

STATE OF FLORIDA

DCN 6142



# Office of the Governor

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August 1, 2005

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

Dear Chairman Principi:

I am writing in regards to the July 19, 2005, vote of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission to consider Naval Air Station (NAS) Oceana for closure, and to emphasize the State of Florida's overwhelming support that former NAS Cecil Field be considered as its replacement.

The recent vote by the Commission to consider closing NAS Oceana was based on the Navy's well documented testimony that NAS Oceana and its Navy Outlying Landing Field (NOLF) Fentress have suffered serious and unabated encroachment—a widely known situation that has worsened since the 1993 BRAC round that made Oceana the only Navy Master Jet Base for the Atlantic Fleet's Carrier based aviation force. Exacerbating matters, severe encroachment has impacted flight operations around NAS Oceana and NOLF Fentress to the point that our nation's naval aviators have had to adjust their flight training such that their flight profiles at Oceana/Fentress no longer replicate those flown for aircraft carrier approaches. The serious and increasing encroachment at Oceana/Fentress has also resulted in the Navy's Court-aborted attempt to spend more than \$100 million for a new NOLF in North Carolina.

As a result of these realities and the Commission's subsequent vote regarding NAS Oceana on July 22 at the BRAC Hearing in New Orleans, the Jacksonville community, Florida's Congressional Delegation, and I request that former NAS Cecil Field be considered as a replacement for NAS Oceana. As you know, NAS Cecil Field was the Navy's only other Atlantic Fleet Master Jet Base for about 50 years until it was closed in 1999. That closure resulted from excess Navy airfield capacity in the days when the Navy still had Vieques and the Puerto Rico training areas, and when properties around Oceana and Fentress were less developed and did not encroach upon those bases and their missions.

Since the New Orleans hearing, Mayor Peyton of Jacksonville and I have conducted significant research and discussions in support of our proposal to the BRAC Commission. We firmly believe Cecil Field is the best alternative available for the U.S. Navy's East Coast Master Jet Base in the advent of a NAS Oceana closure.



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Since the Navy left Cecil Field on September 30, 1999, the Federal government, the State of Florida, and the City of Jacksonville have worked closely to improve the infrastructure at Cecil Field and to protect NOLF Whitehouse from encroachment. In addition to the relatively minor encroachment around Cecil/Whitehouse, the state and City will commit to stemming future encroachment so that the Oceana experience is not repeated and so the Navy can be assured of operationally realistic training when the F/A-18 E/F's and the Joint Strike Fighter aircraft are operating from these facilities.

Approximately \$133 million has been invested at Cecil Field through federal, state, and local grants since 1999 to upgrade the control tower, eight hangars, utilities, drainage, and roads throughout the complex. The City of Jacksonville has secured \$130 million in funding for a high-speed access road to Interstate-10 to provide Cecil Field with outstanding accessibility. I will commit to accelerating this project if necessary to be timed with the re-opening of NAS Cecil Field. I am also prepared to work intimately with the Florida Legislature to address whatever assistance the state can provide to ensure this proposal is operationally and financially feasible for all parties involved.

A further advantage to Cecil Field is its close proximity to NAS Jacksonville that offers access to significant facilities to include a fully operational Naval hospital, a modern Commissary and Exchange, and many other support amenities present in a Fleet concentration area. Family housing could be built with a public/private initiative, which is already planned for the Southeast Navy Region next year. These are all support facilities that, if located elsewhere, would have to be funded and built from the ground up at great cost. Mayor Peyton has conducted an analysis that indicates the necessary infrastructure to complete NAS Cecil Field would be about \$250 million—far from the billion dollar estimates projected to build a new, future Master Jet Base from scratch.

After consultations with the Jacksonville Airport Authority, Mayor Peyton has committed to the BRAC Commission that necessary property issues concerning current tenants at Cecil Field can be resolved to permit complete turnover of all property to the DoD. I support this commitment and will assist the City as appropriate at the state level. We are prepared to work with the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Navy to ensure that a Cecil Field Master Jet Base would be able to conduct continuous, unencumbered flight operations, training, and other required military activities.

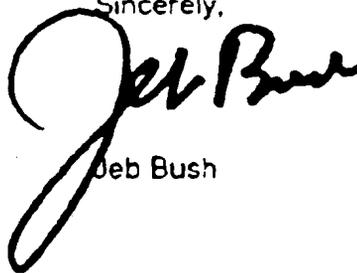
To responsibly consider our proposal, I request the BRAC Commission and its analysts visit Cecil Field and the NOLF Whitehouse to see first-hand the significant improvements made by the state and city since the Navy left Cecil Field in 1999 and the relatively sparse encroachment since that date. Additionally, because of the importance of this issue and the relative dire consequences of not directing a replacement for NAS Oceana, I request that the Commission receive an official presentation on the Cecil Field alternative at the August 10 hearing in Washington, D.C.

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In closing, let me say that there are literally no locations in the eastern United States where a new Navy Master Jet Base might be built today. Cecil Field is the last site on the eastern seaboard capable of accommodating the NAS Oceana mission and personnel, and it offers relatively open surrounding land, close training airspace and bombing ranges, and in-place significant infrastructure. I urge the Commission to seriously consider this proposal on behalf of the U.S. taxpayers and look forward to working with the Commission and the Navy to make this a reality for our men and women in uniform.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeb Bush". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The "J" is large and loops around the "eb". The "B" is also large and loops around the "ush".

Jeb Bush

cc: The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense  
The Honorable Gordon England, Secretary of the Navy  
Admiral Mike Mullen, Chief of Naval Operations