

The Case for Cannon

- The following is a brief overview of some of the main themes that will be touched on at today's hearing.

1. MILITARY VALUE

Some examples of areas where the Pentagon underrated Cannon include:

- The areas where Cannon lost the most points were based on incorrectly submitted data or improperly considered data.
- Air Traffic Control restrictions were measured using a scoring system that assessed maintenance efficiency, not air traffic control delays.
- The volume of Cannon's airspace was reported low because two Military Operating Areas were not reported.
- Operational hours of Cannon's airspace can be extended to 24 hours.
- After making these and other adjustments, Cannon actually ranks in the top five for fighter bases.

2. IMPROPERLY CONSIDERED DATA

Among the factors to be considered are:

- The Pentagon's goal of building facilities away from populated areas is at odds with the 2.28 percent weight given to the encroachment criterion.
- The New Mexico Training Range Initiative will expand the volume of Cannon's supersonic space. No other base in the nation has this capability.
- The Air Force decision to have just two operational F-16 bases will mean airmen will spend a disproportionate time overseas, hurting morale and retention.

3. ECONOMIC IMPACT

- Community leaders estimate that the Clovis-Portales economy would be "unrecoverable" if Cannon closed.
- The 20.47 percent economic impact estimated by DOD is conservative.

4. COST OF BASE REALIGNMENT ACTIONS

- When the Air Force calculated the savings of closing Cannon, it failed to calculate the associated cost moving personnel to other bases.

BRAC--New Mexico Impacts

CANNON AIR FORCE BASE CLOSURE

The military estimates more than 2,600 jobs at Cannon would be lost, making Clovis the hardest-hit community in the closure list. Cannon's fleet of F-16 fighter jets would be dispersed around the country to active-duty and Air National Guard outfits. New Mexico's 150th Fighter Wing would receive three.

The remaining 29 fighter jets would be used as backups.

The Pentagon expects \$2.7 billion savings over 20 years.

WHITE SANDS MISSILE RANGE LOSS

✓ Army Research Laboratory, 178 jobs

Conducts atmospheric and weather research and helps with other tests at White Sands. The program would move to Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. A small detachment would remain at White Sands.

HOLLOMAN AIR FORCE BASE LOSS

✓ Gravitational Centrifuge and Physiological Training, 17 jobs

Used for fighter pilot endurance training, the unit would move to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio.

KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE GAIN

✓ Space Vehicle Research, 203 jobs

Research and development of spacecraft would be relocated from Hanscom AFB, Mass., to Kirtland, which already houses related research.

✓ Armed Forces Reserve Center, 24 jobs

Albuquerque's reserve center on Wyoming NE would move behind Kirtland's fence. The center currently houses offices for local reserve forces.

✓ Three F-16 Falcon fighter jets, estimated 200 jobs

Cannon's closure might be a gain for the state Air National Guard's 150th Fighter Wing. The unit has 15 F-16 fighter jets and would receive three more.

LOSS

✓ Confinement Facility, 12 jobs

The base jail, one of three of its kind in the Air Force, would be closed. It has capacity for 16 inmates. Operations would be consolidated at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif.

A look at the next steps in the base-closure process:

- ✓ May through August: The commission will:
 - Hold public hearings;
 - Conduct site visits; and
 - Collect data on each facility on the Pentagon's list to determine whether the Defense Department proposal was justified.

The commission can vote to add facilities to the list, but it takes seven of the nine members to do so. A simple majority vote would suffice to remove bases from the list.

- ✓ Sept. 8: The commission must forward its report of recommendations to President Bush.

- ✓ Sept. 23: The President must accept or reject the recommendations in their entirety.

If the President accepts the recommendations, Congress has 45 legislative days or until the end of its 2005 session to reject the recommendations in their entirety or they become final.

If the recommendations are disapproved, the BRAC commission has until Oct. 20, 2005, to submit a revised report to the president. The president has until Nov. 7, 2005, to approve a revised report and send it to Congress.

- ✓ The Pentagon then has six years to close, relocate or downsize bases on the final list.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: CHRIS GALLEGOS
202-224-7082

DOMENICI ADDRESSES BRAC COMMISSION AT HEARING

CLOVIS, N.M. – The following is the text of prepared remarks used by U.S. Senator Pete Domenici in his address to the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission at this regional hearing on BRAC impacts in New Mexico.

Domenici, a member of the Senate Defense Appropriations Committee, is the most senior member of the New Mexico congressional delegation.

“The Air Force and Department of Defense are making a mistake in recommending Cannon for closure. I am asking the BRAC commissioners to remove Cannon from the closure list.

“This is an ideal training environment and it is getting better with the New Mexico Training Range Initiative. It is simply irreplaceable. Looking to the future, I cannot envision Cannon not being a key military installation. The nation cannot afford to just discard Cannon Air Force Base.

“I understand that the commission is reviewing many situations affecting many people all over the country. But let’s be clear about our situation here. Closing Cannon would impoverish this region that has had no regrets about living the Air Force model for more than 50 years.

“We’ve embraced the military with open arms, listened to their needs and given them everything they asked for. In the past six years alone, we have provided over \$50 million in military construction to improve Cannon.

“However, our proud relationship with Cannon is about much more than money. Rather, it is about people and the relationships we have built. Over and over, servicemen and women who serve at Cannon come back here to become part of this community’s fabric. Year after year, we take care of our airmen and their families because we want them here—a claim not all communities can make.

“In the end, our defense of Cannon Air Force Base is far from an emotional appeal. Rather, it is based on facts—

- *Facts about data that inaccurately reflect Cannon’s military value;*
- *Facts about costs and savings that do not exist;*
- *Facts about airspace this nation needs for its security—both today and in the future; and*
- *Facts about adverse economic impacts that would eviscerate a community.*

“Based on these facts, we very respectfully ask that the Commission reverse a mistaken recommendation. We are counting on your vote.”

STATEMENT OF U.S. SENATOR JEFF BINGAMAN TO BRAC COMMISSION

I would like to welcome Commissioners Hansen, Turner, Hill, Coyle, Bilbray and Newton to New Mexico. We are glad that all of you, and Chairman Principi, who was here yesterday, could see firsthand how important Cannon is, not only to eastern New Mexico but also to the entire country.

I want to address an issue that the BRAC Commission must give greater weight to than the Pentagon did when it came up with its base closure list. That important issue is the economic impact that closing Cannon would have on eastern New Mexico.

As you will hear in greater detail a little later in the presentation, the Defense Department significantly underestimated the impact that closing Cannon would have on Curry, Roosevelt and neighboring counties.

The Department said just one in five jobs would be lost, directly or indirectly. According to the in-depth analysis that you'll hear more about momentarily, that number is closer to one in three jobs, and the total loss to the regional economy would be hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

These communities are two hours away from the nearest metropolitan area, which is one key reason it would be difficult for displaced workers to find new employment if the base were to close. However, this makes the region an ideal place for an unencroached Air Force base.

In closing, I want to talk briefly about another base closure that took place some years ago in southeastern New Mexico – just 100 miles from here – in Roswell.

Within three years of the 1967 closure of Walker Air Force Base, Roswell's population of 48,000 had dropped by about one-third, far in excess of the number of people directly employed at the base. Nearly 40 years later, Roswell still has not fully recovered from the closure of Walker; and its population has barely climbed back up to 44,000.

Closing another base in southeastern New Mexico would strike a terrible blow to this part of our state.

The BRAC Commission has an important assignment: to closely scrutinize all the military's bases across the country and determine which ones we can do without. A critical part of that decision is figuring out which communities can economically absorb a base closure. We are here today to tell you that as strong and resourceful as the people of Clovis and eastern New Mexico are, a blow like this will have a catastrophic impact on their communities and their lives.

News Release

Heather Wilson
U.S. Congresswoman

<http://www.house.gov/wilson>

Serving New Mexico's 1st Congressional District

For Immediate Release
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Enrique Carlos Knell: (505) 346-6781
(505) 238-8878

Rep. Heather Wilson Statement at the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission Regional Hearing

Clovis, New Mexico

Thank all of you for being here. We appreciate so many members of the Commission coming to Clovis to see the contribution Cannon Air Force Base makes to our national defense. I would like to take the time I have to talk about the military value of the base and its associated airspace.

You will hear in detail this morning about the **New Mexico Training Range Initiative**.

Several years ago, at the request of the Wing Commander and the Air Force, our Congressional delegation launched an effort to improve the airspace for Cannon's 27th wing in the 2003 Defense Authorization Act. This was driven by a change in the threat and the mission. They needed more supersonic high altitude space rather than just space to train for low level high speed penetration of Soviet airspace.

While some bases have large training areas over the oceans, those ranges are of less real military value than the areas we have in the West. The Pentagon's formulas consider space – not the quality of the training that can be done in that space. The wing at Cannon has the opportunity for more realistic training flying over land, searching for targets, dropping ordinance on targets, and integrating operations with ground units at White Sands and Fort Bliss.

The New Mexico Training Range Initiative has made it through all of the environmental and community reviews. Headquarters Air Combat Command and the FAA have reached agreement and expect to sign a written plan within days. This will significantly expand and improve the training range for Cannon to about 30,000 cubic nautical miles.

While the Air Force assumes that these ranges will continue to be available even if Cannon closes, I don't think that is a reasonable assumption for the long term. People accept training ranges when they are associated with bases in their communities. Without the base, the support for the ranges will erode. Closing the Cannon ranges, which I believe will happen without the base, would have a substantial negative impact on the Air Force's ability to train and fight. You must take this into account when you consider the importance of Cannon.

You will also hear about the facilities at Cannon and the possibilities for expansion. The Pentagon rated Cannon less favorably in terms of military value because of inadequate space for expansion within the current base boundaries. In reality, there is significant space for expansion at very low cost and no encroachment problems when compared with bases elsewhere. We have plenty of space.

Reality matters more than formulas. I hope, by the end of today, you will have a richer understanding of the real military value of Cannon and agree with us that it is too valuable to lose.

—END—



U.S. Representative Tom Udall
Third Congressional District of New Mexico

**UDALL STATEMENT TO THE BASE REALIGNMENT AND CLOSURE
(BRAC) COMMISSION REGIONAL HEARING**

I would first like to join my colleagues and the community in welcoming you to Clovis. We have spoken with many of you already about the importance of Cannon, but we greatly appreciate your willingness to hold the regional hearing here and for so many of you making the trip.

I would like to take this time to provide a brief historical perspective on Cannon Air Force Base.

The history of the base began in the late 1920s, when a civilian passenger facility, Portair Field, was established. In 1942, after the United States entered World War II, the Army Air Corps took control of the civilian airfield. It was then known as Clovis Army Air Base.

The Base was reassigned to Tactical Air Command in July 1951. Six years later the base was renamed Cannon Air Force Base after the late General John K. Cannon, a former commander of the tactical air command.

The Air Force has operated F-86s, F-100s, T-33s, F-111s and F-16s out of Cannon. There have always been several thousand military personnel associated with Cannon. The Wing and its personnel have received numerous awards and recognition over the years.

The superb performance exhibited during Operation Iraqi Freedom was a result of the realistic training the pilots received at Cannon.

New Mexico has always welcomed military personnel and their families and Clovis, Portales, and the surrounding communities are no exception. As you have witnessed today, there is truly outstanding community support for the base and the men and women who serve here.

I would now like to turn the presentation over to the community leaders. I am confident their comments will convince you of two things: one, just how valuable the base is to the Air Force and to our nation's defense; and two, how valuable the bond between the base and the local area is.

Again, thank you for your attendance today. I am hopeful that you all will find this presentation persuasive, and will honor our respectful request that you overturn DoD's recommendation.

With that, I would like to turn it over to Randy Harris, Chad Lydick, Hanson Scott, and John Murphy.

Second, our weather. Particularly when compared with the East Coast's frequent overcast skies and susceptibility to rain and hurricanes, New Mexico is an ideal location for pilots to obtain extensive flight experience in a short period of time.

Third, the short distance to bombing ranges.

Fourth, clear skies. New Mexico's airspace is so free of commercial traffic that the FAA has a name for it in its operations guide – the "WSMR Shadow."

And **fifth**, the New Mexico Training Range Initiative – which will provide vital supersonic training for our air force pilots.

The BRAC process is supposed to promote cost-efficiency, military value, and military effectiveness. Regrettably, the DOD's ill-conceived scheme achieves none of the above. The Commission's approval of these recommendations will sanction a weaker military that costs us more.

For two years as a member of Congress, I listened to the complaints of ranchers – and I have urged them accept the incursions associated with our air force bases for the sake of their country, as well as for the sake of jobs in New Mexico. Nevertheless, if the DOD places so little military value upon these bases that it pulls essential jobs out of our state, I will not ask my constituents to make any more sacrifices. If the Pentagon doesn't care, why should they?

I urge the Commission to do its job and reject all of the DOD's recommendations as to White Sands, Holloman, and Cannon.

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Contact: David Host, 202-225-4759

Prepared Remarks
BRAC Regional Hearing
Friday, June 24, 2005

I am here today to echo the voices of all those who have contributed so much to make Cannon Air Force base valuable to our community and our country.

The presentations today have demonstrated the serious errors made by the Department of Defense in proposing that Cannon be included on the base closure list.

You have learned that Cannon has the capabilities ~~and~~ characteristics that can strengthen our military to a tremendous degree.

You've learned that Cannon has access to low-level routes, and supersonic airspace—which was not considered in the Pentagon's review.

You've learned that Cannon has terrific training ranges, and cross-wind runways.

You've learned that Cannon faces no encroachment of any kind—no nearby cities swallowing up land, and no major airports or traffic that would endanger the public or military missions.

And you've learned that Cannon has a rare and precious gift: great weather. You can't just create 329 days of sunshine. You either have it, or you don't. And we have it.

You've also learned that the Pentagon did not take new and future mission capabilities into consideration for Cannon, including its air-to-ground training capabilities. Yet, the war we are engaged in right now is a land war, requiring air-to-ground missions.

Finally, you've learned that the community of Clovis supports this base as if it were their home. And that's because it is. Thousands of patriotic Americans have dedicated their lives to supporting Cannon, strengthening its value to the military, and helping it successfully carry out its mission for the United States military.

Don't disappoint the people who have made this base what it is. Don't turn your backs on their work and their sacrifice.

We have shown that Cannon is vital to the Air Force. Closing it would be devastating to the community, and detrimental to our Nation's security.

It is incumbent upon the Commission to determine if there are better options for closure—bases with more encroachment, less airspace, worse weather, and inferior community support.

I respectfully ask the Commission to do what's right for our country, to ensure our long term security. And I ask the Commission to do what's right for this community, to ensure its survival.

For the good of the American people, I ask that this Commission remove Cannon from the base closure list. On behalf of the community of Clovis, and the State of New Mexico, I thank you for your time and consideration.

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