

Anthony Principi
Chairman
Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 South Clark St., Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Chairman Principi:

As we stated at the St. Louis Regional Hearing, we believe that the decision to close General Mitchell Air Reserve Station (Mitchell) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin is not in the best interest of the United States military. Furthermore, we are concerned that this decision might have been based on faulty and incomplete data as well as incorrect assumptions.

In St. Louis we expressed our strong concern that closing Mitchell would have a negative impact on recruitment and retention. We came to this conclusion for the following reasons:

Negative Impact on Recruiting:

According to the US Census Bureau there are 12 million people in the Chicago/Milwaukee & Madison, WI corridor -- a huge talent pool.

There is a direct correlation between proximity to this large pool of talent and Mitchell's ability to recruit and retain experienced pilots, aircraft mechanics, etc. That is why Mitchell exceeded its recruitment goals from FY00 to FY04 and why it is one of the best Air Force Reserve C-130 recruiting units in the country (Attachment #1, Lt. Col. Thomas Doyon, senior legislative counsel for the United States Air Force letter).

As the U.S. continues to fight a war on terror it is essential that our military continue to meet its recruiting goals. If Mitchell is closed, the Air Force Reserve will have no presence in a major metropolitan area of the Midwest, a risk that should not be taken lightly given the military's current manpower needs.

Negative Impact on Retention:

The closure of Mitchell will also have a negative impact on retention for the Air Force Reserve. According to information provided to the office of Congressman Paul Ryan by the Congressional Research Service and Mitchell (See Attachment #2), Mitchell's overall retention rate exceeds that of the Air Force Reserve. The following chart compares retention rates at Mitchell to the Air Force Reserve at large:

	<u>Mitchell Retention rate</u>	<u>Air Force Reserve Retention rate</u>
2002	96 %	91%
2003	93%	83%
2004	94%	86%

High Retention Rate = High Level of Experience

According to Air Force data, the closure of Mitchell would result in the loss of 1,800 years of flying experience and 2,800 years of maintenance experience (Attachment #2). This is a significant loss. It will take years for the Air Force to regain this level of capability.

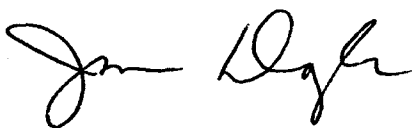
The loss of experienced reservists will lead to a less capable force. We are very concerned that this situation may have a direct impact on operations.

Summary

Closing Mitchell will have a negative impact on recruitment. It abandons a talent pool of 12 million people. There will be no Air Force Reserve presence in the major metropolitan area of the Midwest. Additionally, closure will have a negative impact on retention, a key to maintaining an experienced force.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



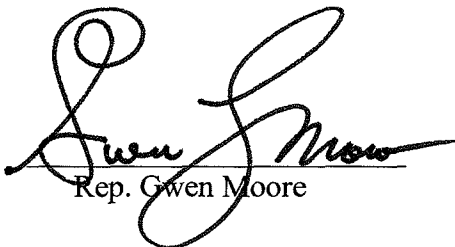
Gov. Jim Doyle



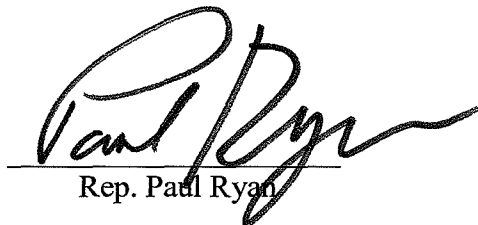
Sen. Herb Kohl



Sen. Russ Feingold



Rep. Gwen Moore



Rep. Paul Ryan

