

2005 Defense Base Closure and  
Realignment Commission  
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600  
Arlington, Va., 22202

Sept. 4, 2005  
BRAC Commission

SEP 08 2005

Dear Sir/Madam:

Received

Once again members of the 118<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing of the Tennessee Air National Guard have answered this nation's call to service. Its C-130s were among the very first planes carrying military personnel and supplies to reach the devastated city of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast.

In so doing, they were carrying on a proud tradition stretching back over half a century in which members of the Nashville-based unit have provided strategic service to this country's defense and humanitarian causes around the world.

As a newspaper reporter, I had the unique opportunity to fly with these men and women in support of America's relief effort in Somalia. I was able to witness firsthand the great risks they took daily to carry out their orders as good soldiers. Just in the past 15 years, they have also lent their expertise to America's efforts in Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Now, you want to end this great tradition by moving the 118<sup>th</sup>'s eight planes to other bases. The reason cited is economy.

My question is: If it took 100 men and \$1 million to operate the planes in Nashville, will it not take 100 men and \$1 million to operate these planes safely elsewhere? Take this loss to the economy here, plus the disruption in lives and homes to the airmen and women here and I do not see a significant savings.

To the contrary. I recall with great clarity and profound sadness seeing our brave men and women filing home from Vietnam – not as heroes – but almost as criminals in the eyes of their countrymen. Many of these soldiers are continuing to pay a high price for their loyalty to this country in that conflict. They must have said then, and continue to say today: "I served my country well in its time of need. Where is my country in my time of need?" Members of the Tennessee Air National Guard must be asking themselves that same question now as they face an uncertain future if this base closure proceeds. "I served my country in its time of need around the world. Now, where is my country in my time of need?"

But, let's not forget America's time of need has not passed. This is no time to be closing any bases with our military facing a protracted war in the Middle East and global terrorism. This is no time to be closing bases, particularly in this area, in the wake of Katrina and the massive rebuilding effort we all face along our Gulf coast. There will always be hurricanes in the Southeast and the 118<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing based at Nashville is far enough inland to escape major damage from these storms, but close enough to render

immediate relief. Surely, if nothing else from Katrina, we learned the importance of a quick and adequate response to these natural disasters.

Don't forget this lesson. Adopt the Boy Scouts' motto – Be prepared! Stop this base closing. Stop it on the basis of this country's immediate need and because the politics of the commission's actions have been called into question. Any good carpenter will tell you – measure twice, cut once. We need to adopt the same philosophy. We need to take another look at the closure list in the wake of recent events. Stop closures now!!!

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles R. Appleton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "C".

Charles R. Appleton  
1064 Sunset Drive  
Gallatin, TN 37066