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June 9, 2005

2005 Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission  
Attention: Chairperson  
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600  
Arlington, Virginia 22202

**Re: Nevada Air National Guard**

Honorable Chairperson and Commission Members,

I am writing you on behalf of the membership of the Nevada Fire Chiefs Association in regards to recent news that the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission has made a recommendation that C-130 aircraft currently assigned to the Nevada Air National Guard be reassigned to another state. In light of the community of interest served by our Association, including Nevada's fire service and all the communities we protect, we want to express our utmost concern and strongly urge the Commission's reconsideration of this decision.

The Nevada Air National Guard is a vital asset to our state in terms of security, the safety of our communities and in support of local government's ability to effectively respond to a major emergency or disaster scenario. As it relates to the fire service, the current mission of airlift and reconnaissance, as well as the developing firefighting capabilities of our Air Guard, is irreplaceable. The Air Guard's infrared camera system has already become an important tool used by incident commanders on major wildland fires. The mobile air firefighting system that is a joint effort between the Air Guard and the USDA Forest Service will help offset the loss of most federally contracted air tankers that served the western states during wildland fire season.

In light of this State's need to be prepared for homeland security, the Air Guard is fulfilling a critical role in Nevada and the western states, relative to airlift capabilities for mass medical supplies and timely deployment of the 92nd Civil Support Team (WMD) or the FEMA Region-9 Urban Search and Rescue Team of Las Vegas, among other capabilities. Taking into account the extraordinary effort the Nevada Air National Guard has put forth to establish protocols and working relationships with an extensive list of local, state and national entities for the sake of protecting communities, it seems unfathomable to incapacitate this unit of the Air Guard.

As you know, the Governor can activate the Guardsmen at any time, but that a Presidential disaster declaration is required to call up active duty resources to assist a state that is in crisis. This process can take days from the time an event occurs. Nevada's perennial occurrence of major wildland fires, our history of flooding and the increasing threat of terrorism underscores the importance of retaining all of our current Air Guard assets in Nevada.

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The Nevada Fire Chiefs consider the mission of the Nevada Air National Guard, coupled with the immediate availability of the C-130 aircraft, as extremely valuable to the people of Nevada. As history would attest of this Air Guard unit, the Battle Born State of Nevada stands ready to support the nation in this post 9-11 era. We again urge you to reconsider your recommendation and maintain these extremely important air resources in the State of Nevada where the dedicated team of the Nevada Air National Guard can continue to provide the high standard of services we have come to depend upon.

Please feel free to contact me if I can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,



Roy Slate  
President, Nevada Fire Chiefs Association

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cc: The Honorable Kenny Guinn, Governor, State of Nevada  
The Honorable Harry Reid, U. S. Senate  
The Honorable John Ensign, U.S. Senate  
The Honorable Shelley Berkley, U. S. House of Representatives  
The Honorable Jim Gibbons, U. S. House of Representatives  
The Honorable Jon Porter, U. S. House of Representatives