

**148th Fighter Wing
Duluth, MN**

**Requested Response
to
BRAC Commission**

9 August 2005

Introduction

The 148th Fighter Wing presents the following information to the Base Closure and Realignment Commission in response to a request from Lt Col Bradley McRee. We want to thank the Commissioners and their staff for all their hard work and dedication on an extremely difficult task. We also want to thank you for the opportunity to highlight, emphasize, and pin point the 148 FW's proven performance, superb infrastructure, mission capabilities, community impact, and contested BRAC data and criteria.

We embrace the United States Air Force's concept of transformation and its vision of the Future Total Force (FTF). The 148 FW wants to be part of the process and wants to be part of the FTF. However, the 148 FW fully supports the principles outlined in the July 25, 2005 letter from Maj Gen Lempke, President, AGAUS, to The Honorable Anthony J. Principi. To reiterate, "... the proposed recommended actions are beyond the scope of the Base Closure Act and it would therefore be improper for the BRAC Commission to include these actions in its recommendations to the President and to the Congress." It is the opinion of the 148 FW that the proposed recommended action of inactivating the 148th Fighter Wing and retiring the F-16 Block 25 aircraft (15 PAA) is a programmatic action as opposed to a real property recommendation.

Therefore, the 148th Fighter Wing concurs with AGAUS and The Adjutant General of Minnesota and urges that all portions and references to this recommended action should be set aside by the Commission thereby allowing the 148th Fighter Wing, the Minnesota National Guard, the ANG, and the United States Air Force to deal with this issue using established separate processes. Consequently, the 148 FW will not forward any additional FTF Initiatives or Proposals for follow-on missions or alternatives to the proposed recommended actions to the Commission at this point. The Minnesota National Guard and the 148th Fighter Wing welcome the opportunity to present options and alternatives to the previously submitted Vanguard Guard/Transformation Initiatives and Proposals outside the scope of BRAC related actions.

Executive Summary

The 148 FW clearly demonstrated its "Outstanding" capabilities by its recent successes in Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) operations in Iraq, while simultaneously maintaining our assigned Homeland Defense/Homeland Security (HD/HS) alert mission. Once again, the 148 FW has proven itself a premier Air Sovereignty Alert (ASA) site and a world wide deployable Precision Guided Munitions (PGM) and Theater Airborne Reconnaissance System (TARS) capable Fighter Wing. Due to exceptional people (Minnesota ranks 5th in ANG End Strength), unmatched infrastructure that includes \$52.5 Million in newly constructed and newly remodeled, state-of-the-art facilities, and unparalleled mission accomplishment, Duluth should retain or even expand its current flying mission.

The 148th Fighter Wing is committed to providing outstanding personnel and critical resources for increased duration (120 days) and more frequent deployments in support of AEF requirements. Additionally the un-congested airspace, local quality of living and strong community support make the Duluth ANG base an excellent candidate for Community Basing of Active Duty personnel and equipment.

Proven Performance

The true indicator of Military Value is performance. The 148 FW continues to demonstrate its ability to superbly execute 100% of assigned missions; simultaneously contributing to the Global War on Terrorism on two fronts, Iraq and 24/7 HD/HS ASA mission. People, our greatest resource, are responsible for making this happen. Highly experienced, extremely dedicated and hard working individuals, they continue to set the standards for others to aspire to.

1. People

- Personnel End Strength consistently exceeds 100%
- Minnesota ranks #5 in ANG Personnel End Strength
- 10 year Retention average of 93.5%
- Highly skilled Full Time work force with an average 15 years of experience
- 100% of all FY 05 AEF/ECS taskings easily filled by unit volunteers

2. Mission Results

- 100% Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) mission success
 - Flew 454 missions and 1,877 combat hours in 40 days
- 100% Operation NOBLE EAGLE (ONE) mission success
 - Flew 1,570 missions and 6,298 hours since 9/11
- Only Wing in the Air Force to **simultaneously** support **three** ASA sites
- ASA Mission experts – consistently rated “OUTSTANDING” or “EXCELLENT” during numerous NORAD Alert Force Evaluations (AFE’s)

Infrastructure

The 148 FW is completing a massive \$52.5 Million base infrastructure modernization. As a result, the Duluth ANGB will have a brand new, state-of-the-art Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Complex, a completely remodeled Operations Building, and a premier new and refurbished ASA site.

- \$ 52.5 Million in new construction
 - Newest Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Complex in the Air Force
 - New 91,400 Sq Ft Hangar
 - Totally refurbished Operations Group building
 - State-of-the-art secure Mission Planning Area
 - Revamped Wing Command Post & Central Security Control facilities
 - New Alert crew quarters – Work in progress
 - New Fire Hall facility – Work in progress
 - New Base entrances – Work in progress
- \$4.33 Million to refurbish seven flow through ASA aircraft shelters
 - New floors, new fire suppression system, new doors, new lighting, and remodeled support structures - exceeds ASA requirements of six shelters
- “Zero” Quantity Distance (QD) issues with the Munitions Storage facility

- Well maintained 10,000' runway with new BAK-14 Aircraft Arresting Systems
 - Longest Runway in the State of Minnesota
- ONLY Joint facility available for the Army aircraft & helicopter de-icing team testing
- ONLY PMEL lab in the ANG that has been certified since 1967
- Aircraft parking ramp capacity to support any ANG assigned aircraft

Mission Capabilities

The "Outstanding" airspace owned and scheduled by the 148 FW, lack of airfield encroachment to the base, and Duluth's unique geographical location combine to yield one of the best training environments in the world. Capacity of the airspace and the base could easily be increased, without adversely effecting civilian aviation and the surrounding community. Total area of the 148 FW's airspace exceeds the Nellis AFB complex where Red Flag exercises are currently conducted. The 148 FW operates from a non-congested airport with "Zero" noise problems, "Zero" air traffic congestion, and a multitude of opportunities for future growth requirements to support any current and future core missions. In addition, the diverse and changing weather conditions at Duluth allow for training in seasonal environments.

1. Premier training airspace in US

- 148 FW owns and schedules five large Military Operating Areas (MOA's) and seven Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspaces (ATCAA's)
 - All-altitude airspace - 300 ft to 45,000 ft
- Supersonic airspace at all altitudes in R-4305 and above 30,000 feet in all ATCAA's
- 100% of airspace approved for Chaff, Flares and Electronic Countermeasures
- 100% of airspace approved for Lights-Out/Night Vision Device (NVD) training
- Airspace available for full-scale weapons employment
- Multiple air refueling tracks within 50 nautical miles (NM)
- Unparalleled abundance of low altitude airspace
 - 148 FW owns and schedules four low level routes and four low level MOA's

2. Encroachment

- Vast quantities of uninhabited land surrounding base and airport
- Virtually unlimited expansion opportunities
- Zero documented air traffic delays in the past 10 years
- No military noise abatement restrictions

3. Geographic Location

- Ideally located ASA site to provide HD/HS for:
 - Major Metropolitan centers and critical infrastructure sites
 - Surveillance of Canadian border
 - Crucial international shipping port

Community Impact

The loss of the Duluth F-16's and a flying mission at the 148 FW would be devastating to the local economy. Over \$41.4 Million is directly attributable to wages and salaries. This amount would be cut by approximately 50%, resulting in a significant blow to the stability of the local economy.

- \$85.1 Million economic impact in FY 2004 and \$75.6 Million in FY 2003
- 8th largest employer in the Northeastern Minnesota and Northwestern Wisconsin
- Sole provider for Emergency Fire/Crash Rescue for the Duluth International Airport
- Only Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team for Northern Minnesota & Wisconsin
- 148 FW members volunteer over 4,800 hours of community support annually
- Provided critical support for State and Local Government agencies
- Ideally suited for Community Basing of Active Duty personnel and equipment

Contested Data and Criteria

The scoring system used to evaluate military installations was unfairly skewed to favor large, active-duty bases at the expense of smaller Air National Guard units. The "military value" rating assigned to the 148 FW in Duluth, MN is woefully unrepresentative of its true military value and was based on a combination of inappropriate criteria and incorrect data. Duluth scored only 32.55 points of a possible 100 points. Based on our independent assessment, we scored much higher. Listed below are the most notable contested data concerning the 148th Fighter Wing:

- **Proximity to Airspace Supporting Mission (scored 3.69 of 22.08):** Within this criterion, the BRAC scoring system places far too much emphasis on actual weapons employment, when current precision munitions training relies almost exclusively on video-assessed weapons deliveries. As outlined earlier, Duluth's airspace is second to none in terms of proximity, size, availability and most importantly, suitability for current relevant training.
- **Access to Adequate Supersonic Airspace (scored 0.00 of 6.72):** The scoring criteria for "block altitude" made this category effectively unachievable for any unit with primarily over-land airspace. The 148 FW received no credit for Restricted Area 4305 which is supersonic from the surface to 45,000 ft and is only 85 NM from the base. Additionally, all of Duluth's plentiful airspace is, in fact, authorized for supersonic training above 30,000' and is available 24 hours per day. The value of supersonic airspace at lower altitudes is grossly overemphasized within the formula.
- **Proximity to Low Level Routes Supporting Mission (scored 1.09 of 7.25):** This formula unfairly penalized units with low level routes which do not terminate in "scorable" ranges. In today's training environment, low level training itself has been greatly deemphasized and "scorable" ranges are no longer as vital as they once were. Despite this, Duluth should have received a much higher rating because it does own and schedule four excellent low level routes, all within 50 NM which begin or end in low altitude airspace.

- **Range Complex Supports Mission (6.62 of 11.95):** Since this criterion is measured in exactly the same way as “Proximity of Airspace Supporting Mission,” our comments from above apply to this category as well. This category effectively represents “double jeopardy” with respect to “military value.”
- **Prevailing Installation Weather Conditions (0.22 of 5.52):** This measurement uses an arbitrary weather condition of 3,000’ ceiling and 3 nautical miles visibility. This criterion over emphasized clear weather training, when most theaters of operation our forces will deploy to have challenging weather as the norm. A better method would have examined the occurrences of weather conditions unsuitable for training.
- **Suitable Auxiliary Airfields Within 50NM (0.00 of 5.18):** This criterion required the auxiliary airport to have a runway which is 8,000’ long. Duluth scored zero points in this category despite their frequent use of Hibbing Airport (6,500’) which is only 30NM away.
- **Sufficient Munitions Storage (0.00 of 4.79):** Criterion requires storage of all munitions for a combined F-117 and F/A-22 unit with 42 aircraft. Duluth’s scored zero points, yet has one of the finest Weapons Storage Sites in the ANG capable of storing 175,000 pounds net explosive weight of munitions. It was a former Nuclear Weapons storage site, with modernized security systems, and boasts the required 1,250 ft quantity distance from all other airport facilities. Additionally, the BRAC Adjudication Official of the United States Air Force **directed** all ANG units to answer this question “N/A” resulting in ZERO points earned.
- **Ramp Area and Serviceability (0.00 of 2.97):** Duluth’s ramp is spacious and well maintained. It is as large as is allowable for an ANG fighter unit of its current size. There is also ample room for expansion to meet future mission needs.

The eight categories listed above represent approximately 70 percent of the “military value” ranking system. Duluth scored low in each of these categories and yet has valid rebuttals to each item. Again, it is our view that the algorithm used did not fairly assess Duluth’s true military value.

Vanguard and Transformation Initiatives and Proposals

The 148 FW has been diligently working with the Air National Guard and the Air Force for the past 15 months to solidify a viable and enduring mission. Two Vanguard Initiatives were submitted, briefed, discussed, and supported by the Minnesota Air National Guard. Both initiatives involved divesting of legacy and non-legacy aircraft, continuance of ASA missions, addition of TARS mission, increased support for AEF requirements, increased aircraft Utilization (UTE) Rates, Community Basing of Active Duty personnel, and utilization of an Air Reserve Component (ARC) Associate organization. In addition, both initiatives utilized a phased approach, gradually working towards Integrated Associate Wings and then to Fully Integrated organizations in Duluth and Minneapolis. Both initiatives previously presented allowed for a smooth mission and aircraft transition, without leaving a gigantic “Gap” in mission execution and combat capability.

Prior to the public release of BRAC recommendations, the Minnesota Air National Guard submitted three additional Transformation Proposals. Again, all three proposals attempted to maintain combat capability while providing for a smooth aircraft and mission transition. The Minnesota National Guard and the 148 FW are eager to work within established separate processes to develop a FTF plan that provides a solution that best serves the interests of our national security and our country.

Conclusion

The 148th Fighter Wing presented the following information to the Base Closure and Realignment Commission in response to a request from Lt Col Bradley McRee. We again want to extend heartfelt thanks to the Commissioners and their staff for all their hard work and dedication on this critical task. Thanks again for the opportunity to highlight, emphasize, and pin point the 148 FW's proven performance, infrastructure, mission capabilities, community impact, and contested BRAC data and criteria. Based on this information, the 148 FW should retain a flying mission and should remain an ASA location.

To reiterate, the 148 FW embraces a transformation of the United States Air Force and its vision of the Future Total Force (FTF) concept. But we must also support the principles outlined in the July 25, 2005 letter from Maj Gen Lempke, President, AGAUS, to The Honorable Anthony J. Principi. We whole heartedly agree that the proposed recommended action of inactivating the 148th Fighter Wing and retiring the F-16 Block 25 aircraft (15 PAA) is a programmatic action as opposed to a real property recommendation.

Consequently, the 148th Fighter Wing fully concurs with AGAUS and The Adjutant General of Minnesota and urges that all portions and references to this recommended action should be set aside by the Commission thereby allowing the 148th Fighter Wing, the Minnesota National Guard, the ANG, and the Air Force to deal with this issue using established separate processes. We look forward to the opportunity to present options and alternatives to the previously submitted Vanguard Guard/Transformation Initiatives and Proposals as soon as possible. We are confident that the Commissioners will agree that the 148 FW should retain a flying mission, not only in the short term, but with an aircraft that will allow the 148 FW to provide this country with a viable, enduring mission performer well into the future.

148th FW Duluth

* WCC Mark Johnson - 8/2/05
Vice WCC Howard Hayes -

Trips to Bureau Gen Bath

Add Minutes - nothing to reach

Blocks 25 were TARS pods have had upgrades
Recm

Value for City basing

102% strength

ASA? Do alert now for over 15 years
Alert in Minneapolis \$5m

Alert shelter
\$3 1/2m at Duluth
Main Hqr in Oct