

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

June 15, 2005

RECEIVED
06272005

Anthony Principi
Chairman
2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 S. Clark St., Ste. 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Chairman Principi,

First, allow us to thank you for your work on the Base Realignment and Closure Commission. The task before you and the commission is an important and arduous one. Your willingness to serve our nation in this capacity is appreciated.

We believe that the Defense Secretary's recommendations largely recognize the important military assets we have in the Northwest. The combination of our distinctive geography, unique military assets and dedicated servicemen and servicewomen, position the Pacific Northwest well in the critical protection of our homeland.

However, we are concerned about the proposed realignment of important Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve assets away from the Pacific Northwest. The Department of Defense has recommended the realignment of all 15 F-15 fighters of the 142nd Air National Guard (ANG) fighter wing based at Portland International Airport (PDX). Additionally, the Pentagon has recommend the realignment of 8 tankers of the 939th Air Force Reserve refueling wing based at PDX and all eight of the tankers assigned to the 141st ANG wing at Fairchild Air Force Base.

These realignments overlook the critical role these air assets play in ensuring the security of the Pacific Northwest and our nation. For more than three days after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the fighters of the 142nd ANG wing provided 24-hour air patrols over population centers, major military bases, and other high value targets across a three state region. The patrols helped protect our citizens and provided invaluable security in the very uncertain hours after the terrorist attacks on our nation. The nation continues to require a comparable level of responsiveness to counter potential threats to its Northwest region.

If implemented, the Secretary's recommendations would greatly limit this homeland security capability for our nation. While the Secretary's recommendations would maintain the alert component at PDX through the rotation of fighters from distant bases -- no fighters would be permanently based in Portland. In the midst of another attack on our homeland, fighters would have to be quickly scrambled from more distant bases, possibly

compromising the security of major population centers and other high value targets along America's west coast.

We also are concerned about the proposed realignment of eight ANG air refueling tankers assigned to the 141st ANG wing at Fairchild Air Force Base and eight additional tankers assigned to the 939th Air Force Reserve Wing at PDX. Air refueling tankers are vital assets in the rapid projection of forces around the world and have played critical roles in past and present military operations. If implemented, the number of active duty, guard, and reserve air refueling tankers in the Northwest will have been reduced by more than 50 percent since the terrorist attacks of September 11th. These reductions will strain force projection capabilities, limit Air National Guard training capacity, increase the average time to run sorties throughout the Pacific Rim, and will reduce available air refueling capabilities.

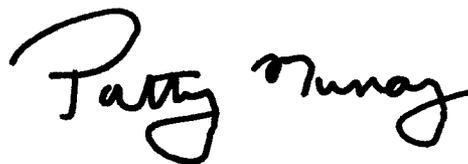
In addition to compromising our Homeland Security, the proposed realignments would reduce the important connectivity of the Air National Guard to the citizens and communities of each state. Currently, each of the 50 States have a unit equipped Air National Guard Wing within their borders. Implementing the Department of Defense's proposed plan would leave seven states, including three western states, without a unit equipped ANG flying unit. Enactment of this plan would have the unintended consequences of reducing the historic and philosophical connectivity of the National Guard to the citizens of affected States and would also reduce the emergency response capabilities currently available to Governors.

With these issues in mind, we respectfully request that you carefully examine the realignment of these air assets, in light of their recent critical role in meeting emerging security requirements. Like the Commission, we want to ensure that our nation is well positioned to protect itself from threats, both foreign and domestic. Our military assets in the Northwest remain well positioned to protect the homeland and to help ensure the national security of the United States. We hope to work with you to implement the current base realignment and closure round to ensure the improved security of our great nation.

Sincerely,



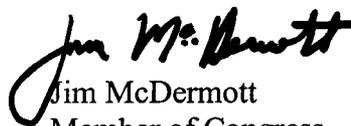
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Norm Dicks
Member of Congress



Jim McDermott
Member of Congress



Cathy McMorris
Member of Congress



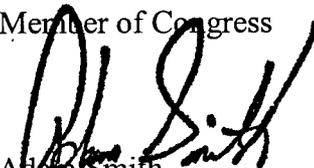
Brian Baird
Member of Congress



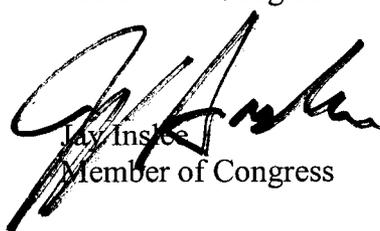
Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



Doc Hastings
Member of Congress



Adam Smith
Member of Congress



Jay Inslee
Member of Congress



Dave Reichert
Member of Congress