

New Mexico FIRST

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June 9, 2005

The Honorable Anthony J. Principi, Chairman
BRAC Commission
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, Virginia 22202

Dear Chairman Principi:

The Board of Directors of New Mexico First urges you to overturn the Department of Defense's BRAC recommendation to close *Cannon Air Force Base, Clovis, New Mexico*.

New Mexico First is a statewide, nonpartisan organization with members and directors who live and work in the Clovis region. Our organization was formed 19 years ago by Senator Domenici and Senator Bingaman for the express purpose of working with communities and state government to address issues of critical importance to New Mexico.

On April 28-30, 2005, New Mexico First convened a statewide Town Hall on The Management and Future of Federal Investment in New Mexico, addressing, among other things, steps to maximize the mutually beneficial relationships between Federal facilities and the State. With that knowledge base, we have consulted with local and state groups knowledgeable about the terms and conditions for base closure and realignment and are convinced Cannon Air Force Base should not be on the BRAC closure list for many reasons.

For years, communities that host military installations have been advised that minimizing encroachment issues and positive community partnering were key to protecting their hosted bases. In the case of Cannon AFB, the support of the Clovis business and civic community has been extraordinary. This local commitment to supporting the base and its critical missions has and will continue to benefit the Air Force. The Clovis community has made these investments in support of the national interest and is prepared to maintain this mutually beneficial partnership. Several examples are noted below.

Cannon AFB with the support of the Clovis business community prepared a plan to expand the base's managed airspace to allow for more realistic combat training and provide an air bridge to link two sections of airspace managed by Cannon and Holloman. Cannon AFB also proposes to modernize the Melrose Air Force Bombing Range. Approval of these changes would *define Cannon AFB as one of the nation's top Air Force combat training facilities and would place Cannon managed airspace among the largest in the nation*.

The local community purchased the land north of Cannon AFB and gave it to the Air Force for additional housing. In the early 90's, Curry County, in conjunction with the state of New Mexico, purchased air easements around Cannon and gave them to the Air Force. Within the last few years, the community purchased land west of Cannon and gave it to the Air Force for installation of instrument lighting. Finally, the community spear-headed the effort to expand and convert the air space to supersonic capability through the New Mexico Training Range Initiative.

Additionally, closing Cannon would be devastating to the economic vitality of the region resulting in greater than 20% loss of jobs and economic activity – greater than any other facility on the list.

In summary, the community has reached out and supported the base consistently over 50 years. Thank you for your consideration. I hope these few comments will help make the Commission fully aware of the unique attributes that Cannon offers to our national defense.

Sincerely,



Lynn H. Blade
Chair of the Board
New Mexico First

cc: Senator Pete V. Domenici
Senator Jeff Bingaman
Rory Cooper, BRAC Commission Staff