



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-0018

BRAC Commission

JUL 21 2005

Received

THE AUDITOR GENERAL

**Southwest Regional Office
1004 Pittsburgh State Office Building
300 Liberty Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15222
(412) 565-7577**

July 19, 2005

*The Honorable Anthony J. Principi
Chairman*

**2005 DEFENSE BASE CLOSURE
AND REALIGNMENT COMMISSION**

*2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, Virginia 22202*

Dear Chairman Principi:

As a U.S. Marine Corps veteran who served during the Vietnam War, I have dedicated my three decades of public service to issues affecting active and retired military personnel. As a Pennsylvania State Senator, I fought to preserve the 911th Air Lift and other military installations in Western Pennsylvania which had been targeted for closing a decade ago. These installations are again under review by your commission, and I have written you previously to express my support for maintaining these strategically vital and economically important facilities.

Yet again, I am writing you to bring attention to a related issue of utmost concern to me and the 69,000 active duty, reservists, National Guardsmen and women, dependents and retirees in the tri-state area of southwestern Pennsylvania. Among the BRAC Commission's recommendations is the proposed closing of the commissary and post-exchange at the Charles E. Kelly Support Facility in Oakdale. Closing the commissary and PX would be an egregious mistake for many reasons. It would greatly inconvenience and economically damage the thousands of military families in Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia who rely on these facilities to help them stretch their military paychecks and pensions. It may force hundreds of retirees to sell their homes and relocate to communities that have commissaries and post-exchanges. It will also hamper the military's efforts to recruit and retain active military personnel in our region.

The Honorable Anthony J. Principi
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I ask the BRAC Commission to preserve the Kelly Support Center commissary and PX regardless of its decision on the 911th Air Lift and other military installations in Western Pennsylvania. In fact, I encourage the Defense Department to consider building a larger, more modern commissary to better serve active and retired military personnel and their families in the Pittsburgh region.

The case for a new commissary is compelling. Although the existing commissary at the Kelly Support Center is one of the smallest physically in the United States; it, nevertheless, ranks third in income production. The PX is one of the few that operates in the black.

The commissary and PX offer discounts of 10 to 40 percent on vital everyday staples, such as milk, poultry and beef, cereals, and healthcare products. The next nearest commissary to Pittsburgh is 190-miles east in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, or 250- miles west at Wright Patterson Air Base in Ohio. Traveling great lengths to access these commissaries will greatly inconvenience military personnel in our region, especially elderly veterans and those with physical disabilities.

As a Pennsylvania State Senator, I represented the district in which the Kelly Support Center commissary and PX are situated. I have used these facilities, and I have spoken with the patriotic men and women, active and retired, who have served our nation in every major conflict from World War II to Iraq. They are proud of their military service, and many I have spoken with are shocked and disappointed that our government would deprive of them of something they have come to depend on to help make ends meet. On behalf of these men and women and their families, I urge you to preserve the commissary and post-exchange at the Kelly Support Center in Oakdale.

Thank you for your consideration and please feel free to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,


JACK WAGNER

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