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COMMITTEES:
ARMED SERVICES
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3204

August 16, 2005

BRAC Commission

The Honorable Anthony J. Principi
Base Realignment and Closure Commission
2521 Clark Street
Arlington, Virginia 22202

AUG 29 2005

Received

Dear Mr. Principi:

Since the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission's regional hearing in Buffalo on June 27, 2005, the case for preserving New York's military installations impacted by the Department of Defense's (DOD's) Base Closure recommendations has become even stronger. As the Commission begins its final deliberations, I urge the commission to keep open the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station and the Rome Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) facility. I also urge the Commission to preserve the Sensors Directorate at the Rome Air Force Research Laboratory and four C-130 aircraft at the Stratton Air National Guard base in Scotia.

As the Commission begins its final deliberations, the 914th Airlift Wing based at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station is being remobilized for duty in support of on-going operations in the Central Command Area of Responsibility. 222 of 246 personnel are being remobilized and all individuals being remobilized are volunteers. This will be the unit's third deployment to the region. The willingness of the 914th to volunteer to serve a third tour is a testament to the demand for their skills as well as to their commitment to our nation. It would send a devastating message to these brave men and women if a closure of Niagara were announced on the eve of their deployment.

The 914th's skills and capabilities are among the many reasons why the Niagara Falls Air Reserve station should be preserved. At the BRAC Commission regional hearing in Buffalo, the Commission heard many strong arguments in favor of preserving the Niagara Falls Air Reserve station which demonstrated the facility's military value as well as errors in the DOD's calculation of the cost of closing the facility. Since that hearing, we have discovered additional information that the Air Force grossly underestimated the costs of moving C-130 airplanes from Niagara Falls and Stratton.

The Air Force recommendations call for moving C-130 airplanes from all over the nation – including eight from Niagara Falls and four from Stratton. In its submissions to the BRAC commission, the Air Force estimates that the costs for this move are approximately \$102 million. However, in response to my request, the Air Force recently released a report of a site survey which estimated the costs for implementing the BRAC recommendations at the base at \$292 million, almost three times the Air Force's estimate. This acknowledgement by the Air Force of

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the true costs of complying with the BRAC recommendations dealt a serious blow to their proposal to close the Niagara Falls Air Reserve station or remove C-130s from Stratton.

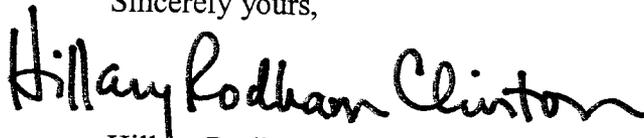
Similarly, the case for preserving the Rome DFAS facility and the Sensors Directorate at the Rome Air Force Research Laboratory has only become stronger since the June hearing. During the hearings, several commissioners raised concerns with DOD's proposal regarding DFAS. An analysis of the costs and space availability at the Rome DFAS facility demonstrates that Rome is one of the lowest cost DFAS facilities in the nation. Moreover, Rome's DFAS facility has the ability to add additional jobs without any construction.

At the June 27 regional hearing, the Rome community and several elected officials and I noted that the Rome Sensors Directorate is located in an area that has unique topographical features and frequency availability. The DOD BRAC recommendations showed no indication that these were taken into account in its BRAC recommendation to move the Sensors Directorate to Wright Patterson Air Force Base. Since the June hearing, DOD has been unable to confirm that it conducted any specific analysis of the topography or the frequency availability at Wright Patterson Air Force Base when it recommended moving the Sensors Directorate at Rome. Moving the Sensors Directorate from Rome could thus result in losing capability that already exists.

As you begin your final deliberations, I urge you to consider the issues raised by New York communities as you develop your final recommendations to the President. I appreciate the seriousness with which the BRAC Commissioners and the Commission staff have undertaken the task of reviewing the Department of Defense's BRAC recommendations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,



Hillary Rodham Clinton

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

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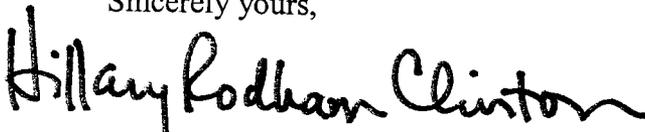
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