



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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August 22, 2005

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Received

The Honorable Anthony J. Principi
Chairman, Base Realignment and Closure Commission
2521 South Clark Street
Arlington, VA 22202

Re: 142nd Air National Guard Fighter Wing

Dear Chairman Principi:

Thank you for your work on the Base Realignment and Closure Commission. The task before you and the commission is an important and arduous one. Your willingness to serve our nation in this capacity is appreciated.

We would like to express our grave concerns about the Defense Secretary's recommendation to realign all 15 F-15 fighters of the 142nd Air National Guard (ANG) Fighter Wing based at Portland International Airport (PDX). The 142nd Fighter Wing protects our homeland with these F-15 jet fighters. The fighter wing's present position in Portland is geographically strategic, providing both continuous air defense and air superiority from northern California to Canada. This is part of the 24-hour continuous alert North American Air Defense (NORAD) system. No other base in the Pacific Northwest covers this range, and without it we are at risk.

Furthermore, this realignment overlooks the critical role the 142nd Fighter Wing plays in ensuring the security of the Pacific Northwest and our nation. For more than three days after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the fighters of the 142nd ANG wing provided 24-hour air patrols over population centers, major military bases, and other high value targets across a three state region. The patrols helped protect our citizens and provided invaluable security in the very uncertain hours after the terrorist attacks on our nation. The nation continues to require a comparable level of responsiveness to counter potential threats to its Northwest region.

If implemented, the Secretary's recommendations would greatly limit this homeland security capability for our nation. While the Secretary's recommendations would maintain the alert component at PDX through the rotation of fighters from distant bases -- no fighters would be permanently based in Portland. In the midst of another attack on our homeland, fighters would have to be quickly scrambled from more distant bases, possibly compromising the security of major population centers and other high value targets along America's west coast.

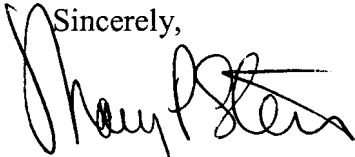
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In addition to compromising our Homeland Security, the proposed realignments would reduce the important connectivity of the Air National Guard to the citizens and communities of each state. Currently, each of the 50 States has a unit equipped Air National Guard Wing within its borders. Implementing the Department of Defense's proposed plan would leave seven states, including Oregon, without an equipped ANG flying unit. Enactment of this plan would have the unintended consequences of reducing the historic and philosophical connectivity of the National Guard to the citizens of affected States and would also reduce the emergency response capabilities currently available to Governors.

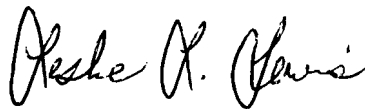
With these issues in mind, we respectfully request that you carefully examine the realignment of the 142nd Fighter Wing in light of its recent critical role in meeting emerging security requirements. Like the BRAC Commission, we want to ensure that our nation is well positioned to protect itself from threats, both foreign and domestic. Our military assets in the Northwest must remain well positioned to protect the homeland and to help ensure the national security of the United States. The citizens of the Pacific Northwest deserve the same protection afforded the eastern United States. We urge you to reconsider the Secretary's recommendation and ask you to support the retention of the 142nd Fighter Wing in its current form and location

Thank you for your help and consideration in keeping the Pacific Northwest and the United States of America safe.

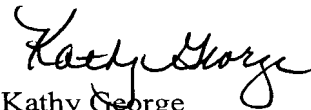
Sincerely,



Mary P. Stern
Chair



Leslie L. Lewis
Vice-Chair



Kathy George
Commissioner

/mps