of Defense (DOD) to withdraw 500 military personnel from Lajes Air Force Base in the Azores has had on the island of Terceira, and on the Azores. We are also concerned about recent statements by Vasco Cordeiro, President of the Azores, that the DOD is planning to phase out the Lajes Air Force Base as part of a consolidation of American forces in Europe over the next three years. These actions could exacerbate economic difficulties facing the Azores.

Lajes Field is on the Portuguese island of Terceira, part of the nine-island Azores archipelago in the mid-Atlantic, 900 miles west of Lisbon and 2,200 miles east of Washington, D.C. The United States has had a presence in Lajes since World War II, when Portugal allowed the United States and Great Britain to combat the Nazi submarine menace off its coast. Today, Lajes remains an important location for supporting aircraft transiting to and from the United States.

We have heard from a group of our local elected officials and members of the Portuguese American Legislative Caucus of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts who have expressed serious concerns about the impacts that these changes and potential future changes could have on the Azores.

While we understand the needs of the Department of Defense to begin to transform its European infrastructure to help maximize our military capabilities in Europe and support our NATO allies and partners in the region.

We are also concerned about the effects that the reduction in force is having on the economy of the Azores. Published reports say that as a result of the reduction in force more than 700 Portuguese civil workers are losing their jobs. Lajes Airfield is the island's second largest employer and this downsizing will significantly impact the Azores economy. Any phase out of the Lajes Air Force Base would have a devastating effect on unemployment and economic development in the Azores.

Therefore, we hope your Administration would consider other productive potential uses of the facilities at the Lajes Air Force Base to the benefit of the United States and the Azores. We hope

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that the United States will take the appropriate actions to assist an ally during a difficult economic time.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey



Elizabeth Warren