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September 2, 2005

BRAC Commission

SEP 13 2005

Received

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

Dear Chairman Principi,

I am writing to urge the BRAC to remove 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 fields' understanding of human disease.

The AFIP Tissue Repository is a valuable national treasure that must remain accessible to researchers and experts in laboratory medicine. The AFIP collection of specimens has helped medical professionals understand, develop vaccines and treatments for, and sometimes cure, often fatal disease. Access to both archived material as well as newly acquired specimens must be preserved.

Each year the AFIP issues hundreds of thousands of hours of continuing medical education to a diverse group of medical professionals who specialize in pathology, forensic radiology, emerging infectious disease, renal disease, opthmalology, and urology. In fact, over seven thousand four hundred 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.

I did my pathology residency training in the United States Army at Madigan Army Medical Center during the years of 1971 through 1975. During that period of time, I found the AFIP to be an invaluable resource in helping me to advance in my profession. Over the past thirty years in medical practice, I continue to use not only the educational courses, but also the expertise of the individuals who presently staff the AFIP in consultation for some very difficult diagnoses. To eliminate this valuable resource, I believe would greatly effect the training of not only military, but also civilian physicians.

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 our nation's citizens. First, I respectfully request that the BRAC eliminate this recommendation to dismantle the AFIP. Second, I urge the BRAC to ensure that the integrity of the Tissue Repository is preserved.

Thank you for your kind consideration to this request.

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