

May 24, 2005

Dear BRAC Commission,

I am writing to appeal to you to save Cannon Air Force Base and the economy of our small town. I was raised in Oklahoma City, OK where I met and married my current husband of 11 years. My husband will retire June 1, 2006, so one might think that it doesn't matter to us because we can leave. But Clovis, NM has grown on us and we call it home. We belong to a church that works and supports the community and the base on a regular basis. Our church, Faith Christian Family Church, has given videophones to the base so that military members can see and talk to their families while they are gone on deployments. When my husband was gone for 3 months to Turkey, a group from the church called and checked on me, mowed my lawn, sent weekly tapes of the service to my husband—they even came and cleaned my house the day before my husband came home to make my life easier. No military community has ever supported me the way they do.

Clovis, Portales, and the whole region surrounding Cannon loves and supports having the base here. The community is growing and prospering because God is here and I believe that the military needs to continue to come here to find out who God is and how He loves them. I could tell you story after story of military members who moved here, came to our church and are now strong Christians who love and serve God with all their heart and abilities. There is a reason why we have so many retirees who get out and choose to remain here. It's a great place to live and raise a family. Clovis is close enough to large towns and most people drive to Amarillo, Lubbock and Albuquerque to do shopping or to make major purchases that can't be found in Clovis. However, we have most necessities that we need right here in Clovis without the traffic and crime of a big city. It's great.

We chose Clovis as one of our bases on our wish list because after a European tour, it was close to Oklahoma City and our family. People told us we would hate it here and that there was nothing to do. Granted, there are some things that we miss such as ice skating and shopping. But the things we don't miss far outweigh the things we do miss. Clovis is the land of big sky. You can look out and see beautiful blue skies forever. At night I can go out in my own yard and take in all the stars in the heavens that are unhindered by city lights and tall buildings. In fact the community astronomers group regularly hold stargazing parties where the whole town can come out and look through high-powered telescopes at Mars and Venus and the moon.

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During the six years we have been stationed here, I have attended Eastern New Mexico University and received my BS in special education. I currently teach at Clovis High School, where there is a super Air Force ROTC program that would also be greatly affected if Cannon closes. There are so many young men and women that go through the ROTC program and then join the military. Large portions of these students are from military families. The recruitment of people into the military would be affected if the ROTC program goes away. It's the "out of sight, out of mind" concept.

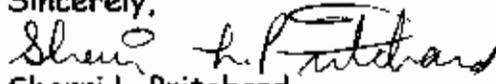
My two teenage daughters are so taken with Clovis and the friends that they have made here, that they don't ever want to leave. When we began to discuss my husband's retirement and whether we would stay in Clovis or move elsewhere, both of my daughters decided not to leave Clovis with us. In fact, my niece and her 3-month old son, moved here with us shortly after we moved here because she needed a change. Less than a year later her mother and sister followed. My parents have made a joke that we are trying to transplant our whole family to Clovis. Every one of our friends who have come here to visit falls in love with the community and our church and want to stay. It's a great place to live.

I fear that closing Cannon Air Force Base would have a significant blow to this small town and the surrounding areas. Clovis is home to a major railroad depot, many dairy farms, and a cheese plant is in the works. As a result, the community is thriving and growing. In the last year we have gotten a Hastings bookstore, Lowe's home improvement store, Chili's, IHOP, and an Applebee's restaurant is due to open in June. We are in the middle of a housing boom, where housing can't be built fast enough. Due to the news that Cannon is on the closure list, things have come to a screeching halt.

My daughter's best friend's father owns his own commercial construction company, Davtec. I spoke to him this week and the base has pulled back on several of his contracts and his family is facing the possibility of losing their family business or having to move. Their family was raised here, their children were born here, their parents live here and they plan on living here forever—until now. This isn't an isolated case. I know many, many people who stand to lose their homes, their businesses, their livelihood because of this base closure.

Please, Please, I implore you to reconsider and leave our community off your hit list and allow Cannon AFB to remain open.

Sincerely,

  
Sherri L. Pritchard