

CHRISTOPHER S. BOND
MISSOURI
COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
SMALL BUSINESS
ENVIRONMENT AND
PUBLIC WORKS
INTELLIGENCE

DC#: 1182

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2503

ORIGINAL

May 13, 2005

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The Honorable Anthony Principi
Chairman Base Realignment and Closure Committee
2521 South Clark, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Chairman Principi:

Today the Congress received the Pentagon's BRAC report which includes a seriously flawed recommendation to eliminate the 131st Fighter Wing based at St. Louis, Missouri. The 131st is the only tactical aviation unit in the Midwest capable of providing the most advanced infrastructure protection for homeland defense on a full-time basis. Senior leaders within the National Guard have expressed concern about potential gaps in homeland defense, and closing down this important unit would only further hinder our abilities to ensure the safety of Missourians and other residents of the Midwest. Just two days ago, the nation's capital was reminded of what one lone aircraft could do when a Cessna 150 flew within a few short miles of the White House. In the Midwest there are key facilities that could be vulnerable from airborne attack if the decision to eliminate the 131st is sustained.

President Bush clearly stated in 2002 that "our great challenge is to protect the American people. The most basic commitment of our government will be the security of our country." The Pentagon's decision to eliminate the 131st Fighter Wing would create a dangerous "vulnerability gap" in homeland protection within America's heartland. We ask that you schedule a hearing in St. Louis at your earliest convenience to investigate our concerns.

Sincerely,

Chris Bond

Matt Blunt

Jim Cooper

Mark Warner

DC#: 1182

John Emerson

W. Callahan

Wm. Lacy Clay

[Signature]
[Signature]

Russ Cochran

[Signature]

Roy Blunt
