

BRAC Commission

August 18, 2005

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The Honorable Anthony J. Principi, Chairman
2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Chairman Principi:

We write to you as the principal authors of the original 1988 BRAC statute and to share with the Commission our views of the BRAC process gained as members of the U.S. House of Representatives, particularly during the 1993 round. The 2005 BRAC Commission is now considering an issue of importance to our nation's naval aviation mission. We would like to take this opportunity to present our views to the Commission on this subject.

It is our understanding that the Commission recently voted to consider Naval Air Station (NAS) Oceana for possible closure or realignment. The Defense Department did not list NAS Oceana as a candidate for closure or realignment in submitting its recommendations and the Commission took this action by exercising its authority under the new BRAC law.

We further understand that Governor Jeb Bush of Florida, in testimony submitted to the Commission, has recommended that the property and facilities of the former NAS, Cecil Field, located in Jacksonville, Florida, be considered as a possible receiving location for the personnel, equipment, and other assets now located at NAS Oceana, if the Commission were to vote to close or realign NAS Oceana.

We also understand that views have been expressed that the Commission lacks the authority to consider the former NAS Cecil Field as a possible optional location for those assets now at Oceana. This is so, according to these views, because the 1993 BRAC round ordered the closure of NAS Cecil Field, which occurred in 1999.

As legislators deeply involved in the development of BRAC we believe that actions taken in a previous BRAC round, keeping in mind the integrity of the BRAC process, do not automatically bind subsequent BRAC commissions. Such is the case involved at Cecil Field.

Two examples will be useful in explaining our reasoning consistent with the Congressional intent behind BRAC.

- A BRAC Commission could direct the return of specific functions or activities to an installation reassigned during a realignment recommended by a previous BRAC round.

- A BRAC round that had previously ordered an installation “moth-balled”, could allow subsequent BRAC rounds to order that the installation re-opened.

While it may be outside the purview of a BRAC Commission to direct the movement of functions from a military installation to facilities not under the Department of Defense’s control, that circumstance should not prevent a BRAC Commission from considering the existence of these facilities when determining whether to close or realign the installation.

The intent of the process, we believe, is to provide an appropriate measure of flexibility to future BRAC Commissions given changes in force structure, world threats, and our nation’s security interests.

In that context, we recognize that the NAS Oceana/NAS Cecil Field situation is unique in several respects. The principle aviation assets now at the former NAS Cecil Field are no longer owned by the U.S. Government. However, it would appear that the Defense Department could readily be in a position to secure control of these facilities to support essential military needs, particularly to fulfill critical naval pilot training requirements. This is especially so because the facilities at Cecil Field are eminently suited for that intended purpose and could readily receive these activities given the aviation infrastructure now present and available at Cecil.

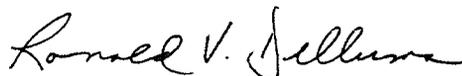
While it may be beyond the Commission’s purview to direct the movement of military functions to a particular site not under the control of the Defense Department, we believe, in keeping with the intention of BRAC, that it is within the Commission’s scope of authority to consider the existence of those readily available facilities in determining whether to close or realign the installation involved.

We hope that these views may be helpful to the 2005 BRAC Commission as it considers whether to vote to recommend closure or realignment of NAS Oceana and whether suitable alternative locations exist as possible receiving sites for NAS Oceana’s personnel and aircraft assets.

Respectively submitted,



Dick Arme
U.S. House Majority Leader
1995-2001



Ronald V. Dellums
Chairman, House Armed Services Committee
One Hundred Third Congress

cc: The Honorable James H. Bilbray
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The Honorable Samuel K. Skinner

The Honorable Philip E. Coyle, III
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