

Anthony Principi, Chairman
Base Realignment and Closure Commission
2521 South Clark Street
Arlington, VA 22202

29 May 2005

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Dear Chairman Principi,

Enclosed is a copy of a recent article in the Great Falls (MT) Tribune, with my annotations, regarding your plan to disband the 120th Fighter Wing of the Montana Air National Guard. I hope it will get your attention during the decision process.

The 120th Fighter Wing is one of the top 5 percent of all units in the entire United States Air Force. They have faithfully flown air defense, interceptor, and air/ground attack missions for many years. They have consistently flown both homeland security missions and air superiority and combat support missions over Iraq since 9/11 with great skill and success.

Your plan notes that some of the 120FW F-16C's are getting old. It proposes disbanding the wing, moving 6 of the fighters to much lower-rated units elsewhere, and scrapping the remaining nine. A much better course would be to replace the older aircraft with new ones, or transition this outstanding ground/air fighter unit to the newer F/A-18's or F/A-22's and preserve a truly outstanding combat unit.

Also to be considered is the fact that northern Montana has excellent flying weather, a huge aerial training area (including some outstanding low-level ranges) with varied terrain, and minimal civil-aircraft congestion. This suggests not only retaining the 120th Fighter Wing, but reopening the runway at Malmstrom Air Force Base and moving some flying missions here. The 120FW could provide both escort and "aggressor" support for bomber training, or mesh easily with other air/ground combat fighter units.

Deactivating a highly outstanding unit to move their weapons to lower-rated units is, bluntly, military stupidity. I hope you will reconsider this decision and do the intelligent thing.

Sincerely,



R. E. Thalmann
Flight instructor USAPHS Fort Wolters, TX 1967-1969
Retired State and municipal police officer
P. O. Box 641, Fort Benton, MT 59442

PRESERVE**120TH FIGHTER WING**
Montana Air National Guard

TO BE VERY BLUNT ABOUT IT, THE WORST EXAMPLE OF MILITARY STUPIDITY WOULD BE TO DISBAND A FIGHTER WING THAT HAS PROVED ITSELF TO BE BETTER THAN 95 PERCENT OF OTHER UNITS IN THE ENTIRE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE.

IF YOU THINK THEIR F-16C'S ARE TOO OLD, GIVE THEM NEW ONES, OR F/A18'S, OR F/A22'S!
THEY CAN USE THOSE IN THE SKIES OVER IRAQ JUST AS THEY HAVE DONE WITH THEIR "OLD" F16'S.

R. E. Thalmann

ROBERT E. THALMANN
FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR USAPHIS FT. WOLTERS, TX 1967-1969
RETIRED STATE AND MUNICIPAL POLICE OFFICER

Fighter wing earns honors

For the Tribune

The 120th Fighter Wing Montana Air National Guard received three prestigious awards — the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award, the 2004 Air Force Maintenance Effectiveness Award and the 2004 Air Force Security Forces Unit award — on May 8 at a formation directed by Maj. Gen. Randall Mosley, Adjutant General for the Montana National Guard.

Col. Mark Meyer, 120th Fighter Wing commander, accepted the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award streamer, which is attached to the wing flag, on behalf of the wing for its accomplishments from June 2003 through July 2004.

This is the seventh time in 30 years the unit has earned the honor, given to less than 5 percent of Air Force units world-

To learn more

For further information, please contact Montana Air National Guard Public Affairs Officer, Maj. Mary Swan at 791-0235.

wide.

In a speech following the awards ceremony, Mosley expressed his appreciation for the efforts of the Montana Air National Guard.

He stated that 80 percent of the Montana Air Guard and 70 percent of the Montana Army Guard have been deployed since September 11, 2001, and have shown outstanding performance of their assigned duties to Montana and the United States.