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18TH DISTRICT, PENNSYLVANIA

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
COMMERCE, TRADE, AND CONSUMER PROTECTION
ENERGY AND AIR QUALITY
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
May 12, 2005



ORIGINAL

The Honorable Anthony Principi
Chairman
BRAC 2005 Independent Commission
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, Virginia 22202

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Southwestern Pennsylvania's Reserve and National Guard installations play a vital role in our nation's security during this crucial time of war. We strongly urge you to maintain these facilities, especially the 99th Regional Readiness Command (Army Reserve); the 171st Air Refueling Wing (Pennsylvania Air Force National Guard); and the 911th United States Air Force Air Lift Wing (Air Force Reserve) and their efforts to maximize joint training and military transformation to meet the next generation of threats to our nation's security.

As the commission prepares to release the Pentagon's recommendations for Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) for military facilities on Friday, May 13, 2005, we wanted to bring to the Commission's attention, irrefutable examples of the military value of Southwestern Pennsylvania's military installations value, and to outline the recent recommendations for improved jointness of these facilities by the Dupuy Institute of Annandale, VA. These recommendations would benefit our national defense strategy for a joint force that is fully integrated, expeditionary for rapid deployment, networked or linked in time and purpose, decentralized with integrated capabilities, adaptable and able to quickly respond with superiority and lethality.

One of the primary criteria for selection is a lack of availability of airspace (including training areas suitable for maneuver by ground, naval or air forces throughout a diversity of climate and terrain areas and staging areas for the use of the Armed Forces in homeland defense missions). In this regard, we wanted to emphasize to the Commission that all three of these facilities based in the Pittsburgh International Airport region are more than able to handle any necessary expansions. In fact, the Allegheny County Airport Authority has specifically set aside land adjacent to the military bases near Pittsburgh International Airport to give our military facilities the necessary room to expand. In essence, available land and airspace are primary facets for Southwestern Pennsylvania to serve as a base for the integration of any similar Army, Air Force and National Guard units.

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However, the primary consideration of the BRAC process in selecting military installations for closure or realignment by the Department of Defense, is proof of military value. Accordingly, we wanted to bring to your attention a vast array of concrete examples of the exemplary service and value of these facilities.

1. The 911th United States Air Force Air Lift Wing (Air Force Reserve):

- Members of the 911th Air Lift Wing have served with distinction in Operations that includes Operation Joint Endeavor in Bosnia; Operation Southern Watch in Saudi Arabia; Operation Joint Guard in Bosnia; participated in the Coronet Oak Rotation in Panama; served in support of Exercise Iron Cobra in Egypt; provided personnel in support of naval activity in Kosovo; and contributed personnel and assets in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.
- Additionally, when USAir Flight 427 crashed in Beaver County, Pennsylvania in September 1994, 911th personnel volunteered to assist as the crash site and base facilities were used for emergency response activities until October 1994. More than 500 members of the unit assisted during that period.
- When Hurricane Andrew struck in 1992, the 911 air crews airlifted food and personnel to provide life saving aid to disaster relief efforts in Florida.

These are just a few of the examples of the military value of the 911th Air Lift wing, which also surpasses another criteria or the ability of a facility to accommodate contingency, mobilization, surge and future total force requirements at both existing and potential receiving locations to support operations and training. Any attempts to consolidate similar units or capabilities in the Air Force should combine these units into the 911th to leverage an already joint service installation without sacrificing any loss in mission capability.

2. The 171st Air Refueling Wing (Pennsylvania Air Force National Guard):

- Members of the 171st Air Refueling Wing volunteered for service in Saudi Arabia in order to participate in air refueling missions for Operation Desert Shield. These operations were upgraded to a full federal activation in December 1990 to May 1991. During this period, members of the 171st Air Refueling Wing refueled nearly 3,000 allied air craft while stationed near the Iraqi Border in support of Operation Desert Storm.
- Flying a remarkable 100% mission effective rate, the 171st flew 556 combat mission and offloaded 4.6 million gallons of fuel during the Persian Gulf War.
- The 171st has already displayed its capacity to handle transformation when the 112 Tactical Fighter Group transitioned to KC-135 planes and became the 112th Refueling group and became a part of the 171st, making it one of the largest refueling organizations in the country.

- Elements of the 171st were called to active duty to provide support for operation Allied Force, beginning deployment in May 1999, with approximately 400 personnel.
- More recently, the 171st has served our national security strategy objectives by refueling military aircraft as a vital part of Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

These are overwhelming examples of the military value in meeting our national security objectives.

3. The 99th Regional Readiness Command (Army Reserve):

- The 99th Regional Readiness Command was officially formed July 16th, 2003, and has already shown its capacity to absorb other units by incorporating the previous 97th and 79th Army Reserve commands.
- More than 2,000 soldiers from the 99th Regional Readiness Command have been deployed to Bosnia and have also participated in operations Urgent Fury, Just Cause, Desert Shield/Storm, Joint Guard/Endeavor and Noble Eagle/Enduring Freedom.

These examples emphasize the ability of the 99th Regional Readiness Command to seamlessly integrate into the active Army without involving multiple levels of government to meet the national security goals of the United States.

In addition, a recent report from the Dupuy Institute of Alexandria, VA, provides a guide to expand the joint capabilities of Southwestern Pennsylvania's military installations. A few highlights of this report include a recommendation for the formation of a Regional Joint Readiness Center (RJRC) to enhance Southwestern Pennsylvania's existing joint training efforts. These recommendations include:

- Establishing a DOD site at the University of Pittsburgh;
- Co-locating the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) from the Federal Building in downtown Pittsburgh with the 911th Airlift Wing at the University of Pittsburgh;
- Formalizing a partnership between the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center and the 171st Air Refueling Wing (ARW) to develop a readiness skills verification program for Expeditionary Medical Support (EMEDS); and
- Linking military distance learning centers through the existing infrastructure of the 99th Regional Readiness Command, the 171st ARW, the 911th Airlift Wing and the Naval and Marine Corps Reserve Center.

These are proactive steps to enhance and expand the current joint goals of Southwestern Pennsylvania's military installations and we would urge the commission to consider future implementation of these recommendations by the Department of Defense to establish a Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG) in formation of a Regional

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Joint Readiness Center (RJRC) to continue to meet our nation's next generation of homeland security and national defense.

As these factors clearly outline the military value of the 99th Regional Readiness Command (Army Reserve); the 171st Air Refueling Wing (Pennsylvania Air Force National Guard); and the 911th United States Air Force Air Lift Wing (Air Force Reserve), we urge the Commission to take these overwhelming examples and efforts to maximize joint training and military transformation into consideration during your current evaluation.

Sincerely,



Tim Murphy
Member of Congress



Melissa Hart
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Bilbray; Mr. Philp Coyle; Admiral Harold W. Gehmen Jr., USN (Ret); The Honorable James V. Hansen; General James T. Hill, USA (Ret); General Lloyd Warren Newton, USAF (Ret); Mr. Samuel Knox Skinner; Brigadier General Sue Ellen Turner, USAF (Ret).