

JUL 19 2005

July 15, 2005

Received

TO: BRAC Commission

2521 South Clark Street

Suite 600

Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Sir or Madam:

The Pentagon has recommended the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station in Niagara Falls, New York be closed. As Niagara County's second largest employer with nearly 3,000 full and part-time workers, this would deliver another devastating blow to our region's economy.

The base site lies within close proximity to four major border crossing between the U.S. and Canada, along with the New York State Power Authority's Hydropower complex which harnesses the waters of the Niagara and supplies substantial power to the Northeast United States Grid.

While the base serves as a logistical backbone for the War on Terror, it is also strategically placed and fully expandable to allow the addition of a fighter squadron to further secure America's northern border and power grid infrastructure. It should be expanded rather than closed.

According to the Niagara Military Affairs Council:

- Closure of Niagara would reduce the Air Force presence in NY by **40%**, and eliminate the last Federal Air Force flying mission in the State. Since 1995, Niagara has been modernized with **\$35M** in new facilities and lengthened runways which have improved the operational effectiveness of the wings.
- We have also reduced our **Base Operations Support costs** by not less than **33%** (to include a **25%** reduction in utilities) to make the base one of the ***most cost-efficient*** facilities in the Air Force Reserve Command.
- Closure of the base would also ***eliminate the ability to recruit and retain New Yorkers*** in a region in which the units have both maintained in excess of 100% manning rates.
- Niagara Falls existing infrastructure can accommodate **8 additional C-130H model aircraft** without any military construction.
- Niagara Falls faces ***no physical encroachment nor air traffic control constraints*** and has acreage on the base and adjacent

to the installation for expansion.

I humbly request that you ***strongly reconsider*** the decision to close the station. The fine men and women of the **107th Air Refueling Wing** and **914th Airlift Wing** have been instrumental in securing the homefront and fighting the war on terror overseas.

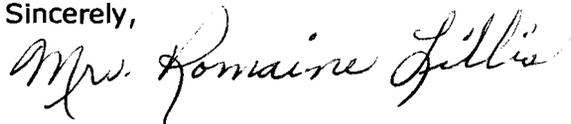
Additional Comments: To my knowledge, before the recent plan to close the Niagara Falls Base, plans were in the offing to expand the base and money has already been allotted for this expansion. Even though the base were to be closed, I understand that government policy would not allow contracts already initiated for this purpose to be reversed. If the base is closed and the expansion is done anyway, how will this area or the government benefit from millions of dollars being spent on an empty base?

Somewhere a decision was made for this expansion. It certainly must have been based on the idea that it was needed. How could two very opposing plans, expanding and closing Niagara Falls Base, have been made? Surely, keeping this base open should be of prime concern, especially since a committee must have given the expansion serious thought even before a closing was considered. Perhaps the reasons for the expansion consideration should be delved into.

Perhaps, too, the government should save money by changing irresponsible policies like the one noted above.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this very important matter.

Sincerely,



Mrs. Romaine Lillis

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Lackawanna, NY 14218

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