



BRAC Commission

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Received

August 2, 2005

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

Dear Chairman:

I am writing on behalf of the sailors and Marines in units based at NAS Atlanta, slated for closure by the Department of Defense.

I think I am uniquely qualified in this regard. In addition to serving as the Commanding General, Marine Corps Mobilization Command during the activations for Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, I was also Commanding General, 4th Marine Aircraft Wing, USMCR, during two previous BRAC rounds.

The issue that transcends all others is the readiness of Navy and Marine reserve units to mobilize, deploy and be employed in combat. The closure of NAS Atlanta, and the movement of the tenant units to other sites will cause a derogation of this readiness.

Specifically, none of the three sites to which these units are to be relocated can match the Atlanta area in the proximity of potential prior-service recruits with the appropriate skills. One of the sites, Warner-Robins AFB, to which Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 773 as well as Marine Aircraft Group 42 is to be relocated, has only 28 prior-



service Marines with appropriate MOSs within 50 miles. By contrast, NAS Atlanta has over 1,100 such Marines within 50 miles.

This demographic reality does not affect only reserve recruiting and retention. When a reserve unit is located in a geographically isolated area, realistic training suffers. When MCAS El Toro was closed, Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 764 moved to Edwards AFB, a 3 1/2 hour drive into the Mojave Desert. The squadron that was moved had given themselves the call sign "Moonlight," because they were justifiably proud of the amount of tactical training on night vision goggles they were accomplishing *throughout the month*, not just on drill weekends. They were able to do this because most of them lived or worked near the base. Very few of them lived near Edwards AFB, and when the squadron moved, the weeknight training that separated this squadron from others was dramatically reduced. If HMLA-773 moves to Robins, 126 miles from NAS Atlanta, the same thing will happen, and it will be happening to a unit just back from 18 months of combat effectiveness in Afghanistan. In fact, they are still mobilized on the west coast training the next rotation of Marines to Iraq.

Sir, I do not think it is possible to overstate the extent to which reserve operational units are negatively impacted by a move to a less desirable area. Bases which contain mostly headquarters and schools are staffed, by and large, by active-duty personnel, or personnel assigned there temporarily. On the other hand, reserve bases like NAS Atlanta rely heavily on personnel who, unlike active-duty personnel, cannot be ordered to follow a unit to a new location.

There is a better solution. Either keep NAS Atlanta open, relocate one or more of the tenant squadrons across the runway to Dobbins ARB, or better yet, simply convey the NAS property and facilities to Dobbins ARB. Such a conveyance would actually save the administrative overhead of operating the NAS, while avoiding the derogation of combat



readiness that would inevitably accompany a relocation of the tenant units.

At a time in our history when we rely more heavily than ever on the reserve components of our armed forces, the Department of Defense has yet to incorporate measures of efficiency and effectiveness that can avoid some of the mistakes, and subsequent "redirects," of previous BRAC rounds. The unintentional result of their recommendation will have a negative affect on reserve readiness. Your commission can prevent this derogation of readiness.

The forced move of the squadrons based at NAS Atlanta would hurt the personnel involved, but much more importantly, it would damage the ability of our nation to successfully prosecute the Global War on Terror and any subsequent conflicts.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. S. Taylor'.

Larry S. Taylor
MajGen USMCR (ret)