

Statement by Pam Atwater, Oct. 31, 2016, at news conference, Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station

Good afternoon and thank you for being here.

We are grateful for the presence of Congressman Collins, Senator Ortt, and other elected officials who continue to support our efforts to oppose the installation of massive industrial wind turbines in Niagara and Orleans counties. I would also like to thank all of our SOS supporters who are here today. Our voices are being heard.

We all know how important the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station is to our community. The brave men and women who serve here, as well as the civilian employees, play a key role in the defense of our great nation. There are nearly 2,800 men and women working at this base, making it the largest employer in Niagara County.

We called this news conference today to make this community aware of a disturbing situation that may well jeopardize future missions here, as well as the future of the air base.

Cassidy and Associates, a Washington-based lobbying firm, has been working behind the scenes for Apex Clean Energy to promote the Lighthouse Wind industrial wind turbine project. They are well-connected inside the Beltway, and they have been relentless in their efforts to ignore the majority of residents in the towns of Somerset and Yates who have repeatedly gone on record in opposition to the installation of these mammoth wind turbines in our towns.

We have now learned that Cassidy and Associates has been hired by the state of New Jersey to help protect several military installations in New Jersey that make up Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, as well as the Earle Naval Weapons Station, the 177th Fight Winger and a Coast Guard Training Center.

This is known as a mega-base – with 44,000 employees.

Cassidy and Associates will be paid \$200,000 for their efforts. This will be in addition to the \$192,000 paid by New Jersey last year to do the following:

- Lobby the Air Force to locate the next generation of mid-air refueling tankers at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. **That's a mission this base just landed.**
- Maintain a list of the chief competitors and threats to New Jersey's military installations.
- Develop a list of similar missions based at other military installations that may be suitable for New Jersey.

Are you starting to sense a pattern here?

This doesn't pass the smell test.

Apex has hired Cassidy & Associates to lobby for its industrial wind turbine project here in Western New York, which could put our air base at risk the next time Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission decides which military installations will close.

We've been fortunate here -- twice, the BRAC Commission has voted to save the base, but what happens in the next round?

Some may believe that the turbines will not have an impact on the base, since a base official, quoted in last Sunday's Buffalo News, spoke about the new mission involving high-flying KC-135 tankers. He was very cautious in his statement when asked if the Apex project would impact base operations.

He called it a nonissue "at this time, with the new mission."

That is hardly reassuring, given how often the missions and priorities of military installations change. If these wind turbines are sited here, this base can pretty much rule out ever gaining low-flying aircraft, including drones. Allowing these structures in the local Military Operating Area could cripple the ability of the base to attract new missions, and would give the next BRAC another reason to close the base.

We're calling this CASSIDY-GATE. The same firm that is promoting wind turbines here, turbines that could jeopardize the future of this base, has been hired by a neighboring state to land a re-fueling mission while keeping an eye on the chief competitors and threats to New Jersey's military installations.

CASSIDY-GATE represents a clear conflict of interest.

We are once again calling on Apex to respect the wishes of a majority of residents and abandon its ill-conceived project.

Local vendors who do business on the air base, base employees, veterans, veterans' groups, military retirees and all Niagara County taxpayers should contact Governor Cuomo and Senator Schumer, telling them that CASSIDY-GATE represents a clear and present danger to the economic future and survival of the Niagara County economy.

We are also calling on the governor and the Article 10 Siting Board to connect the dots, just as we have, and to recognize the future of Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station is at risk. I'm sure the governor does not want this base to close on his watch.

Thank you.