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Mark S. Schweiker
President & CEO

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July 5, 2005

Mr. Anthony Principi
Chairman
Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)
2521 S. Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Chairman Principi:

As a regional business advocacy group, the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce (GPCC) is greatly interested in preserving the current operations of the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Willow Grove, located in Horsham, PA. It is important to emphasize that the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base plays an important military role in the protection of the United States of America (USA) and serves as an economic catalyst for a significant part of our region. Let me elaborate.

As you likely know, the strategic importance of maintaining this 1,100-acre installation in the northeastern USA corridor is vital not only for supporting our efforts in Iraq and the international war on terrorism, but for the local economy as this facility supports 10,000 jobs and pumps \$375 million in annual income into the area. In light of its essential economic nature, the Department of Defense (DoD) has been alarmingly silent on the planned future use of the Willow Grove Base land. As a result, the community remains greatly concerned about the economic impact of closure.

Militarily, Willow Grove is the model of joint use base facilities whose strengths include:

- Working joint operations including all services except the Coast Guard;
- Critical/strategic location near all northeast corridor major metropolitan and port areas;
- Vital part of **homeland defense** and efforts to secure our East Coast;
- Modern, 8,000 ft. runway and modern Digital Radar Air Control System – one of only four in the United States available for emergency preparedness and operations;
- Strong community support has been provided for many years.

In light of these obvious military dimensions and strengths, the region's business leaders call into question the closure decision and related DoD judgments. And with sound basis.

Mr. Anthony Principi
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It is the understanding of several local elected officials that based on available DoD reference materials, at least seven significant and substantial deviations have been found in the DoD process. They would include: erroneous assumptions and lack of analysis in assessing the jointness of NAS JRB Willow Grove; substantial miscalculations in the assessment of the availability of land, facilities and associated airspaces; lack of consideration of the strategic location of NAS JRB Willow Grove with respect to homeland defense and security; large deviations and inconsistencies in the evaluation process; improper deactivation of an Air National Guard Wing; inadequate consideration of demographics, manpower and skill set losses; and inadequate consideration of future mission capabilities.

Given the above observations about closure process, we would ask that the BRAC Commission work to understand and address these concerns. In my estimation, once these questions are properly answered, BRAC will conclude that it is counterproductive to national defense interests to close the Willow Grove base.

It also stands to reason that there will be significant disruption to the regional economy should the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Willow Grove cease operation.

In advance, I thank you for your consideration of these concerns.

Sincerely,



Mark S. Schweiker

cc: The Honorable Arlen Specter
The Honorable Rick Santorum
The Honorable Allyson Schwartz
The Honorable Michael Fitzpatrick
The Honorable Edward G. Rendell