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## Groton, CT: BRAC Arguments

The Department of Defense (DoD) Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) recommendation to close Naval Submarine Base, Groton, CT has been characterized by the BRAC Commission as one of the most important recommendations that they are tasked to consider. Additionally, it is emotionally charged recommendation that has numerous groups speaking out against it.

As such, it is important to understand and discuss both sides of the arguments surrounding the Navy's analysis that led to the recommendation to close Groton and realign assets to Norfolk, VA; Kings Bay, GA; and other locations.

This paper reviews Groton, CT strategies in their attempt to eliminate this recommendation from the BRAC-05 list. Except for the "Rural Southeast Georgia" argument, all were presented at the Regional BRAC hearing conducted on Boston, MA.

Although the Navy's analysis is discussed it must be emphasized that opinions presented are those of The Camden Partnership, Inc.

### The Arguments

1. "Submarine Force Structure" argument. The argument states the Nation needs at least 55 attack submarines, and so we must start building two Virginia-class SSNs per year and maintain Groton in order to support this higher force level.

The BRAC realignment recommendation is based on today's SSN force level, so a 55 SSN force level could be supported without Groton.

Testimony also expressed concerns about the China threat and how it supports a larger force, with more SSN presence in the Pacific. Even if the Nation supported the 55 SSN force level, this concern indicates there should be a greater percentage of SSNs in the Pacific. For example, a 40% Atlantic to 60% Pacific split would equate to only 22 Atlantic SSNs, less than the 28 East coast SSNs included in the BRAC realignment scenario.

The current Virginia class submarine construction plan is for one hull per year until 2012 when the rate increases to two per year. This plan has been updated over several years, with the two per year milestone continually being delayed. At approximately \$3B per

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submarine, it is arguable whether or not a two per year build rate of Virginia class submarines will ever be achieved.

2. "Military Value" argument. The Connecticut delegation attacked the military value analysis conducted by the Navy saying proper scoring was not received in some areas, other areas were inappropriately deleted, and some scoring criteria did not make sense. Based on their opinions and evaluations they recalculated the Groton score, giving the base an additional 12.87 points.

The military value analysis only has meaning when comparing like activities. This type of analysis is only good to show the relative position of, in this case, bases on a scoring list. Taking one installation out, reworking the numbers, without seeing what similar scoring changes would do to the other bases on the list is meaningless.

For the case of East coast submarine ports, the three bases should be considered within the context a stated BRAC objective to form multi-service, multi-use installations.

- a. From a submarine perspective the relevant question would be which bases can support all submarine ship types. Because of the unique requirements associated with security, missile manufacture and maintenance, and Trident submarine repair, Kings Bay is the only base that can support all submarine ship types.
  - b. From a Fleet perspective, the important factor was the proximity to other Fleet assets. Both Norfolk and Kings Bay are located in Fleet concentration areas where both surface ships and aircraft operate in close proximity to where submarines are homeported.
  - c. Regardless of the score assigned, based on these two fundamental criteria, the military value of New London should rank below Norfolk and Kings Bay.
  - d. Given the understanding that submarine force levels will not be larger than the force that exists today and the increasing threat in the Pacific the desire to reduce submarine homeport capacity in the Atlantic makes sense. It further makes sense that a primary scenario to consider is the closing of Groton. The significant annual savings that result make this recommendation compelling.
3. "Synergy" argument. This argument focuses on the synergy created by the proximity to the shipbuilders at Electric Boat and the engineers at NUWC, Newport. This is a very narrow, submarine-focused synergy.

Navy BRAC recommendations are pulling operating forces into major Fleet concentration areas. For the East coast these are Norfolk and the Southeast (Kings Bay, Mayport and NAS Jacksonville). It appears the Navy is working toward a greater synergy between Fleet platform types in their desire to impact Fleet operational readiness.

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4. "Submarine Nesting" argument. BRAC realignments result in projected SSN berthing plans in Kings Bay and Norfolk that result in double-berthed, or nested, submarines. The argument states double-berthing submarines results to port operation inefficiencies.

The argument overstates the significance of this concern:

- a. Berthing plans showed all homeported SSNs in port, this rarely, if ever, occurs due to deployments and other at sea operations.
- b. At Kings Bay, the SSN berthing plan only considered berths at Site Six. Additional room could be available inside the Trident Basin where capacity was based on supporting the operations of ten Trident submarines. Only six SSBNs and two SSGNs will be homeported in Kings Bay.
- c. The berthing plans reflect current SSN force structure, and the current building plan indicates SSN force structure will be less than today's level.

5. "Submarine Capital of the World" argument. Don't close Groton because of the rich history that exists here.

This is a rear looking argument. It does however underline the extreme emotion that surrounds this particular recommendation. As the Navy transforms to embrace new technology and concepts in order to meet future threats, and develop the infrastructure required to support this future force it needs to be forward looking. We should continue to recognize the birthplace of the submarine force, but that recognition should not be at the expense of operational readiness and effectiveness.

The Submarine Force should work on transformation strategies that leverage emerging technologies and operational concepts that allow them to be a preeminent force with a nuclear powered submarine force consisting of 14 SSBNs, 4 SSGNs and 30 SSNs. There is a real possibility this is where submarine force structure is heading, and should at least be an alternative future that is considered. Strategies to expand submarine platforms beyond this level must include embracing other technologies – such as unmanned vehicles and smaller, advanced diesel-powered SSNs.

6. "Economic" argument. Costs for this recommendation were underestimated.

- a. Construction costs: based on their experience in New London the cost per square foot figure for construction should be much higher. This could be because their experience is in New London were all costs are much higher.
- b. Environmental remediation costs were severely underestimated and therefore not properly considered in the BRAC decision. Consistent with prior BRAC rounds environmental remediation costs are not included in decision making. This is appropriate since the Navy owns these remediation costs regardless of whether a base is closed or remains open. In other words, the Navy should be working to

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remediate the superfund sites that have been identified at New London regardless of BRAC.

7. "Environmental" argument: A list of potential environmental factors that should be considered was presented.
  - a. Shoaling. Dredge program is required in Kings Bay but not in Groton. Realigning SSNs to Kings Bay will not increase the cost or scope of the dredging program. Dredging to support Trident operations will support SSN operations.
  - b. Hurricanes. New London is less susceptible to hurricanes than Kings Bay. Probably true, however, this should be considered with all adverse weather impacts. Based on the frequency of Nor'easters and icing conditions compared to hurricane threats to Southeast Georgia, adverse weather impacts operations in New London as much, if not more than it does Kings Bay.
  - c. Endangered species (right whales, turtles, manatees). New London operations do not impact these species. Regarding submarine operations in vicinity of marine mammals and turtles, the Navy is a leader in protecting the environment. Sightings reported by our ships are valuable data used to help protect these endangered species.

8. "Rural Southeast Georgia" argument. This was the initial focus of efforts by Connecticut and is based on the perception that BRAC recommendations would overwhelm the infrastructure of Camden County.

At a meeting with BRAC Commission staff analysts, the community was able to present facts regarding the current capacity and comprehensive planning for future infrastructure development in Camden County in the areas of public education, housing, health services, transportation and utilities. Testimony on Base manning history, education facilities, and housing was given to BRAC Commissioners at the Atlanta Regional hearing.

This argument appears to have been dropped, as it has faded from media reports and was not part of the Boston testimony.