

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

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May 18, 2005

Mr. Anthony J. Principi
Commission Chairman
Base Realignment and Closure Commission
2521 South Clark Street
Arlington, Virginia 22202

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Dear Mr. Principi:

We are writing in regards to the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) recommendations submitted to you and the BRAC Commission by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Specifically, we are strongly opposed to Secretary Rumsfeld's proposal to retire the 147th Fighter Wing's 15 F-16s at Ellington Field Air Guard Station, TX.

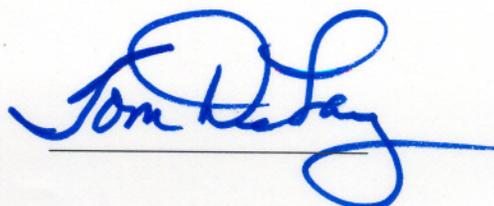
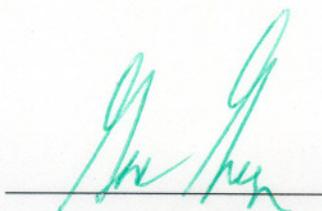
The 147th currently provides air security to nearly five million people in the Houston metropolitan area and the numerous national interests in that area. Houston is the fourth largest city in the nation, and is home to a petrochemical complex that accounts for nearly half of the nation's base petrochemical production capacity, the Houston shipping channel and the Port of Houston that handle more foreign tonnage than any other US port, NASA's Johnson Space Center, and the Texas Medical Center. It is imperative that air security is maintained to protect this area, as an attack on any of these assets would be disastrous for the region and the nation.

In addition to providing security for the Houston area, the 147th is capable of providing precision strikes, close air support, offensive counter air, defensive counter air, and suppression of enemy air defenses. In recent years, the 147th has supported Operation Noble Eagle and Operation Southern Watch, been on a State Department deployment to Israel, and supported counter drug operations in South America. The area around Ellington also provides the 147th with excellent training airspace, including over-water air-to-air training on the Gulf of Mexico allowing them to perform supersonic flights and lights out training from the surface to 50,000 feet.

While we realize that Secretary Rumsfeld's recommendation will maintain the homeland defense Air Sovereignty Alert mission by assigning aircraft from elsewhere to operate from Ellington, we do not feel this provides a deterrent as strong as maintaining the 147th at Ellington with their own F-16s. Furthermore, the savings estimated in the DoD's BRAC report are minimal and do not justify moving the F-16s away from Ellington; while it is estimated that retiring the F-16s will save DoD \$3.6 million over 20 years, an attack on any of the possible targets listed above, especially the petrochemical facilities and Port of Houston, would cost our national economy billions of dollars.

We appreciate your consideration in this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact our offices if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,



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Michael T. McAul

John Cullins

