



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

NATIONAL NAVAL MEDICAL CENTER

BETHESDA, MARYLAND 20889-5600

IN REPLY REFER TO
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Ser 09F1/3304

NOV 30 2007

Mr. Isiah Leggett
County Executive
Executive Office Building
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear County Executive Leggett:

I am responding to your letter of November 1, 2007 in which you request the Department of the Navy to extend the public comment period for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) associated with the closure of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the relocation of tertiary and complex health care to the National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda as required by the Defense Realignment and Closure (BRAC) act of 1990, as amended.

As you point out in your letter, recent policy decisions have resulted in a need to rework certain portions of the Draft EIS and we now anticipate that the Draft EIS will be publicly released during the second week of December. As required by statute, the release of the Draft will be followed by a 45 day public comment period. Following the public comment period, we will address all public comments in a Final EIS. The Final EIS is now scheduled to be released in late March with a Record of Decision being completed in late May. The Record of Decision must be complete before any construction work can begin. Adhering to this schedule, we plan to commence construction and renovation in early June 2008 with intent to complete critical portions of the project on a rapid construction schedule. That will allow us to rapidly transition care of our most seriously wounded veterans from the existing Walter Reed Army Medical Center to the new Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda and complete BRAC Law requirements before September 2011.

The December release of the Draft EIS is the result of senior level policy decisions within the Department of Defense regarding the treatment and care of our wounded veterans. The War in Iraq has resulted in complex injuries - often referred to as Polytrauma many with Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) - that require specialized care and support not only for the wounded.

member of the service but also for the member's family. Recognizing a need to provide and expand a holistic approach to Polytrauma care and the fact that the new WRNMMC Bethesda will be the optimal place to provide such care, has resulted in a refinement and realignment of projects at NNMC Bethesda. The program now includes a specialized clinic to treat wounded veterans, housing for the wounded veterans and their families, and additional administrative support facilities to ensure our wounded veterans can return to duty or civilian status, unencumbered by bureaucratic obstacles. Congress and the American people have been vocal in DoD's need to make these improvements. Defining the requirements and then matching the requirements to construction and renovation plans at Bethesda has been challenging. However, we consider the treatment of our wounded veterans to be one of our most sacred duties and one that we are honored to fulfill. It is our sincerest hope that, if approved in the ROD, we can provide these new and renovated facilities at the earliest possible date. We have worked closely with the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Congress to secure additional funding. This will allow us to complete realignment actions in order to provide unequalled treatment of our service personnel and to fulfill the schedule mandated by BRAC law.

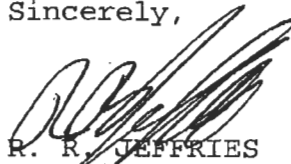
Given the magnitude of the renovation and construction here at NNMC Bethesda, every day we delay in starting construction puts the entire project at risk for late completion and could negatively impact our ability to provide world-class care for our wounded veterans and their families at Bethesda when needed. In order to alleviate portions of that risk, we have defined and are committed to adhering to a timeline that will allow us to produce a complete and comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement in a timely manner and allow construction completion on time. In order to facilitate the reviews we have endeavored to ensure the Draft EIS is an easy to comprehend document, widely distributed within the Montgomery County community, and that public forums are scheduled to support the timely exchange of concerns. Additionally, we plan to have a web site portal available that will facilitate the submission of public comments. Staff members will be available throughout the comment period for rapid acceptance and response to those comments as they are received. In doing so, we believe the 45 day comment period will be quite sufficient.

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As Admiral Robinson stated in his letter of July 30, 2007, we at NNMC Bethesda greatly value the relationship we have with our neighbors and hosts here in the Montgomery County community. It is clear that we all face unprecedented challenges as we work together to further enhance the facilities at NNMC Bethesda to conform to the BRAC law and serve our most valued patients - the uniformed men and woman who serve this great Country. I hope you share my confidence that with our mutual support we can uphold the high standards and proud traditions that are the hallmark of Montgomery County and NNMC Bethesda.

A similar letter has been sent to County Executive, Isaiah Leggett. If you have any additional questions or concerns, you may contact Mr. David Oliveria, BRAC Program Manager at (301) 319-4344 or David.Oliveria@med.navy.mil.

Sincerely,



R. R. JEFFRIES
Rear Admiral, Medical Corps
U.S. Navy
Commander