



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
 DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS
 THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
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 ANNVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA 17003-5002

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August 15, 2005

The Honorable Anthony J. Principi
 Chairman
 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
 2521 S. Clark St., Ste. 600
 Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Chairman Principi:

At your August 11, 2005 hearing on Air National Guard issues, a number of matters were discussed that warrant comment. As the Adjutant General of the only state with an Air National Guard unit slated for "deactivation" under the DoD BRAC report, I believe it's important to reinforce some of the points made by the representatives of the Adjutants General Association and to refute some of the comments made by the Air Force representatives.

First off, I want to again thank you, your fellow Commissioners and your fine staff for your service in undertaking the daunting task of reviewing and making decisions on the DoD BRAC recommendations. I appreciate your efforts to obtain additional input on Air National Guard issues and to try to reach an outcome that will take account of state and federal concerns. I believe Generals Lempke, Valvala, Maguire and Haugen did an outstanding job of describing how the DoD and Air Force recommendations will damage the very military values that this BRAC round was supposed to support.

The reason for the "firestorm" of controversy that Admiral Gehman described is clear: It is not that the Air Force "messed with" the Guard; it is that the Air Force messed up the process, the analyses and the results. While giving lip service to maintaining the Air National Guard as full partner in the Total Force, they showed a lack of respect and understanding for the federalism that underlies the roles and missions of the National Guard.

In his briefing to your Commission and in answers to your questions, Major General Gary Heckman of AF/XP gave a carefully worded account of the Air Force's interaction with the National Guard Bureau and the Adjutants General on plans for Air National Guard units. General Heckman's remarks certainly illustrate the problem with the Air Force approach to, and understanding of, Guard-related issues. He said the Air Force briefed the TAGs on the "reasons for what we're doing along with the fundamental principles that founded our analysis." He said he interacted with the Air Directorate of the NGB more closely than he did with major commands. He even asserted that he went to the trouble to give the adjutants general, who are major (two-star) generals, the same briefings he gave four-star generals in the major commands and the Pentagon, as if this somehow met the requirements for coordination and cooperation with the Air Force's partners in the National Guard.

I was hoping that one of the Commissioners would have asked General Heckman what he told me and the other the adjutants general about plans for our specific ANG units, and when he told us. You know the answer: Nothing and never. Why didn't the Air Force do what the Army did and involve state officials in a cooperative dialogue about their plans?

Commissioner Newton asked the TAG panel why the BRAC Commission should give the Adjutants General more time to work with the Air Force on Future Total Force plans through the normal planning processes when they have already had two years and couldn't reach an agreement. It's true that the Air Force has been working on its BRAC plans for years, but the TAGs were not consulted or otherwise involved in BRAC-related decision-making by the Air Force at any time before May 13. This is not a case where the consultative process broke down; it's a case where the Air Force didn't even try. As Maj Gen Haugen from North Dakota observed at the hearing, the TAGs have an excellent record of working with the Air Force and accomplishing programmatic changes and unit movements through the regular planning and budgeting process. The reason to put this back on track is simple: It's the right way to deal with the kind of transformation proposed by the Air Force.

The Chief of the National Guard Bureau, LTG H. Steven Blum, called on the Commission to adopt the DoD recommendations as submitted and then let him fix them and address the states' concerns. General Blum is no doubt in a difficult situation: He recognizes the Air Force recommendations have to be changed, and he urges flexibility to do so. As Chief of the National Guard Bureau, he is under pressure to comply with the DoD positions. The way to accomplish the goals described by General Blum is for the Commission to reject the DoD recommendations for the ANG and put this process back on the right track involving future total force planning in a coordinated manner. This is the best way to give LTG Blum, the Air Force and the TAGs and governors, the chance to work together effectively.

Homeland defense and homeland security are issues of great importance to Pennsylvania, to our nation as a whole and to your Commission. The Air Force representatives said the enclaves of expeditionary combat support forces left at some ANG flying installations in the BRAC recommendations helped meet the governors' needs for homeland defense and homeland security. I would ask how they made this needs assessment and which governors and adjutants general were consulted. As General Valvala pointed out, the enclave concept came as complete surprise to the adjutants general when it was announced on May 13. The enclave concept seems ill-defined. The Air Force panel said it would leave security police, firefighters, medics, engineers and others behind in non-flying units to support the governors, but, as was pointed out, some of these functions, like firefighters, only exist at units with flying operations.

I note that the Air Force apparently concluded that southeastern Pennsylvania doesn't need the enclaved homeland security forces they see as supporting the needs of the governors since only the small 270th EIS is kept at this key strategic location in the Philadelphia suburbs. Needless to say, the Air Force never asked me or Governor Rendell what ANG forces we would like in this area to address these urgent needs. We would have told them that we need to

maintain military flying operations in this key location with a well-trained, ready and reliable National Guard force to respond to both state and federal contingencies.

Finally, Secretary Dominguez addressed General Blum's call for a flying unit in every state with the astonishing observation that there is a flying wing in every state and it's called the Civil Air Patrol. Secretary Dominguez went to some pains to insist he wasn't saying the CAP had the capabilities of the Air National Guard. But the fact that he would even draw this comparison shows just how far the Air Force is willing to go to try to justify their unsupportable recommendations for programmatic changes to ANG units.

The CAP, an auxiliary of the Air Force, is a great organization whose volunteers perform valuable service flying small, single-engine, low capacity aircraft in search and rescue, reconnaissance and similar low-intensity missions. Pennsylvania provides more financial support to the CAP than all but one or two other states, but the CAP does not function under state command and control, as does the National Guard. Its volunteers, nearly half of whom are youth, are neither trained nor equipped to respond to the kinds of contingencies we face. Finally, I should note that DoD will close a CAP operating location in Southeastern Pennsylvania if you approve the recommendation to close NAS JRB Willow Grove.

Thank you again for holding the hearing on August 11. I know that some of the Commissioners expressed disappointment or frustration that the Adjutants General and the Air Force had not come to a solution. It is grossly unfair to blame the TAGs and the states for this situation or to expect the TAGs to produce in a period of weeks a substitute for the plan the Air Force has developed, without consultation or coordination, over a period of years. The Air Force told you that, "in prior rounds of BRAC, National Guard leaders could not bring themselves to embrace the needed change," but that "this time, that courage is evident." In my view, real courage is evident in the adjutants general and governors who have stood up to DoD and sought to get this process back on the right track. I know that it will take courage and foresight for the Commission to vote down the DoD recommendations for the Air National Guard, and I urge you to do so.

Sincerely,


JESSICA L. WRIGHT
Major General, PAARNG
The Adjutant General