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May 24, 2005

Dear Madam and Sirs,

My name is Darlene Gagala, the wife of a retired Air Force Master Sergeant, and I live in one of the friendliest places on earth, Clovis, New Mexico. Originally my husband and I came from Detroit, Michigan, but after traveling all over (Rhein Main AFB, Germany; Little Rock AFB, Arkansas; George AFB, California; Luke AFB, Arizona; Soesterberg AFB, The Netherlands; McChord AFB, Washington; and Cannon AFB, New Mexico) during my husband's 20 year Air Force career, my husband and I knew we had found our new home here in Clovis. We now have lived here the longest of any place in our lives.....just over 19 years.

I have thought about Cannon AFB being on the BRAC list and one thing comes to mind immediately, "Mistake – A HUGE Mistake". Webster's describes a *mistake* as "error", "wrong action", "to assume wrong". The interesting thing about a mistake is that it can be corrected. Webster's describes *correct* as "to show the mistake", "to remove the mistake", "to make correct". The HUGE Mistake that has been made here is in your power to correct.

Cannon does not fit the criteria provided for base closure. Cannon AFB does not have a problem with Air Space – we have no problem with encroachment. Cannon is out in the open – all by itself.

If cost effectiveness is an issue, it has to be less expensive to keep Cannon open than some other bases – the cost of living here is much less for the average citizen for utilities and such, so it stands to reason it would be less for utilities at Cannon too.

If national defense is an issue, we are a well kept secret here, winning many awards for our base and for the training of our troops. We have a record of many deployments and safe returns because of the training the troops are receiving here. If the planes here are not needed anymore, move them on out. They say that a plane is the easiest thing in the Air Force to move. But, if that is the case, move others in. Cannon has the space and facilities to accommodate joint war-fighting, training, and readiness as was evidenced by the recent joint training effort between Cannon and the US Navy. The availability of air space and ideal flying weather makes Cannon the perfect candidate to support future training missions for the F-22, Joint Strike Fighter, and other military aircraft.

There have been major improvements made at Cannon – from a new tower and runway to new housing for airman and families. Why build up another base when Cannon already meets or exceeds the standard of an up-to-date base? This base has been kept strong and modern.

The community would be devastated if Cannon closes. Businesses who were considering building are having second thoughts and now have a wait and see attitude. The community of Clovis and Portales that has recently been given the status of a "microplex" is now in a holding pattern.

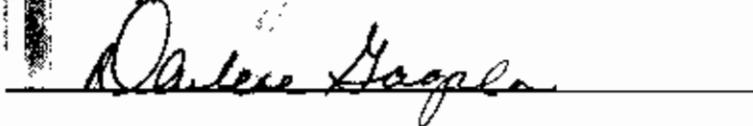
As far as the people here...every community always has one or two old "grumps" that would like to see the base close, but believe me when I say, that is not the majority consensus here. We have the support of all the neighboring towns....who would also be hurt by closure.....and who truly love "supporting our troops". The community has been a strong supporter of Cannon with the Committee of Fifty leading the way for the last 50 years. Curry County, in conjunction with the state of New Mexico, purchased air easements around Cannon Air Force base and GAVE them to the Air Force to protect that airspace from encroachment. The local community purchased the land north of Cannon Air Force Base and GAVE it back to the Air Force for additional housing, now known as Chavez Manor. Within the last few years, our community purchased land west of Cannon and GAVE it back to the Air Force for the installation of instrument lighting on the alternate runway at the base. Leaders within our community spear-headed the effort to expand and convert the air space to supersonic capability through the New Mexico Training Range Initiative.

On a personal level - I have to wonder about all those promises of rewards after retirement. With the closure of other bases in the vicinity, more retirees rely on Cannon than just those in our local area. Clovis, Portales, Eastern New Mexico, West Texas (including Amarillo and Lubbock) are home to a large military retiree population. These people rely on Cannon Air Force base for healthcare, grocery shopping, and more. There is not another installation close by to serve our retired military. Retirees who sacrificed for our country and freedom deserve to have those promises of security kept.

Let me repeat myself.

*It is in your power to reverse this grievous mistake.*  
Please take Cannon off the list.

Sincerely,



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