DCN 3778
Executive Correspondence

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-0018

THE AUDITOR GENERAL

RECEIVED

07 05 2005

June 30, 2005

Admiral Harold W. (Hal) Gehman, Jr. (USN, Ret)
Commissioner
2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 S. Clark St., Ste. 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Admiral Gehman:

We are at a time in our nation when Americans face an insidious threat. We all know that our war on global terrorism is far from over. I am proud of the dedication of our military serving in this war, and I have deep appreciation for their sacrifices.

I was an infantryman during the Vietnam War, and I know first-hand what it means to soldiers to have a nation united behind them as we are today. My respect for our military compels me to oppose the Pentagon's plan to close four military installations in Pennsylvania.

My experience as a Marine taught me that geographically critical bases are strategically vital to the military's defense. My role as Pennsylvania's Auditor General requires me to oppose the decision as a severe economic blow to our state and its thousands of loyal military and civilian personnel in Pennsylvania.

The two main U.S. military installations slated for reorganization in Pennsylvania are the Willow Grove Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base in Montgomery County, near Philadelphia, and the U.S. Air Force Reserve 911th Air Lift in Allegheny County, outside Pittsburgh, which would be moved to Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina. In addition are two Western Pennsylvania facilities close to Pittsburgh International Airport: the Army's Charles E. Kelly Support Facility that will be closed and the 99th Regional Readiness Command that will be moved to Fort Dix in New Jersey.

Closing military bases during a war is like taking police off the streets during a crime spree. America needs to be prepared to respond to homeland security threats from strategic geographical locations, particularly the northeast corridor of the United States. Pennsylvania is a unique state in that our bases offer different, but very important, regional readiness. Willow Grove is located near major metropolitan and port areas. Strategically, it is positioned in the heart of the heavily populated New York -

Philadelphia - Baltimore - Washington corridor, a terrorist target in the past and possibly in the future. Our bases in the western part of the state are ideally situated to serve the Pittsburgh area and the Midwestern populace areas. Both bases have served the military extremely well for decades and most recently in the war on terrorism.

The arguments for maintaining the Pittsburgh-area facilities and Willow Grove are overwhelmingly persuasive.

In Pittsburgh, the BRAC Commission's primary reason for relocating the 911th to North Carolina was based on faulty information.

- The Pentagon said it wanted to close the 911th Air Lift Wing because there wasn't sufficient land to accommodate more than 10 C-130 cargo planes. There are actually 53 acres of tarmac available for expansion. The extra land would allow space for 16 planes, the Air Force's preferred number for a squadron. *(Pittsburgh Tribune-Review 6/22/2005)*

- The county also owns another 1,200 unused acres near the Pittsburgh International Airport that could be developed. *(Associated Press 6/20/2005)*

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Willow Grove is the dominant military base in Eastern Pennsylvania.

- Willow Grove has played a vital role in post 9/11 military mobilization. It houses reserves and National Guard units from all of the services, one of only three such bases in the country. *(Philadelphia Inquirer 6/11/2005)*

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The closing of these two strategically important bases would affect more than 10,000 military and civilian jobs in the Commonwealth. Pennsylvania took major hits from three previous BRAC closings. Our Commonwealth has endured 16,000 job losses since the first closings in 1988.

Pennsylvania has one of the largest National Guard units in the country and the members use these bases as headquarters or for training. *(Philadelphia Inquirer 6/27/2005)*

Let us not forget that Pennsylvania has a long history of providing strength to the military. Western Pennsylvania has provided a higher proportion of recruits for both active and reserve forces than the national average. *(Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 6/21/2005)* Eighty-three brave Pennsylvania soldiers have given their lives defending freedom in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Pentagon's plan weakens our overall military strength. It damages troop morale, and it sends the wrong message to the enemy about our national resolve.

Though views may differ across the nation as to the decision to initiate military action in Iraq, at the present America stands proud and united in its support of our troops.
But that may not be the case in the future. States that are losing military bases and jobs, as proposed in Pennsylvania, are concerned about the commitment to our troops, families and communities while America is at war. Closing these strategic military bases while our country is at war simply does not make sense.

It is no secret that the military is falling short of meeting its recruiting targets. Thus, the National Guard looms ever larger in our national defense plans. On June 23, Pennsylvania Army National Guard sent a brigade into combat for the first time since World War II. With 2,130 soldiers, it is the state's largest deployment since the Korean War. They will add to the 1,000 soldiers already in the Middle East. That brings to 3,200 the number of Pennsylvania Guard members fighting against the insurgency.

Cutting National Guard installations will not strengthen our national security and enhance our ability to win the global war on terror; it will only weaken us at a time when we need the National Guard the most.

Eliminating our facilities will only depress National Guard recruiting efforts. The closings will force some National Guardsmen and reservists to drive longer distances to report for duty.

The Pentagon needs to return to the drawing board. Closing these key military bases in Eastern and Western Pennsylvania will harm the security of Pennsylvania and the United States of America. Many Pennsylvanians have given their lives for their country by making the ultimate sacrifice. Their families and communities have suffered in the process. Please do not turn your back on them by closing these bases. It would send the wrong message to 12 million Americans that have defended our country since its inception.

Sincerely,

JACK WAGNER

JW/SH/kr

Cc: Governor Edward G. Rendell
Senator Arlen Specter
Senator Rick Santorum
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The Honorable James V. Hansen
Commissioner
2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 S. Clark St., Ste. 600
Arlington, VA 22202

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JW/SH/kr

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June 30, 2005

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The Honorable Samuel K. Skinner
Commissioner
2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 S. Clark St., Ste. 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Commissioner Skinner:

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THE AUDITOR GENERAL

June 30, 2005

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Brigadier General Sue E. Turner (USAF, Ret)
Commissioner
2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 S. Clark St., Ste. 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Brigadier General Turner:

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General Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton (USAF, Ret)
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2521 S. Clark St., Ste. 600
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The closing of these two strategically important bases would affect more than 10,000 military and civilian jobs in the Commonwealth. Pennsylvania took major hits from three previous BRAC closings. Our Commonwealth has endured 16,000 job losses since the first closings in 1988.

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Let us not forget that Pennsylvania has a long history of providing strength to the military. Western Pennsylvania has provided a higher proportion of recruits for both active and reserve forces than the national average. *(Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 6/21/2005)* Eighty-three brave Pennsylvania soldiers have given their lives defending freedom in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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But that may not be the case in the future. States that are losing military bases and jobs, as proposed in Pennsylvania, are concerned about the commitment to our troops, families and communities while America is at war. Closing these strategic military bases while our country is at war simply does not make sense.

It is no secret that the military is falling short of meeting its recruiting targets. Thus, the National Guard looms ever larger in our national defense plans. On June 23, Pennsylvania Army National Guard sent a brigade into combat for the first time since World War II. With 2,130 soldiers, it is the state's largest deployment since the Korean War. They will add to the 1,000 soldiers already in the Middle East. That brings to 3,200 the number of Pennsylvania Guard members fighting against the insurgency.

Cutting National Guard installations will not strengthen our national security and enhance our ability to win the global war on terror; it will only weaken us at a time when we need the National Guard the most.

Eliminating our facilities will only depress National Guard recruiting efforts. The closings will force some National Guardsmen and reservists to drive longer distances to report for duty.

The Pentagon needs to return to the drawing board. Closing these key military bases in Eastern and Western Pennsylvania will harm the security of Pennsylvania and the United States of America. Many Pennsylvanians have given their lives for their country by making the ultimate sacrifice. Their families and communities have suffered in the process. Please do not turn your back on them by closing these bases. It would send the wrong message to 12 million Americans that have defended our country since its inception.

Sincerely,

JACK WAGNER

JW/SH/kr

Cc: Governor Edward G. Rendell
Senator Arlen Specter
Senator Rick Santorum
Pennsylvania Congressional Delegation
Major General Jessica Wright

DCN 3778
Executive Correspondence

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-0018

THE AUDITOR GENERAL

June 30, 2005

RECEIVED

07052005

The Honorable Philip Coyle
Commissioner
2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 S. Clark St., Ste. 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Commissioner Coyle:

We are at a time in our nation when Americans face an insidious threat. We all know that our war on global terrorism is far from over. I am proud of the dedication of our military serving in this war, and I have deep appreciation for their sacrifices.

I was an infantryman during the Vietnam War, and I know first-hand what it means to soldiers to have a nation united behind them as we are today. My respect for our military compels me to oppose the Pentagon's plan to close four military installations in Pennsylvania.

My experience as a Marine taught me that geographically critical bases are strategically vital to the military's defense. My role as Pennsylvania's Auditor General requires me to oppose the decision as a severe economic blow to our state and its thousands of loyal military and civilian personnel in Pennsylvania.

The two main U.S. military installations slated for reorganization in Pennsylvania are the Willow Grove Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base in Montgomery County, near Philadelphia, and the U.S. Air Force Reserve 911th Air Lift in Allegheny County, outside Pittsburgh, which would be moved to Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina. In addition are two Western Pennsylvania facilities close to Pittsburgh International Airport: the Army's Charles E. Kelly Support Facility that will be closed and the 99th Regional Readiness Command that will be moved to Fort Dix in New Jersey.

Closing military bases during a war is like taking police off the streets during a crime spree. America needs to be prepared to respond to homeland security threats from strategic geographical locations, particularly the northeast corridor of the United States. Pennsylvania is a unique state in that our bases offer different, but very important, regional readiness. Willow Grove is located near major metropolitan and port areas. Strategically, it is positioned in the heart of the heavily populated New York -

Philadelphia - Baltimore - Washington corridor, a terrorist target in the past and possibly in the future. Our bases in the western part of the state are ideally situated to serve the Pittsburgh area and the Midwestern populace areas. Both bases have served the military extremely well for decades and most recently in the war on terrorism.

The arguments for maintaining the Pittsburgh-area facilities and Willow Grove are overwhelmingly persuasive.

In Pittsburgh, the BRAC Commission's primary reason for relocating the 911th to North Carolina was based on faulty information.

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- The county also owns another 1,200 unused acres near the Pittsburgh International Airport that could be developed. *(Associated Press 6/20/2005)*

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DCN 3778
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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-0018

THE AUDITOR GENERAL

June 30, 2005

RECEIVED
07052005

The Honorable James H. Bilbray
Commissioner
2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 S. Clark St., Ste. 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Commissioner Bilbray:

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I was an infantryman during the Vietnam War, and I know first-hand what it means to soldiers to have a nation united behind them as we are today. My respect for our military compels me to oppose the Pentagon's plan to close four military installations in Pennsylvania.

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JW/SH/kr

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DCN 3778
Executive Correspondence

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-0018

THE AUDITOR GENERAL

RECEIVED

07 05 2005

June 30, 2005

General James T. Hill (USA, Ret)
Commissioner
2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 S. Clark St., Ste. 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear General Hill:

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JW/SH/kr

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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-0018

THE AUDITOR GENERAL

June 30, 2005

RECEIVED

07 05 2005

The Honorable Anthony J. Principi
Chairman
2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 S. Clark St., Ste. 600
Arlington, VA 22202

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