

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

Dear Chairman Principi:

During the course of the last few days you have received a series of letters outlining why we believe the closure of General Mitchell Air Reserve Station in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Mitchell) was based on faulty and incomplete data as well as incorrect assumptions.

This packet of information contains all the past letters and back-up data for your review.

To summarize, we believe the recommended closure of Mitchell is a mistake for the following reasons:

Management of the C-130 Fleet:

In our first letter we provided certifiable data that demonstrated that the Air Force had trouble managing both the size and the distribution of its C-130 fleet.

We brought to your attention a Government Accounting Office (GAO) report regarding the Air Force's C-130 fleet. In that report the GAO noted the active duty C-130 fleet is older than the Reserve Component's C-130 fleet.

We also brought to your attention the fact that as the BRAC list was being compiled, the President's annual budget submission cancelled the C-130J multi-year procurement contract. Until that time neither Mitchell nor Niagara Falls ARS were on the BRAC list. After the president's budget was made public, Mitchell and Niagara Falls were last minute additions to the BRAC list. We are concerned that these additions were made to help ensure that the Air Force would have more modern C-130s in its inventory if the C-130J was indeed cancelled.

Based on this evidence and comments made by General Heckman, it appears that the Air Force is using the BRAC process to manage its C-130 fleet and re-distribute its assets. Neither of these is an appropriate use of the BRAC process. These issues are best resolved between Congress and the Air Force.

In this case we believe the Department of Defense substantially deviated from all of the BRAC selection criteria since we believe this action is outside the scope of the BRAC process.

Recruitment and Retention will be harmed:

We also noted that we believe the closure of Mitchell will harm recruitment and retention.

There are 12 million people in the Chicago/Milwaukee/Madison metropolitan area -- 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.

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.

We also demonstrated that Mitchell has one of the best retention records in the Air Force Reserve -- much better than the Air Force Reserve as a whole.

This high retention rate directly relates to a high level of workforce experience (the equivalent of 1,800 years of flying experience and 2,800 years of maintenance experience) that will not follow the unit if it is moved to North Carolina -- it will take the Air Force years to reconstitute this level of expertise.

In this case we believe the Department of Defense substantially deviated from criteria # 1 of the BRAC selection criteria since recruiting and retention have a direct impact on the operational readiness of the total force.

Corrections and clarifications:

We noted that for smaller Air Reserve bases (like Mitchell) several of the Air Force's MCI rating categories were clearly unfair, including ramp serviceability and expandability.

We also noted that Mitchell's installation pavements quality score and hangar capability score should have been higher. These oversights cost Mitchell 8.39 points that would have given it an overall higher MCI rating than Youngstown ARS and Minneapolis/St. Paul ARS -- bases that were not touched by BRAC.

We also noted the overall attributes of Mitchell's airspace -- especially its proximity to low level routes for which Mitchell received no credit and the uncongested Wisconsin airspace when compared to Georgia, the destination of some of Mitchell's C-130s.

In this case we believe the Department of Defense substantially deviated from criteria # 2 of the BRAC selection criteria since the availability of the associated airspace in Wisconsin is virtually wide open for training.

Costs Savings:

Air Force data shows that Mitchell is the second least expensive Air Force Reserve base to operate. Since BRAC is a cost-cutting exercise we fail to see the logic in keeping more expensive bases open – especially those that are recommended to receive Mitchell's C-130s.

We also showed, and the Air Force confirmed, that the skilled workers at Mitchell have been able to save the Air Force over a million dollars a year at its depot maintenance facility. This savings will be lost if Mitchell is closed.

In this case we believe the Department of Defense substantially deviated from criteria # 4 of the BRAC selection. Mitchell is less expensive to operate than the receiving locations for both Mitchell's people (Pope AFB) and assets (Little Rock AFB and Dobbins ARB).

Conclusion

In the final analysis the decision to close Mitchell is based on flawed data. Based on evidence, we are concerned that the reason for adding Mitchell to the BRAC list was to enable the Air Force to move its C-130s to the active Air Force. The appropriate place for that debate is in the halls of Congress, not the BRAC process.

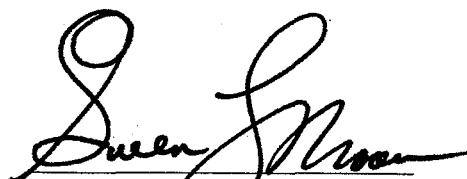
Thank you for your attention to this matter.

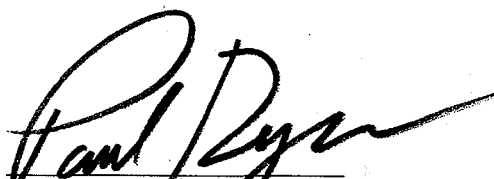
Sincerely,


Gov. Jim Doyle


Sen. Herb Kohl


Sen. Russ Feingold


Rep. Gwen Moore


Rep. Paul Ryan