



## Ellsworth Authority named Defense Community of the Year



South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard receiving the "Defense Community of the Year" award in Monterey, CA.

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The South Dakota Ellsworth Development Authority's partnership with Ellsworth Air Force Base is being lauded by the country's defense organizations.

The Association of Defense Communities named the Ellsworth authority the Defense Community of the Year for the strong relationship it has developed with the base.

Pat Burchill, the authority's chairman, said being picked as the award recipient is significant, particularly because it was selected from about 200 communities, states and organizations with a significant military presence.

"I think the award recognizes the vision that the state of South Dakota had by forming the authority back in 2009," Burchill said. In fact, Burchill said, the partnership is being looked at by other defense communities nationwide that are looking to improve relationships with nearby military installations.

The South Dakota Legislature established the authority in 2009 to work toward keeping Ellsworth off any future Base Closure and Realignment Commission lists. Ellsworth made it on the 2005 list, stirring aggressive efforts statewide to successfully remove the base from the list.

The base values its partnership with the authority, according to Ellsworth commander Col. Mark Weatherington.

"It allows us to carry out our national security mission more effectively, helps identify and resolve issues of mutual concern, and it opens the door to cooperation on important development opportunities that benefit both the base and our neighbors in the Black Hills," Weatherington said.

In just three years, the authority has reduced encroachments near the base, used excess Air Force land to develop a commercial retail area and donated 20 acres to the Douglas School District. This fall, it will break ground on a \$16 million wastewater treatment center, which will serve both the base and the city of Box Elder.

Early this month, Gov. Dennis Daugaard accepted the award on behalf of the authority at the association's annual conference in Monterey, Calif. Burchill and the authority's executive director, Scott Landguth, were also in attendance.

"South Dakota has been a strong partner with the U.S. Air Force for 70 years, and we are working hard to ensure that we maintain that partnership for years to come," Daugaard said in a prepared statement.

While serving as lieutenant governor, Daugaard was influential in getting the legislation passed that created the authority. Burchill said it has been a collective statewide effort to make the progress the authority has made since its conception.

"I think it's a team effort; it takes the state, it takes the city, it takes the counties in order to get this done," Burchill said. "We've got a really strong board."

Burchill said although the award does not protect Ellsworth from a future base closure list, it certainly could not hurt its chances of staying open. "They are basically telling us that we are a great example of effective partnerships among bases and local communities," Burchill said.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **ELLSWORTH DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY NAMED DEFENSE COMMUNITY OF THE YEAR**



The Association of Defense Communities has named the South Dakota Ellsworth Development Authority the 2012 Defense Community of the Year, presenting the award Aug. 6 at the ADC Annual Conference in Monterey, Calif. The award recognizes an active defense community whose efforts in building partnerships with a military installation have enhanced military value and the overall economic development of the community.

ADC is the nation's leading association representing U.S. communities and states with a significant military presence.

"I think the important thing that I would highlight is we're partners," said Col. Mark Weatherington, Commander Ellsworth Air Force Base. "This is about how an Air Force base and a local community can work together in mutual interest and help solve some problems to make both of them prosper and both of them succeed."

Since its formation in 2009 by the state legislature, the South Dakota Ellsworth Development Authority has worked to reduce encroachment surrounding Ellsworth Air Force Base and improve the base's efficiency in an effort to support the installation's missions and prepare it for future growth.

The authority has purchased, designed and now is building a multi-use development to house residents and businesses currently incompatible with Ellsworth Air Force Base. The authority also is working with the local communities to strengthen zoning and overlay districts to reduce future encroachment. In addition, the authority is building a regional wastewater treatment plant that will serve both Ellsworth and the city of Box Elder, saving the Air Force an estimated \$8 million.

The organization also is using excess land provided by the Air Force to develop a commercial area for retail and light industrial uses. The project will provide an economic boost to the region and a better environment for Air Force personnel. The authority donated 20 acres of the Air Force land to the local school district for a new elementary school.

The authority and Ellsworth are both committed to a strong, enduring relationship. Terry Yonkers, the assistant secretary of the Air Force for installations, environment and logistics, cited Ellsworth as a "great example" of effective partnerships at work, a reference to the public-public partnership among the installation, local communities and the state.

"Our country is fortunate to have South Dakota Ellsworth Redevelopment Authority as a leader among other communities that support and have supported U.S. military missions," said John Armbrust, President of the Association of Defense Communities.



