DCN 5703

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 27, 2005

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

Dear Chairman Principi,

We are writing to follow-up on a BRAC recommendation that we believe adversely impacts the training of our Army and law enforcement personnel. The Department of Defense recommended the Explosive Ordnance Device (EOD) Department be relocated from Redstone Arsenal, AL, to Fort Lee, VA. This recommendation was made without fully taking into account the synergy between the EOD elements of the Army, the FBI, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF), all of whom are currently in place in Huntsville.

Redstone Arsenal is the current home to the Army EOD Training Department which manages EOD proponency for the Army. It has ample facilities, proven training programs, and an excellent live-fire range for the training of EOD personnel. Redstone has the immense land areas necessary to provide the required safety standoffs for EOD training and events. The Arsenal currently dedicates 1,000 acres for EOD training and has set aside an additional 500 acres for expanded training requirements for emerging munitions. In addition to ignoring the existing synergies for EOD training at Redstone, DoD also failed to include the cost of the specialized EOD training ranges, the land and EOD training complex. Further, DoD did not include in its analysis the substantial time and cost related to permitting for new explosives ranges at Fort Lee and the necessary EPA assessments.

In addition to providing Army EOD training, the EOD Department at Redstone also manages the FBI Hazardous Devices School (HDS), which trains civilian law enforcement and public safety personnel in the design, construction, deactivation, and disposal of improvised explosive and incendiary devices, to include weapons of mass destruction. Construction has been completed on an urban live-fire training facility for the HDS at a cost of $25 million. ATF is currently in the process of locating a training facility at Redstone in 2006. Further, the Senate's FY06 Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations bill includes $5 million for development of an Explosives Training and Research Facility for the ATF to provide post blast research and training at Redstone. This arrangement provides great synergy for Army EOD soldiers and civilian bomb technicians by giving both access to the same facilities, techniques, and intelligence information.

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We believe it would be a significant step backwards for the Army's training to be moved to another location. This decision should have been made in concert with the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice to ensure joint training is not jeopardized. It has been a consistent policy of the United States since September 11, 2001, that to improve homeland security, efforts must be made to increase and improve interagency cooperation and synergy. Moving the EOD Department to Fort Lee runs counter to this policy.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and your service on the Commission. We are proud of the contributions our state makes to meet our nation's defense needs and can assure you that Alabama is well-poised to absorb any growth that comes from your recommendations.

Sincerely,

Richard Shelby

Jeff Sessions

Bud Cramer