



BRAC Commission
Executive Correspondence
DCN 5667

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Received

July 27, 2005

The Honorable Anthony Principi
Chairman
Base Realignment and Closure Commission
The Pentagon
Washington, DC

Dear Chairman Principi and Distinguished BRAC Commissioners:

On behalf of the managers, supervisors and employees stationed around the world at military installations with the Department of Defense, I am writing you today to urge your consideration of keeping certain military facilities operational under the pending round of Base Realignment and Closure process. Since our establishment in 1913, the Federal Managers Association (FMA) has been a committed supporter of the efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our Nation's Civil Service while maintaining a strong national defense. We believe that the closure of any of our current Naval Shipyards, in particular the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, ME, would diminish – not strengthen – our response capability and surge capacity.

Our mission statement of "Advocating Excellence in Public Service" reflects the core value that our members carry out everyday in supporting the government's mission to serve the American people. It is because of this very belief that we continue to have concerns with the ongoing process for realignment and closure that has been assigned to you by our President and Congress.

Since this round of BRAC was first proposed in 2001, FMA has maintained the consistent position that the current post-9/11 era is not the time for major reductions in our Defense infrastructure. With troops deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq, and unrelenting insurgent and terrorist attacks abroad, the national security climate has become far more sensitive and complex. Moving forward with the BRAC process runs counter to those efforts to prevent further attacks on the home front. Further, as employees in the Department of Defense (DOD) will soon be part of the largest personnel reform in over 25 years, this seems an inopportune time to shift resources and close critical bases. As a result, once Congress empowered the Pentagon to move forward with the BRAC round for 2005, FMA proactively recommended that DOD carefully examine the criteria for closure and realignment using complete, accurate and transparent data.

Recent discussions between FMA leadership and various members of the Department of the Navy leadership have brought to light uncertainty about the number of submarines required for the future, as well as the type of submarine needed to achieve the mission. There has been speculation that the stealth nature of our submarine forces may reflect a need to keep 55 submarines in service. The current tempo and pressure demand a ship repair infrastructure that must remain strong in order to keep up with our homeland security commitments. We believe that the closure of Portsmouth Naval

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Shipyard or any of the four public shipyards will severely impair our ability to meet our global missions.

Since the Commission's undertaking of its important and irreversible role in the examination of the proposed base reorganization from DOD, it has been revealed that the suggested closures may not have been decided in an environment of clear facts. For example, under opposition from senior Senators, the President was forced to nominate you and the fellow members of the commission during a recess appointment. Moreover, the Pentagon was reticent to release important documents to Congress that served as the basis for their recommended closures. At the recent Commission hearing held in Boston, Mass. on July 6, it was evident that the Commission is also concerned about the efficiency sacrifices that would be suffered from the closure of Portsmouth.

In conjunction with the Boston hearing, the Commission has been informed of the drastic effects on the Northeast from the eradication of naval activity in that region. It should be noted that the New London Submarine Base is another essential component within the Navy infrastructure, especially in light of the need to support a submarine force of 55. In fact, the testimony of several high-ranking naval officials seems to contradict the elimination of a submarine presence in the Northeast. We believe that keeping New London open as well is the proper and prudent choice, with the understanding that New London will require the work of Portsmouth Naval Shipyard to maintain operational tempo and activity.

In struggling through the previous rounds of BRAC we have witnessed the need to reinvest in infrastructure and personnel, which did not produce the anticipated savings that served as the rationale for the base closures. For instance, the loss of the Circuit Breaker Repair facility at Mare Island has resulted in all shipyards having to stand up individual shops at the various shipyards. Similarly, a significant financial investment was required at Norfolk to absorb the Fleet Training group known as IMANPY from the Charleston closure. These are but two of many reinvestment efforts that BRAC-safe facilities had to make to maintain repair capabilities.

The existing challenge in the ship repair industry is not just a public-sector issue. Private and public shipyards are facing critical demands on their skilled workforces. Increasing human capital attrition rates are on the verge of affecting both sectors as the "baby boomers" who became the skilled ship repair artisans of the 1980s and 1990s reach retirement age. Centuries of experience are on the brink of leaving this industry. While efforts have been made to upgrade the industry through funding for workforce revitalization, there will be a dramatic loss of institutional knowledge and expertise that stand to affect all sectors of this industry – and already has. We cannot afford to lose the invaluable experience and knowledge base of the ship repair workers at Portsmouth, Pearl Harbor, Norfolk or Puget Sound Naval Shipyards. Closure does not ensure that these highly talented, highly dedicated Civil Servants will relocate or remain in their skilled areas of expertise.

As has been shown in the data provided to the Commission, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard is a superb business unit in the area of submarine repair. As you may know, workers at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard last month were awarded the Unit Meritorious Citation, underscoring the shipyard's exceptional economic performance and strong schedule adherence to the required mission of the fleet. Its stake in the recent philosophy of a "One Shipyard Concept" cannot – and should not – be

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underestimated within the repair community for our submarine forces. At the Commission hearing in Boston, these sentiments were echoed by the recently retired Rear Admiral William Klemm:

The bottom line is that, regardless of the Department of Defense's Force Structure Plan or budget, the closure of Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, at this time, constitutes an irrevocable decision to reduce current force structure. Ironically, rather than optimizing infrastructure to support required military force structure, this closure recommendation, if supported by the commission, will result in a reduction in size of the SSN Fleet through a backlog on maintenance actions over the next five years... I can assure you that the current DoD Force Structure Plan requires the workforce of all four public shipyards to accomplish the work I have described over the next five years. Closure of a naval shipyard during this Future Years Defense Plan will effectively reduce critical submarine force structure by default.

FMA respectfully requests that the Commission reject the recommendation by the Pentagon to close Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and the New London Submarine Base. There is sufficient information and professional counsel from those experts involved with the ship repair industry to support such a reversal. In this time of war, our Nation needs all four of our public shipyards and the workforces that make them indispensable to our Defense needs.

As expressed by Rear Admiral Klemm it would be detrimental to the force structure plan in being able to meet future commitments if the current public shipyard structure is reduced. These national assets are vital in sustaining the operational effectiveness and efficiency of the world's most powerful naval presence. Please be mindful of the awesome capabilities these weapon platforms can deliver, but remember equally the heroes who keep these vessels performing.

Thank you for your consideration of our views, and please let us know if we can be of assistance to you during this process.

With kindest regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

Michael B. Styles

Michael B. Styles
National President

cc: BRAC Commissioners
Chairman Duncan Hunter
Ranking Member Ike Skelton
Chairman John Warner
Ranking Member Carl Levin
Senate Depot Caucus
House Depot Caucus