

Keep Air Force Institute in Ohio!

by Judy DeMarco

"The evidence clearly illustrates that keeping AFIT open and operational at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base is the best alternative for the Air Force, the Department of Defense, and certainly the taxpayer."—Ohio Sen. Mike Dewine

"Moving AFIT out of the Dayton community would destroy the unique opportunities AFIT students now have to learn from and work with leaders in the Air Force, scientific, and procurement communities, with no conceivable offsetting gain in educational value."—Former Air Force Secretary F. Whitten Peters.

The Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC), on Aug. 10, heard testimony from, among many others, those speaking for the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio. The Commission was considering consolidating the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT), located at Wright-Patterson, with the Naval Postgraduate School and Defense Language Institute, both in Monterey, Calif.

The AFIT is the Air Force's graduate school and professional continuing-education institution. It provides responsive education, research, and consulting programs through its three resident schools: the Graduate School of Engineering and Management, the School of Systems and Logistics, and the Civil Engineer and Services School. It also manages educational programs of Air Force officers at civilian universities through its Civilian Institution Program.

The results of a number of studies were submitted on that day to the Commission, detailing not only the amazing cost-effectiveness of the AFIT at its current, Dayton, Ohio location, but also the phenomenal increases in expenses for, first, moving the operation to Monterey, paying West Coast real estate and building prices, and second, maintaining its operations there, in terms of housing costs, and in terms of the privatization of services that would be necessary.

Republican Rep. Michael Turner testified, "The annual additional cost, just of basic housing allowance by moving AFIT to Monterey, would be about \$12 million." Dan Curran, President of the University of Dayton, said, "privatizing AFIT is not worth the initial cost because . . . the scenario for privati-



Here, more than 230 scientists and engineers are receiving graduate degrees from the Air Force Institute of Technology at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, in Ohio. AFIT produces first-rate labs, engineers, and scientists. University of Dayton President Dan Curran pointed out that "the scenario for privatizing AFIT's graduate programs will take more than 100 years to produce savings."

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The relocation and privatization of AFIT would direct a lot of taxpayer's money into the housing and real estate bubble of California. In addition, taking the Institute away from its current location rips it away from the partnerships and affiliations with military and civilian institutions of unique capacities in the nation.

Senator Dewine testified: "The Air Force research labs are positioned right next to AFIT, giving AFIT students access to about 3,000 of the brightest, most experienced scientists and engineers in the world, more than any single location in the world. This location also offers students the ability to receive instruction about classified technology, which cannot be done in a civilian institution."

Dan Curran pointed out, "I think if you look at the labs—just taking one area—research conducted at the base in nano materials and nano characterization, I don't think you see the quality of labs anywhere else in the country that they have at the base. And again, AFIT students have access to that, have access to the composite labs. It's a significant research initiative there."

And about the strong center of excellence of private universities in the Dayton area, Curran said: "It is the University of Dayton; it is Wright State. But also, in the research area, you're talking about Ohio State, one of the top ten research institutions in the country in areas like fuel cells and so on; you're talking about Cincinnati, one of the leading medical universities. So that synergy is very important. It helps the universities move forward and challenge our students to go into the sciences, to go into engineering. And certainly it benefits the AFIT students and the Air Force."