

U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison
September 2, 2004

Overseas Basing Commission Hearing Statement

I would like to thank the Overseas Basing Commission for inviting me to speak at their first hearing. I cannot stress how important this mission is to both the DoD and to the servicemen which serve so selflessly in the defense of our great nation.

I welcomed President Bush's recent announcement that the Pentagon will reassign up to 70,000 uniformed personnel and nearly 100,000 families and civilian employees, with many returning to the U.S. In doing so, potentially hundreds of facilities will be closed. I knew this kind of repositioning was inevitable and this announcement makes the mission of the Overseas Basing Commission even more important. It will provide detailed information on installations and infrastructure which will be very useful to both DoD and Congress as critical decisions are made. Our foresight in establishing the Commission gives us a start in this important process.

As Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, I have encouraged the Pentagon to consider overseas basing issues, including requiring a DoD report on specific long-range stationing plans for U.S. bases overseas. I also have held many congressional hearings to further prompt DoD officials to overhaul the U.S. base alignment overseas and I have focused military construction funding for overseas facilities to those with a clear certain future use.

The Subcommittee on Military Construction learned in our first hearing in July heard that, if the Pentagon returns 29,000 soldiers from Germany ñ approximately two divisions ñ we would save \$400-\$575 million annually and give our troops superior training capabilities and opportunities. With the President's decision to return 70,000 service members from overseas locations, I fully expect savings.

For years I have worked to reform America's overseas basing structure to better address current and future security needs. We are now at a crossroads. With the help of the Commission and the information you receive from distinguished experts in their respective fields, we will be better positioned to both understand what overseas basing and its associated infrastructure is needed to face future threats.

I thank the Commissioners for dedicating your time and expertise for this task. I look forward to your report and any recommendations you will have to improve our overseas basing and infrastructure.