

# South Dakota becomes RAIDER COUNTRY

**SCOTT LANDGUTH**

Executive Director South Dakota Ellsworth Development Authority



On March 28, 2019 the United States Air Force announced Ellsworth Air Force Base would become home to the first two B-21 Raider Bomber Squadrons. These squadrons consist of the first training squadron and the first operational squadron.

How did we get here? How did South Dakota and the Black Hills become Raider Country?

In 2005, Ellsworth Air Force Base was slated to close as part of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process. In the 14 years since, a coordinated effort by our Congressional Delegation, multiple Governor's Offices and State leaders, and on a local level resulted in the Air Force valuing Ellsworth as the premier site to locate its newest bomber the B-21. The efforts to make this possible are numerous, including these key initiatives that put Ellsworth over the top.

The expansion of the Powder River Training Complex was a game-changer when it came to evaluating Ellsworth Air Force Base. The value of having the largest training range within the lower 48 states is tremendous to Ellsworth. Most of the credit for this expansion goes to Senator John Thune and his office. The hard work and perseverance from Senator Thune over a decade's time resulted in a training range that moved Ellsworth from a site considered for closure to a site marked for growth.

The creation and continued support of the South Dakota Ellsworth Development Authority provides South Dakota an entity – and Ellsworth a partner – to solve a wide range of issues. The creation of the Authority under Governor, now Senator, Mike Rounds and the support under Governor Dennis Daugaard, which continues with Governor Kristi Noem, has let the Air Force know South Dakota and the Black Hills is a great place to conduct their mission. If Ellsworth has an

*South Dakota*  
Ellsworth Development Authority

issue, the Authority does everything in its power to fix it. From providing wastewater services to eliminating encroachment in accident potential zones at the end of the runway, the Authority has partnered with Ellsworth to address problems and make Ellsworth a more valued base to conduct its mission.

Ellsworth's selection as the first home of the B-21 Raider will result in thousands of new jobs and millions (if not billions) in new construction. It will boost the economy of not just the Black Hills area, but the entire state of South Dakota. With the bomber will come new neighbors and friends, many of which will stay in our community becoming permanent residents of the Black Hills. This growth will bring new challenges and opportunities, and with the leadership at the Federal and State levels, as well as the resources the Ellsworth Development Authority can provide, we are positioned to handle whatever comes our way. We have proven we can.

**Scott Landguth is the Executive Director of the South Dakota Ellsworth Development Authority. The Authority's mission is to ensure that South Dakota and the Black Hills are a great place for the Air Force to conduct its mission.**



The new bombers, called the B-21 or Raider, will ensure a population and construction boom at the base, which had been at risk of completely shutting down in 2005.