

BALTIMORE, MD – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) released the following statement that he submitted to the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commissioners at the regional hearing held today in Baltimore. Representative Hoyer has been working closely with the BRAC Commissioners since the release of the Department of Defense BRAC recommendations as part of his ongoing efforts to educate the Commission about the unique military and homeland security capabilities at Southern Maryland's defense installations.

“Although I am unable to be present for the BRAC Regional Hearing today, I wanted to join with my Colleagues from the Maryland Delegation and Governor Ehrlich in providing comments on the DoD's recommendations for BRAC 2005.

“First, let me say thank you for your contribution to this important process. I know the personal sacrifices you have made in order to ensure that we have a fair and equitable process as we downsize the number of DoD Installations. I know many of you personally and have the highest confidence that your final product will be thoughtful and in the best interests of our country.

“You have some very difficult decisions to make in the days ahead as you listen to very emotional pleas to make changes to the DoD's recommendations. In the end, you want to be sure those difficult choices have been the right decisions. In Maryland, I can speak from experience on the enormous task a receiving community faces to implement a decision.

“As a result of a BRAC 1993 decision, the Navy relocated over 3,000 jobs, mostly civilian workers, to Pax River from Crystal City, Virginia. The two locations are about 1.5 hours apart via ground transportation. Through an extraordinary partnership among, local, state and federal levels of government, coupled with strong support from the private sector, Pax successfully moved 80% of these workers, far surpassing the Navy's own expectations.

“Maryland has successfully proven its ability to work in partnership with the DoD to implement large scale movements of people into Maryland. The Maryland Congressional Delegation, led by Senator Sarbanes and Senator Mikulski, has repeatedly shown its ability to work together across party lines to focus our attention on large scale projects such as this. Both Senators worked closely with me and state and local officials from Southern Maryland to ensure the success of the BRAC decisions of the 1990s.

“Congressman Ruppertsberger now represents the Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Congress and with his background as County Executive of Baltimore County, he is well familiar with local government and has an outstanding relationship with the private sector, both key factors that will ensure a successful influx of new workers to the Aberdeen area.

“At Fort Meade, Congressman Ben Cardin and Mr. Ruppertsberger will provide a very strong team to work with local and state officials and the local business community to facilitate a successful influx of new workers to that area. I am confident that Governor Ehrlich will provide the same level of commitment that we experienced during the 1990s when the State stepped in and made over \$200 million of new investments in transportation and school funding to assist with the new jobs at Pax River.

“The DoD recommendation to move positions into Maryland results from the success we have already achieved at Pax River and Indian Head, and the advantages of co-locating functions to create greater synergy. Bringing together bright, talented workers to share ideas and collaborate was the key to the early formation of our cities and the DoD has discovered the benefits of consolidating functions here in Maryland where a very large and talented workforce is already dedicated to our National Security.

“I would join with my colleagues in asking you to review the efficacy of the recommendation to consolidate the DFAS organization. I am confident that you will consider the arguments being made with regard to this organization as it affects nearly every major military installation.

“Finally, I would specifically ask the Commission to take a close look at several recommendations that look to relocate positions from Pax River and Indian Head. Some recommendations appear to reverse prior consolidations and diminish synergy that now exists at both installations. Does it make sense to disrupt and jeopardize existing synergistic collaboration in the hope of re-creating it elsewhere? I am a strong proponent of consolidation when and where it makes sense, but I have very strong concerns about the significant disruption when little or no benefit results.

“Again, let me say thank you to each of you for your service and dedication during this challenging process. Our nation benefits from having the kind of expertise and talent that we have once again assembled to provide a steady and fair hand over the difficult process of downsizing our nation’s military installations. I look forward to continuing to work with you.”

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