

June 17th, 2005

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



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Dear Chairman Principi,

First, we would like to thank you for your work on the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission. The difficult task that you and the Commission members are undertaking is critical for the future of our nation's military. We appreciate your willingness to serve our nation in this capacity.

We believe that the Defense Secretary's BRAC recommendations largely recognize the important military assets we have in the Northwest. Our distinctive geography, unique military assets and dedicated servicemen and servicewomen, combine to position Northwest facilities as highly valuable for our nation's security.

However, we have some questions and concerns about the implementation of the proposed Joint Base Lewis-McChord and the proposed reduction in jobs affiliated with McChord AFB. While we applaud the Department of Defense's willingness to better leverage local assets and improve efficiency through joint basing, the lack of detailed information about the proposal has made it difficult to truly evaluate the merits of this proposal.

As the Commission considers the Defense Department's proposals, we urge you to seek clarification on a number of critical points:

What is the correct number of position cuts at McChord AFB? As you are aware, on May 13, 2005, the Department of Defense released its list of proposed closures and realignments of military installations. That list proposed 567 positions at McChord Air Force Base (424 military billets, 136 civilian positions and 7 net mission contractors). Recently, however, Senator Maria Cantwell received an e-mail from the Air Force listing the job reductions related to realignment at McChord as 629. Clarification is needed as to what the actual recommended number of job reductions related to McChord within the joint-basing initiative is.

How was this number derived? What functions are recommended to be combined and what is the basis for expected efficiencies? Which jobs specifically are recommended for elimination? To date, we have been unable to learn how the Defense Department developed this job reduction proposal. We have spoken with the commanders of both Fort Lewis and McChord AFB, as well as members of Air Mobility Command, none of whom have a sense of how this figure was derived. The figure appears to be driven entirely by a small number of individuals

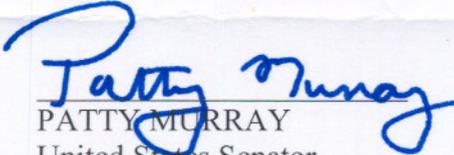
within the Pentagon, making it difficult to evaluate the process by which the figure was developed.

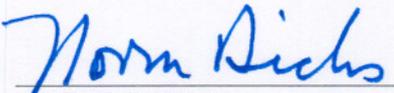
We have also been unable to obtain clarification as to which positions would be eliminated under joint basing. Without clarification on this point, it is impossible to determine the merits of the Department's joint basing proposal, especially in terms of its impact on mission readiness.

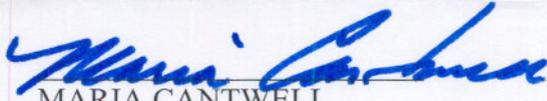
What is the impact of the proposed job reduction on mission readiness? As noted above, it is difficult to answer this question without clarification on how the job reduction number was derived or which positions are proposed for elimination. However, it is worth noting that the proposed cuts at McChord have the potential of affecting not only the administration of the base, but also the administration of the 62nd Airlift Wing's mission. As you may know, the Army maintains two separate command structures at neighboring Ft. Lewis: a garrison command for oversight of the base and its functions, and a mission command for oversight over the units deployed from the base. The Air Force, on the other hand, combines both garrison command and mission command within the same structure at McChord AFB: the 62nd Airlift Wing. Cuts in the administration of the base may have the unintended consequence of cutting into the administration of the air mobility mission of the Wing. While local Air Force personnel agree that some efficiencies might be achieved through jointness (such as in the area of contracting), they have also informed me that given the high operations tempo at McChord AFB, they do not know how 567 positions can be eliminated at McChord AFB without affecting their ability to carry out their mission.

With these questions in mind, we respectfully request that you carefully examine the Joint Base Lewis-McChord proposal and its impact on the air mobility mission. Like the Commission, we want to ensure that our nation is well positioned to protect itself from external threats and that its Armed Forces have the appropriate manpower they need to fulfill their mission. We look forward to working with you to implement the current base realignment and closure round to ensure the improved security of the United States.

Sincerely,


PATTY MURRAY
United States Senator


NORM DICKS
Member of Congress


MARIA CANTWELL
United States Senator


ADAM SMITH
Member of Congress