

EXECUTIVE CORRESPONDENCE

BRAC Commission

August 23, 2005

SEP 01 2005

The Honorable Anthony J. Principi
Chairman, BRAC Commission
Polk Building, Suite 600
2521 South Clark Street
Arlington, VA 22202

Received

Dear Chairman Principi:

Earlier in the Base Realignment and Closure process, we shared with you our reasons for opposing the Department of Defense recommendation to close Naval Submarine Base New London. On August 20, we were surprised and disappointed by DOD's final testimony in support of closing that base. We offer you a response to that testimony, hoping you will consider its main points as you prepare a final decision on SUBASE New London:

1) We strongly disagree with DOD testimony that labeled "emotional" the advice of senior policymakers and retired officers who oppose the closure of SUBASE New London. A review of this correspondence will show that the "emotion" we share is the common understanding of the strategic, industrial, operational, training and readiness value of SUBASE New London. It is the Department of Defense that has defended its recommendation on New London, never once conceding an analytical mistake or oversight in the face of overwhelming evidence from disinterested parties.

After reviewing only a portion of the plan to close New London, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) identified \$400 million worth of errors in the Navy's cost estimate – twenty five percent of the projected savings. Internal Navy documents also reveal substantial errors in the Navy's plan to rebuild New London's assets elsewhere. A rational testimony would have attempted to explain this conflicting information. Instead, witnesses questioned the motives of individuals who have dedicated much of their adult lives to public service, including a former President of the United States, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. We are pleased by news that the independent GAO will review additional parts of the Navy's cost estimate to assist the BRAC Commission in its final decision on New London.

The DOD witnesses summarily dismissed the arguments senior policymakers and retired officers made on the national defense implications of closing SUBASE New London. We have voiced grave concerns about:

- Expected operational readiness problems resulting from overcrowding at Naval Station Norfolk and a lack of nuclear fast attack submarine (SSN) capabilities at SUBASE Kings Bay;
- The disruption of the entire U.S. submarine force at a time when the global subsurface threat is growing exponentially;
- The disruption of submarine training, compounded by the absence of a detailed plan for moving the Naval Submarine School to Kings Bay;
- A loss of subsurface strategic flexibility on the East Coast; and

- The military and industrial risks inherent in a decision to destroy the Nation's center of excellence for undersea warfare.

The Navy has never satisfactorily explained how closing SUBASE New London would improve the national security of the United States. DOD argues that there is excess capacity; but there are no empty piers. DOD says we must eliminate surplus infrastructure; yet it drafts a plan to rebuild existing facilities elsewhere at great cost. The DOD analysis shows that two-thirds of its projected savings for closing SUBASE New London come from billet eliminations; then it claims hundreds of extra personnel at other facilities available to perform maintenance but does not move to eliminate that excess capacity. While DOD fails to offer a reasonable military argument for closing New London, outside reviews have discredited its cost savings argument. On August 20, the Department of Defense had a final opportunity to answer outstanding questions about the national security and financial case for closing New London. DOD witnesses instead opted to question the credibility of individuals with the Nation's best interest in mind.

2) DOD witnesses repeatedly defended the department's BRAC recommendations with talk of "synergy" and "centers of excellence." A witness also spoke of "centers of industrial and technical excellence" in support of a particular recommendation. At one point, the officials even advocated a center of excellence for culinary arts. We are disappointed that DOD uses such arguments when convenient, and then ignores the value of what is arguably the world's most effective and sophisticated center of excellence for national defense. One witness implied that the Navy could simply reconstitute a "new center of excellence" for undersea warfare in the Southeast United States, an obvious reference to Kings Bay. This casually-delivered plan – never before raised by a DOD official in the public forum – reveals a misunderstanding of the synergy around SUBASE New London.

Simply moving the base's assets will not recreate a center of excellence at Kings Bay because the base is the keystone of New London's synergy, not its sole component. The New London center of excellence has:

- The operational capability of 18 home ported SSNs;
- Intermediate maintenance at the base's Naval Submarine Support Facility, manned by Electric Boat employees (at great taxpayer savings);
- Warfare development at Submarine Development Squadron 12;
- Basic and advanced training at the Naval Submarine School; and
- Medical research at the Submarine Medical Research Laboratory.

New London's synergy, however, includes difficult-to-reconstitute capabilities that would not move with the base:

- Design, manufacturing and long-term maintenance at the Electric Boat Corporation three miles away;
- The services of a world-class defense subcontractor base (60 percent of the Nation's undersea warfare work takes place in southeastern New England);
- Innovation, research, development, test and evaluation at the Naval Undersea Warfare Center in Newport, Rhode Island; and
- Education and undersea exploration through nearby universities and institutions, like MIT, the Woods' Hole Oceanographic Institution, and the Mystic Institute for Exploration.

SUBASE New London is the catalyst that enables these many components to work toward the common goal of U.S. undersea warfare dominance. The Navy may be able to recoup some of this synergy with its plan to move six submarines and several tenant commands to Kings Bay; but even that consolidation is an unrealistic expectation. In all likelihood, if the submarine base closes, the Navy will spend the better part of the next two decades trying to reconstitute efficiencies and synergies New London already yields today. During this time, Electric Boat, the Nation's only prime contractor for submarine design and construction, will probably struggle to remain viable and innovative. Ultimately, the Navy and U.S. national security will suffer.

3) A DOD witness said he considered New London "somewhat elderly" and another witness referred to the "centuries-old" submarine base. This is not the first time in this BRAC round a DOD official has incorrectly called the submarine base "old" – an unfair tactic used to stifle debate over New London's future. In truth, SUBASE New London is historic; but it is also one of the Navy's most modern bases. According to the Navy's own data, over 40 percent of the base's utilized facilities were constructed after 1980. What's more, the Navy has spent over \$200 million on military construction projects at New London since 1990, including \$125 million in the last five years alone. DOD's BRAC data shows New London has more modern submarine berthing than Kings Bay. The bulk of the Naval Submarine School's infrastructure is new, its state-of-the-art trainers maintained by Electric Boat employees. Like Naval Station Norfolk, established during World War I, New London is an historic site with modern infrastructure and exciting capabilities that have evolved dramatically since it became a submarine base in 1915. A simple tour of the base would make this point obvious to the casual observer and the naval expert, alike.

The witnesses presented no evidence to support the opinion that SUBASE New London is "old." We can only surmise that this appeal is designed to conjure images of crumbling piers and buildings at what is in reality one of the world's finest and most well-used naval bases.

4) We share the concern of our former colleague, Admiral Hal Gehman, and other Commissioners that the DOD recommendations would leave the Northeast region without a major military facility. In fact, if New London closed, the Navy would not have an operational naval base north of Norfolk, a threat to recruitment/retention and homeland defense missions – a top military value criterion. SUBASE New London is the Northeast's crown jewel. The base offers operational capabilities, training, innovation, and maintenance (both intermediate and overhauls) at partner Electric Boat. The base is versatile, capable today of absorbing additional maintenance work and of home-porting more crews. SUBASE New London satisfies the range of the submarine force's needs at minimum cost to the taxpayer because southeast New England's subsurface synergy allows it to take full advantage of A76 competitive sourcing – a model for other naval bases to follow. Any future basing configuration in the Northeast should include New London first and foremost.

The Department of Defense's argument for closing Naval Submarine Base New London is weak. There is no serious military rationale to the plan, and the projected cost saving estimate have been discredited. DOD's responses to reasoned arguments against closure are dismissive in nature. In sum, DOD has clearly failed to make a compelling case for destroying the Nation's center of excellence for undersea warfare in New London. We urge you to reflect on this state of affairs as you make your final decision.

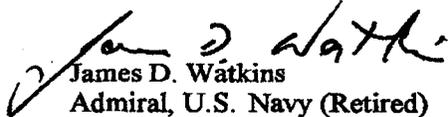
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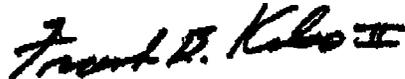
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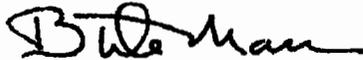
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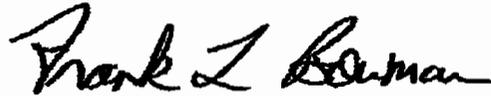
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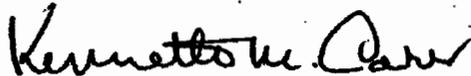
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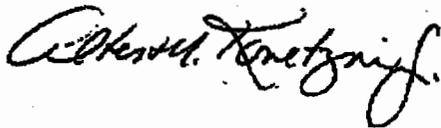
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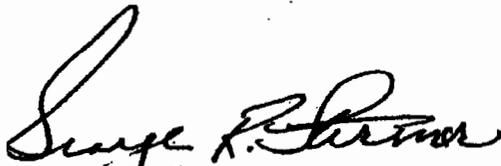
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