



Robert A. Ficano
County Executive

BRAC Commission

AUG 15 2005

Received

August 10, 2005

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

Dear Chairman Principi,

I am writing to urge the BRAC to remove once and for all, the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP) from the list of military facilities slated for closure. The AFIP is an irreplaceable resource for disease research and patient care. This exceptional institution not only provides outstanding service to our nation's military community, but also contributes significant knowledge and education to the broader medical field's understanding of human disease.

The closing of this "National Treasure" that exists no where else in the world, and offers the medical and scientific community a unique and otherwise unavailable resource, would be, in my opinion, a colossal mistake in judgement. . Only people who do not understand or appreciate its value would make a decision of this nature.

I do understand and appreciate the power of the bureaucracy, but in this case it is to your own and its own best interest, to keep this facility intact. In today's world, we need all of the competent, comprehensive and complete pathological resources that are available, to study and to deal with potential problems arising from the disease processes in the biological world, both natural and man made. To think that a properly funded and managed AFIP would not be of tremendous value in today's world of terrorism, biological and otherwise would be a terrible mistake in judgement.

Additionally, and consistent with their unique position in the pathology community, the AFIP tissue repository is a valuable national treasure that must remain accessible to researchers and experts in laboratory medicine. The AFIP's collection of specimens has helped medical professionals understand, develop vaccines and treatments for, and

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sometimes cure often-Fatal diseases. Access to both archived materials as well as newly acquired specimens must be preserved.

Finally, each year the AFIP issues hundreds of thousands of hours in continuing medical education to a diverse group of medical professionals that specialize in pathology, forensics, radiology, emerging infectious disease, renal disease, ophthalmology, and urology. In fact, over 7,400 medical and other health professionals alone were educated and trained in 2004 through a variety of AFIP-sponsored venues including live courses, seminars and Internet courses.

The AFIP's leadership in the area of education and training advances the knowledge base and ensures the competence of thousands of medical professionals. It would be a major loss to both military and civilian medicine, especially at this time, if AFIP's consultative services were discontinued.

Should the AFIP be forced to close, our nation would lose a valuable resource that plays a key role in the advancement of medicine and contributes knowledge to improve the health of our nation's citizens. Do not succumb to sinking to the lowest common fiscal denominator. Please be smart and thoughtful in this decision making process, what you give up, you may never get back, certainly not cost effectively!

First, I respectfully request that the BRAC eliminate once and for all, any misguided thought or recommendation to dismantle the AFIP. Second, I urge the BRAC to continue to ensure that the financial integrity of AFIP generally, and the specific funding of the tissue repository is preserved.

Thank you for your kind consideration in this matter,

Sincerely,



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Cc. file