

United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510-1304

April 24, 2015

General Frank J. Grass  
Chief, National Guard Bureau  
111 South George Mason Drive  
Arlington, VA 22204

Dear General Grass;

I write in strong support of the 183<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Wing's consideration to establish a Cyber Operations Squadron. The Illinois Air Guard is fully qualified and uniquely suited to provide installation space and personnel to this effort for the region.

I am confident that the 183<sup>rd</sup>'s capabilities and the benefits leveraged by the region will make a very successful contribution to the nation's cybersecurity needs. The unit has more than 200 cyberspace and intelligence Airmen trained and ready to assume this mission. It also has a robust information technology infrastructure, including an extensive fiberoptic backbone and two new Sensitive Compartmented Information Facilities (SCIFs).

Illinois contains the largest academic and commercial concentration of cyber related businesses, institutions, and applicants in FEMA Region V. For example, the University of Illinois at Springfield's Computer Science Department collaborates with the National Security Agency and the Department of Homeland Security through its designation as a National Center of Academic Excellence in Information Assurance Education, while its nearby Champaign-Urbana campus hosts the fastest open science super computer in the world. To cite just one example of the private sector expertise, Chicago's 1871 tech start-up hub is the largest outside of Silicon Valley. These assets make clear that the region stands ready to educate, complement, and sustain the workforce for this new cybersecurity mission.

I appreciate your consideration in this matter and thank you for your continued support to the 183<sup>rd</sup> and the Illinois National Guard.

Sincerely,

  
Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

cc: Lt Gen Clarke, Director of the Air National Guard