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COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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MILITARY QUALITY OF LIFE AND
VETERANS AFFAIRS
HOMELAND SECURITY
FOREIGN OPERATIONS



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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4331

May 31, 2005

ORIGINAL

Chairman Anthony Principi
2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Chairman Principi:

I would like to commend yours and the Commission's efforts to streamline our Nation's military, and I recognize the necessity of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process in transforming our military into a modern and efficient force. To facilitate your role in verifying the Department of Defense's (DoD) BRAC recommendations are in the best interest of our military, tax payers and national defense, I respectfully request that one or more Commissioners visit Fort Hood. While there, I invite the Commission to explore the merits of a largely overlooked recommendation that will greatly affect the transformation process.

While Fort Hood is not recommended for closure, nor considered a "major realignment" based solely on the 2003 to 2011 authorized strengths, simply comparing the two discreet endpoints of the analysis does not paint an accurate or truthful picture of the realities the DoD realignment recommendations will have on the communities of Central Texas and the soldiers and families assigned to Fort Hood. A "bubble" has been created that demanded increased capacity, and Central Texas has responded.

Through temporary stationing initiatives since 2003, Fort Hood's assigned strength will grow to a peak of 49,393 in FY06 and then be reduced through the recommended realignments to 40,761 assigned by 2011. Currently, Fort Hood's strength is approaching 48,000 assigned, and it will reach the peak sometime within the next 12 months. The communities have been preparing for the past two-plus years by building new homes and schools and increasing their municipal services capabilities (fire, police, etc.) to accommodate the growth. Local and state entities have invested in the infrastructure (roads, utilities, parks, etc.) to provide those arriving with an adequate quality of life.

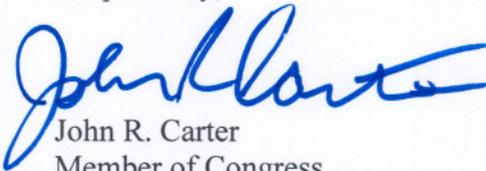
According to DoD's findings, as outlined in the BRAC Report, Fort Hood ranked third in military value among all installations nation-wide. With its 88 live-fire ranges, including 12 multi-use ranges for Abrams Tank and Bradley Fighting Vehicle gunnery, Fort Hood can already train up to 50,000 soldiers on prime, heavy-maneuver land without leaving

the installation. The recommendation to transfer the 4th BCT/ 4ID to Fort Carson is projected to incur a \$551 million upfront cost. That amount does not include the millions of dollars in sustained costs required to move a heavy BCT 150 miles away to Pinon Canyon where Fort Carson's heavy units conduct training maneuvers larger than company level. Given BRAC's primary goal of reducing DoD excess to achieve a government savings, I am skeptical of how this recommendation lends itself to that goal.

What has not been accurately portrayed is the effect on the Central Texas economy that will result from the recommendations. The communities surged to build sufficient houses to accommodate nearly 9,000 additional Soldiers. The realignment will leave a significant excess supply of houses which will most certainly cause the market to fall sharply. Those soldiers who purchased homes will be the hardest hit, particularly when they will have to find housing in an area where the cost of living is nearly double that in Central Texas. The citizens of Central Texas, who rose to the challenge to support our soldiers and their families, will correctly perceive that they were deceived, and it will be difficult to regain their trust when we ask them to respond in the future.

These unique circumstances and facts are not clearly articulated in the DoD recommendations, and thus may not be understood by the BRAC Commission. I look forward to a Fort Hood visit by the Commission to understand first hand the training capability and support of the Central Texas Communities which the soldiers currently enjoy.

Respectfully,



John R. Carter
Member of Congress