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The BRAC Commissioners swing into action!

"We've got no other place that's more encroached on," said commissioner James T. Hill, a BRAC Commissioner

Despite (CNO) Clark's insistence that the Navy has reviewed alternatives to Oceana, commissioner Samuel Skinner, another member of the BRAC Commission, "pressed for another look."

In the past few days, CCAJN has received numerous reports from media sources that NAS Oceana came **very close** to being put on the Pentagon's BRAC list, released Friday. Based on our own knowledge, if that be true, then the quote in the Saturday Virginian-Pilot, "...A senior Navy official told reporters in Washington on Friday that the military searched unsuccessfully for another East Coast Base that did not have Oceana's encroachment problems...." strikes us as highly unlikely, and it seems as though some members of the BRAC Commission have already figured that out!

To date, the DOD has apparently produced no backup material to support their assertions. Such backup is surely due the BRAC Commission, let alone the public.

Given that, CCAJN has a number of suggestions for the BRAC Commission, as it pursues its work over the next several months. Although CCAJN is not properly qualified to thoroughly study and analyze home-basing issues, **we know the BRAC Commission is.**

So we ask the Commissioners and their staff to take a "hard look" at the following partial list of alternative, F/A-18 home-basing suggestions, bearing in mind that one of the most important criteria enunciated by the Pentagon in this BRAC round is **"Jointness"** ("we must learn to fight as a Joint Force..."):

1) Marine Corps Air Station(MCAS), Cherry Point, North Carolina.

Cherry Point was the preferred choice during the 1993 BRAC round to home-base all 12 squadrons of F/A-18 Hornets, which were to be relocated from NAS Cecil Field, Florida. The 1995 BRAC redirected all the squadrons to "Oceana or other East Coast installations with adequate capacity." The decision ultimately was to deploy 10 squadrons to Oceana and 2 to MCAS Beaufort, SC. Now, as a result of the 2004 EIS, there are scheduled to be 8 Super Hornets squadrons – plus the FRS training squadron – home-based at NAS Oceana. Two Super Hornet squadrons would be home-based at Cherry Point. It turns out Cherry Point has more than adequate infrastructure capacity to handle at least four squadrons and, with the addition of a parallel runway, could handle all 10 squadrons, plus the FRS. Havelock, NC, and its environs, is a Beach community, not unlike what Virginia Beach may have looked like in the 1960's. Like Virginia Beach, its residents are strong supporters of the military, but unlike Virginia Beach, that community has gone well out of its way to stop encroachment on its base. In fact, that anti-encroachment effort, which is vigorous, is an ongoing one on the parts of elected leaders, business leaders, and community groups in that community. So we ask, if MCAS Cherry Point was satisfactory enough to be ***the preferred location*** for ten squadrons in 1993, what has changed? If anything, the likelihood is that on a comparative basis, its suitability in the scheme of things, **from a Navy perspective**, is very likely much improved!

2) Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS), Beaufort, South Carolina

Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort is already a joint-use facility. Besides seven Marine F/A-18 squadrons, they have two Navy F/A-18 squadrons training there. Yes, there's real estate development, but it's not around the airfield. There are no schools within the Beaufort AICUZ, whereas here in Virginia Beach there are 18. While Beaufort County is the fastest-growing county in South Carolina, somehow the governments there have figured out how to keep development away from the military airspace.

In the last couple of years, for example, Beaufort County partnered 1:1 with the Feds to buy more land under the approach to MCAS-Beaufort from the sea. The County has spent a million dollars matching the Federal Government's million dollars to buy from private landowners 130 key acres under that flyway to the sea, and they're buying more. The stated purpose of the purchases is to keep the land out of development.

The elected officials and business leaders in that community have worked extensively with the military – particularly over the past few years – to actively protect against encroachment. Again, Beaufort is a upscale Beach location with more than sufficient amenities for those who live there. There is also more than sufficient capacity at Beaufort to handle additional F/A-18 squadrons.

3) Pope Air Force Base and Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, both in North Carolina (Remember Jointness!)

We do not know, as yet, too much about these facilities, but we do know that both have adequate excess capacity. Pope AFB was mentioned in the Pentagon's Friday announcement as a candidate for realignment. The only issue we are aware of at Seymour Johnson AFB (near Goldsboro) is that about 40,000 people live in that city. That, of course, compares with 470,000 who live in Virginia Beach, so we would imagine the encroachment issues there are very likely to be much less severe.

That is to say, if the DOD is really concerned about encroachment!

As the BRAC process goes forward, we will be asking that these alternatives – and others that may exist – be studied and analyzed extensively by the BRAC Commission, and that meaningful backup analysis be provided to the public.

We would also encourage officials at other East Coast cities to speak up and make their cases.

Ultimately, in this BRAC round, or beyond, we believe it inevitable that the DOD will come to recognize that it will become increasingly untenable to keep fighter aircraft training at Oceana. Long term planning – and sound logic – suggest it is much better to address these issues sooner, rather than later.



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A reader of the CCAJN News Service forwarded this message to us, which we are providing to you as information for appropriate study, analysis and consideration.

Alternative F/A-18 Home Basing possibilities

"Another alternative F/A-18 home-basing option, this one, with far greater possibilities, is the newly proposed McGuire AFB/Ft Dix/ Naval Air Engineering Station Lakehurst complex in New Jersey.

"NAVAIR at NAES Lakehurst is the world leader in Aircraft Launch and Recovery Equipment (ALRE) and Support Equipment (SE). Their mission is the Aircraft Platform Interface (API), assures that fixed and vertical wing aircraft operate safely and effectively from aircraft carriers, air capable ships and expeditionary airfields worldwide.

"NO ENCROACHMENT PROBLEMS and a bombing range locally at Warren Grove and real catapults and shipboard arresting gears for real world training. Even the next generation Electromagnetic catapult.

Naval Air Engineering Station (NAES) Lakehurst (also known as NAVAIR Lakehurst), is the northeast's largest naval aviation installation and home to the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division, as well as fourteen joint and interagency commands.

"Lakehurst is the world's only provider of full spectrum support for aircraft launch, recovery and support equipment systems for U.S. and Allied Naval Aviation Forces at sea and Marine Corps Expeditionary Aviation Forces ashore. We provide these services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, both from our base here in New Jersey and aboard our deployed ships and with our Marine Expeditionary Forces. From system development, prototyping and manufacturing, testing, training, and in-service engineering, NAES Lakehurst provides our deployed Navy and Marine Corps aviation forces with "one-stop shopping" for all their Aircraft Platform Interface (API) needs. When it comes to deployed Navy and Marine Corps aviation, the NAES Lakehurst motto says it all: *"Without Us, They Don't Go and They Can't Get Back"*.

"NAES Lakehurst is also a joint training and operations base. Host to tenant organizations from Ocean County, the state of New Jersey, the Army, Air Force, National Guard, Naval Reserve, U.S. Public Health Service, and Department of Justice, NAES Lakehurst provides unparalleled mission capability for our tenants while making innovative use of tenant reimbursements to buy down the total installation infrastructure cost to the Department of Defense and the U.S. Taxpayer.

"Finally, NAES Lakehurst is part of a unique, three base "Mega-Base" complex with the Army's Ft. Dix and the Air Force's McGuire AFB. All told, the unique contiguous arrangement of these three bases provides resident organizations with over 42,000 acres of unique capabilities to meet their mission needs, while surrounded by 58,000 acres of state and federally managed land to protect against encroachment. As such, coupled with its "Heritage of Service", NAES Lakehurst truly represents a "Model for the Future".

"We are the largest Naval Aviation facility in the Northeast, with 7,430 acres of land, 368 structures, 298 buildings, two active conventional runways, a 12,000 foot dedicated research and development test runway which is equipped with full scale Aircraft Carrier catapult and arresting gear, three active mile-long test tracks to simulate aircraft landings and six large hangars. Our facilities include engineering offices for over 1,500 technical personnel supporting the API mission, a "Software Engineering Institute's Software Capability Maturity Model (SW-CMM) for the CASS Software Support Activity (SSA)", more than 20 advanced engineering laboratories, training facilities and a 5.7 acre complex of manufacturing and prototyping shops...."
Website: www.lakehurst.navy.mil