

07 07 2005



Martha's Vineyard Hospital
One Hospital Road • P.O. Box 1477 • Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 S. Clark St., Ste. 600
Arlington, VA 22202



Dear Sirs:

Martha's Vineyard Hospital through its relationship with the U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Cape Cod has been able to save the lives of the residents of Martha's Vineyard, as well those of the many seasonal residents and tourists. This ability is contingent upon the existence of the Massachusetts Military Reservation which houses Camp Edwards, Otis Air Force Base and U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Cape Cod. For this reason it is imperative that the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) reverse the Bush Administration's proposal to close Otis.

But, by far, the single greatest loss for Martha's Vineyard will be the potential loss of Air Station Cape Cod, which uses runways maintained by the Air Force. The Coast Guard air station plays a lifesaving role for the Vineyard's 15,000 year-round residents and its 100,000 summer visitors. The role of search and rescue, which is a core function of the U.S. Coast Guard's mission, will be inhibited and delayed by the relocation of that portion of its responsibility to Quonset Point in Rhode Island. But most important will be the loss of the air evacuation service provided to Martha's Vineyard.

Martha's Vineyard Hospital, a federally-designated Critical Access Hospital, is the only hospital on the island. Critically ill patients must be quickly transported to tertiary hospitals and the hospital depends upon a commercial air ambulance service. However, foul weather frequently shuts down the operations of the commercial air ambulance helicopters. When this happens the Island depends upon the Coast Guard Air Station Cape Cod helicopters. They fly in conditions in which commercial air ambulances will not. And when even they cannot fly, the Coast Guard dispatches a Falcon jet to pick up a patient at Martha's Vineyard Airport and transport him or her to Logan Airport for relay by ambulance to Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston or another trauma center.

The decision to close Otis is a "life or death" one for those of us who live on the Vineyard. We urge the BRAC to help keep Otis open. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Timothy Walsh, Chief Executive Officer

Dedie Wieler, Chief Quality Officer