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7 June, 2005

BRAC Commission
Washington, DC
c/o NIMAC
PO Box 231
Niagara Falls, NY 14304-0231

Dear Chairman Principi & BRAC Commissioners:

I am deeply troubled by the Defense Department's recommendation to close Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station. This recommendation is a terrible mistake, and I urge the BRAC to reverse this decision and remove the Niagara Falls base from the list.

It is hard to understand why the Defense Department has decided to take planes, missions, and jobs away from so many Air Guard and Air Reserve bases and put them on more costly active duty bases. Of all the bases to pick to close, how do you close the base whose unit helped rescue Jessica Lynch in Iraq, because they are the lead night vision C-130 unit in the Reserves? You must also recognize:

- The Federal Government has invested more than \$35 million in Niagara Falls since 1995 in new facilities, and is currently constructing a \$6.2 million Military Entrance Processing Station there to serve Western New York & Northwest Pennsylvania.
- Base Operations Support costs have been reduced more than 33 percent (to include a 25 percent reduction in utilities) to make the base one of the most cost-efficient facilities in the Air Force Reserve Command.
- Closure of the base eliminates the ability to recruit and retain New Yorkers in a region in which the units have both maintained in excess of 100 percent manning rates.
- Niagara Falls existing infrastructure can accommodate eight additional C-130H model aircraft without any military construction.
- Niagara Falls faces no physical encroachment nor air traffic control constraints and has acreage on the base and adjacent to the installation for expansion.
- Placing the majority of the Air Forces C-130 planes at one base in Little Rock, AR does not appear to be a militarily strategic move. Have we forgotten the lessons learned at Pearl Harbor, HI ?

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I urge the Commission, in the strongest possible terms, to remove Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station from the Pentagon's recommended list of base closures and to stop the continuing retreat of the military from our region of the country.

Very Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark S. Salvatore". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark S. Salvatore