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13 June

Received

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Dear Sirs

2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission  
2521 S. Clark St., Ste. 600  
Arlington, VA 22202

**To Whom it may Concern**

This letter responds to the call (<http://www.brac.gov/feedba>) the 2005 BRAC plans. In particular, it addresses the proposed Directorate of AFRL at Hanscom Field near Boston, to be relo

By mistake, this letter was originally mailed with wrong date "6 July 2005" in place of "6 June 2005." Here is a corrected copy - please use it to replace the one originally sent

David P. Stern

I am a physicist recently retired from research on the Earth's plasma environment in space, after 40 years with NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland. During that time I had many professional contacts with AFRL scientists, both those who worked there in the past and those who still do, and even visited a few times to lecture.

Throughout those years I was continually impressed with that team's technical competence and its dedication to work. In the areas of magnetospheric and ionospheric physics, in both experimental technology and scientific creativity, the Hanscom team has been productive and knowledgeable. At least in recent years, the quality of its work (in the above fields) exceeded NASA's, also it was less hobbled by bureaucracy and had better academic ties.

I understand that BRAC is considering moving those activities to Albuquerque, NM. I do not know the motivation, but I suspect that one result of making such a move official would be the break-up of the AFRL team. In particular, you might lose many senior researchers, established in the community, with local academic ties and kids in school,

Technological excellence is a fragile commodity, hard to build up but easy to destroy. This might well happen. Furthermore, over the years AFRL has established valuable working relationships with experts in surrounding institutions, such as MIT (whose Lincoln Lab is close to Hanscom), Boston College, Boston U., Dartmouth and the U. of NH; these ties may lose their usefulness. A move like the one proposed might severely impair the USAF pool of expertise in such areas as space weather, ionospheric physics, radio propagation, applied plasmas and similar fields. Instead, USAF may be better served by bolstering its center of technological excellence at Hanscom AFB.

If anyone at BRAC would like to discuss these matters further, I can be contacted at any of the addresses on top.

Sincerely

David P. Stern

<http://www.phy6.org/stargaze/Sstern.htm>