

Statement by the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard SOS Task Force

We have received the news that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has placed the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard on the list of military bases he has recommended for closure.

With all due respect, we believe that the Secretary has made a grave misjudgment; indeed a colossal error.

Much has been made of the *criteria* written into the law by which the Secretary is to guide his choices. But what must be emphasized in the light of national interests is the true overriding *criterion* of military value coupled with efficiency and effectiveness in the saving of money.

Since the process does allow for an appeal to a Commission that has the final power of decision, the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard SOS Task Force, comprised of representative bodies of the entire community of this bi-state – actually tri-state – region, their delegations in the Federal Congress and State Governors, has determined that we will spare no effort in bringing the extraordinary, award-winning, unmatched performance of the workers at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard before the BRAC Commission to the end that this initial recommendation will be reserved. The record we will bring to them is unparalleled and whatever the reason might have been that it was not fully taken into account, we intend to remedy that omission and make our case with every effort we can.

The Portsmouth Naval Shipyard is the nation's oldest, dating officially from 1800, but serving the United States of America even earlier. Sentiment, alone, of course, is not a reason to keep it in operation. Yet in many respects, it is also the youngest of defense establishments, continually breaking new ground in the way it conducts its work, developing new technologies and modes of getting the work done far ahead of schedule and under budget, becoming, as we speak, the shipyard of the future. We at the SOS Task Force aim to do everything in our power to get this message through to the appropriate decision makers and convince them that it is not too late to prevent a terrible mistake, harmful to our entire country.