

TIM JOHNSON
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August 5, 2005

BRAC COMMISSION

AUG 05 2005

Received

General Lloyd W. Newton
Commissioner
Base Realignment and Closure Commission
2521 South Clark Street
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Mr. Commissioner:

As the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission continues their consideration of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's base closure recommendations, I want to raise certain issues related to the proposal to close Ellsworth Air Force Base. These include consolidating the entire B-1 fleet at Dyess Air Force base; the violent and unpredictable weather patterns surrounding Dyess; the strategic location of Ellsworth; and finally the significant upgrades and investment made at Ellsworth since the last base closure round.

I am deeply troubled by the Defense Department's proposal to consolidate the entire B-1 bomber fleet. The B-1s stationed at Ellsworth have been integral to our national defense and have completed combat missions in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Some have argued consolidating the entire B-1 fleet at one base will increase operational and training efficiency, as well as generating annual savings for the Defense Department. While I am not convinced consolidation will produce these results, I would submit that like the B-52s based at Minot Air Force Base and Barksdale Air Force Base, maintaining the B-1s at two strategically located installations is prudent and good military sense.

Furthermore, consolidating the B-1s unnecessarily subjects the bulk of our strategic bomber force to the risk of natural disasters and terrorist threats. An extensive amount of information has been forwarded to the BRAC Commission detailing the violent and unpredictable weather patterns near Dyess Air Force Base - the installation the Defense Department recommends to beddown the entire B-1 fleet. As that data illustrates, Dyess is prone to tornados and violent storms capable of producing damaging winds and large hail. In conjunction with volatile weather concerns, consolidating the entire fleet at one military installation may make the B-1s an inviting target to those that wish to destroy the backbone of our bomber fleet.

Moreover, Ellsworth is a world class military installation uniquely qualified to maintain the B-1 bomber fleet. To ensure the B-1 mission was not compromised, during the past decade substantial investment has been made to upgrade facilities at Ellsworth. As you know, once a military installation is closed and authorized for redevelopment, it is nearly impossible to recover this critical asset. Consequently, the improvements made at Ellsworth to make it a premier military installation for decades to come will no longer be readily available to the Air Force.

In addition to the critical issues already highlighted, Ellsworth is strategically located with excellent access to training ranges and wide open spaces affording it ample opportunity to prepare for any mission required by the Department of Defense. Ellsworth does not face the urban encroachment issues that confront many other military installations, and as the field hearing in Rapid City demonstrated, Ellsworth has unwavering community support.

The arguments I have outlined are not intended to unduly criticize Dyess Air Force Base. Rather they underscore the necessity of maintaining two B-1 bases in the unfortunate event one military installation is severely compromised. I am confident you will carefully weigh these arguments and come to the conclusion that closing Ellsworth Air Force base and consolidating the B-1 fleet at Dyess is shortsighted and wrong for our national defense.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Johnson", with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Tim Johnson
U.S. Senate

TIM JOHNSON
SOUTH DAKOTA

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August 5, 2005

General James T. Hill
Commissioner
Base Realignment and Closure Commission
2521 South Clark Street
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Mr. Commissioner:

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Sincerely,



Tim Johnson
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August 5, 2005

The Honorable James V. Hansen
Commissioner
Base Realignment and Closure Commission
2521 South Clark Street
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Mr. Commissioner:

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August 5, 2005

Admiral Harold W. Gehman, Jr.
Commissioner
Base Realignment and Closure Commission
2521 South Clark Street
Arlington, VA 22202

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Tim Johnson
U.S. Senate

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August 5, 2005

The Honorable Samuel K. Skinner
Commissioner
Base Realignment and Closure Commission
2521 South Clark Street
Arlington, VA 22202

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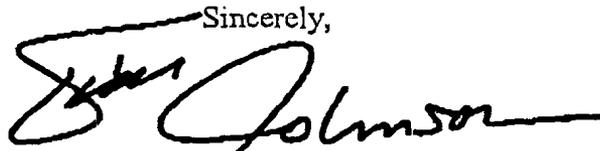
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August 5, 2005

Brigadier General Sue E. Turner
Commissioner
Base Realignment and Closure Commission
2521 South Clark Street
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Commissioner Turner:

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U.S. Senate