

BRAC Commission

July 14th 2005

To: BRAC Commission

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Dear BRAC Commission members:

Members of your commission expressed interest in adding NAS Oceana to the BRAC closure list. As president of Magic Hollow Community Association, the largest homeowners association and one of Oceana's adjacent neighbors, and a wife of a retired Navy member who spent his career dealing with various types of aircraft, I believe I can provide you with additional information in shaping your decision.

I would like to deal with the logistics of the location first:

Much media attention has been given to a small and vocal group claiming to represent the majority of area citizens on the need for Oceana to be moved. This group however represents an extremely small portion of the population of the Virginia Beach and Chesapeake residents. NAS Oceana is a master jet base; it has the widespread support of our community. Does it get loud? Yes on occasion, but the noise is not persistent, or long in duration. The stories I hear about kids cringing and dogs running at the sound of the jet are so untrue it is laughable. The kids I see either ignore them, or look on them with awe. My neighbors' dogs cringe or bark when people walk by. My own dog joined our family 6 months ago and I have never even seen her acknowledge a jet flying over. These are the exaggerated words of people who want to press their own agenda. I have heard perhaps a jet in 3 days. Jet schedules vary often.

My community is Oceana's largest western side neighbor. We have 755 homes located here. Our children attend schools in areas thought to be widely affected by jet noise. We live and shop in these areas. People are not packing up to leave, we have been here 17 years, and many of my neighbors have been here nearly 30 years. We are not poor, uneducated people with no other options. We enjoy our community and embrace our Navy neighbors. Home values in our community have been rising faster in our neighborhood, than in some "non-affected" neighborhoods.

Prior to September 11th, I served on a liaison committee with NAS Oceana, and City officials to develop solutions and share concerns involving all interested parties. I found the Navy to be quite willing to work with the community to alleviate concerns where it could. We pushed for Congressional funding to build the "Hush House" an engine testing facility in a controlled environment. Noise issues after the hush house went into existence dropped dramatically. In the past 5 years, I have had no member complain about NAS Oceana operations, and prior to that, the complaints were infrequent or were alleviated by the Hush house.

Regarding the safety of the pilots and neighbors: I would suggest that safety is an issue regardless of where planes fly and people work. These highly trained pilots land their planes in nights at sea under deplorable conditions. I have the utmost confidence in their

abilities to do so at NAS Oceana. I have seen no evidence of pilot hot-dogging, flying at inappropriate levels or other concerns. I would be more nervous next to a quieter municipal airport than a master jet base.

Another issue this BRAC commission must face is the quality of life issues provided by NAS Oceana's location. As I mentioned previously, my husband honorably retired after 21 years of service to the United States Navy. His rate, ABF (Aviation Boatswains Fuel), kept him contact with jets, helicopters and the like. He served two tours of duty at NAS Oceana. My husband was able to give the US Navy a career, in no small part to where we live. I am a computer networking professional. My career was and is still important to me and the income of my job critical to my family. Had we been forced to accept an assignment to a more rural location, the job opportunities and pay for me would not have been present. Navy families willingly sacrifice a great deal for their country. We endure long separations (not just the 6 month variety), uncertain schedules and lets be frank – very low pay and a crumbling of our benefits. My ability to have a career (not a job) and provide my part for my family is critical.

Educational opportunity is another aspect. Virginia Beach Public Schools has a top notch educational program. How many rural communities offer the following to their citizens: Japanese foreign language, a huge variety of Advanced Placement offerings, specialized academies in legal, medical, technology and math and science? Our students can take many classes now that give them college credit through articulation agreements and dual-enrollment. We have high end successful technology programs in our Advanced Technology Center that are blueprint for school systems across the country. And following graduation, our children can stay local and attend a variety of colleges or specialized education centers or find ample opportunities for work. These opportunities will not be available in a more rural setting.

Finally, the BRAC Commission must consider the financial impact of such a decision. Billions of dollars have been invested in NAS Oceana and its community. Abandoning such an investment and then having to spend additional money elsewhere to retro-fit a location for Oceana is simply fiscal mismanagement. You must act as stewards for the American taxpayer and consider these financial costs. If you were truly concerned about some of the noise or encroachment issues, spend just 10% of this money and you can easily help sound proof some schools, or nearby homes, or as a last resort, buy the properties that are concerning you regarding the encroaching of NAS Oceana. To throw it all out and start again is ridiculous. The Naval fleet is nearby, thus reducing costs even further. The money you would force the US Navy to spend for raised costs and relocation expenses could be better spent on our homeland security. There are so many unfunded expenses that cannot be met now, for you to increase the burden on our country for no reason would be wrong.

Thank you for your time and attention to this letter. NAS Oceana is a vital and integral part of our country's national security. You must do the right thing and leave NAS Oceana intact in Virginia Beach where it belongs.

Thank you,

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