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STATE OF ALASKA Received
DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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Galena Closure	907-428-6019

DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

FRANK H. MURKOWSKI, GOVERNOR

P. O. BOX 5800
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99505-0800
PHONE: (907) 428-6003
FAX: (907) 428-6019

Chairman Anthony Principi
2521 S. Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

August 22, 2005

Dear Chairman Principi:

This letter is a follow-up to my letter of August 5, 2005 which identified State of Alaska issues and Governor Murkowski's concerns pertaining to potential BRAC actions at Kulis ANGB, Galena Forward Operating Location (FOL), and Eielson AFB. Since that letter, there has been additional information obtained concerning the Galena FOL closure recommendation which we feel is important for consideration by the Commission as you conclude your deliberations on this most important facility.

First, Governor Murkowski wants to express his appreciation for the tremendous attention BRAC Commission members and staff have provided to Alaska. From the initial public hearing in Fairbanks and site visits at Kulis ANGB and Eielson AFB, to the additional visit to Galena FOL after that installation was added to the BRAC process, we believe that Alaska has been treated very fairly. We recognize that the Commission has a very difficult task ahead and do appreciate the deference provided to Alaska which allowed us to work with you and your staff to ensure that all pertinent issues were fully and openly discussed.

In my August 5, 2005 letter, I described the State of Alaska concern about job loss and community impact should Galena FOL be closed. I would like to expand upon that letter and present more clarity on the issues we feel will be significant, should Galena FOL be closed. Governor Murkowski continues to request that the BRAC Commission not close Galena FOL, but should the Commission believe that closure is necessary to meet DOD requirements, we want to place, on the record, our concerns and initial estimates of community impacts.

1. Galena Airport is a critical airport for air transportation in Western and Northwestern Alaska. If Galena FOL is closed and alert activities moved to another location, such as Eielson AFB or Elmendorf AFB, Galena Airport must continue to play a necessary role as an alternate airport for military aircraft operations west of Fairbanks. If the Air Force completely terminates all support for Galena FOL, the State of Alaska, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), will be solely responsible for the operation and maintenance of the airport. Based on commercial aircraft operations in western Alaska, it can be anticipated that DOT&PF will no longer need to maintain the runway, taxiway system, or ramps to standards compatible for

military aircraft operations. If this occurs, the military will lose a valuable alternate airport location for emergency operations. This will reduce the safety factor associated with military use of ranges in northwest Alaska, as well as limiting options in case of an airborne emergency during air sovereignty missions. We request the BRAC Commission require the Air Force to continue providing adequate funding to maintain the runway, taxiways, and ramps which permits emergency operations of military aircraft at Galena Airport.

2. Regardless of whether the Air Force continues to use Galena Airport, there remains an operational cost to the State of Alaska with closure of Galena FOL. The airport is not currently certified under 14 CFR Part 139. To certify the airport will require numerous upgrades, such as perimeter fencing, a badging and access program for airport tenants, aircraft rescue and fire fighting equipment, airfield maintenance equipment, a wildlife management and mitigation plan, and storage facilities for sand, chemicals, and equipment.
3. The State of Alaska is extremely concerned about environmental issues associated with the sustained military operations at Galena FOL. This includes an extensive list of previously identified contaminated sites at Galena FOL. The Air Force estimates that environmental clean-up is \$16 million; however, that number may be low if closure is recommended as there may be significant environmental issues related to many of the facilities that will no longer be needed by the Air Force or the City of Galena. The Air Force environmental program has been underway for over a decade and existing work plans are in place to continue until 2015. And this is without the additional environmental issues which will be identified should Galena FOL be closed. We request that an emphasis be placed on the need for adequate and accelerated environmental clean-up be completed by the Air Force before closure is permitted.
4. The State of Alaska is concerned about the impact closure will have on the Galena Vocational School and Residential School located at Galena FOL. This educational complex is critical to Alaska achieving successful educational objectives for native Alaskans. Any closure recommendation must require the Air Force to grant these facilities to the State. The State Department of Education estimates that without these facilities, the school may have to close, resulting in a significant loss to the regional area in educational opportunities.
5. The State of Alaska is concerned that closure of Galena FOL will have a significant impact on public safety in the region, as the Alaska State Troopers Galena Post uses facilities at Galena FOL for housing, office, and storage. Depending on what is done with the existing building, the Galena Post may be forced to relocate, causing a significant impact on public safety to the community and region.

6. The State of Alaska is also concerned about the impact on the loss of water and sewer services currently provided by the Air Force at Galena FOL. Also, there is concern about the operation and cost of the existing power plant. While it can be expected that with closure, these facilities may be offered to the community, the cost of operations and maintenance of these facilities will create an economic burden to the small community of Galena.
7. The State of Alaska is concerned that the cost estimates provided by the Air Force for the operation of Galena FOL are grossly underestimated and do not reflect the full cost of operations. While the existing Air Force contract is \$8.5 million, that does not include many additional expenses currently covered by the Air Force. These additional costs must be identified as part of any community impact study to determine the true economic impact on the community of Galena. In addition to the monetary loss, the Air Force grossly underestimated the job loss potential with closure of Galena FOL. The Air Force estimated that the region would have a net loss of 12 jobs, or 2.2% of the population. Community estimates are much higher. There could be a loss of nearly 100 jobs, which represents nearly a 30% job loss by closure action. This is a significant discrepancy which must be addressed in the community impact deliberation process.

Given the extraordinary disproportionate impact of closure on Galena, we believe it is reasonable to ask that final action be deferred until 2011 to allow time for federal and state agencies to budget for the likely higher cost of operating out of Galena. The worst possible outcome for the community would be closure, followed shortly thereafter by a decision by the federal agencies to pull out. If closure is deferred until the end of the BRAC process (2011), it will permit time for a more thoughtful community redevelopment plan to be developed and implemented. Should the Commission elect to close Galena FOL, we are submitting recommended language for your consideration:

The Commission shares the concerns expressed by the community about the economic impact on Galena, the consequences for the collocated school, and for the federal agencies that operate out of the airport. The Commission recommends that missions at Galena Forward Operating Location be relocated and merged with Eielson AFB in 2011, to allow maximum time for community planning and redevelopment efforts and to ensure that critical services provided by federal agencies are not interrupted before these agencies have an opportunity to plan for the greater operating costs associated with the Air Force relocation. It is also recommended that the Air Force continue to provide adequate funding to the State of Alaska to ensure Galena Airport remains a viable alternative emergency airport for military operations and that all environmental requirements of the Air Force be completed before closure is final.

In closing, Governor Murkowski requests that Galena FOL be removed from the BRAC closure list. Should that not occur, it is recommended that the BRAC Commission adopt the language provided above to ensure that community impacts are properly addressed and that sufficient time is provided to ensure that Galena has the opportunity to recover from the closure decision. Thank you for your consideration of these issues.

Respectfully submitted,



Major General Craig E. Campbell
Commissioner, Department of Military and Veterans Affairs