

July 12, 2005

Base Realignment and Closure Commission  
2521 South Clarke Street, Suite 600  
Arlington, Virginia 22202

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Dear Commission Members:

I returned from vacation and while catching up on a week's worth of newspapers found myself amazed at the fact the Commission may be seriously considering the inclusion of Naval Air Station Oceana to the list of bases to be closed. Since the Department of Defense's review of bases saw the clear military need for Oceana, I can only suspect this is because a very small minority has been able to make its voice heard in undue proportion to its influence regarding supposed problems. I believe the following to be factual and representative of why the Oceana should not be added to the list.

- I actually asked four active military families we are fortunate to have as friends a few weeks ago about the quality of life for military families in Hampton Roads. The best duty spot for bringing up a family was the unanimous reply. They were not surprised Oceana was excluded from The Department of Defense's recommendations for closure. They couldn't imagine why the base would be closed based on that factor alone. The quality of life for service men and women and their families in Virginia Beach is superb. There are job opportunities for spousal and family employment, higher educational opportunities, great medical care, a tremendous support network for children with special needs, and world-class recreational opportunities in this metropolitan area of 1.6 million people. This must help with retention of military personnel and the many factors important to maintaining the country's military readiness. Oceana's location next to the majority of the east coast aircraft carriers is advantageous from a military standpoint and it allows service personnel to spend more time with their families. Factually, I was personally involved in the Base Realignment and Closure Commission during the mid-1990's and remember Oceana being ranked as the top Navy/Marine Corps air station in military value. In a world that has become more dangerous since that time it is hard to imagine any conclusion that does not maintain Oceana at that high level.
- If the Department of Defense and what we see here in the area argues so well for Oceana's military readiness, it leaves me to believe that something else is at work. Presumably, this is some small, but perhaps vociferous, group of citizens opposed to the base. Please consider that a small band of critics does not present the region's true feelings about Oceana, the service it provides the country, and the men and women who work there. These critics have been studied and listened to by various groups in the community. Less than one tenth of one percent of the citizenry in the region is actively opposed to Oceana operations. An

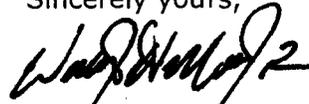
independent research firm actually asked the citizens of Virginia Beach whether jet noise was a reason they were unhappy with their decision to select where they live. Only 1.5% responded in any affirmative way and I am pretty sure if the question included closing Oceana they would simply deal with the occasional noise.

- There have been encroachment issues, but that comes with the many possibilities for suburban, urban, and rural living the City provides. Moreover, these encroachment issues are consistently studied and evaluated. Many were proactively addressed through a recently completed Joint Land Use Study and an Airport Zoning Ordinance. The City of Virginia Beach's commitment is clear. I know the municipality has invested more than \$200 million in transportation improvements around NAS Oceana during the last 10 years. My wife teaches at one of the two elementary schools removed from the "APZ" following the 1993 base closure round. I would challenge any critics to name one federal, State, or local legislator in any of the region's cities that has not supported Oceana in the past ten years. There is not one.

I am not former military. I can make a claim as a Navy "brat". My father moved from the mid-west, kept the family here in Hampton Roads during the last fifteen years of his naval career. He sometimes left for tours of duty and other locales, but the family stayed here because he didn't want to uproot us from such a desirable place to live.

I also understand jet noise might be a sporadic occurrence from time to time. But most of us know the reason for it. I have sat on a soccer field near Oceana on many afternoons and early evenings over the years watching the planes practice or land and take off. It will be periodically loud, but it doesn't stop the game or the enjoyment of kids playing, except for the occasional youngster who just has to stop and stare at the awesome power of those planes. I have yet to meet one of the members of that group that makes up 1.5% of our local population supposedly opposed to Oceana. I am sure a few are there and entitled to their opinion. But when you are making your decision remember Oceana is militarily ready, encroachment is being dealt with, and the vast majority of Virginia Beach and Hampton Roads citizens know intermittent jet noise is a small price to pay for the freedom it helps our military preserve.

Sincerely yours,



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