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NEWS RELEASE

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A Jewel in the Gem State **by Senator Larry Craig**

There is an old saying, “Behind every great man, there is a great woman.” I certainly can’t disagree with that. If I could take some liberty with that expression, though, I’d adapt it a little bit, so it says “Behind every great organization, there is a great community.” This is definitely true of one of the premier organizations in Idaho – Mountain Home Air Force Base (MHAFB).

On March 30, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates announced that Mountain Home Air Force Base had been chosen to receive the 2007 Commander-in-Chief’s Annual Award for Installation Excellence. Only one installation from each branch of the military receives this award per year. Mountain Home was selected as the top U.S. Air Force Base, beating out installations all over the world.

About 85 active-duty Air Force installations competed for the award this year, and from that field, three finalists were chosen. Mountain Home beat out Columbus Air Force Base in Mississippi and Hurlburt Field Air Force Base in Florida for the top prize. MHAFB performed well in all areas evaluated. In particular, Air Force evaluators rated MHAFB’s youth center as the “best seen to date.”

Over the years, I have worked very closely with the different Wing Commanders at Mountain Home Air Force Base. We’ve tried to ensure that their installation will provide our soldiers with the best living conditions and optimal training space to ensure that should they be called to duty, they would be fully prepared.

I know firsthand that the work being done both at home and abroad by our airmen and soldiers at Mountain Home Air Force Base is among the best our military can offer. Now, the entire nation knows as well. This honor only reinforces the pride Idahoans have in our men and women in the military for the good work they do and the sacrifices they make.

Having said that, I can’t limit the credit solely to the installation itself. I’m sure that Wing Commander, Col. Tony Rock would agree that all the people of Idaho help make MHAFB what it is today. Every time I get a chance, I let leaders at the Pentagon know how much Idaho supports the United States Air Force and all our military branches.

Idahoans have sent countless care packages to airmen, soldiers and sailors who have been deployed overseas. Some headed up efforts to round up phone cards so servicemembers could call home for free during the holiday season. Others worked to make sure the family members left behind

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by deployed soldiers have emotional, material, or financial support. And every year, the City of Mountain Home organizes an “Air Force Appreciation Day” celebration that includes a parade, which organizers claim is the largest in the state.

Clearly, Idahoans deeply appreciate the sacrifices made by military members and their families, so we do our best to show that appreciation and give back whenever we can. I think this often-repeated message of welcoming and gratitude, which swells up from the grassroots of our state, helps the men and women of Mountain Home Air Force Base. It lets them know that they are honored members of the greater community of Idaho. Apparently, the Pentagon has taken notice as well.

Today, I not only congratulate Mountain Home Air Force Base for this remarkable achievement, but also the people of Idaho. You are the great community behind that great organization.