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2005 BRAC Commission Schedule

Base Realignment and Closure Commission

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

21 JUNE 2005

Contact: Robert McCreary
Deputy Director of Communications

703 – 699 – 2964

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Media Advisory for 2005 BRAC Regional Hearing in Buffalo, New York

HEARING DATE: MONDAY, JUNE 27

TIME: Doors Open to Public at 11:30AM

**Hearing Coverage- Center for the Arts Mainstage Auditorium
1:00PM-5:30PM / Media PRE-SET 10:00AM, No later than 11:15AM**

Media Availability – Black Box Theater of the Center for the Arts

As each State completes their presentation they will hold a media avail. The BRAC Commission's media avail will begin promptly 15 minutes after the end of the hearing.

LOCATION:

Center for the Arts Mainstage Auditorium
Coventry Circle
University of Buffalo
North Campus
Buffalo, NY 14260

PARTICIPATING STATES:

New York, Ohio

BRAC COMMISSIONERS: Chairman Anthony J. Principi, General Lloyd W. Newton (USAF, Ret.), General Sue Ellen Turner (USAF, Ret.), Honorable James H. Bilbray

Logistical information for media

- Satellite truck parking available in rear of the Center for the Arts Auditorium
- 200 ft. Cable run to press risers
- 400 ft. Cable throw to media availability location
- 65 ft. Max camera throw
- TV quality sound and lighting
- Free, wireless internet available

Credentialing and Media Inquiries: Contact: James Schaefer, Director of Communications: 703-901-7793 james.schaefer@wso.whs.mil

For more information, schedules and future updates.

Please visit our website, www.brac.gov,

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**2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
Suggested Talking Points for Niagara Falls International Airport
Air Reserve Station**

- 1. The Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) was established by the Congress to perform a careful, open, transparent, and independent analysis of the suggestions by the Department of Defense (DoD) to close or realign various military installations across the country, and the Commission will follow a process specifically outlined by law, with military value as the preeminent consideration.**
 - The factors to be included in the Commission's evaluation have been prescribed by statute; the Commission will take the economic, environmental, and other effects that the suggestion to close Niagara Falls International Airport Air Reserve Station (ARS) could have on the local community, while basing its final decision almost entirely upon military value.
 - The contributions that Niagara Falls International Airport ARS has made to the defense of the United States, including serving as the home to the 914th Airlift Wing, which performed transportation missions and Special Operations support missions in the Middle East, and the 107th Air Refueling wing, will be taken into full account by the Commission.
 - The Commission is aware of the \$75 million that has recently been spent on the rebuilding and renovation of the Niagara Falls International Airport ARS, but will base its final decision almost entirely upon the current military value of the installation.

- 2. The Congress established the Commission as an entirely non-partisan, non-political entity for the sole role of evaluating, and providing accountability to the public for, the suggestions by DoD to close or realign different bases.**
 - The considerations to be included, by the Commission, in the Commission's evaluation have been specifically prescribed by law and are entirely open to public scrutiny.
 - The process is completely open and transparent and the final decision will be made almost entirely based upon military value.

- 3. The Commission is very aware of the human impact that could be had by the suggestion to close Niagara Falls International Airport ARS, should the suggestion be enacted.**
 - Although the base only makes up 0.2% of the total local employment, the Commission understands that its economic contribution is significant, as it has a \$133 million direct impact on the region.
 - While maintaining military value as its most important consideration, the Commission will take the economic, environmental, and other effects that the closure of Niagara Falls International Airport ARS would have.
 - Community input is welcomed by the Commission and is considered vitally important; the decision made by the Commission will be based almost entirely upon the military value of the installation. The most helpful information to the Commission, submitted by the Community, is information regarding factors that may have been overlooked by DoD in DoD's evaluation and suggestions.

Facts compiled from included press clippings.



**2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
Suggested Qs & As for Niagara Falls International Airport Air Reserve Station**

Q1. Did the political affiliation of the Senators and Congressmen representing the area of the installation have anything to do with the Department of Defense's (DoD) suggestion to close Niagara Falls International Airport Air Reserve Station (ARS), and will it influence the decision of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) in any way?

A1. The Congress established the Commission as an non-partisan, non-political entity to independently evaluate DoD's suggestions to close or realign various bases across the country and ensure that those suggestions were made in accordance with the law and after all critical factors were taken into account. The Commission will follow a process of evaluation and analysis that has been specifically outlined by law.

Q2. Niagara Falls International Airport ARS has served as the home of the 914th Airlift Wing, which has transported supplies across the Middle East and supported night-vision Special Operation Forces, and to the 107th Air Refueling Wing. Will the Commission take the defense role that this installation has played, especially in regards to the Middle East, as the Commission makes its conclusion as to whether or not to uphold DoD's recommendation for closure of the installation?

A2. The criteria for which factors are to be included in the Commission's evaluation has been specifically set forth by statute. While the Commission will take into account the economic, environmental, and other effects that the closure of the installation would have, the preeminent consideration, by the Commission, will be the military value of the military installation. The Commission recognizes the valuable role that many, if not all, of the installations across the country have played in the defense of the United States, but as DoD seeks to streamline and make our military more efficient in order to meet changing global threats, the Commission seeks to ensure that DoD has taken the current military value of the installation into full consideration.

Q3. The Niagara Falls International Airport ARS generates \$50 million in payroll, \$20 million in contracts, \$20 million in purchases annually, creating a large amount of revenue for the businesses in the surrounding region. Some have estimated the direct economic impact at \$133 million. Will the Commission consider the economic effect that closing the base would have on the local community, in addition to the Commission's consideration of the military value of the base?

A3. The Commission is keenly aware of the human impact that the suggestion to close an installation could have, should that suggestion be enacted. While the Commission will base its final recommendation almost entirely upon its evaluation of the military value of an installation, the Commission will also make a careful and thorough evaluation of the economic impact that the closure of Niagara Falls International Airport ARS could have on the surrounding community.

Q4. The economic argument for closing the base has been that the installation only represents 0.2% of the total employment of the area and that the closure would save

Q4. Continued

the U.S. \$199.4 million over the next 20 years. Will the Commission ensure that DoD is not sacrificing U.S. defense to save money, especially in a time of war?

A4. The Congress established the Commission specifically to ensure that DoD had followed that law and taken all critical factors into account in its suggestion to close or realign various military installations across the country. The Commission is to serve as a source of public accountability and to independently evaluate, in a completely open and transparent manner, the suggestions made by DoD. While the Commission will take a variety of factors into account, as prescribed by law, the Commission's final decision will be made almost entirely based upon the military value of the installation.

Q5. Niagara Falls International Airport ARS was on the 1995 BRAC list originally, but was then removed. Why should this not happen again with this round of BRAC?

A5. The Commission is an independent entity, established by the Congress, to evaluate the suggestions by DoD to close or realign various military installations across the country to ensure that those suggestions were made in accordance with the law and after taking all critical factors into consideration. The process followed by the Commission, as well as the factors to be included in the evaluation, have been specifically outlined by law. Please be assured that the Commission will perform an extremely detailed, thorough, transparent, and accurate analysis before coming to its conclusions.

Q6. \$75 million has been spent recently on Niagara Falls International Airport ARS on building projects. Does the fact that this amount was just recently spent on the installation have any affect on whether or not it will remain on the list for closure?

A6. Funding to support an installation, such that it is able to perform its current mission, has no impact on, and is not reflective of, DoD's intended future of the installation. The Commission will independently and transparently evaluate the suggestion made by DoD to close Niagara Falls International Airport ARS, and ensure that military value has been properly taken into account.

Q7. The state of New York is providing \$200,000 to fund efforts to retain its military installations. \$100,000 of this will be directed to the Niagara Military Affairs Council for the specific effort of saving the base from closure. Governor George Pataki has written Chairman Principi, specifically outlining the reasons he feels the base should be retained: troops deployed to the front lines, high recruitment, no encroachment, that it is a total force joint facility, and that it is located within a reasonable proximity of 5 major cities in North America. Additionally, there is a campaign to write 25,000 letters to the Commission, urging it to retain the installation. Will these efforts have an effect on the Commission's decision?

A7. The Commission is very aware of the impact that the suggestions by DoD to close or realign various military installations would have on the surrounding community. The most important consideration to the Commission is military value but the Commission will also take into account the economic, environmental, and other effects that the closure of the installation would have on the region. The Commission welcomes input from the

A7. Continued

community; it is a valuable part of the evaluation process. The most helpful information that can be provided is evidence of factors that have been overlooked by DoD in DoD's evaluation of the installation as DoD formulated its suggestion for closure.

Facts compiled from included press clippings.

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**NIAGARA FALLS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AIR
RESERVE STATION
NEW YORK**

National News Articles

**GOV. PATAKI ANNOUNCES ADDITIONAL \$100,000 IN FIGHT TO KEEP
NIAGARA FALLS AIR RESERVE STATION OPEN**

Local News Articles

**Officials Vow to Keep Base Open; Bipartisan Supporters Confident; Residents,
Businesses Can Only Voice Worry**

**PLANNED BASE CLOSURE PROMPTS STATE TO SEEK \$1 MILLION IN AID
FALLS BASE RALLY ATTRACTS 600; AIMS TO PRESS PANEL HOLDING
HEARINGS**

Editorial/Opinion Articles

**The Niagara Falls Airfield; This Region's Sole Military Base Is a Must for the Local
Economy**

National News Articles

**GOV. PATAKI ANNOUNCES ADDITIONAL \$100,000 IN FIGHT TO KEEP
NIAGARA FALLS AIR RESERVE STATION OPEN**

US States News
May 16, 2005

Gov. George E. Pataki, R-N.Y., issued the following press release:

Gov. George E. Pataki, working together with Rep. Thomas M. Reynolds and New York's Congressional Delegation, State and local officials and local base supporters in the fight for the **Niagara Falls** Air Reserve Station, today announced that the State will provide an additional \$100,000 in Base Retention Funds to support local efforts to save this critical base from being closed as part of the 2005 base **realignment** process.

The Governor also announced he has sent a letter to Anthony J. Principi, Chairman of the Federal Base **Realignment** and Closure Commission (BRAC), asking that a regional BRAC hearing be held in the Buffalo-Niagara region to allow local base supporters in **Niagara Falls** and Western New York every opportunity to voice their support for the Niagara Air Reserve Station. (A copy of Governor Pataki's letter to BRAC Chairman Principi is attached below.)

"We fought successfully back in 1995 during the last BRAC round to save the Niagara Air Reserve Station from being closed, and we're going fight hard to save it again," Governor Pataki said. "This process is far from over, and this additional support will be critical as we re-group

with Base supporters and re-double our efforts to get **Niagara Falls** removed from the BRAC list in the coming months."

At the Governor's direction the State is allocating an additional \$100,000 to the Niagara Military Affairs Council, so the Council can continue its aggressive efforts to be a strong and forceful advocate on behalf of the base. The \$100,000 is on top of the \$100,000 already provided in the State Budget to support the Council's advocacy efforts, bringing the total level of State support for the Base to \$200,000.

"In addition to providing additional support for the Council, I have also written BRAC Chairman Anthony Principi to formally request that a regional BRAC hearing be held in the Buffalo Niagara region, so that local officials, community leaders and other base supporters have every opportunity to fully voice their support for the **Niagara Falls** Air Reserve Station," Governor Pataki said. "We want members of the commission to understand and hear firsthand why this Base is so important to the military and to the community."

In addition to requesting a regional BRAC hearing in Buffalo, the Governor also asked BRAC Chairman Principi to personally visit the **Niagara Falls** base to receive a full understanding of how valuable the Base is to the military and to the community.

During the last BRAC round in 1995, the Governor and other supporters, including the Niagara Military Affairs Council, fought successfully to keep the **Niagara Falls** Air Reserve Station open.

Governor Pataki's letter to BRAC Chairman Principi:

May 16, 2005

Chairman Anthony J. Principi

Base **Realignment** and Closure Commission

2521 South Clark Street

Suite 600

Arlington VA, 22202

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As you know, the citizens of the State of New York take tremendous pride in the contributions they are making to the nation's defense and particularly to the ongoing operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and throughout the world in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Given the significant contributions of one base in particular, the **Niagara Falls** Air Reserve Station, I was extremely disappointed to learn it was singled out for closure by the Department of Defense.

I appreciate the commitment you made to me on April 21, 2005 that BRAC Commissioners would personally visit any major base targeted for closure. Because of the great importance of this base, I would encourage you to personally visit the Niagara facility to see first-hand its tremendous value.

In addition, I would also request that the BRAC Commission schedule a Regional Hearing in the

Buffalo / Niagara region to ensure that the citizens of Niagara County and Western New York can participate in the BRAC hearing and have every opportunity to voice their support for the Niagara Air Reserve Station.

As I discussed with you in April, the **Niagara Falls** Air Reserve Station has played a vital role when it comes to the nation's defense and to strengthening our homeland security strategy. The brave airmen and women from the 914th and 107th Airlift Wings have and continue to make extraordinary contributions to our State and nation in War on Terror.

Its aircraft have been deployed to the very front lines in Iraq, its recruitment remains high, the facility has no encroachment, it is a Total Force joint facility, it is strategically located among 5 major population centers in the Northeast United States and Canada, and its impact on the community is profound.

Given these attributes, your participation during the base visit process and the selection of a Regional Hearing in the Buffalo / Niagara region will be essential. It's important to provide a direct opportunity for those most impacted by this recommendation to communicate their views on the importance of keeping the **Niagara Falls** Air Reserve Station open.

Very truly yours,

George E. Pataki.

Local News Articles

OFFICIALS VOW TO KEEP BASE OPEN; BIPARTISAN SUPPORTERS CONFIDENT; RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES CAN ONLY VOICE WORRY

Buffalo News

Bill Michelmore and Jerry Zremski

May 14, 2005

NIAGARA FALLS -- Near the gates of the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, politicians on Friday promised to change the Pentagon's mind and keep open the 58-year-old military base.

"We're going to link arms, and we're going to beat this down," said Niagara County Legislature Chairman William L. Ross, fists raised.

Several others joined him, including Rep. Thomas M. Reynolds, R-Clarence, a key GOP fundraiser on the national stage whose district spills onto the Falls base.

"We're mad as hell," said Reynolds, "and we're going to fight."

Farther away from the gates though, where poverty, patriotism and broken economic promises mingle, confidence was harder to muster. The bowed heads and the frowns on many of the customers in Marsh's General Store, less than a half-mile away, said more than any politician could.

Many of the customers are base employees. They stop at the third-generation business to buy soda, gas and cigarettes.

"Apart from being bad for us, it's just devastating for the local economy," said store owner Pam Marsh. "I don't know how much more this community can take."

Closing the Falls base, if finalized, would save the U.S. government \$199.4 million over 20 years. The Air Reserve Station was included in a proposal to close 33 major bases and eliminate dozens of National Guard and Reserve units.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld also recommended closing the Navy's recruiting district headquarters in Buffalo, which employs 37.

The recommendations now go to the independent Base Realignment and Closure Commission for review. The commission will submit its recommendations to President Bush by Sept. 8, and he will have until Nov. 11 to send them to Congress. The closings will become final at that point, unless Congress rejects all of them.

The Niagara Falls air station has more than 800 full-time military and civilian employees and hosts 3,000 citizen airmen who train at the base every month, said Neil E. Nolf, the base's information officer.

\$150 million impact

It has an annual payroll of \$50 million and pours an estimated \$150 million into the local economy through jobs on base, ongoing construction projects and the impact in local restaurants and stores, Nolf said.

Reynolds and Ross were among a bipartisan group of lawmakers who came to the Niagara Falls International Airport, next to the air station, to voice support.

U.S. Sens. Hillary Rodham Clinton and Charles Schumer, U.S. Reps. Louise Slaughter and Brian Higgins, and several state, county and local officials also attended a Friday afternoon news conference.

Clinton called the decision to close the 1,000-acre base "plain wrong."

"This is the largest base on the northern border and is absolutely essential to the security of our nation," said the Democratic former first lady, to cheers and applause.

The Pentagon estimated that the air base's closing would result in the loss of more than 1,000 jobs, justifying it by noting that would be only 0.2 percent of area employment.

But that statistic is lost on members of the Niagara Military Affairs Council, a 500-strong group of businessmen and local officials formed after the Falls base narrowly missed being shut down during the last round of closures in 1995.

"This decision fails to recognize the economic impact it would have on the region," said Merrell Lane, a Niagara Falls funeral director and chairman of the military affairs council. "We will take our case to the commission as we did in 1995, and I'm convinced we will succeed, as we did then."

'Another nail in coffin'

A little further down Lockport Road at the Walmore Inn, the Friday fish fry had lost its normal sizzle. "Half of my customers work or train at the base," said Paul Gibbs, owner of the century-old tavern. "If they close the base, I'll be out of business. More important, it will be another nail in the coffin for the area."

Niagara Falls Mayor Vince Anello said the closing threat couldn't come at a worse time.

"For the first time in decades we're in a position to turn this economy around," said Anello, referring to the Seneca Niagara Casino, the hotel being built behind it and other development projects in the works.

In documents distributed to congressional offices to explain the proposed closings, the Pentagon said the Air Reserve's 914th Airlift Wing would see its headquarters moved from Niagara Falls to Langley Air Force Base, Va. Meanwhile, the unit's eight C-130H cargo planes would be moved to Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark., which the Pentagon said has "higher military value."

The Air National Guard 107th Air Refueling Wing would move its eight KC-135R aircraft to the 101st Air Refueling Wing in Bangor, Maine.

The recommendation appears to be part of a Pentagon plan to consolidate Air Force cargo-shipping units in Little Rock. A Pittsburgh Air Reserve base with the same mission as the Niagara Falls base is also slated for closure, as is a similar National Guard unit in Mansfield, Ohio.

Fort Drum is spared

New York's largest military facility -- Fort Drum, home of the Army's 10th Mountain Division was spared in the base closure recommendations. But Rumsfeld recommended the closings of several reserve centers around the state along with the Defense Finance and Accounting Service in Rome, which employs 290. A realignment at the Rome Laboratory would cost another 137 jobs.

PLANNED BASE CLOSURE PROMPTS STATE TO SEEK \$1 MILLION IN AID

Buffalo News

Jerry Zremski

June 1, 2005

New York State plans to apply for up to \$1 million in federal aid to help **Niagara Falls** in case the federal government shuts down the community's Air Force Reserve base.

Todd Alhart, a spokesman for Gov. George E. Pataki, said Tuesday that the state would seek the money even though it plans to continue fighting the Pentagon's proposal to close **Niagara Falls** Air Reserve Station.

"Our first priority remains working with the congressional delegation to save the **Niagara Falls** air base," Alhart said. "But we will be applying for this federal aid because it's the responsible and prudent thing to do."

The U.S. Department of Labor has set a June 12 deadline for states to apply for the first round of funding under the National Emergency Grant program.

A state can use such a grant to begin planning its response to a proposed base closing. The initial planning would assess the extent of the economic damage the base closure would cause and possible responses to the shutdown so the economic impact on the workers could be eased.

Communities can receive up to \$1 million in funding under the first round of the program. The state expects to apply for the aid not only for **Niagara Falls**, but also for Rome, which has a military laboratory that would lose 427 jobs under the base-closure process, and several smaller military facilities targeted for cutbacks.

A second phase of the grant program will target money for job training.

The state expects to hear whether it received any money for **Niagara Falls** by June 30, said Rob Lillpopp, a spokesman for the state Department of Labor.

That is long before the independent Base **Realignment** and Closure Commission is scheduled to finish its review of the Pentagon's proposal to close 33 major bases nationwide, including the Air Force Reserve facility in **Niagara Falls**. The commission is scheduled to issue its recommendations by Sept. 8.

The closure of the **Niagara Falls** facility would result in the loss of upwards of 800 full-time jobs. The base is headquarters for an Air Force Reserve unit that flies cargo planes and an Air National Guard unit that flies tankers for refueling.

FALLS BASE RALLY ATTRACTS 600; AIMS TO PRESS PANEL HOLDING HEARINGS

Buffalo News
Thomas J. Prohaska
May 16, 2005

If about 600 Western New Yorkers and a flock of their elected representatives have anything to say about it, the **Niagara Falls** Air Reserve Station will stay open.

A 90-minute rally Sunday filled the Summit Park Mall food court with reservists, their families, members of the public and plenty of politicians from Niagara and Erie counties.

The rally was arranged weeks ago, when it was thought today was the day the Pentagon would announce the list of domestic military bases it seeks to close. The idea then was to have a last-minute show of support for the **Niagara Falls** base.

But the announcement was moved up to Friday, and **Niagara Falls** was on the hit list, so the rally became the first shot in a lobbying campaign to persuade the Base **Realignment** and Closure Commission to keep the base open. Commission members will hold hearings around the country and visit the affected bases before they submit a final closure list to President Bush by Sept. 8.

Many of the speakers pointed out that **Niagara Falls** was on the initial closure list in 1995 and was saved by lobbying.

John Cooper, owner of a **Niagara Falls** sign company and vice chairman of the Niagara Military Affairs Council, told the crowd that a member of the commission will visit **Niagara Falls**, perhaps as soon as next month.

"Do not underestimate the value of community support," Cooper said. "We will have a rally the day before (the commissioner) comes. Everybody bring five other people. We need to line the route he or she will take to the base."

"It's Operation Save **Niagara Falls!**" shouted State Sen. George D. Maziarz, R-Newfane. "We convinced them in 1995, and we won. We're going to convince them in 2005, and we're going to win again."

The air base is home to the 914th Airlift Wing of the Air Force Reserve, which was the first Reserve unit in the Air Force to be sent to the Iraq War twice. It also hosts the 107th Air Refueling Wing of the New York Air National Guard, which also has been to Iraq.

Merrell R. Lane is the **Niagara Falls** funeral director who heads the 500-member Niagara Military Affairs Council, a volunteer group of private citizens that lends support to the base. He said he thought the base would be spared from the Pentagon's list.

Many speakers followed the cue of Rep. Thomas M. Reynolds, R-Clarence, who said in a news conference Friday that he was "mad as hell" about the closure prospect.

"Four (international) bridges, two power plants," said Maziarz. "To close it would be an abomination. It just doesn't make sense."

Rep. Brian M. Higgins, D-Buffalo, told the crowd that Reynolds and Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton led a strategy session of politicians after Friday's news conference. He said that in 1995, "You made the argument, not by raising your voice, but by strengthening your argument."

Buffalo Mayor Anthony M. Masiello also downplayed the emotional aspect of the issue.

"We've got to get smarter," he told the audience. "We've got to start appealing to the hearts and minds and consciousness of the people in Washington who are making these decisions that are detrimental to us."

The base has 642 civilian employees and hosts more than 2,000 reservists. Its annual payroll is about \$50 million, making it the second largest employer in Niagara County.

The Pentagon has spent \$50 million for improvements at the base in the past decade, ranging from a longer runway to new visitors' quarters. Cooper said that wasn't wasted money.

"It's not about a piece of real estate," said Col. James Roberts, the base commander. "It's about the men and women who serve. Out there we have one thing to do: stay current, qualified and ready to fight."

REYNOLDS HOPEFUL ABOUT FALLS BASE; SAYS PENTAGON FAILED TO FOLLOW GUIDELINES

Buffalo News

Jerry Zremski and Nancy A. Fischer

June 4, 2005

Rep. Thomas M. Reynolds met Friday with a top official of the base closure commission and reviewed classified documents regarding the proposed shutdown of the **Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station** -- and said he came away feeling more hopeful about saving the facility.

Reynolds, R-Clarence, spent about a half-hour meeting with Charles Battaglia, executive director of the Base **Realignment** and Closure Commission, and a couple of hours reviewing the documents.

While Reynolds said he could not reveal details, he said he thinks the Pentagon did not follow its own guidelines for deciding which bases to recommend for closure. The independent base closure commission is free to remove bases from the closure list when it can prove the Pentagon strayed from its rules.

"I am optimistic we will be able to prove the case that they wavered from the criteria," Reynolds said.

Reynolds said much of the information the Defense Department delivered to the commission's reading room was cumbersome and difficult to wade through.

He said it helped to have New York's base closure lobbyist, Hamburg native John M. Simmons, at his side as he sorted through the material.

Much of the information appeared to be classified for no good reason, Reynolds said.

"I'm at the height of frustration with how much of this is classified," said Reynolds, whose district includes part of the base.

Reynolds said he had "a good getting-to-know-you session" with Battaglia.

"He emphasized to me that we are just at a starting point here," Reynolds said. "The commission is not going to be a rubber stamp. They are going to take a close look at all of this and make some tough calls."

The commission will hold a hearing in Buffalo on June 27. It is reviewing the 33 major base closures the Pentagon recommended last month and will issue its closure plan by Sept. 8.

The commission is expected to vote to save no more than 15 percent of the bases on the Pentagon's closure list.

Meanwhile, during a press gathering at **Niagara Falls International Airport** on Friday, John Cooper, vice chairman of Niagara Military Affairs Council, referred to the commission hearing date as "D-Day" and urged the public to step up pressure to keep the base open.

"It's been three weeks since we stood here to discuss the **Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station** being slated for closure by the Department of Defense."

"We continue today to have confidence that in the end we will prevail and the **Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station** will be removed from the closure list," Cooper said.

He said a letter-writing campaign that began two weeks ago has generated more than 7,000 letters but said more must be done to meet or exceed the Military Affairs Council's 25,000-letter goal (letter templates are available online at www.nimac.org).

Carol Houwaart-Diez, who chairs the council's community mobilization, said the challenge is not just to target support from Niagara County but all of Western New York.

Houwaart-Diez also pointed to other efforts, including a day of prayer June 12, when support for the base will be sought in mosques, synagogues and churches.

"On Sunday, June 26, we will have a rally and on June 27 we will ask people to line the streets in support as the BRAC Commission travels from the Buffalo airport to **Niagara Falls**," Houwaart-Diez said.

The route will be made public as soon as it is confirmed, she said.

Cooper said gathering information about how the base made the closure list has been tough since much of it is classified.

"This is supposed to be a fair and open process," he said. "We need the information to make our case. Was the criteria followed? Were the facts correct? We need to be able to review this."

Earl A. Frampton, communications director for the AFL/CIO Niagara Orleans Labor Council, said the organization, which supports keeping the base open, represents 40 unions and 18,000 members.

About 3,000 full- and part-time jobs are at stake.

"We want to be part of a coalition of community organizations to save this base. If we talk about the economic impact of this base closing down, the figures are staggering. It's going to take a community effort to do this, not one group but many," Frampton said.

"In the past 10 years we've closed down 23 plants and had various layoffs. Folks, we can't afford to let this base go."

Editorial/Opinion Articles

The Niagara Falls Airfield; This Region's Sole Military Base Is a Must for the Local Economy

Buffalo News

May 12, 2005

As critical as the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station is to Niagara County and the rest of Western New York, its \$133 million annual direct economic impact doesn't mean as much to the Pentagon as it does to this region. Whether the base survives the looming round of closings will depend less on local economics than on military need and political clout.

Closing the base would be foolish for the military, and disastrous for the local economy. But unfortunately for New York in this matter, both of its senators are Democrats, as is Rep. Louise Slaughter, whose district includes half the base.

The heaviest political burdens fall on key Republican House leader Rep. Tom Reynolds, Republican Gov. George Pataki and, by virtue of her post on the Senate Armed Services Committee, Sen. Hillary Clinton. All get high marks from local base supporters for their work so far, but they need to keep pushing to keep Niagara Falls off the closing list now, and off any later amendments to it.

The solid military record Niagara Falls-based units have posted in the Middle East and elsewhere should help. So should the airfield's strategic location on the nation's northern border, and its role as the only New York military base west of Syracuse. But the real test may well come after Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld releases his proposals in the next few days and the independent Base Realignment and Closure Commission begins a review process that will lead to a September report to President Bush.

Independent or not, that process will be politically competitive. Military bases, especially major active-duty ones, are huge economic engines for their communities. Congressmen understandably fight for them, even while backing the concept of cost-savings from systemwide downsizing.

Niagara Falls is not a major active-duty base. It is a Reserve and National Guard station, sharing the region's longest and heaviest-duty runways with Niagara Falls International Airport. But it does have major local impacts.

Although many of its jobs are part time, for example, it ranks as the second-largest employer in Niagara County, behind Delphi-Harrison and ahead of the Seneca Niagara Casino. Its 2,936 jobs - 717 of them full time -- generate \$50 million in payroll, and the base generates about \$20 million per year in contracts and another \$20 million in purchases, powering another \$25 million in payroll for jobs indirectly created and \$500,000 in local restaurant and business revenues from reservists attending drills, training or conferences.

Niagara's existing units are the 914th Airlift Wing, which has been hauling beans and bullets all over Middle East combat zones and is specially trained to support night-vision Special Forces operations; the strategically important 107th Air Refueling Wing; and the Army's helicopter-using 865th Combat Support Hospital.

All are highly skilled, and the talent of members who live in Western New York is a vital asset to the military. A strong case can be made that a new Coast Guard air station should be added to the mix, for northern border security and rescue work.

The Niagara Military Affairs Council also points out that the base has moved aggressively in recent years to consolidate facilities and replace outmoded structures in a \$75 million rebuilding program designed to save much more than that in the long term while enhancing unit operations.

Aside from the cleanup work at West Valley, the air station marks the biggest federal presence in an economically challenged region that hasn't had as much benefit from federal spending as other regions. Keeping this base is a vital concern for Western New York.

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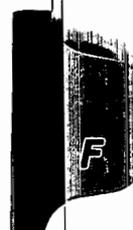
**2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
Suggested Talking Points for Defense Finance and Accounting Service Cleveland**

- 1. The Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) is very aware of the human impact that the suggestion to realign Defense Finance and Accounting Service, Cleveland (DFAS) could have, should the suggestion be enacted, and will perform a thorough, accurate, and transparent evaluation of the possible economic ramifications on the region.**
 - The Congress established the Commission to provide accountability to the public for the suggestions by the Department of Defense (DoD) to close or realign various bases. The Commission will ensure that Community input has been taken into account, and effects on the community have been fully considered.
 - While the economic effects that the realignment of DFAS Cleveland would have are important, the Commission will base its final decision, regarding the DFAS, almost entirely upon military value.
 - Public input is important to the Commission. The Community is encouraged to provide the Commission with any information that the Community feels may have been overlooked in DoD's analysis of DFAS Cleveland.

- 2. The Commission is a completely non-political, non-partisan, and independent entity, established by the Congress to perform an evaluation of DoD's suggestions to close or realign various military installations across the country.**
 - The Commission is entirely open and transparent and all materials used by, or submitted to, the Commission, with the exception of documents sensitive to national security, will be made publicly accessible.
 - The criteria upon which the Committee will base its decisions regarding DFAS Cleveland has been specifically outlined by law.

- 3. While DoD is responsible for determining the strategy for enabling our military to meet today's changing global threats, the sole task of the Commission is to evaluate DoD's suggestions to close or realign domestic military installations.**
 - DoD is conducting this round of base closures and realignments to ensure that our military is as streamlined as possible without having to support excess infrastructure, ineffective in meeting modern global threats. Contributing factors to DoD's strategic determination of military value is jointness, ease of mobility, and efficiency.
 - The Commission will evaluate whether DoD has properly evaluated the military value of DFAS Cleveland and ensure that this is indeed, militarily, the best decision, before it makes a suggestion that would so impact the community.

Facts compiled from included press clippings.



**2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
Suggested Qs & As for Defense Finance and Accounting Service Cleveland**

Q1. Cleveland, OH has been named "The Most Impoverished City," and yet the Department of Defense (DoD) has suggested realigning the Defense Finance and Accounting Service Cleveland (DEFAS), which would cut 1,028 jobs from the installation. The impact of this job-loss on the surrounding community could be great, as the community has already been struggling economically. Will the Commission take this into account as it evaluates DoD's suggestions?

A2. The Congress established the Commission as an independent entity to perform a thorough, objective, transparent, and accurate analysis of the suggestions by DoD to close or realign various military installations across the country, to ensure that DoD's suggestions were made in accordance with the law and after all critical factors had been taken into account. Although the Commission will base its final decision regarding DEFAS Cleveland upon the military value of the installation, the Commission will also take the economic, environmental and other effects that the realignment would have on the surrounding community into full account, as prescribed by law.

Q2. DFAS Cleveland handles the pay for the majority of the reserves, for active duty Navy, and for military retirees. The DFAS in Indiana, to which DoD has proposed many of these tasks be assigned, currently only handles the pay for active duty Army. Will the Commission evaluate whether the DFAS in Indiana has the capability to handle this and also whether the cost any construction necessary to enable it to properly manage these new tasks is not more than the move is worth?

A2. The Commission will perform a full evaluation of all the pertinent factors, as prescribed by statute. DoD is attempting to streamline and make our military as efficient as possible, so that the military does not have to bear the burden of excess infrastructure that is ineffective in meeting today's changing global threats. Although DoD creates the strategy to ensure that our military is well-prepared to meet these threats, the Congress established the Commission to ensure that the suggestions to close or realign various military installations across the country, were made in accordance with the law.

Q3. DFAS Cleveland plays a role in an integral part of what some call the "nerve center" for our troops. Would a realignment cause a significant disruption that would be difficult to bear during a time of war?

A3. The purpose behind this round of BRAC is to ensure that our military is as streamlined and efficient as possible in order to meet changing global threats. With this in mind, the Commission will evaluate the suggestions by DoD to close or realign various installations across the country, to ensure that DoD made its suggestions in accordance with the law and after taking all pertinent factors into account.

Q4. It would take an estimated \$29 million to realign DFAS Cleveland. Will the Commission take the costs of the realignment into consideration as it performs its evaluation?

A4. The criteria for how the evaluation is to be conducted has been specifically set out by law. The Commission will perform a full analysis before coming to its conclusions

A4. Continued

and although military value will be the most important consideration to the Commission, the Commission will also take into account the economic factors surrounding the suggested realignment.

Q5. Some have implied that the reason for the suggestion to realign DFAS Cleveland was the relatively high price of real estate and are making suggestions for other locations, within the city of Cleveland for the DFAS. One suggestion has been the new development called The Flats. Would the Commission consider this suggestion as having any merit towards saving the DFAS?

A5. The suggestion by DoD to realign DFAS Cleveland is part of an overall strategy to streamline our military and make our military as efficient as possible, without having to bear the burden of excess infrastructure that is ineffective in contributing towards the goal of meeting changing global threats. The sole task of the Commission, as established by the Congress, is to evaluate DoD's suggestions to ensure that the suggestions were made in accordance with the law and after a full evaluation of all critical factors had been made.

Q6. A U.S. Representative has claimed that OH was unfairly "targeted" in the BRAC process. Does political influence have any bearing in the Commission's evaluations?

A6. The Congress established the Commission as a completely non-partisan, non-political entity to independently evaluate the DoD's suggestions for base closures and realignments to ensure that those suggestions were made in accordance with the law. Part of the purpose of the Commission is to provide public accountability for the decisions to close or realign the various bases; the Commission is completely open and transparent and all material used by, or contributed to, the Commission, with the exception of material that is sensitive to national security, will be available to the public.

Q7. How can the public make the Commission aware of factors that it feels may have been overlooked by DoD in DoD's evaluation and suggestion to close DFAS Cleveland?

A7. Community input is not only welcomed by the Commission, it is vital to the process. The public is encouraged to contact the Commission through the Commission's official website: www.brac.gov.

Facts compiled from included press clippings.

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**DEFENSE FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING SERVICE
CLEVELAND
OHIO**

National News Articles

Local News Articles

Congressman calls plans to close Cleveland pay office wasteful

Congresswoman Tubbs Jones Joins Senator John Thune(R-SD), Rep. Stephanie Herseth (D-SD) in Urging Delay of Base Closures

Cleveland to lose 1,000 defense jobs; Pentagon has city's DFAS center in sights; High-paying work means millions to area; Leaders vow fight; chance of winning slim

Pending fight for DFAS jobs appears futile

Lawmakers bash move of military pay center

Editorial/Opinion Articles

Indefensible; LaTourette's careful financial analysis makes a clear case that shutting down Cleveland's DFAS office would be folly

National News Articles

Local News Articles

Congressman calls plans to close Cleveland pay office wasteful

Ohio News Network

June 16, 2006

CLEVELAND -- A Department of Defense plan to reduce or close a military payroll office in Cleveland should be considered financially wasteful, an Ohio congressman said in a letter Thursday.

The plan could result in the loss of about 1,200 jobs.

U.S. Rep. Steve LaTourette, R-Ohio, in a 16-page letter to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, argued that the military's plans for the Defense Finance and Accounting Service in Cleveland would be a "colossal waste of taxpayer money."

LaTourette said any savings would not occur until 2012, but it will cost \$29 million to shutter it.

All facilities on the military's hit list are fighting for their lives. The Base Realignment and Closure Commission is expected to send its decisions to President Bush by Sept. 8.

The Cleveland DFAS would keep only about 150 employees whose work is for military retirees and their survivors. They work for a contractor.

A member of the BRAC commission, retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd Newton, will visit Cleveland June 23 to meet with managers and employees and members of the Ohio congressional delegation. That meeting is closed to the public. A regional meeting with the commission is scheduled for June 27 in Buffalo.

BRAC spokesman Robert McCreary had no direct response to the LaTourette letter. "No decisions have been made anywhere," he said. "We're reviewing the (Department of Defense) recommendations for bases, installations and facilities across the country."

Congresswoman Tubbs Jones Joins Senator John Thune(R-SD), Rep. Stephanie Herseth (D-SD) in Urging Delay of Base Closures

PR Newswire US

May 26

WASHINGTON, May 26 /PRNewswire/ -- Today, Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones joined with Senator John Thune (R-SD) and Congresswoman Stephanie Herseth (D-SD) in urging the Department of Defense in delaying the current Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) round.

"In my district, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service of **Cleveland (DFAS-Cleveland)** is an integral part of the 'nerve center' that supports our troops on the ground in Iraq and worldwide. This site is the home of the Reserve Pay Center of Excellence which processes payroll for the Army, Air Force and Naval Reserves and National Guard. It has a track record of innovation and success that has been recognized on more than one occasion by the Pentagon.

"Currently, Reserve and National Guard soldiers make up 40 percent of the troops on the ground in Iraq. We feel it would be a disservice to our men and women in uniform if we disrupted the system that ensures they're paid on time. Our troops deserve the best this country has to offer."

"Should this BRAC round go through, **Cleveland** stands to lose 1,028 jobs should the **DFAS-Cleveland** Office close. Additionally, Northeast Ohio will lose another 50 jobs with the realignment of jobs at NASA Glenn Research Center. These job losses will have a tremendous economic impact on the City of **Cleveland**, which has been named "The Most Impoverished City" in the country.

"I support Senator Thune and Rep. Herseth in their efforts to delay these base closures. It is important that work to keep as many of these bases open. Not only is it important for our troops, but for the many civilians who work at these facilities."

Senator Thune and Rep. Herseth have proposed legislation that seeks to postpone the BRAC recommendations until one year after the last of these actions occurs: the recommendations of the Review of Overseas Military Facility Structure are implemented by the Secretary of Defense; a substantial number of American troops return from Iraq; the House and Senate Armed Services Committees receive the quadrennial defense review; implementation of the National Maritime Security Strategy; and implementation of the Homeland Defense and Civil Support directive. This legislation is supported by the National Guard Association of the United States, Adjutants General Association of the United States, and the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States

Rep. Tubbs Jones is a co-sponsor of H.R. 2427, Rep. Herseth's bill to postpone the 2005 round of defense base closures and realignments. Additionally, she is offering an amendment to the Military Quality of Life Appropriations Committee which would require that military utility value reports be released before implementing base closures.

Cleveland to lose 1,000 defense jobs; Pentagon has city's DFAS center in sights; High-paying work means millions to area; Leaders vow fight; chance of winning slim

Plain Dealer (Cleveland)

Becky Gaylord and Stephen Koff, Plain Dealer Reporters

May 14, 2005

Northeast Ohio would lose more than 1,000 high-paying jobs – with a payroll of more than \$50 million – under a plan unveiled Friday to trim military bases and offices in every state.

The jobs would come from the Defense Finance and Accounting Service office in downtown **Cleveland**, whose workers live across the region.

The office is on a list of Pentagon recommendations to close, shrink or move hundreds of operations to save \$50 billion over two decades.

Before President Bush and Congress consider the list, an independent panel will review it and hear appeals from affected communities.

News of the loss in **Cleveland**, which would strip about \$6.9 million from local city and county taxes, comes as the region reels from word earlier this week that NASA Glenn Research Center failed to lure 500 new jobs and a new administrative center to Brook Park.

Political and business leaders hope a new Flats development, which Scott Wolstein will announce Monday, could be a lifeline by offering lower rent to the Defense office. Based on savings from the lower rent, local leaders will appeal to the Pentagon to preserve the **Cleveland** operation.

DFAS pays higher rent in **Cleveland** than in three of the four other cities with major offices.

The **Cleveland** defense workers, who handle pay for the Navy and enlisted men and women in other services, make an average of \$54,000 a year. The jobs of another 1,000 Northeast Ohioans, such as contractors, depend on **DFAS**. The payroll for **DFAS** and the support workers is about \$128 million a year.

The job cuts, which would begin next year and conclude as early as January 2007, would cost **Cleveland** about \$1 million in income taxes.

Political and civic leaders vowed to fight the decision.

“We see the list, but we don’t accept it,” Mayor Jane Campbell said at a news conference. “We intend to stand up and turn it around.”

An appeal process will unfold over the next several months. In previous rounds of base closures, only one in 10 of the targets on the list was eventually spared, said lawyer Fred Nance, who heads a state-funded lobbying group called the **Cleveland** Defense Industry Alliance.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission will assess the military operations the Pentagon wants to shutter. Bush will review the panel's suggestions in the fall. He then can pass it to Congress, which can only accept or reject the list without changes. The steps are intended to insulate the process, to some degree, from politics.

Many states, including California and New York, would lose jobs.

Overall, Ohio would gain 241 jobs. The Columbus Defense Supply Center would get 1,758 jobs.

Rep. Dennis Kucinich, Democrat of **Cleveland**, charged the Bush administration with unfairly targeting Northeast Ohio.

"This administration has basically told Northern Ohio to go to hell," he said. "This community needs these jobs, and Washington is fully aware of that."

Fellow Democratic Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones, whose district includes the **DFAS** office, downplayed that suggestion: "I'm confident that this administration does not want to penalize Northeast Ohio."

Advocates for the **Cleveland** office said the rent charged by its landlord, an arm of the federal government, made the costs of keeping **DFAS** too steep.

"We believe the primary drawback to **Cleveland**'s competitive position was our rental costs, our real estate costs here in **Cleveland**," Nance said.

As Nance and his group lobbied to preserve the **DFAS** office, Pentagon rules prevented them from altering existing costs, such as rent.

The base rental fee for **DFAS Cleveland** is about \$14.30 per square foot a year. In Columbus, it's \$12.20; Denver, \$10; Kansas City, \$18; and Indianapolis, \$13.20.

Now that local leaders have made it clear they will appeal the decision, they can try to improve their position by finding lower-cost space.

Because of public subsidies, space in Wolstein's proposed development could cost \$12 per square foot, Sen. George Voinovich, Republican of Ohio, said Friday. And unlike the **Cleveland DFAS** office's current rent, which rises annually, in Wolstein's development, the price would not increase for several years.

Business leaders might cobble together another option, too. Nance declined to give details of the deal but said it would "dramatically decrease the real estate costs here in **Cleveland**."

If the **DFAS** jobs leave, the work that employees in **Cleveland** do could go to Denver, Columbus or Indianapolis, where the **DFAS** center is slated to gain about 3,400 jobs. Whether the **Cleveland** workers would be offered transfers is not clear.

A memo from **DFAS** Director Zack Gaddy, which was sent to employees through the agency's electronic communications system, gave no details about relocations or other changes.

Employees at the **Cleveland** office will get face-to-face briefings Monday from their acting director, Kenneth R. Sweitzer. He said in an interview that the Pentagon drew up the target list

without his involvement.

Also in jeopardy are 50 jobs at the NASA Glenn Research Center. Details about those jobs were unavailable.

Pending fight for DFAS jobs appears futile

Crain's Cleveland Business

Jay Miller

May 23, 2005

Community leaders who think they can make a good case to retain more than 1,000 Defense Finance and Accounting Service jobs in **Cleveland** should read the government's base closing report closely before they get their hopes up too high.

They seem to stand little chance of salvaging the jobs, even with the offer of a new building for **DFAS** in the Flats.

Tim Ford, executive director of the National Association of Installation Developers, an organization whose members redevelop military bases closed in earlier rounds of base closings, said the Defense Department's latest "Base Closure and Realignment Report" indicates that "force protection" - the military's term for security - was a key factor in the decision to move the jobs from **Cleveland**. Mr. Ford said it's logical for the government to move all **DFAS** operations to gated military bases, which have vacant space or land available for expansion.

"For cities like **Cleveland**, that's an unfortunate circumstance," Mr. Ford said.

The Defense Department announced May 13 it would eliminate 1,028 jobs from the Anthony J. Celebrezze Federal Building downtown as part of a nationwide effort to consolidate military operations to save money. It wants to move the military pay processing work done by those employees to **DFAS** centers near Columbus, Denver and Indianapolis. **Cleveland** would retain several hundred **DFAS** jobs to handle payments to retired military personnel.

The impression given by civic leaders and media reports locally is that the main factor in the decision to shrink **DFAS** in **Cleveland** is the higher cost of office space here compared to **DFAS** centers elsewhere. The Pentagon has not released the specific data it used to decide to shift jobs from **Cleveland**, but its initial report signals that the most important consideration was a desire to consolidate operations in the continental United States in locations with high "Anti-Terrorism/Force Protection" (AT/FP) rankings. That yardstick was created in the wake of the bombing 10 years ago of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

Secure ground favored

A 382-page addendum to the main base-closing document that focused on Headquarters and Support Activities - which includes **DFAS** - stated, "Dispersed forces and activities within the United States will be placed on more secure, military controlled sites." It also noted that using vacant space at existing military bases made the most sense.

"This rebasing offers opportunities to increase combat power, enhance security, and promote efficiency while generating significant savings," the report stated.

The three sites the Pentagon selected as **DFAS** centers all exceed **Cleveland** as secure facilities.

DFAS Columbus is on the grounds of the Defense Supply Center, a 575-acre installation that stores and distributes weapons parts. **DFAS** Denver is located at what is called the Buckley Annex, a part of the former Lowry Air Force Base, which also is home to the Colorado Air National Guard and the Air Reserve Personnel Center.

In Indiana, **DFAS** is located on the grounds of the former Fort Benjamin Harrison, which is just north of Indianapolis and closed in 1995. Its home on the site is the Emmett J. Bean Center. The Defense Department spent \$123 million refurbishing the Bean Center, which has 1.6 million square feet of space, making it the largest military office building after the Pentagon.

Keeping up the fight

The **Cleveland** Defense Industry Alliance, set up last year to lobby to keep the **DFAS** jobs, has vowed to fight the planned action and has said it will offer **DFAS** a new building on the East Bank of the Flats to try to meet the military's needs. Attorney Fred Nance, who heads the privately funded alliance, said the group will flesh out its strategy within a month.

The Pentagon's choices for base closings are not the final word. That belongs to the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission, an independent panel, which will review the Defense Department's base-closing plan and can make changes before it makes a final recommendation this fall to President Bush.

Mr. Nance said the Pentagon did not consider the economic impact on local communities, which the Base Realignment and Closure Commission can do. It will hold hearings across the country in the months ahead to allow communities to make their cases.

But even in the best of circumstances, the chance of turning around the Pentagon's decision is slim. In earlier rounds of base closings, the commissions supported the Pentagon 85% of the time.

Alternate site falls flat

The Flats site the local defense alliance is offering has its own security issues. The property is adjacent to the Flats East Bank Neighborhood redevelopment project unveiled last week by developer Scott Wolstein.

A local security consultant, James Clark, managing partner of Alderson Clark Security Consultants of Bay Village, questions the site's viability.

"You can secure anything if you want for the right number of dollars and with the right infrastructure and law enforcement support," he said. "But (this site) doesn't appear well thought out."

Mr. Clark noted that railroad tracks, which criss-cross the site, are especially vulnerable to sabotage.

He also was struck by what appeared to be a hasty decision.

"If one were to sit down and look for an appropriate site for such a facility, one would think they would want to do research on a number of sites and see which would best suit the security (needs)," he said.

Lawmakers bash move of military pay center

Plain Dealer
Stephen Koff
June 17, 2005

Washington — U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan could find their military paychecks delayed, or could run into other pay snags, if the Pentagon moves payroll operations from **Cleveland** to Indianapolis, Congress members from Ohio say.

"Our soldiers, reservists and retirees better cross their fingers and hope they continue to get paid on time," Rep. Steve LaTourette said Thursday at a Capitol Hill news conference.

It was the latest defensive move by LaTourette, a Republican from Concord Township, and **Cleveland** Democrats Dennis Kucinich and Stephanie Tubbs Jones in trying to stop the Department of Defense from cutting 1,200 jobs from downtown **Cleveland**.

The job losses would be devastating for **Cleveland**, which contradicts the Pentagon's claim that it took economic impact into consideration, Kucinich said.

"Anybody with an ounce of sense could look at **Cleveland** and say, 'They could not afford to lose 1,100 jobs,'" Tubbs Jones said.

The Pentagon wants to take duties from the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, or **DFAS**, operation in **Cleveland** and move them to Columbus, Indianapolis and Denver. The proposal is part of a sweeping set of base closure recommendations affecting many states.

Cleveland's DFAS center processes pay for military retirees and handles active duty pay for the Navy, plus reserve pay for all branches but the Marines. LaTourette said that Indianapolis would be likely to get all the payroll jobs. The Indianapolis **DFAS** office now handles pay only for active-duty Army.

The consolidation "is a disaster waiting to happen," LaTourette said.

LaTourette also cited new figures showing that the government lacks the space in Indianapolis to absorb the 3,500 new jobs that might go there.

He got the figures from the General Services Administration, which manages government property and serves as **DFAS'** landlord.

"Moving **DFAS** military payroll functions to Indianapolis will either require a new building or renovation of another building, and I can't even fathom how high those costs will be," he said.

The Pentagon is using vastly different numbers that show ample space is available. Defense spokesman Glenn Flood said the numbers were provided by **DFAS**.

Asked about the difference, LaTourette said, "I think I'm going to trust the landlord to know how many square feet he or she has available in Indianapolis."

The Ohio lawmakers, joined by Rep. Sherwood Boehlert, a New York Republican with his own **DFAS** issues, said part of their problem has been getting accurate and timely information that shows the Pentagon's rationale.

"It's like pulling teeth to get information," Boehlert said.

Whichever set of figures is accurate, the Pentagon won't have the last word. The independent Base Realignment and Closure Commission will hold hearings, visit each site and evaluate all available data before making its own recommendation to President Bush, commission spokesmen said.

Kucinich noted another case in which **DFAS** figures proved to be way off. It sought competitive bids to see whether privatizing part of its operations would save money, and awarded a contract to a vendor whose proposal seemed to reflect savings.

But government audits, prompted by Kucinich's prodding, showed that **DFAS** badly mismanaged the bid process — and that privatization was going to cost taxpayers an extra \$31 million.

Military retirees complained after privatization that they weren't getting their checks on time.

DFAS still refused to reverse the contract award.

Editorial/Opinion Articles

Indefensible; LaTourette's careful financial analysis makes a clear case that shutting down Cleveland's DFAS office would be folly

The Plain Dealer

June 13, 2005

Will the reorganization of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service ultimately save taxpayers more than a billion dollars, as the Pentagon claims? Or would it amount to just another expensive reshuffling of the people who mind the payrolls of our active and retired military personnel?

That's one of the questions raised by Rep. Steve LaTourette, the Concord Township Republican, who rejects the Defense Department bean-counters' contention that the award-winning **Cleveland DFAS** office (among dozens of others) was not economically justifiable. His thoroughly researched answer supplies several good arguments for those who say that not only should the **Cleveland** operation be maintained, but that **DFAS** itself should be exempted from this round of base closing recommendations.

LaTourette examined the Defense Department proposal to effectively close the **Cleveland DFAS** office, as well as close, consolidate and realign dozens of other **DFAS** operations, and concluded

that the Pentagon plan amounts to a giant shell game. Rather than saving money, it would result more likely in the disruption of the military payroll system and the pointless economic upheaval of dozens of American communities.

The Pentagon projects that spending more than \$282 million on realignment — \$29 million just to shift jobs and people away from **Cleveland** — will return a savings of \$1.3 billion during the next 20 years. While the dollar figure this time is considerably smaller, the concept echoes what the Defense Department said the last time it played jackstraws with so many peoples' lives and livelihoods.

That was 1995, when, over the objections of Congress and the then-General Accounting Office, the Pentagon "consolidated" the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (**DFAS**) in part by adding 20 small offices scattered around the country. These offices would mean savings of perhaps \$9 billion over 20 years, the leaders promised.

Ten years now have passed. Taxpayers have shelled out more than \$170 million just to make the smaller **DFAS** offices habitable. And now they are to be shuttered, while the more than 5,000 Americans who work in them are to be forced to relocate or just set adrift. The projected savings? Nowhere to be found.

In his 15-page letter to the chairman of the Base Realignment and Closing Commission, supported by 143 footnoted citations, LaTourette has laid out solid economic arguments for rejecting not only the **Cleveland** closure, but the Pentagon's entire approach to its critical **DFAS** operations. From Limestone, Maine, to Kansas City, the proposed closures and relocations would cost millions, with any realistic hope for savings pushed far into the future.

In his studied, documented approach, LaTourette has performed a service not only for the **Cleveland DFAS** office — which is not even in his district — but for similarly situated communities across the country. That, we would submit, is the proper way for a lawmaker to approach the situation.

It may be politically popular to demagogue that "this administration has basically told northern Ohio to go to hell," as Rep. Dennis Kucinich, the **Cleveland** Democrat, did the morning the closures were announced. But invective avails little; cogent arguments win cases. LaTourette has supplied those arguments. Now, this community, along with all the others so threatened, must press the case.



2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
Suggested Talking Points for Defense Finance and Accounting Service Rome

- 1. The Congress established the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) to evaluate the suggestions, made by the Department of Defense (DoD), to close or realign various military installations across the country. The process followed by the Commission has been specifically outlined by law and is completely transparent to the public.**
 - The Commission will perform a full evaluation, as prescribed by statute, before reaching its conclusion regarding DFAS Rome.
 - While military value is the preeminent consideration of the Commission, the Commission will also consider the economic, environmental, and other effects that the suggestion to close DFAS Rome would have on the surrounding community.
 - The Commission is aware of the cost of making the changes proposed by DoD, consolidating the DFAS installations into 3 locations, and will take the economic ramifications of this decision into full account, while basing the Commission's final decision almost entirely upon military value.
 - The Commission is aware of the record of performance had by DFAS Rome and will take this into account as it evaluates DoD's decision to close the installation as a part of DoD's strategy for ensuring that our military is as streamlined as possible to meet changing global threats.

- 2. The Commission is keenly aware of the human impact that the suggestion by DoD to close DFAS Rome would have, should the suggestion be enacted.**
 - The Commission is aware of the effects of the potential job loss, should DoD's suggestion to close the DFAS be enacted, and will take these into full consideration, while basing its final decision almost entirely upon military value.
 - The Commission is aware that the closure of DFAS Rome jeopardizes the installation's \$192,000 contract with ARC, Oneida – Lewis Chapter, which facilitates employment for the disabled, and that the installation currently employs around five people with disabilities. While the effect on communities that these decisions could have is very important to the Commission, the factors to be taken into account have been set forth by law and the Commission will hold military value as its most important consideration.

- 3. The Commission is entirely non-partisan and non-political in nature.**
 - The factors to be considered by the Commission, as well as the process to be followed, have been specifically set forth by law.
 - The Congress established the Commission as an independent entity to evaluate the suggestions made by DoD to close or realign various military installations across the country, and to ensure that those suggestions were made in keeping with the law and after all pertinent factors were taken into account.
 - The Commission was established partly to serve as a source of public accountability and after conducting a thorough, transparent and open evaluation, will base its final decision almost entirely upon military value.

Facts taken from included press clippings.



**2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
Suggested Qs and As for Defense Finance and Accounting Service Rome**

Q1. Jobs from American Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) installations, which were closed, in Europe, were sent to DFAS Rome, New York because of the DEFAS' outstanding performance. In light of this, does it make sense to now close the installation?

A1. The Congress established the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) as an independent entity to evaluate whether the Department of Defense's (DoD) suggestions to close or realign various installations were made in accordance with the law and after all critical factors had been taken into account. While DoD creates the strategy to ensure that our military is as streamlined and as efficient as possible to meet changing global threats, the Commission's sole task is to evaluate DoD's suggested base closures or realignments. The Commission will base its decision almost entirely upon the military value of the installation, which--by DoD's determination of this--largely includes considerations of jointness, ease of mobility, and efficiency. The overall plan by DoD is to eliminate excess infrastructure which is ineffective in meeting modern global threats. The Commission will perform a full evaluation before coming to its conclusion regarding DFAS Rome.

Q2. DFAS Rome has a history of success. It was opened in 1995 on the former Griffis Air Force Base site, and originally employed only 35 people. While other DFAS installations were closed in 1995, DFAS Rome grew. By 1996, it had grown to 254 employees and had need of 200 more. By the end of 1997, the DEFAS had 306 employees, of which 270 were civilian, and then in the Summer of 2000, had 390. Additionally, the installation just had a \$10 million renovation. The installation handles finances for the Military Academy at West Point, Army Nuclear and Chemical Agency, Defense Acquisitions University, Army Contract Agency, and Army Forts Belvoir, AP Hill, and Meade. Will the Commission take this background of performance into account?

A2. The Commission will make a full evaluation, as prescribed by statute, before coming to its conclusion regarding DFAS Rome. The Commission understands that most, if not all, military installations across the country have made significant contributions to the defense of the U.S., the Commission is basing its conclusions almost entirely upon the current military value of the installation and its contribution to meeting modern global threats.

Q3. Close to 75% of the employees at DFAS Rome are technicians, earning an income close to \$25,000 a year. The remaining 25% have an income of close to \$40,000 annually. Additionally, the closure of the installation would jeopardize a \$192,000 contract with ARC, Oneida-Lewis Chapter, through which the installation employs about 5 people with disabilities. Will the Commission take into account the effect that the closure would have on the community, before reaching its conclusion?

A3. The Commission is very aware of the human impact that the suggestion to close an installation could have, should the suggestion be enacted. Please be assured that the

A3. Continued

Commission will perform a full evaluation, as prescribed by law, in a transparent and open manner before reaching its conclusion regarding DFAS Rome.

Q4. The costs of closing DFAS Rome and combining DFAS installations across the country appear large. It would cost approximately \$8 million to close DFAS Rome, with no financial savings until 2009. Overall, it would cost DoD approximately \$77 million to consolidate the DFAS installations across the country into three locations: Indianapolis, Denver, and Columbus. Will the Commission take the cost of enacting the DoD's suggested closures and realignments into account, prior to making its conclusions regarding DFAS Rome?

A4. The Commission will take all pertinent factors into consideration, as prescribed by law. While military value is the preeminent consideration, the Commission will also take other factors, such as the economic and environmental impact on the local communities, into full account.

Q5. Some have claimed that the suggestions to close or realign installations in Ohio, were political in motive. Does political influence have any sway on the Commission?

A5. The Commission is an entirely non-partisan, non-political entity, established by Congress to perform an independent evaluation of the suggestions by DoD to close or realign various bases across the country, and through that, provide accountability to the public for those decisions. The Commission will follow a completely open and transparent process, as prescribed by law.

Q6. How can members of the local community make the Commission aware of their concerns?

A6. The BRAC Commission welcomes public input; it is a vital part of the Commission's process of evaluation. Members of the community are encouraged to contact the Commission with any factors that they feel were overlooked by DoD in the DoD's evaluation and suggestions.

Facts compiled from included press clippings.



DEFENSE FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING SERVICE ROME NEW YORK

National News Articles

Local News Articles

Boehlert: \$8M cost to close DFAS

DFAS workers rally

Officials forming DFAS plan

Local officials: It's not over for DFAS employees

Relief, resolve in Rome

Community Contributors share their thoughts

Closing Rome site would hurt ARC workers

DFAS saw jobs grow steadily

Local colleges have strong ties to lab

Editorial/Opinion Articles

National News Articles

Local News Articles

Boehlert: \$8M cost to close DFAS

Rome Sentinel

June 17, 2005

The Pentagon's proposal to close Rome's Defense Finance and Accounting Service center, resulting in the loss of nearly 400 jobs, was bashed by Rep. Sherwood L. Boehlert on Thursday. "It is the wrong thing to do and it's based on incomplete information," said Boehlert, R-24, New Hartford. "DFAS Rome is home to over 380 jobs, and an exemplary record of service that exceeds most other DFAS facilities in all measurable categories."

He observed that getting military officials to offer supporting data and information "is sometimes like pulling teeth."

His remarks at a news conference in Washington came one week before a member of the commission reviewing the Pentagon's recommendations for military installation closures and consolidations visits Rome DFAS to learn more about its operations. Commissioner Lloyd Newton, a retired Air Force general member of the commission, is due to arrive at DFAS around 7:30 a.m. June 22 and is expected to be at Griffiss most of the morning.

A regional hearing of the commission will be held five days later in Buffalo, near the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, which is scheduled for closure. There will be speakers there to support keeping DFAS Rome open. Among those allotted time to speak are Gov. George E. Pataki and New York's senators, Charles E. Schumer and Hillary Rodham Clinton.

After the news conference Boehlert said the Pentagon estimates it will cost more than \$8 million to close the Rome center with no actual savings until fiscal year 2009. However, by 2010, the annual savings from closing the Rome center will be an estimated \$1.4 million.

Overall, the Defense Department proposes to spend more than \$77 million to consolidate the DFAS operations nationwide.

The Department of Defense wants to combine all the DFAS payroll and accounting work now done at more than 20 offices around the country into three large centers in Indianapolis, Denver and Columbus, Ohio. The Rome center disbursed nearly \$3 billion and did accounting for almost \$29 billion for 16 Army customers last year.

After it completes its review of the recommendations released by the Pentagon May 13, the commission will submit its list of proposed closings and realignments to President George W. Bush by Sept. 8. The panel can make additions or deletions to the Pentagon's recommendations although in past rounds of base closings about 85 percent of the initial proposals have been accepted by the commission.

"The DoD (Department of Defense) has made a significant investment of more than \$10 million in the Rome DFAS facility, and with a 50-year no cost building lease, seamless technological integration, top-notch record of service and capacity for additional jobs, it only makes sense to keep our facility up and running," said Boehlert. "I will continue to make the argument that Rome, which has excess physical plant capacity, should be considered for additional work."

The Rome center's customers include the Military Academy at West Point, Army Nuclear and Chemical Agency, Defense Acquisition University, Army Contract Agency, and Army forts, like Belvoir and AP Hill, both in Virginia, and Meade in Maryland.

Also at the news conference were three representatives from Ohio who oppose closing the DFAS office in Cleveland. More than 1,200 jobs are at stake in Cleveland.

"We've got the Pentagon playing musical chairs, not just with the jobs at DFAS, but with the lives of the people that work there," Rep. Dennis Kucinich said.

Rome DFAS isn't the only military installation at Griffiss targeted in the Pentagon's recommendations.

It proposes to move sensors work from Rome Lab to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. The shift would cost 137 jobs locally.

DFAS workers rally

Observer-Dispatch

Elizabeth Cooper

May 28, 2005

ROME - JoAnn Freeland, who gave birth 10 weeks ago, doesn't want to lose her job at the Defense Finance and Accounting Service.

And the stress isn't just affecting her.

"My 5-year-old told me last night he didn't want to move," she said. "I didn't think he really understood."

Freeland was among about 175 DFAS employees at a rally outside their office at Griffiss Business and Technology Park Friday morning. DFAS, with its 380 jobs, was recommended for closure in the Defense Department's Base Realignment and Closure list released May 13. The Rome Air Force Research Lab also is slated to lose 130 jobs.

At the rally, U.S. Rep. Sherwood Boehlert, R-New Hartford, said he was working with representatives from other districts with DFAS centers to devise a way to convince the BRAC commission not to follow a plan to consolidate 21 smaller facilities into three "mega-centers."

"The chairman of the (House) armed Services Committee is slated to lose a DFAS," Boehlert said of U.S. Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-California. "The fact of the matter is a lot of locations are impacted."

Boehlert and Ed Abounader, president of DFAS-Rome Local 201 of the American Federation of Government Employees, said the unions and government officials at the DFAS facilities in Rome and Limestone, Maine, are spearheading the effort.

Limestone is similar in size and also has supportive local government and development officials, Abounader said, noting that some of the DFAS sites slated for closure have fewer than 100 employees.

"I don't know if they have the resources and coordination we have here," Abounader said after the rally. "They're just flying on their own."

Boehlert and Abounader were joined at the rally by Assemblywoman RoAnn Destito, D-Rome, Oneida County Executive Joseph A. Griffo and Rome Mayor James Brown. Steve DiMeo, who is spearheading the effort to protect DFAS through his office at Griffiss Local Development Corp., also spoke.

All vowed to do everything in their power to protect DFAS.

And Freeland and her colleagues say they welcome the help.

"I want to stay here because of my family," Freeland said. "Especially my 5-year-old and my infant, so they can know their roots and be near their grandparents."

Bush backs BRAC plan, 8A

TREVOR KAPRALOS / Observer-Dispatch

Accounting Technician Michelle Emlin of Clinton kisses her daughter Rebekah Mauzy, 10, during a rally in support of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service at the Griffiss Business and Technology Park Friday morning in Rome.

TREVOR KAPRALOS / Observer-Dispatch

An employee from the Defense Finance and Accounting Service wears a bracelet during the Friday rally. The bracelet reads: "Save DFAS-Rome."

Officials forming DFAS plan

Observer-Dispatch
Elizabeth Cooper
May 14, 2005

ROME - Until Friday, local officials knew they might be in for a fight, they just didn't know

exactly what that fight would be.

Now they are gearing up to defend Rome's Defense Finance and Accounting Service, its 380 jobs, and the \$19 million economic impact it represents.

"I just want you to know the fight isn't over," U.S. Rep. Sherwood Boehlert told a gathering of almost the entire DFAS-Rome staff Friday morning shortly after the Pentagon's recommendations came out.

The recommendations propose consolidating about 19 similar sites across the country into three "mega-centers." Currently there are five mega-centers, but two of those will be closed as well.

Boehlert, R-New Hartford, and others involved in the area's anti-BRAC efforts said they would immediately start analyzing the numbers to find any flaws in the financial reasoning and look for more scenarios that could benefit DFAS-Rome.

"The way we've always tried to win is to show why it won't work," Oneida County Executive Joseph A. Griffo said.

As they begin to better understand the Pentagon's numbers, they will be able to construct a more detailed strategy, the officials said.

"The only way to look at that one is to look at it from a national perspective," said Steven J. DiMeo, who has been coordinating the area's anti-BRAC efforts from his office at Griffiss Local Development Corp. "Not so much that there shouldn't be consolidation, but whether the recommendations as presented is the best way to do it."

He said it's likely some consolidation would save money for the Defense Department, but whether completely eradicating the smaller facilities was the best plan isn't yet clear.

"I don't know if there is something in between that," he said.

At a news conference presented by the Griffiss team, U.S. Senators Hillary Clinton and Charles Schumer said they would work to save DFAS, too.

"We will make alliances with other places where DFAS's are closing," Schumer said.

Boehlert said DFAS-Rome has a good reputation. Its facility underwent a \$10 million renovation in 1997, and was recently expanded to absorb operations from DFAS operations in Europe.

But some acknowledged that it could be difficult to fight the DFAS consolidation plan because of its national scope and that none of facilities similar to Rome's had been spared.

"Any time you lose a job, it's a concern for me," Griffo said. "(But) we have to be realistic in this fight."

DEFENSE FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING SERVICE

325 Brooks Road, Rome, NY

Director: Roy Higgins

Employees: 380

E DFAS provides finance services such as providing temporary duty pay, vendor pay, accounting data processing and reports production and system support to the U.S. Army.

E Defense Finance and Accounting Service in Rome opened in April 1995, as part of the Pentagon's consolidation of service finance and accounting operations.

E About 75 percent of the work force is classified as accounting technicians who earn an average of \$25,000 annually. The other 25 percent earn an average of \$40,000, Director Roy Higgins said.

TREVOR KAPRALOS / Observer-Dispatch

Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., and Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., applaud Rep. Sherwood Boehlert, R-New Hartford, after he spoke Friday morning about defending jobs at the at the Griffiss Business and Technology Park in Rome.

Local officials: It's not over for DFAS employees

Observer-Dispatch
Elizabeth Cooper
May 17, 2005

ROME - Local officials say they don't want to talk about how they'll help any displaced Defense Finance and Accounting Service employees until they're sure the jobs will be leaving.

"As far as we're concerned, those jobs are going to be fought for," Oneida County Executive Joseph A. Griffo said. "(But) we have the resources in place for transitional assistance, if that indeed needs to be the case."

After Friday's announcement that the **DFAS** unit in **Rome** may be moved as part of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure process, Griffo and other local officials vowed they would do everything they could to keep the facility - and the roughly 380 jobs it represents - in the Mohawk Valley.

And **DFAS** workers are hoping they're able to do that. Chris Russo of Utica doesn't want to leave the area, and he's hoping he won't have to.

"Personally, I'm going to try to hang on and see what happens," he said. "I have four kids, first of all, and I have an obligation to be there for them."

His children don't live with him, but the 34-year-old father said he wants to be nearby to watch them grow up and be part of their lives. If he has to move, he won't go too far, because he'd want to come back regularly for weekends, and if there were ever an emergency, he'd want to be able to be by their sides as fast as possible.

The BRAC Commission has until Sept. 8 to make changes to the Defense Department's

recommendations, and local officials say they will lobby the commission hard to drop a plan that would consolidate 19 **DFAS** locations into three "mega centers" in Ohio, Colorado and Indiana.

And that's why they're not ready to offer details about what they'll do for the **DFAS** employees if they are displaced.

"I think the (job) opportunities will be there, but before we lay those out, we should let the battle go to the BRAC Commission," Oneida County Work Force Development Director David Mathis said.

Assemblywoman RoAnn Destito, D-Rome, agreed.

"Every job is important to us," she said, adding the Griffiss anti-BRAC team would review available documents relating to the **DFAS** decision to find ways to attack it.

Griffo, Destito and Mathis said the county has dealt with job loss before and already has a team in place to help workers find other employment if the time comes.

Steven J. DiMeo, president of Mohawk Valley EDGE, whose office at Griffiss Local Development Corp. has been the nerve center of the local anti-BRAC effort, and Empire State Development Corp. Vice President and Regional Director Anthony Picente, have headed to Washington D.C., to sit in on three days of BRAC hearings that will explain the rationale for many of the Defense Department's recommendations. Griffo said information they learn there could help in the **DFAS** fight.

Ed Abounader, president of **DFAS-Rome** Local 201 of the American Federation of Government Employees, said he would wait to see what happens.

"We have a chance to fight and we're going to," he said.

Abounader added that the union has access to data about **DFAS**, and he'll use that to help in the fight.

If the closing stands, though, **DFAS** has made a commitment to place the displaced workers at one of the new mega centers. But statistics show that in such instances, just 10 percent of workers take employers up on offers of transfers, Abounader said. The **DFAS** employees' average age is 49, and most have ties to the Mohawk Valley. Abounader, 53, himself is a lifelong Utica resident.

Additionally, he said, the military will help personnel who lose their jobs because of the BRAC process get new ones. But that help will come only after the BRAC list is finalized, which won't happen until later in the year, according to the Defense Department's schedule.

Even if **DFAS** is on the final list, it's still not known when the facility would close.

"The agency hasn't gotten to that timeframe point yet," said local **DFAS** Director Roy Higgins.

All BRAC-stipulated closures and consolidations must be completed by 2011, but Higgins said **DFAS** would likely move faster than that.

But Higgins said he thinks the time for employees to make job-related decisions hasn't come yet.

"Everyone has to analyze their personal situations and prioritize what's important to them and make the decision," Higgins said.

If they want to stay in the area, there are businesses that need people with their skills, Mathis said.

"I think you have a number of financial institutions, insurance companies and a number of higher education institutions," Mathis said. "They all have accounting functions."

For example, Utica National Insurance Group, with headquarters in New Hartford, has several departments that could be ideal for workers with accounting, finance and information technology experience, said Michael Austin, that company's vice president of corporate communications.

"Certainly anybody that is displaced from the results of the base closing commission is welcome to apply here," he said.

As for Russo, he said he'll cross that bridge when he comes to it.

"It's out of my control, I can't worry about it," he said. "I'd hate to see it go, (but) it's part of life. You've got to roll with it."

Relief, resolve in Rome

Observer-Dispatch

Elizabeth Cooper and Tim Blydenburgh

May 14, 2005

ROME - The Pentagon dealt a blow to the Mohawk Valley Friday - nearly 520 jobs are in jeopardy - but it could have been more painful.

A decade-long effort to protect the Air Force Research Lab in **Rome** largely paid off, but the 10-year-old Defense Finance and Accounting Service center could close under this year's Base Realignment and Closure round.

Workers at the **DFAS** center were somber as they learned details.

"You're looking at people going through the same emotions as a death," said Keith Watkins, an eight-year **DFAS** employee.

Many workers at the finance center have strong ties to the Mohawk Valley or are in a position when they would be reluctant to relocate. Others, with mortgages and children's college costs to worry about, fear a drop in pay if the center closes.

About 75 percent of the finance center's work force are accounting technicians earning an average of \$25,000 annually. The other 25 percent earn an average of \$40,000, Director Roy Higgins said.

Friday's announcement by the Pentagon capped a whirlwind period of suspense and anxiety for hundreds of local workers, their advocates and residents in and around **Rome**. News of the Pentagon's proposals generated both relief related to **Rome** lab's preservation and resolve tied to

hopes that **DFAS** can be saved.

The key developments:

Rome lab would lose 137 workers, who would move to Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio.

DFAS would be closed and consolidated into a "mega-center" somewhere else in the U.S. About 380 local jobs are affected. A closing date isn't certain.

The third military site, Northeast Air Defense Sector, would remain intact. More than 300 work at the site.

"It's kind of mixed," Oneida County Executive Joseph A. Griffo said after learning the news. "We had hoped for better, but it could have been worse."

Elected leaders, including New York's senators, will wage a campaign to overturn the pending **Rome** moves, which are among many announced by the Pentagon and designed for a more efficient and effective military. The BRAC commission will review the suggestions and has until Sept. 8 to give its recommendations to President Bush.

"I want to say to the people at **DFAS**: We will fight for you," said U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., at a news conference Friday morning at the Griffiss Business and Technology Park's Griffiss Institute. He said supporters must stay vigilant.

"There is still wheeling and dealing, but I have to say, we're close to the goal line with regard to **Rome** lab," Schumer said.

Schumer and U.S. Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., joined several other elected and civic leaders shortly after the information was available.

At 9:15 a.m., the gathering of local officials received an e-mail containing the list, and the room was silent as they scrolled through the list looking for the local installations.

"**DFAS** is closed," Assemblywoman RoAnn Destito, D-**Rome**, said, and then there was more silence as they continued to scan the list for news of **Rome** lab.

The lab has been the focus of the area's anti-BRAC efforts. Its 820 military jobs and the 600 civilian contractor jobs linked to it are vital to the regional economy, and its presence key to efforts to attract technology businesses to the area. Almost 700 jobs would remain.

In the past two weeks, officials said they have been fighting to halt attempts by Hanscom Air Force Base in Massachusetts to land all or part of it.

The **Rome DFAS** is one of about 20 such sites across the country. If the move does happen, workers will be offered the chance to go to one of the mega-centers, Higgins said.

U.S. Rep. Sherwood Boehlert expressed consternation over the plan, saying the Air Force had recently expanded **Rome's DFAS** site. He said he and the others will look closely at why the decision had been made to shut it.

"A little over a year ago, **DFAS** closed up in Europe and brought the bulk (of **DFAS** jobs) back to

the U.S. The jobs that came back to the U.S. - guess where the bulk of them went?" he said, noting that **Rome** had been the choice, "because of the outstanding performance, customer satisfaction and low turnover rate of a very good quality work force. What changed? I'm not sure and that's going to get my attention."

Elected leaders said they would look at the numbers and the philosophy behind the closing and try to convince the BRAC commission to change its mind.

"We'll make the case that if they're going to consolidate, why not consolidate in **Rome**?" Sen. Clinton said.

Community Contributors share their thoughts

Observer-Dispatch

May 14, 2005

We asked our Community Contributors to share their thoughts on the BRAC Commission decision to spare NEADS and **Rome** Lab, but close the Defense Finance and Accounting Service facility in **Rome**. Here's what they had to say:

We'll feel the absence of any jobs lost

The impact of BRAC's decision today is significant. To lose 430 jobs is horrifying, and hopefully those that are directly affected are able to remain in our area and find comparable employment.

The **Rome** community itself fared well, considering the amount of jobs and friends we could have lost. The people who work at NEADS, Defense Finance and Accounting Service (**DFAS**) and the lab, as well as their families, have become an integral part of our community. When one is lost, we all feel their absence considerably.

I congratulate NEADS and the lab on being somewhat spared by this morning's announcement. I also congratulate the **Rome** community and its leaders for their efforts in preserving what we still have. We should all look ahead to the future of our area, and continue its modernization and growth.

Nancie McClendon lives in **Rome**.

We've learned nothing is completely secure

Nothing is really secure until the final decisions are made in the fall. Defending what is to stay from the attacks of other communities in the next several months should be the prime mission.

Massachusetts Sen. Ted Kennedy was able to keep Hanscom open and even increase its manpower. This does not bode well for **Rome** lab. Our politicians are now on the hot seat.

Joe Sallustio lives in **Rome**

We must focus on private-sector growth

Over the years, millions of taxpayer dollars have been invested in the Griffiss site, yet during that time there has been a continual cycle of boom and bust that has alternately fueled and impeded the area's growth.

With all the money that's been spent, one would expect the value of the facility to increase over the long term, and that may be true of the infrastructure. But there is also value in communities, and when these cycles occur, the human and economic disruption can be significant and costly. Dependent businesses suffer, local governments lose tax revenue and families are separated or forced start their lives over. Is this in the best interests of all concerned? One has to wonder if these changes are truly driven by efficiency and not politics.

The **Rome** Defense Finance and Accounting Service (**DFAS**) handles reimbursements for military travel and military contractors. It would seem that demand would be up in both of those areas, given the huge increase in military activity and reconstruction we've seen under the current administration. We've spent a couple hundred billion (off-budget) dollars in Iraq and Afghanistan just in the last two years. But 14 **DFAS** offices are to be closed around the country, four of them in California. It will be interesting to see how they justify this. Maybe the work is being outsourced to Halliburton!

Mesa, Arizona lost 100 percent of its Air Force Research Lab, so I guess we're lucky that **Rome** lab is losing "only" 130 of its 800 jobs. But I'm sure those 130 people don't feel so lucky. Given the leading-edge work being done at **Rome** lab, which is so critical to the war on terror, one would think that this too would be a growth area.

Efficiency is a good thing. But these closings won't decrease the defense budget, and our taxes won't be going down because of it either. I'm sure that we can count on our representatives in Congress to put up a good fight to save these jobs, but the long-term solution is to focus on robust, private-sector employment that is dependent on our local strengths (natural resources, work ethic, communications infrastructure, etc.) and is not subject to the whims of the federal government.

C. Darryl Mattison lives in Utica.

A lot of government money spent lobbying

It is hard to see this happen even if the impact appears to not be as deep as last time. The ironies abound as new construction goes on for the Armory in Utica - the lines of budget are so convoluted that one hand does not know, or care, about the other.

How is it that private, local, state and federal money goes to lobby federal, state and local government and agencies to add or delete or bolster programs - ours included?

The Osbornes live in Ilion.

In this fight, we will need a united front

The **Rome** lab is an integral part of the Griffiss Local Development Corp.'s plans for Griffiss Business and Technology Park.

We have seen homegrown companies like Dolphin Technology prosper. BAE, a multinational

company, has started an operation and continues to grow and expand. Griffiss Institute would not exist if there was no **Rome** labs.

The very idea of a lab is wonderful. If we lost it, we would lose more than existing jobs. We would lose opportunities for future growth.

So this is a time to celebrate. The lab isn't on the list, but **DFAS** is. And in the scheme of things you could almost say it falls into the category of acceptable losses. If we are going to lose something, better to lose something that is not as integral to the community than the lab.

Acceptable losses. A very cold phrase. If you work at **DFAS** and you have to pay the mortgage or send kids to college, it's a hard kick to the gut. We are a small community. There are no acceptable losses.

But this fight is different from others. **DFAS** is a small operation that is part of a larger cut. This is not about central New York. This fight is more like a class action lawsuit. We have to partner with the other communities affected and present a united front.

There are good reasons to eliminate large facilities such as air bases and large port facilities. However, I am not sure that the same logic applies to back-office operations such as **DFAS**. Cities grew larger in the past because there was a need for office facilities to operate in centralized locations. Today, we have modern communications and computers. A lot of the need for such large facilities has disappeared. I think this maybe one of those things that initially looks good on paper but, when you look at the costs of moving and retraining people, is not a good idea.

We really have to look at this BRAC process like a football game. It is now halftime. Facilities that are not on the list are like teams which have substantial leads and those who are on the list are substantially behind.

But there is another half to be played. And just because you are substantially ahead or behind, we can not predict that this is how the game will end. We can not be complacent because the lab is not on the list. We will have to be vigilant. We can not be discouraged because **DFAS** is on the list. We will have to fight.

Robert Traube lives in Utica.

Time for officials to realize our value

We continue to see a failure of our military leaders to value the technical expertise critical for national defense when they reduce the staff of our world-class **Rome** lab.

Thank God they didn't close this critical lab, but the partial move of the Sensor Directorate (if true) will damage a well-functioning team of dedicated employees who also feed spin-off work to local, growing technical firms like Critical Technologies and Capraro Technologies.

Let's hope our downstate politicians stop commenting on our weaknesses and start praising our unique, consistent and growing technical strengths.

For more than 50 years, we've been honoring the outstanding technical leaders annually, leaders who confirm our Mohawk Valley has - and continues to grow and develop - outstanding technical

leaders such as Dr. Donald W. Hanson, who recently returned to head the **Rome** lab.

Bill Rudge lives in Clinton. He is a former chairman of the Mohawk Valley Engineers Executive Council.

Closing Rome site would hurt ARC workers

Observer-Dispatch

Kari Ingersoll

May 21, 2005

ROME - The possible closing of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service jeopardizes a contract with the ARC, Oneida-Lewis Chapter, that keeps people with disabilities employed.

DFAS would be closed - and 380 jobs lost - under a recommendation made last week by the Pentagon, which will be reviewed by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

If the maintenance contract ends, the road ahead for ARC workers, who have limited vocational opportunities, would be even tougher.

"We'll try to find them other jobs, but it will be hard to find something that will equal the quality - and pay - of these jobs," said Mike DiNitto, ARC director of vocational services.

Under the \$192,000 contract, five people with disabilities and one staff member are employed in the maintenance department and are responsible for cleaning the 110,000-square foot facility. With health benefits and wages, the jobs pay about \$12 an hour, he said.

Last week, the Pentagon said **DFAS** unit was among the dozens of military sites nationwide marked for closing. The Air Force Research Laboratory in **Rome** would lose 137 of its 820 workers.

"Obviously, if we close, any contracts having to do with **DFAS** would be terminated," **Rome DFAS Site Field Operations Manager Phil Montana** said.

Montana said he did not have any information if any type of assistance programs would be available to the ARC workers.

"We've faced this situation before," DiNitto said referring to the closing of the Griffiss Air Force Base in 1995. "And we will look to find another opportunity like we did at **DFAS** - but it's going to be very difficult to do."

When the base closed, 11 people employed through a similar contract lost their positions at the base commissary, he said.

"We know (the BRAC announcement) hurts for everyone involved," DiNitto said pointing to the 380 jobs that could be lost. "But these are self-supporting independent members of the community who hopefully won't have to turn to government assistance to survive."

The BRAC Commission has until Sept. 8 to make changes to the Defense Department's recommendations.

DFAS saw jobs grow steadily

Observer-Dispatch

Linda Murphy

May 14, 2005

ROME - Twelve years ago, the federal Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) announced that Griffiss Air Force Base would close and leave the Mohawk Valley.

As soon as the announcement was made in 1993, local officials worked hard to woo the federal Defense Finance and Accounting Service to Griffiss. The Pentagon had decided to streamline its 380 **DFAS** sites down to about 15.

For about a year, **DFAS** visited **Rome** and several hundred other properties from Hawaii to New York, looking for the best sites to launch their facilities.

The Mohawk Valley learned in May 1994 that the former Griffiss Air Force Base was one of the selected sites, and was promised up to 750 new jobs.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony came with fanfare in April 1995. The center at first employed 35 workers and promised hundreds more.

"This will provide jobs and provide opportunity to the community," said Deputy Defense Secretary John Deutch, who attended the ceremony launching the center's local presence. "It couldn't be a more beautiful day here in **Rome**, New York."

But Friday, officials announced that as part of the 2005 base realignment, more than 300 at the **DFAS** will leave **Rome**.

That would undo the progress **DFAS** has made since 1995.

By fall of that year, the accounting center employed 142 and expected to hire 33 more by Thanksgiving.

Most of these civilian jobs were held by former Griffiss employees.

As other **DFAS** sites closed as part of the 1995 consolidation, the number of workers in **Rome** continued to grow. By July 1996 it employed 254 workers. Weeks later, **DFAS** announced it needed 200 more people to fill entry-level accounting positions.

By the end of 1997, the **Rome** office employed 306 people, of whom 270 were civilians.

Word that the Pentagon was thinking of saving money by outsourcing the **DFAS** accounting duties to private business worried the by-now-390 employees during summer 2000.

The fear was never realized, but over the next few years, the number of **DFAS** workers declined to 325. In June 2003, prospects brightened.

The Pentagon had decided to close its accounting centers in Europe. Some 130 new workers would be needed in **Rome** to compensate for the site closure in Germany, officials said. They operated in a facility that recently had a \$10 million renovation.

At the time, officials said the added jobs and the site's modernization made a strong case for keeping the center open when the 2005 BRAC decision was made.

Despite the efforts of local officials and employees, the Pentagon put the **DFAS** in **Rome** on its proposed closing list, released Friday.

Local colleges have strong ties to lab

Observer-Dispatch

Marshand Boone

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ROME - With the announcement that more than 500 jobs military-related jobs may be eliminated or transferred, but hundreds more appear secure, local educators sought to determine what impact they'll face.

Mohawk Valley Community College President Michael Schafer said his institution, like other area colleges, has significant links to the Air Force Research Laboratory, whose central mission is being preserved.

With research in cybersecurity and information assurance, **Rome** lab is at the core of MVCC's course offerings, Schafer said. Utica College, Syracuse University and Cornell University are among other institutions with connections to such research at **Rome** lab.

"Some of the best and brightest work at the **Rome** lab and associated businesses," he said.

Still, MVCC faces an impact from the possible loss of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service and its 380 jobs at Griffiss Business and Technology Park.

Ron Cantor, dean of the MVCC **Rome** campus, said the college teaches four courses per semester at the **DFAS** site in **Rome**.

"If we can't do those classes for them anymore, it is a loss," Cantor said.

Rome lab is slated to lose 130 jobs in addition to the 380 cuts at **DFAS**. Many **Rome** lab workers affected might be likely to relocate to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, but it's unclear how many **DFAS** accounting technicians - who earn about \$25,000 per year - might relocate.

Cantor said he expects to lose a few students, but doesn't predict a devastating effect and thinks the area will rebound.

"Ten years ago, when Griffiss Air Force Base was downsized incredibly, we rebuilt with private industry and high tech companies," he said.

Although the **Rome** school district lost 2,000 students when Griffiss closed, Assistant Superintendent Jeff Simons said it was too early to know how the job losses would affect enrollment.

He said the district would make every effort to partner with officials to try and preserve jobs.

"Any general loss of job affects school districts," Simons said.

The emotional impact might be hardest on students, **Rome** Free Academy counselor Steven Granacki said. The prospect of leaving friends, especially in the higher grades, can sometimes be a traumatic experience, he said.

Editorial/Opinion Articles