



**U.S. Senator Rick Santorum
Statement for the Record
BRAC Commission
July 7, 2005
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Regional Hearing to consider the Department of Defense's recommendations for base closure and realignments for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Commission, I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the valued military installations in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Let me begin by stating that I am disappointed by the recommendations of the Department of Defense to close 13 military installations and realign six others throughout the Commonwealth; however, I am pleased that five other installations in Pennsylvania stand to gain if the BRAC Commission accepts DoD's recommendations. In the end, if the BRAC Commission accepts the Department's recommendations, Pennsylvania will lose nearly 1,900 jobs, both military and civilian, and the United States will lose critical military skills and valuable contributions of Pennsylvanians.

As you are aware, there are three military installations in western Pennsylvania that were recommended by the Department of Defense for closure or realignment -- the 911th Airlift Wing, U.S. Air Force Reserve; the 99th Regional Readiness Command, U.S. Army Reserve; and the Charles E. Kelly Support Activity. Recently, General Lloyd Newton, USAF (Ret.), visited the Pittsburgh International Airport Air Reserve Station, host to the 911th Airlift Wing. As you know, the 911th Airlift Wing provides airlift of airborne forces, equipment and supplies, and delivers important materiel by airdrop, landing, or cargo extractions systems. This unit also provides intra-theater aeromedical evacuation for injured or wounded military personnel.

Mr. Chairman and members of the BRAC Commission, I strongly disagree with the recommendation to close the Pittsburgh International Airport Air Reserve Station, and I take issue with DoD's justification for doing so. In reality, land currently owned and leased by the 911th Airlift Wing can host 13 C-130 aircraft. Furthermore, under a current Memorandum of Agreement between the Air Force and the Pittsburgh International Airport, the 911th Airlift Wing can host 7 additional C-130 aircraft, for a total of 20 C-130 aircraft.

In addition to the miscalculations regarding the C-130 aircraft capacity of this base, there are further repercussions associated with moving this unit. The Pittsburgh International Airport Air Reserve Station is an Air Force Reserve facility; as such, each of these reservists has established a civilian life in the Pittsburgh area. Asking these dedicated men and women to leave their friends, homes, and civilian jobs will have a severe impact on the overall mission of the United States Air Force. In fact, 94% of personnel at the 911th have indicated that they will not move. Replacing these servicemembers will not be easy, particularly considering the Air Force's reliance on the skills of these individuals.



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The service will lose valuable experience and expertise, as many reservists will choose to retire or separate instead of uprooting their families or commuting thousands of miles away.

In addition to recommending the Pittsburgh Air Reserve Station for closure, the Department of Defense has proposed realigning the 99th Regional Readiness Command, U.S. Army Reserve, through the establishment of a Northeast Regional Readiness Command Headquarters at Fort Dix, New Jersey. In addition, DoD has proposed closing the Charles E. Kelly Support Facility in Oakdale, Pennsylvania, and relocating its units to the Pittsburgh Army Reserve Center.

If this commission accepts DoD's recommendation to restructure the Regional Readiness Command, I strongly support consolidating units currently housed at the Kelly Support Facility and additional activities located in the greater Pittsburgh area at the site of what is currently the 99th Regional Readiness Command. By building on existing assets, personnel, and community infrastructure within the Pittsburgh region, we will be able to address military and homeland defense needs.

By closing two bases and realigning a third in western Pennsylvania, the Department of Defense is recommending the removal of critical services for veterans. Services such as ID cards, TRICARE, Base Exchange, commissary, casualty assistance, and the transportation of household goods are all housed within the 911th Airlift Wing at the Pittsburgh International Airport Air Reserve Station and the Kelly Support Facility. These men and women, who have sacrificed so much to protect our lives and preserve our freedom, deserve the best that we can offer them. Surely this includes convenient access to the benefits they have earned.

In southeastern Pennsylvania, Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base (NASJRB) Willow Grove is an installation utilized by not only the Navy and Marine Corps, but also the Army Reserve, Air Force Reserve and Pennsylvania Air National Guard, making Willow Grove a truly joint installation with respect to military operations. Among the tenants of this installation are the 913th Airlift Wing, Marine Aircraft Group 49 (MAG-49), Patrol Squadron 64 (VP-64), Patrol Squadron 66 (VP-66), Fleet Logistics Support Squadron 52 (VR-52), and the 111th Fighter Wing of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard. With regard to the Navy's presence at this installation, there are 373 officers assigned drilling reservists and 1,094 enlisted reservists to VP-64 and VP-66 at NASJRB Willow Grove. Additionally, there are 234 civilians assigned to this installation.



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Regarding NASJRB Willow Grove, I strongly believe that the Department of Defense substantially deviated from the list of military criteria necessary in evaluating installations for closure or realignment. I believe that there are erroneous assumptions and a lack of analysis in assessing the jointness of NASJRB Willow Grove, and there are substantial miscalculations in the assessment of the availability of land, facilities, and associated airspace.

Furthermore, I believe that there was a lack of consideration given to the strategic location of NASJRB Willow Grove with respect to homeland defense and homeland security. In recommending Willow Grove for closure, DoD did not adequately consider the demographics of the region, and the manpower and skill set losses that will result. Most importantly, with regard to the 111th Fighter Wing, Governor Ed Rendell and Adjutant General Jessica Wright were not consulted or engaged on the status of this unit.

Though Pennsylvania stands to lose many positions in both the western and southeastern regions of the state if this commission accepts DoD's recommendations, Pennsylvania will gain many valued positions at two Army depots. Both Letterkenny Army Depot and Tobyhanna Army Depot stand to gain 409 and 275 positions respectively if DoD's recommendations are accepted by the BRAC Commission. I am pleased that these two installations in Pennsylvania that have made significant contributions to our nation's defense and the Global War on Terror will be able to continue to do so under DoD's recommendations. These are two first-rate installations that have proven their value to the nation.

I am also pleased that the Naval Support Activity Philadelphia stands to gain 291 positions as a result of DoD's recommendations. Further, I am pleased that DoD has recommended the realignment of Soldiers Systems Command, Natick, Massachusetts, and I support relocating the budget, funding, cataloging, item management, and customer services for consumables at Natick to the Defense Supply Center Philadelphia.

Finally, I am pleased that the Army War College at Carlisle Barracks was not on the list for closure or realignment as recommended by DoD. The Army War College plays an important role in addressing our national security needs. This storied institution plays a vital role in training future military and civilian leaders. I am pleased that the Department of Defense did not consider closing or relocating this institution to achieve budgetary savings.

Mr. Chairman and members of the BRAC Commission, I ask that as you review DoD's recommendations for base closures and realignments, you carefully evaluate the

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Santorum". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

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Department's justification for closing the Pittsburgh International Airport Air Reserve Station and with closing NASJRB Willow Grove. Upon review and evaluation, I am confident that you will see substantial deviations in the Department's recommendations.