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4TH DISTRICT, MISSOURI



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March 10, 2011

The Honorable J. Randy Forbes
Chairman
House Armed Services Readiness Subcommittee
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Forbes,

I am writing to express my concern over any Defense Base Closure and Realignment (BRAC) discussions that are under consideration.

In a speech before the Massachusetts High Technology Council Senator John Kerry said, "We need to prepare for the reality that every defense installation in America will be under scrutiny coming into 2015." Senator Kerry's recent remarks are the first in which someone has publicly mentioned a date for a possible round of proposed base closings. I believe the best BRAC decision to make involves one which ensures that we are not in a position to have these discussions in the first place. With all the emerging threats in the world, now is not the time to talk about base closings. We need a stronger defense posture not one that is weakened by base closings.

I am proud to represent two vital installations in my district, Fort Leonard Wood and Whiteman Air Force Base; both installations embody key missions and should not worry about BRAC. The United States Army Maneuver Support Center of Excellence at Fort Leonard Wood is the premier Army Center of Excellence where teams work innovatively to provide our Army integrated capabilities, professional warrior Soldiers, leaders, and forces that excel in the current operational environment and set conditions for success in future conflicts.

The 509th Bomb Wing, located at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, is one of only two Air Force units that operate the B-2 Spirit stealth bomber. The unit can launch combat sorties directly from Missouri to any spot on the globe, engaging adversaries with large payloads of traditional or precision-guided munitions. The first combat use of this capability was during 1999, as part of Operation Allied Force, the air campaign over Serbia and Kosovo.

The 509th also led the way for America's first military response following the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington D.C. in September 2001. B-2 bombers were the first U.S. aircraft to enter Afghan airspace in October 2001, paving the way for other coalition aircraft to engage Taliban and Al Qaeda forces. During this operation, the aircraft flew roundtrip from Missouri, logging combat missions in excess of 40 hours - the longest on record.

I ask you to commit to supporting a strong military and work to ensure that we do not have to consider any BRAC proposals. It is imperative for our future strength and readiness. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Vicky Hartzler
Member of Congress