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Baltimore County Executive

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Baltimore County

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June 29, 2005

Commissioners
2005 Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Commissioners:

I am the County Executive of Baltimore County, Maryland, the largest jurisdiction in the Baltimore Metropolitan area with more than 780,000 residents. I am writing in regard to the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) study. Without question, by the broadest measures, the State of Maryland benefits significantly from the report recommendations. I commend the Department of Defense for acknowledging the strengths of Maryland's location, workforce, infrastructure and quality of life.

Baltimore County has pledged to work jointly with neighboring counties to implement the final BRAC recommendations. The focus of our regional perspective is to encourage the planned growth of these highly skilled technical jobs and to assure the Commission that the region is prepared to embrace this expansion. Fort Meade in Anne Arundel County stands to gain 5,300 new positions and Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Harford County expects to gain 5,000. Baltimore County undoubtedly can benefit from and does support that aspect of the recommendation.

Baltimore County has office and commercial space, and new housing and mixed-use communities currently in place and in development to accommodate new growth. Designated growth areas are located in Owings Mills and White Marsh. Projects such as Baltimore Crossroads @ 95 and the revitalization of 170 miles of waterfront in the eastern portion of the county and the Red Run Business Centers and Owings Mills Town Center in the western county include over 5 million square feet of space for new offices, residences, retail, community colleges and libraries. Along with our regional partners, Baltimore County is prepared to support, develop and implement plans to expand the technology capabilities required to meet the 21st century military and civilian requirements of the BRAC 2005 recommendations.

I also wish to specifically discuss the proposed realignment and reduction of the C-130J unit operations at the Warfield Air National Guard Base located in Middle River, Maryland, on the east side of Baltimore County. The 135th Airlift Group is the only fully operational C-130J squadron in the U.S. Air Force. The removal of the aircraft from Warfield would mean the loss of over 100 full-time positions and potentially 400 Air National Guardsmen supporting this unit. The contribution of this unit to the local and

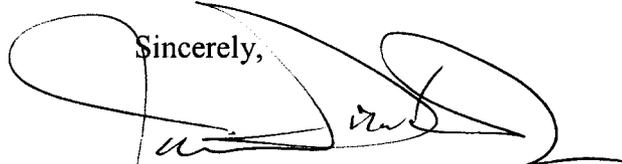
state economy is significant, but not as significant as their proximity to strategic Maryland installations and our Nation's Capitol.

We are a nation at war. I have visited with Air Guard service members at Warfield returning from Iraq deployments. These servicemen have educated me not only on the value of their work, but the integrity and discipline of their unit. The C-130J represents the "cutting edge" of technology in airlift capability, and it is my belief that this trained cohesive unit should remain intact at Warfield. The 135th Airlift Group's capability to respond to missions in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as stateside emergencies represents incalculable value to the military, Maryland, and the nation.

The dynamic spirit and flexibility of the Air National Guard represents the same characteristics that the BRAC study has identified in choosing Maryland for other military and strategic expansions. On behalf of the 135th Airlift Group and the citizens of Baltimore County, I ask that you consider retaining the C-130J unit at Warfield. As a vibrant part of a community with a strong legacy of supporting the United States military in its defense of freedom around the world, I respectfully request that you not accept the recommendations of the Department of Defense in regard to the 135th Airlift Group in Middle River, Baltimore County, Maryland.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



James T. Smith, Jr.
County Executive