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12 DEC 2025

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
United States Senate
531 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Merkley:

This letter is in response to your letter dated November 21, 2025, regarding U.S. Coast Guard Air Facility (AIRFAC) Newport, Oregon. Thank you for your letter and for meeting with me to discuss this important issue. Thank you for your invitation to visit Newport, Oregon and meet with the local community to discuss their strong support for the Coast Guard. I look forward to visiting this coming year.

The Coast Guard understands how important helicopter operations from AIRFAC Newport are along the Oregon coast for commercial fishing and recreational boating, as well as the dangers of the cold water and harsh weather along and offshore of the Oregon coast.

As we discussed, my intent is to permanently maintain a Coast Guard helicopter operating from AIRFAC Newport except when maintenance, crew readiness, or emergent mission needs require short-term, temporary movement of the helicopter and crew until their presence is restored. The Coast Guard will do better to communicate and be transparent with you and the Newport community in these situations.

In addition to Newport, we will continue to conduct search and rescue response along the entire Oregon coast with helicopters and crews from AIRFAC Newport and Coast Guard Air Stations in Astoria and North Bend.

If the Coast Guard is considering any future change to the long-term status of AIRFAC Newport, the Coast Guard understands and will comply with the statutory requirements in 14 U.S. Code Section 912 governing closure or termination of operations there.

The following provides answers to the questions in your November 21 letter:

- Due to a shortage of aircrew and increased aircraft maintenance issues, the Coast Guard made the decision to use its operational flexibility in Section 912 to temporarily reduce operations at AIRFAC Newport in 2025. There was not an intent to close or terminate operations at AIRFAC Newport. As we have always done since 2015, the Coast Guard planned to resume regular operations at AIRFAC Newport in December 2025 for the duration of Dungeness crab season. I directed return of the helicopter and crew on November 25, 2025.

- The Coast Guard remains ready to respond to search and rescue needs along the entire Oregon coast through a network of boat stations, air stations, radio facilities, and the worldwide Emergency Position Indicating System. This is complemented with vessel carriage requirements of survival gear to increase survivability in cold water and other prevention measures such as vessel inspections and the Code of Federal Regulations to ensure safety of life at sea.
- The Coast Guard continues to operate AIRFAC Newport and also supports missions, including those around Newport, from Air Station North Bend.
- The Coast Guard, in conjunction with the Department of Homeland Security, the Administration, and Congress, continually assesses Coast Guard force posture to ensure the most efficient and effective use of government resources to best meet mission needs.

I look forward to continuing to work with you in this regard.

My Senate Liaison Office at (202) 224-2913 would be pleased to respond to any further questions you or your staff may have.

Sincerely,



Kevin E. Lunday
Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard