

ANDER CRENSHAW  
4TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA  
DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP  
REPUBLICAN POLICY COMMITTEE

DCN 7158



Executive Correspondence  
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
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FOREIGN OPERATIONS, EXPORT FINANCING  
AND RELATED PROGRAMS  
COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

UNITED STATES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FAX TRANSMISSION  
FROM THE OFFICE OF:  
CONGRESSMAN ANDER CRENSHAW  
FLORIDA, 4<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

BRAC Commission

TO: *Chairman Principi*

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COMMENTS:

FROM:

  *J*   Congressman Ander Crenshaw

\_\_\_ John Ariale *Chief of Staff*

\_\_\_ Lynn Miller *Scheduler/Office Mgr.*

\_\_\_ Erica Striebel *Legislative Director*

\_\_\_ Lee Smith *Legislative Counsel*

\_\_\_ Nathan Riska *Legislative Assistant*

\_\_\_ Todd Shriber *Communications Dir.*

\_\_\_ Davis Berg *Legis Correspondent*

\_\_\_ Jeremiah Sadow *Staff Assistant*

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**Congress of the United States****Washington, DC 20515**

August 8, 2005

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

Dear Chairman Principi,

We would first like to thank you and your fellow Commissioners for all the time and analysis that you have dedicated to ensuring our defense infrastructure is properly aligned for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We would like to highlight an opportunity for the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission to make a transformational change for the Department of the Navy.

As you are aware, the legislation that is guiding the 2005 BRAC round is the result of many hours of congressional hearings and debate. We, in Congress, did not want politics to guide this round of closures as it had in the early 1990s. Through the crafting of the BRAC implementing legislation, we had too often heard how politics, not future military value, guided which installations were kept and which were closed. We believe that the 1993 closure of NAS Cecil Field was one of those decisions that was influenced by more than what was good for the Navy. NAS Cecil Field was a master jet base and home to over 13 F/A-18 fighter squadrons. The 1993 BRAC decision transferred these jets and their accompanying personnel to NAS Oceana, VA.

Today, much has changed in Virginia and Florida since the closure NAS Cecil Field. The area surrounding NAS Oceana, VA has rapidly developed in the past decade. Commercial and residential encroachment has severely effected military operations out of NAS Oceana. NAS Oceana's Outlying Field (OLF) Fentress cannot provide the type of aircraft carrier training as prescribed by the Navy. On the first day of naval aviator training, pilots are taught that in the dangerous environment of landing on a carrier deck, repetition will keep them safe. All training should be the same on land and at sea, repetition is key. However, at NAS Oceana and OLF Fentress Navy pilots must vary their approaches because of the noise restrictions put in place due to residential encroachment. The changed reality at NAS Oceana has caused the Navy to change their longstanding training mantra. With the introduction of the louder and more disruptive F/A 18 E/F Super Hornet aircraft, it is logical to reason that these noise restrictions will only increase at NAS Oceana.

The environment in Florida has also changed, but it has been a change for the better. With the closure of the Vieques training range at Naval Station Roosevelt Roads in Puerto Rico, the Navy relocated its pre-deployment training exercises to the state of Florida due to the unparalleled environment Florida provides. Aircraft stationed at Cecil Field would have access to 200,000 square miles of unlimited supersonic air space in both the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. The immediate training area includes 4

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target complexes with over 85 different tactical aim points accommodating the newest in precision guided munitions and laser tracking weapons. Unlike OLF Fentress, the operating procedures of Cecil Field's OLF Whitehouse provide the same training environment as an aircraft carrier at sea, and the field can be used for daytime and nighttime training exercises.

In addition to the unique and unreplicated training opportunities, Cecil Field is located within twenty minutes of NAS Jacksonville and Fleet Readiness Center – Southeast (formerly know as Navy Air Depot Jacksonville). Fleet Readiness Center – SE has a highly skilled workforce of over 3,500 artisans. These artisans have performed intermediate and depot level maintenance on the F/A 18 aircraft for many years. The original BRAC recommendations of the Secretary of Defense called for consolidation of fleet and depot maintenance activities, this could be easily accomplished if the F/A 18 operational base and Fleet Readiness Center were located across town from one another.

Both you and your fellow Commissioners, along with the Department of the Navy, have realized the realities of today at NAS Oceana. We are writing so you can be fully informed on the wonderful realities that Cecil Field, Jacksonville and the state of Florida can provide to the Navy's Atlantic fighter jet community. Since the Navy's departure in 1999, over \$133 million in Federal, state and city grants have been used to improve and refurbish Cecil Field. In order for Cecil Commerce Center to compete in the commercial world, all aspects of Cecil Field were brought up to modern day standards including improving roads, utilities, drainage and airfield support. The partnership of the city, state and Federal leaders created an environment that allowed new Cecil Commerce Center to flourish, that same partnership will also work effectively to ensure the Navy has the master fighter base they need for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The BRAC Commission has the unique opportunity to make important military decisions out of the normal political vacuum in Washington, DC. We urge you to allow Florida to present the opportunities and advantages that Cecil Field, Jacksonville and the state of Florida can provide the Navy.

We thank you for your time and consideration. If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact one of our offices. Thank you.

Sincerely,

  
ANDER CRENSHAW  
Member of Congress

  
CLIFF STEARNS  
Member of Congress