



980G Hopkins Rd  
Williamsville NY. 14221

BRAC Commission  
Washington, D.C.

To Whom it may Concern;

I am writing in a rebuttal of an article that appeared in the Buffalo News dated June 3, 2005 titled "Frequent Call Ups."

The 136th Flying squadron of the 107th was called up in 1951 for the Korean conflict, in 1961 for the Berlin crisis, in 1968 for the Vietnam War, and most recently for the Afgan, and the Iraq conflicts. I can't believe it took the DOD and Air Force 53 years to realize how much they depend on the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserves as a combat ready back up force. ANG and Reserve units know why they are maintained and are ready and willing to defend the National Policy of the United States if called upon!

The cost to maintain these valuable forces is an approximately one-third the cost to maintain an active duty unit. Even if the cost were one half, here at Niagara you have a BUY ONE GET ONE FREE bargain.

In the article a Gen. Heckman States "By consolidating the cargo plans we save money by reducing maintenance staffs and allowing more pilots to fly each aircraft." This is fine in theory, but what happens when you have to send a number of aircraft to different forward operating bases in support of regional conflicts, you guessed it, not enough maintenance staff to support both forward operating bases and home station maintenance. You would also have extra pilots sitting at home station with little or nothing to fly.

The sustained fuel capability at Niagara Falls is equal to that of Bangor, Maine. This statistic, I think does not warrant discussion as in the event of another conflict the KC-135 tankers will be moved to forward operating bases to support fighter and transport aircraft and will be using fuel from storage facilities at the forward operating location.

I still believe by decreasing Air Guard and Reserve units our military capability will suffer greatly. There will not be enough money to reinstitute these units once they are phased out.

Once again we are leaving an enormous void in the Defense Posture of the United States. Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James C. Cook".

Brig. Gen. James C. Cook  
NYANG (Ret.)

1. Attachment

## FOCUS: BASE CLOSINGS

# Frequent call-ups are cited in proposal to shut Falls base

*Repeated activation of reservists shows need to rebalance airlift fleet, general says*

By JERRY ZREMSKI

NEWS WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON — The frequent call-ups of the Air Force reservists based in Niagara Falls played a role in the decision to recommend closing their home facility, a top Air Force general said Thursday.

Maj. Gen. Gary W. Heckman said repeated call-ups show that the Air Force has too many reservists and National Guard members flying C-130 cargo planes, and not enough active duty forces performing that task.

"We're working these guys (reservists) awfully hard," said Heckman, co-chairman of the panel that said the Niagara Falls base should be closed. "You have to ask if we're asking too much of our citizen airmen."

To correct that problem, the Pentagon looked to the base-closure process as a way to rebalance its airlift fleet, moving more cargo planes to active duty and suggesting the closure of several bases like the one in Niagara Falls, Heckman said.

In an interview at the Pentagon, Heckman and Brig. Gen. Hanferd J. Moen Jr., of the Office of Air Force Reserve, offered a detailed explanation of the recommendation to close the Niagara Falls base.

They also downplayed concerns raised by the base's supporters, who say the decision could hurt homeland security efforts and military recruiting in Western New York.

Heckman acknowledged that the Air Force had set a target date for closing the Niagara Falls base in 2009. That date could change, he added.

"I think Niagara has very good facilities," Heckman said.

But the generals indicated that good facilities are not enough to keep the base open in light of the Air Force's plan to concentrate many of its C-130 cargo planes at an active-duty base in Little Rock, Ark.

The Air Force currently has far too many small Guard and reserve bases like the one in Niagara



*"You have to ask if we're asking too much of our citizen airmen."*

*Air Force Maj. Gen. Gary W. Heckman*



Buffalo News file photo/Derek Gee

Part of the reason for recommending closing the Niagara Falls Air Reserve

# Consolidating cargo planes would cut costs

**BASES** • from A1

Falls, scattering its airlift capacity across the country in a way that's inefficient, Heckman said.

By consolidating the cargo planes, the Air Force projects that it can save money by reducing maintenance staffs and allowing more pilots to fly each plane.

"If we're going to be good stewards of the taxpayers' money, we can't be putting these (planes) out in penny packets," Heckman said.

## Location a factor

Nevertheless, the Pentagon recommended closing the Niagara Falls base even though it scored higher than other bases on the "Mission Compatibility Index" designed for the base closure process.

Heckman noted many of the lower-scoring bases that fly C-130s are National Guard bases.

"The Air Force Reserve is a bit more portable than the Air National Guard," Heckman explained, citing two reasons.

For one, Guard units often include much-needed "expeditionary combat support" operations, such as police, medical personnel and civil engineers, who frequently deploy with other forces. Secondly, Heckman said, Guard units perform both a federal and state function, making them harder to cut.

That did nothing to protect the Air National Guard's 107th Air Refueling Wing, which, like the Air Reserve's 914th Airlift Wing, is based at Niagara Falls. Under the base closure plan, the 107th would lose its KC-135 refueling tankers to a base in Bangor, Maine.

The Bangor base scored lower than Niagara Falls in the Air Force's refueling ratings, but Heckman said other factors led to the decision to expand the Bangor facility.

Heckman said he believed that Niagara Falls' fuel-pumping capabilities didn't match those of the Bangor base or similar facilities in

## Clipping Niagara's wings

*Where jobs from the local air base would go*

Operation	Destination	Number of jobs to be transferred
Aircraft refueling	Bangor AFB, Maine	162
Electronic combat support	Schriever AFB, Colo.	83
914th Airlift headquarters	Langley AFB, Va.	30
Civil engineering	Lackland AFB, Texas	2

Niagara jobs to be eliminated: 354

*Source: Department of Defense documents*

New Jersey and New Hampshire. In addition, the Bangor facility is the U.S. refueling base closest to Europe.

"Bangor's location did weigh in its favor," Heckman said. "But again, there was no one factor that you could really point to."

## Good recruiting record

The recommendation to close the Niagara Falls base angered Maj. Gen. Thomas P. Maguire Jr., adjutant general of the New York National Guard, who said last week that the closing would leave the governor "hard-pressed to stage any kind of relief effort" in Western New York in the event of a terrorist attack or even a major snowstorm.

But Heckman said the U.S. Northern Command, the Colorado-based command element that oversees homeland defense, had reviewed the base closure plan and was "quite satisfied with it."

The Northern Command — which oversees the joint U.S.-Canadian North American Aerospace Defense Command — agreed with the Air Force's assessment of how Niagara Falls ranked in terms of importance to homeland defense.

"With the combination of bases we have, there was not a compelling reason to keep Niagara open," Heckman said.

Heckman served as co-chairman of the Air Force's Base Closure Executive Group, which also considered the impact that base

closures could have on military recruiting and retention.

He acknowledged that the Niagara Falls base has a strong recruiting record, but said that, too, was not enough to outweigh the other factors that called for the base to be closed.

"We are going to need fewer Guard and reserve C-130 folks," he said. "We're going to need more in other areas."

## Options for reservists

While some of the full-time jobs at the Niagara Falls base would move to other facilities around the country, the Air Force doesn't know where the Niagara Falls reservists would end up serving out their tours of duty, said Moen, the top Air Force Reserve officer on the base closure group.

"The command right now is taking a look at all the various options, but we need to see what the final BRAC (base closure) commission does," Moen said.

Reservists might be able to join nearby units or transfer to the National Guard.

"Taking care of our people is going to be priority number one," Moen said.

As for National Guard members, their positions would follow their planes to Bangor.

"But we realize it would be an awful long commute," Heckman said, and that is why Guard personnel would likely be able to join other Guard units within New

York State.

The generals also stressed that the decision to close the Niagara Falls base is now in the hands of the independent Base Realignment and Closure Commission, which will hold a hearing in Buffalo on June 27. The commission is scheduled to amend the Pentagon's base closure recommendations by Sept. 8.

Told of Maguire's complaint that state commanders were left out of the base closure process, Heckman said the commission will be sure to hear their views.

"People say well, gee, the politicians didn't get to play, the TAGS (adjutant generals) didn't get to play, and that's correct," he said. "That's by design, because the time they play is now."

## Lawmakers complain

Politicians argue, however, that the Pentagon isn't playing fair. More than 40 members of Congress — including Rep. Thomas M. Reynolds, R-Clarence, and Louise M. Slaughter, D-Fairport — have signed a letter to Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, complaining that the Pentagon is keeping much of its base closure data classified.

"Release of this data is required by law, and the continuing delay in its disclosure will increasingly undermine public faith in the transparency and fairness of DOD's decision-making process," the letter said.

In response, Heckman said the Pentagon was being careful for good reason.

"We're just making sure we're not releasing sensitive information," he said.

Heckman acknowledged he had never been to the Niagara Falls base, but he stressed that the base-closure process was a personal one for everyone involved.

"We have great bases," he said. "We just have too many of them."

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