

19 May 2005

DCN: 504

Anthony J. Principi  
BRAC Commission  
Polk Building  
Suites 600 and 625  
2521 South Clark St.  
Arlington, VA 22202



Dear Mr. Principi,

I am a former Navy kid. My mother married a diver who was active duty out of Coronado, California when I was eight years old. Within a year, my step-father was transferred to Little Creek in Virginia Beach, Virginia. We lived in Virginia Beach for five years before he was transferred again, that time to the Naval Air Station in Brunswick, Maine.

As a 14-year-old, the last place I wanted to be was halfway up the Maine coast. My step-father had the option of going to Panama City, Florida, but my parents chose Maine. For our family, Maine was a better place to be. Better schools, better culture, and better for the Navy.

Brunswick Naval Air Station, I learned, is the only operational Naval air base in New England. It also is the administrative center for the Navy's S.E.R.E. school in Rangeley, Maine. My step-father was a Senior Chief Corps Man for the S.E.R.E. school.

The importance of Brunswick N.A.S. should be obvious to anyone who is concerned with national security. As the only operational air base in New England, it provides protection for the region. I was in Brunswick on September 11, 2001, and I felt safer knowing there were patrols flying over the state. I would not have felt as safe if I were somewhere without an obvious military presence. Also, as the most imposing military base in the region, B.N.A.S. is the last post of defense before the Canadian border. It is also situated on vital shipping lines of the North Atlantic.

This military presence has been beneficial even as recently as this week. Two separate commercial airline flights have been diverted to Bangor International Airport because of terrorism concerns, and the resources of B.N.A.S. have been readily available for assistance. What if B.N.A.S. were not operational? Would the region be as safe? I believe it would not.

Would the national security of our nation suffer? I believe it would.

Besides being vital to the Navy, B.N.A.S. is an important facet of the Brunswick community. Without B.N.A.S., jobs will be harder to come by for everyone from the high school kids who work at the on-base Taco Bell, to the retirees who help run the on-base golf course. The base helps keep this Maine town modern and moving forward. Brunswick is the largest town in Maine and boasts two hospitals along with the prestigious Bowdoin College. The base has recently undergone the building of a new hanger, new family housing, and added security

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measures. It is not only an asset to the community, but the community around it helps support its functions and would be ready to help in case of an emergency.

Simply put, scaling back the operations at Brunswick Naval Air Station would be a step in the wrong direction for the Navy. It is a modern facility, it is capable of handling many operations, it is in a very strategically advantageous location, and it is nestled in a community that supports the Navy and its operations. Bath Iron Works, which produces several ships for the Navy, is only a few miles away in Bath. Between the two facilities, mid-coast Maine is dominated by the Navy and service to the Navy.

I admit, I did not want to move to Maine when I was 14. I'm now 21 and a senior at Northeastern University in Boston. It took me awhile to warm up to Brunswick, but it is quite a town to live in, I discovered. And, it is quite a place to have an air station. I hope the Commission will reconsider the fate of Brunswick Naval Air Station. While small, it is very important to the Navy and the security of our nation. Scaling down the operations of B.N.A.S. would cost Brunswick jobs, the Navy strategic leverage against terrorism in New England, and the United States the guarantee that there is somebody standing guard here in the frigid North.

Thank you for your attention,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Shannon K. Blakely". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Shannon K. Blakely  
College student and former Navy brat  
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#801  
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