



STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA
M. MICHAEL ROUNDS, GOVERNOR

BRAC Commission

AUG 03 2005

Received

July 29, 2005

Anthony Principi
Chairman
2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Chairman Principi:

Thank you for your continued service during this most important process. With this letter, I am requesting that Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota, be removed from the list of base closures.

As we have discussed before, there are many people in the Department of Defense that worked diligently to put together a list of economic reasons to save the department money. However, good people do make mistakes.

From a military value perspective, Ellsworth provides more current and future value to the Air Force than competing large aircraft bases. Ellsworth maintains a base for high tempo B-1B operations and nearly immediate access to an unrestricted Military Operations Area (MOA). Finally, Ellsworth provides a strategic presence in the north central U.S. and can accommodate emerging missions or, if need be, in case of emergency, all the B-1B aircraft fleet.

While we still believe there needs to be two bases to support the fleet of B1-Bs, there are two issues I ask you to consider. First, closing Ellsworth will not create the savings the Air Force estimated. The consolidation of the entire B-1B fleet at Dyess AFB, Texas, and the closure of Ellsworth may not realize the reported savings of \$1.853 billion because it includes a significant percentage of personnel savings which cannot be applied outside of personnel accounts.

Any costs associated with consolidated B-1B flying operations in the Dyess area will be increased by \$14,000 per mission due to an increase of 0.7 hrs of flight time when compared to similar missions flown at Ellsworth (estimated 20-year cost could range as high as \$280 million). Powder River MOA missions flown from Dyess AFB will require an added 5 hours of flight time at a cost of \$100,000.00 per mission or \$100 million per 1,000 missions flown—20-year cost for such missions could range from \$1 to 2 billion.

The cost to close Ellsworth AFB (\$299 million) is the most expensive of all Air Force recommended actions and provides the least rate of return over the 20 years of calculated savings. Other major closures and realignments provide returns on investment in a range two to five times greater. The \$124 million military construction cost to prepare Dyess for a consolidated B-1B mission will still position Dyess with less facility space than a closed Ellsworth.

Lastly, retaining Ellsworth will create savings the Air Force has not considered. Because there may be no cost savings realized by consolidating the entire B-1B fleet at Dyess AFB, Texas, and closing Ellsworth, there are initiatives that must be taken into consideration.

Ellsworth was the only base in the north central U.S. judged suitable for the bed down of the Global Hawk mission according to the Air Combat Command Environmental Impact Statement dated March 2001. Ellsworth should be designated for the emerging UAV mission. In terms of other future missions, Ellsworth ranked first in six of eight Air Force categories (Bomber, Airlift, Tanker, Fighter, SOF, C2ISR and Space) when compared to Grand Forks and Minot.

While we still believe there needs to be two bases to support the fleet of B1-Bs, if the judgment of the Commission is that the B-1B fleet should be consolidated at one base, retain Ellsworth for the consolidation of all B-1Bs. Ellsworth is better suited to maintain and operate all B-1Bs. The MOA and low level route used by Dyess AFB are under the control of federal courts, and do not currently provide a suitable B-1B crew training area. They are subject to one or possibly two Supplemental Environmental Impact Statements and probable future flight operating restrictions. The Powder River MOA and low level route used by Ellsworth AFB is better suited for all B-1B training and qualification missions, is more readily accessible to Ellsworth, requires fewer total flying hours to accomplish similar missions, and is not subject to the controversy of the Dyess ranges. Ellsworth can handle 71 large aircraft; it requires only \$63.9 million in construction to bed down two additional squadrons. A third additional squadron can be housed in an existing facility recently made available by the construction of a new B-1B squadron operations facility.

Mr. Chairman, Ellsworth Air Force Base is a great resource both for the Air Force and this country. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Michael Rounds". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "M." and last name "Rounds" clearly legible.

M. Michael Rounds

MMR:ls