

Governor Tim Pawlenty
BRAC Commission – Grand Forks
23 June 2005

Submitted testimony regarding Grand Forks

Commissioners, thank you for coming to our part of the country to listen to our concerns.

When the Congress created the Base Realignment and Closure process, they created a powerful tool for getting the most out of our defense dollars. But like any powerful tool, it must be used carefully or unforeseen damage can occur. That is your responsibility.

We appreciate the Air Force's recommendation to keep the Grand Forks Air Force base open and to find alternative missions. As future missions are considered for Grand Forks, we urge you maintain this base as a core facility.

The Grand Forks Air Force base has played an important role in protecting our national security and it has an enormous economic impact on the surrounding area, both in North Dakota and Minnesota. This area has already endured difficult economic times. Unfortunately, new job opportunities are often limited. The Air Force receives outstanding value from the Minnesotans and North Dakotans who work on the base because they are extremely motivated. We would hope that as the Commission

reviews the Air Force's data, that you would consider productivity and work ethic as part of your analysis.

Skilled, trained and hardworking people are an important asset to our military. As you consider the Air Force's recommendation, I hope you will consider these factors. Keeping the base at strong staffing levels is important not just to North Dakota, but to Minnesota as well.

Thank you for your attention.

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Submitted testimony regarding Duluth

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When the Congress created the Base Realignment and Closure process, they created a powerful tool for getting the most out of our defense dollars. But like any powerful tool, it must be used carefully or unforeseen damage can occur. That is your responsibility.

I want to make two points.

First, while we are pleased that the Department of Defense has recommended that the Duluth air base remain open, we are very concerned about related recommendations that encourage an accelerated retirement of the 15 F-16s which make up the 148th Fighter Wing.

There have essentially been two processes going on at the same time – the BRAC process and the Air Force's Future Total Force (FTF) decisions.

For the Air Force to include an FTF decision like retiring the F-16s as part of their BRAC recommendation violates the purpose and intent of Congress

when it set up BRAC. We believe the role of BRAC is to look at facilities, not evaluate or change missions. An F-16 is not a facility.

I am appreciative of the Commission's desire to further explore this issue during a hearing currently scheduled on June 30, 2005 in Atlanta, Georgia.

Second, as a Governor, I am concerned about Homeland Security and Homeland Defense in my state. Maintaining a viable Air National Guard force in Northern Minnesota is essential. Additionally, with Duluth's proximity to the growing Twin Cities metropolitan area, I strongly agree with the Air Force's recommendation to maintain an air sovereignty alert site in Duluth.

We also need to have capabilities to respond to the state mission. We have the best National Guard in the country and some of the highest rates of recruitment and retention in the Air National Guard. If we are going to continue to recruit and retain Guard members, we need aircraft for them to operate.

We know that eventually the F-16s will be retired. We are having fruitful discussions with the Air Force about follow-on missions.

But you should not allow the BRAC process to be used in a manner in which it was never intended, or accept recommendations without fully appreciating the assets Duluth represents.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you.