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Executive Correspondence

CITY OF BUFFALO  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

ANTHONY M. MASIELLO  
MAYOR

August 17, 2005

BRAC Commission

**AUG 22 2005**

Received

Base Realignment and Closure Commission  
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600  
Arlington, VA 22202

To Chairman Anthony J. Principi and Members of the BRAC Commission:

Though I have attended a number of public events in support of the Niagara Falls Air Force Base, I write to officially register my opposition to the recommended closure of the Niagara Falls Air Base.

60% of this installation is joint use – by both the U.S. Air Force Reserve's 914<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing and the New York National Guard's 107<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing. As such, it is a model of efficiency and collaboration. More than one-third of the facilities at Niagara have been modernized in the past decade, its extended runway supports vital combat fuel operations – and there's still plenty of room to expand.

As the headquarters of Western New York's joint military task force, the Niagara Air Base is charged with commanding any homeland defense or disaster response mission in our region. As Mayor of New York State's second largest urban center, I am convinced that removing aircraft and experienced personnel from the Niagara Air Base would cripple our region's ability to respond to homeland defense missions.

The Niagara Base is strategically located near Buffalo, the Great Lakes, four major international bridges (including the Peace Bridge, one of our nation's busiest borders), two international rail bridges, and the Niagara Power Project, the largest producer of electricity in New York. Over 12-million people visit Niagara Falls itself each year. Every one of these assets is vulnerable to terrorist attack. Together they constitute a critical mass, which America must secure and protect.

New York ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in the number of servicemen and women deployed in support of our operations in Iraq. Members of the 914<sup>th</sup> were the first reserve unit to be deployed 24/7 in Iraq and they've recently been activated for a third tour of duty in the War on Terrorism. Re-enlistment in the 914<sup>th</sup> is between 96-99% -- at a time when our nation's military is struggling to maintain recruitment targets.

Our men and women have served honorably and deserve to have a Base to come home to. The Niagara Air Base is cost-efficient, mission-capable, and combat-tested, with retention rates consistently ranging over 95%. The Department of Defense should stop talking about closing the Niagara Base and start creating ways it can reproduce Niagara's successes.

The Niagara Air Base is an indispensable asset in maintaining America's security and I urge you to remove it from the Base Closure List.

Sincerely,

Anthony M. Masiello  
Mayor of Buffalo

AMM/sa

cc: Senator Charles Schumer  
Senator Hillary Clinton  
Congressman Thomas Reynolds  
Congressman Brian Higgins  
Congressman Louise Slaughter