



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

For Immediate Release
May 13, 2005

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Governor Bill Richardson pledges \$300,000 to fight BRAC decision, plans town hall in Clovis

Santa Fe – New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson along with New Mexico's congressional delegation, today pledged to wage a unified effort to combat the Defense Department recommendation to close Cannon Air Force Base as part of the 2005 base realignment and closure (BRAC) process.

Governor Richardson also ordered the immediate release of \$300,000 to the New Mexico Military Base Planning Commission to fight this recommendation. The Governor will hold a Town Hall meeting in Clovis on Monday, May 16 (time and location to be determined) to meet with local officials to launch the fight to overturn this flawed decision by the Bush Administration.

Governor Richardson's Prepared Statement:

Along with most Governors in the country, I have been anxiously awaiting the release by Secretary Rumsfeld of the Department of Defense's recommendations for base realignments and closures, or BRAC, as it is commonly described.

Now we know the facts and let me begin by repeating the words of John Paul Jones, "we have only begun to fight."

I am disappointed by this perplexing decision by the Bush Administration because we worked tirelessly for nearly three years to make a strong case for the military value of all of our bases, including Cannon Air Force Base. We will work immediately to convince BRAC Commissioners that the Pentagon overlooked the obvious strengths of Cannon, including its value to the nation's military mission and the fact that there is no encroachment upon the base in Clovis.

We have a strong case to make in support of Cannon and our other bases. New Mexico has been a strong supporter of the military, which makes today's surprising decision by the Pentagon impossible to accept.

If Secretary Rumsfeld's Defense Department recommendations are adopted, New Mexico will face thousands of lost jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in lost economic activity. I unequivocally state that I am determined to do my utmost to overturn the Department of Defense recommendation to close Cannon Air Force Base. We will mount a strong argument to the BRAC Commissioners that not only is Cannon AFB important to New Mexico, but Cannon plays a vital role in the defense of our nation.

Here's what Defense Secretary Rumsfeld is recommending----

- That Cannon AFB close-- resulting in **2,824 lost jobs**: 2,385 military and 384 civilian.
- Jenkins Armed Forces Reserve Center in Albuquerque close—36 lost jobs, but the units will be incorporated into Kirtland AFB.
- Kirtland AFB in Albuquerque will remain open and gain 30 military jobs and 176 civilian jobs for a net gain of 206.
- Holloman AFB in Alamogordo will remain open but lose 17 positions.
- White Sands Missile Range will remain open, but will lose 178 jobs: 13 military and 165 civilians.

Net losses for New Mexico --- 2,420 military jobs, 374 civilian jobs, 55 mission contractors---**total 2,849 total jobs lost.** This is the Department of Defense number and does not reflect the actual total. We have estimated over 7,000 jobs will disappear in Eastern New Mexico.

Our recent Economic Impact Study indicated that almost 7,000 jobs, direct and indirect, result from Cannon AFB's operations in eastern New Mexico, with over \$210 million dollars a year in economic value to our State. Most of the economic impact is realized in Curry County, but Cannon has an impact in many counties in New Mexico.

And on a personal note, last month I visited with the brave and dedicated men and women at Cannon AFB, and toured that outstanding facility. I heard incredible stories of service to this country from many of them who had just returned from dangerous duty in Iraq, Afghanistan, or one of many other locations around the world. There are no more patriotic, well-trained, or effective troops than those at Cannon. I want to let each one of them know that I will fight as hard for you as you have been fighting for our country.

The good news is that our other three bases are safe and although we may lose 231 jobs, it could have been much worse. Still, we will not give up on even one job without making our best case for New Mexico to the Base Commission. I congratulate the community leaders, the commanders, and our Commission members who have given such important support to our bases and we will continue to work to make sure these bases are not added to the list in the coming months.

But, let me reiterate that I am extremely disappointed that Cannon AFB is on the Defense Department closure list. I totally disagree with their decision. The 27th Fighter Wing should not be inactivated. As the Air Force and DOD leadership know, Cannon

AFB was in my Congressional District, and I continually provided the Air Force outstanding support with military construction resources. Senator Domenici and Senator Bingaman have always made Cannon AFB a very high priority for their support as well, and I know that Congressman Udall has continued to work hard for Cannon. In my view, Cannon AFB has always been a perfect location for Air Force fighter operations. The Base has many, many advantages--the proximity of the Melrose Range, the availability of air space-which we have worked to enlarge, the lack of ANY encroachment, our outstanding NM weather which is optimum for flying operations, and--superior community support that has been widely appreciated by the Air Force for over 50 years.

Prior to the BRAC announcement, I contacted several of the BRAC Commissioners and asked for their support if a New Mexico installation is threatened. I intend to follow-up my requests with the remaining members of the BRAC Commission immediately. Also, I pledge my Administration's support to the Clovis and Portales community leaders who have worked so hard over many years to look after the needs of Cannon AFB and the outstanding service men and women-and their families-who are essential members of their communities. We will fight hard to overturn the DOD recommendation.

Background

ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT

During my campaign for Governor three years ago, I decided that we needed to establish an office at the State level to work closely with our community advocacy groups, and one of my first actions as Governor was to establish the Office of Military Base Planning and Support. We asked the Legislature to support our request with continued funding of the Office, and to authorize the establishment of the Military Base Planning Commission-Senator Ingle and Rep Saavedra carried the legislation for us. The NM Legislature supported my requests unanimously, and our Commission, led by the Lieutenant Governor, and composed of those community leaders who have been involved with their installations for many years, has worked tirelessly to identify appropriate state-level issues which complement on-going community initiatives; here are some of them:

NEW MEXICO TRAINING RANGE INITIATIVE: This Initiative consists of enlarging the air space available to Cannon AFB and other military users. We facilitated coordination between the Air Force and the Federal Aviation Administration, as well as the Air Force and the commercial airlines-the latter at the Pentagon's request; we have followed up the Training Range Initiative in Washington-both in the Pentagon-several visits---and at FAA headquarters. The Air Force and the FAA are now approaching an agreement.

EDUCATION: The Air Force and the Army have both made the quality of local community education programs a high priority, and I have kept the Secretary of the Air Force and the Army, as well as the Chief of Staff of each service, informed on my education initiatives. We have also kept OSD (Office of the Secretary of Defense) updated on our education programs.

ENCROACHMENT: In order to ensure continued coordination between our municipal planning agencies and our military installations, I issued an Executive Order directing all

State agencies, and requesting that all municipalities work closely with their installations in preserving "military value." Further, the Bureau of Land Management has asked for our assistance in working with our military installations-as well as Ft. Bliss--and we have been glad to assist them in their planning efforts.

NEW MEXICO GROSS RECEIPTS AND COMPENSATING TAXES: Last year, the NM Legislature supported my request for a compensating tax deduction for military research and development; this past Session, the Legislature passed a Gross Receipts Tax deduction for "transformational acquisition programs." This latest initiative was a key element of the joint White Sands Missile Range and Holloman AFB proposal for a major DOD testing and evaluation program-and we expect a favorable decision and announcement any day.

INFRASTRUCTURE: We were able to support two high-profile projects-though not very costly projects--at Cannon AFB and Holloman AFB-reconstruction and rehabilitation of their overpass entrances. Our District II Engineer worked closely with the Civil Engineer squadrons at each base to plan and design the overpass projects.

TRANSFORMATION: Another important State initiative is that of proposing New Mexico and all of our capabilities as a means of supporting Department of Defense transformation efforts. Two members of our New Mexico Team took our Transformation Initiative to the Joint Chiefs of Staff last December, and, just last week, Joint Forces Command, the Combatant Command responsible for DOD transformation, asked New Mexico to meet with them and further discuss our concept. And Cannon AFB plays a critical role in that Initiative.

CLOSING: To close, I want to mention two evaluations of our military facilities that we asked a Washington-based firm to do-a "DOD Criteria Assessment" of each installation, and a Criteria Assessment of all four installations together. All of our installations scored highly on "Military Value," the main set of criteria for closing and/or realigning installations. A few weeks ago, we completed a unique presentation which considers air space, military training routes, commercial air traffic, population densities, and weather-clearly, New Mexico is a perfect location of military aviation activities.

AND CONTINGENCY APPROPRIATIONS: During the recent Session, I set aside \$300,000 in contingency appropriations in the event one of our military installations was threatened-we will be receiving proposals from interested firms next week, and we plan to make that capability available to ongoing community efforts in Clovis and Portales. Our Office of Military Base Planning and Support-and our Commissioners-will be members of their team.