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June 8, 2005

Chairman Anthony J. Principi
Base Realignment & Closure Commission
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Subject: Possible Closure of the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Base

Dear Chairman Principi and BRAC Commissioners:

The possibility of closing the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Base as recommended by Pentagon officials, causes me great consternation for the safety of the citizens of the Western New York Region and our Country's combat readiness. This is a big mistake.

I find it appalling that the active duty forces have seen fit to take planes, missions and jobs away from so many dedicated and militarily proficient members of both the Air Force Reserve and the New York Air National Guard based at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Base. Their unit histories are replete with successes in meeting and exceeding the Active Duty Force's expectations, particularly when called upon to perform in combat theatre of operations. Most reasonable and informed citizens interpret the Pentagon's actions as declaring "war" on the reserve forces. Don't let this happen. Their future is in your hands.

I also find it appalling to accept a reduction in the combat ready reserve forces and resources at a time when our Country is militarily over extended with world challenges and commitments ranging from Afghanistan to Iraq, along with numerous other countries.

I join with fellow Western New Yorkers in voicing in the strongest terms possible to remove the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Base from the Pentagon's recommended list of Base closures. I am sure you realize the 914th Airlift Wing is the last Air Force Reserve-flying unit in New York State. Unfortunately, our State has experienced a constant history of cut backs in Air Force activity. The history of the 107th Air Refueling Wing, New York Air National Guard is as impressive as any active duty organization, operating at a fraction of the cost of an active unit.

Thank you for your attention.

Regards,

Isabel C. Swisco



Lt Col Michael Svisco
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June 16, 2005

Chairman Anthony J. Principi
Base Realignment & Closure Committee
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Chairman Principi and BRAC Commissioners:

As a military retiree with 37 years to my credit, 31 of which were spent in the New York Air National Guard Unit at Niagara Falls, I have a number of concerns relative to the Base's possible closure.

The 107th has a long history of call-ups, both unit and selective units (i.e. medical personnel, etc.), not only in time of war or peace-keeping ventures, but also civil disasters. Some of these troops are approaching military retirement, yet there are obviously no solid plans in place to assure these people that their long and faithful service has been appreciated.

There are a number of generational personnel on the Guard rosters, sons and daughters dedicated to a way of life and the ideals of freedom it represents. Never forget, these state militiamen claim the Minutemen as their forebearers, guarding home and family.

For many years a number of the residents of this area have enjoyed a sense of well-being about Guard and Reserve units. They have felt safe and protected in view of the proximity of targets such as Niagara Falls, the power stations and a number of industries associated with defense work.

How do the regular forces, who are stretched beyond their limits, even with the Reserve and Guard units now on active duty, expect to function once these units are decimated? This action will not only impact many lives, it will also result in the military losing an unacceptable amount of invaluable experience and expertise.

Having served during World War II, the Korean Conflict, the Berlin call-up, the Cuban Missile Crisis and Vietnam as a fighter pilot, I retired in 1979 having served more than ten years as a maintenance officer. The reasons being given for virtually eliminating Guard and Reserve units and massing aircraft and other operations in large groups for economical reasons rather than strategically placing them against any type of attack or natural disaster is eerily reminiscent of Pearl Harbor.

Respectfully,

Michael Svisco
Lt. Col., USAF Ret.