

PETE V. DOMENICI  
NEW MEXICO

DCN: 7198

COMMITTEES:  
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
APPROPRIATIONS  
BUDGET  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
INDIAN AFFAIRS

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3101

August 2, 2005

**BRAC Commission**

Admiral Harold W. Gehman, Jr. (USN, Ret.)  
Commissioner, 2005 Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission  
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600  
Arlington, VA 22202

**AUG 08 2005**

Received

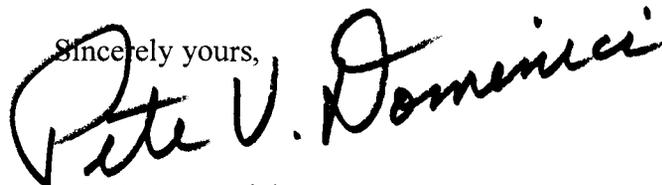
Dear Commissioner Gehman:

As you know, the Secretary of Defense's recommendations to the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission includes a recommendation to close Cannon Air Force Base, located near Clovis, New Mexico. According to the Department's own estimates, this recommended action would result in the loss of approximately 20% of the jobs in Clovis and the surrounding areas. The negative economic impact would be almost twice as great as any of the Secretary's other recommendations. Furthermore, an economic impact study performed for the State of New Mexico estimates the actual adverse impact would be greater than 30%, an impact from which the Clovis area economy would likely never recover.

I believe that closing Cannon AFB would be a serious mistake from a national security perspective and am firmly convinced that the recommendation to close Cannon was based upon flawed or incorrect data which resulted in inaccurate conclusions about the base's military value. Cannon is one of the lowest cost fighter bases in the United States. The Department's recommended closure action calculated cost savings as \$2.7 billion net present value (NPV) over twenty years. In fact, when costs are properly calculated, the savings are only about \$150 million (NPV). Additionally, this incorrect or flawed data led to incorrect conclusions in such areas as encroachment, proximity to training air space, proximity to low level routes to training airspace, range complex qualities, operational flying hours, buildable acres, auxiliary airfields, and the New Mexico Training Range Initiative. A comprehensive fact sheet addressing each of these military value components is attached for your information.

In order to fully appreciate the military value of our base, and given the potential for grave economic impact on the Clovis area, I urge you to visit Cannon AFB before casting any votes on the future of this national asset. The Clovis Community, my staff and I stand ready to assist in facilitating your trip in any way we can. I thank you for your consideration of this invitation.

Sincerely yours,



Pete V. Domenici  
United States Senator

Attachment

## **Cannon Air Force Base Comprehensive Fact Sheet**

The Defense Base Closure Realignment Act states that the Commission may make changes in any of the recommendations if it determines that the Secretary of Defense substantially deviated from the force structure plan and final criteria.

The DOD deviated substantially from the final BRAC criteria and Force Structure plan, and Cannon Air Force Base should be removed from the Closure List.

BRAC Criteria incorrectly evaluated:

1. Military Value
2. Cost Savings
3. Economic Impact

Force Structure implications were not comprehensively considered.

### **BRAC CRITERIA**

#### **Military Value\*:**

Military Capability Index (MCI) calculations and subsequent analyses led to inaccurate conclusions attributable to flawed data. Selected examples include:

- Cannon has no operational, infrastructure, or urban encroachment and will therefore be invaluable to the Department of Defense in the future. By having the encroachment evaluation weighting grossly undervalued at 2.28%, this critical measurement did not appropriately differentiate Air Forces bases that have severe encroachment from those that have little or none.
- Proximity to air space supporting mission was incorrectly scored with respect to multiple sub-elements within the question.
- Proximity to low-level routes was not properly scored. Cannon has several low-level routes in close proximity to the base and was incorrectly penalized for reporting legacy routes that have supported earlier missions.
- Range complex supporting the mission was incorrectly scored low. The Melrose Range is an outstanding complex used by a wide variety of military users, including the Army and the Navy, and it was evaluated as having the highest utilization in the Air Combat Command.
- Operational Hours were not accurately assessed; operational hours were recorded as 12 hours; actual hours are 24/7. This error affected scoring in access to airspace, supersonic air space, and range complexes.
- Buildable Acres: The number of buildable acres reported was only 3% of what actually exists.
- Auxiliary airfield scores were incorrect. The assessment did not value the Cannon crosswind runway or the Clovis Municipal Airport funded expansion plan for next year.

\* Further requests for data calls have been sent to the BRAC Clearing House and we are currently waiting for responses.

- The New Mexico Supersonic Training Range Initiative (NMTRI) was not considered by DOD.

**Cost Savings:**

Cost savings as outlined by the Air Force were grossly overstated.

- DOD calculated costs savings are overstated based on the number of personnel which will be moved elsewhere and not eliminated from the force; we have not been provided information explaining the NPV savings increasing from \$1.3 billion to \$2.7 billion in the last month before the release of the recommendation.
- DOD calculated cost savings as \$2.7B (NPV) over 20 years. Cost savings, in fact, are approximately \$150 M (NPV).
- Cannon is a cost-efficient installation in a low cost area, and the Air Force data that was used in the analysis did not accurately reflect the true cost efficiencies of operations at the base.

**Economic Impact:**

DOD underestimated the economic impact of closing Cannon by starting with a much lower baseline of military personnel and civilians than are currently stationed at the base.

- Current authorized manpower at Cannon is 3,919; Air Force used an inaccurate baseline of 2,824 people.
- The DOD calculates a 20.5% employment impact from closing Cannon; a scientifically reliable analysis based on actual manpower finds a higher impact to be 30.58%. Historic precedent from other regional closings confirms this higher percentage.
- Even at the lower impact, the 20.5% figure poses the largest job loss as a percentage of community employment of all 2005 BRAC recommendations—nearly double the second largest impact.
- If Cannon were to close, it is likely that the nearby communities would never fully recover within the lifetimes of the current residents.
- The region reports a minority population of more than 50%. Closure of Cannon would disproportionately impact this population.
- Curry and Roosevelt Counties are currently designated “medically underserved” by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. If Cannon were to close, this situation would worsen.

**FORCE STRUCTURE**

Cannon is an irreplaceable asset and offers invaluable future flexibility and versatility.

- Future Force Structure considerations should be addressed issues such as:
  - Strategic Depth
  - Joint Training
  - Contingency Operations
  - Possible Future Missions
  - Homeland Defense
  - Quality of Life/ Retention Issues
  
- These issues have not been given appropriate considerations within this process, and the removal of Cannon and its military value could not be reconstituted in the future.