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August 13, 2002

Mr. John Spodofora  
Lakehurst Naval Air Engineering Station (NAES)  
Highway 547  
Lakehurst, NJ 08733

Dear Mr. Spodofora:

Knowing of your support for keeping the Lakehurst Naval Air Engineering Station (NAES) a vibrant and growing part of our community, I am writing to update you on some of the work I have been doing to protect this crucial military installation from closure.

As you may recall, during the 1st session of the 107th Congress, legislation was passed in the Senate as part of the Fiscal Year 2002 National Defense Authorization Act (S. 1438), to authorize another Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission for the year 2003. The House version of this bill initially rejected the BRAC, but during the conference negotiation, the House and Senate reached a compromise in which they set up a BRAC, but postponed it to the year 2005. Adamantly opposed to authorizing a new round of BRAC, I voted against the S. 1438 conference report. It passed over my objections, and became law.

The main reason I am opposed to BRAC is that in the past it has proven to be a deeply flawed process that does not, cannot, and will not accomplish its two primary goals: (1) freeing up resources to fight the War on Terrorism, and (2) making sure that politics is removed from the closure decision making process.

For example, the General Accounting Office (GAO) has shown that BRAC costs generally exceeded projected savings for many years after bases are scheduled to close. In fact, the GAO noted that cumulative BRAC costs exceeded savings every single year from 1990 to 1998. Thus, instead of increasing the amount of resources available to fight terrorism, a BRAC round in 2005 will actually reduce and divert resources for the better part of a decade.

Second, my personal experiences with the prior (1995) BRAC process -- in which I helped lead the successful effort to save Navy Lakehurst -- caused me to reach one conclusion: the BRAC system is rigged and fraught with hidden agendas. In 1995, it was obvious that the Pentagon wanted to close down Lakehurst for their own internal political reasons. Even when the data showed that closing Lakehurst and moving its unique facilities and machinery would cost tens of millions of dollars and not be cost-effective, officials inside the Pentagon ordered the data to be fabricated and 'spun' so that closure would look attractive on paper. I actually saw correspondence ordering people at Lakehurst to 'make the numbers look better.' I was dismayed

and disgusted by the depths to which the institutional bureaucracy inside the Pentagon would stoop in order to accomplish their agenda. In fact, had there not been courageous people at Lakehurst who were willing to risk their careers and provide me with inside information, the base probably would have ended up being closed, and Ocean County's largest employer, with 2,300 people and a substantial statewide economic impact, would have been lost.

Ever since I helped save the base in 1995, I have been actively working to grow the base and secure it against the next round of BRAC. Below is a partial selection of the base improvements and initiatives I have undertaken over the past several years:

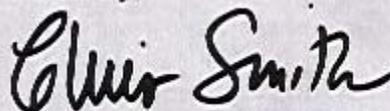
- Successfully won Congressional authorization and appropriation (FY 2000) for \$15.7 million Aircraft Platform Interface (API) laboratory ("Superlab") at Lakehurst. This cutting-edge facility is crucial to Lakehurst's long-term future, and I recently cut the ribbon for its grand opening.
- Successfully obtained \$1.75 million in authorization and appropriation (FY 2002) for a Aviation Shipboard Information Technology Initiative (AS/ITI). This project will be managed at Lakehurst, and improve the operation of aircraft carrier launch and recovery equipment. When completed, the AS/ITI program could create a new line of work for Lakehurst, which in turn would preserve jobs and insulate the base from closure.
- Successfully secured \$8.2 million in the FY 2003 authorization (HR 4546, as passed by the House) for the AS/ITI project at Lakehurst.
- Successfully won \$5.2 million to be authorized and appropriated in FY 2003 military construction bills (HR 4546 and HR 5011 as passed by the House) for a consolidated Fire House at Lakehurst. This important infrastructure enhancement will help position Lakehurst to win new missions, such as the C-17 assault landing strip.
- Successfully negotiated (in cooperation with Rep. Saxton) an agreement between the Air Force and the Navy to have the Air Force build a C-17 assault landing strip at Lakehurst. This Air Force project is expected to be included in the President's Budget for FY 2004.
- Currently working to secure \$13.4 million in appropriations in the FY 2003 Department of Justice funding bill for a new FBI aviation hangar (plus 2 new helicopters) at Lakehurst. The FBI uses these helicopters and small fixed wing aircraft at Lakehurst to help in the fight against terrorists.
- Successfully included report language in the FY 2003 Defense Authorization bill (HR 4546, as passed by the House) supporting the FY 2004 timeframe for a proposed \$17 million construction project for Lakehurst. The project in question -- Electromagnetic Aircraft Launching System (EMALS) -- is absolutely vital to the long term future of Navy Lakehurst.
- Successfully laying the ground-work for the President's FY 2004 budget to include funds to build a \$17 million EMALS test-bed demonstrator program at Lakehurst. If this project is built at Lakehurst, it would provide a steady future for naval aviation programs at Lakehurst for the next 50 years.

Rest assured that when the next round of BRAC comes, I will be hard at work to make sure that Navy Lakehurst is well prepared to weather the storm. Below is the timeline and key dates for the next BRAC round:

	<b>2005 BRAC Timeline</b>
December 31, 2003	Secretary of Defense sends his initial selection criteria to the Congressional defense committees
February 16, 2004	Secretary of Defense sends final selection criteria to defense committees; publishes criteria in Federal Register
March 15, 2004	Selection criteria final, unless disapproved by an Act of Congress
March 15, 2005	President forms new BRAC Commission; sends nominees to Senate
May 16, 2005	Secretary of Defense sends a closure/realignment list to Commission, and to the Congressional defense committees
July 1, 2005	GAO reviews DOD's list; reports findings to President/defense committees
September 8, 2005	Commission sends its findings and recommendations to President
September 23, 2005	President reviews Secretary of Defense's and Commission's list of recommendations
October 20, 2005	Commission may submit revised list in response to President's review
November 7, 2005	President certifies closure/realignment list (or process is terminated)
April 15, 2006	Work of the closure/realignment Commission must be terminated.

Again, thank you for your continued interest in, and support for, Navy Lakehurst. If there is anything further I can provide assistance on, please do not hesitate to call on me.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH  
Member of Congress