

Date: August 14, 2005

The Honorable Anthony J. Principi, Chairman
Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

BRAC Commission

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Received

Re: **Pittsburgh, Land and More**

Dear Chairman Principi and Fellow BRAC Commissioners,

The Pittsburgh Region, home to the 911th Airlift Wing, the 99th Readiness Center and the Charles E. Kelly Military Support Facility, is strategically located and plays a vital role in our nation's defense and homeland security. Pittsburgh is renowned for its world-class medical facilities and for its hard-working and productive citizens – many of whom carry on a tradition of volunteering for service to their country.

Recently, the Department of Defense (DOD) recommended the closure of the 911th Airlift Wing due to lack of available land at Pittsburgh Airport. Land is not an issue! Land currently available -- and used -- by the 911th can support additional aircraft right now. Pittsburgh Airport's four runways afford any and all aircraft ready accessibility; if it can fly, it can land at Pittsburgh! The 911th provides additional value and cost-effectiveness through its operation of a variety of tenant functions for other federal state and local government agencies which result in taxpayer savings.

DOD also recommended the closure of the Kelly Support Facility and the realignment of the 99th Readiness Center. The Kelly Support Facility serves tens of thousands of retired and active duty military personnel and their families in Western Pennsylvania and across the mid-Atlantic region. The 99th is scheduled to move from a new state-of-the-art building here to trailers in New Jersey. Much of the data used by DOD in making decisions on these bases is flawed, and in certain cases unavailable.

Closing these bases would not best serve our military defense posture, nor would it result in maintaining our ability to respond to national defense or homeland security challenges. In addition, our military would not only lose the services of the qualified Reserve personnel now serving, but would experience a negative impact on local recruiting as well.

The 911th Airlift Wing should not be closed! Indeed, it should be considered for expansion as part of a Joint Readiness Regional Center – along with the 99th Readiness Center and Charles E. Kelly Support Facility.

Sincerely,

John James, III
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