

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

July 27, 2005

Dear Chairman Principi:

We are writing to express our strong concern about any potential recommendations by the Base Closure and Realignment (BRAC) Commission relating to Pope Air Force Base that would reduce our nation's warfighting capability. For the reasons set forth below, we believe the Commission should reject the Department of Defense's BRAC proposals relating to Pope AFB, and instead should establish a joint base at Fort Bragg and Pope that maintains and enhances our premier power projection force.

We were pleased that the BRAC Commission voted to review the proposal to realign Pope AFB. However, during the deliberations on July 19th, the BRAC staff recommended removing all C-130 aircraft from Pope AFB. This would be a serious mistake that would have a significant negative impact on our military's capability to quickly react in crisis situations. When the President directs, the 82nd Airborne Brigade Combat Teams and Special Forces units at Fort Bragg are required to be ready to deploy within 18 hours of notification and be airborne within 24 hours. To meet these timelines, the 43rd Airlift Wing provides C-130s and execution planning for the Crisis Reaction Force, and also performs critical functions to support strategic airlift for surge and contingency deployments worldwide. Closing the Airlift Wing and removing the C-130s from Pope AFB would degrade this rapid response capability.

Closing Pope Air Force Base also violates BRAC guidance and principles, and it is a mistake we cannot afford to make. The Secretary of Defense has directed that any BRAC actions not reduce our warfighting capability. The DOD BRAC principle for Deployment and Employment puts it well: "The Department needs secure installations that are optimally located for mission accomplishment (including homeland defense); that support power projection, rapid deployment, and expeditionary force requirements...; that sustain the capability to mobilize and surge; and that ensure strategic redundancy." The XVIII Airborne Corps is the nation's premier power projection force and its current deployability rests at adjoining Pope AFB. The proposed realignment of Pope AFB adversely impacts our ability to deploy the XVIII Airborne Corps.

The 43rd Airlift Wing has directly supported combat operations in Panama, Grenada and Haiti, and supported and planned strategic deployments for combat operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. The XVIII Airborne Corps relies on the 43rd Airlift Wing for its training, deployability and support. The joint training, planning and execution opportunities have forged a strong relationship and a proven team to create

the premier power projection force that support the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP). This capability is not replicated anywhere else in our military force structure.

A Reserve Associate Squadron – which the Department has proposed to replace the C-130 component of the 43rd Airlift Wing – will not meet the operational planning and execution capability of the Wing for training, exercises and combat; it will not provide the capability of the Wing to surge or to schedule and handle non-Wing aircraft; and it will not have the opportunity to develop the trust and habitual relationships that exist today between the XVIII Airborne Corps staff and the Wing. Because of these considerations, the power projection mission at Fort Bragg will be severely degraded by replacing the 43rd Airlift Wing's C-130s with a Reserve Associate Squadron.

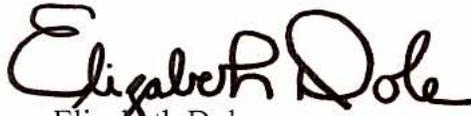
The projected cost analysis and cost savings for this proposal are seriously flawed and inaccurate. In reality, while these actions will save the Air Force money, the Army and DOD will pay dearly for those savings. The GAO analysis indicates that there are significant differences between the cost savings claimed by the Air Force and the costs projected by the Army regarding base operations support, recapitalization and sustainment for facilities at Pope AFB. If Pope AFB kept facilities to the same standards that exist today, the cost of maintaining and operating these facilities will increase as the Army replicates functions and assigns personnel to duties that were run by and have been unique to the Air Force. The savings attributable to personnel moves is also inaccurate, and reflects manpower savings for personnel who will be transferred but not eliminated from the force. According to GAO, these savings are imaginary, yet account for approximately forty seven percent of the net savings reported in the Department of Defense's analysis. These two items combined result in marginal, if any, payback, and will never return the initial implementation costs. The Army is still trying to assess the costs and other implications of taking over the maintenance and operations of a major Air Force base. It is clear that we cannot afford to duplicate roles and missions by trying to develop an Army capability to run an Air Force base.

We strongly urge the Commission to keep the Airlift Wing at Pope AFB in place and intact, and permit the Air Force to continue to operate the Air Force Base and support the XVIII Airborne Corps as efficiently and effectively as they have in the past. Implementing the BRAC actions as proposed would waste money while reducing combat capability, which is completely unacceptable and contrary to the BRAC guidance and principles. As the Army builds its combat capability at Pope AFB, it would be a serious mistake to reduce the Air Force capability and presence.

We believe that after a more thorough review you will agree with us that our nation must maintain the combat capability of this unique force and establish a joint base at Fort Bragg and Pope AFB that will maintain the power projection capability of America's 911 Crisis Reaction Force.

Thank you for the time and effort you are devoting to these important issues and for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Dole
United States Senator



Richard Burr
United States Senator



Bob Etheridge
Member of Congress



Robin Hayes
Member of Congress



Mike McIntyre
Member of Congress

Cc: Mr. James H. Bilbray
Mr. Philip Coyle
Admiral Harold W. Gehman Jr., USN (Ret.)
Mr. James V. Hansen
General James T. Hill, USA (Ret.)
General Lloyd W. Newton, USAF (Ret.)
Mr. Samuel K. Skinner
Brigadier General Sue Ellen Turner, USAF (Ret.)

Attachments:
Pope AFB Realignment Considerations

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Mission Capability:

Fort Bragg and Pope AFB constitute a unique power projection capability unlike any other military installation in the country. Forces on Fort Bragg must meet requirements to execute on the shortest timeline of any forces in our military as directed by the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP). Units from the 82nd Airborne Combat Ready Brigade and Special Forces are required to deploy within 18 hours of notification. With the Pope AFB airfield adjoining Fort Bragg, crisis response forces can stage and deploy faster than at any other installation, and units do not have to leave the installation to stage and board aircraft, allowing force movements to remain undetected. These forces include three 82nd Airborne Brigade Combat Teams, with a fourth projected; Special Forces from the US Army Special Operations Command; and the Joint Special Operations Command. There are combat planning staffs on Fort Bragg/Pope AFB from the 18th Airborne Corps, U.S. Army Special Operations Command, Joint Special Operations Command, and the 43rd Airlift Wing. In addition, combat controllers from the 18th Air Support Operations Group, and 14th Air Support Operations Squadron, and the Combat Controllers School train and deploy with Army units. The capabilities that exist at Fort Bragg and Pope AFB can not be replicated anywhere else due to the wide range and specialized training of crisis response forces at Fort Bragg; the training, planning, execution and airlift support provided by the 43rd Airlift Wing; the capability to deploy quickly to meet crisis timelines; and the ability to conceal preparations and maintain secrecy.

Forces at Fort Bragg provide a variety of options to the President and Secretary of Defense during crisis planning that no other base can provide. With the addition of the Homeland Defense mission, units at Fort Bragg may be required to respond quickly to an international crisis or to a national emergency or terrorist act in the United States. If this response capability is degraded, our national security could be affected. Some other major Army installations that have runways on the post that can accommodate strategic lift aircraft are: Fort Bliss, Fort Hood, and Fort Campbell. Fort Bliss is home to the Army Air Defense Command, which does not have a rapid response mission. Fort Hood is home to III Corps, the 4th Mechanized Division and the 1st Cavalry Division, all heavy forces that move the majority of their equipment by rail. Fort Campbell is home to the 101st Airborne Division, which is heavily equipped with helicopters, which also deploys primarily by rail. None of the Army's airfields operate at the same level, alert status and tempo of Fort Bragg/Pope AFB.

Combat Airlift Operations from Pope AFB:

Over the last four decades, the unique relationship and organizations of Fort Bragg and Pope AFB were created specifically to support the nation's Crisis Response mission as directed in our militaries' classified contingency plans. Airlift Wings at Pope AFB have supported Combat Operations that were planned and executed from the base. They provided the primary airlift and execution planning for Grenada, Panama and Haiti.

This required the wing to closely coordinate with the Corps staff and to provide the majority of the Air Force planning for the operation and to orchestrate the preparation, briefings, loading, marshalling and launching of all aircraft, personnel and equipment, and deconflict the flights into the battle area. These are just a few examples of the order of magnitude of Pope operations from past Crisis Response missions and only includes operations when aircraft launched from or cycled through Pope AFB:

Operation Urgent Fury (Grenada), 1983: Forces had to be ready to launch 18 hours after alert. Approximately 24 C-141s were positioned at Pope AFB to support the 82nd Airborne Division's move, but were configured for air land operations and had to be reconfigured for airdrop operations on Pope during the 18-hour preparation window prior to launch. Additionally, three C-5A aircraft cycled through Pope during this same period to pick up and deploy special operations forces.

Operation Just Cause (Panama), 1989: Forces had to be ready to launch 18 hours after alert. 31 C-141s were initially loaded at Pope and sent to Charleston AFB for staging. 20 C-141s were positioned at Pope AFB to support the 82nd Airborne Division's initial airfield seizure airdrop operations, followed by 43 C-141s and 16 C-5s conducting airland operations. An ice storm in North Carolina the night of the operation could have canceled the mission had the Army and Air Force commanders not had developed confidence in each others abilities through multiple joint training exercises and habitual planning relationships.

Operation Desert Shield/Storm (Kuwait/Iraq), 1990/1: Forces had to be ready to launch 18 hours after alert. The initial aircraft launched at 1:40PM, August 8, 1990 and was followed by approximately 889 C-141, 430 C-5 and 485 commercial charter (CRAF) missions operating around the clock from Pope AFB until all XVIII Airborne Corps and special operations forces had been deployed from Fort Bragg, approximately 40,000 soldiers and their unit equipment. Almost half of this movement was accomplished in the first 30 days.

Operation Uphold Democracy (Haiti), 1994: Forces had to be ready to launch 18 hours after alert. The combat airdrop (airfield seizure) was to be executed from 32 C-130 aircraft followed by 54 C-141 aircraft to airdrop additional personnel and equipment. 37 of the C-141 aircraft were pre-loaded with equipment at Pope and then staged at McGuire and Charleston AFBs. The 32 C-130 aircraft and 17 C-141 aircraft launched directly from Pope AFB. An additional 32 C-130 aircraft were supporting special operations forces from other airfields.

In every case, forces had to be prepared to deploy within 18 hours of alert. In every case, the Air Force planning, staging, and execution requirements far exceeded the capabilities of a squadron headquarters or the expertise of an Army garrison staff. In every case, the base operations and support infrastructure was robust enough to handle the Crisis Response mission. This would not have happened without support from the Airlift Wing. The expertise and resources requisite to a Wing organization have the ability to execute initial planning while simultaneously receiving and preparing platforms

and personnel from across the Air Force tailored to the mission profile to meet the impeding operational requirement. The current BRAC recommendations do not ensure that this documented joint response requirement can be sustained and therefore does not comply with the DOD BRAC guidance

Airlift Wing Support for Exercises, Operations and Deployments:

In the deployment scenario the main wing functions are the marshalling and loading of equipment, preparation of aircraft, and command and control of the launches to meet the established timelines. The issue of support for the Army during deployments is dependent on the size of the operation. Wing assets normally require augmentation to support the deployment of the 82nd Airborne Division, XVIII Airborne Corps Headquarters and support staff. During large-scale deployments or exercises such as Large Package Week, CAPSTONE, and Joint Forced Entry Exercises (JFEX), additional maintenance personnel are needed to meet the added workload. The Wing provides the daily route and drop zone deconfliction for any and all AF aircraft conducting training or Army support at Pope AFB. In some exercises, even though wing aircraft may not be involved with the exercise or training event, the 43rd Wing provides support for core functions and planners and schedulers assist with scenario development and events timeline to ensure compatibility with all base activities and to provide the proper level of visibility and success of the missions. The Airlift Wing staff deployed to SWA to provide a battle staff during Desert Storm. The 43rd Airlift Wing currently provides 10 C-130E aircraft and 15 aircrews to the CENTCOM AOR, and because of this heavy usage, the Wing borrows aircraft from active and ARC bases to keep the mission going both deployed and at home. The planned replacement of the C-130E aircraft with C-130J aircraft at Pope AFB was an important aspect to maintain our airlift capability and support Army operations. The funding cut for the C-130Js by OSD, affected the Air Force proposal to realign Pope AFB, as the military justification for closing the wing was to consolidate an aging aircraft fleet. The C-130J provides longer range, faster deployments and more load capacity than the C-130E, and will be used for strategic and intra-theater airlift operations.

Evolving Missions:

In addition to the current spectrum of operations that U.S. forces are supporting around the world, there are evolving missions associated with the War on Terrorism and Homeland Defense. Terrorist acts, especially those associated with nuclear or chemical/biological weapons, would conceivably require a rapid military response. Missions could include securing an area or a city, restoring the peace, engaging terrorists, CNB containment and cleanup, and retaliation for an attack. Responding to a potential terrorist act with overwhelming force or engaging forces prior to an attack could prevent the act from taking place. All of these missions would require a rapid response with appropriate force and equipment. With the current relationship between Fort Bragg and Pope AFB, and with the airlift wing in place, crisis response forces are available to respond quickly to these situations. If the wing is disestablished, aircraft would need to

deploy to the installation, which adds time to the crisis response. Execution planning would also be delayed.

Other missions that have been supported in the past and may be needed in the future are Humanitarian Relief, and support for the War on Drugs.

Mission Degradation:

A brigade from the 82nd Airborne Division designated the Division Ready Brigade (DRB) is required to be staged for deployment in 18 hours and airborne within 24 hours of notification by the President. Deploying the entire Brigade requires approximately 76 C-130s or 20 C-17s. If an Airlift Control Element or team had to deploy to Fort Bragg to plan, coordinate and control airborne operations, they would not meet the required timelines. In addition, if the orders call for a large-scale deployment requiring surge operations, augmentation of many airfield functions listed above may be required. An associate RC squadron would not have the planning section or trained personnel to plan combat operations similar to operations in Grenada, Haiti and Panama. The relationships between Corps, Special Forces and Wing staffs, built on working together and solving problems during numerous joint training exercises would no longer exist. This is a degradation that our crisis reaction forces cannot afford.

Forces at Fort Bragg and the Airlift Wing at Pope AFB have reacted quickly to contingency crisis for the past twenty years. Breaking up this team and degrading America's crisis response capability does not make good military sense while we are engaged in a War on Terrorism and involved in military operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and other areas around the world. The military justification for closing the wing and consolidating an aging aircraft fleet is far outweighed by the responsibility to our national security for developing an increased crisis response capability at a newly designated joint base Bragg/Pope. Establishing joint base Bragg/Pope and maintaining the Airlift Wing is a tremendous opportunity to increase our power projection capability and adhere to DOD BRAC guidance to achieve efficiencies and effectiveness with joint basing opportunities.

Cost Analysis:

The OSD BRAC report lists cost assessment for the Pope AFB realignment proposal for one-time costs of (\$218.1 million), with net implementation savings of \$652.5 million, and net annual savings of \$197.0 million. The projected payback is immediate and the 20-year net present value savings is projected as \$2,515.4 million. These figures do not reflect the actual cost of continuing to operate the installation, although these costs will be transferred to the Army. The BRAC statute requires that BRAC cost assessments reflect any cost that will be transferred to a DOD or non-DOD entity to be reflected in the cost analysis. GAO identified that almost half of these projected savings are due to manpower reductions, which are nonexistent. They also identified a large differential between Army cost projections and Air Force savings associated with operating the installation. In reality the cost for operating the airfield will increase and the initial costs for implementing this proposal will never be paid back.

The Army was not expecting to operate the base and did not develop cost figures for this area. The actual costs for the Army to operate the airfield and maintain the facilities and equipment can be expected to be higher than with the Air Force operating the installation. With 154 installations, the Air Force has developed efficiencies and expertise in operating Air Force bases. The Army has a handful of large army airfields located on Army installations, none of which handle the volume or profile of aircraft that fly out of Pope annually or the crisis response requirements of Pope. The Army does not have the inherent expertise, learned efficiencies or specialized equipment required to operate a major airfield such as Pope. They will need to build this capability, which will take time and additional expense. It will be more expensive for the Army to maintain and operate Pope AFB to the same level of standards and operations that currently exist, than for the Air Force to continue to operate these functions.