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The Honorable Anthony J. Principi  
Chairman, 2005 Base Closure and Realignment Commission  
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600  
Arlington, VA 22202

Subj: NAS/JRB Willow Grove, PA

Dear Chairman Principi:

I believe you and other members of your Commission are scheduled to visit NAS/JRB Willow Grove, PA on or about 7 July 2005. I would like to make a few observations and suggestions for your consideration prior to your visit.

First, I assume the Commanding Officer, Captain Myers USNR, will not be advocating keeping the air station open. I have read his statement about the proposed closing of the base and it is clear to me that his script was prepared in Washington, DC and he is under strict orders to see that the base is shut down, for the ostensible purpose of enabling the Navy to shift funds from its infrastructure costs, such as NAS/JRB Willow Grove, to support the unsustainable shipbuilding program in which the new aircraft carrier will cost \$13 billion plus, a new destroyer \$3 billion plus and a new submarine \$3 billion plus also. The Navy is self-destructing with this program and is jeopardizing overall national security by sacrificing operating bases such as Willow Grove to help pay for this folly.

I strongly believe that NAS/JRB Willow Grove should not only be kept open but REALIGNED by assigning additional Navy, Air Force and Army units to it. NAS/JRB Willow Grove is an outstanding example of how inter-service cooperation can and must work throughout our entire military structure. Willow Grove is the way of the present and increasingly the future, not a Navy-identified wasteful cost that should be discarded. Willow Grove represents what the services will need in the future, especially depending as the several services are now- and will be increasingly, on reserve forces to augment active duty personnel in time of need. We don't know when that time of need will arise in the future. But it will. And the Navy is preparing to abandon a facility that will be critical in any future crisis.

Sending Willow Grove's assets to McGuire AFB is another mistake. McGuire is very vulnerable to a RBC (radiological, biological, chemical) attack. While McGuire may not be physically destroyed, it will nonetheless be rendered inoperable for an unknown period of time. Then where do you go? Willow Grove represents a back-up location for just such an emergency. Let the land go to developers and that resource, now known as NAS/JRB Willow Grove, will be gone forever. There are no viable open areas left in the northeast to develop an alternative facility in the future. NAS/JRB Willow Grove is too valuable a strategic asset to close it down. It should be expanded.



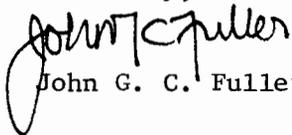
Chairman Anthony J. Principi

Moving assets to McGuire AFB will only make McGuire less efficient and overcrowded. This is not cost effective. The military services in general, and the Navy in particular, are saturated with costly policies, practices and procedures that should be examined carefully first, before degrading the physical plant which is fundamental to the effective operation of our armed services. The Navy, very wasteful with personnel in the past, is trying to improve, but much more can and must be accomplished. Only then, and on a multi-service basis, should closing bases such as Willow Grove be considered. In the future, many military bases should become joint, multi-service operations, such as Willow Grove is now, which will allow for substantial savings in operating costs if managed properly. Closing bases such as Willow Grove in anticipation of a one-time savings for accounting purposes is counter productive. Among other things it assumes that the costs estimated for closing bases is correct. The numbers given are probably far below and final, real cost. The anticipated savings will prove to be elusive if not non-existent.

This is a game which the 2005 Base Closure and Realignment Commission should bear in mind. You are now a critical link between military preparedness and readiness in 2005 and where they will be, need to be and must be in 2015. Our ability to respond to any threat to the United States must remain. That is where NAS/JRB Willow Grove fits in.

Thank you for reading this letter. You have a very difficult task to perform and I hope you will carefully consider every facet of every decision in a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional environment before you make your final recommendations.

Sincerely,

  
John G. C. Fuller