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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
- SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND AIR QUALITY
- SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
- SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS
- SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF OFFICIAL CONDUCT

DEMOCRATIC SENIOR DEPUTY WHIP

DEMOCRATIC REGIONAL WHIP

July 7, 2005

Commissioner James V. Hansen
BRAC Commissioner
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, Virginia 22202-3909

Dear Commissioner Hansen:

I would like to thank you for visiting Ellington Field. Ellington Field is vital to the protection of the southeast Texas gulf coast and is an integral part of our nation's homeland defense.

Our main motivation in keeping the 147th Fighter Wing at its current levels at Ellington Field is homeland security. Houston presents one of the most vulnerable targets in the US with the fourth largest city in the country, the Johnson Space Center, the largest medical center in the world, the largest port for foreign tonnage in the US, and one of the most crucial segments of our nation's economy, a petrochemical complex that stretches the length of the Houston Ship Channel in close proximity to Ellington Field.

The Port of Houston is the second largest petrochemical complex in the world, and the largest in the Western Hemisphere, which produces over 35% of the nation's gasoline at a great many refineries. Numerous chemical plants also line the channel, producing a number of volatile compounds. According to the U.S. Coast Guard, 7,600 deep draft vessels arrive each year, and 60% of those ships carry sensitive oil/chemical cargos. Terrorists have clearly focused on using airplanes as weapons against strategic and symbolic targets in the U.S.

Combine these valuable, but potentially dangerous assets with Houston's heavy air traffic (2 major commercial airports) and the fact that private planes traverse the airspace above this petrochemical complex, and the need for serious air defense capabilities in the Houston area becomes very clear. An airborne attack on the refinery complex could seriously disrupt the nation's energy supply, causing major nation-wide economic impacts. An attack on a chemical plant could result in a hazardous release with thousands of casualties. With the expected BRAC savings of eliminating the 147th totaling only $3.6 million over 20 years, I urge reconsideration of the initial BRAC recommendation to eliminate the 147th Fighter Wing at Ellington Field.

I want to thank you again for taking the time to visit Ellington Field and the 147th so that you may have a first hand look at the critical role the Fighter Wing plays in protecting Houston's air space and deterring an attack on one of the most susceptible areas of our country. Anything

less than maintaining the 147th at its current levels will remove the strong deterrent the Fighter Wing provides and leave Houston less protected against possible terrorist attacks.

Sincerely,

Gene Green
Member of Congress

Cc: Chairman Anthony J. Principi