

DCN 8017

Base Realignment and Closure Commission

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PO Box 10045  
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BRAC Commission

AUG 22 2005

Re: Eielson AFB Proposed Realignment

Received

August 22, 2005

Dear BRAC Members:

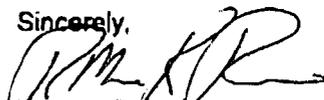
By now you have learned that the savings proposed by the Pentagon for re-aligning Eielson AFB are imaginary. But the issue of the imaginary cost-savings aside- what is of grave concern is the specter of the US Air Force losing the operational knowledge of how to work and fight in the extreme cold that has been gained by decades of hard work in the sub- Arctic. Eielson AFB is the ONLY installation we have where we routinely operate in conditions down to minus 40 below. If Eielson were re-aligned, the institutional knowledge we have gained since WWII about just what it takes to safely operate equipment and jets in the cold will be LOST as personnel who have worked at Eielson separate or retire.

Most of you have never had the good fortune to live and work in a place where winter temperatures can and do fall to -40 or colder. (We have seen temps fall below -60). At these temperatures, it is not simply a matter of dressing a little warmer to survive. Every aspect of how one lives and works needs to be modified. For example; how does one safely handle munitions at these temperatures? Try putting an ungloved hand against metal and ones hand will be burned by frostbite instantly. How about static electricity? An accidental static discharge can have devastating consequences when working with munitions. Yet, at -40 below the air is so cold and dense, that it does not hold moisture- and large static discharges are routine. We've learned the hard way how to deal with these sorts of problems, but now we risk losing all this accumulated knowledge.

If we believe that the United States no longer needs an Air Force with the capability to routinely, and safely, operate in the sub-Arctic, we jeopardize our national security and the lives of the men and women who we will task with fighting battles in the future. By keeping Eielson from re-alignment, we can maintain our cold-weather fighting abilities at the most strategically located base with the best air training grounds found anywhere.

Thank you very much for your thoughtful consideration and time you've given by serving on the BRAC Commission.

Sincerely,



Merrick Peirce