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June 22, 2005

General James T. Hill USA, (Ret)
2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Re: Hector International Airport Guard Station, Fargo, North Dakota

Dear Tom:

Congratulations on your appointment to the BRAC Commission. I knew you couldn't stay idle for long. Susie and I left Belize, back to the private life (retirement?) in April.

I didn't realize I would be in contact with you so soon. As you know I was born and raised and have lived all my life in North Dakota, except for my 4 years in the U.S. Army and 3 ½ years as Ambassador to Belize. My concern is the DOD recommendations regarding the Hector International Airport Guard Station in Fargo, home of the 119th Fighter Wing. I understand you will be briefed on and will have read North Dakota's concern regarding the Air Guard station in Fargo so I would like to make 2 points for you to consider and relay to your fellow commission members in your deliberations.

The DOD has proposed to realign Hector "to allow its aircraft to retire with no flying mission backfill". The Air Force has proposed a UAV mission for both Hector and the Air Base in Grand Forks.

1. North Dakota strongly supports the UAV mission requirement of the USAF that is proposed for the 119th Fighter Wing in Fargo and the Air Base in Grand Forks.

2. The North Dakota Air National Guard 119th Fighter Wing - known as the Happy Hooligans - is based in Fargo and recognized as one of the world's finest fighting units even though they are flying the Air Force's oldest aircraft, the F-16. Among other awards they have received are 3 William Tells, 2 Hughes Achievement Awards, the Daedalian Maintenance Trophy, and 10 USAF Outstanding Unit Awards. The Happy Hooligans were the first to patrol the skies over Washington, D.C. after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the Pentagon. The DOD recommendation is that the 119th Fighter Wing be realigned "without a flying mission backfill". This is a programmatic change and should not be part of the BRAC recommendations. The Air Force had previously decided some time ago to retire the F-16s and their retirement should not be counted as a BRAC "savings".

The recommendation of the Air Force on the realignment of the Hector Air Guard station was also based on flawed data. I am enclosing a one page "point paper" that sets out these flaws.

We ask that the clause "without a flying mission backfill" be removed from the recommendations, and allow the 119th Fighter Wing to make its case to the Air Force and the National Guard Bureau for its future flying missions after the scheduled retirement of the F-16s.

If you need any additional information or explanation, please let me know.

Best regards,



Russell F. Freeman

cc: Governor John Hoeven
Fargo Moorhead Air National Guard Support Group

Point Paper

Problem:

The Commission will be misled by inaccurate Department of the Air Force analysis of criteria which understated the Military Capability Index of Hector Airport AGS. This evaluation does not reflect the 119FWs superior operational record that has been continuously demonstrated and the excellent facilities it possess.

Issues:

1. The issues created by the statement "without a flying mission backfill" in The DOD, Part 2 of 2, Detailed Recommendations, Section 3, Department of the Air Force, page 38 based on Hector's low military value is a distortion of the evaluation and is without merit.
2. The DOD, Part 2 of 2, Detailed Recommendations, Section 3, Department of the Air Force, page 39, states under Economic Impact on Community, "This recommendation will not result in any job reductions (direct or indirect) over the 2006-2011 period in the Fargo, ND-MN, Metropolitan Statistical Economic Area". Prior to BRAC there was no reason to believe there would not be a follow on flying mission. A programmatic change in aircraft and/or mission had been announced. F-15s had been identified and were to be assigned upon Air Force procurement of F-22s, which at worst would have resulted in no job reductions.
3. 119th FW stands ready to assume and support the Air Force UAV mission requirement.
4. It is imperative that the 119th FW pilots have the degree of proficiency required to competently fulfill the UAV mission. Suitable aircraft must be assigned to the unit to assure pilot recruitment, training and proficiency.
5. The information provided to the Commission does not reflect the costs associated with their actions. The move of the David Johnson Army Reserve Center onto the Hector Airport Air National Guard Facility as shown on The Headquarters USAF State-by-State Installation View, Slide 142, is \$40.92M. The DOD, Part 2 of 2, Detailed Recommendations, Section 1, Department of the Army, page 74, states "although not captured in the COBRA analysis" shows an NPV 20 year cost of 8.0M. The USAF claims the BRAC savings, but the costs are speciously omitted as a programmatic change.
6. 119th FW is recognized as one of the world's finest fighter units with extensive training areas and a high quality recruiting base (25,000 college students). Unmatched facilities, newly reconstructed runway and aircraft arresting barriers along with the capacity to expand at little or no future cost. The 119th currently has over 140,000 fighter flight hours without a "Class A" accident; the only F-16 unit, Active, Guard or Reserve that has not lost an F-16 Air National Guard flying unit in every state to support state requirements.
7. Unlike the U. S. Army BRAC process the Adjutants General were not made a part of the
8. deliberations therefore many issues were not properly considered.

Solution:

An objective assessment demands realistic criteria however the criteria presented to you by DOD are demonstrably flawed. We are confident the Commission will arrive at an appropriate decision when they know the facts and are not prejudiced by the misinformation given to them.

Recommended Action:

That the Commission take action to insure that:

1. The following clause: "without a flying mission backfill." is removed from BRAC language.