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27TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

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AND INFRASTRUCTURE
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3227

July 15, 2005

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

BRAC Commission

JUL 15 2005

Received

Dear Chairman Principi:

I was heartened by yesterday's revelation that the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission Office of the Deputy General Counsel agrees with the argument many have made for months, that the Air Force is inappropriately using the 2005 BRAC round for purposes that contradict BRAC's true intent. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to reiterate the argument that the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station (NFARS) in Western New York has no place on the BRAC Closure list. As you will recall, this base has a significant impact on my region, with 500 of its 3,000 employees residing in my Congressional District alone.

NFARS brings clear and compelling homeland security and military value to both New York State and the nation. The facility's 914th Airlift Wing of the U.S. Air Force Reserve and 107th Air Refueling Wing of the Air Force National Guard serve unique and essential roles whose worth has been proven through repeated deployments in Operation Iraqi Freedom as well as in the defense of crucial domestic infrastructure including the Niagara Power Project and six international bridge crossings within the area.

The Air Force's manipulation of the BRAC system to overestimate the payback figures that would be realized from closure of NFARS was a serious enough sign that this base should not have been placed upon the list of recommendations. Its efforts to enact activities beyond the scope of the Commission's authority, including retiring aircraft when such action has already been barred by statute, transferring Air National Guard units from one state to another, and creating a statutory requirement to base specific aircraft in specific locations, is simply alarming.

I wholeheartedly agree with the arguments made by your Deputy General Counsel, who actually used NFARS as an example of how the BRAC process should *not* be carried out. I believe that this document is proof of the irreparable damage that the Air Force's machinations have done to the legitimacy of the BRAC round for this branch of the Armed Services. As I hope you will agree, the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station truly does not belong on the list of bases recommended for closure.

Thank you for your consideration of my request. I look forward to your reply. If I may be of further assistance, please have your staff be in touch with Moira Campion of my office at (202) 225-3306.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Higgins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Brian Higgins
Member of Congress