



DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1010 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1010

BRAC Commission

AUG 09 2005

Received

July 20, 2005

The Honorable John Warner
Chairman, Senate Armed Services Committee
Washington, D.C. 20610-8060

Senator
Dear Senator,

We are in agreement regarding NAS Oceana. NAS Oceana is the most suitable option of all East Coast tactical aviation bases for the present and is manageable for the foreseeable future. It does, however, have significant encroachment issues that pose operational risks, particularly when the Joint Strike Fighter is introduced, which will bring with it higher noise levels. Ultimately, we will need to pursue a long-range strategy with the local community that ensures that Oceana will remain a viable Master Jet Base.

Please be advised that my letter to the Base Closure and Realignment Commission on July 14 was prepared in the context of an Oceana question asked at the 17 May hearing, specifically, what would the Department do if it had a "clean sheet of paper." Note that we did not cite alternate facilities to NAS Oceana as, in the Navy view and as stated in testimony to the Commission, there are no existing alternate facilities to accomplish the NAS Oceana function. In the ideal world, the Navy would build a new air station, able to accommodate both legacy and planned high-performance airplanes commensurate with industrial viability and community considerations. Our experience to date, however, is that building a new air station would be extraordinarily difficult, for any number of reasons.

The Department stands firmly behind its recommendation to keep NAS Oceana open.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew England", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6050

July 19, 2005

The Honorable Gordon England
Acting Deputy Secretary of Defense
1010 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1010

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I was stunned to read the letter you sent on July 14, 2005 to BRAC Commission Chairman Principi, responding to the Commission's request for information on proposed scenarios for additional base closures. In reference to the future of Naval Air Station Oceana, Virginia, your letter stated "We concluded the best long-term basing alternative for East Coast Navy tactical aviation would be to build a new 21st century naval air station...but such action would optimally occur outside the BRAC window." Your letter continued, "Selecting a location and building from the ground up is by far the preferred choice as it gives us the most flexibility to ensure we accommodate future capabilities, while allowing for sufficient 'buffers' to preclude potential encroachment issues."

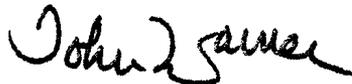
I find it hard to believe that in the midst of the BRAC process, the Department would make such a surprising announcement. Given the many requirements for increased funding for the Navy to maintain adequate levels of shipbuilding, why would the Department even consider a basing alternative that would cost in excess of \$1.4 billion to replicate the capabilities currently existing at NAS Oceana? Where is the written documentation used to justify this conclusion? I request that you provide the Committee the detailed analysis, data, and procedural steps that led to such a dramatic decision.

Making such a troubling announcement in the context of a routine response to the BRAC Commission casts a dark cloud over the local communities surrounding NAS Oceana that have patriotically supported the U.S. Navy for 65 years. Such an announcement puts them in a permanent state of limbo that will linger well beyond the BRAC process. The local communities have been aggressively cooperating with the base to address issues related to the encroachment of local development—a common issue on many other installations in a suburban setting. In testimony before the BRAC Commission on July 18, 2005, Vice Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Willard described the encroachment issues regarding Oceana "as manageable." How can the Navy now continue to ask in good faith for assistance from local community leaders if the Department is stating its intent of building a new Master Jet base at another location?

This is simply not the way I would expect a significant basing decision to be made.

I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,



John Warner
Chairman