DCN: 2630

CITY OF ESTACADA

"Close to everything, but away from it all"

MAYOR
Robert Austin

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June 15, 2005

The Honorable Anthony J. Principi
Chairman, Base Realignment and Closure Commission
Polk Building, Suite 600 & 625
2521 South Clark Street
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Chairman Principi,

The recent DoD recommendation to the BRAC Commission moving the 142nd Fighter Wing's F-15 aircraft to New Orleans and Atlantic City is a mistake. This decision creates a potential life threatening circumstance. It neglects the mission of Homeland Defense. The following discussion of facts clearly demonstrates why this decision places the Pacific Northwest and Western Region of the United States at risk.

First, the 142nd Fighter Wing in Portland, Oregon, protects our homeland with the F-15 Eagle jet fighter. Their present position is geographically strategic; providing both continuous air defense and air superiority capabilities from northern California far into Canada. This is part of the 24-hour continuous alert North American Air Defense (NORAD) system. No other base in the Pacific Northwest covers this range, and without it we are at risk.

Secondly, intelligence reports consistently reveal Al Queda and its franchise terrorist cells are continuing to probe our aviation resources as sources of effective weaponry. Most of the major routes for airlines operating between Asia and North America traverse the West Coast airspace, with many taking off at Western International Airports heavily "fuel loaded" for long flights. Reflecting back to 9/11, and by proactively using current day intelligence information, it would be nothing short of woeful negligence to not maintain a dedicated Air Defense Fighter Wing to provide logistic and operational support to an alert mission in protection of the western United States.

Lastly, the citizens of the Pacific Northwest and Northern California deserve the same protection afforded the Eastern United States. This decrease in Air Defense capability, coupled with known current threats and the likelihood of multiple targets that are widely dispersed becomes a scenario that is more appealing and potentially a very successful opportunity for the terrorist. Realistically, the 142nd Fighter Wing's homeland defense mission is more critical now than previously perceived.

475 SE Main Street • PO Box 958 • Estacada, OR 97023 • 503 630 8270 • Fax 503 630 8280
Email: mayor@cityofestacada.org • Web Address: www.cityofestacada.org

The DoD recommendations degrade the Homeland Security of the Northwest and the entire nation. This cannot and should not be ignored. I believe that a **maximum** effort must be generated to change the DoD recommendation that transfers Dedicated Air Defense from the Northwest. I strongly ask for your support and leadership to help reverse this DOD recommendation.

Thank you for your help and consideration in keeping the Pacific Northwest and the United States safe.

Respectfully yours,

Bob Austin
Mayor