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LOUISE M. SLAUGHTER
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
28TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

FROM THE WASHINGTON OFFICE OF
CONGRESSWOMAN LOUISE M. SLAUGHTER

PLEASE DELIVER TO: BRAC COMMISSION

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FROM: Rep. Slaughter

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LOUISE M. SLAUGHTER
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
28TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

July 13, 2005

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

Dear Chairman Principi

Thank you for attending the New York and Ohio BRAC Regional Hearing, and participating in the site visit to Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station (NFARS) on June 27th. Since this event, new and startling information has been disclosed regarding terrorist threats across our Northern Border. I believe it is urgent that I share this information with you and reiterate the vital role of NFARS in our nation's homeland defense.

Last week, Canadian intelligence officials stated their belief that at least 50 terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda, now reside in Canada. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIA) added that terrorist representatives are actively raising money, procuring weapons, manipulating immigrant communities, and facilitating travel to and from the United States. It is clear from CSIA's report that the Western New York region is in danger of becoming a preferred gateway for terrorist cells looking to enter the United States.

This unsettling report strengthens the argument that our country's safety depends to a large extent on a strong Guard and Reserve presence along the northern border. As you know, the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station is strategically located within miles of six bi-national bridges. This area is the busiest U.S.-Canadian border crossing corridor in the nation.

The Air Reserve Station has continued to play a critical role in protecting the Northern Border and keeping the region safe. For example, the base's fire department and HAZMAT teams specialize in responding to nuclear, biological and chemical threats. Due to their significant expertise, the fire department has responded to three threats at our bi-national bridges in the last ninety days alone. Additionally, a number of security agencies train and house equipment at the base, including the U.S. Border Patrol, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency. The installation has also supported the deployment of Army Guard helicopters assigned to the U.S. border.

As the BRAC Commission continues to review the Pentagon's closure list, I respectfully urge you to take into account CSIA's report and NFARS' strategic importance to homeland defense operations. I fear that closing this installation will make the Northern Border less secure, and threaten the safety of not only the Northeast, but the entire United States.

Sincerely,

Louise Slaughter
Member of Congress