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2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 S. Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Commissioners:

The DOD BRAC recommendation to move the Army Research Office (ARO) to Bethesda, MD would severely impair its ability to provide continued leadership in the administration of research for the Army. As a member of the National Academy of Sciences, I ask that you review and reverse this decision for the following reasons:

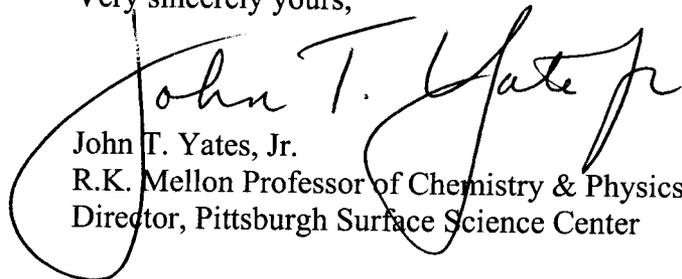
1. The homogenization of research management in DOD to one central location in Bethesda, MD could lead to a more conservative and less innovative approach in selecting research to support the Army and DOD. In 2005, the DOD commissioned NRC-NAS to examine DOD basic research. In their report "Assessment of DOD Basic Research", it is stated that "a variety of research management approaches in the DOD is appropriate to the widely diverse missions and motivations for basic research." Geographical centralization of DOD management could result in some loss of the diversity now present in ARO.
2. Currently about 1/2 of the ARO program managers operate small research programs as adjunct faculty members in the three universities located within a few miles of the ARO office. These are Duke University, the University of North Carolina, and North Carolina State University. Such an opportunity will be lost should the move to Bethesda, MD take place. The faculty status of the ARO program managers provides a unique opportunity for them to participate in frontier basic research, and hence to more effectively manage such research in universities throughout the USA.
3. An informal poll of the ARO management team showed that approximately 70% loss would occur if the move to Bethesda, MD were carried out.

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4. Conversations with a leader at ARO indicated that the creep of applied and developmental research into the 6.1 basic research activities of ARO would be favored by centralization in Bethesda, MD. The NRC-NAS report indicated that while such creep had not occurred substantially in DOD-supported research, DOD should maintain its vigilance to prevent this.

In its more than 1/2 century history, ARO has supplied distinguished leadership in managing DOD research. It has supported some of the best science in the USA and employed a high level of efficiency in so doing. I urge you to reverse the proposal to move ARO to Bethesda, MD, allowing it to continue to excel in its work for DOD at its North Carolina location.

Very sincerely yours,



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