

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
FRIDAY, APRIL 26, 1985

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PENTAGON ASSURES DOLE OF MCCONNELL SUPPORT
Weinberger Backs Funding for Wichita Base

WASHINGTON -- In a letter to Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, the Pentagon today reiterated its official position that it supports \$69.6 million in B-1 project funding for Wichita's McConnell Air Force Base. The funding was eliminated by the Senate Armed Services Committee. The measure will now be considered by the full Senate, in debate over military construction funding for Fiscal Year 1986.

"This pledge of support by the Pentagon means we have cleared the first hurdle in the debate over McConnell's future," said Dole. "The next step will be to persuade the Senate of the cost and mission effectiveness of including McConnell as the fourth B-1 Bomber base."

Following is the full text of the letter from Deputy Secretary of Defense William Taft to Senator Dole:

Dear Bob:

I am writing with respect to the concerns you have raised regarding the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) action on our request for military construction at McConnell Air Force Base. As you know, the President's Budget included B-1 projects totalling about \$69.6 million for the following: facilities for avionics maintenance (2.1), operations (3.5), and communications (1.3); security improvements (7.3); hydrant fueling system (18.4); integrated maintenance facility (6.4); maintenance hangar (17.0); convoy roads (3.7); weapons storage (6.3); facilities for support equipment (1.9) and warhead maintenance/inspection (.75); and altering utilities systems (1.0). The SASC mark deleted these funds.

We believe these funds were cut because McConnell AFB was on a list provided by the Department to Senator Goldwater in response to his request for examples of bases that could be closed and yield savings to the Department in future years. In forwarding that list to Senator Goldwater, the Secretary emphasized that he did not support the closing of McConnell, or any of the other bases on the list, because the Department could not afford the near-term costs of such closure. That remains our position.

The funds requested for McConnell are needed for support of the B-1 program. We hope they can be restored to the bill.