



ASSOCIATION OF UNITED STATES NIGHT VISION MANUFACTURERS

BRAC Commission

JUL 19 2005

July 14, 2005

Received

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

Subject: Proposed Move of Night Vision and Electronic Sensors Directorate (NVESD)

Dear Mr. Principi:

The Association of United States Night Vision Manufacturers would like to respectfully request that the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission give serious consideration to retaining the Night Vision and Electronic Sensors Directorate (Night Vision Laboratories) at their present location in Ft. Belvoir, Virginia.

For your information, our Association was created in 1980 as a result of proposed severe reductions in procurement funding for night vision devices suggested by the U. S Army and the Congress in late 1979. These cutbacks, if implemented would have significantly impacted the industrial mobilization base, and more importantly, slowed or perhaps even stopped, the development of Third Generation technology which is the basis of U. S. night vision superiority today.

During the past twenty-six years, our Association has worked "hand-in-hand" with our government counterparts to address funding shortfalls, export policy issues, acquisition planning and other issues of mutual interest. As a result of these coordinated efforts, we take pride in the role we have played as an industry to make it possible that our war fighters indeed do "own the night."

A very important element of the U. S. night vision technology base is the expertise that is resident at the Night Vision and Electronics Directorate (NVESD). This highly specialized research and development laboratory comprised of over 500 government scientists, engineers and technicians as well as approximately 200 contract and support personnel has been key to the development of night vision technology and is vital to maintaining the technological lead we hold today. As you may already know, the Night Vision Laboratories (NVESD) perform both basic and applied research, play a major role in the transitioning of technology to full scale production, provide a quick response capability to the product managers and finally have in place an extensive manufacturing technology capability.

Therefore, we would like to suggest that the proposed move of the night vision laboratories (NVESD) to Aberdeen as part of the C4ISR ensemble be reconsidered at some length in light of the real possibility of losing our technology advantage in night vision. We would like to submit the following:

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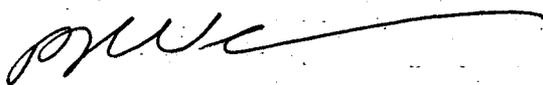
1. The technical expertise at NVESD is indeed unique. If past experience holds, and only 30% to 40% of the technical and support staff agree to move to Aberdeen, our industry would lose a technical support base that would be extremely difficult to replace in the short term. Young graduates today, qualified or even interested, in this very specialized technology, and able to obtain the required security clearances, represent a small percentage of our graduating engineers and scientists. Therefore, we face the very real risk of losing a very key technology base of expertise for some extended period of time.
2. With regard to the concept of consolidation, transfer of technology is no longer restricted by the need for individuals to be in close proximity. Teleconferencing, e-mail, and other means of electronic data transfer is common place today and all of our technical experts are well versed in these communication techniques. Moreover, the laboratories are in close proximity to its primary user of night vision devices, PEO – Soldier, as well as other key using agencies such as the Federal law enforcement and intelligence agencies. Additionally, the Directorate is in close proximity to the Army and Navy Research Laboratories, the Marine Corps Research Center at Quantico, the Defense Research Projects Agency and the Institute for Defense Analysis. Being closely aligned with the managing product managers of PEO – Soldier has been especially advantageous to this user during these troubled times. These close associations have enabled NVESD to be in a position to provide valuable technical assistance to all of these user organizations on a quick turn-around basis.
3. The economics of moving NVESD does not seem to make sense. Whatever the cost is to move the entire facility (estimated to be \$300.0 million), it seems to be an expense that needs not to be incurred and there appears to be no synergy to be gained with the organizations that are under consideration to be transferred to Aberdeen.

On a positive note, leaving NVESD at Ft. Belvoir, keeps the Directorate in close proximity with PEO – Soldier which is the primary user of the equipment that was originally developed by the night vision laboratories. Also, we insure that we retain a very unique and highly sophisticated technical base of expertise and quick reaction capability. Additionally, the Directorate remains in a secure facility which was one of the prerequisites of the proposed realignments.

We certainly understand that much thought and planning has gone into the current BRAC plan. However, we respectfully suggest that reconsideration of the proposed NVESD relocation is worthy of some time and effort by the Commission.

Thank you for any consideration you may give to this matter.

Sincerely,



Robert G. Williams  
President