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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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July 28, 2005

BRAC Commission

AUG 01 2005

Received

Brigadier General Sue Ellen Turner, USAF (Ret)
Base Realignment and Closure Commission
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Brigadier General Sue Ellen Turner:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today to discuss base realignment and closure recommendations, particularly the Air Force proposal to realign Eielson Air Force Base to a "warm" status. Your task is not an enviable one and I commend you for your continued service to our nation. As we discussed, I have many concerns about the Eielson proposal and believe it is a broken recommendation that does not deliver promised savings, ignores strategic value, and undermines joint training opportunities.

First, the Air Force analysis was flawed by not including a realistic cost of maintaining Eielson in a "warm" status as compared to fully utilizing the base for the key missions of air defense, close air support, and joint training and operations with the Army. There is no such thing as a "warm" facility in mid-winter Alaska – a facility is either operational or not. Their poor analysis was revealed during the Eielson site survey when it was determined that an additional 1,000 personnel are needed to maintain the installation than originally anticipated. This finding will reduce projected Eielson savings by over \$1 billion.

Further, it was a poor assumption to count the salaries of every active duty person they moved from Eielson as cost savings, even though they are not going to leave the service. The General Accountability Office (GAO) was critical of this flaw in their July 1st report to the Commission. In the report, GAO noted that 47 percent of projected net annual recurring savings is associated with relocating personnel to other areas. To compare, the same personnel savings account for 82 percent of the claimed Eielson annual recurring savings. If you just required the Air Force to buy back the transfer of personnel and added a modest addition to the "warm" base leave behind at Eielson, the difference is remarkable. An annual recurring savings of \$229 million goes to \$27 million!

The Air Force recommendation also completely ignores Eielson's vital strategic advantage for current and future missions and total force mobilization. The primary mission of units based at Eielson is to reinforce our units on the Korean peninsula and the Taiwan Straits. Considering our plans to reduce the number of ground troops in Korea and Marines on Okinawa, this mission is of even greater strategic value and importance. Eielson aircraft are critical to defeating any enemy offensive and removing them will significantly increase response time to any contingency. Please ask the Commission staff to provide you the details of a Pacific Command memo, dated 9 December 2004, to the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff which responds to potential Air Force BRAC recommendations.

Brigadier General Sue Ellen Turner, USAF (Ret)

July 28, 2005

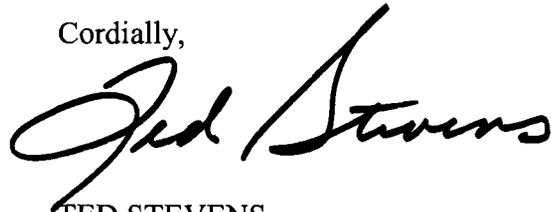
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Finally, it is clear to me that there was a complete disregard for the impact of the Eielson recommendation on joint training and readiness. The Air Force makes absolute no sense in their decision to remove all A-10 and F-16 aircraft from interior Alaska at a time when the Army's presence in the region is growing. The converted Stryker Brigade at Fort Wainwright and the new Airborne Brigade at Fort Richardson train everyday with Eielson aircraft on Alaska's 63,000 square mile range complex. The absence of aircraft in the region will certainly degrade mission readiness. Of great concern to me is close air support training, which is critical to current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Please continue to review this matter. The Air Force decision meets the test of significant deviation in all four primary military value considerations and should be overturned by the Commission, leaving both A-10 and F-16 aircraft at Eielson. Do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance.

With best wishes,

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ted Stevens". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

TED STEVENS

Chairman

Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Defense