

My name is Dave Hodges. I am the Dave Hodges that was misquoted by reporter Chen in her very biased article. This reporter is seemingly unable to even get the basic facts correct. I told this reporter that I lived in Wittmann. She reported that I lived in El Mirage.

The meeting started with meeting organizer Laura Mook thanking the Arizona Republic for helping to make the meeting possible. So much for the objective press. It is doubtful that a single retiree organized this meeting on her own and was able to elicit the attendance of Luke officials and 2 state legislators.

I am very disturbed by this reporter and her approach to the meeting. The voices calling for the heads of the El Mirage city officials were in the minority. Most people simply wanted to find out about Luke's fate and were not actively campaigning for the removal of Mayor Waterman.

I am very concerned about how I was misquoted in the article. There can be no doubt to what I said because I scripted my opening in order to frame my questions about the safety of the F-35.

I said that my son and I enjoy the F-16's and that I did not want to see Luke closed. I gave a qualified statement of support so long as the F-35 was safe and did not endanger the public. I asked Rusty Mitchell to respond to the EPA reports which state that the F-35 is 2-3 times louder than the F-16 and would cause "health risks" to nearby residents. This is not even close to what Chen reported in the above article.

I asked Mitchell the question 3 times and he refused to answer. He cannot answer because he knew I had the facts about the dangers posed by the F-35 and I was holding them at the meeting.

In an example of further shoddy journalism, Chen referred to the report of being an April study. How would she know? She never looked at what I was holding. She just assumed and reported her assumption as fact. This is sadly behavior that has become all too common to this paper that we refer to as the "Arizona Agenda." Chen asked for and was given my cell phone number. If she was unsure as to the facts and my position, not to mention where I live, she should have called me. That is, if she hadn't already wrote the theme of her story in advance.

I made it clear in the meeting that I would support the F-35 coming to Luke if officials could cite replicable research which refutes the EPA report and the studies of Valparaiso Florida which cite human health risks. Luke is valuable to the valley and I support its mission. However, the fact that Rusty Mitchell refused to answer my question with any air of definitiveness is very concerning and concern all of us.

When the jets fly over my house, it is indeed the sound of freedom. However, if the sound of freedom is going to break our eardrums and cause neurological damage to innocent citizens, we need to re-evaluate our support of the F-35 coming to Luke. We should support Luke, but not support the F-35 until at such time the public can be assured that the plane does not endanger us.

Oceana and Valparaiso are 2 communities which are suing the Air Force over the F-35 and the dangers that it poses to its populace. Shouldn't we in Arizona ask questions? Or do we not care what happens to residents in the West Valley cities so long as the power brokers get what they want? The EPA told the Air Force that they would have to relocate 1200 families because of the F-35's at Eglin and the Air Force ignored the EPA. Does that concern any of the supporters of Luke?

My sincere hope is that the Eglin and Oceana figures and subsequent law suits will be proven to be without merit and we can all get what we want, the preservation of Luke through obtaining the F-35.

I have a copy of the power point presentation from Florida on the F-35 and I will be happy to share with anyone who is willing to write me www.acpprteam@yahoo.com. It is certain that reporter Chen and her bosses will never let this report see the light of day in the Republic.

Dave Hodges

AZ Republic, Sep-05, 4:20 PM