

May 19, 2005

The Honorable James H. Bilbray  
BRAC Commission  
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600  
Arlington, VA 22202



Dear Honorable James H. Bilbray:

We are deeply disheartened and concerned with the fact that the possibility exists that we may lose Cannon Air Force Base. We have been living in Portales, NM for five years and have come to enjoy watching the jet planes fly over our house and listening to the cheering from our three-year-old son as he watches the planes with such admiration in his eyes.

Cannon plays a vital role in our small town both economically and for security reasons. In our current state of well-being with respect to all the terrorism acts taking place, it's a comfort to know that Cannon is here. We know there are too many people in our town and the surrounding areas that take this for granted but we can assure you that our family does not.

After having sat through so many meetings pondering the impact that this base closure would have on our society, we figured it's time to voice our opinions. We just can't see how Cannon fits the criteria for base closure. There are so many elements that ought to make it stand out above the other bases considered. We realize that at the time the pros and cons were weighted and many thousands of questions were asked and answered, the New Mexico Training Range Initiative was not considered. We believe that now is the time to take this into consideration. With the expansion of the military operating area our base can increase their training capabilities by going supersonic. Can the same be said for the other air bases? After all, this makes the potential for training to become more "realistic."

The fact also exists that our community is home to many retired military that currently have the ability to take advantage of the services provided at Cannon (healthcare, shopping, etc.). Unfortunately this is something not easily replaced due to the fact that the air bases in Roswell, NM and in Lubbock, TX were shut down in the past. This would require our retired military to travel to Albuquerque which is a fair distance away!

The effect this closure would have on our local (Portales) school district is severe. It is my understanding that 118 currently enrolled students are military dependents. The impact of losing this many students would be detrimental to approximately eight to nine school teachers as their services could not be justifiably cost effective. The impact financially on our school system would result in a loss of \$400,000!

Many facts will come across your desk in the days to come and many probably already have from the many concerned citizens of our community. We can only plea with you that you open your hearts and your minds to comprehend the extent of damage that this is going to cause our community.

We appreciate your time and hope you can understand our concern.

Sincerely,

Antonio R. Sanchez, Jr. & Layle L. Sanchez