



**United States Senator Harry Reid  
Democratic Leader  
Testimony before the BRAC Commission  
June 24, 2005**

Mr. Chairman, I would like begin today by thanking the Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) for holding this hearing. I know the Commission faces tough choices in the months ahead, and I want to express my gratitude to you for agreeing to take a close look at the proposed closure of the Hawthorne Army Depot and the realignment of the Nevada Air National Guard. Closing and cutting these two facilities would have serious consequences for the people of Nevada and the security of our country, and I thank you for carefully examining the Defense Department's recommendations.

I would also like to thank Nevada Governor Kenny Guinn, the Nevada Homeland Security Director Giles Vanderhoof, the Nevada National Guard Adjutant General Cindy Kirkland, State Senator Randolph Townsend, State Senator Mike McGinness, Assemblyman Bernie Anderson, and the Executive Director for Mineral County Shelley Hartmann for agreeing to testify. Each of these distinguished individuals brings with them a wealth of information about the Hawthorne Army Depot and the 152nd Airlift Wing, and I'm grateful to them for traveling to New Mexico to share their thoughts.

Let me begin today by once again expressing my strong support for the BRAC process. I believe it is important to give the Pentagon the authority to ensure that we have the defense infrastructure we need, and the BRAC process does exactly that.

Further, I would like the record to show that – overall - the Defense Department's recommendations are very favorable to Nevada. As a result of the Department's findings, Nellis Air Force Base will gain 1,400 military and civilian personnel. Fallon Naval Air Station will become the Fleet Readiness Center for the West, and Nevada will continue to play a major role in defending America.

That being the case, I nevertheless do find the Defense Department's recommendations concerning the Hawthorne Army Depot and the 152nd Airlift Wing troubling and inconsistent with our national security objectives. In both cases, the Department's initial analyses are incomplete, and in many cases, incorrect, and both recommendations warrant serious reconsideration.

Let me begin with the decision to close the Hawthorne Army Depot – a state-of-the-art facility uniquely positioned to serve the needs of our military. During today's testimony, you will hear a number of important objections to the Defense Department's recommendation. In my testimony, I would like to focus your attention on three key areas: 1) the flawed economic impact analysis; 2) the failure to consider Hawthorne's role in the current war in Iraq; and 3) Hawthorne's use as a multi-functional and Joint Service oriented facility.

I will start with a discussion of my concerns with the economic impact analysis.

According to the Department's analysis, less than 0.1 percent of total employment of Hawthorne's surrounding community would be lost as a result of the depot's closure. This figure is flawed. The Defense Department arrived at this conclusion by including employment data from the Reno/Sparks metropolitan area. However, the Reno/Sparks area is 133 miles away and never should have been included. The true employment displacement percentage is closer to 30 percent, and could go as high as 50 percent if all indirect jobs are factored in. Far from a minimal impact, Hawthorne's closure would have disastrous economic consequences for Mineral County.

In addition, Hawthorne's closure will come at a high cost to the United States taxpayer. The Department's findings suggest that the total cost to close the depot lies somewhere around \$180 million. I would suggest today that the actual cost is closer to \$1.28 billion. The Department of Defense simply failed to include the hundreds of millions of dollars required for demilitarization and relocation of munitions and for environmental clean-up.

The second point I would like to bring to your attention is the role the depot plays in supporting our military's efforts in Iraq. Hawthorne currently supplies over 3,000 tons of munitions directly to the war. This output would be lost should Hawthorne close – a fact the Defense Department failed to note when making its recommendations.

As my last point on Hawthorne, I would like to draw your attention to the Department's failure to recognize Hawthorne's use as a multi-functional, Joint Service oriented facility.

Contrary to the Defense Department's findings, Hawthorne serves not only the Army, but also the Navy, the Marines, the Corps of Engineers and Defense Logistics Agency. Marines use Hawthorne to simulate conditions that mirror Iraq and Afghanistan. Navy Seals use the depot's high desert, mountain and water settings for training, and the Fallon Naval Air Station makes use of Hawthorne's facilities for environmental cleanup. Should Hawthorne close, its unique training settings, clean-up efforts and demilitarization capacity would be lost.

I would now like to shift focus and address the proposed realignment of the 152nd Airlift Wing . As you will hear from today's testimony, this recommendation is also based on flawed, incomplete data. In my testimony, I would like to draw your attention to three key areas: 1) the Department's use of inaccurate facts in analyzing future mission capacity of the base; 2) the Department's failure to consider the loss of Scathe View C-130s should the unit be realigned; 3) the Department's failure to consider the 152nd Airlift's role in Homeland Security and emergency management missions.

In making its recommendation on the 152nd, the Defense Department determined that Reno was unable to expand beyond its current 10 C-130s. This determination is false. The facility has additional land and ramp space not considered by the Defense Department. Current law allows Reno to accommodate up to 12 C-130s today and up to 16 within four years. In addition, the infrastructure is in place to support the personnel needed for this expansion.

My second point regarding the 152nd concerns the Scathe View C-130. Scathe View C-130s are high demand Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance assets. They are currently being used with success in Iraq to track terrorist movements and prevent U.S. casualties. Scathe View C-130s are unique to Nevada, and if the 152nd is realigned, the Air Force will lose this combat proven system and high priority aircraft in the War on Terror.

As my last point concerning the 152nd, I would bring to your attention the Defense Department's failure to consider the unit's use in Homeland Security missions. The 152nd currently provides 59 percent of the C-130 airlift assets west of the Rockies. These missions include transporting medical personnel, civil support, search and

rescue teams, as well as rapid response teams. If the 152nd is realigned, these timely transports would be placed in jeopardy.

I understand initial plans call for the Air Force to rely on transports based in Southern California. Such transports will result in a 72 hour reaction time for issues in Nevada. In a Homeland Security or emergency situation, this response time is simply unacceptable.

In concluding my remarks, I highly encourage the commission to visit my State. Given the uniqueness of these installations and communities, I do not feel that the impact of the recommendations can be truly appreciated without seeing, in person, the considerable inaccuracies in the report.

I would like to once again thank the Commission for holding today's hearing and for its willingness to reconsider recommendations regarding the Hawthorne Army Depot and 152nd Airlift Wing. I believe you will see from my testimony and the other Nevadans here today that that these initial recommendations are deeply flawed and in need of a second look.

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