Executive Correspondence
DCN 7784

BRAC Commission

AUG 18 2005

Received

** SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE **

Fax Cover Sheet

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FAX TO: Chairman Principi

COMMENTS:

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FROM: Lucian Niemeyer
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This transmission consists of 6 pages, including this cover sheet.

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TRACK 784

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United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6050

August 18, 2005

Honorable Anthony J. Principi
Chairman, Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, Virginia 22202-3920

Dear Chairman Principi:

I thank you for your letter of August 15, 2005. I fully share your concerns and support your statement that "there is no higher military value than the safety and proficiency of America's uniformed young men and women." I further believe that all levels of the Navy—from Secretary of the Navy to the Chief of Naval Operations, and throughout "the ranks"--are likewise concerned about the safety and training of all those involved in naval aviation. That is why the Congress—in coordination with the Secretary of Defense—directed that "military value" be given the greatest priority in the selection criteria during the 2005 round of Base Closure and Realignment.

First, the Navy, using "certified" data, as required by BRAC statute, which incorporates the impact of encroachment on operational training, determined that NAS Oceana has one of the highest military values of any air station in the country. This high military value is further enhanced by the support Oceana provides to "special" mission personnel and equipment which was briefed to several Commissioners on August 4, 2005. I also draw your attention to a letter I received on August 4, 2005, which I have attached. In it, Admiral Mullen states "NAS Oceana remains the best option for the Navy master jet base on the East Coast, largely due to operational capabilities and proximity to the fleet and training areas."

Mr. Chairman, when we visited NAS Oceana on August 1, 2005, we heard the opinions of naval aviators with a wide range of experience and responsibilities for the training of our pilots. The consensus of the Naval experts in that meeting was that encroachment to the landing pattern has existed for 27 years at Oceana and has not adversely impact the skills and training of our carrier pilots. These same experts cited that the substantial advantages of close proximity to the fleet and access to unencumbered airspace—airspace which is used for more than 90 percent of the strike fighters training requirements--far outweigh any concern regarding the landing pattern. We also heard that the new outlying landing field to be constructed in Washington County, North Carolina will allow our pilots to practice landings at exactly the same altitude as would be required for carrier operations.

As was stated in sworn testimony by Vice Admiral Willard on July 18, 2005 to the Commission, "the challenges that you mention regarding encroachment and Oceana have been and are manageable."

We all recognize there exist differences of opinion, but the overwhelming body of statements and professional judgment presented by the Navy's leadership, which is consistent with BRAC decisions in prior years, provides a solid basis for the 2005 Commission to reach a similar conclusion.

I have reviewed the documents which the Commission received from the Department of Defense up to and including statements received on August 16, 2005. These documents consistently corroborate the professional judgment of the Chief of Naval Operations and other Navy officials. I want to take this opportunity to highlight a few facts.

In response to questions from BRAC Commission analysts about a scenario to relocate jets to Cecil Field, the Commander of Fleet Forces Command certified on August 9, 2005 that "*CFFC does not support this scenario. CFFC has determined that NAS Oceana is clearly the most suitable option as a Navy East Coast Master Jet base in support of East Coast Fleet carrier operations. Oceana meets current training needs now and into the future. A wholesale move of all assets located at NAS Oceana to Cecil will cause significant challenges in maintaining required readiness levels.*" The CFFC also cited a litany of encroachment and force protection issues with this scenario. The Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Navy for Base Realignment and Closure also certified on August 9, 2005 that this scenario would cost the Navy $1.64 billion to rebuild Cecil Field, and the Navy would not realize a savings for more than 100 years.

In my August 12, 2005 letter to you, I stated that in drafting the law, Congress specifically intended for the Commission <u>not</u> to exhaust valuable resources and time reviewing complex promises and proposals from communities trying to influence the Commission's final deliberations. In a letter from Undersecretary of Defense Michael W. Wynne to the BRAC Commission on August 16, 2005, the Department also stated that it "did not include future state expenditures in its analysis, as this may violate statute, and likely pit receiver states against the current location." Promises of future state expenditures cannot serve reliably as the foundation of a Commission's recommendation to move the Navy's East Coast master jet base. State and local governments cannot guarantee that such promises will be delivered in the future, in which case the Navy will face a dilemma with no easy solution.

In response to questions from BRAC Commission analysts about a scenario to relocate two squadrons to MCAS Cherry Point, North Carolina, the Commander of Fleet Forces Command certified on August 9, 2005 that "*CFFC does not support this scenario. Noise mitigation resulting from this scenario would be minor....A total of four squadrons at MCAS*

Cherry Point result in; 1) Excess capacity at NAS Oceana; 2) significant construction costs at MCAS Cherry Point; 3) Significant maintenance support costs due to duplication of facilities and functions. All three of these factors run counter to the basic principles of BRAC." The Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Navy for Base Realignment and Closure also certified on August 9, 2005 that this scenario would never yield a savings for the Navy, instead costing $406 million to carry out the recommendation.

In response to questions from BRAC Commission analysts about a scenario to relocate the master jet base to an unimproved property, the Commander of Fleet Forces Command certified on August 9, 2005 that "*CFFC does not support this scenario...The cost of executing this scenario within a compressed timeline will have a devastating effect on the DoD budget and the programs it supports..Environmental Impact Statement, acquisition, movement of all aircraft, and the significant costs to execute all of these makes this un-executable within the BRAC budget or timeline."* The Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Navy for Base Realignment and Closure also certified on August 9, 2005 that this scenario would cost the Navy $1.85 billion to build a new base, and the Navy would realize a savings after 325 years.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to a letter (attached) I recently received from Secretary England which states: "there is no viable alternative to Oceana Naval Air Station."

Mr Chairman, the public record on this matter--based on testimony and certified data from the Navy--has been clear and consistent on the need to retain the East Coast master jet base at Naval Air Station Oceana, Virginia. Implicit in all of the analysis performed by the Navy is the quality of training that is currently provided at NAS Oceana which cannot be replicated elsewhere. The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Mullen, sent a compelling message to the Commission on August 4, 2005 "I need now—your Navy needs now—Naval Air Station Oceana.

The base realignment and closure process was established to allow the Department of Defense to reduce excess infrastructure. I cannot find any provision in law, or any precedent in the previous BRAC rounds, for the Commission to use the BRAC process to establish a new military installation. I still do not fully understand how the Commission will be able to rely on a series of unenforceable commitments and promises to make a recommendation, given the dynamic nature of local governments and the need for continuous legislation to authorize state and local expenditures. Directing the Department of Defense to carry out a decision to establish a new military installation with little assurance that any community commitments will be met by future officials may not be executable.

Mr Chairman, I am committed to a fair and open BRAC process as is the Commission. The affected communities across our nation must have confidence that the Commission conducted their activities openly and fairly, and reached their recommendations through an

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objective review of the facts. The facts support the retention of Oceana as the Navy's East Coast master jet base.

With kind regards, I am

Sincerely

John Warner

John Warner

Executive Correspondence
DCN 4

DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1010 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1010

August 17, 2005

The Honorable John Warner
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-6050

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for sharing your letter to the Chairman of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission with regard to Naval Air Station, Oceana, Virginia.

The Department of Defense fully endorses its earlier recommendations and testimony regarding Naval Air Station Oceana. In the Department's recommendations to the Commission and in testimony to the Commission by the Chief of Naval Operations, we did not recommend either realignment or closure of the Master Jet Base at Oceana. There is no viable alternative to Oceana Naval Air Station.

Further, the Secretary of Defense, in making recommendations to the Commission, did not deviate from the force structure plan or the selection criteria and complied with all provisions in the statute.

The Department's witnesses will reiterate this position during oral testimony at the BRAC Commission hearing on August 20. Thank you again for sharing your communication with me, and thank you for your continued leadership as Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and for all you do for America and for our men and women in uniform.

Acting

Executive Correspondence
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CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

04 AUG 2005

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter of August 3, 2005 requesting data and analysis regarding the feasibility of the move of the Navy's Master Jet Base to former NAS Cecil Field. Fleet Forces Command has forwarded data in response to a scenario data call request generated by the Base Closure and Realignment Commission. The request by the Commission involved multiple alternatives for which the data is currently being reviewed and analyzed. Upon completion of that analysis, we will be forwarding the requested scenario data and COBRA analysis to the Commission, at which time I will also forward it to you.

While it is premature to provide this scenario data until it has been analyzed, the position of the Department of the Navy with regard to NAS Oceana remains as it has been characterized in correspondence both with the Commission and your office. NAS Oceana remains the best option for the Navy master jet base on the East Coast, largely due to operational capabilities and proximity to the fleet and training areas. We do not expect the cost analyses requested by the Commission to alter this position.

Thank you for your continued support. If I may be of any further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,

M. G. MULLEN
Admiral, U. S. Navy

The Honorable John Warner
Chairman, Committee on
Armed Services
Washington, DC 20610-8060