

DCN 5575

May 19, 2005

Brian & Rena McKiernan
10354 Big Piney Road
Rapid City, SD 57702
605-342-5237

Mr. Anthony Principi
Chairman, Defense BRAC Commission
Polk Building
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202



Dear Sir:

The Secretary of Defense recommended Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota be closed. As a veteran and a retired Army officer, I think this is a grave mistake and I'd like to offer another perspective for you to consider, in addition to its impact on the national defense structure.

As the former Director of the Veterans Administration, you are aware of the important role the Ft. Meade and Hot Springs VA Medical facilities have in the upper Midwest. These are the only facilities within 300 miles and, without them, thousands of veterans would be left unsupported.

Ellsworth AFB is similar to these VA facilities. Ellsworth AFB is located in rural South Dakota and serves thousands of active, retired, National Guard and Reserve personnel. If Ellsworth AFB should close, Warren AFB in Cheyenne, WY, would be the closest military facility. It's also 300 miles away. We shouldn't forget the "people factor" when making these tough decisions.

Closing a facility like Ellsworth AFB would have a devastating impact in a sparsely-populated state like South Dakota. It would be much more dramatic than in other areas where the facility is just one of many major employers. Not only is it the area's largest employer, it also provides jobs for area businesses and serves a large retired military community. For more than 60 years, Ellsworth AFB and the local community have developed a bond that's benefited both parties.

Ellsworth AFB with its B-1 bomber force plays a major role in the total defense force. Granted, B-1 bombers can operate as efficiently in Dyess AFB, TX as in Rapid City, South Dakota. But, if the true costs savings are evaluated along with the serious impact closure would cause, I hope you agree Ellsworth should be removed from the base closure list. You're our last hope and, coming from the VA, I think you understand the role it plays in rural America.

I don't envy your position. Tough decisions need to be made and you've probably heard hundreds of citizens voicing concern for their cause. Ellsworth AFB desires special consideration because of the major role it plays in a five-state area. Secretary Rumsfeld and his military planners looked at Ellsworth AFB as a token on a game board without regard to the overall impact it has on South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Wyoming and Nebraska. That's a big area!

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian McKiernan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B".

Brian McKiernan

David and Deanna Leivestad
12040 41st Ave. N.
Plymouth, MN 55441



May 20, 2005

Ref: Base Realignment & Closure Proposals

We heard recently that the Pentagon has drafted a list of military facilities which are being considered for closure. We understand hearings will be taking place soon regarding this matter.

We are particularly concerned about the possible closure of Ellsworth AFB in Rapid City, South Dakota. Our government currently has just over 60 B-1 Bombers in operation. They are located at Dyess AFB in Abilene, Texas and at Ellsworth.

Considering the tremendous job these jets and their crews performed in recent conflicts, and their cost to the American taxpayers, we feel everyone would agree these bombers are great national assets.

Therefore, it is our opinion that the protection of these bombers should be of utmost concern. Closing Ellsworth AFB would mean housing all these assets in one location, which could be devastating if a terrorist group or a natural disaster were to strike Dyess.

We understand that early Air Force leaders felt that interior bases, buffered by a friendly government to the north, were much more insulated from attack than bases nearer to the borders of our country. Dyess is much more exposed due to its proximity to the southern border and coastal areas that are not very well defended or patrolled. This reasoning made sense then and still remains valid today.

Here's another consideration. When the B-1s are called into service, can you guarantee they will always be flying in temperate weather conditions? We think not! In South Dakota the crew members get to experience the full gamut of weather conditions, which certainly more aptly prepares them to fly anywhere anytime. And isn't that exactly what we want—to have the best prepared pilots in the world?

We are also concerned about what locating all of the B-1 operational units on one base would mean to the support staff. For example, would they have to be deployed more frequently? We feel this is a real possibility.

We would encourage you to use your vote and your influence to ensure that Ellsworth AFB is not closed. It is a matter of national security that it remains open. Thank you for any assistance you can offer.

Sincerely,
David and Deanna Leivestad