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The movement of the Naval Packaging, Handling, Storage and Transportation (PHST) Center from Naval Weapons Station Earle to Picatinny Arsenal has been overshadowed by news of the proposed closing of Fort Monmouth. However, the proposed realignment could prove a serious detriment to the Navy mission.

No one seems to be able to make any sense of the move, especially considering:

1. NWSTA Earle is not being closed. In fact, BRAC documentation states that NWSTA Earle must remain open. However, much of the work done by other tenants/organizations NWSTA Earle would have to be moved to Picatinny. NWSTA would lose approximately \$1,000,000/yr in funding that is provided to the station and its tenants by the PHST Center. NWSTA Earle is already planning to open housing to the public in order to offset operating costs. The movement of the PHST Center would greatly increase the funding deficit.
2. The move is part of an effort to create a "Gun and Ammo" Center at Picatinny. However, guns and ammo work comprises only a small amount of the work done by the PHST Center. The bulk of the work involves missiles, torpedoes, handling equipment and manuals. Also, the report mentions the Naval PHST Center's "acquisition" activities. The acquisition function of the Naval PHST Center was transferred to NSWC Indian Head several years ago.
3. A so-called "Joint Packaging, Handling, Shipping and Transportation (PHS&T) Center" will be created, "particularly important in this current time of high demand for guns and ammunition by all the services" (this is a misnomer, the "S" in PHST stands for storage). However, the Army missile packaging function will remain at Redstone Arsenal, the transportation, handling and stowage work will remain at McAlester Army Depot, and the Army packaging test facilities will remain at Tobyhanna Army Depot.

The Naval PHST Center is already a four-pillared Center, a model that the other services should be following. In addition, the Naval PHST Center is responsible for explosive safety manuals (ship and shore). The Army packaging office at Picatinny does no such work. No additional joint capabilities are being created, and there would be minimal beneficial sharing of information. The Navy does joint work with Air Force programs, but the Air Force is not involved in this proposed joint center. There is one ongoing cooperative effort between Picatinny packaging and the Naval PHST Center. The Joint Modular Intermodal Container (JMIC). The distance between the two offices has proved no impediment to the success of this effort. It should be noted that JMIC is much better suited to Army items/ammunition. The size of the JMIC and the size restrictions in shipboard weapons magazines limits its Navy applications.

4. The move is justified by qualifying the Naval PHST center as "lower overall quantitative value". In fact, the Naval PHST Center has more people working on PHST than the Army packaging office. The Naval PHST Center has a packaging design department, the Army packaging office does not. In addition, the Naval PHST Center has packaging specific test equipment necessary for its mission.

Examples are test chambers large enough to accommodate Tomahawk missile containers, and a pull tower to test ordnance handling slings. Since much of this equipment is for Navy-specific work, any significant potential for cost savings from consolidation of facilities is eliminated. In addition, Naval PHST work requires close coordination with the T&E branch, and is located adjacent to the PHST Center building. The T&E facilities at Picatinny are several miles away from the packaging office, and are part of a separate department. In addition, much of the testing done for the Army packaging office is performed at Tobyhanna Army Depot, which is about the same distance from Picatinny as is the distance from Picatinny to NWSTA Earle.

5. The Naval PHST Center is moved from the easy access to ships and Navy ordnance which have been a key to its success for decades. All synergy is destroyed, and the ability of the Navy to perform its mission is negatively impacted with no tangible benefits to the Army other than a gain in personnel at Picatinny. Some Navy personnel (the fleet and weapons program managers) are said to be very disturbed by this proposed move, and its potential impact on Navy capabilities.

The importance of packaging, handling, storage and transportation in Navy logistics is often overlooked. The fact remains, if a container does not provide adequate protection, it doesn't matter how effective a weapon is. Should a weapon be damaged during shipment or handling, it can't be used, or used effectively. If a container cannot be handled with existing equipment or moved through the ship, the mission is jeopardized. If it doesn't fit in an elevator or through a passageway, you can't get it to the aircraft on the flight deck, or to the launcher. As important, or perhaps more important is the safety of our sailors. Ordnance handling equipment is designed with strict safety factors. The threat to personnel and resources cannot be overstated. Weapons must be capable of being stored for long periods, handled and transferred easily and safely, and they must function when needed. PHS&T are critical to the success of the Navy.

It should be noted that the recommendation to move the Naval PHST Center was an Army recommendation, and neither the detailed Army nor Navy reports discuss the move of the PHST Center. How could the Navy have let this happen? The Army chaired the Joint Action Scenario Team. In addition, the Army representative to the Joint Cross Service Group was the Technical Director of the Army Developmental Test Command. Perhaps the Army, unfamiliar with the breadth of the scope of the Naval PHST mission, saw a small group at Earle, likely categorized as developmental T&E. A scenario was proposed, calling for the group to move to Picatinny. The PHST is currently under the Naval Surface Warfare Center, Indian Head Division. This is not a good match considering the Indian Head missions. Indian Head, anxious to shed its detachments (if you look at the BRAC report it seems as though they got rid of them all), put up no resistance to the proposal to move the Naval PHST Center to Picatinny. The Navy subsequently rubber-stamped the idea. How could Indian Head ignore the importance of the Naval PHST Center to the Navy?

An incorporation of NWSTA Earle into the existing Tri-Service Base (Lakehurst, Ft Dix and McGuire Air Force Base) is the logical solution. The idea of employing the NWSTA

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rail and pier as part of the Tri-Service base has already been discussed, and makes too much sense to ignore. Under such a scenario, the PHST Center could either remain at Earle, or be moved to Lakehurst. Lakehurst handles "Yellow Gear" and tie-down procedures. It also has facilities such as a virtual weapons magazine, that would be a valuable tool for the Naval PHST Center. Such a move would allow the Navy to consolidate and yet maintain a core capability.

If, in fact, a Joint Packaging Center is the goal, it is the Navy that should have lead. The Navy requirements are the strictest. Weight and cube must be minimal, the containers must be compatible with existing handling equipment, including approved slings, etc. Navy ordnance must be capable of being replenished at sea. With the exception of the finishes (the Navy does not require green coatings), Navy ordnance/weapons would have no problem fitting in the Army or Air Force logistics pipelines. The converse is not true when it comes to Army and Air Force ordnance/weapons in the Navy pipeline.

One week after the announcement, many of details and the supporting information (cost analyses, justification, detailed rationale, etc) have yet to be released (if they even exist). Do the PHST employees become Army employees? Will a new facility have to be built at Picatinny? Will this proposed joint center be part of the gun & ammo Center? How much will that cost? PHS&T is one of the 10 elements of weapons logistics, and the Naval PHST Center is the technical warrant authority for Navy PHST (the Navy has specifically authorized the PHST Center to do the PHST work for the Navy). The Navy cannot survive without a uniform system of developing, approving, distributing and maintaining weapons containers and ordnance handling equipment. The system must have a standard for ensuring explosive safety, and take into consideration Navy-unique PHST requirements, including underway replenishment, ship passageways, weapons elevator dimensions and other constraints. How can the Navy not be negatively impacted by turning a key element of Navy weapons logistics over to the Army? If it is under the guise of "jointness", what is the benefit to the Navy? Navy drawings, manuals, handbooks, allowance lists, etc, would be turned over to the Army. These have no value to the Army, and the Army would have no vested interest in maintaining them, updating them, etc.

As troublesome as the proposed move is to the employees of the Naval PHST Center, just as troublesome is the fact that no one at the center can make sense of the move. At a minimum the Naval PHST Center must remain part of the US Navy, no matter where it winds up being physically located. I understand that the time you have available to fully investigate all the proposed alignments and closings is extremely limited. However, I urge take the time to fully investigate this matter. The impact to the Navy cannot have been adequately evaluated. Is it merely open season on defense facilities in Monmouth County, NJ?