



BRAC Commission

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Received

State of West Virginia
Joe Manchin III
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August 11, 2005

The Honorable Anthony J. Principi, Chairman
Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, Virginia 22202

Dear Chairman Principi:

I am writing to ask the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission to revise the Department of Defense recommendation concerning the 130th Airlift Wing at Yeager Air Guard Station in Charleston, West Virginia. I firmly believe that the military value of this unit and installation warrant their retention on the joint warfighting, civil support, and homeland defense team.

In performing the calculations concerning military value, the Air Force assumed that Yeager Air Guard Station had a maximum capacity to support eight C-130 aircraft. The actual current capacity of the air station is twelve, which is the optimal size for a reserve C-130 wing according to the Air Force. Because of the faulty factual assumptions regarding capacity, the Air Force BRAC process never considered nor analyzed basing scenarios that would expand the 130th Airlift Wing at Yeager Air Guard Station to twelve aircraft. Bad data cannot produce good analysis or sound recommendations.

The purpose of this correspondence is to assist the Commission in performing its statutory function of careful review of the Department of Defense recommendations. We deeply appreciate the Commission's focused consideration of Yeager Air Guard Station thus far, including two site visits to the installation in June and the public hearing in Charlotte, North Carolina. The Department of Defense recommendation to realign the 130th Airlift Wing from Charleston is based on a false factual foundation. According to the law, the Commission should revise the Department of Defense recommendations if it finds that they substantially deviate from the statutory criteria. The Department of Defense recommendation to terminate the 130th Airlift Wing and move its C-130 aircraft to Pope Air Force Base is based on inaccurate and incomplete data. These inaccurate inputs produced Department of Defense recommendations that substantially deviate from the BRAC criteria.

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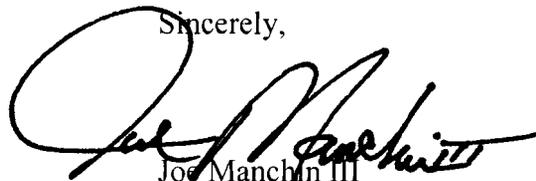
Our review of the Department of Defense BRAC process leads to the conclusion that Yeager Air Guard Station did not get a "fair shake." Errors in data used by Air Force analysts, systemic bias against smaller Air Guard stations, and inexcusable lack of consultation with State Adjutants General all contributed to faulty conclusions that substantially deviate from the BRAC criteria mandated by BRAC law. Additionally, I have grave concerns about the fundamental legality of the BRAC process as applied to the Air National Guard, and my office is currently evaluating our legal options. The Commission's own legal staff has concluded that the Commission cannot approve the Pentagon's recommendations affecting the Air National Guard without the consent of each state governor. This opinion is based on the plain meaning of 10 U.S.C. § 18238, which states:

A unit of the Army National Guard of the United States or the Air National Guard of the United States may not be relocated or withdrawn under this chapter without consent of the Governor of the state or, in the case of the District of Columbia, Commanding General of the National Guard of the District of Columbia.

Finally, closing the 130th Airlift Wing will seriously undermine my ability to train the West Virginia National Guard as a joint force, perform homeland security missions, and perform disaster relief operations regionally. Closing the 130th Airlift Wing is an example of what we will lose by wholesale consolidation into large active bases.

The 130th Airlift Wing has been a key player on the Joint Warfighting Team for 58 years. The 130th is not just eight airplanes – it is a dedicated community of people and organizations with deep roots in West Virginia. The 130th has been part of the Charleston community since 1947 and has been a family tradition for multiple generations of Guardsmen. Their brave Airmen have deployed in the Global War on Terror in Iraq, Afghanistan, and many other global hotspots in defense of our nation. When West Virginia was needed, the 130th was there providing critical airlift assets. I believe that the military value, accurately assessed, warrants keeping the 130th Airlift Wing on the joint team where they will continue to provide support to joint operations, homeland defense, domestic support to civil authorities, and the highest quality joint training.

Sincerely,



Joe Manchin III
Governor