

June 7, 2005

Patricia Thatcher  
3717 Jefferson St  
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BRAC Commissioner  
2521 South Clark Street Suite 600  
Arlington VA 22202

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Dear BRAC Commissioner,

I have been a resident of Clovis for over 20 years now and have enjoyed my association with the local area and my 16 year employment at Cannon AFB. It is one of those rare military installations where the local communities (Clovis, Portales, and the other surrounding towns) strongly support the ongoing critical mission of the Air Base. Whatever the base has asked in the past, the community has stood behind and "partnered" to make it happen. I am amazed and confused why the Government would be in such haste to give up a valuable asset. Cannon has served New Mexico and the Nation extremely well and with great pride for the past 60 years and the future offers so many additional promises of mutual support and cooperation, that to close it now would be counterproductive and cost the US Taxpayer far more than the savings realized by Cannon's closure. You have heard the arguments before, I am sure. The wealth of assets this Air Base offers to the country. The unlimited and constantly expanding air space, the openness of the range and low-level flying capabilities, the sparse population allowing for unhindered flying operations, the year-round favorable weather conditions, the community support and eagerness of local ranchers and property owners to support continued and expanded operations - it just does not add up. Especially when other comparable military operations suffer disparity from the lack of these conditions. With Cannon, these resources are readily available and could easily expand to any future mission.

The United States is at war whether we want to admit it or not. What happened with 9/11 was only a wake-up call, and no part of the United States is safe. Terrorist could disrupt the everyday security of this nation, whether by attacking a big city or our country's heartland. After all, if terrorists decided to launch an attack from the South, how far from the border do we need to be to consider ourselves safe and not needing any type of quick defensive response force. While Cannon may not be the only answer, we certainly possess the capabilities to join a joint retaliatory response force to counteract any such threat.

Let's not lose sight that we have several enemies around the world - those who either detest our superior power or do not agree with our ideology or way of life. These forces would sacrifice anything to see us come to our knees. This has already been shown through the repeated car bombings and suicide missions experienced on a daily basis in the Middle East. The best way to do erode our strength is to weaken its power from within. Apparently, we did not learn a strong enough lesson from Pearl Harbor. We consolidated our ships and lost. We consolidated our airplanes and lost. We consolidated our fighting forces and lost. It took the best part of the next four years to regain our national security - at great human and material costs to this nation. Is

putting all our forces in one area wise? With all the mega areas that BRAC is proposing, could we be enabling these factions to do their activities easier and hand the United States a serious blow that is not recoverable?

Cannon is in a sparsely populated area and would be easily defended if the need were to arise. Large cities like Las Vegas and Phoenix would be a disaster. The civilian casualties could be enormous. Mega Bases in areas like these could lead to them being targeted. I would think that if the United States were to be attacked, it would be easier to set up defenses in fields rather than in someone's back yard.

Over the years I have come to learn what a great asset this base is and how much it still has to offer our Nation's national defense. Many retirees rely on Cannon Air Force Base for healthcare, grocery shopping, and more. There is not another installation close to enable our retired military to receive some of their promised benefits. The relationship between Cannon Air Force Base and the surrounding towns - Clovis, Portales, West Texas, and others, is unlike any other installation in the country. The local community purchased the land north of Cannon Air Force Base and GAVE it back to the Air Force for additional housing, now known as Chavez Manor. The surrounding communities support the military effort at the base and would expend all efforts to support any future mission.

The availability of air space and ideal flying weather makes Cannon the perfect candidate to support future training missions for the F-22, Joint Strike Fighter, and other military aircraft. Within the last few years, our community purchased land west of Cannon and GAVE it back to the Air Force for the installation of instrument lighting on the alternate runway at the base. Leaders within our community spearheaded the effort to expand and convert the air space to supersonic capability through the New Mexico Training Range Initiative.

Cannon has the space and facilities to accommodate joint war-fighting, training, and readiness exercises as was evidenced by the recent joint training effort between Cannon and the US Navy. The Melrose bombing range is seconds from the end of the runway at Cannon. This allows pilots to get airborne, and immediately begin training operations over the bombing range, rather than spending all of their fuel just to get to the range, having one pass over, then returning to the base.

In the early 90s, Curry County, in conjunction with the state of New Mexico, purchased air easements around Cannon Air Force base and GAVE them to the Air Force. This was done to protect that air space from encroachment and was an important issue for the Air Force.

I do not believe Cannon met the criteria to close.

Clovis would be seriously compromised should Cannon be closed. More importantly the security of the United States could be seriously compromised.

Sincerely,

  
Patricia Thatcher