DCN: 5836

BRAC Commission
Received
7/7/2005

July 5, 2005

Chairman Principi
2005 Defense Base Closure & Realignment Commission
2521 S. Clark St., Ste. 600
Arlington, Va. 22202

Dear Sir:

In my last letter, I attempted (perhaps sophomorically) to show some of the basic differences between the three levels of aviation maintenance. Performance at those levels is essential to maintaining an acceptable level of readiness. I hope you will accept that my interest is primarily in readiness as it has been since 1946. I will probably not be believed because I am a civilian.

Contrary to mythical popular belief, depot corporate memory, expertise, response and accuracy reside with groups of civilian careerists in the several depots (A, N & AF). I have never professed to be a total expert because there is not, and cannot be one, because of the complexity and technological application levels involved in Aviation Logistic Support.

I have known and worked with the many, many fine knowledgeable enlisted and commissioned Marines up to and including the Commanding Officers and beyond. They all have applied themselves diligently but cannot in three to six years learn what the affected career civilians have learned and applied for 30 years or more. The military element consists of the segment of the DOD that knows and applies the warfighting and training strategies that make up the world's greatest military machine. The military and civilian segments of DOD make that possible. As a consequence of that relationship, I will not, and could not, intelligently comment on any other BRAC closure or realignment proposal or any modification recommended by your commission. I re-emphasize that the thoughts, comments, statements and opinions expressed in this and my previous letter are my own personally from my experience and have been coordinated with no one or no organization.

I doubt that you, Mr. Chairman, will be permitted to see this letter. I don't envy your job and wish hopefully that you will eventually formulate what is best for DOD aviation and consequently our maximum aviation military might and readiness.

The three-hour audience with the Secretary of the Navy that I related to in my earlier letter, taught me that the depot level as practiced in the three services is not universally understood nor is it necessary that it be.

I have been extensively involved in establishing depot level capability for airframes, engines, components, and accessories. That doesn't come easy but will evolve through seasoned practitioners who are authorities in their separate elements of capability establishment.

Capability establishment and production performance (greatly simplified) come through the following fundamental steps:

1. Given subject study
2. Manufacturer coordination
3. Technical manual development
4. Performance testing
5. Special support equipment procurement
6. General support equipment procurement
7. Artisan, Technician and Engineering Training
8. Facility adaptation
9. Military Construction

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10. Parts stocking and replenishment
11. Subject prototype
12. Packaging and Preservation
13. Engineering support
14. Usage data development
15. Atmospheric rework requirements

Each of these fundamental steps is general with each containing sub-element that comprises the whole. It would be a pleasure to discuss each of these elements more thoroughly with one or more of the BRAC commissioners at any time.

Regardless of the product, every reworked article necessarily must go through the same phases. Those phases are:

1. Processing identification
2. Cleaning
3. Inspection (analytical, ferrous & non-ferrous)
4. Rework
5. Change Incorporation (when applicable)
6. Post-rework certification
7. Packaging and Preservation

The fundamental steps to establishing capability and the operational phases above can be duplicated at any specific site if all the conditions are met. It is my own personal opinion that realignment is really development of capability that was dis-established from the '95 BRAC.

The depot at Cherry Point has been developed over a 60-year period and has been recognized nationally for its excellence, economy, productivity, environmental control and other attributes. Importantly, equipment and furnishings incorporate the latest in aviation technology. The buildings and equipment are kept in an excellent state of repair.

On 30 June 2005, I attended the Change of Command ceremony for the then Commanding Officer, Marine Col. John Gumbel and his successor, Col. Mark Reed. I invite you to look at the next to last sheet of the Ceremony Program (Encl. 1), entitled "Naval Air Depot, Cherry Point Accomplishments." The accomplishments listed occurred during Col. Gumbel's tour as XO and CO. If necessary, I could probably furnish an accomplishment list throughout the Depot's existence. That list would include the applicable accomplishments during the 30 or more Depot Commanding Officers' tours.

I have seen the BRAC proposals for workload migrations. Those proposals show the only personnel (man-hours) losses to be incurred at the A, AF & Navy Depots are at the Cherry Point Depot. Paradoxically then, the acclaimed best Depot is assigned the only Depot losses.

No one I am acquainted with or have spoken to, can begin to understand the rationale behind that proposed transition.

I recognize and accept that you and your BRAC Commission have a terrifying assignment to accomplish and that you are literally bothered and pestered by others such as I.

I apologize profusely for the length of this letter and the depth to which I have gone in expressing my beliefs based on lengthy Aviation Logistic Support experience. My statements are all in the interest of improved DOD Aviation Readiness.

Yours very truly,

Ralph Potter (252) 638-1845

Encl. (1)