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December 12, 2014

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

PERSONAL

Dear Senator Graham:

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, I am writing again to ask that you take action on the commitment that the two past Chiefs of Staff of the Air Force have made to the Sumter community: returning the three star general who commands Air Force Central Command (AFCENT) back to Shaw Air Force Base. The time to do this is now.

The President has submitted for Senate approval the name of a general who has served at Shaw in the past and who has many friends in our community. The President also has made it clear that active combat participation by our military in Afghanistan will cease very soon. Although dangerous activities continue in Iraq and the surrounding region, I cannot imagine that the commander of AFCENT will have much time to spend with his family. One would think that having a commander's family in a very dangerous area of the world during active hostilities is not very wise policy. I have summarized these points in previous correspondence. They are important factors that confirm why several previous studies had rejected the organizational structure General Schwartz adopted when he became Chief of Staff of the Air Force.

We in Sumter are always concerned about the defense of our country. We have hosted our military neighbors in every war since World War II. We support our troops and the command structure of the United States military. Shaw is important to Sumter and South Carolina economically; but our community slogan is "Uncommon Patriotism". We put our country first. Yet we are always wary of any effort to take away missions from Shaw, just as we are wary of any steps that diminish the prestige of our base.

Removing the three star from Shaw is a loss of prestige for Shaw. It means that we have lost the commander of a major mission—and his spouse and family. If this situation continues, it may well mean that we lose the mission altogether. This would be a terrible loss for our base and probably be detrimental in future Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) proceedings. Yet our concerns are not self-serving.

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Sumterites become very involved when there is a BRAC. You will find quite a few here who know lots of detail about why Army Central Command (ARCENT) was moved to Shaw and what was done to accommodate that move. However, no one in or out of uniform knows more about this particular topic than General T. Michael Moseley. As you remember, General Moseley commanded both 9th Air Force and AFCENT during intense periods of combat operations and during the peak of personnel deployment numbers for operations in Afghanistan, across the Horn of Africa, in Yemen, and, of course, in Iraq. During this same period his command duties included providing personnel and aircraft for protection of the United States through Operation Noble Eagle. General Moseley has also served as the Joint Staff's Deputy Director for Political and Military Affairs (DDPMA) for the Middle East, where he was the "go to, policy guy" for the Middle East. He was selected by President George W. Bush to continue his service as the Air Force Vice-Chief of Staff and later as the Chief of Staff during five more years of Middle East combat. During his time in the Pentagon, General Moseley was personally and closely involved in overseeing the last BRAC. General Moseley spent 22 years deployed. He knows the specific combat challenges, the command organizational imperatives, and the political and military challenges facing us in the Middle East. He now serves as a Board Director of the East-West Institute; so he still focuses on the Middle East and Asia.

Perhaps most importantly to my concerns in this letter, he was instrumental in the relocation of 3rd Army/ARCENT to Shaw and South Carolina. In bringing two of our military's most historic units (9th Air Force / 3rd Army) to Shaw, he took cooperation between the services and "jointness" to a new level. While he was Chief, General Moseley directed multiple analytical studies to look at the most effective combat organizational templates for the Air Force and the CENTCOM theater. I urge you to reach out to General Moseley on this subject. I believe he would be honored to assist you in providing the background, the history and the consequences of the current command template, which is not the best plan. He can also explain why it is critical to get the AFCENT commander back at Shaw now. AFCENT commanders before General Mosley, and General North after him, also performed their duties superbly, with their homes at Shaw. These generals all knew that their families were safe in Sumter, and their spouses were leaders on base and in the Sumter community. Now is the time to get this situation back as it should be. It will require personnel action by the Air Force, which should be accomplished at the time of the upcoming AFCENT change of command.

I fear AFCENT will gravitate towards Washington if you do not insist that the three star flag of AFCENT be returned to Shaw when the next change of command occurs.

Please do not take this letter lightly. This has been going on now for over five years. If this situation is not changed soon, I am very concerned that it will become permanent. As you know, there is a lot of competition for these commands. The talk we hear now is that this move is desired or required by CENTCOM, which is quite different from what you have been told.

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Thank you for your work on behalf of our country, our state, and our community here in Sumter. I hope that you will have a wonderful Christmas.

Your friend,



Joseph I. McElveen, Jr.
Mayor

P.S. Senator, I am sorry this letter is so long. Yet this is a critical issue for Sumter, Shaw and South Carolina. Please do not just send me the standard "I got your letter" response. Rather than call or write to me, I ask that you contact General Moseley. If you do not have his contact information, I will send it to you; or I will ask him to contact your office to arrange a time to talk.

pc: Governor Nikki Haley
Secretary Robert M. Hitt, III, S. C. Department of Commerce
Sumter County Legislative Delegation Members
Bob Smith, Chairman, Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce
Greg Thompson, Chairman, Sumter Development Board
Gen. (ret) T. Michael Moseley, United States Air Force
Shaw-Sumter Community Council Executive Committee Members