



REPRESENTATIVE ERIC CROFT

July 7, 2005

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

RE: Opposition to the BRAC's recommendation to Realign Eielson Air Force Base

Dear Chairman Principi,

After reviewing the Base Realignment and Closure Commission recommendations, I respectfully would like add my voice to the chorus objecting to the recommendation to realign Eielson Air Force Base to a "warm base". My concerns with the realignment are specific to three areas: 1) Eielson's importance to national security, 2) Eielson's unparalleled training grounds, and 3) concerns regarding the expense and difficulty of maintaining a "warm base" in one of the coldest climates in North America.

Eielson's Importance to National Security

There are basic facts about Alaska that cannot be disputed. Alaska is huge, 656,425 square miles huge. With 6,640 miles of coastline, Alaska has more coastline than the rest of the United States combined. Alaska, when superimposed across the lower 48 states stretches from California to Florida.

Alaska, if you look at its location from the perspective of looking down at the globe from the North Pole, is closer Asia and Northern Europe than any other state.

Alaska has a history of watching our Pacific neighbors. In modern American history, Alaska is the only part of the United States occupied by a foreign power. Our residents were shipped off to prison camps. Until the end of the Cold War, Alaska had significant military installations to keep an eye on the Soviet Union.

Alaska is within range of North Korea's fledgling missile program, and North Korea has not been shy in expressing its desire for nuclear weapons. China is expanding its missile forces. China, is the only remaining nation in the world with the resources to challenge the United State's role as the sole world super power. The closest U.S. location to China is Alaska.



Alaska has important national security facilities protected by planes based out of Eielson: the 800 mile long trans-Alaska oil pipeline transporting one million barrels of North Slope crude oil each day to Valdez for shipping, the Ft. Greely anti-missile interceptor site, and the ICBM early warning site at Clear.

Additionally, within the next ten years a natural gas pipeline is expected to be built to provide natural gas to continental U.S. locations, thus expanding the national security importance of Eielson.

Alaska has, and Eielson protects: 17% of the ENTIRE United State's oil production, 19% of the ENTIRE United State's oil reserves, 19 % of the ENTIRE United State's natural gas reserves, and 12% of the ENTIRE United State's coal reserves.

Eielson's proximity to unparalleled training grounds

Historically the most dangerous places to conduct warfare are environmentally challenging locations, generally this means hot or cold. Alaska is unsurpassed for Arctic training and Eielson is the only extreme cold weather training facility within the Department of Defense, hosting the Air Force's Arctic Survival School

In addition to being huge, Alaska is comparatively empty. Alaska has a population of about 625,000, of which well over half live in the established road and rail belt areas. To the north of Eielson, there are enormous areas that are sparsely populated. Without accounting for Alaska's population centers, there 1.1 persons per square mile. This scarcity of human populations both decreases the population impacted by military exercises while affording the air force increased privacy.

Eielson has 63,000 square miles in their range complex. This range is the largest overland instrumented training range in the world.

Expense and difficulty of maintaining a "warm base" in one of the coldest climates in North America

At 64.65 degrees north, Eielson is less than 2 degrees short of the Arctic Circle. Located in the Interior region of Alaska, the area easily reaches 20 degrees below zero during the winter months, and is often even colder. In 1971, Fairbanks, Alaska, recorded its coldest January on record with a mean temperature of -31.7 F.

During a month when the average temperature falls below 30 degrees below zero, it is unbelievable difficult to keep buildings from freezing solid. Eielson has some of the newest and best military housing on any North American air force base. Leaving the buildings uninhabited and at a lower than usual temperature is a recipe for broken pipes and resulting water damage. Leaving the base "warm" places the buildings at a serious risk.

There are serious questions as to whether the amount estimated to be saved by the air force through the Eielson realignment (\$229 million) is correct. There are real and

convincing arguments that the savings may be closer to \$300,000. This is not enough of a savings to warrant the potential destruction of the buildings on base.

In conclusion, there is no real benefit to realigning Eielson Air Force Base. Quite the contrary, our national security, access to and transportation systems for national interest natural resources, Arctic training opportunities, and the brick and mortar buildings of the base itself will be exposed to irreparable harm.

Sincerely,



Representative Eric Croft

CC: Senator Ted Stevens
Mayor Jim Whitaker
President Mark Hamilton