

SMS, John T. Prater, USAF (Retired)  
 8532 LaLinda Lane  
 Clovis, NM 88101

**05312005**

General,

*I am a retired Air Force veteran of 26 years service. Half of those years were spent at Cannon Air Force Base. A terrible mistake is in the making by placing Cannon, or any other military installation, on the closure list. I know you are most likely hearing this from every area that is on the list. However, with Cannon it is especially true! I hope and pray that what I have to share with you will convince you of that fact. I observed, on C-Span your discussion with the Air Force. I have never been so disappointed by military leaders as to how and why these decisions were made.*

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*The closing of Cannon would have a number of negative affects on the area in different ways. First would be the educational system. One of the Clovis schools near Cannon is 95% military students. The entire staff of that school would likely be out of work. Both Clovis Community College and Eastern New Mexico University would easily have a 10% reduction in students. Next would be the economy. There is no doubt that many businesses would close their doors with the loss of some four to five thousand jobs being taken away. These are people who are friends and neighbors! Surely, we do not want this to happen! The Cities of Amarillo and Lubbock would feel the impact as well.*

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*How and why is Cannon important to the security of our nation? Planes do not fly themselves. It takes pilots. Cannon has long been known for the training of pilots. There absolutely is no better place to do that than Cannon Air Base! Take a moment and look at two maps; the weather map and the map of New Mexico. All you see is open space and blue sky! The cities of Clovis and Portales*

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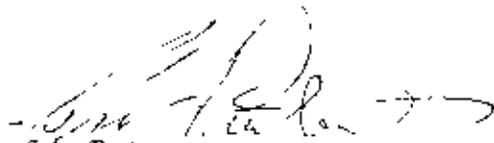
Now I would like to point out another very important concern: retired military. Within the Clovis and Portales area about 8 to 10% of the population is retired military. It is my opinion that the base hospital provides excellent care for those of us under Tri-Care. As you know we had no say in how our care would be provided. Many of us now pay for the care we were promised free for a career of service to our nation. If the base is closed that care will be impaired and become far more costly. I had to choose between VA and Tri-Care for my medical needs, I selected Tri-Care Prime in order for my wife to have care as well as my self. For both my wife and I, health issues require visits to our care provider every 60 to 90 days at a minimum. Closing the base will require payment for each visit we make to the local hospital. I did an analysis of the past two years and between office and ER visits that would run my wife and I an additional three to four hundred dollars of additional medical cost a year and when you add the cost of medication we are facing an additional thousand dollars a year in medical cost. That may not seem like a lot to some people but for us it is.

Finally, if 9/11 taught us anything, it taught us that our enemies are wise and observant powers. By reducing the number of military installations we have we are simply reducing the number of targets they have to hit to impede our abilities to respond. Plus the realignment map provided from your discussion on C-Span would make it even easier! The largest majority of bases are coastal areas! Why are we making their job easier for them? In addition to that Cannon is a prime example that closing bases doesn't really save money. You and I both know that you can make numbers say what ever you want them to. It is all about what pot of money you are talking about. But when you compare savings to expenditures you really do not save. You proved that point with the two star when you pinned him down on this matter and he finally admitted that the cost is zeroed out when you compare both saves and expenditures. I was a member of the base expedition team here at Cannon when the F-111 bases were closed. I know that more money was spent expanding Cannon to house all the F-111's than was saved had they remained where they were.

A nation is only as strong as its military. I am EXTREMELY concerned that the all mighty dollar has become the driving force behind the military. I would point out that bigger seldom proves to be better. Let me share why. When all the F-111's were brought to Cannon did all the personnel come with them? NO! Shaw and Hill Air Forces bases are going to find themselves with a lot more planes and very few additional maintainers! That can do nothing but place us on the fast track to destruction! I loved every day of my military career and every day I wish I was still on that flight line putting jets in the air. I can assure you I am today, as I did then, fighting change that results in nothing but a negative affect on MY Air Force. There are no positives to be found in closing Cannon or any other military installation. Mark my words, the black hole looms before us and a weakened military capability will suck us right down it! This action can do nothing but put BIG smiles on our enemies' faces and invite others to become an enemy. SURELY you do not want this to happen!

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The closing of Cannon would have a number of negative affects on the area in different ways. First would be the educational system. One of the Clovis schools near Cannon is 95% military students. The entire staff of that school would likely be out of work. Both Clovis Community College and Eastern New Mexico University would easily have a 10% reduction in students. Next would be the economy. There is no doubt that many businesses would close their doors with the loss of some four to five thousand jobs being taken away. These are people who are friends and neighbors! Surely, we do not want this to happen! The Cities of Amarillo and Lubbock would feel the impact as well.

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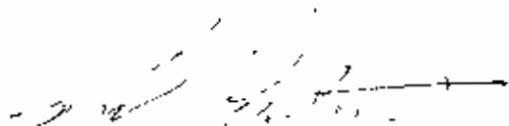
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