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

May 19, 2005

Dear Mr. Principi;

I am writing to urge you to reject the proposed realignment for the Brunswick Naval Air Station, Brunswick, ME.

BNAS is vital to our regional and national security. It is the only remaining airfield in New England and is strategically situated to provide both homeland defense of our shipping lanes in one of the most heavily populated regions of the US as well as providing refueling and support for all types of aircraft making trans-Atlantic crossings. Recent improvements to the base include construction of an aircraft hanger for the next generation plane: the only hanger currently in existence for that type aircraft I believe.

It seems incredibly unwise to remove all of the planes and active duty military personnel from BNAS at a time when we are still trying to determine what our future threats will be both domestically and internationally. We are at war and the Department of Defense has not made its case for such drastic changes while we face terrorist threat. It is claimed that this is being done to promote flexibility and cost savings, yet substantial investments have been made to improve BNAS's facilities and housing. Why waste all of that money that has already been invested as recently as last year? I find that I have no confidence in the purported "savings" that this plan alleges!

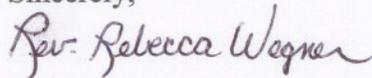
It is even more unwise to shift those resources to an area that was heavily damaged by hurricanes last year and faces continued threats of similar weather difficulties in the future. As I recall, many of the aircraft from Jacksonville had to flee to Brunswick last summer. The weather pattern is unlikely to change in Florida's favor any time soon I fear. To further complicate the issue, why is it a good idea to make any one installation a large attractive target for weather damages or terrorist attack? Why endanger all of our capabilities by lumping them into these super-centers instead of retaining a more strategic positioning?

While I readily admit my lack of qualifications for military analysis, one does not need to be an expert in the field to see the damage that will be done to this community and our

state if we are sacrificed for a purported cost savings that has not been demonstrated. Maine is being told that it will have to bear a disproportionate burden of economic damage so that this highly unproven concept in military management can be tested. We are a town of less than 22,000 people and this proposal is taking away over 2,300 military jobs, 61 civilian jobs and will affect an additional 1,800 plus civilian jobs over the course of five years. This comes at a time when the Department of Defense is also attacking the shipbuilding program at Bath Iron Works, the other major employer for our area and proposing the closure of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyards in Kittery at the loss of over 4,000 jobs. It appears that the Navy is going out of business according to these recommendations. It is illogical! How will our military have any hope of efficient functioning with this assault on our naval programs at a time when there has not even been a full evaluation of what our future military needs will be.

This proposal has caused extensive disruption in the lives of my parishioners, in community businesses and in our schools. We cannot adequately plan anything as simple as a church budget, let alone a school board or town government budget with all of the insecurity that has been caused by this realignment proposal. We know that we have valuable assets for the protection of our region and our nation and it hurts to hear them devalued. It hurts even more to be left with a skeleton of BNAS that cannot be productively put to a new use thanks to this "realignment" plan. We are facing the worst of all possible situations and I urge you, Mr. Principi, to rely upon your own experience with BNAS and all that it has to offer our country. I urge you to do the right thing and oppose this realignment plan.

Sincerely,



Rev. Rebecca Wegner