



Congressman Tim Bishop

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BISHOP, ELECTED OFFICIALS WELCOME PENTAGON DECISION TO KEEP 106th AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE OPEN

Washington, DC—Congressman Tim Bishop announced this morning that the 106th Air National Guard base at Gabreski Airport in Westhampton Beach is not on the Department of Defense's list for recommended bases to be closed. The DoD will now submit its recommendations to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC), beginning the next phase of this very important process. The DoD delivered the list to Congress this morning.

"We have cleared an important hurdle today, but I will remain vigilant in fighting to keep the 106th at Gabreski because the process is far from over. Today's decision by the Department of Defense is a tribute to the vital mission performed by the men and women of the 106th, and to the work of the local elected officials and the community at large who have supported the base."

"This is a further recognition of the heroic efforts of Gabreski's 106th Air Rescue Wing both at home and abroad," noted Congressman Steve Israel, the only New York Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee. "As we go forward in the BRAC process, we'll continue to make sure that the commission understands the unique capabilities of Gabreski's rescue wing to protect the homeland and help our forces maintain peace and stability around the world."

"The Air National Guard Base at Gabreski is a vital component of our homeland defense," said Congressman Peter King, Chairman of the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness. "Today's decision is a victory for New York and America."

"This is a major victory for our East End economy and the safety and security of our entire region," said Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy. "Our bi-partisan, intergovernmental lobbying efforts helped snatch victory from the jaws of defeat."

"We are all so relieved that the military base will remain on Eastern Long Island," said Southampton Town Supervisor Patrick A. Heaney. "The base is among the largest employers on the East End, employing 1275 people and bringing in an estimated \$100 million of economic activity annually while providing essential security to all of Long Island and the areas surrounding New York City."

"The 106th is a vital part of our region's coastal defense system and Suffolk County residents can rest easier knowing that this highly decorated unit is not on the Pentagon's list to the BRAC

Commission. Long Island representatives from every level of government are united in the fight to save the 106th. The outpouring of public support is a tribute to the reputation earned by the 106th over years of dedicated service. Our respect and admiration are well placed and I am delighted that the people in Washington appear to recognize the contribution of this outstanding air rescue wing," said Senator Ken LaValle.

"I am thoroughly pleased that the BRAC Commission has recognized the valuable assets of the 106th Air National Guard," stated Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr. "Long Island and all of New York State benefits from the dedication and bravery of the men and women of the 106th and I am truly thankful for the efforts of all the local representatives who have fought so hard for the 106th Air National Guard. New York residents will continue to benefit from their security and rescue capabilities"

"This is a very important moment in our fight to save the 106th, it is a tribute to our community and the great bipartisan coalition which has worked together in this effort. I'm very glad the Pentagon recognizes what we've known all along, that the 106th is vital to our homeland security and is an important member of this community," stated Suffolk County Legislator Jay Schneiderman.

Hank Beck, founder of Gabreski Rescue Initiative Partnership (GRIP) stated, "We are and remain cautiously optimistic that the positive acknowledgment about the 106th RQW at Gabreski Airport in Westhampton Beach that the BRAC commission has received from the DOD is reflective of the efforts and message that has been successfully delivered." Beck continued, "However, GRIP and all it's supporters will remain on alert until the final report is delivered to the President in September."

The BRAC Commission is tasked by the Department of Defense to evaluate the structure of the military in a time of changing conflicts and evolving needs. This step of the process requires the DoD to prepare a list of bases that should be closed or consolidated. The list is presented to the BRAC Commission for further review, which has until September 8, 2005 to submit a revised list to the President for an overall approval or denial of the recommendations. The President then has until November 7, 2005 to send the BRAC list to Congress for approval. Neither Congress, nor the President may amend the Commission's proposal during consideration.

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