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Honorable Anthony J. Principi  
Chairman - 2005 Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission  
2521 S Clark Street  
Suite 600  
Arlington, Va. 22202

Mr. Chairman:

I am writing this letter not only on behalf of the Navy and Marine Corps reserve personnel stationed at NAS Atlanta but from my personnel concerns over the proposed BRAC closure of this facility.

I recently retired from the United States Marine Corps, as the Division Sergeant Major for the 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Division. While serving in this position, one of my responsibilities was the activation of numerous Marine reserve units in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. I also was faced with a unique challenge and the reality that several units were not ready to be mobilized and could not be deployed because of their training deficiencies due to recent facility relocations.

When a unit is physically relocated, the demographic reality of recruiting and retention will become uncontrollable and unmanageable. Federal regulations do not require reservist to travel over 100 miles to meet his or her reserve obligations. Meals and lodging must also be furnished, at government expense, when the reservist lives outside a 50 mile radius of their home training center. Junior enlisted reservists receive less than \$100.00 pay for a normal drill period and cannot afford additional commuting expenses to and from their drill locations. These Marines and sailors will inevitably drop out of the reserve program entirely. Senior enlisted personnel, who are MOS qualified and hold critical job skill, will next to leave the units due to extended commuting distances; retention will begin a downward spiral. In an aviation environment, certain MOS's and critical job skills require years of training before a qualified replacement will become proficient in his or her MOS. Units which are relocated will undergo a long and grueling reconstruction phase before they are deemed qualified and recertified for mobilization.

I understand and respect the economics and practicality of base closures and consolidations but the proposed BRAC closure and relocation of NAS Atlanta personnel is completely contrary to current DOD consolidation philosophy. The current NAS Atlanta and Dobbins ARB collocation arrangement should be a model of what a combined DOD reserve facility should be and not a target for closure. The Georgia Air National Guard, US Air Force, US Army, US Navy and US Marine Corps are all collocated and share a common runway and operational air facility. These air facilities are also co-occupied by a civilian contractor, Lockheed Martin Aeronautics, which manufactures the F/A-22 and C-130 aircraft under DOD contracts. If the Navy and Marine Corps components are relocated to another facility, the operating expenses and facilities operational infrastructure will not go away, they will simply be shared by fewer users and contributors!

A more practical and economical approach, that might be considered by the BRAC commission before closing NAS Atlanta or any other “operational dependant units”, would be to leave the units in place and combine the facilities management task into a centralized management operation. A facilities name change, from NAS Atlanta and Dobbins ARB, to “*The Atlanta Air Reserve Training Facility*” might be appropriate.

In 1991, as a Marine Corps Gunnery Sergeant attached to HMA-773, MAG-42, NAS Atlanta, I was deployed within 30 days to South West Asia in support of Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield. Currently, all of the Marine Corps units at NAS Atlanta have been activated or are currently on active duty in support of the war on terrorism. Reserve components play a major role in the Marine Corps deployment cycles and commitments throughout the world today and are considered a major component in Marine Corps doctrine and operational policies. The phrase used within the reserve community today is “*Don’t ask IF you are going to be activated but WHEN*”.

As the Division Sergeant Major of the only reserve division in the Marine Corps, I stood before numerous Marine units with their families knowing full well that they were going to be deploying to Iraqi and would be placed in harms way in a short time but I also knew that they had been given the best training and equipment available to complete their mission. Navy and Marine Corps reservists today are ready, willing and able to face any the task put before them. We see examples of their courage, commitment and dedication daily in the news. Giving these brave young men and women the best opportunities to train and gain that “extra edge” is the least we can do to support their gallant efforts and sacrifices.



John B. Dean  
Sergeant Major  
USMC (ret)