

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

BRAC Commission

JUL 25 2005

July 13, 2005

Received

Secretary Anthony Principi  
Chairman, Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission  
2521 S. Clark Street, Suite 600  
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Mr. Chairman,

We write in response to your letter of July 1, 2005 regarding the inquiry of the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission to the Department of Defense regarding its rationale for expressly rejecting any final recommendations to close Naval Air Station Brunswick. This letter supplements our testimony before your Commission on July 6, 2005 and explains our understanding of why the Department rejected such closure.

In short, the Defense Department's own transcripts from its extensive BRAC deliberations show that, on at least ten separate occasions, various officials – including the Secretary of the Navy, Chief of Naval Operations, Commander of Fleet Forces Command, and the Commander of the Northern Command – all spoke during the extensive BRAC process to Brunswick's distinct military value. Copies of these references are attached as Exhibit "A."

There are three broad attributes that distinguish Brunswick; strategic location, capacity, and infrastructure.

Strategic location is the primary attribute for any operational base, and Brunswick's location could not be more strategically vital. Brunswick is located adjacent to the great circle routes for ships and aircraft crossing the North Atlantic. It is the only fully operational, active-duty airfield in the Northeast, with previous BRAC rounds having closed all other active duty air bases north of New Jersey. Critically, Brunswick is also proximately situated to several major population centers.

Because of its unique strategic location, Brunswick is a vital link in our national defense. It is critical for the surveillance of ships coming from Europe, the Mediterranean and the Middle East. It is the closest U.S military airfield to the current theater of operations. Indeed, Brunswick has hosted or provided logistical support for more than 120 aircraft returning from Middle East operations, and has provided berthing for more than 850 Defense personnel returning from Iraq. Likewise, Brunswick is the preferred refueling stop for tactical jet and turboprop aircraft crossing the Atlantic Ocean. Armed aircraft can depart Brunswick and enter offshore operating areas without over-flying populated areas. Finally, response time and endurance on-station which are, of course, critical in maritime patrol and reconnaissance missions, derive directly from Brunswick's critical strategic location.

With regards to capacity, Brunswick has no encroachment issues; it has 63,000 square miles of unencumbered training airspace and nearly 1,000 acres available for expansion. It has ramp space sufficient to park more than 250 maritime patrols or other large aircraft under maximum surge conditions. It has nearly 12,000 Navy-owned mountainous acres capable of accommodating joint exercises and meeting all Navy and Marine Corps Atlantic Fleet SERE training requirements at a single site. Brunswick also has the unique ability to support every aircraft in the Defense Department inventory, which makes Brunswick essential across the full range of homeland defense operations and contingencies. And as the Navy's Infrastructure Analysis Team expressly recognized on January 11, 2005, Brunswick offers unique joint and NATO strategic, physical and training assets.

For all of these reasons, Brunswick served as a key base for homeland defense during the months following September 11<sup>th</sup>. Indeed, Brunswick's role during *Operation Iraqi Freedom* clearly demonstrates its ability to accommodate mobilization and surge requirements. For example, it provided P-3 surveillance missions and land-based combat air patrol for Navy ships at sea. Such patrol assets of course remain necessary to locate and monitor ships in the North Atlantic, including those potentially carrying weapons of mass destruction, cruise missiles, or other threats to our shores.

Finally, regarding infrastructure, Brunswick is in first-class condition, with more than \$120 million in recapitalization and military construction during the past five years. As a result of this investment, Brunswick has, in effect, an all-new airfield. Indeed, with its side-by-side 8,000-foot runways, there are literally no aircraft in the current or future inventory that Brunswick cannot support either in a transient role or permanent assignment. Moreover, the Department has recently invested heavily in virtually all aspects of Brunswick's infrastructure: hangar bays; ramps and taxiways; aircraft control tower; three phases of family housing; transient quarters; and a new base entrance.

For all of these and related reasons, the Navy's Infrastructure Team presented the Navy analysis group in August of 2004, with a list of recommended airfields that should be assigned military value scores for strategic location. Brunswick was on that list.

These and like attributes and potentials explain why, on at least ten separate occasions, various officials – including the Secretary of the Navy, Chief of Naval Operations, Commander of Fleet Forces Command, and the Commander of the Northern Command – all spoke during the extensive BRAC process to Brunswick's distinct military value. Although copies of all ten such references are attached hereto, we briefly cite four such examples here.

First, in the BRAC Commission's first hearing with the Navy on May 18<sup>th</sup>, when questioned about the economics of realignment, the Chief of Naval Operations responded by saying:

*"This is a military value question more than anything else, and a naval base and the air base in the Northeast. We're keeping SERE training up there, but we're really keeping a strategic capability in the Northeast. That's what it boils down to."*

Second, the minutes of a January 2005 Navy analysis group meeting show that Brunswick's advantages were duly noted during a discussion on whether to close Brunswick was desirable:

*"[I]n light of the fact that Brunswick is the last active-duty DoD air base in New England and is relatively un-encroached, the significant capital investment in facilities there, the requirement for a homeland defense capability in this region, and the loss of East Coast aviation capability this scenario would represent."*

Third, the Commander of Fleet Forces likewise stated that:

*"Closure of NAS Brunswick supports operational synergies associated with a single-site P-3/MMA force at the unacceptable expense of closing a base offering numerous transformational and maritime Homeland Defense basing opportunities."*

Fourth, the IEC subsequently rejected the recommendation to close Brunswick because:

*"Department of Navy leadership expressed concern that closure of NAS Brunswick could have strategic implications regarding Northern Command's*

homeland defense strategy and would result in the loss of the only naval aviation footprint in New England.”

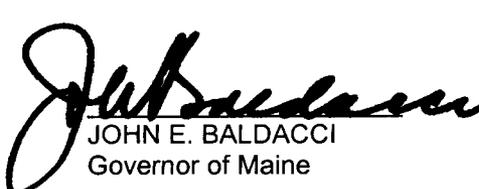
As if these and the other concessions to Brunswick’s unique strategic value are not enough, even NATO has apparently recognized the importance of Brunswick to NATO’s operational capability by investing significantly in Brunswick’s facilities. For example, NATO built a fuel farm at Brunswick in order to support regularly all types of foreign aircraft. Moreover, NATO also built a state-of-the-art Tactical Support Center that provides vital command and control for operational and exercise flights by U.S. and NATO maritime patrol aircraft.

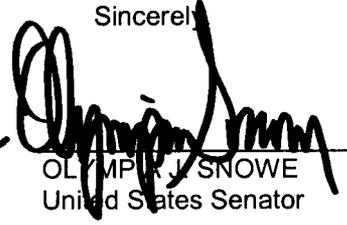
In the end, the Navy’s hasty proposal to close Brunswick was overturned by the Council due to the Brunswick’s overwhelming strategic military value. This value should trump any decision to close or realign this vital national asset. Without a fully functional base, ready to respond at a moment’s notice, our nation’s maritime security will be at risk.

Consequently, Brunswick should remain an active, fully-operational Naval Air Station. The facts about Brunswick that we have again recited in this letter clearly demonstrate that the proposal to realign Brunswick was itself wrong, and that closure would not correct the problems created by realignment; it would only exacerbate them.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this matter which is so vitally important to the national security interests of our country.

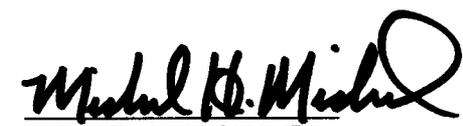
Sincerely,

  
JOHN E. BALDACCI  
Governor of Maine

  
OLYMPIA J. SNOWE  
United States Senator

  
SUSAN M. COLLINS  
United States Senator

  
THOMAS H. ALLEN  
United States Representative

  
MICHAEL H. MICHAUD  
United States Representative

- cc: Hon. James Bilbray, Member  
Hon. Phillip Coyle, Member  
ADM Harold Gehman, USN (ret), Member  
Hon. James Hansen, Member  
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