



BRAC Commission

AUG 17 2005

Received

Admiral Kinnaird R. McKee USN (Retired)
7101 Bay Front Drive #608
Annapolis, Maryland 21403

2 August 2005

Dear Chairman Principi,

The purpose of this letter is to convey to you my intense opposition to the recent recommendation to abandon the New London Submarine Base. The information in the next two paragraphs is offered to assist you in evaluating the basis for my statements that follow.

I am a retired submarine officer with operational experience in four Diesel-electric and four Nuclear powered submarines over a period of over a period of sixteen years. My operational experience also includes command of a 6th Fleet submarine task force in the Mediterranean during the 1972 Yom Kippur War and later as Commander, U.S. Third Fleet in the Pacific.

Early in In 1982, I was awarded a fourth star and was selected to relieve Admiral H.G Rickover on the occasion of his retirement as the Director, Navy Nuclear Propulsion. In that job I became responsible for all aspects of Naval Nuclear Propulsion in surface ships and aircraft carriers as well as in submarines. That responsibility extended to all naval nuclear propulsion associated industrial activities as well as Navy support activities ashore and afloat. I retired from that position at the end of 1988.

I understand that you have already received letters on this subject from a number of other three and four star submarine flag officers. Their comments are thoughtful and well founded. I unequivocally endorse them, and I will endeavor not to repeat them here. Instead, I will approach the matter from a somewhat different perspective.

Submarine warfare is an extremely difficult and demanding business; one that must be pursued in the most inhospitable environment on earth. The most immediate enemy is cruel and omni-present. That enemy is not just in the sea around us. It is the sea around us. Our crews must expect to do more than just go in harm's way. They must be able to live there.

They are often required to operate alone and unsupported for long periods of time in waters controlled by the enemy. Each knows that one mistake by a single crew member can be immediately fatal to the entire crew. When a piece of equipment fails, the crew is expected to fix it without going home. After all, is a long way to the hardware store when you have to start from under six feet of Arctic ice in winter.

The only way submariners have been able to live and be successful in the deep ocean has been to adopt a total immersion approach to all aspects of this dangerous game, and the players are not just individual submariners and submarine crews. By total immersion, I refer to continuing exposure to and competence in, every aspect of submarine warfare, such as strategy, tactics, navigation, damage control, design, construction, preventative and corrective maintenance and nuclear reactor safety. This competence is developed over time in many places, including an array of schools, operational training facilities and shipyards. Each is important, but Submarine Base New London is where it all begins. It is the nation's only true Center of Excellence in Submarine Warfare.

Finally, there is another particularly important justification for continuing this traditional approach to our work. It has to do with the that our Nuclear Propulsion Plants have been accepted in ports and oceans all over the world. That alone would speak volumes for the importance of our total immersion approach to nuclear safety as well as submarine safety, but there are still some who do not want to believe.

Other well intentioned individuals who may say that our successful focus on a total immersion approach is solely the work of Admiral Rickover and that it all originated in his world. They would be wrong. Those traditions began at the Submarine Base New London. Admiral Rickover just turned up the gain on an established way of doing business. Abandonment of New London would remove one of the keystones in the entire edifice. In my judgement, we do that at our peril.

Very Sincerely,


Kinnaird McKee