

DCN 6802

May 31, 2005

The Honorable Anthony Principi
Chairman, Base Realignment Commission (BRAC)
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Chairman Principi,

I am writing to you today to request that you NOT close Cannon Air Force Base! Cannon has become our family! I am an Air Force widow of a loving husband, father, and grandfather, who served his country with pride. My husband not only served two tours in Vietnam but spent time away from us at several other restricted overseas tours. Ours is truly a military family and our children continue to carry out their proud heritage today by their military service. I have one son who a SGT in the New Mexico Air National Guard, another son who a SSG in the Army Reserves, and a son-in-law who is a LTC in the Army. One of my sons just returned from Iraq at the end of March. My children know the importance of their heritage and of carrying on that tradition! The respect my children have for their country and for the military was sparked from our time at Cannon AFB.

When our family first came to Cannon it, was like coming home. The Clovis, New Mexico community welcomed our Air Force family with open arms. The community has stood by the military troops and continues to work hand-in-hand with the Air Force to ensure a high standard and Quality of Life for the servicemembers and their families. During my time as an Air Force spouse, I remember having the opportunity to open our home during the holidays for Airmen who were stationed away from their own families. Having them in our home made our holiday more special. As we sought to increase the morale of these young troops, they brought joy to our family. We were not a rich military family. However, my husband strongly believed that if he set the example and took care of his troops, they would take care of each other.

Our family traditions are just one example of the atmosphere in our local community. Other Air Force personnel give back to the community by volunteering thousands of hours each year to organizations in the surrounding communities, including mentoring and tutoring local school children, participating in city chamber activities, helping scouting groups, churches and veterans organizations. In fact, I recently completed my tenure as President of our Hospital Auxiliary. During that time, we were able to forge new partnerships with the base Military Treatment Facility, DECA, AAFES, the Family Assistance Center, and spousal groups to better serve those living off the installation.

Cannon is home to four premier fighter squadrons: the 522nd, 523rd, 524th and the 428th fighter squadrons. Currently, more than 4,000 active-duty members and civilians make up the work force at Cannon Air Force Base, approximately 270 officers, 3,201 enlisted airmen and 614 civilian employees.

The total monetary impact on Clovis for fiscal year 2003 was estimated at \$211.2 million. Military and civil service civilian payroll totaled \$116.2 million, contracts and purchase orders (expenditures) totaled \$53.7 million, and non-civil service civilian annual wages totaled \$41.4 million.

Cannon Air Force Base should not be on the list for the following reasons:

- Cannon does not fit the criteria provided for base closure.
- The base has an abundance of air space and no encroachment issues. This provides for safer and more realistic training scenarios for pilots.
- Once the New Mexico Training Range Initiative is implemented, we will be able to offer pilots the ability to fly supersonic during training missions. This is a very important point, as it allows the Air Force to better train for real-life situations.
- The weather in Eastern New Mexico provides year round training ability.
- The Melrose bombing range is seconds from the end of the runway at Cannon. This allows pilots to get airborne, and immediately begin training operations over the bombing range, rather than spending all of their fuel just to get to the range, having one pass over, and then returning to the base.
- Cannon has the space and facilities to accommodate joint war-fighting, training, and readiness as was evidenced by the recent joint training effort between Cannon and the US Navy.
- Cannon has ample space/ramp space to accommodate surge force requirements in training and emergency situations.
- The availability of air space and ideal flying weather makes Cannon the perfect candidate to support future training missions for the F-22, Joint Strike Fighter, and other military aircraft.
- Cannon has won countless awards, both on ACC level, Air Force and NAF levels, and national and STAT levels.
- The relationship between Cannon Air Force Base and the surrounding towns such as Clovis, Portales, New Mexico, and many others in Eastern NM and West Texas, is unlike any other installation in the country.
- Clovis, Portales, Eastern New Mexico, and West Texas (including Amarillo and Lubbock) are home to a large military retiree population. These people rely on Cannon Air Force base for healthcare, Commissary shopping, and Exchange Benefits, MWR Activities, and more all of which were promised as retiree benefits. There is not another installation close by to serve our retired military.
- In the early 1990s, Curry County, in conjunction with the state of New Mexico, purchased air easements around Cannon Air Force base and GAVE them to the Air Force. This was done to protect that air space from encroachment and was an important issue for the Air Force.
- The local community purchased the land north of Cannon Air Force Base and GAVE it back to the Air Force for additional housing, now known as Chavez Manor.

- Within the last few years, the Clovis community purchased land west of Cannon and GAVE it back to the Air Force for the installation of instrument lighting on the alternate runway at the base.
- Leaders within our community spear-headed the effort to expand and convert the air space to supersonic capability through the New Mexico Training Range Initiative.

As a widow I can say that I for one am proud to be part of the military family and very thankful to call Cannon my home. The community has supported our family in the past and continues to provide a place for others to raise their military families. Thank you for taking time to consider my request not to close Canon AFB. I wish to express my gratitude to the Commission for taking on the difficult task of BRAC.

Respectfully,

Bess Kline National Military Family Assn.

Bess Kline

Cc:

David Langford, Mayor of Clovis

Governor Bill Richardson

Senator Pete Domenici (R-NM)

Senator Jeff Bingham (D-NM)

Representative Tom Udall (D-3rd NM)

Representative Heather Wilson (R-1st NM)

Joyce Raeyer, Director Government Relations, National Military Family Association