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April 25, 2005

The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As you prepare to submit your list of recommended base closures and realignments to the Congress and the recently established Base Realignment and Closure Commission, I am writing to express my strong support for retaining the mission and location of the 122nd Air National Guard Fighter Wing in Fort Wayne, Indiana. For the last sixty years, the 122nd Fighter Wing has proudly resided in Fort Wayne, Indiana, where it has made vital contributions to our nation's air defense superiority, as well as the state of Indiana's security in times of emergency and natural disasters.

Since 2001, there has been a great deal of speculation regarding the future mission and role of the Air National Guard. While I applaud the Department of Defense's ongoing effort to transform our nation's military into a highly-effective and efficient force, I am concerned about the potential impact that BRAC or the Air Force's Total Future Force Initiative could have on Air National Guard installations in my home district and around the country. Given the current demands being placed on the active-duty force, I believe a possible reduction in end-strength or downsizing of Air National Guard installations could adversely impact our operational readiness given the Guard's role in delivering roughly one-third of our military's air compact capability.

Additionally, I am concerned that the role of the Air National Guard in responding to State emergencies is not being given due consideration in the BRAC and Future Total Force initiatives. To date, I am not aware that the governors of the states have had significant influence in the potential changes being considered for the National Guard, and I urge you to draw them into the process.

Knowing of the ongoing discussions regarding changes to the U.S. Military, I'd like to draw your attention to the many advantages of the 122nd Fighter Wing and its base facilities. Regarding its value to the military, the 122nd is fulfilling both its federal and state missions with distinction.

Comprised of 17 F16 C+ aircraft, the fighter wing has been critical to the current war in the Middle East, having participated in both Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, the battles of

Falluja and Najaf, as well as numerous other medical, humanitarian, and operations support missions in the region. The 122nd was among the first Air National Guard units to participate in the Joint Forces Directorate by providing convoy drivers to Army units in Iraq. The fighter wing has highly experienced, combat-proven pilots who have flown over 47,000 flight hours with no Class A mishaps. The 122nd is a three-time recipient of the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award, as well as the recipient of the National Guard of the United States Outstanding Unit Award.

Domestically, the 122nd has been essential to our national security as it was chosen to participate in the post-9-11 air cover over Chicago. It was selected because the Fort Wayne Air National Guard base has sufficient open space for allowing the unit to store and load live munitions. Bases with land encroachment issues do not have this capability.

In addition to the notable mission capabilities of the 122nd fighter wing, the unit's state-of-the-art facilities, infrastructure, access to training grounds and ability to expand are integral to the unit's overall operational readiness and ability to adjust to future force requirements. The current base sits on more than 166 acres of land leased by the State of Indiana and the Fort Wayne Airport Authority. Over 90 additional acres adjacent to the base have been reserved for military use, providing a unique opportunity for future expansion and growth at a low cost. The base's facilities include 34 buildings totaling 479,037 square feet, as well as two runways that are both 150-feet wide and 8,000- and 12,000-feet long. These runways are capable of handling all sizes of planes, including large tankers and airlift planes.

Over the past decade, the Fort Wayne Air National Guard facilities and runways have been upgraded or rebuilt through more than $25 million dollars in federal earmarks. An additional $12 million in federal funds for a new airport control tower, as well as funding through the regular appropriations process have also contributed to the base's exceptional infrastructure. Today, most of the actively used buildings and facilities are either newly built or recently renovated, including the parking ramp for the F-16 Fighters, the corrosion control facility, the medical support and dining center, the base supply building, the base headquarters, the firehouse, the security gate, the fuel hanger and the main hanger, which will be completed later this year. Upon the main hanger's completion, the base will be able to house all of its 17 F-16 planes in a hanger during bad weather. Fort Wayne is fortunate to have this capability. Overall, the base is an efficient and modern base that is well-positioned for long-term use, facility expansion, and any future force mission changes.

One of the great advantages Fort Wayne has over other similar bases is its joint location with Fort Wayne International Airport, a Level 7 airport with an FAA flight tower that operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This co-location enables the F-16 pilots to train at any time of day or night without having to be concerned about obtaining tower coverage. Fort Wayne's airport has both a passenger flight service with several major airlines and an international cargo operation that pays for nearly half of the airport's operational costs. The joint funding sources at the airport significantly reduce the costs of maintenance and operation for the Air National Guard. These efficiencies save the military money that can be better spent on technology and equipment.

Another cost saver for the military is the 122nd's quick access to a variety of special use airspace and range complexes for training purposes. The four closest training facilities are all located within the State of Indiana and are less than an hour's flight time from the base. The unit can also fly up over the Great Lakes in less than an hour, giving the pilots a full range of options for practicing different kinds of skills in various environments. The base's close proximity to these training areas saves significant money over a year's time.

The base's location in Northeast Indiana is also an advantage for recruiting, which has been historically very high for all of the Armed Services. The Fort Wayne Air National Guard is currently at almost 104% of its manning strength and ranks 9th in the country for recruiting among all Air Guard bases. This may be partly due to the type of high-skilled jobs in the region. Historically a large manufacturing base, the jobs in the area are increasingly becoming more high-tech with a growing number of truck/part manufacturers and defense contractors locating in the area. The job experience of these employees is a natural fit for the jobs in the Air National Guard. The high recruiting rate in the area is a cost saver for the 122nd, as well. About 70-80% of the personnel are from the local area, saving the Guard money it would otherwise spend on travel and hotel costs for people traveling outside of a 70-mile radius.

While the 122nd Fighter Wing is valuable to our nation and state, it also plays a significant role in the economic vitality of Northeast Indiana and the Fort Wayne community. The unit has more than 900 drill status guardsmen in addition to more than 200 full-time federal technicians and 76 full-time active guard and reserve. The jobs generated by the base have a direct economic impact of more than $58 million dollars for the city of Fort Wayne and surrounding areas. The loss of this income could pose a tremendous hardship on the local economy. Additionally, the loss of the base could have a significant impact on the airport, which is a critical component of economic development in the region. It is estimated that the airport has a combined direct and indirect economic impact of nearly $420,000,000 in Northeast Indiana, and the presence of the Air National Guard at the airport has been a key reason for the generation of those dollars. The 122nd's location at the airport has helped the airport obtain federal funding for its new air traffic control tower, and the F-16 flight traffic has proven essential to maintaining the level of air traffic necessary for Fort Wayne's 24-7 tower coverage.

Whether being deployed for homeland security missions, humanitarian relief efforts or participating in Operation Iraqi Freedom, the men and women of the 122nd have served the people of Indiana and the citizens of this country with great pride and distinction. I understand you will be making very difficult decisions in the coming weeks and ask that you give strong consideration to keeping the 122nd Fighter Wing intact in Fort Wayne, Indiana, as well as ensuring that the state's governors play a significant role in any decision making regarding the future of the National Guard.

Sincerely,

Mark Souder

Mark Souder
Member of Congress

Fort Wayne, Indiana: The Ideal Community to Support Current and Future Needs of the Air National Guard

Northeast Indiana is an ideal location for the Department of Defense and the Indiana Air National Guard. Northeast Indiana and the Fort Wayne International Airport, home of the 122nd Fighter Wing (FW), provides mission critical and physical attributes that cannot be replicated anywhere else in the Midwest region of the United States. In addition to having the largest commercial runway in the State of Indiana, the City of Fort Wayne, Allen County and Fort Wayne International Airport have designated over 225 acres of land for use by the Indiana Air National Guard.

Physical Size and Capabilities Make It Attractive to Consolidate Future Missions: With over 3,400 acres of land, including 1,250 acres of undeveloped property, and the largest commercial runway in the State of Indiana at 12,000 feet, the Fort Wayne International Airport is an attractive location for the Air National Guard to consolidate like missions.

No Encroachment or Environmental Concerns: As the Airport continues to develop, the City, County and Airport Authority have reserved over 225 acres for the 122nd FW to ensure they have the land necessary to accommodate future mission capabilities and requirements.

Readily Available Range Complexes & Special Use Airspace for Training: The 122nd is fortunate to have a variety of special use airspace and range complexes nearby and readily available for training. There are four locations within the State of Indiana available for use by the Air National Guard, including: Hilltop MOA, 12 Mile MOA, Atterbury Range Complex and Jefferson Proving Grounds.

State of the Art Facilities: Thanks to the strong support from the Indiana Congressional Delegation over the last five years, the 122nd FW and the Airport have completed over $50 million in construction for the following projects and new facilities:

- **New Air Traffic Control Tower (offers 24 hour services)**
- **New Parking Ramp and Taxiway**
- **New Fuel Cell and Corrosion Facility**
- **New Medical Training Facility**
- **New Dining Hall**
- **New Hanger for on-loading and off-loading equipment and munitions**
- **New Security Gate Entrance**
- **Realignment and Repair of Perimeter Base Roads Completed**

Commercially Viable Airport: The Airport is easily accessible to the U.S. and world markets, as it currently serves American, Continental, Delta, Northwest, and United Airlines. Daily commercial flights are offered to the following hub destinations: Atlanta, Chicago O'Hare, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, and Detroit.

Strong Community Support and Recruitment: Northeast Indiana, the City of Fort Wayne and Allen County have a proud tradition of supporting the needs of our warfighters. At a time when the National Guard and the armed services are having difficulty attracting new recruits, the 122nd FW is currently manned at 104.2% man strength.