

To: Chairman Anthony Principi and Members of the BRAC Commission
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From: Philip J. Frazee
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Subject -- Cannon AFB ranking against other "fighter" bases and inclusion on the closure list

A short background on myself -- 29 years active duty in the Air Force flying fighter aircraft. During the last 10 years I was a Fighter Squadron Commander at Hill AFB (1994), Operations Group Commander at Aviano AB (96), AGOS Commandant at Nellis AFB (98), and Vice Wing Commander at Cannon (2000). I retired from active duty in 2002 as AF Doctrine Center Advisor to Commanding General, US Army Combined Arms Center, Ft Leavenworth KS. Currently I'm instructing AF Junior ROTC at Clovis High School.

I'd like to start off by stating that I really have no dog in this fight. I currently live in Clovis New Mexico, but as this will not be my final retirement location, the closure of Cannon AFB really wouldn't effect me personally. My concern is more for the good of the service. I believe it's NOT in the best interest of the Air Force to close Cannon, and believe the computations somehow were misinterpreted, misunderstood or misguided in the first place.

For decades the Air Force has tried to move its activities away from unfriendly environments -- the densely populated, noise sensitive, encroaching, ATC restrictive, unsupportive populations. The lack of any of these problems is precisely what has kept Cannon active for 50 years. It appears we have forgotten our past -- to the peril of our future.

I'd like to address a couple of the areas from the fighter list where Cannon did not do as well as I believe it should have.

Not getting max points for availability of airspace.

You'll be hearing all about the NM Training Airspace initiative, so I won't address that here. The basic airspace that is available to the base right now however, is excellent!

Is it the best airspace available anywhere? -- Certainly not! Nellis Ranges and the UTTR (for example) are much more extensive for Air to Air operations and better equipped with target sets for Air to Ground, but they come with a price that is probably not included in the computations.

It's not my purpose to point fingers at other bases, but I noticed that Keesler, Eglin, Hurlbert and Tyndall all ranked higher than Cannon when it came to airspace (obviously due to over water access). A question that needs to be asked, however is if they all received credit for *the same airspace*? Airspace that, by the way, is shared with Gulfport, Navy Whiting, Navy Pensacola, etc. Anyone who has been TDY to this area for a WSEP shoot or anything else, and tried to

schedule range time for a lowly 2 ship BFM sortie knows that the airspace is NOT sufficient to serve all the customers that are there – yet they all ranker higher than Cannon -- ??

The same issue can be applied to the Nellis ranges, the UTTR, and White Sands airspace for that matter. Multiuse airspace is not always the best airspace for fighter operations! One of the great aspects of the airspace around Cannon is the fact it is controlled and scheduled through the base itself without having to share with test units, Red Flag, competing units, etc -- it belongs to Cannon and is always available. It's open when we need it, and we close it when we don't need it – that population friendly approach should not count against the base.

Not getting max points for the proximity of airspace

The proximity issue is another matter that confounds me. When departing from the eastern edge of the tactical range at Melrose, an aircraft is an average of 15 nautical miles from Cannon's north and south VFR entry points. Typically flights will *voluntarily* hold on the range because there's not enough time to rejoin the flight, get a battle damage check, check out with the range, descent check, approach and landing check. Pecos is another 5 miles away, and the Bronco's aren't a lot further. Something is amiss when the base only receives 27% of the points available.

Non-availability of a "suitable auxiliary Airfield" within 50 miles.

I certainly don't know who developed this criterion, but this is one that I believe is misguided, penalizing bases in non-populated areas and giving an advantage to bases in large populated areas -- exactly where the Air Force has historically NOT wanted to be!

Salt Lake City International / Hill AFB, MaCarren International / Nellis AFB, Tampa International / MacDill AFB are examples of bases that have major conflicts with near by international airports -- I flew fighters from MacDill AFB before the Air Force **closed the base** to fighters *primarily because of it's proximity to a "primary aux Field"*. Under the current system this proximity is a bonus? -- Again, I'm confused.

Cannon's dual runways (you don't find that at Hill or Shaw), and the ability to get to Lubbock or Roswell are certainly adequate to the need -- which is NOT often with the great flying weather enjoyed by the base. The entire subject will become a mute point when Clovis Municipal (10 miles away, but a municipal rather than an international airport) lengthens their runway in the near future.

Availability of low level routes

Again, I don't know where the data came from, but can't imagine Cannon not scoring max points here. There are plenty of VFR and IFR routes readily available, they're close to the base, they're not typically used by other units, pilots can build their own low levels through the MOA's -- I'm just plain confused how the base scored so poorly in this category.

In closing, I'm simply amazed that Cannon ranked as the WORST base for fighters in ACC. Particularly when the list includes bases that previously hosted fighter operations **but**

disbanded those operations because of airspace / encroachment / ATC issues. Yet these same bases are ranked higher than Cannon on the current fighter list?? It simply defies logic unless you are inclined to believe that 50 years of Air Force leadership supporting the less populated, supportive atmosphere of bases like Cannon while closing bases like MacDills were somehow misguided.

There are things Cannon probably can't do. I'm a strong believer in joint operations – as you can see by glancing at my previous jobs. Cannon being located a couple thousand miles away from the nearest aircraft carrier, and hundreds of miles away from large Army ranges has its drawbacks, but we **all** can't be joint! You can't drive an aircraft carrier or land an F-16 in Ft Leavenworth Kansas either, but that would be a really poor reason to close it down!

I've flown fighter aircraft from probably 100 different locations in my 29 years in the Air Force -- including virtually all the bases on the list. Cannon is ABSOLUTELY no where near the bottom of the list for fighter locations -- I'd personally rank it in the top 10. I believe we are about to lose an outstanding asset due to flawed reporting or computations. That would be a great loss for the Department of Defense as a whole, but more specifically for the Air Force fighter community.



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