

BRAC Commission

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

Dear Chairman Principi and Members of the Commission:

I am Major General (Retired) John C. Doesburg. I retired effective 1 January 2005. My last assignment was as the Commanding General, U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command (RDECOM) and for five years I also served as the Installation Commander, Aberdeen Proving Ground. I understand there has been extensive discussion about the closure of Ft. Monmouth, New Jersey, and the movement of most of the organizations there to Aberdeen Proving Ground. I would like to take this opportunity to outline the inception of RDECOM, underscore why the move of the Communications and Electronic Command (CECOM), the Communications and Electronics Research, Development, and Engineering Center (CERDEC), Night Vision Laboratory, and the associated Program Executive Officers (PEOs) and Acquisition Center make sense.

The original concept of RDECOM was to break down the "stovepipes" (technology/functionally restricted or unilateral organizations) that existed among the Army Research, Development, and Engineering Centers (RDECs), develop a system-of-systems approach to research and development, fuel collaboration among the best scientists and engineers regardless of where they were assigned, and to provide technology to warfighters as quickly as possible by leveraging the other concepts listed. Unfortunately, under that original concept I was directed to not move organizations or people regardless of potential synergies or savings. This was primarily driven by the contentious nature of changing the command and control of the RDECs.

Even in the early stages it was apparent that some level of consolidation was needed to meet the original concept of breaking stovepipes and improving collaboration within the entire RDT&E community. As time went on, I developed several options on how consolidation could be accomplished, focusing on technology synergies and savings in infrastructure and personnel costs.

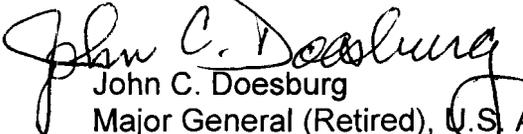
One of my major options called for the CERDEC to move from Ft. Monmouth to Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG) because of the strong relationship of CERDEC to the Army Research Laboratory (ARL), located at both APG and Adelphi, MD. Specifically, ARL is a national and world leader in sensor, electronics and computational science. These technologies by and large transition directly to CERDEC. I also felt there was a strong relationship between CERDEC and several other organizations located at APG – the Edgewood Chemical and Biological Center (ECBC), the Developmental Test Command (DTC) and the Aberdeen Test Center (ATC). Key parameters for me – many of ECBC's chemical and biological sensors require CERDEC developmental skills to translate data into actionable information; plus APG (DTC and ATC) had a large testing and range complex, extensive security for CERDEC's classified programs and was a major location for evaluating the Future Combat System, in which CERDEC has a critical support role.

After the BRAC announcement it was clear someone had a bigger vision than I did. By moving the other components of the Life Cycle Management Command (formerly CECOM, the PEOs and Acquisition Center) to APG they had really thought through the complexities of transitioning technology, gaining intellectual power through co-location, and the need for a single integrated center for research and development across multiple domains. By moving most of the assets of Ft. Monmouth to APG they have created an intellectual nexus that can solve today's and tomorrow's challenges across a wide spectrum.

As the former Installation Commander I can state that Aberdeen Proving Ground has sufficient land space for this move. The surrounding communities have sufficient land for housing and commercial development to support the influx. The universities within the region have undergraduate and graduate programs in disciplines that support the skills needed (more importantly several are world class).

Bottom Line – this is the right move. If it was within my power, I would have made this move two years ago. Our Army, the other Services and our young warfighters are better served by this move.

Very Respectfully,


John C. Doesburg
Major General (Retired), U.S. Army