

**JOINT STATEMENT**

**BY**

**SEN. TERRY LINK, 30<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT,**

**REP. EDDIE WASHINGTON, 60<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT,**

**AND**

**LEON ROCKINGHAM, MAYOR, CITY OF NORTH CHICAGO**

**BEFORE THE**

**REGIONAL HEARING OF THE**

**DEFENSE BASE CLOSURE AND REALIGNMENT COMMISSION**

**ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI**

**JUNE 20, 2005**

Distinguished Chairman and members of the Commission: Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today.

We would like to begin by thanking the Commission for all your good work. Your mission is important to all of us. As citizens, taxpayers and elected officials, we recognize that you have some tough choices to make.

We also share a fundamental agreement. Our military must have the right tools for the job. That includes a modern base structure that makes the best use of all available resources, particularly those where training occurs for support of the Department of Defense's (DoD) war fighters.

For that reason, we must respectfully disagree with a current Defense Department recommendation that would downsize Great Lakes Naval Training Station. We urge the Commission to reconsider and reverse that proposal for a simple reason. These would be the wrong cuts, in the wrong place at the wrong time.

We share the goal of streamlining the military base structure, but the streamlining must not degrade war-fighting capabilities and support. In this case, the issue is not whether – but how and where – to best consolidate the military's medical training and research capabilities.

Making the assumption that the military's medical training and research could be consolidated, we believe that the DoD proposal goes too far in over-centralizing these critical activities at one location, in this case Fort Sam Houston in Texas.

Consolidation has its merits, but we believe that the Pentagon's proposal swings the pendulum too far. Instead of locating the training and research at several bases around the country, these functions would best be performed by two

centrally located bases. Fort Sam Houston and Great Lakes are both excellent bases that deserve serious consideration.

This two-base model is a stronger, more secure platform for the future and avoids the syndrome of “putting all your eggs in one basket,” or, in this case, one base. This more balanced approach would provide needed savings, operational flexibility and a level of healthy redundancy.

It appears that the Pentagon’s recommendation was made with neither adequate consideration of the military value advantages of keeping this program at Great Lakes, nor the financial risks of implementing the recommended action.

Northeastern Illinois, where Great Lakes has been located since 1911, is world-renowned as an outstanding center of intellectual capital in the area of medical care, teaching and research facilities. Clearly, the ability to tap into these world-class resources for training and research purposes is not something the military should walk away from lightly.

The recommended action to consolidate training at Fort Sam Houston in Texas, as demonstrated by DoD’s own calculations is a risky venture. We say that because the entire recommended action is estimated to cost a bit over a billion dollars, approximately 4% of the entire cost of this BRAC round, which, by the way, is more than double the cost of the four BRAC rounds of the late 1980s and 1990s. DoD predicts that it will take ten (10) years to get a pay back on this investment. That would be about fifteen years from now. We know of very few businesses that would strap on an investment of this magnitude and lengthy payback period. We would ask that you compare this lengthy payback period with actions recommended by the Department in previous rounds, in which the average payback periods appear to be considerably shorter. We are sure that you will conclude, as we do, that this is a risky venture, particularly since no

investment needs to be made to maintain the status quo, which has provided adequate service for many years.

In the same way that key military considerations were not adequately considered, we would submit that the DoD proposal also would have an unintended adverse impact on the local economy that will be both immediate and lasting.

The economic impact of the loss of almost 2,000 military positions and a smaller cut in civilian jobs would take a particular toll on the small businesses that are the backbone of area communities.

For both military value and financial reasons and local economic concerns, we urge the BRAC Commission to reverse the contemplated downsizing of Great Lakes.

Based on the record, excellence of training capability and capacity, and training redundancy, we would hope that the Commission will concur that Great Lakes is a base that should be expanded, not downsized.

We would like to have this statement entered into the record and we would be happy to respond to any questions that the Commission may have.