

Thank you, Chairman Principi, and members of the Commission for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Tim Davlin, and I'm the Mayor of Springfield, Illinois. I represent the individuals, families, and the communities of Illinois that will be affected by your decision regarding the 183<sup>rd</sup> Air National Guard unit based at Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport.

As you know, the Department of Defense has recommended moving our seventeen assigned F-16 fighter aircraft from Springfield, IL, to Ft. Wayne, Indiana – a decision we believe substantially deviates from the Base Closure and Realignment Committee criteria.

Here's why:

1. Moving the aircraft to Ft. Wayne does not demonstrably improve our overall national defense or homeland security missions;
2. This shift of assets to Ft. Wayne will not result in net savings for our military—not one single penny—and , in fact, it will cost money;
3. The facility at Ft. Wayne is simply not as well-equipped to meet the future force requirements of our military as the base in Springfield; and
4. The economic impact to Springfield, Illinois, and the surrounding area has been drastically miscalculated by the Air Force.

I will speak briefly to each of these points, but I encourage each of you to closely review our white paper that provides an in-depth analysis of these arguments.

First, you as Commissioners have been given a monumental and no doubt, at times, a disagreeable task. I do not dispute that our military needs some changes. Certainly the military must constantly improve its efficiencies, but the purpose of these closings and realignments should be to make our military stronger.

Changes to National Guard units must not undermine our homeland defense efforts.

Yet, that is exactly what would happen if our F-16 fighter aircraft are moved from Springfield, Illinois.

The 183<sup>rd</sup> FW has a proud heritage of answering our nation's call to duty. The military value of the wing is undeniable. Most recently, personnel from the 183<sup>rd</sup> FW played an integral role in both “Operation Southern Watch” and “Operation Enduring Freedom”.

Specifically:

- From a national perspective, the 183<sup>rd</sup> FW is centrally located in the U.S. and can easily support any mission in the region whether it is federal, state or homeland security.
- From a regional perspective, Illinois has 28 locks and dams along the Mississippi, the Illinois and the Ohio Rivers. Having the 183<sup>rd</sup> FW located at its current base is an important Homeland Security issue for the state.
- 15% of all commodities in the country are shipped on the inlet waterways at 3% of the cost. The bulk of these shipments are on the Mississippi, Illinois and Ohio Rivers, which all border Illinois.
- Additionally, Illinois has 11 nuclear facilities while other surrounding states have between 1 and 4 facilities. Again, this has critical Homeland Security ramifications for the region.
- While on the surface it may not appear to be much of a difference between locating the Fighter Wing in northern Indiana versus central Illinois, we believe an in-depth study by Commission will raise serious doubts about whether such a move will improve our nation’s homeland security defenses.
- From a performance perspective, the 183<sup>rd</sup> FW, with a military value of 115, is ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> out of 10 F-16 ANG units. Seven other units have lower military value, yet the 183<sup>rd</sup> FW is 1 of 5 units recommended for realignment. Yet DoD proposes moving the aircraft from the 183<sup>rd</sup> FW to a guard base which ranks below Springfield.

Next, and this point is related to improving the future capabilities of our military and the National Guard: if your task as Commissioners is to find the appropriate mesh of bases that meet the Defense Department’s future force requirements, this recommendation simply has it all wrong.

Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport in Springfield has many environmental and infrastructure advantages that position the 183<sup>rd</sup> FW to carry out current and expanded future missions.

Specifically:

- Unlike Ft. Wayne, Springfield is not hampered by any air quality restrictions. The county of Allen (Ft Wayne), however, is classified as a non-attainment area for 8-hour ozone standards.
- In fact, the 183<sup>rd</sup> has just completed a Base master Plan. The state and local community are working together with the airport authorities to acquire financial aid and assistance to provide additional acreage to the base in order to accommodate force protection, munitions storage and homeland security alert facility.

Finally, we know that many communities around the country will suffer an economic impact when their military bases are closed and realigned. Perhaps that is a painful but necessary step when we are trying to right-size our military. However, let's at least be honest about the impact those closings will have on our communities before making those painful decisions.

The devil is in the details and in the case of Springfield, the Air Force simply has it wrong. The claim that only 163 positions will be lost is also wrong—for it fails to include those who work part-time at the military base. Include those part-time workers and the numbers skyrocket to almost 600 individuals.

The loss of the firefighting unit at the military base, which also serves Capital Airport, will cost the airport between \$500,000 and \$600,000 every year. Additionally, the unit is relied upon to provide runway maintenance and snow and ice removal.

Such a loss would be devastating for the 9-county central Illinois area economy.

We cannot afford losses of this magnitude.

I have lived my entire life in Springfield, Illinois. When I talk to my neighbors, my friends and the citizens of Central Illinois, there is no mistaking the tremendous, button-popping pride they have in our Air National Guard base.

Personnel from the 183<sup>rd</sup> FW responded to the call of duty, after the events of September 11, 2001. The unit deployed for a three month period starting in March 2002 and as I mentioned, took part in both “Operation Southern Watch” and “Operation Enduring Freedom.” During the unit’s first 30 days in theater, personnel from the 183d flew more than 1,000 hours.

Because of the long hours, and to get all its pilots combat flying experience, the squadron rotated all of its 33 assigned pilots, six of whom stayed the entire rotation. These men and women are not full-time military – they are part and parcel of our community. Yet, they answered the call of duty without hesitation.

The 183<sup>rd</sup> Air National Guard base has been a close partner with the community of Springfield, Illinois for over 50 years.

They served our country with distinction and honor.

Commissioners, they deserve better than this. The people of Central Illinois understand the military; they understand what is required of our fighting men and women to protect us at home and abroad. And I’ll take a solid base in the Heartland any day.

In closing, the decision regarding the Springfield-based 183<sup>rd</sup> is not consistent with BRAC’s own criteria. A decision that will cost the taxpayers money, not save money. And Commissioners, you have the power to change this recommendation for the benefit of our military and our future force requirements.

I hope that you seriously consider whether realigning Springfield’s aircraft is in the best interest of our country’s national security and homeland defense.

We in Springfield have many reasons to believe it is not.