



NIAGARA COUNTY
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: CHRISTIAN W. PECK
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER
TEL: (716) 439-7241
FAX: (716) 439-7058

March 2, 2010

COUNTY LEADERS STAND UP FOR OUR AIR BASE
\$40K CONTRIBUTION WILL HELP FUND NIMAC 2010 OPERATIONS

SANBORN—Reaffirming Niagara County's commitment to protecting the 3,000 jobs at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, county lawmakers presented the Niagara Military Affairs Council with a check for \$40,000 Monday.

This maintains the county's funding level for the organization from 2009 levels, despite the county's previous dedicated revenue stream for funding NIMAC—its share of Seneca Niagara Casino slot revenues—being legislative stripped from the county by Assemblywoman Francine DelMonte, D-Niagara Falls. County lawmakers tapped the few remaining casino dollars in the county's coffers, as well as a hybrid of other revenue streams, to help protect the air base.

Legislature Chairman William L. Ross, C-Wheatfield, and Legislators Kyle R. Andrews, D-Wilson, and Danny W. Sklarski, D-Niagara, presented the funds to Merrell Lane, the chairman and organizer of NIMAC. NIMAC was first organized to fight back against a mid-1990s BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) by Washington bureaucrats.

"The BRAC process comes along every so often, and it's through the hard work of Merrell Lane and the support of our community that we've been able to secure federal dollars from Washington to bring them back to Niagara County and get them reinvested into the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station to make it a viable and sustainable entity moving into the future," Andrews said. "That means a great deal to our community and our surrounding communities, because there are over 3,000 jobs at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station."

NIMAC will use the funds to continue to coordinate local grassroots efforts to shield the base from closure as well as for liaison efforts with Congress and the Pentagon.

"It's certainly our mission and NIMAC's mission to protect those 3,000 jobs now, and into the future," Andrews, an Army Reserve officer who serves as the Legislature's liaison to NIMAC, said.

Sklarski, the town of Niagara Democrat who was the first county lawmaker to join the NIMAC effort 14 years ago, reaffirmed the importance of NFARS to the economy of the Niagara region.

"Not only does this air base support more than 3,000 men and women from this area, but they contribute more than \$100 million annually to the local economy," Sklarski said. "And this is something we absolutely have to maintain."

Lane, who joined the three lawmakers at podium crowned by a model of the Bell X-1, the sound barrier-breaking jet piloted by legendary aviator Chuck Yeager and built in Wheatfield, vowed NIMAC would persevere in its efforts to preserve the air base.

"This funding will go a long way toward keeping our efforts going in Washington and the local communities," Lane said. "This is such a major employer, and it's just so important that we keep it going and keep it strong. We're working on about \$25 million in new projects that will be coming to the base in the next couple of years."

Lane also expressed his gratitude to county lawmakers and taxpayers for backing NIMAC's efforts.

"I'd like to thank the Niagara County Legislature and the citizens of Western New York who took this step to keep our efforts going in Washington and locally," Lane said. "We'll continue the work."

###