



DCN: 3292
First United Methodist Church

Hooks, Texas

We're Fishers of Men

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Dear BRAC Commission,

My name is Jeff Gage and I am the pastor of First United Methodist Church in Hooks, Texas, home to the Red River Army Depot, and the nearby Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant. Both of these installations are on the most recent list of scheduled base closings released by you in May. I am writing to urge you to reconsider this decision because it does not seem to make good sociologic, defensive, or economic sense.

First, sociologic consequences must be considered. Essentially the city of Hooks would not exist without Red River Army Depot. For some people in this area, the only way of life they know is centered around Red River Army Depot and Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant. Their children, siblings, parents, grand parents, and extended family work at and have all worked at these institutions. They take great pride in that, and they take great pride in contributing to the safety and success of our armed forces. Closing Red River and Lone Star would be a blow to the psyche of the community.

Next, defensively, it is my understanding the Department of Defense would like to see centralized production of all of its materials and supplies. On the surface, this desire may sound feasible, but when the Department of Defense looks at history and the actions of terrorists, they should reconsider.

On April 19, 1995, Timothy McVeigh, an American citizen, showed his willingness to attack the government in the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. On September 11, 2001, foreign terrorists showed their desire and willingness to attack America on American soil by flying airplanes into the World Trade Center.

Based on these two acts alone, centralized production of key military supplies would seem to be ill-advised because if one facility is attacked successfully by similar extremist such as Mr. McVeigh and the Islamic terrorists, key military components, their production, and their maintenance could be eliminated in one single, heinous act. Would not multiple sights of production and maintenance be the wisest decision in order to adequately defend our country and protect our fighting men and women in the military?

Also, in a similar vein, if a catastrophic metrological event such as a flood, tornado, or hurricane were to destroy one facility where centralized production

occurred, whether in peace or war time, the safety of our country and our armed forces would be compromised.

Finally, members of the BRAC Commission, consider the economics. Based on calculations provided by Jerry Sparks, chairman of the Texarkana Chamber of Commerce Base Realignment and Closure Committee, as reported by the *Texarkana Gazette* on May 22, the likely economic impact could amount to over \$400 million. This figure is based upon an estimated 5,000 jobs that will be lost if the bases are closed.

Couple this with the fact that when these jobs are gone, so too will be the ancillary businesses. These businesses include convenience stores, diners, grocery stores, and the like that depend upon the people of Red River and Lone Star to stay in business. If the two facilities close, it is very likely that other businesses will close, as well.

Also, please consider that a net job loss of 5,000 jobs constitutes about 9 percent of the total workforce within a 50-mile radius of Hooks. A 9 percent unemployment rate would be devastating to this community. Moreover, when the current unemployment rate of 5.9 percent is added into the computations, the rate goes to almost 15 percent. That would be atrocious.

Another economic factor to consider is the direct cost to the government to close these facilities and move their production lines elsewhere. It is my understanding that Red River Army Depot has the only tank tread rubber plant of its kind in the US. Why would the government want to build a new plant in another place when a current plant with a trained work force already exists?

A similar scenario arises for the M67 grenade which is manufactured only by Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant.

On an extended front, if these two facilities are closed, the loss of 5,000 jobs would have a tremendous ripple effect on the entire population of the Miller/Bowie County area.

Texarkana is currently undergoing an economic boom of sorts. New homes are being constructed at a quick pace, and several new national chain businesses have recently opened, especially on the northwestern edge of the city. *Bed Bath and Beyond*, *Old Navy*, and *Starbucks* have all opened within the past year, and several more are planning to open in the near future. A new hockey arena and sports facility will begin construction this fall.

In a large metropolitan area, events such as these are but a small occurrence. In a city like Texarkana, though, these things are a cause of community pride and celebration. If Red River and Lone Star are closed, this economic boom

will be put in jeopardy and will quite likely come to a halt. Four hundred million dollars is a very large blow.

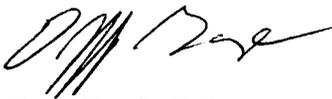
Another impact would be the effects caused by the trickle down loss of jobs and industry. If 5,000 jobs are taken away, not only does one have to take into account the diners and gas stations close, but also the professional people who indirectly depend upon these two facilities. Doctors, lawyers, bankers and accountants, teachers, and other white collar professionals are all supported indirectly by the Depot and the Plant. If the two are gone, these professionals will quite possibly have to leave as well, creating a further drain on the community.

This effect would not only be economic, but imagine the churches and schools that will be affected. Key leaders will be ripped away from organizations that depend so heavily upon them. Take into account the civic institutions such as the Lions Club, the Kiwanis Club, the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, and countless others that will be ravaged because of these closings. The devastation would be catastrophic.

I hesitate to consider the future of the area if these two proposed closings come to fruition.

Therefore, based on these points, I respectfully encourage, implore, and urge you to reconsider your decision to close the Red River Army Depot and the Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant.

Sincerely,



Rev. D. Jeff Gage
Senior Pastor
First United Methodist Church
Hook, Texas