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Congress of the United States
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August 8, 2008

RDML Robert J. Bianchi
SC, USN, Commander
Navy Exchange Service Command
3280 Virginia Beach Blvd.
Virginia Beach, VA 23452

Dear Commander Bianchi:

I write to request that the U. S. Navy Exchange Service Command consider providing commissary services at the Naval Air Station (NASB) after the base closes in 2011.

BNAS has been slated for closure as part of the most recent Base Re-Alignment and Closure (BRAC) process. Its commissary, located on base property in Topsham, Maine and Navy Exchange (NEX) at the Brunswick facility, have provided valuable services and benefits to the active military members and their families now stationed at the base, the Bath Iron Works shipyard, as well as to thousands of retired military, Reservists and Guard members and their families who live in the region. Many of these patrons will continue to reside in this area after the base closure. It is estimated that after closure of the base, more than 900 active duty personnel and 21,000 retirees will reside within an hour's drive of NASB. Many of these men and women have expressed their concern to me that they will no longer have access to a military commissary and NEX once the existing facility is closed.

The NASB commissary is the only such facility in the Maine Midcoast region. The NEX in Portsmouth, New Hampshire and the commissary in Bangor, Maine are each a long distance away. As food, fuel and other prices have soared, the imminent loss of the economic and social benefits of a nearby commissary or NEX loom large in the lives of my constituents. Indeed, many retirees have told me that the loss may prompt them to move to another part of the country.

I understand that the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) usually closes the commissary and NEX when a base is closed, and that a tentative date has been established for the closing of the Topsham commissary. However, there is at least one precedent for creating a new commissary when a base was closed: Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indianapolis. I believe the circumstances in Brunswick also merit continuation of commissary services after the base is closed.

The continuation of a commissary can be accomplished by using the existing commissary facility, with modifications, which could be conveyed to the federal government by lease, as suggested by the Supervisor of Shipbuilding, Conversion and Repair, Captain Dean Krestos, in his memorandum of July 29, 2008, enclosed herewith. Alternatively, a new facility could be constructed in connection with the creation of the new Armed Forces Reserve Center on the Brunswick base property.

The redevelopment of NASB, now in the implementation stage, calls for the construction of the new Armed Forces Reserve Center that will house Marine Reserve and Army National Guard units on land set aside on the base for this purpose. I understand that the Marine Reserve is working with the Navy to obtain permission to begin construction of its Center facilities before the base closes. I also understand that officials associated with the Center, including the Adjutant General of the Maine National Guard, John W. Libby, would welcome the construction of a commissary near or adjoining the Center to serve eligible patrons, including National Guard and Reserve members assigned to the Center and their families. If the Marine Reserves is allowed to begin construction of the Center prior to base closure, presumably access would also be granted to construct an adjacent commissary. If so, the new commissary could be completed prior to the closure of the existing Topsham facility.

The continuation of commissary services on NASB property would fulfill the mission of commissaries: "to provide non-cash compensation to military personnel, foster and maintain a sense of military community relationship among military personnel and families, and contribute to a sense of confidence among military personnel that their families are cared for by the military institution...."

A new commissary at this site would also serve another important purpose. Numerous retirees, many of whom once served at NASB, have made their home in the Brunswick area in part because of their expectation that their cost of living would be reduced because of access to the commissary. The loss of these thousands of residents would be an additional economic and social blow to the region, which will already be reeling from the losses associated with the base closure. The continuation of commissary services in Brunswick at a new facility would provide an economic boost to the region that would help mitigate these losses.

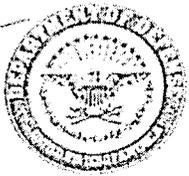
For the foregoing reasons, I hope that you will seriously consider recommending the creation of a commissary to be constructed adjacent to or near the Armed Forces Reserve Center in Brunswick. I look forward to working with you to achieve this goal.

Sincerely,



Tom Allen
Member of Congress

THA/jc



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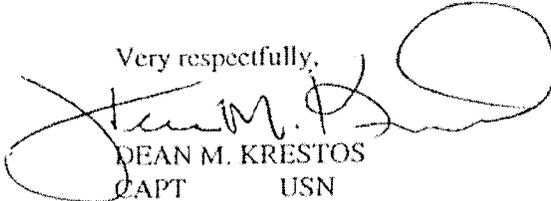
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Ser 100/082
29 July 2008

From: Supervisor of Shipbuilding, Conversion and Repair, USN, Bath, ME
To: Commander, Naval Sea Systems Command (VADM Sullivan, NAVSEA 00)
Via: Commander, Logistics, Maintenance and Industrial Operations (RADM Hugel, NAVSEA 04)

Subj: NEX/DECA ACTIVE DUTY SUPPORT

1. I respectfully request your endorsement of my request to maintain NEX and Commissary services in the Bath/Brunswick area to support the large number of active duty Sailors that will remain after NAS Brunswick (NASB) closes.
2. NASB DEERS data indicate that there will be approximately 940 active duty personnel within an hour's drive of NASB and over 21,000 retirees in the area that will still be in need of these services. The existing NEX complex on NASB (~48K square feet of retail space) is currently un-claimed for future development and could still be used for this purpose. Once a need is approved the existing operation would need to be scaled down (size wise) to fit the new demographics. NEXCOM will fund any required changes.
3. As you are aware, THE NASB is scheduled for closure via the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process by September 2011. Captain Fitzgerald, the base commander, expects actual closure to be closer to May 2011. It is the intention of both the Commissary, located at the Topsham Annex, and the Navy Exchange, located on base, to close concurrent with base closure. Captain Fitzgerald recently agreed to a Commissary date with DECA officials for 19 March 2001. No official date has yet been set for the NEX closure, but I expect it to be close to the Commissary date.
4. I recently met with the NEXCOM Regional Coordinator and the manager of the NASB NEX. After discussing the situation with them, I am confident, now more than ever, that after NASB closure, a bonafide requirement remains for services that a NEX, NEXMART, and Commissary provide for our Sailors and other active duty personnel who remain in the area. While the requirement for the number of active duty personnel to justify an NEX exists, I was told by the NEXCOM Regional Coordinator that a formal request must be forwarded through my chain of command to RADM Biachi.
5. Once it is determined that the requirement exists, NEXCOM would work to get the property leased back to the Federal Government. This issue can be addressed via special legislation or a federal property lease back. The Maine Adjutant General, General Libby, who is the ranking military official in the state of Maine and is a member of the Governor's cabinet could be of great assistance in this area. There is a precedence in other areas of the country (Orlando, FL) where leasing has been done to accommodate and NEX installation.
6. We meet the criteria of number of active duty personnel, but the requirement must be articulated to NEXCOM. This initiative will have the added advantage of benefiting the large retired and reserve personnel in the area. Now is the time to act if we are to preserve these benefits to our active duty sailors.

Very respectfully,



DEAN M. KRESTOS
CAPT USN

Copy to:
Captain W. A. Fitzgerald, Commanding Officer, Naval Air Station Brunswick