



316 Chanticleer Pl.  
Clovis, NM 88101

May 16, 2005

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

Dear BRAC Commission Members:

I am a resident of Clovis, New Mexico, the small town on the high plains of Eastern New Mexico and home of the 27<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing at **Cannon Air Force Base**. The news of Cannon's possible closing hit this community and this writer with a deafening thud on what has been pegged "Black Friday" by this community.

I write this letter with a heavy heart but with a great deal of hope that this nine member panel will actually hear our arguments and allow us to tell the story of Clovis, New Mexico and this outstanding base.

My father is retired Major with the United States Air Force. After he retired from McGuire AFB in the early 70's, our family returned to my mother's home on the high plains. We have lived here ever since I was five years old. My father was a fighter pilot and had previously been stationed at Cannon where he met my mother. Clovis and Cannon have been our home for many years.

It has long been known that eastern New Mexico has outstanding weather. There is sky as far as the eye can see. Cannon sits 7 miles west of Clovis. As my father puts it, as well as many other retired pilots who have flown at Cannon, this is an excellent place to train and to fly. Almost every day of the year, over 300 days, the planes can fly. That is how good our weather is. Clovis is small and there is absolutely **no** encroachment. Our base has the ability to welcome a multitude of aircraft, not just the F-16s. There is room for expansion at this base, unlimited expansion and best of all- our base has the capability of going supersonic. This is a project that was in the works before the base closure list came out and was overlooked in the Pentagon's report to you.

Please allow me to tell you a little about our community. We love our soldiers. We welcome them in our neighborhoods and churches. We are friendly, God-fearing people who firmly stand behind our servicemen. It would be extremely difficult to find a community who welcomed their airmen with more enthusiasm and respect. New Mexico is a poor state and the cost to live in Clovis entices many military families to retire here and call Clovis their home. Land is cheap, homes are extremely affordable and this

community would be more than willing to surrender whatever is needed to help keep our base. I have reviewed the BRAC criteria and I am hard pressed to find an area that Cannon comes up lacking. I realize that I am not an expert but obvious observations are evident to every resident here who is fighting to keep Cannon and remove it from the base closure list.

On a personal note, I firmly believe that Secretary Rumsfeld has the nations best interests at heart. I just believe that he is misguided in his assessment of Cannon- that is has no military value. Even writing that in a sentence is difficult. The effects to this community would be devastating. Even by the Department of Defense's own assessment, Clovis, New Mexico would be hit harder economically than any other community in the United States. It has been predicted that 20.5 % of our local jobs would be lost. That figure is actually surprising low according to some estimates. It has even been predicted as high as 26% would be more accurate. Schools would be closed, housing would plummet, people would move, businesses closed. This is just a farm and ranch community that rarely gets a break. Only in the past few years have we started to see a few more businesses come to town. I beg of you to consider this when you visit Clovis. We don't have a lot to offer in the way of fancy amenities but we can offer something even more valuable- a welcome and unrelenting support. This is so much more than some of the larger cities in the United States who have declared that they no longer want their bases. We would gladly welcome them to Cannon!

Please come to Clovis with open minds. Please do not rubber stamp this proposal at any of the bases listed on the closure list. Your decision has the ability to destroy or restore a community. We are counting on your sound minds. After you hear our leaders justify Cannon's existence I believe that you will agree with this writer. Cannon is so valuable that we should expand, not be closed. Please come and meet our people. We welcome you in this dusty eastern New Mexico town.

Thank you for reading my letter and please accept my apologies for going on and on. I pray that you will hear us and not forget us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Casillas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "S".

Susan Casillas

A proud resident of Clovis, New Mexico  
and Cannon Air Force Base