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One Hundred and Nineth
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-4322

August 17, 2005

The Honorable Anthony Principi
Chairman
Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 S. Clark St., Ste. 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Chairman Principi:

I would like to bring to your attention an important recent addition to the Ellington Field community in Houston, Texas, that I believe the Commission should take into consideration when voting on your final recommendations next week.

Earlier today, I joined Texas Governor Rick Perry in announcing the decision that a new squadron of Predator Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) will be based at Ellington Field. This, above all else, shows that the Department of Defense (DOD) along with the State of Texas realize the strategic value and critical mission of Ellington Field and the capabilities of the Texas Air National Guard's 147th Fighter Wing that will operate the UAVs.

As you know, in its BRAC recommendations, the DOD recommended that the F-16s currently based at Ellington should be retired beginning in 2007. The new Predator mission actually compliments the crucial mission of the F-16s in protecting the Texas Gulf Coast region. Additionally, the 147th easily possesses the capabilities necessary to operate the new mission in addition to simultaneously operating its F-16s.

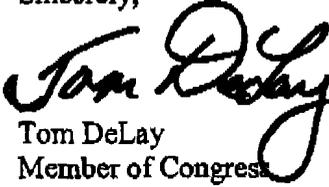
Ellington's homeland security value continues to strengthen in many other ways. A deal was recently negotiated to allow new reserve facilities to be built at Ellington Field to support the transfer of 2,300 Army, Navy and Marine Reservists to Ellington over the next five years. Also – perhaps the pinnacle example of the relevance of the 147th and their F-16s – nearly 300 of their Guardsmen were just last week deployed to Iraq in support of the war on terror.

During my testimony to the BRAC Commission's July meeting in San Antonio, I expressed many concerns with the DOD's recommendations, in particular, with the lack of involvement by the Department of Homeland Security in the development of the recommendations. I have been in contact with Secretary Michael Chertoff on numerous occasions, as recently as earlier this week, to let him know that I found it unsettling that DHS was not more involved in the DOD's BRAC recommendations. The security of the nation

requires close coordination between the entities charged with our protection. I believe that the Commission voiced appropriate concern about the lack of DHS involvement in the August 11th hearing. I certainly hope that matters like these will be reflected in your final decision making process, as proceeding forward and implementing the BRAC recommendations as they relate to the 147th Fighter Wing at Ellington Field would be a true setback to the security of our nation.

I appreciate your dedication and public service to our country and would be happy to provide you with any additional information you may need about the Texas Air National Guard's 147th Fighter Wing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom DeLay". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "D" and "L".

Tom DeLay
Member of Congress