

DCN 4729
Executive Correspondence



Congressman
Thomas
Reynolds
New York-26

332 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: 202-225-5265
Fax: 202-225-5910

fax

To:	DEIDRE	From:	Mark
Fax:	703 699 2735	Pages w/ cover:	5 4
Phone:		Date:	
Re:		CC:	

Comments: _____

THOMAS M. REYNOLDS
26th DISTRICT, NEW YORK

COMMITTEE ON
WAYS AND MEANS

COMMITTEE ON
HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
322 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-8258

DISTRICT OFFICES:
600 ESCAJAY, SUITE 260
WILLIAMSVILLE, NY 14221
(716) 834-2324

1577 WEST RIDGE ROAD
ROCHESTER, NY 14616
(585) 653-0870

July 15, 2005

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

Dear Chairman Principi:

I wanted to take a minute to personally thank you for taking the time to discuss the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station this morning. It is reassuring to know that a task of this importance has been placed in such capable hands.

I have enclosed some additional information for your review, detailing the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station's military value as well as its importance as the only base on the list at which two Air Reserve Component wings are co-located. As I mentioned, both of these units could be retained through one vote to remove Niagara from the list of closures.

I would also like to reiterate that in order for the Commission to be able to solve the Air Guard (107th - Tankers) issue at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, we must broaden the scope of the issue to be the "Air Reserve Component" issue rather than solely the "Air Guard." Niagara Falls is an Air Reserve facility, which has an Air Reserve Wing and Air Guard Wing. And under the current system of review, the Commission cannot preserve the Air Guard if they do not preserve the Air Reserve unit (914th - Airlift).

Please let me know if there's any more information I can provide you with or any further help I can give during this important process. I appreciate your efforts on behalf of our Armed Forces and our nation; and I have no doubt you will reach a decision that benefits both the military and the American people.

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Member of Congress

Mr. Secretary;
Thank you for your
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Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station

JOINT USE AIR RESERVE COMPONENT BASE

Niagara is the only Base on the list in which two Air Reserve Component wings are co-located on the same facility, both of which would be retained by voting to disapprove.

At Niagara, 57% of the facilities are shared use, which creates a number of efficiencies. With US Army MEPS on base and an opportunity to bring Army Reserve unit across the runway onto Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, opportunities exist for even greater joint use and efficiencies.

Commissioners who visited the base saw the ability of Niagara Falls to permanently accommodate 17 C-130's and 13 KC-135 tankers with no military construction.

HOMELAND DEFENSE

Location makes its tanker wing the *sole unit optimized* to support Combat Air Patrol in both the Northeast and the Midwest.

Niagara Falls is within 4 miles of the Canadian border over which 61% of all US-Canadian commercial traffic crosses and 4.5 miles from the Niagara Power Project, the Northeast's greatest electricity generator.

If the base is closed and the 107th moves, the Governor will lose significant command and control capability in Western Region 6 under jurisdiction of the Commander of the 107th at Niagara, which will have no military base within 160 miles of the 2nd most populated portion of the State.

MILITARY VALUE

The Air Force's rationale to close Niagara was to "correct a documented imbalance in the C-130 mix between the Active Duty and Reserve." The number of C-130s in the Active Duty Air Force inventory vs. Air Force Reserve will shift by a total of 4 as a result of USAF's BRAC recommendations. This underscores that the stated rationale to close Niagara is groundless.

Our wings' military value is clearly validated by their repeated deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq and yet with these deployments, we have no problem retaining our service-members.

The 914th has been to both Iraq & Afghanistan and returns to Iraq for the 3rd time this summer while the Commission is in final deliberations over the fate of Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station. The 107th has deployed multiple times to support Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. Even with these multiple deployments based upon their high skill level, the wings have retention rates in excess of 95 percent, which exceeds Active Duty retention rates by over 50%.

DECLINE IN DOD PRESENCE IN NEW YORK AND THE NORTHEAST IS DRASTIC

If USAF recommendations are approved:

- New York would lose 33% of its flying wings.
- Airlift in the Northeast would be limited to one site (Quonset RI) and reduced by 80% (from 61 down to 11).
- Tanker capability in the Northeast would be reduced by 33% (from 57 down to 40).

The major military installations in New York, the 3rd most populace state in the Country with the largest city (NYC), has already been reduced by over 40%. In 1988, we had 15 major military installations and today, including Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, we have only 9 remaining.

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The absence of military presence in the region will hurt homeland defense, debilitate recruitment & retention and erode support for the military from the lack of connectivity with the voting population.

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

At Niagara, 87% of the service-members at Niagara Falls live within 50 miles of the base. There will be a significant loss of Technicians if the base were to close, because the next closest base to Niagara is over 160 miles away (Hancock ANG Base in Syracuse).

The units at Niagara Falls have a 95% retention rate which exceeds the Active Duty rates of approximately 60% by more than half. The average reservist at Niagara has 14 years of experience.

The closure of Niagara will decimate the recruitment and retention in the region, which is the 2nd most populace portion of the State.

DOD recognized the importance of Niagara to recruitment by the relocation of the Military Entrance Processing Site from Buffalo to its current location on the Base.

TANKER / C-130 CAPABILITIES

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Niagara's runway capacity enables the KC-135's to take off with a full combat fuel load and is the furthestmost western C-130 base, which can reach European Command without re-fueling.

Niagara's C-130 Night Vision Goggle expertise for special operations mission is sustained by our sparsely populated, encroachment free training environment (to include joint training with Fort Drum) that includes a 15,000 square mile Low Altitude Training and Navigation range.

Location makes its tanker wing the *sole unit optimized* to support Combat Air Patrol in the Northeast and the Midwest. It can concurrently maintain an ability to support the Air Bridge as part of the Northeast Tanker Task Force.

The base's efficiency is underscored by the fact that Niagara flies over 24% of the Northeast Tanker Task Force missions with the fewest numbers of planes among the 5 bases in the Tanker Task Force.

CORRECTED COBRA SHOWS NO SAVINGS TO CLOSE NIAGARA

Niagara was slated to be a gainer until late in the process (4th look) when USAF was looking for savings, but as the corrected COBRA shows, there are no savings to be gained as a result of closing Niagara.

Air Force COBRA data erroneously shows a two year pay-back and a \$199M Net Present Value savings because the Department:

- Created false, recurring savings from the elimination of 1189 Drill positions. GAO has clearly indicated that these savings cannot be taken unless there is a commensurate reduction in End Strength. Yet, the Department testified before Congress in April of 2005 that End Strength would not be reduced as a result of BRAC.
- Fails to include \$65M in one-time costs to enclave the Military Entrance Processing Site and the Ground Air Transmission Radar for the Northeast Air Defense Sector mission, which will remain at the site of the base.

The BRAC Commission is now in receipt of the corrected COBRA, which shows no savings to the Government to close Niagara Falls once these adjustments are included in the COBRA analysis.

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WASHINGTON OFFICE:
332 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
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(202) 225-6295

DISTRICT OFFICES:
500 EGGY, SUITE 260
WILLIAMSVILLE, NY 14221
(716) 834-2324

1677 WEST RIDGE ROAD
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DISTRICT OFFICE:
600 EGGJAY, SUITE 280
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DISTRICT OFFICE:
500 EBBEY, SUITE 250
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1877 WEST RIDGE ROAD
ROCHESTER, NY 14615
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