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MEDIA CONTACT: Jeff Sadosky | [202-224-5190](tel:202-224-5190)

***Mansfield News Journal* Highlights Portman's Efforts To Save Mansfield Jobs**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, *The Mansfield News Journal* highlighted Portman's efforts to proactively prepare for a potential BRAC process and prevent painful repercussions to the Mansfield Air National Guard Base following the Air Force's decision to eliminate the C-27J program. Discontinuation of this program would result in the retiring of four C-27Js at the 179th Airlift Wing at Mansfield Lahm Airport, placing the jobs of more than 750 men and women at risk.

Portman, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, has pulled together the Ohio congressional delegation and Major General Deborah Ashenhurst, the Adjutant General of the Ohio National Guard, Thursday to discuss the effects of these proposed cuts.

Article included below.

The Mansfield News Journal

Senators Tackle Loss Of C-27Js

By Bryan Bullock

February 8, 2012

Ohio's senators have meetings planned this week to discuss the effect of proposed defense cuts, including repercussions for Mansfield Air National Guard Base. The Air Force has detailed plans to cut the service by almost 10,000 active National Guard and Reserve airmen next year as part of a broad move to downsize and shift capabilities around the country.

The plans include retiring the four C-27Js at 179th Airlift Wing at Mansfield Lahm Airport.

Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, is scheduled to meet Thursday with Adjutant General of the Ohio National Guard, Maj. Gen. Deborah Ashenhurst, to discuss the C-27J program and efforts to secure a follow-on mission for the base should the aircraft program be eliminated. Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio,

plans to meet Thursday with the entire Ohio Congressional delegation and the Adjutant General to discuss the same subject matter.

In a conference call with reporters Tuesday, Portman said he is concerned about the elimination of the C-27J program.

"I think this would be a loss to the Air Force and our capability," Portman said about cuts at the 179th Airlift Wing. "It's also the loss of about 800 manpower positions if they dissolve the entire unit."

More than 750 men and women, including 204 full-time airmen, are based at the 179th.

Portman said if the unit was dissolved, he thought the 200th Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineers (Red Horse) unit at the Mansfield base would continue.

The base debuted a new, multi-million dollar Red Horse facility and Armed Forces Reserve Center last fall.

Brown, Portman and Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Urbana, have vowed to fight cuts proposed for the C-27J program. Legislators have said the aircraft -- a twin-engine, multipurpose cargo plane -- has proven cost-effective and important for national security.

The Mansfield base has two C-27Js deployed in Afghanistan.

Portman said the proposed defense cuts also would reduce aircraft at Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base in Columbus and Youngstown Air Reserve Station. He said he believes the Youngstown unit would remain operational, but the Columbus unit would face a reduction in manpower.

"I'm sure the Air Force has an analysis that they've gone through for all these bases, but we want to be sure they are hearing (our concerns) directly from us," Portman said.

Portman plans to discuss the defense cuts and a proposal for another round of federal base realignment and closure (BRAC) studies Thursday. He said the proposed cuts will be clearer once President Barack Obama releases his budget next week.

In 2005, the federal government considered shutting down the Mansfield base by 2010 as part of a BRAC study. The military decided to keep the base open and the unit transitioned from the C-130 to the smaller, newer C-27J.

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Barbara Walter
Chairman
Richland Co. Republican Party