

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY BIRD

August 23, 2005

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Base closings hint at new air strategy

Christian Science Monitor

Brad Knickerbocker

August 23, 2005

When his Cabinet tried to get Calvin Coolidge to up the budget for military aviation back in the days of open cockpits and silk scarves, the president is said to have quipped, "Can't we just buy one airplane and have the pilots take turns?"

It is a joke many in today's Air National Guard would not find funny. Under the Pentagon's plan, which its base-closing commission will vote on this week, 30 Air-Guard sites from Cape Cod in Massachusetts to Houston to Portland, Ore., would be closed or downsized; 29 of 88 flying units would end up with no aircraft.

But beyond the political turf squabble, Air National Guard issues now being considered by the nine-member Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) also involve the future of the Air Force, including the ability - and possibly the intention - of the United States to project and use its military power worldwide.

This round of base changes "represents the last opportunity we will have for a generation to reset our forces," Gen. John Jumper, Air Force chief of staff, told commissioners over the weekend.

While they may be busy fighting wars on several fronts today, Air Force planners are looking ahead 30 years at what they call "Future Total

Force," including Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard forces.

"The Future Total Force will allow us to provide combat capabilities in a way that only a global power can provide them: striking with little notice, anywhere in the world, with precision; moving our armed forces and their equipment to any location, at any time, to support our national objectives," Michael Dominguez, assistant secretary of the Air Force for manpower and reserve affairs, said at a recent seminar in Washington. "As the single global power, we can't be content with dominating local commons - the planet is our commons. And, for good or ill, the world looks to us to enforce the rules, maintain the security, and sustain the stability of the global commons."

With different equipment and extended missions at a time when the United States is likely to remain the world's only superpower for decades, the Air National Guard will probably see its structure, location, and mission change as a result. In some ways, it already has seen the change.

Air National Guard crews in New York, Texas, North Dakota, and Arizona can fly pilotless spy and attack missions over Iraq from their home stations, Secretary Dominguez notes. In future years, such drones could take over some important aerial refueling and transport duties as well.

More computer work

Similarly, Air Guard personnel are slated to be part of what the Pentagon calls "C4ISR" (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance) - which is likely to mean more work at computer terminals and less flying.

In the military of the future, however, this could give Air Guard units more power and responsibility than they currently have.

"Air Force leaders want to use the base-closure process as a way of reorganizing the reserves, especially the Air National Guard, so that it is

better postured to support the regular Air Force in overseas missions," says military analyst Loren Thompson of the Lexington Institute in Arlington, Va. "They feel they must take steps to make the Air National Guard more efficient and relevant to national needs, because budgets are not growing but missions' needs are."

The Pentagon sees all this in terms of force projection necessary as long as the US bears responsibility for keeping an eye on the "global commons." But elected officials view the sought-for changes in terms of lost jobs and more.

Under the Pentagon's plan, five states - Connecticut, Delaware, Montana, Nevada, and North Dakota - would lose all their aircraft. Regional air defenses against terrorist and other attacks are at stake, as well as the ability of governors to use Air Guard units to fight forest fires and deal with other emergencies. Constitutional questions have been raised as well, involving the role and authority of governors, which has led several states (including Pennsylvania, Indiana, Washington, and Oregon) to threaten lawsuits against Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

Will homeland be safe?

But mainly governors and members of Congress in affected states voice their concern in terms of defending against another terrorist attack on the US.

"This boils down to regional homeland security," says US Sen. Maria Cantwell (D) of Washington. Senator Cantwell notes that if the 15 F-15 fighters and eight KC-135 fuel tankers leave the 142nd Air National Guard fighter wing in Portland for other facilities in Louisiana, New Jersey, Oklahoma, and Kansas, "the nearest fighter jets available [to the Pacific Northwest] in an emergency may be as far away as Fresno, Calif."

Meanwhile, other critics see the proposed changes in Air Guard forces as a part of another worrisome trend.

"Rumsfeld is trying to create more of a force that can intervene in third-world hot spots," says national security analyst Ivan Eland of the Independent Institute in Oakland, Calif. "Creating a force that makes it more flexible and easier to intervene overseas means the politicians will be tempted to use it more, thus creating more blowback attacks on the US homeland."

"Unfortunately," he adds, "these changes [in the Air National Guard] will reduce our ability to deal with such attacks."

All this has made the debate over the future of the Air Guard the most contentious part of the base-closing and realignment process.

BRAC commissioners this week vote on whether to accept, reject, or modify the Pentagon's recommendations. Their final version will go to President Bush by Sept. 8. Mr. Bush may either accept or reject that version without further modification. If he accepts it, it then goes to Congress, which also has as its only choices a yea or nay vote on the full plan.

NEW REPORT ON OVERSEAS BASING PLANS REMAINS CRITICAL OF PACE, TIMING

Inside the Army
August 22, 2005
Sebastian Sprenger

The Overseas Basing Commission is sticking to its claim that the Pentagon has failed to sufficiently coordinate with other federal agencies' plans for restructuring the military's global presence, panel Chairman Al Cornella told sister publication Inside the Pentagon Aug. 16.

The commission released its final report the previous day. The group first presented its findings in a May 9 interim report, which has since prompted "interest in Congress either in . . . sponsoring legislation or having additional hearings on the findings of the commission," Cornella said.

The chairman, though, declined to comment on the specifics of possible legislation or name the lawmakers who would become sponsors.

Compared with the May report, "there is not a lot of change," Cornella said. However, the new document "enforces some of our previous findings," he added.

Besides the purported lack of coordination among the Defense Department and other agencies, the May 9 report said the Pentagon's plans to bring 70,000 troops home from overseas are ill-planned and could prove costlier than estimated by the military.

The final report reiterates a recommendation to include other federal agencies in the decision-making process for overseas basing changes because the subject touches on matters of diplomacy, commerce and intelligence.

"As the report makes clear, the overseas basing structure is an integral part of the security strategy of the United States with implications for the foreign and domestic policy of the United States for decades to come," the commissioners write in the report's preface.

While some meetings took place between DOD and State Department officials, panelists were unaware of such contacts at the National Security Council, which includes representatives from the Commerce and Energy departments, as well as the intelligence community, Cornella said.

Pentagon officials have rebutted the commission's claim about a lack of interagency cooperation.

Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Ryan Henry, for example, told reporters May 9 that the Pentagon has worked closely with the State Department and the National Security Council in crafting its global defense posture.

The commission's final report also expresses concern about strategic lift capabilities that have

not kept pace with the Pentagon's increased emphasis on expeditionary forces. Therefore, "requirements demanded by a 1-4-2-1 strategy may be difficult to meet in light of the current rebasing plan," the commissioners write. "The Commission cannot see how moving the majority of U.S. forces back to the United States will make the task of deploying them into contested regions any easier," the report states.

The 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review introduced a planning paradigm dubbed "1-4-2-1," mandating that the military prepare to defend the U.S. homeland; project forces to deter conflict in four regions around the globe; "swiftly defeat aggression in [two] overlapping major conflicts"; and retain the ability for "decisive victory" in one of the major conflicts, which may include the possibility of "regime change or occupation."

Commissioners are also wary that the Pentagon has made global basing decisions before the 2005 QDR and the Mobility Capabilities Study have been completed because troop moves could be "affected" by the outcome of the studies, Cornella said.

Commission officials have tried to obtain information on the Mobility Capabilities Study for inclusion in their report.

"We were briefed heavily on mobility" by U.S. Transportation Command and the combatant commands, but not on details of the study itself, Cornella said.

"The Mobility Capabilities Study was scheduled to be done in March. And when we asked for it, the next thing we new it was scheduled to be done in June. When we asked for it in June, it was scheduled to be done in September," he said. It was "always just out of our reach."

Asked whether he believes the findings of the commission can still influence the Pentagon's plans to restructure its forces overseas, Cornella replied, "I would think because DOD is the first one to tell you that this is a 'plan in stride.' . . . They do have the capability to adjust and say,

'We're not going to move as many forces as fast.'"

The commission's interim report contained details on the Defense Department's basing plans in various parts of the world. That and other information has now been shifted to a classified annex. The new annex also includes the "master plan" of the Pentagon's Integrated Global Presence and Basing Strategy, Cornella told ITP.

The decision to classify parts of the report follows complaints by defense officials that some of the information in the interim report was classified or sensitive.

"I'll be quite honest, I think the Overseas Basing Commission was unhelpful in many respects. . . . Our people tell me, after a study of what they've got, that some of the information may have been classified," Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said at a May 16 hearing before the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

"Some of the information that was posted on [the Overseas Basing Commission] Web site has given concern to some of the countries we've been negotiating with because it revealed our negotiating position in a way that we hadn't previously discussed with the other countries, which is notably unhelpful," Rumsfeld added.

The Overseas Basing Commission first learned of the Pentagon's classification concerns May 6 - one day after the report was first posted online. Commission members subsequently cut the appendices from the 262-page document and reposted the redacted report on their Web site. Commission staffers also handed out the abbreviated report to journalists at a May 9 press conference.

After learning May 12 that DOD officials were still concerned that the document may contain classified information, the panel took the report off its Web site entirely. Commission officials reposted the document June 23 after taking out the sections that Pentagon officials said were sensitive.

Commission officials throughout have maintained that the information they gathered was available through open sources and that the panel's recommendations did not change as a result of the classification moves.

The Overseas Basing Commission was established under the fiscal year 2004 Military Construction Appropriations Act. Its goal is to provide Congress and the president an independent analysis of whether the "current overseas basing structure is adequate to execute current missions, and to assess the feasibility of closures, realignments, or establishment of new installations overseas to meet emerging defense requirements," an April 27 commission statement notes.

The commission derived its recommendations in part from talking to 1,500 to 2,000 defense officials at the Pentagon and across the combatant commands, Cornella estimated. "Our report is really a reflection of the comments made to us. Sometimes that gets lost in translation."

The commission terminates Sept. 30. Until then, panelists will remain available to provide information to lawmakers, Cornella said.

States hope court bid to keep Air Guard facilities open will fly

Scripps Howard News Service
Lisa Hoffman
August 22, 2005

Governors across the country will have one eye on a Pennsylvania courthouse Tuesday, where a lawsuit that would prevent the Pentagon from closing Air National Guard facilities gets its first official hearing.

In Philadelphia, attorneys for the state will argue in federal court that the Defense Department has no legal right to shut National Guard sites without the consent of Gov. Ed Rendell. Illinois has also filed suit, and at least four other states are poised to do so as well.

"Federal law is quite clear: Air National Guard units cannot be moved without the express permission of their commander in chief, the governor," Connecticut Gov. Jodi Rell, who is weighing whether to sue as well, said in a statement.

Rendell, her counterpart in Harrisburg, has sued the Pentagon, contending that governors must have a say because the Guard is under their control for peacetime domestic purposes such as wildfire fighting, riot control and providing emergency aid in the wake of natural disasters. Pennsylvania's Republican U.S. senators, Arlen Specter and Rick Santorum, have joined the lawsuit, which challenges the Pentagon actions on constitutional grounds.

But the Defense Department, backed by an Aug. 11 legal opinion by the Justice Department, argues otherwise.

The Pentagon says it is the federal government that holds paramount sway over the Air Guard, which includes about 106,000 part-time troops who are attached to units at more than 170 Air Force bases, Guard installations and civilian facilities across the country. Air Guard personnel have been mobilized for the war in Iraq, and also play a role in the nation's homeland security efforts against terrorism.

At issue are at least 30 Air Guard facilities that the Pentagon wants to shut down, shrink or substantially alter. In Philadelphia, U.S. District Judge John Padova has given the case priority and promised to rule before Sept. 8.

That is the deadline for the Base Realignment and Closing Commission to present its decision on the 33 major military bases and hundreds of other facilities on the Pentagon hit list. Commissioners will vote publicly on each Pentagon recommendation in marathon public sessions beginning Wednesday.

In recent hearings, commissioners have expressed concern with the Guard proposals, worrying that the elimination of units in some areas may leave regions of the nation unprepared

for quick response to danger, be it caused by terrorists or Mother Nature.

"I think it's actual fact that our national defense is being hampered, will be impaired by the proposals," said James Bilbray, a former Nevada congressman and a commission member, at a hearing Saturday.

Along with Pennsylvania, which is fighting to protect the Willow Grove Naval Air Station, which is home to the 111th Fighter Wing of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard, other states up in arms are:

- Illinois, which has filed suit to block the transfer of F-16 fighter jets from the 183rd Fighter Wing of the Springfield Air National Guard unit to a facility in Fort Wayne, Ind.

- Connecticut, which is contemplating suing to save the Air National Guard's 103rd Fighter Wing at Bradley International Airport. The Air Force wants to move nine of the 17 A-10 warplanes to Barnes Municipal Airport in nearby Massachusetts, and to retire the rest.

- Missouri, which is drawing up a legal case against the transfer of 15 F-15 warplanes from the Missouri Air National Guard's 131st Fighter Wing at Lambert Airport in St. Louis to bases in New Jersey and Nevada.

- Delaware, which would be left without any Guard planes, is fighting to save the 166th Airlift Wing, which would lose its fleet of eight C-130 transport planes to neighboring states.

Principi: Panel working on Air Guard compromise

Air Force Times
Gordon Trowbridge
22 August, 2005

The independent base-closings commission is putting together a "thoughtful compromise" to address widespread criticism of a plan to remove aircraft from nearly two dozen Air National Guard units, the panel's chairman said Monday.

Anthony Principi said he believes commissioners could agree on a consensus plan within a day — or just before the Base Realignment and Closure Commission is scheduled to begin its final deliberations on Wednesday. Principi's statements came during the taping of an interview program scheduled to be broadcast on the C-SPAN cable network on Tuesday night.

Principi said commissioners continue to have deep reservations about the original Air Force plan, part of hundreds of recommendations to close or shrink bases made in May by the Defense Department. That plan would cut the number of Air Guard units with flying missions from 70 to 48.

Governors in Illinois and Pennsylvania have challenged the moves in court, saying such sweeping changes in Guard units are illegal without state approval. States also have argued — often with agreement from commissioners — that the shifts would leave large areas of the country without protection from air attack. But Principi also said he understood the Air Force's position that as its fleet of aircraft shrinks, it must be consolidated into fewer, larger, more efficient air wings.

In the commission's final hearing on Saturday, Principi said the dispute had caused "a chasm" between the active-duty Air Force and the Air National Guard. For more than a month, commissioners had called for the sides to fashion their own compromise plan, a step the commission itself has had to take as the days dwindle before a Sept. 8 deadline to finish work. Principi gave few hints as to the outline of the plan, but said staffers and commissioners were at this point working mostly without consultation from the states or the Pentagon.

Principi addressed several other potential controversies:

- He said Virginia Beach, Va., officials had "done a great deal in recent weeks" to address encroachment issues at Naval Air Station Oceana, which the commission is considering

for addition to the closings list. "Some might say it's too little, too late," Principi said.

- He repeated statements that he and other commissioners are skeptical of the Pentagon's savings estimates. Defense Department officials say this round of base closings would save about \$49 billion over 20 years, but based on a Government Accountability Office analysis, Principi said, the figure may be half that.

- Principi said "we have great concern" about the Pentagon plan's impact on New England, which would lose its last operational active-duty bases. The recommendations are worrisome both for strategic reasons and over maintaining the military's ties to the region, Principi said.

- The chairman also had kind words for two New England bases recommended for closing: Submarine Base New London, Conn., and Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Maine. Principi called New London "the heart and soul of the submarine community" and Portsmouth "the gold standard" for shipyards. But in both cases, Principi said, the Navy has made strong arguments that the bases represent excess capacity.

- Commissioners will weigh heavily the economic impact on areas such as Clovis, N.M., and the state of South Dakota, Principi said. Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., represents roughly a third of Clovis' jobs, Principi said, and Ellsworth Air Force Base is South Dakota's second-largest employer.

The half-hour interview with Principi is scheduled to air at 8 p.m. Eastern Time Tuesday on C-SPAN. The network's C-SPAN 2 channel plans live gavel-to-gavel coverage of the commission's deliberations and votes beginning at 8 a.m. Wednesday.

BRAC Chairman Says Pentagon Might Be Wrong About Some Base Closures

Congressional Quarterly
John M. Donnelly
August 22, 2005

With an independent commission poised to vote this week on the list of military bases it will recommend for closure, the chairman of the panel strongly suggested Monday that he remained unconvinced by the Pentagon's reasons for shuttering several of the facilities.

Speaking just two days before the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) begins its final votes, chairman Anthony J. Principi sounded favorably disposed to the arguments against closing the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Maine, the Naval Submarine Base New London in Connecticut and Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota.

In an interview Monday with Congressional Quarterly, Military Times and C-SPAN to be aired Tuesday evening, Principi acknowledged that the administration has made strong arguments in favor of closing the bases on the list that it submitted to the BRAC commission in May. And Principi said he did not know how the commission would vote in every instance when it begins its final voting on Aug. 24.

Still, he was critical of the Pentagon's rationale for closing several facilities, including its estimate that it could save some \$49 billion over 20 years by closing 33 major bases and many smaller ones.

"The cost savings that we find are significantly lower than the Pentagon has reported," Principi said.

The purported savings from closing Ellsworth Air Force Base exemplified the Pentagon's overstatements, he said. The Pentagon wants to move the base's B-1 bombers to Dyess Air Force Base in Texas.

"A significant percentage of the savings at Ellsworth is linked to military personnel," Principi said. "Those military personnel are not coming off the end strength but they're being moved. . . . From our accounting perspective, it's really not a cost savings."

"If you back out the military personnel from the savings the Defense Department has indicated, it

costs you money. . . to move those B-1 bombers to Dyess," Principi said.

The Pentagon says those resources could be applied to other missions and therefore should be considered savings.

"We don't see it that way," Principi said, "and neither does the Government Accountability Office."

Principi also said the Pentagon's proposed reductions in New England would leave the region bereft of operational airfields.

"My concern is that perhaps they've gone too far," he said, adding: "Does that mean we'll retain all the [New England] military bases that are on the list? I don't know."

Shipyard Concerns

Principi offered a spirited defense of Maine's Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, where 5,272 jobs are at stake. Consultants and others have said privately for weeks that Portsmouth might be spared by the commission.

"Today it is estimated we probably have about 25 percent excess capacity in our public shipyards," Principi said. "But if you close down Portsmouth, you reduce that excess capacity to somewhere between 5 and 8 percent."

Principi added: "We have to look out at a horizon over 20 years to 2025. When we looked at emerging regional threats, uncertainty as to the number of submarines that we'll have in the future, it gives us some pause for concern."

He also called Portsmouth "truly a preeminent shipyard in this nation" and "the gold standard by which we should measure productivity and management labor relationships." But he also noted: "On the other hand, we do have excess capacity, and we have to look at that."

Regarding the largest proposed closure on the list, the New London submarine base, Principi noted that the facility is part of a synergistic community that includes a submarine training school, General Dynamics' Electric Boat plant,

where submarines are built, and other installations in the region. But larger issues might weigh on the commission's decision, he said.

"It's the heart and soul of the submarine community," Principi said of New London. "That's in and of itself not a reason to retain the New London submarine base. The number of submarines has come down, and we do have excess capacity at our other naval base at Kings Bay" in Georgia.

Principi seemed inclined to add the Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia Beach, Va., to the list of closures. The commission is concerned that the surrounding community is too close to base for safe and useful flight training.

While state officials have sought to address those concerns, "some might argue its too little too late," Principi said. "It's hard to take down those homes, schools and shopping malls that are in that area of flight operations."

The commission wants to shift the assets from Oceana to Cecil Field in Florida, which Principi called "a gift from heaven."

In addition, he said the commission was attempting to write an alternative to an Air Force plan that would consolidate Air National Guard assets nationwide.

The Air Force also wants to consolidate Air National Guard aircraft at fewer bases, which has led to a firestorm of protests from governors, including several lawsuits. The commission is attempting to resolve the conflict.

"This has been a very major issue," he said. "With the reorganization, some states have been left without any aircraft, and others with very few. . . . There were five or six states that were left with no air assets. . . . I would venture to guess that I've heard from all 50 governors about it and most of the members of the delegations."

The commission wants to come up with a compromise before the Aug. 24 meeting, he said.

"Hopefully within the next 24 hours we'll work out a consensus within the commission that addresses this problem," he said.

Jumper: BRAC decisions needed to continue transformation

Air Force Print News
1st Lt Tim Dougherty
August 22, 2005

The Air Force chief of staff told the Base Realignment and Closure Commission on Aug. 20 that while many of the decisions related to base closure are "gut wrenching," the changes are needed to allow the Air Force to continue to transform to meet the war-fighting demands of the 21st century.

"The decision to close many of these bases is very personal to me," Gen. John P. Jumper said. "Many of us will feel the impact of these decisions. I lived at many of these bases as a kid while my dad was coming up through the ranks. However, this is the time for tough and bold decisions. It's an opportunity that we must seize to allow us to continue to be able to respond to emerging missions around the world today."

The Air Force has experienced BRAC rounds in the past, with the most recent occurring in 1995 after the Air Force shrunk by 200,000 Airmen. However, the general said, there are major differences between the Air Force's current recommendations and those from past rounds.

"In 1995, the BRAC rounds were a consequence of decisions that had already been made relative to troop strength," the general said. "The recommendations today are proactive. This round doesn't only accommodate planned reductions. Instead, it allows us to reset our force, anticipate challenges and establish organizations we need for the future."

General Jumper said the recommendations are both strategy and capability based, and they

support the intent of the BRAC panel, which is to divest the Air Force of infrastructure it no longer needs, while improving the effectiveness and military value of retained assets.

“We know we’ll be a smaller force; however, we’ll be a more lethal force thanks to advancements in technology,” the general explained. “We know where and when and how we station our forces must change in order to enable the transformation required by the new security environment.”

The general also said the BRAC recommendations were made with a single, total force -- active, Guard and Reserve -- in mind and not just as a combination of individual components or representatives.

“The Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve are integral parts of the Air Force,” General Jumper said. “Maintaining an optimal mix of manpower and missions among components is key to their continued relevance and critical to their contribution to the finest Air Force in the world.”

Saying “we know what to do and we need to act,” the general stressed to the panel that this round of BRAC proceedings is the most significant opportunity to take critical steps in the transformation process in his 39 years of service.

“Change is not easy and we know that,” he said. “But we need to have the courage to take the steps we think need to be taken. It is my conviction that the Air Force recommendations taken together with the other service’s recommendations are the right thing to do for the nation.”

The hearings were the last formal opportunity for representatives from the Department of Defense to provide testimony before the panel sends a final version of the recommendations to President Bush by Sept. 8. The president can either reject the list or accept it without modifications. If he accepts the list, it is submitted to Congress, which can similarly accept or reject it.

OBERING: MDA 'RE-ENGINEERING' TARGETS BETTER SYSTEM INTEGRATION

Inside the Army
Ashley Roque
August 22, 2005

The director of the Missile Defense Agency is "re-engineering" the organization to reduce staff levels and establish centers of excellence focused on getting "products out the door."

"I've tried to cut down the overhead, get more resources out to the folks that are actually putting their hands on the hardware [and] the software," Air Force Lt. Gen. Henry Obering said here Aug. 16 at the Army's annual Space and Missile Defense conference. "We are looking at a tremendously lean headquarters to reduce our staff levels . . . but we want to retain very tight control.

"We have to have the integration of all these programs and components and that means centralized control, decentralizing execution," he added.

MDA is charged with fielding the Bush administration's layered ballistic missile defense plan that would be able to intercept ballistic missiles in the early boost phase of flight, the longer midcourse phase and the final, terminal phase.

Accordingly, Obering is looking to solidify the number of positions directly reporting to him. To date, more than a dozen MDA officials report directly to Obering, according to an agency official. However, the director is looking to shave that figure down to six -- a Ballistic Missile Defense System program executive officer, an engineering and test official, an agency operations official, an acquisition management official, an international strategy official and an advanced technology official.

Included in the job description of a future BMDS PEO, is the oversight of eight "centers of excellence" located throughout the country, according to the MDA official. Centers of

excellence likely to emerge include: models and simulation; targets and countermeasures; warfighter support; directed energy; space application; fire control; sensors; and interceptors.

"The purpose [is] to better integrate the system," Obering told reporters. "We've got the technical foundation laid [out] to integrate the system but we never laid [out] the programmatic foundation."

Additionally, Obering's plan calls for the creation of one "test force" that will be responsible for testing all missile defense programs, the director said.

When Obering took the reins as MDA director in September 2004 from retired Lt. Gen. Ronald Kadish, there were separate test groups that worked on each program.

Changes as a result of the re-engineering plan should start to take place during the beginning of calendar year 2006, according to the agency official.

In conjunction with solidifying positions, the agency is looking to consolidate its headquarters in the Washington, DC, area. To date, approximately 12 MDA offices are sprinkled throughout the region, Obering said, but he is proposing the formation of a single office.

However, if the Defense Department's 2005 base realignment and closure round is approved, the agency will see additional relocations. Under DOD's BRAC recommendations, the MDA headquarters would move out of leased spaces around the Northern Virginia area and set up shop in Ft. Belvoir, VA, a few miles from the Pentagon. Additionally, 2,200 positions within the headquarters, or 85 percent of the staff, would relocate to Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville.

"If BRAC is approved we proceed with the planning and proceed with the moves," Obering said. "If its not, we are looking to consolidate just the national capital region footprint that we have now. . . . Either way, whether BRAC is

approved or not, we're planning to execute and make sure we don't stumble."

Local News Articles

It's down to the wire for base closings

Ft. Worth Star-Telegram

Dave Montgomery

August 22, 2005

A crowd greeted members of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission who visited the Red River Army Depot in June.

After more than three months of hearings, on-site inspections and pleas from frantic communities, the 2005 base-closing commission will meet in marathon sessions this week to decide the fate of scores of military installations marked for closure or downsizing.

Texas political leaders are hoping to rescue four Lone Star facilities slated for closure under the Pentagon's latest base restructuring plan: Naval Station Ingleside, near Corpus Christi; Red River Army Depot and Lone Star Ammunition Plant, both near Texarkana; and Brooks-City Base at San Antonio.

Overall, Texas comes out ahead under the proposed nationwide reshuffling to move military manpower and resources, with a net gain of 6,150 military and civilian jobs. Naval Air Station Fort Worth, for example, will wind up a winner if the nine-member commission ratifies the Pentagon's proposal to shift additional aircraft and personnel to the joint reserve base.

"I'm not sure it's over, but we're still optimistic that the final result is going to be positive for the Fort Worth-Dallas area and NAS Fort Worth," said Albon Head, a Fort Worth lawyer who heads a task force created to preserve the North Texas installation.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld wants to close more than 150 military installations, including 33 major facilities, under recommendations the Pentagon submitted to the

Base Realignment and Closure Commission at the start of its review period in early May. Commissioners voted last month to add nearly a dozen other non-Texas installations to the closure list.

Late changes

Headed by former Veterans Affairs Secretary Anthony Principi, the commission has scheduled at least three days of deliberations, beginning Wednesday at a Hyatt Regency hotel in suburban Arlington, Va. Meeting from 8 a.m. until 10 p.m., and possibly Saturday as well, commissioners could cast hundreds of votes as they debate each proposal and hear staff recommendations.

Commission members have given few hints of the possible outcome of the deliberations.

"The only thing I'm reasonably sure of is that the list will have some changes made to it," Commissioner Sue Turner, a retired Air Force brigadier general, said Friday.

Community leaders from across the nation are planning to set up mini-encampments in the hotel to monitor the outcome. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, has reserved an executive suite for members of the Texas congressional delegation and representatives from as many as 10 Texas communities that have a stake in the deliberations.

The chief objective for Texans is to preserve the four facilities that Rumsfeld wants to close. But state and local officials are also trying to reverse consolidation moves that would transfer troops or parts of Texas bases to other areas of the country where the Pentagon says they would be more efficient.

Leaders from Central Texas are challenging a proposal to shift nearly 9,000 troops from Fort Hood, the nation's largest active-duty post, to Fort Carson, Colo. Rep. Chet Edwards, D-Waco, told commissioners at a regional hearing in San Antonio that the recommendation "doesn't make sense" and would force the Colorado base to

spend \$1 billion to build facilities to accommodate the influx.

Another high Texas priority is protecting Dyess Air Force Base near Abilene, home to half the nation's B-1 bomber fleet. The Pentagon wants to close Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota, the nation's other B-1 base, in order to locate the entire fleet in Texas. South Dakota officials are waging a fierce campaign to defeat the recommendation.

At the same time, boosters of Dyess are trying to prevent the proposed transfer of C-130 transports from there to Little Rock Air Force Base in Arkansas. Supporters of Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls are challenging a move to shift a maintenance training program for Lockheed Martin's F-35 joint strike fighter to a base in Florida.

Fort Worth confident

Communities began preparing for the 2005 base-closure round -- the fifth since 1988 -- years in advance, spending millions on lobbyists, economic studies and high-tech presentations for Pentagon officials. Although Fort Worth officials said they felt guardedly confident that the city's reserve base would survive, they left nothing to chance and assembled a 46-person task force to keep Fort Worth off the closure list.

The facility, the nation's first joint reserve base, was created in the mid-1990s on the site of Carswell Air Force Base, which was closed in a previous round of restructuring. It has 13 major units and 68 aircraft and would gain 27 fighters and transports under the 2005 plan. The transfers would also create at least 426 jobs.

Pete Rose, a Washington lobbyist who represents Fort Worth, said he has seen no signs of opposition to the recommendation for the Fort Worth base.

The proposed closures of the Red River depot and the Lone Star plant, though, would deal a withering blow in deep East Texas, area officials say, costing 4,500 jobs and up to \$400 million in economic benefits. The closure of both plants,

they say, could triple unemployment in the region.

Political leaders in both Texas and Arkansas have joined forces in an attempt to save the facilities, calling the proposed closures ill-advised at a time when both plants are operating round-the-clock in the Iraq war effort. But many concede that prospects look bleak.

"Praying," responded Jerry Sparks of the Texarkana Chamber of Commerce, when asked how he plans to spend the countdown to the commission's decision. But he said he remains optimistic: "I think we've got a shot at it."

Coastal security

Gulf Coast leaders seized on a fresh argument for saving Ingleside, home port of the Navy's minesweeper operations, after the commission decided to consider closing the Oceana jet training base near Norfolk, Va. Proponents are urging commissioners to shift Oceana's flight operations to Naval Air Station Kingsville and keep nearby Ingleside open as a deep-water carrier port.

The proposed Oceana closure "allowed us to make an argument that wasn't looked at" previously, said Gary Bushell, a consultant to a coastal area task force trying to save Ingleside. The Navy base's defenders also contend that Ingleside's closure would eliminate a needed national security presence along the oil-rich Gulf Coast.

The deliberations constitute the commission's last major step before drafting the final report that must go to President Bush by Sept. 8.

Bush has the option of kicking the report back to the commission for revisions or sending it intact to Congress for final approval or disapproval. Earlier base-closing commissions have accepted at least 85 percent of the Pentagon recommendations, resulting in the closure of 97 bases in the four previous rounds.

Texas, the second-hardest-hit state, after California, has lost seven and depends on its

remaining 18 major bases, which generate an estimated economic effect of \$43.4 billion.

The 2005 restructuring, says Rumsfeld, will save \$48.8 billion over the next 20 years while reshaping America's military into a leaner, more mobile force. The closures would be phased in over six years beginning in 2006.

MIXED BLESSING; The realignment of military installations could result in a windfall for the Naval Air Station-Joint Reserve Base in Belle Chasse.

Times-Picayune (New Orleans)
Paul Purpura
August 22, 2005

The Naval Air Station-Joint Reserve Base in Belle Chasse could easily have found itself on the federal base-closure list along with New Orleans' Naval Support Activity.

The air station ranked 24th out of 36 naval air bases in terms of military value, the key criterion the Defense Department used to decide which installations should be shuttered to save money, documents show.

But New Orleans area officials say a regional approach toward military preservation years earlier not only has saved the air station but positioned it well for the future. It could gain at least \$92.3 million in projects to accommodate the proposed addition of 1,407 military billets and 449 civilian and contract jobs through BRAC, the Pentagon's Base Realignment and Closure process.

"Whether we keep Naval Support Activity open or not, I think NAS (Naval Air Station) has a great future," said retired Marine Corps Maj. Gen. David Mize, chairman of the Mayor's Military Advisory Committee of Greater New Orleans. "It's going to be wonderful either way. It's such a modern, nice, complete base for both operational ability and quality of life."

State officials should learn this week whether the air station will be a step closer to improvements the Defense Department proposes through BRAC. Beginning Wednesday, the federal BRAC Commission will vote on whether to accept Defense Department recommendations, including the fate of Naval Support Activity and the Defense Information Systems Agency in Slidell.

The commission must forward its report to President Bush by Sept. 8. Bush could order the commission to make revisions or forward the BRAC report to Congress, which must approve or reject the list in its entirety.

BRAC Commission spokesman Robert McCreary said he did not know when Naval Support Activity and the Defense Information Systems Agency center would come up for a vote this week because commissioners face a heavy workload. The voting will be done in public sessions in Arlington, Va.

"There's over 1,800 actions that needed to be voted on," McCreary said. "We'll know by Saturday."

The decision on the Naval Support Activity could weigh heavily on whether the air station sees the growth the Defense Department proposes.

Of the \$92.3 million in proposed spending at the Belle Chasse air station, \$89.6 million is tied to closing the Naval Support Activity about 10 miles away in New Orleans, according to BRAC documents. Much of that expense is associated with moving Marine Forces Reserve, a key tenant at Naval Support Activity, to Belle Chasse.

Elected officials and business leaders have worked to save the Naval Support Activity in recent months, meeting with BRAC commissioners and staff members in an effort to tout the 'federal city' concept.

"From my conversations over the past several months, I sincerely believe the commission members recognize both the value of our current

facilities and the significance of our federal city program," said U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La. "I hope the BRAC Commission does not pass up these opportunities with this week's vote."

Though local officials agreed years ago to make military retention a regional priority, it's a politically delicate position for some officials who could see their communities gain at the expense of their neighbors, or lose to them, depending on the BRAC outcome.

Compared with some communities nationwide affected by BRAC, southeast Louisiana could be viewed with envy, said Tim Ford, executive director of the National Association of Installation Developers, An Association of Defense Communities. The Washington, D.C., group helps communities address military base redevelopment matters.

Should the Naval Support Activity close and many of its tenants move to Belle Chasse, New Orleans would gain about 230 acres for its tax base and create redevelopment opportunities that could be economically beneficial, Ford said. "It's one of the more ideal situations to be in," he said.

The regional support that the federal city concept has received for years was focused on the air station, including congressional help that has paid off in the round of closures.

Officials cite a recently completed runway extension that expanded the base's operational capabilities, 500 new family housing units and Belle Chasse Academy, a charter school that required special state legislation.

"We started preparing for (BRAC) to make sure we were in the best position to keep the base open years ago," Plaquemines Parish President Benny Rousselle said.

Hoping to avoid parochialism among local leaders, Mize said, officials early on made a "team agreement" to make military retention a regional effort.

"It's self-defeating to think parish by parish here, because that's not how people live. That's not how they spend their money," Mize said.

Mixed military value

Despite the regional attention the air station has received in recent years, the base had mixed scores in the BRAC process, documents show. Its military value ranking -- 24th of 36 naval air facilities -- is slightly below average and a bit higher than three similar air stations proposed for closure in Georgia, Pennsylvania and Maine, according to a BRAC report.

Viewed as an administrative and headquarters activity, however, the air station ranked 24th out of 334 installations. Naval Support Activity ranked 41st on that same list.

In studying which bases they would offer for closure, Navy analysts developed three scenarios that included Belle Chasse, according to a BRAC report. In the end, the analysts concluded that closing Belle Chasse "would have resulted in almost total elimination of the reserve air stations, as well as severely impact the demographics of all other nonaviation reserve units that utilize the base," according to the report.

Even though the air station would have been shut down under the Navy analysts' scenarios, that "is not in and of itself an alarm," Mize said, adding that analysts developed numerous scenarios for many bases, including one that would have recommended that Naval Support Activity be realigned rather than closed.

The air station is home to Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Air National Guard and Coast Guard aviation units. It also is home to Marine Corps and Army nonaviation units, all of which bring more than 5,000 active duty and reserve troops to Belle Chasse.

Parish foresees boon

The additional 1,856 military, civilian and contract jobs are expected to give Plaquemines Parish an economic boost. "I think the

opportunity for increased retail sales is good, not only from existing business but from new businesses that might open up," Rousselle said.

Mize said increased military construction could boost the local economy in the short term, but he questioned whether the Defense Department could finance the BRAC-related projects quickly.

Air station commanders declined to comment, saying through a spokesman that BRAC recommendations are not final.

Among the construction projects proposed for the air station is a \$26.9 million general administrative building, one of three planned, according to BRAC reports. Another \$14.4 million would be spent on bachelor housing and \$586,000 for family housing. Officials said the recently built galley would be expanded.

The air station would have \$710,656 worth of construction associated with getting the Atlanta-based Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron 77, an E-2C Hawkeye squadron that specializes in counter-narcotics missions, BRAC reports show.

The Louisiana Air National Guard's 159th Fighter Wing would add nine F-15 Eagles from Oregon to its 122nd Fighter Squadron, bringing to 24 the number of jet fighters in its inventory and requiring \$1.8 million in construction. The Air Force determined that the move was necessary to support homeland defense missions from the air station, which "has above average military value" among reserve bases, according to BRAC reports.

About 300 people would be added to the wing, which already has about 1,000 part-time and full-time members, said Lt. Col. Pete Schneider of the Louisiana National Guard. Another 110 airmen would move from Jackson Barracks with the Air National Guard's 214th Engineering Installation Squadron, Schneider said.

But the Air Force Reserve's 926th Fighter Wing, a famed outfit known as the "Cajuns," would be disbanded, and its 15 A-10 Thunderbolt II jets

would be moved to Barksdale Air Force Base near Bossier City and Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri.

An anxious wait over base's fate

Associated Press
Carolyn Thompson
August 22, 2005

To reservists of the 914th Airlift Wing getting ready for an unprecedented third tour in Iraq, the military value of their base seems crystal clear.

Soon they will know whether the commission deciding the base's fate agrees.

"I'm very nervous. It's uncertainty that really drives me nuts," said Master Sgt. Ronald Nowasell Jr., who is keeping a watchful eye on the Base Closure and Realignment Commission as it votes this week on whether to recommend the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station for closure.

The vote will cap an anxious three-month wait that began in May when the Pentagon recommended shuttering the Niagara Falls base as part of a national cost-cutting restructuring plan.

Base supporters have not been sitting still. The community has flooded BRAC with more than 123,000 letters of support for the base, and Rep. Thomas Reynolds, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton and a host of other political and community leaders have been peppering commissioners with reasons to keep the base open.

Supporters cite its proximity to the U.S.-Canadian border and involvement in the war in Iraq while challenging cost-saving estimates and the wisdom of using the BRAC process to move relatively small numbers of planes and personnel.

The base is Niagara County's second largest employer, housing 2,936 full- and part-time workers, most of them 914th Reservists and National Guard members from the 107th Air Refueling Wing.

Reynolds on Friday made a last-ditch pitch, pointing to yet another deployment of base reservists.

"The 914th Airlift Wing will mobilize and head overseas - making them the first air reserve component to go to Iraq for a third time," Reynolds wrote to commissioners. "Since Day One, I have stressed that given Niagara's high military and homeland security value, there is no way it should be slated for closure."

Base spokesman Neil Nolf said about 250 to 300 reservists are expected to be redeployed for up to a year, with some leaving as early as Saturday.

"We can't control certain things, but there are things we can," said Nolf, adding that base commanders are focusing on preparing troops for Iraq, even amid an uncertain future.

Nowasell, a flight medic with 17 years in the Air Force Reserves, is, on one hand, optimistic that supporters have made a strong case for saving the base. But he knows other bases on the chopping block have been working just as hard.

"I don't feel good. I don't feel completely uncomfortable," said Nowasell, whose wife also works on the base. "Literally, it's 50-50."

Nowasell is not among those deploying again, and he feels for his colleagues who may go to Iraq under an added layer of uncertainty. "Being overseas, not knowing where you're going to be when you come back a year later - if you're going to come back and start emptying out your desk in anticipation of a transition from here to who knows where," he said.

The base dodged the last round of closings a decade ago, appearing on the vulnerable list but surviving when upstate neighbors Plattsburgh Air Force Base and Griffiss Air Force Base did not.

Commission to vote this week on Missouri base closures

Associated Press
Sam Hananel
22 August, 2005

Three months after the Pentagon proposed cuts that would slash more than 3,600 military and civilian jobs in Missouri, state officials are bracing for a final vote this week by the commission charged with streamlining America's military complex.

Starting Wednesday, the nine-member Base Closure and Realignment Commission will publicly debate the fates of military installations nationwide. At the hearings, scheduled to last through Saturday, the commissioners are to vote on each installation.

Much of the focus by outraged Missouri officials has been on plans to close the National Guard's 131st Fighter Wing at Lambert Field in St. Louis. Its defenders argue the unit - and its 250 jobs - is crucial to homeland security defense in the Midwest.

The Pentagon's plan calls for shifting people, equipment and aircraft among at least 54 sites where Air Guard units now are stationed. Roughly two dozen sites would expand, while about 30 would be closed or downsized.

The fight to save National Guard units in Missouri and other states has emerged as one of the most contentious issues, with members of the commission openly questioning the wisdom of moving relatively small numbers of planes and personnel and challenging the Pentagon's cost savings estimates.

Still, military analysts caution that people shouldn't read too much into what the commissioners have said at public hearings.

"The commissioners want the Air Force and the Pentagon to prove its case," said Loren Thompson of The Lexington Institute, a Virginia-based think tank. "But it would be a stretch to expect that most of the commissioners

would reject the Air Force's reasoning for reorganizing."

In four previous base-closing rounds, the commission has left about 85 percent of the Pentagon's initial recommendations intact.

Two states - Pennsylvania and Illinois - have filed lawsuits charging the commission cannot close Guard units without the consent of state governors. Missouri Gov. Matt Blunt has said he too is considering legal action if Missouri's unit stays on the closure list.

The lion's share of job losses in Missouri - more than 2,000 employees - would occur at the Army Human Resources Command in the St. Louis suburb of Overland. Missouri's congressional delegation, led by Republican Sen. Kit Bond, argues that moving those jobs to Fort Knox, Ky., does not make fiscal sense.

In a letter to the commission last week, Bond and other members cited figures showing it would be much cheaper for the military to consolidate human resources jobs in St. Louis instead.

Perhaps the best chance for the state to save jobs will come when the commission considers plans to close the Defense Finance and Accounting Service offices in Kansas City and St. Louis, where more than 900 jobs are on the chopping block.

The Pentagon wants to consolidate 24 DFAS offices around the country in three cities: Indianapolis, Denver and Columbus, Ohio. But last month, the commission voted to place those cities on the closure list as well and reconsider the entire consolidation process.

"For any DFAS facility, that means arguments on military value and economic value are strengthened by the staff's willingness to consider alternative options," said Robert Gillcash, a military analyst who worked as a legislative aide on past base closure rounds.

At a hearing last month, the BRAC commissioners appeared open to the idea of

keeping more than three DFAS sites open, which could mean survival for offices in St. Louis and Kansas City.

The commission has until Sept. 8 to send its recommendations to President Bush, who must either approve or disapprove the list by Sept. 23. The White House must submit a BRAC commission list to Congress by November 7.

If Congress fails to pass a motion of disapproval of the list within 45 days, the list becomes law.

Panel sees feasibility of Oceana closure

Navy Times
Gordon Trowbridge
August 22, 2005

With just two days remaining before it begins its final deliberations, the independent base-closings commission seems poised to close Naval Air Station Oceana, Va., reject several Pentagon recommendations based on what commissioners believe are faulty savings estimates and perhaps make dozens of other changes to the Defense Department's plan. At a final hearing Saturday and in an exchange of documents with Pentagon officials, the Base Realignment and Closure Commission gave the best hints yet of what may happen when commissioners begin voting this week on the Bush administration's request to close or reorganize more than 800 installations, large and small, across the country.

In what some of the panel's nine members admitted was a turnaround, at least four suggested on Saturday that they believe closing NAS Oceana, the Virginia home of the Navy's East Coast fighter wings plagued by surrounding development, is doable. The commission faces a high hurdle to add bases to the Pentagon list — legally, seven of the nine commissioners must vote to do so — but a move several commissioners portrayed as a long-shot less than a month ago now seems possible.

"I think we all have to agree Oceana is not going to be any better when it comes to encroachment," said commissioner Lloyd

Newton, a retired Air Force general. "If a window of opportunity opens to take advantage of a possible option, that seems to be prudent."

That option — one not considered by the Navy and raised by the commission only in late July — is reopening the Navy's former master jet base at Cecil Field, Fla., near Jacksonville. Saturday's hearing included testimony from Florida officials offering the base — closed in 1993 and turned into a business park — to the Pentagon without cost. Virginia officials also testified, attacking that plan and describing Oceana's encroachment issues as overstated and Cecil Field as full of unknowns.

The Navy, which considered moving Oceana's aircraft to other East Coast military air bases during its internal base-closing deliberations, has strongly opposed the commission's consideration of closing the base. On Saturday, Adm. Robert Willard, the vice chief of naval operations, said the Navy estimated it would cost \$1.6 billion to move from Oceana to Cecil Field, a cost that outweighed any benefits and one the Navy couldn't afford.

But commissioners dismissed that objection, noting that Navy estimates put the cost of moving to Moody Air Force Base, Ga. — which commissioners said was less ready for the Navy — at roughly half a billion dollars.

"I was a doubting Thomas," commissioner Samuel Skinner, a former secretary of transportation, told Pentagon officials. "I'm surprised. I didn't think we could find an option. ... I think [Cecil Field is] a viable option."

Doubt cast on cost savings

Pentagon officials also failed to convince skeptical commissioners that Defense Department savings estimates are valid, a skepticism that seems likely to affect the voting this week.

The Defense Department projects that its plan, if implemented, would save roughly \$49 billion over the next 20 years. But as much as half of that figure is made up of reductions in military

personnel — men and women in uniform who would no longer need to perform their current jobs because of base consolidation.

In most cases, though, the services plan not to eliminate those billets, but to transfer them to other bases, or into stressed career fields. A Government Accountability Office analysis of the recommendations calls the savings estimates misleading, contending that if the base cuts do not result in personnel end-strength reductions, they don't really save money.

Several commissioners asked Undersecretary of Defense Michael Wynne on Saturday to justify the estimates, and Wynne repeatedly described the savings as standard accounting practice in government and industry.

"I tried to understand [the Pentagon's position]," BRAC Chairman Anthony Principi told reporters after the hearing. "But at the end of the day, if you don't reduce end-strength, you don't have savings."

Regional impact pondered

It also seems clear that the panel will consider the regional impact of its decisions.

Principi pressed Wynne on the plan's effect on New England. The Pentagon wants to close Submarine Base New London, Conn., and Otis Air National Guard Base, Mass., as well as removing patrol aircraft from Naval Air Station Brunswick, Maine. The only military facilities left in New England would be reserve and National Guard bases and active-duty research facilities.

"Why are we abandoning the region closest to the sea and air lines of communication with Africa, Europe and the Middle East?" Principi asked. "I question the wisdom of doing that."

Principi also suggested that economic impact will weigh heavily. While the statute establishing the base-closings process sets military factors as the overriding concern, economic impact is among the criteria that must be considered. Principi noted that plans to close

Cannon Air Force Base would strip the Clovis, N.M., area of roughly half its jobs, and that Ellsworth Air Force Base, also slated to close, is South Dakota's No. 2 employer.

The panel also seems interested in making changes to Army recommendations involving Fort Monmouth, N.J., and other research, development and testing facilities, and to plans to close or consolidate several Army depots and ammunition plants.

Commissioner Phillip Coyle, a former head of Pentagon tests and evaluations, questioned several shifts of technical facilities, including the closing of Fort Monmouth, which would move several Army intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance development efforts to Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.

And a Pentagon document submitted in response to questions from the commission's staff indicates the panel is considering significant changes to the plans for Army depots. Among plants recommended for closing or shrinking that the commission may keep open or at their current capacity: The Lima Tank Plant in Ohio; chemical demilitarization plants in Utah, Nevada and Indiana; Hawthorne Army Depot, Nev.; and ammunition plants in Kansas, Texas and California.

Decision Nears on Fate of Area Naval Base

Los Angeles Times
Fred Alvarez
23 August, 2005

Local officials hope the Pentagon will abandon its plan to transfer up to 2,856 jobs to other facilities. A panel is to offer its recommendation this week.

It's a waiting game now. After months of lobbying and letter-writing, months of sifting through Defense Department documents for evidence to support saving thousands of jobs at Naval Base Ventura County, local officials are

set to learn this week if they have accomplished their mission.

The commission evaluating Pentagon recommendations for base closures and realignments is scheduled to begin final deliberations Wednesday as it decides whether to shut down, consolidate or redistribute functions at more than 800 installations nationwide.

The Ventura County base, under a Pentagon plan unveiled in May, is slated to transfer as many as 2,856 jobs to other facilities. The move is meant to streamline operations and save money.

But the proposal has touched off a furious counteroffensive, with elected officials, community leaders and Navy personnel arguing that the Pentagon understated the base's military value and that its recommendations would result in little or no cost savings and jeopardize the readiness of U.S. armed forces.

"Very few people will move with their jobs, and that loss of intellectual capital will be devastating to our fighting forces," said George Strohsahl, a retired admiral and former commander of the Naval Air Warfare Center at Point Mugu.

Strohsahl was among three retired Navy officers and two members of Congress who urged rejection of the Pentagon plan last month before the Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

The nine-member panel is expected to make its recommendations this week to President Bush.

"The base has economic value to the county," Strohsahl said. "But more importantly, it has irreplaceable military value to this country."

Many of those in jobs targeted for transfer say they won't leave the area, even if the work does.

Under the Pentagon's proposal, as many as 2,856 jobs — military personnel, civilian employees and contractors employed directly at the base — would transfer, most to Naval Air Weapons

Station China Lake in the high desert. The plan also states that an additional 3,517 nongovernment support jobs could disappear over the next five years.

Naval Base Ventura County is expected to pick up about 860 jobs from the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Norco, which is on the closure list.

Informal polls taken at the Ventura County base show about 80% of those slated for transfer would quit or retire rather than leave the area.

Many are like electronic engineer Todd Sohn, 43, who has worked at the base for 17 years and has planted deep roots in the community.

With a home in Ventura and two children in school, Sohn said he would look for private sector work if his job is transferred, as scheduled, to China Lake, near Ridgecrest in northeastern Kern County.

"I lived in the desert for a while when I went to college, and I don't want to go back," said the University of Arizona graduate, who works in electronic warfare.

"If you look at it from a technical point of view, this move doesn't make sense," he said. "Even if there is a little bit of cost savings, the loss of talent is going to adversely affect the war fighter for years to come."

That is among the arguments that base supporters have been making for months.

Naval Base Ventura County consists of Point Mugu Naval Air Station and the Port Hueneme Naval Construction Battalion Center, one of two Seabee bases in the United States.

Under a previous realignment plan, Point Mugu and China Lake were placed under a single command in 1992 and have since been consolidating operations.

But base supporters in Ventura County say the current proposal goes too far.

Under the realignment, for example, about 1,000 employees who maintain and operate the Navy's 36,000-square-mile missile testing range in the waters off Point Mugu would transfer to China Lake and perform those duties from 150 miles away, said retired Navy Capt. Jack Dodd, a chief strategist in the county's campaign to retain jobs.

The move would weaken testing efficiency and military training, Dodd said. Moreover, he said a military analysis showing a 20-year savings of \$433,000 is flawed because it fails to account for recurring annual operating costs and the costs of moving support functions to China Lake. His own analysis shows the move would lose money over 20 years.

Dodd said that after studying the material used by the Defense Department to justify other job transfers, he believes much of the analysis is flawed.

"All of the closures and realignments should be done in order to enhance the capabilities of our men and women in uniform, but we believe these recommendations would decrease military value," Dodd said.

Governor makes final plea to spare Illinois bases

Copely News Service
Dori Meinert
August 22, 2005

With the independent defense base closing commission preparing for its final votes later this week, Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich on Monday reiterated his arguments for keeping the fighter jets at Springfield's Air National Guard base.

In a letter sent to each of the nine commissioners, Blagojevich also outlined why they should reject the Pentagon's recommendations to shift thousands of jobs at the Rock Island Arsenal and Great Lakes Naval Station to other states.

The Pentagon's recommendations won't achieve the desired cost savings and won't make the

military more efficient, Blagojevich argued in the letter to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

The commission has scheduled four days of deliberations beginning Wednesday, with votes affecting the Springfield base expected on Friday.

"The BRAC process is about two worthy goals - saving money and making our military more efficient and effective," Blagojevich wrote. "The only problem is the Pentagon is not practicing what it preaches. These recommendations fly in the face of reason and must be stopped."

The Pentagon recommended shifting the 183rd Fighter Wing's 15 F-16 fighter jets from the Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport to Fort Wayne, Ind. The Springfield base would lose 163 military and civilian positions.

Noting that the Springfield base has a higher military ranking than the Fort Wayne facility, Blagojevich argued that "it does not make sense to move scarce resources from a higher ranked installation to a lower one."

And, the move won't save money in the long run, he said. While the Air Force estimated it would cost \$10 million to move the aircraft out of Springfield, it couldn't demonstrate any savings would result from the move, he wrote.

He also argued that removing the fighter jets from Springfield would create an unacceptable homeland security risk.

"Without the F-16s based in Springfield, the entire lower Midwest will be left without fighter protection. The events of Sept. 11, 2001, should be a reminder to us all that such a situation is unacceptable. Further, the firefighters currently based at Capital (Air National Guard Base) are also slated to be moved out of Illinois. These firefighters are some of the most valuable first responders in Illinois and their loss would be a needless homeland security risk with little associated savings," the governor wrote.

Blagojevich also reiterated his argument that the Pentagon doesn't have the authority to move Guard units in a state without the governor's agreement. But the Justice Department recently sided with the Pentagon on that issue.

In relation to the Rock Island Arsenal, the governor argued that no significant cost savings or military efficiency would result from shifting 1,200 jobs to other states. About 1,100 of those jobs are within the Tank Automotive and Armaments Command, which would be moved to Michigan under the Pentagon's proposal. However, the Rock Island Arsenal has a higher military ranking than the Detroit Arsenal and the shift would cost taxpayers \$115 million to expand the Detroit Arsenal, Blagojevich wrote.

The commission has until Sept. 8 to submit its recommendations to the White House. President Bush then has until Sept. 23 to approve or reject them in their entirety. Congress has until Nov. 7 for an up-or-down vote on the entire list.

IN THE HOME ZONE AROUND OCEANA AIR BASE

The Virginian-Pilot, Norfolk
August 22, 2005
Jon W. Glass

Since June, the Navy has sent nine letters to City Hall objecting to new housing developments being planned around Oceana Naval Air Station.

All but six of the 80 homes in the projects would be built in accident-potential zones, where the risk of a jet crash is greatest. And all but the same six units would be in the loudest jet-noise zone around the base.

"This is a blatant encroachment issue," Capt. P.J. Lorge, who was acting as Oceana's commanding officer, wrote June 27 about a 42-home development planned off London Bridge Road.

Building homes there, he said, is "an outright disregard for this Department of Defense facility and the health and welfare of future residents."

City officials, however, say they can't stop the construction.

That development and the other eight projects are being built "by right." That means the underlying zoning on the property allows houses to be built there without City Council review or approval. Several of the sites have old homes on them that are being demolished and replaced with duplexes.

Potentially, thousands more homes could be built around Oceana outside the City Council's purview.

The situation underscores the dilemma facing the city as it fights to save Oceana as the Navy's East Coast master jet base: There may be only so much the city can do to buffer Oceana from the development that has put the facility in the cross hairs of a federal base-closing commission.

"It's going to have to be, do what we can where we can," said James K. Spore, Virginia Beach's city manager.

The Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission votes this week on whether to recommend closing the base.

Even if Oceana dodges the base-closing bullet, its future could hinge on the city's ability to rein in growth that the Navy views as incompatible.

Top Navy officials have said their ideal solution -- at an estimated cost of at least \$ 1.4 billion -- would be to build a new master jet base unhindered by homes and shopping malls.

Adm. Mike Mullen, chief of naval operations, said during a BRAC Commission hearing earlier this month that Oceana remains the best option for the "foreseeable future." Development that has hemmed in the base -- known as encroachment -- "continues to impact our training" and "has grown worse over the last few years," Mullen acknowledged.

But he expressed optimism that the recent adoption of a joint land-use study involving

Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, Norfolk and the Navy is a turning point.

The \$ 1.4 billion question: Does it go far enough?

Some think not.

"The joint land-use study was a significant step in the right direction, but it doesn't stop encroachment like the Navy was asking," City Councilman Bob Dyer said.

The study, for example, offers no remedy for by-right development.

In addition, the recommendations do not apply to Oceana's low jet-noise zone, even though the Navy views construction of new homes in the zone as incompatible with its mission. City officials say that residents in the low-noise zone are less likely to complain about loud jets, and that nearly 19,000 homes are already there.

Others, however, said the city and the state are moving decisively to address encroachment.

The City Council upped the ante last week when it announced plans to spend \$ 15 million -- with the state chipping in half -- to buy out a disputed condominium site on Laskin Road. The 6-acre site, rezoned by the council nearly two years ago over the Navy's objections, is in an accident-potential zone and in a noise zone where jets roar over at 114 decibels -- louder than a rock concert.

The council also unveiled plans for an acquisition fund totaling an estimated \$ 161 million over 20 years to buy land or development rights from willing sellers, primarily to preserve a key flight path between Oceana and its training field in Chesapeake.

The week before, three state lawmakers from Virginia Beach and Chesapeake had announced plans to enact the study recommendations into Virginia law and to create a program to help buy development rights in accident-potential zones.

The Navy itself intends to begin meeting with developers who are planning projects viewed as harmful to Oceana, hoping to persuade them to build something more compatible -- another of the study's recommendations.

All those steps will help protect Oceana in the long-term, said Bill Macali, a city deputy attorney. He is helping to draft a new zoning overlay district meant to reduce incompatible growth in Oceana's highest noise zones.

"It's probably a case where no one thing will be our silver bullet," Macali said.

The Navy views by-right development as one of the most important issues looming. In several of the Navy's recent letters objecting to the by-right projects, Capt. Tom Keeley, Oceana's commanding officer, described the planned development as "further insidious encroachment upon our operations in support of homeland security."

Cmdr. John C. Lauterbach Jr., command judge advocate at Oceana, said last week: "It is the issue for the future. The whole by-right regime is of significant concern."

City officials say the issue will be hard to resolve. The options to address it are potentially expensive, legally risky and politically controversial.

A few of the nine by-right projects the Navy is now opposing are in areas of the city that city councils during the 1970s and '80s rezoned to residential over the Navy's objections. But most are in older sections, such as Oceana Gardens, that were zoned residential years before the Navy began flying high-performance fighter jets at Oceana.

Four of the projects are sandwiched among existing homes on undeveloped lots that went unnoticed until the region's housing boom began unleashing an unquenchable demand for new homes.

The other five projects involve redevelopment, in which an outdated home is being torn down

and replaced with duplexes, condos or larger single-family homes.

City officials said there's not enough money available to buy all the property, even if the owners were willing to sell. The developers of the nine projects either declined to comment, could not be reached or did not return telephone calls.

R. Edward Bourdon Jr., an attorney who represents developers, said the city would be wasting tax dollars to try to buy out by-right development.

Purchasing land to preserve the Navy's flyway between Oceana and the training field in Chesapeake "has some logic to it," he said, because that area of the city is relatively undeveloped. But much of the potential by-right development, by virtue of its existing residential zoning, is surrounded by similar development, he said.

The council's decision to buy the Laskin Road site was "ludicrous," he said, because hundreds of homes already lie in the same accident-potential zone between the site and Oceana's runway.

"No one can demonstrate any impact on operations at Oceana, either negative or positive, on whether that property is developed with condos or a hotel or left as open space," he said. "They'd have to spend billions to remove the existing encroachment."

The city estimates that 4,800 homes, assessed at an estimated \$ 896 million, already exist in accident-potential zones around Oceana. About 12,000 additional housing units, assessed at \$ 1.9 billion, are in the loudest noise zone.

Dyer said the city should investigate changing the zoning in the most critical areas to reduce future housing density, a process known as downzoning. It's legal for localities in Virginia to downzone, but Bourdon guaranteed that the city would be sued because the action would reduce property values.

The city would have a high legal standard to meet, including proving that a change in circumstances warranted the downzoning. Dyer said the military's role in the war on terror, launched after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, and the Pentagon's tougher stance against incompatible development starting in December 2002 might give the city a case.

At this point, Macali said, the city hopes to reduce housing density through voluntary rezonings that could increase property values, particularly at the resort.

At the Oceanfront, most of which is in a jet-noise zone, the Navy is concerned that the underlying zoning would allow about 9,000 additional homes. The city hopes to cap that at about 3,000 by offering incentives for owners willing to agree to a mixed zoning that would reduce the number of homes in exchange for shops, restaurants and offices. Those uses, Macali said, are compatible in the noise zones there.

"It's hard to undo past mistakes," he said, "but we're really trying to do that."

Special Ops Commander Backs Oceana

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot

Jon W. Glass

August 23, 2005

A commander of U.S. military special forces said in a letter Monday that Oceana Naval Air Station is the only airfield that can meet the needs of his command.

U.S. Sen. John W. Warner released the letter late Monday to bolster Virginia's case for keeping Oceana as the Navy's East Coast hub for fighter attack jets.

Warner, R-Va., who heads the Senate Armed Services Committee, sent the letter to the chairman of the federal base-closing commission that will decide Oceana's fate.

The Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission is scheduled to vote this week on

whether to recommend moving Oceana's jets to Cecil Field, a former Navy air base in Jacksonville, Fla.

Oceana's classified role in supporting special operations forces, including Navy SEALs, convinced a base-closing panel in 1993 that the secret mission – and thus the base's aircraft – could not be moved from Virginia.

Monday's letter from Army Gen. Bryan D. Brown, who heads the U.S. Special Operations Command, came in response to an inquiry by Warner about Oceana's significance to special operations.

"I would like to clearly state the Command's position on this matter," wrote Brown, whose command is based at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida.

Given the command's "current posture in the Norfolk, Va., area, in terms of both specialized facilities and uniquely demanding operation considerations," Brown said, "Naval Air Station Oceana is the only airfield that can meet our classified and highly sensitive mission requirements."

Brown's letter contradicts testimony at a hearing Saturday in which delegations from Virginia and Florida argued their cases before the BRAC Commission.

At the hearing, retired Adm. Robert J. Natter, former commander of the Atlantic Fleet and now a hired consultant for Florida, assured the commission that the special operations forces mission could be moved to another base in the Norfolk region.

Natter said he was aware of the mission and was convinced it did not have to occur at Oceana.

Members of the BRAC Commission were briefed in a closed session on Aug. 4 about Oceana's secret role. It did not appear to convince the panel of the base's singular importance.

Instead, the commission announced a week later that Florida officials should be given a hearing so the panel could consider reopening Cecil Field. The 1993 BRAC panel had voted to close Cecil Field based on Navy recommendations.

John Ullyot, a spokesman for Warner, said Brown's letter "adds another strong and relevant voice" to keeping the Navy's master jet base at Oceana.

"Oceana is critical not just to the Navy, but to the special operations mission and other joint forces, one of the most important commands in waging the war on terror," Ullyot said. "The disruption that the closing of Oceana would have on the war on terror is not something the Navy or the joint forces is interested in."

Members of the BRAC panel have expressed concerns that suburban development around Oceana has compromised pilot training there and poses safety risks for Navy pilots and the community. On July 19, the panel voted 7-1 to add Oceana to the list for possible closure.

Navy officials have told the BRAC Commission that the ideal solution would be to build a new master jet base. But for now, they said, Oceana remains the best place for the East Coast master jet base.

The BRAC panel is scheduled to vote Wednesday on Army and Navy bases being considered for closure or downsizing.

Virginia Beach Mayor Meyera E. Oberndorf, who testified at Saturday's hearing, said she is "cautiously optimistic" that the commission "will see the virtue in continuing the use of Oceana."

"I have given them every assurance that our city can possibly afford that the base will be protected as conscientiously as we can," Oberndorf said. "This has been a very difficult situation to be in."

City Councilman Bob Dyer, who attended Saturday's hearing, said Virginia has made a "realistic case" for keeping Oceana.

"We'll probably survive this by the skin of our teeth," Dyer said. "I think during a time of war and a budget crunch, it'd be in the Navy's best interest to stay here and to use the resources where they're needed."

Uphill Battle On Base Closing State Strives to Sway Vote

Hartford Courant

David Lightman and Jess Hamilton

August 23, 2005

In the final hours before the Base Realignment and Closure Commission decides the fate of the Naval Submarine Base in Groton, Connecticut's pleas are getting personal.

Key Team Connecticut members spent the weekend writing and calling panel members individually, saying that they would keep pushing until they secured the five votes needed to keep Groton open - a goal that one prominent member of the group concedes it has yet to reach.

Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn., talked over the weekend with commission Chairman Anthony J. Principi - whom Connecticut officials regard as sympathetic to their effort - and he has talked to several others in recent days.

Sen. Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., has spoken with Principi and Commissioner James V. Hansen since Saturday's final hearing on base closings, and he plans to speak to three more commission members today. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, wrote Principi a three-page letter on Monday.

Gov. M. Jodi Rell has spoken to seven of the nine commission members in recent months, and she is trying to reach the remaining two.

So far, Simmons said, the team is confident that it has some votes - no one would say from whom - but not the majority needed to keep Groton open.

The team's eleventh-hour appeals are probably swimming in a sea of calls and approaches to the commissioners from throughout the country, because the Pentagon has recommended closing or realigning 61 major bases.

The commission vote, which could come as soon as Wednesday, is difficult to handicap.

Although some members on Saturday seemed to be seriously considering keeping the Groton base open, no one, including the chairman, would commit publicly to such a vote.

In the four previous base closing rounds, a process that began in 1988, commissioners have rejected about 15 percent of the Pentagon's recommendations. Analysts and those familiar with the process warned that no matter how compelling a local case might seem, it's important to remember that the commission ultimately looks at how Groton and other facilities fit into the national picture.

"We're fighting uphill here. Let's not kid ourselves," Dodd said last week. "The presumption is in favor of the Pentagon."

Simmons compared the final days to the last miles of a marathon.

"I've done my best," he said. "I've given it everything I got. Now we're just hanging on to the finish."

Personal pitches help, said former U.S. Rep. Sam Gejdenson, who represented eastern Connecticut in Congress for 20 years and helped lead the successful 1993 fight to keep the base open. But they carry real weight only when they involve solid arguments, not simply recalling good times. "You have to keep making the arguments," Gejdenson said.

Different members are stressing different arguments in their personal pitches.

Simmons, whose district includes the sub base, relies on his military background and knowledge. "It is not easy to stand up to the

Department of Defense, even when it is wrong," he told Principi in his letter.

Dodd, the only major delegation player who has been in Congress for all of the BRAC rounds, offers a pithier approach.

"Let the debate occur," he said, particularly over military value. "But don't have the debate foreclosed by a real estate decision."

Lieberman, who like Dodd participated in the successful 1993 effort to persuade BRAC to keep Groton open, uses a combination of affability and military knowledge gained from his years on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

The arguments that Lieberman and others are making in the closing days have become familiar:

The Pentagon's May 13 estimate that shutting Groton will save \$1.6 billion over 20 years has been largely discredited. At the Saturday hearing, Pentagon officials said that the closing would save "more than \$1 billion," and conceded that potentially hundreds of millions of dollars in environmental cleanup costs were not included.

Team Connecticut maintains that it will actually cost \$641 million to close the base, and Principi has said that if Groton's closure doesn't save money, it might not make sense.

Questions remain about the size of the future submarine fleet. Vice Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Richard F. Willard suggested Saturday that the estimate of a 54- or 55-sub fleet is probably correct, not the 37 to 41 that other Pentagon officials have suggested.

The base's intimate, incomparable relationship to neighboring sub builder Electric Boat can't be rebuilt elsewhere.

Groton's location is more valuable than bases in the Southern states. Because of their ability to dive below the polar ice cap, supporters say,

Groton's subs can reach the Pacific faster than those from Norfolk, Va., or Kings Bay, Ga.

No one knows which arguments, if any, will affect the odds that John Markowicz, chairman of the Groton-defending Subbase Realignment Coalition, is willing to state for the base's escaping the list.

It's still about a 1 in 7 chance, he said. That's the statistical ratio for how many bases have been taken off previous BRAC lists - including Groton's sub operations in 1993.

Then again, said Dodd, in these last hours, between commission members, staffs and Team Connecticut lobbyists, "there's a lot of conversation going on here."

Targeting Loring Jobs Stings In Limestone

Portland Press Herald
Associated Press

Local residents are still smarting from the idea that the Pentagon would try to take away the olive branch extended after the closing of Loring Air Force Base, the linchpin to the economy in northern Maine.

A year after the base closed in 1994, the Pentagon opened the Defense Finance Accounting Service center at the former base hospital. Limestone was chosen to help ease the burden from the loss of 1,100 civilian and 4,500 military jobs at Loring.

Today, 353 people are employed in the Limestone operations of the Defense Finance Accounting Service, an agency that was created through reorganization to serve all four military branches: Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines.

The Pentagon has 26 DFAS centers across the country, and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld wants to reduce that number to three megacenters in Denver, Indianapolis and Columbus, Ohio.

The Limestone center handles the books and ledgers for domestic Air National Guard bases and active duty Air Force bases in Europe, according to Larry Conrad, who oversees the operations in the modern facility that was renovated six years ago.

Advocates have argued for not only keeping Limestone open but for adding jobs because of its efficiency and low turnover rate. The base could easily accommodate up to 480 workers and could accommodate up to 600 workers by eliminating some storage space, Conrad said.

The accounting technician jobs at DFAS-Limestone pay \$33,000 a year on average and are viewed as premium jobs in northern Maine, said Carl Flora, president and chief executive officer of the Loring Development Authority.

"To lose that would be a big blow," he said. "When you take away jobs, you take away people's hopes and dreams."

Opinions/ Editorials

No Military In New England? Unthinkable

Hartford Courant

Chris Dodd and Joe Lieberman

August 23, 2005

Like many kids growing up in Connecticut, we have dreamed of patrolling center field at Yankee Stadium or smacking a line drive off the Green Monster in Fenway Park. And just like most children everywhere, we were inspired by watching our heroes. From Ted Williams and Joe DiMaggio to Derek Jeter and David Ortiz, the presence of these remarkable athletes fuels our imaginations and connects generations.

Now, imagine that baseball was gradually removed from the Northeast. No more Yankees or Red Sox. No more friendly rivalries. No more mothers and fathers sharing America's pastime with their sons and daughters. How many of those children would grow up with dreams of hitting a home run or pitching a no hitter? Most likely very few.

Sadly, the Pentagon has recommended this very fate for the military in the Northeast, and the implications are far more serious. The Pentagon's recommendations would not only virtually eliminate the military presence in this region, they would also put our Navy in a virtual straightjacket by eliminating essential pier space at Submarine Base New London. We would have no good option but to downsize our submarine fleet while China and other nations, many of which are not American allies, aggressively develop theirs. The national security repercussions are clear.

In recommending closure of all major operational military bases in the Northeast - Sub Base New London, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Naval Air Station Brunswick and Otis Air National Guard Base - the Pentagon has stated loud and clear that it believes New England is less valuable than other parts of the country. They have declared that our proud heritage of patriotism, our industry, our strategic location and our unique character are inconsequential to the future of our national security. As proud representatives of the Northeast, we strongly disagree.

Policy-makers must consider current intelligence data, weapons capabilities, personnel strength and cost among a host of other factors when planning for national security over the coming decades. But there are also intangibles that must be considered. These factors do not fit into equations, matrices or spreadsheets, but are of equal, if not greater, importance to the strength of our military.

One such consideration is that the military should represent the nation as a whole. It should draw into its ranks representatives from all parts of the country, from all backgrounds, races, ethnicities and faiths. Because when our military goes abroad, it presents the face of America to the world. It is a sign not only of our strength, but our unity. More than any other organization, the military is known as a great equalizer of men and women throughout this country. It brings together all Americans and directs them toward a common cause.

The closure of these bases in the Northeast would inevitably hinder this goal. The roar of jet engines overhead, the sight of ships in the harbor and the silent hiss of a submarine as it slips out of port are all powerful experiences that instill a sense of adventure in the minds of young Americans. Daily interaction with the troops who serve as role models in communities across this country is an invaluable recruiting asset for our armed forces. The presence of military personnel exposes us to the excitement and the challenges of their way of life and makes the military a real and appealing career choice for young Americans.

The increasing separation between the military and the public has become a visible problem in the Northeast. The region has suffered a disproportionate number of base reductions in prior Base Realignment and Closure rounds and, as a result, now has 21 percent of the country's population and only 7.4 percent of the active-duty military. This situation has already hindered recruiting efforts. Today, as the military undertakes ever more ambitious missions overseas while struggling to meet its recruiting goals, we can ill afford to lose any more opportunities.

Anthony J. Principi, chairman of the nine-member BRAC commission, has voiced concern that these closures would leave the Northeast without a military presence. He said recently, "It's important for our military and our society to be interrelated, so that is a concern as to whether the Defense Department has gone too far in removing all military bases from New England."

Let us hope that, when the BRAC commission votes as a whole this week, they recognize the essential value of a firm military footing in the Northeast and of a military that truly represents America as a whole.

Just as many kids dream of emulating athletes who wear the uniform of their favorite baseball team, there are those who are inspired to serve their country by watching the heroes who wear the uniform of our armed forces. If we take away that inspiration, we are not only

shortchanging their future, we are endangering the future of our military and of this country.

Keep paymasters in Denver

The Denver Post
August 22, 2005

Colorado's big guns have closed ranks around the Denver Defense Finance and Accounting Service center as a base-closing panel begins deciding today where its ax will fall.

The center, with more than 1,200 jobs, was thought to be safe until a unanimous vote last month by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission recommended that it go under a microscope and be considered for closing.

Denver DFAS is all that's left of the former Lowry Air Force Base. The unit oversees pay for 2.2 million military members and 295,000 Department of Defense civilians employees. The commission vote conflicts with a Pentagon recommendation that the \$150 million center stay open and other finance and accounting activities be consolidated in Denver and two other sites.

It's startling to see that a facility with such an exemplary record for skill and efficiency can suddenly be fighting for its life. Of course, the center is hardly alone.

Colorado's political establishment is fighting to save the facility. Gov. Bill Owens, Sens. Wayne Allard and Ken Salazar, and Denver City Council President Rosemary Rodriguez recently appeared before the commission to plead the case.

Rep. Diana DeGette, whose district includes the center, noted in a statement that Denver has a "skilled workforce, ability to expand existing facilities and strong community support for our military," and that the Pentagon gave Denver DFAS its top ranking in terms of military value. She also noted that the Air Reserve Personnel Center already will be moved from the Buckley Annex to Texas.

DCN 8020

Salazar said the 11th-hour scrutiny on DFAS may result from a feeling that other basing decisions will benefit the state - Fort Carson is expected to gain 12,000 to 20,000 soldiers.

But Colorado lost thousands of military jobs when Lowry and Fitzsimons Army Medical Center closed in the 1990s. DFAS is a top-performing facility and a closure isn't justified.

Additional Notes

N/A