

24 May 2005

2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 S. Clark St., Ste. 600
Arlington, VA 22202

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Dear Commission Members,

Reference the potential closure of Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico which is on the current list of military installations to potentially be closed.

I, like many of the people living in the local area, am not a native son of New Mexico. I was originally born and raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan and transplanted to this area after retiring from the United States Air Force in 1979. I retired at Cannon Air Force Base, Clovis, New Mexico. I retired here in the local community because of a feeling of belonging that I originally acquired when I arrived here in August of 1976. I spent a total of 42 years serving in and working for the Air Force (23 in uniform and 19 as a civilian employee). During that time I had been physically stationed at 17 different bases/locations (both stateside and abroad) and over the years have visited numerous other bases in various capacities (training, inspections, vacations, etc).

I find it absolutely ludicrous that Cannon Air Force Base has been placed on the base closure list. Yes, I understand the need to phase out various aircraft as they age, various models of the F-16 included. But, in all of my travels, I have never seen another Air Force installation that rivals Cannon Air Force Base from an aircraft and pilot training perspective. Being on the high plains of New Mexico, Cannon AFB is located out in the middle of nowhere, 100 miles from the nearest decent sized town (Lubbock, Tx). There is really nothing out here but farms and ranches, making it ideal for flying training purposes. Cannon AFB has unlimited flying space and a climate that allows flying training operations approximately 350 days per year. On top of that, Cannon AFB recently rebuilt their runways, which accommodate today's largest aircraft and Cannon oversees Melrose Bomb Range just 17 miles west of the base. Melrose offers pilots unlimited real world aerial bombing practice. And, if I understand it right, the flying space has recently been approved for supersonic flight training, something I have been told that the Air Force has been wanting for quite some time. Cannon AFB has outstanding facilities, and being out here in no man's land it has the potential for unlimited growth potential. In a day and age where the Department of Defense talks about co-located bases and joint training capabilities, it makes little sense to eliminate a location that offers exactly those qualities. It takes little imagination to envision joint military forces based at a location such as Cannon, conducting joint training exercises in the expanse that is available. And most important, the people of the Clovis and Portales communities want the base here; consequently, there are absolutely phenomenal relations between the base and the town people; that's the reason my wife and I settled here. Arriving at Cannon was the first time in all those years of traveling that we actually felt wanted, and was treated as though we belonged; it started the day we arrived. At your levels, you may not be aware of it, but in most military towns it simply doesn't work that way. Most military communities want your money, but they treat you like second class citizens - not here!

In closing, let me say that I understand drawing down forces in today's world and even closing down some of the overseas locations and bringing the troops back home. But to close down a stateside base that meets the requirements for the future force as much as Cannon AFB does, makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. It would make more sense to keep Cannon AFB active, bring in new aircraft, along with joint military forces and make Cannon AFB a composite base. In addition, if Cannon AFB is closed, it will be devastating to the community not just from a financial perspective but in other areas also. For example, many of the nurses in the Clovis and Portales areas are affiliated with the base, most as dependents. If the base should close and the people were transferred elsewhere, the medical community would suffer drastically.

Regards,


Norman P. Reed, MSgt/USAF/Retired