

# State of North Dakota

August 4, 2005

BRAC Commission

The Honorable Anthony J. Principi  
Chairman, Base Realignment and Closure Commission  
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600  
Arlington, VA 22202

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Received

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As you prepare for the final deliberation of the BRAC Commission, we would like to bring to your attention specific suggestions for the recommendations on Grand Forks Air Force Base and Hector International Airport Air Guard Station that you will include in your Report to the President.

## **Grand Forks Air Force Base**

We urge that the Commission's report provide sufficient facilities and real property at Grand Forks Air Force Base to bed down a robust force of unmanned aerial vehicles and for other potential missions.

Since the release of the Secretary's BRAC recommendations, the Air Force has notified the Commission that it wants to make GFAFB home to a "family of UAVs" with associated intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance support functions. Predators are scheduled to arrive in FY 2007, while Global Hawks will arrive later. However, there is a disconnect between that plan and the assumptions in the Department of Defense COBRA runs, which show that the Department will divest 45 percent of the buildings on the base and all of the family housing. A recent Air Force site survey of the base confirmed that a large proportion of the base's facilities would be needed for a mixed force of 24 Predator As, Predator Bs and Global Hawks. The larger UAV force structure that the Air Force has testified they intend to base at Grand Forks would eventually require additional construction.

We further urge the Commission to retain a portion of the tanker mission at Grand Forks. Doing so would preserve infrastructure needed to accommodate the future tanker fleet should the Air Force decide to base a portion of it at Grand Forks. It would also continue to provide needed support to bombers flying nuclear missions from Minot Air Force Base.

We recommend that the Commission report provide that the Air Force shall:

“Realign Grand Forks Air Force Base (AFB), North Dakota. Distribute 24 of the 319<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing's aircraft as directed by the Secretary of the Air Force. Retain at Grand Forks sufficient facilities and real property to support one squadron of 12 KC-135R aircraft performing the aerial refueling mission. Additionally, the

Air Force shall retain such additional facilities and real property as are required to bed down a family of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), including Predator A (MQ-1), Predator B (MQ-9), and one half of the projected Air Force fleet of Global Hawk (RQ-4) UAVs. Retain sufficient family housing assets to support these missions.”

### **Hector International Airport Air Guard Station**

We urge the Commission to reject the Secretary of Defense’s justification language calling for the retirement of the F-16s of the 119th Fighter Wing “without a flying mission backfill” and his recommendation to realign the Hector International Airport Air Guard Station into an enclave providing only expeditionary combat support elements.

The North Dakota Air National Guard is willing and able to assign personnel to support the planned UAV mission from locations at both Grand Forks Air Force Base and Hector Air Guard Station. But the Commission’s report should not preclude the Air Force from continuing a manned flying mission in Fargo.

Despite clear indications in the Grand Forks AFB recommendation that the Secretary of Defense contemplated having personnel at Hector International Airport AGS support the “emerging mission” at Grand Forks AFB, there is no mention in the Hector recommendation of retaining facilities and real estate needed to support that mission.

The Secretary’s recommendation would dispose of the 119th Fighter Wing’s ramps, hangars and aircraft-support facilities. That would make it very difficult and expensive to ever restore a flying mission at the facility. It would also require the Commission to determine how a National Guard unit is equipped and organized, which we believe is beyond the authority given by the Base Closure Act.

We recommend that the Commission report reject the realignment recommendation for Hector International Airport Air Guard Station. The retirement of the F-16s at Hector will occur programmatically in FY 2007 regardless of BRAC actions. By rejecting the Hector IAP AGS recommendation, the Commission will leave open the possibility of a new manned flying mission to replace the F-16s at Hector, while not affecting the ability of the North Dakota Air National Guard to support emerging missions at Grand Forks.

If the Commission determines it is advisable to retain Hector IAP AGS on the realignment list, we recommend that the Commission’s report provide:

“Realign Hector International Airport Air Guard Station, North Dakota. Retain sufficient facilities and real property to support UAV ground control and intelligence analysis functions and for expeditionary combat support elements, including fire, crash and rescue services. Additionally retain sufficient facilities and real property to support a potential future flying mission of squadron size. The Commission rejects the Secretary’s justification language suggesting Hector should be realigned ‘to allow its aircraft to retire with no flying mission backfill.’”

Mr. Chairman, we want to compliment the Commission and its staff on the outstanding way they have carried out their responsibilities. Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations. Should you have any questions about these suggestions, please feel free to contact us.

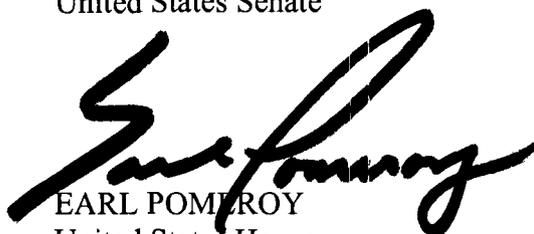
Sincerely,



KENT CONRAD  
United States Senate



BYRON L. DORGAN  
United States Senate



EARL POMEROY  
United States House



JOHN HOEVEN  
Governor