

**Senator John Ensign, Nevada  
Statement for BRAC Regional Hearing  
Clovis, New Mexico  
June 24, 2005**

## **BRAC Statement**

Members of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, thank you for holding this regional hearing and permitting interested individuals the opportunity to make their voices heard.

When the recommendations of the Secretary of Defense were announced last month, I took some time to review the underlying legislation. I also looked at the data that the Department of Defense used to make the determination to close the Hawthorne Army Depot and to transfer our National Guard's C-130s out of the state.

Since, Military value is one reason why the recommendation to close the Hawthorne Army Depot and move its function to Tooele, Utah, is so puzzling to me. Hawthorne has the largest, most diverse, and environmentally compliant conventional demilitarization capability in the Department of Defense depot system. It is also used by Navy SEALs, Marines and Army Rangers for training in terrain that simulates the conditions found in Iraq.

If we were to try and establish an equivalent Hawthorne demil capability in Tooele, it would require funding projected at some \$138 million simply for construction and cost over \$300 million to duplicate its capability—not including the time needed to obtain the necessary environmental permits, if they could be obtained at all.

But Hawthorne is more than just a demil facility, it is a community; a community comprised of hard working men and women who struggle to live the American dream, the dream of a steady job and raising a family in small-town Nevada.

Although I support the BRAC concept, I also appreciate the concerns of many Nevadans about how this round of BRAC recommendations will affect local communities and jobs. The ripple effect of lost jobs at the depot will reach every corner of the Hawthorne community.

The legislative language authorizing this 2005 round of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission was quite specific in establishing which criteria to use when evaluating bases. "Military value" was mandated to be the primary consideration. Also considered was the economic impact to each community.

“Military value” consists of such things as current and future missions; availability and condition of land; ability to accommodate additional missions; and the cost of operations and manpower implications.

One of the most important considerations before this Committee is whether the data used to determine economic impact on impacted communities is accurate.

DoD generated data indicates that closing Hawthorne would result in a loss of 199 direct jobs in Mineral County. According to DoD, that equates to a 0.1% job loss, a minimal impact on the community. Now every Nevadan knows that result can't be right. DoD considered Hawthorne to be part of the Reno/Sparks Metropolitan Area. However, Hawthorne is not part of the Reno/Sparks Metropolitan Area. DoD's analysis is skewed because it included Hawthorne as part of the Reno/Sparks Metropolitan Area.

The fact remains that Hawthorne is 133 miles from Reno, almost a three hour drive. Hardly a bedroom community.

The economic impact on closures to other communities was not calculated this way. In establishing the economic impact of BRAC for the Milan Army Ammunition Plant, the Humboldt, Tennessee, Metropolitan Statistical Area was used. Humboldt is twelve miles away from the ammunition plant and has a population of less than 10,000 citizens. Twenty miles from Milan is the city of Jackson, Tennessee, with a population of more than 60,000.

It is only fair that the same consideration be given to Hawthorne. It is unreasonable to calculate the loss of employment for Hawthorne in relation to the population of a major city over 100 miles away when the impact of other installations is being measured against the population of small, nearby towns.

The real data does not lie. When weighed against Hawthorne's employable population of 1,860, the numbers tell a bleak story. The Nevada Commission on Economic Development calculates that, when total contracting personnel are accounted for, 539 jobs will be lost by the closure of Hawthorne—totaling a 27% job loss for the local community.

As a primary employer in Hawthorne, it is important to judge the economic impact based on realistic distances and real jobs.

Equally puzzling to me is the recommendation of the Department of Defense to relocate the eight Nevada Air National Guard C-130s to Little Rock, Arkansas. The justification given for the move is that it would distribute the C-130 force structure to a higher military value base, the thought being that this recommendation creates a larger, more effective squadron.

The BRAC recommendation was based on an “inability to expand beyond ten aircraft.” That is incorrect. The Reno-Tahoe International Airport is capable of supporting 12

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C-130s on existing land and growing to 16 C-130s with future ramp development.

The reality of the situation is that the Reno-based C-130 aircraft are written into the Nevada Emergency Response Plan and form part of the Nevada Civil Support Team, the Urban Search and Rescue Team, and the Weapons of Mass Destruction Support Team.

The National Security Strategy lists homeland defense as our nation's number one priority. BRAC calculations failed to address Nevada's unique requirements and location for homeland defense. Eliminating the C-130s from the state would absolutely cripple our ability to respond to any large-scale emergency. Due to the fact that Nevada is a geographically large state with annual flooding, large-scale wildfires, major fault lines, the largest dam in the nation and a tourist destination unlike any other in the world, the Nevada Air National Guard's support of these diverse characteristics is paramount.

When one realizes that Nevada is the fastest growing state in the union and is twice the size of the six New England states combined, the loss of Nevada's compliment of C-130s would compromise the ability of the state to respond to a variety of emergencies.

Let's be clear about one thing. I have strongly supported the Base Realignment and Closure process since the first round in 1988. We knew then and we all know now that the Department of Defense has excess base capacity. The BRAC process is the fairest process we have found to close this excess capacity.

But that doesn't mean that the recommendations of Department of Defense should be accepted without careful scrutiny.

I continue to believe that a fair, thorough, and impartial review of both Hawthorne and the Nevada Air National Guard will result in the determination that these are worthy contributors to our overall national defense.