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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 5, 2005

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Samuel Knox Skinner
Commissioner
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Commissioner Skinner:

Congratulations on your appointment to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission. The President has not only selected you for your unquestioned integrity, but also for your wealth of experience and talent. I applaud your dedication in taking on this challenging mission.

The magnitude of the job ahead of you is extraordinary. I have been extremely supportive of the Department of Defense in its effort to increase efficiency and streamline operations. With our current world commitments, we must do everything possible to ensure that not one taxpayer dollar is wasted and that every resource and installation is essentially dedicated to keeping our military men and women safe and effective. This BRAC round must be, more than anything, untarnished by political influence.

As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I have been privileged to witness first-hand just how important military value is as a criterion for keeping a base. With installations from each of the four DoD services and the Coast Guard, along with valuable training ranges and airspace located on over 400,000 acres in the eastern portion of North Carolina, a unique opportunity presents itself for logistically easy, fully integrated, joint training that can serve as a model for streamlining and leveraging the capabilities of our armed forces. Furthermore, the state has been a nationally recognized leader in pioneering public-private cooperation to protect lands around our bases from development and prevent encroachment. I am immensely proud of the leading role that North Carolina has played in the War on Terror; North Carolina's military bases are efficient and flexible, and train troops that are among the first to deploy when contingencies arise. Their civilian workers provide skilled technical support that is critical and valuable. I believe that all of the military facilities in North Carolina serve as an integral part of our national security infrastructure, and that, due to their unique assets, warrant expansion, not closure.

I look forward to working with you as the BRAC process moves forward and we take the necessary look at our strategic national security needs and how best to station our forces throughout the country.

With warmest best wishes,

Elizabeth Dole

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BASE CLOSURE AND REALIGNMENT (BRAC)

North Carolina

- I know that you have been or will be visited by every state delegation and lobbied from just about every angle. We just wanted to take this opportunity today to demonstrate just how committed the North Carolina leadership is to our Military. We have been working tirelessly to build on our long history of support and to strengthen the future of our proud installations.
- In my role on the Senate Armed Services Committee, I have been particularly sensitive to the needs of the service member stationed in North Carolina. Over the past two years I have kept the North Carolina bases in the spotlight by including their issues and examples in numerous hearings. And I have been extremely supportive of the Department of Defense in your effort to increase efficiency and streamline operations.
- I am extremely fortunate to have the support of my colleagues in the 109th Congress. Senator Burr has hit the ground running - and he knows just how special North Carolina is to our military personnel. The state has one of the highest military retiree and veteran growth rates in the nation - a clear testament as to the quality of life in North Carolina. As a new member of the veterans Affairs committee, Richard will play a critical role in providing for our military members. On the House Armed Services Committee, GK Butterfield, Robin Hayes, Walter Jones, and Mike McIntyre are simply the best advocates for Seymour Johnson and Pope Air Force Bases, Fort Bragg, Camp Lejeune, and Marine Corp Air Station Cherry Point including the Naval Depot, but more importantly they are unsurpassed in their dedication to all our military men and women.
- And finally, Governor Mike Easley and Lt Governor Bev Purdue. The effort to make our bases the best in the world is a statewide team effort. The North Carolina Military Commission formed by the Governor's office, has teamed with the state legislature, civic leaders from communities in proximity to military bases, and military commanders to ensure all avenues of opportunity and support are explored and acted upon.

Military Value

North Carolina's bases are a model for joint interoperability and readiness:

- North Carolina supports a unique military infrastructure in that all of our major installations are located in the Eastern part of the state. Strong joint mission ties between the Army and Air Force, Special Forces, and now the Marines and the Navy are only a hint at the possibilities that exist for expansion, not closure.
  - Pope provides the primary operational and training support for Fort Bragg's 82nd Airborne with Seymour Johnson providing a secondary runway and deployment site. Cherry Point is the aerial port embarkation for marines from Camp Lejeune. Camp Lejeune's expeditionary forces train in an urban environment and on the artillery range at Fort Bragg.
  - I have witnessed firsthand how fighter and attack aircraft from Seymour Johnson and Pope, New River and Cherry Point conduct extensive joint training along the North Carolina coast in what are the premier training ranges on the Atlantic seaboard.

- The NAVAIR Depot at Cherry Point provides maintenance of aircraft, engines, and components for the Navy, Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, State Department, and international allies. It will be the only repair facility for the V-22s stationed at New River. According to the DOD's 2004 Report to Congress on Depot Maintenance Long Term Strategy "due to continuing intense operations, NAVAIR Depot Cherry Point has proven to be a valuable national asset."

North Carolina is a leader on compatible land use and is aggressively keeping encroachment in check:

- The state has been a nationally recognized leader in pioneering public-private cooperation to protect lands around our bases from development and to prevent encroachment.
- To date, 37,445 acres within five miles of North Carolina's military bases have been protected from incompatible development since the last round of federal base realignments and closures in 1995.
- North Carolina has provided funding for its land protection initiative through the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, Natural Heritage Trust Fund, Ecosystem Enhancement Program and Conservation Income Tax Credit. The U.S. Army and U.S. Navy have provided matching funds for some projects. The Nature Conservancy and the N.C. Coastal Land Trust have assisted the state and the military in acquiring lands and conservation easements. The combined investment total is at $37,725,660.
- In April of 2004, Craven County took action to protect two of the eight runways at MCAS Cherry Point for future use with zoning measures that will keep development from encroaching on needed airspace.
- Wayne County (Seymour Johnson AFB) put in place a moratorium not allowing any subdivision of land inside the noise zone of 65 decibels identified in their 1993 Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (ACUZ) study.
- To provide an important sound buffer to the Dare County Bombing Range, the state provided $6.5 million to match $1.8 million from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and acquire 26,862 acres.
- Last year, the state approved a $20 million bond issue to buy lands around bases and established a new requirement that local communities notify base commanders of proposed changes in zoning ordinances.

North Carolina invests in infrastructure to enhance and expand military missions:

- Over the last two years, I have joined Congressmen Hayes, Jones, and McIntyre in supporting continued strong military construction investment at our military installations and helped accelerate the construction of:
  - A new fire station at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base;
  - Family Support Center and Barracks at Ft Bragg;
  - Ordinance Disposal Facility at Camp Lejeune;
  - The Naval Reserve Training Center in Wilmington; and

  - We lifted the cap on privatized family housing - we have seen what quality housing means to our military members and are committed to continuing the effort to eliminate all substandard military housing across the nation

- I have publicly endorsed the Marine Corps Military Operating Area extension plan, which will enhance training flight operations and make the Eastern North Carolina training range complex even more diverse and user-friendly.
- The state has made major investments in its two strategic ports at Wilmington and Morehead City, which have handled a tremendous amount of equipment and materiel for our operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- The state is very sensitive to the needs of the military in allocating highway dollars and has made major investments in roads serving our installations.

North Carolina Bases are environmental standard bearers:

- The NAVAIR Depot at Cherry Point was selected as a winner in the 2004 Chief of Naval Operations Environmental Awards, sponsored by the Chief of Naval Operations' Environmental Readiness Division. Earlier this year the North Carolina Department of Environmental and Natural Resources named the Naval Air Depot Cherry Point as one of only three 2004 Environmental Stewards.
- The Ft. Bragg Private Lands Initiative is a model in how to balance military training at a major power projection installation with the conservation endangered species and other sensitive resources. By expanding the landscape envelope around the base, critical mission requirements can be met and an endangered species (red cockaded woodpecker) is able to thrive.

Other Considerations

North Carolina is a leader in quality-of-life programs and educational support for military personnel and their families:

- Should you visit the state in the next few months, you will be able to witness first-hand our communities' commitment to their military installations. Local governments and civic groups all have regular and productive communications with base commanders and provide incredible support for personnel and their families
- Members of the military and their families now have access to in-state tuition at our colleges and universities, and our community college system supports the military in a variety of ways. North Carolina has also established a program to provide financial counseling to military families and to assist with their daycare needs.
- The regional airports at New Bern and Kinston have actively sought out and added new routes with Delta and USAirways, increasing air accessibility to Seymour Johnson and Cherry Point.
- Leaders from MCAS Cherry Point, NAVAIR Depot Cherry Point, and the local community collaborated to establish a college-level Institute of Aeronautical Technology. The institute will ensure a steady supply of properly trained and motivated skilled workers for NAVAIR Depot Cherry Point.

It goes without saying; North Carolina depends on our military bases

- The economic impact of our military facilities is impressive. More than 100,000 personnel are based at the active facilities in North Carolina. According to a study just completed by Eastern Carolina University, these bases contribute more than $18 billion annually to the state's economy - the single most important economic contributor in the region.
- NAVAIR Depot Cherry Point is eastern North Carolina's largest employer - not just a county, but the entire portion of the state east of I-95. The Cherry Point installations contribute over $1.5 billion annually to the state's economy. The NAVAIR Depot Cherry Point is a valued and essential part of North Carolina's economic vitality.