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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6025
<http://appropriations.senate.gov>

July 25, 2005

J. KEITH KENNEDY, STAFF DIRECTOR
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The Honorable Anthony Principi, Chairman
Base Realignment and Closure Commission
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Chairman Principi:

Thank you for your recent phone call and continued willingness to discuss base realignment and closure recommendations that are important to the state of Alaska, particularly the Air Force proposal to realign Eielson Air Force Base to "warm" status. Your task is not an enviable one and I commend you for your continued service to our nation.

It is clear to me that there was a complete disregard for the impact of the Eielson recommendation on joint training and readiness. The Air Force makes absolute no sense in their decision to remove all fighter aircraft from interior Alaska at a time when the Army's presence in the region is growing. The converted Stryker Brigade at Fort Wainwright and the new Airborne Brigade at Fort Richardson train with Eielson aircraft on the Alaska ranges everyday. The absence of aircraft in the region will certainly degrade mission readiness. Of great concern to me is close air support training, which is critical to current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Further, the recommendation completely ignores Eielson's vital strategic advantage for current and future missions and total force mobilization. During final deliberations, the Commission must consider that the primary mission of units based at Eielson is to reinforce our units on the Korean peninsula and the Taiwan Straits. Considering our plans to reduce the number of Army aircraft and ground troops in Korea, this mission is of even greater strategic value and importance. Eielson aircraft are critical to defeating any enemy offensive and removing them will significantly increase response time to any contingency. Please ask the Commission staff to provide you the details of a Pacific Command memo, dated 9 December 2004, to the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff which responds to potential Air Force BRAC recommendations.

Finally, there is no such thing as a "warm" facility in mid-winter Alaska – a facility is either operational or not. The Air Force analysis was flawed and did not include a realistic cost of maintaining Eielson in a "warm" status as compared to fully utilizing the base for the key missions of air defense, close air support, and joint training and operations with the Army. The poor analysis was revealed during the Eielson site survey when it was determined that an additional 1,000 personnel are needed to maintain the installation than originally anticipated in the COBRA model. This finding will dramatically reduce projected Eielson savings.

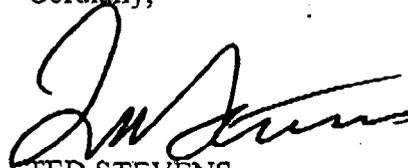
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Please continue to review this matter. The Air Force recommendation for Eielson grossly undervalues the loss of joint training opportunities and the resulting loss of combat capability, particularly for the United States Army in Alaska. We must ensure Eielson remains open. Do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance.

With best wishes,

Cordially,



TED STEVENS

Chairman

Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Defense