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July 22, 2005

BRAC Commission

AUG 01 2005

Received

The Honorable Anthony J. Principi
Chairman, Base Realignment and Closure Commission
Polk Building, Suite 600 & 625
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Chairman Principi:

On behalf of the City of Medford we would like to express our concerns regarding the recent DoD recommendation to the BRAC Commission moving the 142nd Fighter Wing's F-15 aircraft to New Orleans and Atlantic City. We believe that this decision is a mistake as it neglects the mission of Homeland Defense and threatens the security of the Pacific Northwest and Western Region of the United States.

The 142nd Fighter Wing in Portland, Oregon protects our homeland by providing both continuous air defense and air superiority capabilities from northern California far into Canada. It is a strategic part of the 24-hour continuous alert North American Air Defense system. There is no other base in the Pacific Northwest that covers this range.

If the Northwest is left with just a single fighter alert detachment, a growing region of 11 million people will be at risk. This is less capability than existed prior to 9/11. The decision to reduce our Air Defense Squadron will leave hundreds of daily international flights and the trans-Pacific maritime routes significantly unprotected with nearest air support coming from Fresno, California. We believe the Bonneville Dam, the Hanford Nuclear Reservation, the U.S. Naval Submarine Base in Bangor, Washington, and the Northwest's natural gas pipelines are worth protecting.

The DoD recommendation also diminishes Oregon Governor Kulongoski's manpower dedicated to state emergencies. Oregon will lose approximately 650 national guardsmen immediately available to assist the state with natural disasters such as wild fires, floods and volcanic eruptions.

The citizens of the Pacific Northwest and Northern California deserve the same protection afforded the Eastern United States. The DoD recommendation degrades the Homeland Security of the Northwest and the entire nation. This cannot and should not be ignored. We believe that a maximum effort must be generated to change the DoD recommendation that transfers Dedicated Air Defense from the Northwest. We strongly ask for your support and leadership to help reverse this recommendation.

Thank you for your help and consideration.

Sincerely,

Gary H. Wheeler
Mayor

Claudette Moore
Council President

Skip Knight
Council Vice President

Cc: Senator Ron Wyden
Senator Gordon Smith