



FAX COVER SHEET
Office of Rep. Peter DeFazio
2134 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone 202-225-6416/ FAX 202-225-0032

DATE: 6/16/2005

TO: BRAC Commissioners Fax: 703-699-2735

FROM: Rep. DeFazio, Rep. Dicks

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COMMENTS:

To follow is a letter for consideration by the Commissioners from Reps. DeFazio and Dicks expressing opposition to the Pentagon's proposal to remove 15 F-15 aircraft from the Portland, Oregon air base.

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515



June 16, 2005



Mr. Anthony Principi, Chairman
Base Realignment and Closure Commission
The Polk Building, Suites 600 and 625
2521 South Clark Street
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Chairman Principi:

We write as members of the House Committee on Homeland Security from the Northwest to express our opposition to a Pentagon proposal to move 15 F-15 Air National Guard fighter jets out of Portland, Oregon, leaving our region with no immediate, sustainable air protection to guard against homeland security threats. We strongly urge the BRAC Commission to reject this Pentagon proposal and instead maintain the existing F-15 force structure at the Portland Air National Guard base.

The Bush administration's National Security Strategy (2002) establishes homeland security as the first priority of the nation. The National Defense Strategy (2005) establishes that the first defense objective is to secure the U.S. from direct attack. And, the National Military Strategy (2004) establishes three military objectives, the first of which is to protect the United States against external attacks and aggression. Unfortunately, the Pentagon's proposal to move the F-15s from Portland undermines these strategies and would leave the Northwest vulnerable to terrorist attack.

Currently, the 142nd Fighter Wing of the Air National Guard, stationed at the Portland air base, fulfills an important homeland security mission in the Northwest. There are 15 F-15s, along with a full complement of pilots, maintenance, weapons, and intelligence support. Two of the 15 F-15s remain armed and on-alert, capable of scrambling within five minutes of an order, 24 hours a day seven days a week. An additional F-15 is armed and can be deployed soon after with the remaining aircraft available to be armed as necessary by the fully staffed support personnel. The 142nd Fighter Wing has flown numerous homeland security missions since September 11, 2001.

The homeland security threat to the Northwest is significant. Our region is growing quickly. Northwest states rank 6th, 9th, and 10th for population growth within all 50 states. There are more than 2,000 international flights incoming to our region every

single day. Hundreds of additional flights transit through the Northwest en route to Denver, Dallas, San Francisco and other destinations. There are a number of Pacific maritime routes that could also pose a threat to our region with ships serving as platforms for cruise missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles or other weapons. And, there is major infrastructure in the Northwest that could be attractive for terrorists to attack, such as major commercial ports, hydropower dams, well known corporations like Microsoft, Boeing and Intel, nuclear facilities, and landmarks like the Space Needle in Seattle.

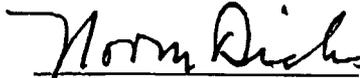
If the Pentagon's proposal for the Portland Air National Guard base is adopted by the BRAC Commission, then the alert force structure in our region would drop below the pre-September 11th posture. That is simply unacceptable. It would leave the Northwest unable to handle increased alert requirements or defend against multiple, nearly simultaneous attacks, such as those that occurred on September 11th. Our region would go from a pre-BRAC defense/homeland security posture of 15 aircraft with 15 pilots and fully staffed, maintenance, weapons and intelligence support to a post-BRAC posture with only two aircraft, two pilots and a handful of support personnel, with additional personnel more than a six hour drive away. Two aircraft defending the 11 million citizens of the Northwest (a population projected to grow by nearly 50 percent by 2030) is totally inadequate. The Northwest would be extremely vulnerable.

The September 11th Commission warned, "Do not give terrorists the impression that potential targets are not defended." Unfortunately, that is exactly what the Pentagon proposal does with respect to the Northwest. We urge the BRAC Commission to correct this and ensure the Northwest remains protected by maintaining the existing F-15 force structure at the Portland Air National Guard base.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,


PETER DeFAZIO
Member of Congress


NORM DICKS
Member of Congress