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June 16, 2005

BRAC Commission
2521 South Clark Street
Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Chairman Principi and BRAC Commissioners,

The Buffalo- Niagara Region has seen a long streak of economic bad luck. That is why it was extremely troubling for my constituents and I to learn that the Base Realignment and Closure Commission has recommended the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station for closure.

Should this closure be allowed to take place it will; in all likelihood, prove to be ferociously devastating. With 642 civilian employees and more than 2,000 reservists the annual payroll for this particular base is approximately \$50 million, making it the second largest employer in Niagara County. Surely, the last thing our region needs is to lose more jobs.

More troubling to me is the fact that the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station has been targeted for closure despite the fact that it has outperformed other bases scheduled to stay open. According to the Air Force's key measures of military value, Niagara Falls will lose its cargo planes while nine bases that when ranked on their ability to support cargo missions finished below Niagara Falls will stay open. Also, the Niagara Falls base is slated to lose its KC-135 refueling tankers to a base in Bangor, Maine, that finished below Niagara Falls when ranked on its ability to handle refueling missions.

I would like to call on the BRAC Commission to scrap their plans to close the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station and rather embrace a different notion, one that can help the American military and the Buffalo- Niagara region duly: expand the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station. In the past decade the Pentagon has spent in excess of \$50 million

dollars to make various improvements to the base. These improvements and all this money spent would fall by the wayside if the base were to be closed.

Currently, the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station has room to accommodate eight more C-130 Hercules aircraft without any new construction whatsoever. Simply put, the base could be expanded without any new construction costs to Defense Department. One can speculate that the ranking of the Niagara Falls base on it's ability to support cargo missions would increase dramatically if it were to receive eight more planes.

The Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station is situated uniquely within four international bridges; three of them are within ten miles of the base. In this age of national security, closing a base with such a key location to an international border can only serve to weaken our border at a time when it should be strengthened. Also nearby are two key power plants which contribute power to much of the Eastern United States. Surely, most will agree that the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station is in an extremely strategic location. This base is absolutely necessary in order to provide added security and to oversee emergency relief efforts should the need arise.

I respectfully urge you Chairman Principi, and the remainder of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission to not only remove the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station from the list of recommended base closures, but rather, to make a recommendation to the Defense Department that this base be upgraded for all the reasons outlined in this letter. I would like to thank you for your time and wish you good luck in your future endeavors.

Sincerely,



SAM HOYT
MEMBER OF ASSEMBLY

SH:csf:ar

cc: Hon. F. DelMonte; Hon. B. Brown; Hon. G. Maziarz; Hon. H. R. Clinton; Hon. C. Schumer; J. Berlinger