

LACKLAND AIR FORCE BASE TEXAS

National News Articles

Local News Articles

San Antonio Ready To Take Its Shot With BRAC

Lawmakers fear Texas communities won't be able to beat the BRAC clock

Cuellar, S.A. Differ on Brooks Approach

Local group plans to lobby Pentagon on a BRAC closing

Military money is to flow to San Antonio

Losing Wilford Hall knocks leg out of S.A. medical stance

Now comes the hard part: Erasing bases from Pentagon hit list

Editorial/Opinion Articles

Bases for arguments

National News Articles

Local News Articles

San Antonio Ready To Take Its Shot With BRAC

July 5, 2005

Sig Christenson

San Antonio Express-News

As a commission begins a tour of local military installations today, San Antonio officials have settled on a strategy to save key missions at risk of being lost without jeopardizing big gains in the latest round of base closures.

But two questions remain.

The first is how to use the 15 minutes local leaders will have to make their pitch when the 2005 Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission meets here next Monday.

The second is whether U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar will join San Antonio base advocates in backing the Pentagon's plan to close Brooks City-Base -- or go off message in a way that some fear could undermine this year's unexpected **BRAC** windfall.

The hearing is set for 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center.

"My intent is to speak with a unified voice, and that will be our No. 1 goal," Cuellar said. "At the same time, part of my job as a congressman that represents the southern part of San Antonio that includes Brooks City-Base is to talk about certain things that will be important missions I feel we should keep."

After years of preparing for the **BRAC** hearing, community leaders will ask the commission to keep some of Brooks' missions in San Antonio.

Brig. Gen. John G. Jernigan, head of San Antonio's Military Missions Task Force, said the city is "putting those points in a really nifty package." But, he added, "You can imagine we can't have four congressmen, two senators, a (county) judge and a mayor all talking in 15 minutes and come out with a cohesive message."

Cuellar, D-Laredo, could find himself at odds with the others as the city makes its case. Last month, he urged the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce to fight harder for Brooks and its 3,700 military and civilian jobs.

"I'll be very honest," he told the chamber during a June 14 breakfast in Washington. "I'll be a team player for San Antonio, but you have to help me out on the South Side."

The comments raised eyebrows among some here who expected Brooks to close long ago and who sought to soften the blow.

Cuellar said in a San Antonio Express-News commentary last week that "it is critical that we are prepared with a plan of economic redevelopment and job training assistance." He didn't call on officials to fight to keep Brooks open, and in an interview Friday he seemed to backtrack on the statements that sparked the flap.

"(When) I said that I am going to fight for Brooks City-Base, I was very specific. I mean, I was very careful about how I used the words," he said. "I intend to fight for Brooks City-Base. But what we're looking at here is what specific missions can we fight to keep here at Brooks City-Base."

"I've always been a team player. I intend to be a team player."

It's unclear how hints of discord would play with the nine-member commission. Cuellar will be with at least one commission member at today's tour of Brooks. Officials will bend the commissioner's ear at a dinner that is included in a tour of Brooks and **Lackland AFB**.

Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff and others believe the city emerged a big winner in this year's **BRAC**, despite losing Brooks and Wilford Hall Medical Center's trauma center, which treats an average of 100 trauma victims a month -- most from the South Side.

San Antonio would gain nearly 3,500 jobs and \$ 1 billion in construction if the commission approves the Pentagon closure blueprint. Fort Sam Houston would become a Defense Department center of excellence for joint enlisted medical training.

Former Mayor Howard Peak, who oversees the quasi-municipal authority that runs Brooks, said the task force has developed a finely tuned message in the hope of keeping some high-tech missions. Wolff echoed that theme, suggesting the smart play is to make good arguments for critical parts of the base.

"We had 67 missions that are affected at four bases, but we're approaching it on a mission basis rather than just a blind argument -- 'don't close Brooks,'" Wolff said.

San Antonio's new mayor, Phil Hardberger, agreed. "I think you have to have a balanced

approach and you have to pick where your fights are going to be," he said.

Things are much better for the city this time around than in 1995, when Brooks initially was targeted for closure. Though the '95 commission later spared Brooks, it shuttered Kelly AFB, costing 10,000 jobs.

The conundrum for Wolff, Jernigan and others since the dreaded **BRAC** list was unveiled in May has been how to persuade the commission to save key missions without undermining Fort Sam's gains.

Leaders in Corpus Christi and Texarkana would love to have that problem.

Ingleside Naval Station and Red River Army Depot are targeted for closure, and Corpus Christi Naval Air Station would lose 1,025 jobs. Those bases, along with Brooks and Wilford Hall, account for 12,938 military and civilian jobs and an annual economic impact of more than \$ 1.6 billion.

Texarkana officials are scrutinizing Pentagon data to see if analysts erred in rating a rival depot ahead of Red River. But they declined to provide details of what they've learned.

"We have every reason to believe that some of those who have everything to gain from our loss are checking print sources and the Web," said Jerry Sparks, chairman of the Texarkana Chamber of Commerce's **BRAC** committee. "It's a poker game. When can you tell how good a hand you have?"

Every community faces the same problem. Jernigan is on record as saying he wants to convince the commission to keep Brooks' School of Aerospace Medicine as well as **Lackland AFB's** Cryptologic Systems Group, where 840 people work.

A past Brooks commander, Jernigan said other missions could remain, but he didn't elaborate. He said that although the School of Aerospace Medicine is small enough to stay at Brooks, which is owned by the city and leased to the Air Force, it would be necessary for the service to move out quickly to make way for potential tenants.

Cuellar said certain missions should stay at Brooks, but "not the whole thing." Asked if the missions he'd like to keep are the same as those targeted by the task force, he said, "Again, we're still working on it. We will have something by this week for sure."

Peak said the city's approach is to accept most of the recommendations, show the commissioners how they can improve on the closure round by keeping some missions here, and accept reality -- that Brooks is gone.

"What we're trying to do here is very, very precise," he said.

"Cuellar's a realist," said U.S. Rep. Charlie Gonzalez, D-San Antonio. "I don't see him getting out there and going, 'You guys, contrary to what everybody else here feels, I think you need to keep it open.'"

Lawmakers fear Texas communities won't be able to beat the BRAC clock

San Antonio Express-News

Gary Martin

June 22, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Texas lawmakers voiced concern Tuesday that communities won't have enough time during next month's hearing in San Antonio to convince the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission to save installations in the Lone Star State.

Texas and Arkansas have been allotted just four hours at the July 11 hearing to show the Pentagon deviated from the selection criteria in making its recommendations.

San Antonio has 15 minutes to make its case for Brooks City-Base, which is targeted for closure, and Lackland AFB, which would lose a medical hospital and an intelligence mission to realignment.

"Give us a little time," said Rep. Charlie Gonzalez, D-San Antonio. "Fifteen minutes doesn't seem adequate."

The lawmakers spoke out as BRAC Chairman Anthony Principi announced he'd attend the hearing at the Convention Center, along with three other commissioners.

"The overall impact on Texas is enormous and the chairman's presence indicates his interest in hearing the facts on which the commission must base its decision," said Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas.

Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, said he was encouraged by the fact Principi will attend the hearing.

A BRAC spokeswoman, Megan Riffle, downplayed Principi's attendance, saying it was based on his availability rather than the priority of Texas military installations.

The chairman is expected to attend several regional hearings as the commissioners spread out to cover more ground, she said.

The commission has until Sept. 8 to review the Pentagon list and prepare a final roster of bases for closure.

That list goes to the president for his approval or rejection.

The amount of time given to each state at regional hearings is determined by criteria that includes the number of jobs lost and other factors.

A request by Hutchison for more time at the San Antonio hearing was denied.

According to the base closure commission, the senior senator determines the time allotted each community.

Under a plan devised by Hutchison, Texarkana officials will have 55 minutes to defend Red River Army Depot and the Lone Star Ammunition Plant.

Coastal Bend leaders have 45 minutes to make the case for the Ingleside Naval Station, Corpus Christi Naval Air Station and the Corpus Christi Army Depot.

"What can you explain in 45 minutes when you are talking about billions of dollars of equipment and soldiers lives?" asked Rep. Solomon Ortiz, D-Corpus Christi.

El Paso, Houston, Wichita Falls, Temple and Abilene each will have 30 minutes or less.

"It's never enough time," said Chris Paulitz, a Hutchison spokesman. "Everyone in this process should be unhappy. Anyone who is satisfied about the time we have to fight for these bases would be way too complacent."

Under the formula, Arkansas gets 30 minutes, part of which will be used to defend the Texarkana installations.

San Antonio leaders said they'd be hard-pressed to cram all the details about Brooks and **Lackland** into a 15-minute presentation.

"Obviously, you can't get into any level of detail," said retired Brig. Gen. John Jernigan, who heads a San Antonio military missions task force.

"The only thing we will be able to do is get the ideas on the table," Jernigan said.

San Antonio wants to use its time to reinforce the Pentagon's plan to build a regional medical center at Brooke Army Medical Center.

They also will contend the regional center would be enhanced by keeping the School of Aerospace Medicine at Brooks and locating other Brooks research missions at local installations.

"We wish we had more time, but if this is the time that is allotted, the San Antonio delegation is going to come together," said Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-Laredo, whose district includes South San Antonio. "I feel very confident we will make the presentation."

City leaders also will argue that the Cryptologic Systems Group at **Lackland** AFB should remain intact, not splintered under realignment, and at the San Antonio base if possible.

The cryptologic group accounts for 700 intelligence jobs. Its clients include the National Security Agency, which recently announced a major relocation to San Antonio.

Despite the lack of time at the hearing, Gonzalez said it wouldn't be San Antonio's sole opportunity to make its case.

He said commissioners also would conduct site visits of each base targeted for closure.

"There is a lot going on behind the scenes," he said.

Cuellar, S.A. Differ on Brooks Approach

San Antonio Express-News

Gary Martin

June 15, 2005

WASHINGTON -- San Antonio leaders said Tuesday they are walking a tightrope, defending Brooks City-Base from closure while being careful not to jeopardize Pentagon plans to build a regional medical center at Fort Sam Houston.

But Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-Laredo, prodded the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce to fight harder for Brooks, even though the city stands to gain jobs and federal spending under the plan submitted to the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, commonly called **BRAC**.

"I understand it's a major win for San Antonio, not only for jobs but for the potential, but all I ask is, 'Help me out on this particular part,'" Cuellar told the group during a breakfast gathering at the Renaissance Mayflower Hotel.

"I need your help," he said.

Under the Pentagon's proposal, jobs lost at Brooks and **Lackland AFB** would be more than offset by 9,300 new positions at Brooke Army Medical Center, site of the new medical center, and more than \$ 1 billion in new construction that comes with it.

Because of that, San Antonio leaders have urged restraint in making the case for Brooks to the Pentagon and **BRAC**, when it holds a regional hearing July 11.

"San Antonio is considered a net gaining unit," said John Montford, chairman of the Greater San Antonio Chamber. "We need to temper our comments."

But Cuellar, whose congressional district includes the working-class South Side, urged business leaders not to ignore the fight for Brooks or for the 3,700 civilian and military jobs that would be lost if the base closes.

He said the fight needs to be waged, not only for the research personnel who command high salaries, but also for workers who make the minimum wage.

"I'll be very honest," Cuellar told the group. "I'll be a team player for San Antonio, but you have to help me out on the South Side."

Cuellar said losing Brooks would mean a second economic hit for the South Side, which lost thousands of jobs after Kelly AFB was ordered closed in 1995.

Then, San Antonio business leaders organized huge demonstrations involving thousands of people who donned T-shirts with slogans and urged **BRAC** to spare local facilities.

Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff said those tactics, "T-shirts, begging, just didn't work."

This time, Wolff suggested, a little perspective would be useful.

Though San Antonio will argue to save specific missions at Brooks, the city will gain far more than it loses under the 2005 **BRAC** proposal. And, besides, the Pentagon has considered closing the base for more than a decade.

"You can't argue out of both sides of your mouth," Wolff said. "We're not going to take a broadside at the Pentagon."

Others say that's not necessarily a bad thing.

Officials in the District of Columbia are protesting the closing of Walter Reed Army Medical Center, which would consolidate with National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., and send other missions to Fort Belvoir, Va.

Nearby states and counties, though happy to be beneficiaries of the BRAC recommendations, nevertheless are complaining that the Pentagon failed to adequately plan to move thousands of jobs to facilities in a metropolitan area ranked as one of the highest nationwide for traffic congestion.

Local governments are seeking federal assurances that roads and infrastructure would be improved to handle the influx of new workers in Maryland and Virginia.

Paul Taibl, with Business Executives for National Security, a nonpartisan group that advocates corporate practices in the Defense Department, said San Antonio might be wise to consider a similar strategy.

"They ought to be saying, 'What are you going to do for me?'" Taibl said.

"Communities and their local leadership should take their best shot at saving their base," Taibl said.

But if it looks as if the Pentagon will prevail, "they should look at alternative uses if they stay on the list."

If Brooks closes, Cuellar said, he would seek reimbursement from the Air Force of \$ 9 million spent by San Antonio during the past decade to take over maintenance of the base.

Taibl said the city was right to seek those funds.

"They should certainly ask. They should definitely make that case," he said.

Wolff agreed that if the base closure commission, which has until Sept. 8 to review Pentagon proposals, sides with the Defense Department, the community should accelerate its redevelopment plans.

He noted that numerous private businesses are moving to the base's business park operated by the Brooks Development Authority.

If the commission orders the Air Force to close Brooks, Wolff said, the military should move out immediately and allow the city and county to complete its redevelopment.

"If they make a decision to go, the quicker they go, the better for us," Wolff said.

Local group plans to lobby Pentagon on a BRAC closing

San Antonio Express-News

L.A. Lorek

June 10, 2005

A group of 100 government and business people plans to lobby Pentagon officials to keep a group of military intelligence jobs here.

During a trip to Washington on Sunday, "We do intend to bring it up to the (Base Closure and Realignment) commission," said retired Air Force Brig. Gen. John Jernigan, who heads San Antonio's military missions task force. "We believe there is a benefit to the customer to keep them here."

Under the **BRAC** recommendations, the Defense Department will relocate the Cryptologic Systems Group at **Lackland** AFB to three bases, eliminating more than 700 intelligence jobs in San Antonio.

The move will result in an economic loss of \$3 billion of future defense dollars, according to Oscar Balladares, **Lackland's** public information officer.

But more important, it will hurt San Antonio's growing intelligence community and decrease the nation's national security readiness, said Scott Gray, vice president of OnBoard Software, a military contractor in San Antonio.

"This proposed **BRAC** realignment can jeopardize our national security posture," according to a paper written by Gray, OnBoard founder David Spencer and other concerned citizens. "The imminent expansion of NSA in the San Antonio region will also suffer as a result of losing this key support organization."

If San Antonio loses the group, called CPSG, it would lose more than 200 military, 300 civilian and 200 contractor jobs. The various functions are to be moved to Tobyhanna Army Depot, Pa., Robbins AFB, Ga., and Hanscom AFB, Mass.

In addition, CPSG works closely with the Air Intelligence Agency at **Lackland** and the National Security Agency in San Antonio.

CPSG supports missions such as intelligence collection, homeland security, counter-terrorism, military operations, cyber security and law enforcement. It includes the Signals Intelligence, Communications Security, Information Assurance and Cryptographic Modernization units.

CPSG's customers include the National Security Agency, National Reconnaissance Office, all military services, NASA, foreign allies and other agencies.

During the 1995 **BRAC**, the Pentagon excluded the CPSG from the recommendation to close Kelly AFB. The local lobbyists hope to get it excluded again.

Military money is to flow to San Antonio

San Antonio Express-News

Gary Martin

May 20, 2005

WASHINGTON -- The Air Force surgeon general said Thursday that the Pentagon would spend \$ 1 billion in San Antonio during the base closure process to create one of two proposed world-class regional medical centers.

Lt. Gen. George P. Taylor said recommendations to close nine hospitals nationwide includes \$ 2.4 billion to build supercenters for medical care under the Defense Department at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio and National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md.

Taylor told the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, commonly called **BRAC**, that the proposals "are large, far-reaching actions that cut across the entire DoD healthcare system."

The result would be two regional medical centers that would rival teaching hospitals like Baltimore's Johns Hopkins hospital and health care system, he said.

The new regional health centers would be patterned after joint-use medical facilities at Balad Air Base in Iraq and Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany.

The recommendations were issued last week by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld as part of a plan to close or realign 33 major U.S. military installations.

Those plans, details of which are incomplete, have been received with anxiety by military retirees and dependents who receive health care at military hospitals that would close, like Wilford Hall Medical Center in San Antonio.

Commissioner Sue Turner told Taylor that "people want to know more details about their personal circumstance."

"I hope there is something under way in the DoD to get that information out and help reduce the shock," Turner said.

The commission announced 16 regional hearings to hear from communities about the Pentagon's recommendations. A hearing is scheduled July 11 in San Antonio.

Taylor said outpatient care would continue unchanged, except in areas where hospitals were closing and the regional centers weren't being built.

In those cases, dependents and retirees would use civilian facilities and doctors covered under the military healthcare plan TRICARE.

Taylor said the Defense Department remains "very mindful of our great commitment to the over 9 million beneficiaries who depend on the military health care system for their care."

While TRICARE is the program for most dependents and retirees, Commissioner James Bilbray said that in the past, many have pleaded not to be "thrown out of a military hospital."

In San Antonio, Taylor said the Pentagon plans to build a new out-patient center at **Lackland AFB** to serve troops, dependents and retirees.

He said building a new facility at the base is more cost-efficient and would allow the Air Force to "shutter the windows on the main building at Wilford Hall."

In addition, BAMC would become a 425-bed facility to handle inpatient care, and the trauma center at the hospital would be expanded to handle emergency cases now served by both military hospitals in San Antonio.

The cost of the construction at **Lackland** and BAMC would total \$ 1 billion, and would be completed in 2010.

Those costs also include consolidation of military combat medical schooling from all the service branches at Fort Sam Houston, creating a single Center for Medical Enlisted Training.

Taylor said the command structure at BAMC, tentatively renamed the San Antonio Regional Medical Center, would be determined later by the service branches.

The Pentagon plan to consolidate military medicine also includes leaving Brooks City-Base.

Aerospace medicine, training and research and development activities at the San Antonio site would be moved to Wright-Patterson AFB.

"This will allow the military to completely leave City-Base," Taylor told the panel.

The centrifuge at Brooks, a unique piece of equipment to study G-forces, also would move to Wright-Patterson, where a consolidation of medical and human systems research would be based.

Losing the Air Force as a tenant at Brooks in South San Antonio would mean a \$ 264 million loss in payroll. But a number of missions, and about a third of the 2,700 jobs at the base, would remain in San Antonio at **Lackland** and Fort Sam Houston, city leaders said.

Brooks was targeted for closure in 1995, but was spared when the previous base closure commission closed Kelly AFB instead.

The loss of Brooks would end a 10-year experiment between the military and the city of San Antonio, which spent \$ 9 million to take over services and redevelop portions of the base.

"I wouldn't say that anything went wrong, it's just a new opportunity," Taylor said.

Taylor said San Antonio was poised to become a national center for biomedical science with the regional medical center and new training missions at Fort Sam Houston.

The scope of the medical training expansion at Fort Sam Houston, along with the construction of a regional medical center, caught San Antonio by surprise when the base closure list was announced last week.

"This is a huge, positive development that is going to have repercussions for our national stature of a biomedical center," said Joe Krier with the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce.

City leaders were in Washington this week to attend the base closure commission hearings, and came away with the impression that San Antonio was one of the big winners in the Pentagon's proposals.

Losing Wilford Hall knocks leg out of S.A. medical stance

San Antonio Express-News

Cindy Tumiel

May 15, 2005

In the flash of a flying bullet fired from a moving car, Jacqueline Bledsoe's life depended on the doctors and nurses at Wilford Hall Medical Center.

Paramedics rushed her to the Southwest Side military hospital last Feb. 2, wounded and bleeding, after a drive-by shooting shattered her jaw and tore open her cheek during an attack that killed another woman and injured a small child.

Emergency room workers swiftly went to work, just as they always do whenever one of San Antonio's civilians is wheeled into the military hospital's trauma center. They inserted a breathing tube to bypass her broken jaw, stabilized her vital signs, then rolled her to an operating room where surgeons trained to treat soldiers' battlefield wounds began the job of rebuilding her face.

Bledsoe didn't know where she was until three days later, when doctors eased her out of a drug-induced coma. The East Side woman slowly became conscious of the swirl of Air Force uniforms around her and **Lackland** AFB's aircraft outside her hospital window.

"I looked out the window and saw the planes," she said. "I always wanted to be in the military. I thought I died and went to heaven."

Bledsoe is one of thousands of victims of gunfire, car accidents and other critical injuries who have benefited from Wilford Hall's care. But now, after three decades as part of a three-pronged regional trauma system, Wilford Hall's role appears to be ending.

On Friday, the Pentagon recommended that all inpatient services -- including trauma care -- be moved out of Wilford Hall's massive edifice on **Lackland** AFB.

If the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (commonly called **BRAC**), Congress and President Bush follow the recommendations, Wilford Hall will be reduced to an outpatient clinic and day surgery center.

A major investment will increase the trauma capacity at BAMC and establish it as a joint training center for Air Force, Army and Navy medics.

The recommendation still has several hurdles to clear, and would be phased in over several years. But if it comes to pass, Level 1 trauma care in a 22-county region of South Texas would have to make some significant adjustments as one hospital is phased out of the picture.

"This has been part of our contingency planning for awhile," said Dr. Ronald Stewart, trauma

director at University Hospital, the area's only civilian Level 1 trauma center. "Trauma care will not be hurt."

"There will be changes but this is not devastating," said Eric Epley, executive director of the South Texas Regional Council for Trauma, or STRAC.

Wilford Hall, BAMC and University are triangulated around San Antonio like the legs on a stool, providing emergency care access for the most seriously injured patients in a 22-county trauma service region.

Fifteen smaller hospitals in rural surrounding counties feed into the trauma network, sending their more seriously injured patients to San Antonio when higher-level services are needed.

Staff in the smaller facilities have grown to know the doctors at Wilford Hall and value their contributions to regional trauma care, said Dottie Traxler, chief nurse at Otto Kaiser Memorial Hospital in Kenedy.

"Having two military facilities has been a major benefit to this area," Traxler said. "The way I see it is that without Wilford Hall, we are going to be more dependent on University, and they are already so busy."

University, with the largest emergency room, handles roughly half of the 6,000-plus serious trauma cases that occur each year, according to Stewart. The others are split between BAMC and Wilford Hall.

The relationship has been good for all. Military doctors need trauma training to prepare them for handling battlefield casualties. University Hospital, meanwhile, didn't need to build as much trauma capacity because it had help from military facilities.

But regional trauma officials say they always have been mindful that military help could go away quickly during wartime, when Air Force and Army doctors and nurses are moved from stateside hospitals to battlefield areas.

In fact, Stewart noted, Wilford Hall currently is charged with staffing a field hospital in Iraq, which has reduced its availability for injured civilians and shifted the burden to the other two hospitals in the network.

"The BRAC threat has always been around," said Epley, who heads the regional planning body for trauma hospitals. "We've been talking about this issue and contingency plans for a number of years."

Wilford Hall has been involved in civilian trauma care since around 1975, when the hospital began treating emergency cases from the surrounding area, stabilizing patients and then transferring them to University, said Lt. Gen. P.K. Carlton, former Wilford Hall commander.

Eventually, Wilford Hall began admitting trauma patients to its acute care units, Carlton said. But reimbursement for uninsured trauma patients has long been an issue -- military hospitals currently don't get funding through taxes that Bexar County collects for indigent care.

"San Antonio stopped paying the military for trauma care several years ago," Carlton said. "I think the City of San Antonio will really have to look at how to cover the Southside."

In 2003, the Texas Legislature adopted a bill that imposes additional fines for certain traffic violations and distributes that money to hospitals providing trauma care, Stewart noted.

Wilford Hall has received \$1 million through this fund since last August; BAMC has received about \$1.5 million and University about \$2 million, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services.

Wilford Hall's location has been advantageous in providing trauma service to the city's Southwest Side, which can be a 12- to 15-minute ambulance ride from University, in the South Texas Medical Center. But the time issue is not as critical as it was when the three-legged trauma system was established, said Dr. Donald Gordon, medical director of the city's EMS system.

The region now has four air ambulances to transport the most severely injured patients, and the life-sustaining technology inside ground ambulances has vastly improved, he said.

Now comes the hard part: Erasing bases from Pentagon hit list

San Antonio Express-News

Gary Martin

May 15, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Armed with stacks of data and personal pleas, Texas lawmakers now begin the politically painful process of trying to remove local installations from a Pentagon closure list and protect their state's share of millions in military spending.

Minutes after Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld announced recommendations Friday to close 33 major military installations, Texas leaders vowed to fight for Brooks City-Base, Ingleside Naval Station, Red River Army Depot and the Lone Star Ammunition Plant.

Closing those four would eliminate thousands of jobs that provide an economic boost to San Antonio, Corpus Christi and Texarkana.

"I am going to go to bat for them with all my strength," said Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas.

However, the chances of removing a base from the closure list seem slim at best. Only 15 percent of installations targeted for elimination in four previous rounds -- 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995 -- were spared.

"Challenging the recommendations is difficult, at best," said Mike Lucinski with Business Executives for National Security, a non-profit organization of corporate executives who advocate streamlining defense operations.

"Unfortunately for the communities, it's not the best of odds," Lucinski said.

Rumsfeld is scheduled to appear before the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, commonly called **BRAC**, Monday, when it begins four days of hearings. Officials from the Air Force and Navy will testify Tuesday, followed Wednesday by the Army.

The commission has until Sept. 8 to review the Pentagon's recommendations and submit a final list of base closures to President Bush.

The president may accept or reject but not alter the list.

"I committed to the Congress, to the president and to the American people, that our deliberations and decisions would be based on the criteria set forth in statute and devoid of politics," said Anthony Principi, the commission chairman.

But even before the panel begins its review, organized labor urged the Defense Department to consider a two-year delay in implementing base closures due to the conflict in Iraq and the war on terror.

"This is not the time to scale back and close military installations that provide valuable services and equipment that help keep us safe," said John Gage, president of the American Federation of Government Employees, the union that represents civilian workers at **Lackland** AFB and other San Antonio bases.

"Thousands of loyal workers will lose their jobs and entire communities will be destabilized because military installations are usually the biggest employers, especially in rural areas," Gage said.

Organized labor isn't alone in counseling restraint.

Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., said he will file a bipartisan bill to delay the base closure round for two years, or "until we have a better understanding of our future military and security needs."

The Pentagon's proposal to close Ellsworth AFB in Rapid City, S.D., would eliminate 6,768 jobs, or 8.5 percent of that city's employment.

Some of those jobs would move to Dyess AFB in Abilene, part of a generally positive **BRAC** impact on Texas, which would see a net gain in jobs under Rumsfeld's plan.

Nevertheless, state lawmakers wasted no time in pledging to fight for the threatened bases.

"The worst situation for us, from a community standpoint, is Texarkana," said Hutchison, who's considering a gubernatorial challenge to Gov. Rick Perry next year. "For Texarkana to lose both their ammunition depot and Army depot is beyond comprehension."

Perry is creating a "strike force" to persuade federal officials to keep bases open, and he has invited Hutchison and other lawmakers to join him in a tour of communities expected to be hard hit by closures.

Pentagon analysts said the closures could mean a loss of 4,176 jobs - or 6.2 percent of the area's employment. The recommendation comes despite increased work shifts at the Red River Army Depot to install armor on Humvees headed to Iraq.

Closing Ingleside and realigning Corpus Christi Naval Air Station would cost more than 6,800 jobs -- 3.1 percent of the area's workforce -- the Pentagon estimates.

"The clock is ticking and the job before us is enormous," said Rep. Solomon Ortiz, D-Corpus

Christi.

In San Antonio, the effort will focus on saving Brooks City-Base, which accounts for more than 4,000 jobs and an annual payroll of \$264 million. That figure doesn't include millions more paid to contractors.

Freshman Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-Laredo, who may face opposition in the Democratic primary in March, said he will push the Air Force to defend its decision, and fight for redevelopment funds if Brooks is closed.

"I just want to be sure every employee at Brooks has a job," said Cuellar, whose congressional district includes the San Antonio base.

Air Force officials will explain their closure recommendations to the commission Tuesday.

In the coming weeks, Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, said he plans to ask the Air Force for its rationale in closing Brooks in light of substantial savings to the military after the city took over maintenance of the base.

Earlier this year, Nelson Gibbs, assistant secretary for Air Force installations and environment, described Brooks as a success story.

"It has been very successful," Gibbs told the Senate Armed Services Committee. "The Air Force pays basically for the services it receives from the city at standard rates. And we believe we've saved a fair amount of money."

Editorial/Opinion Articles

Bases for arguments

Fort Worth Star-Telegram

May 15, 2005

* The main criterion for whether a military facility should remain open is its military value rather than its employment value.

Sometimes waiting is the worst part when people are expecting bad news, but leaders in communities with military bases targeted for closure would argue that point this morning.

On Friday, the Defense Department released Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's recommendations for base closures and realignments. The list is something well short of "the mother of all BRACs" that had been earlier feared. But for the 33 communities targeted for major base closures, that's small comfort.

In Texas, the losers are Brooks City Base in San Antonio, with 2,923 people; Naval Station Ingleside near Corpus Christi, with 2,218 personnel; and the Red River Army Depot's 2,500 near Texarkana -- all on the potential closure list.

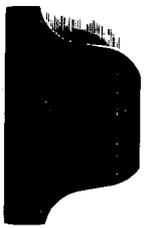
Realignments may be equally painful elsewhere in Texas. Lackland and Sheppard Air Force bases could see 3,140 and 2,624 personnel, respectively, lost or reassigned to other facilities.

It is important for elected officials to keep in mind that the Defense Department is not a works project for American cities, nor should a BRAC fight be the basis for a politician's re-election campaign.

The main criterion for whether a base should remain open is its military value -- does it adequately and effectively support the country's overall defense posture?

In the public hearings that will occur in the next four months before the BRAC Commission must submit its list to President Bush, Texas leaders will be provided with opportunities to make their case for why Ingleside and Brooks and Red River should stay open.

They had best be prepared to argue issues such as global posture, operational readiness and mission capabilities, and not just jobs.



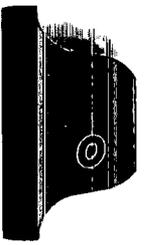
**2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
Suggested Talking Points for Visit to Naval Station Ingleside**

- 1. Military value is the most important consideration to the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) as the Commission evaluates the suggestion made by the Department of Defense (DoD) to close Naval Station Ingleside.**
 - The Commission will evaluate the economic, environmental, and other effects that the closure could have on the surrounding community but the key factor in the Commission's conclusion as to whether or not to suggest the Naval Station Ingleside for closure is military value.
 - The Commission recognizes Naval Station Ingleside's unique mission and the value of its mine-sweeper and mine-hunting assets.
 - The Commission is aware of the potential importance of Ingleside's location (proximity to Mexico) in various homeland security efforts.

- 2. The Commission is aware of the human impact that the suggestions to close Naval Station Ingleside could have and is taking this into consideration.**
 - The Congress established the Commission as an independent entity to ensure that all critical factors have been evaluated, and that the effects on the surrounding community have been taken into account in the decision to recommend a base for closure or realignment.
 - The Commission will evaluate the economic and social impact that the base's closure would have on the surrounding community, while basing its decision almost entirely upon military value.
 - The Commission is aware of the economic burden that an initial loss of 4,000 jobs could have on the Corpus Christi economy.

- 3. The Congress established the Commission as a non-political, transparent, and independent entity to perform a thorough evaluation, through a process set out by law, of the bases suggested for closure or realignment by DoD.**
 - The Commission serves to ensure that all pertinent factors have been evaluated and that the impact that the suggestions to close or realign a base would have on the surrounding community, have been taken into full account.
 - The Commission encourages public input. Community groups wishing to submit information that they feel may have been overlooked by DoD, are encouraged to contact their Congressional representative. Additionally, the public may submit comments directly through the Commission's official website: www.brac.gov.

Facts compiled from included press clippings.



**2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
Suggested Q's & A's for Visit to Naval Station Ingleside**

Q1. Under the Pentagon's proposal, the Corpus Christi area would lose several thousand jobs due to the closure of Naval Station Ingleside. Will the Commission evaluate the economic impact of the closure of Naval Station Ingleside?

A1. The Commission will perform a thorough, accurate, and objective analysis which will take into account, chiefly, the military value of Naval Station Ingleside, but will also consider the impact that the realignment of the installation would have on the surrounding community. Please be assured that the Commission will make a full evaluation, as prescribed by law, before coming to its conclusions and formulating its suggestions.

Q2. Naval Station Ingleside has the Navy's only electromagnetic roll facility used to demagnetize mine warfare ships. Will the Commission consider this in its evaluation of the installation's proposed closure?

A2. The Commission will perform a thorough, accurate, and objective analysis which will take into account, chiefly, the military value of Naval Station Ingleside. Military value is determined through three primary criteria—jointness, ease of mobility, and role in the changing global threat structure.

Q3. Recently, Governor Rick Perry has said that he would establish a "strike force" to coordinate with communities that would be negatively impacted by the BRAC recommendations. In addition, Senators John Coryn (a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee) and Kay Bailey Hutchison have stated that they will fight certain BRAC recommendations. Will the Commission's evaluation of the DoD be non-partisan? Does the Commission expect Texas to receive a favorable evaluation given that the President was previously governor of the state?

A3. The Congress established the BRAC Commission as an entirely non-partisan and non-political entity to independently evaluate whether DoD made its recommendations in accordance with the law. The Commission will serve to provide accountability to the public and ensure that all suggestions have been based upon the criteria set forth by statute. The Commission will perform a thorough, accurate, and objective analysis, in a completely open and transparent manner, which will take into account, chiefly, the military value of Naval Station Ingleside, but will also consider the economic, environmental and other effects that the closure of the installation would have on the surrounding community.

Q4. Under the BRAC recommendations Texas will have a net gain of 6,150 jobs. Will the overall net gain in jobs for Texas influence the Commission's decision on individual communities that may be negatively impacted?

A4. The Commission will consider the full impact of the DoD's recommendations on the local communities surrounding installations that are negatively impacted. Each installation will be evaluated independently and on its own merits—primarily through criteria established to determine military value.



Q5. Naval Station Ingleside is the only deep water installation located on the Gulf of Mexico. Will the Commission evaluate the strategic importance of the installation both to Homeland Security and Homeland Defense efforts?

A5. The Commission will evaluate the installation based upon its military value. Military value is determined through three primary criteria—jointness, ease of mobility, and the base's role in the changing global threat arena. The Commission recognizes Naval Station Ingleside's strategic location on the Gulf of Mexico. The Commission understands that the base's proximity to Mexico is of growing importance with regard to various Homeland Security efforts.

Q6. The DoD recommendations are based on an analysis of the military value of an installation. The value of Ingleside resides in its location, potential for expansion, diverse training facilities, its double decked pier, and its access to deepwater. Will the Commission re-evaluate the military value of the installation based upon some of these unique characteristics?

A6. The Commission will evaluate the bases military value based upon three primary criteria—jointness, ease of mobility, and the installation's role in the changing global threat arena. In addition to military value, the Commission will analyze the economic and environmental impact of base closure on the local community.

Q7. Naval Station Ingleside is located on 900 acres of valuable land. If the base closes what will the Department of Defense do with the land?



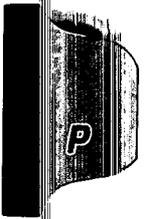
A7. The question of what will happen with a base after its closure is under the purview of the Federal Government and DoD rather than the BRAC Commission. Applicable laws dictate that federal property must first be made available to other federal agencies. If the property is deemed excess by the federal government then it will be made available to homeless assistance groups. It is only after this point that the land may be offered to the local government or to private developers at market value. In the case of Naval Station Ingleside, the deeds for the land included reversionary interest clauses, allowing the port first access to purchase back the land if it is deemed excess by the Department of Defense.

Q8. How can the Community inform the Commission of information that the Community feels may have been overlooked by DoD?

A8. The BRAC Commission encourages public input into this transparent and objective process. Community groups who wish to submit information for the appropriate regional hearing are urged to contact their Congressional representative. Additionally, the public may submit comments through the Commission's official website, which is www.brac.gov.

Facts compiled from included press clippings.





NAVAL STATION INGLESIDE TEXAS

National News Articles

Local News Articles

Base fans get ready to line up; Week's BRAC site visits give commissioners chance to tour Coastal Bend bases

Regional BRAC-listed bases

Congressman sees strength in numbers; BRAC visits to area bases start on July 7; Lining Up Support for Ingleside

New Ingleside leader mum on BRAC; Watkins could be final commander

Hundreds rally to save Texarkana military sites

BRAC chief to attend San Antonio hearing next month

Texas official: Assets may save NS Ingleside; Secretary of State to present case against its closure

Texas wants military bases safe from closure

Gathering facts for BRAC counterattack; Texas official visits Ingleside today, Thursday

U.S. Senators: Spare Ingleside; Officials meet to determine plan of action

Texans gearing up for a close look at base closure report

Officials mum on Ingleside's future uses; Many say priority still lies in saving the Naval station

Coastal Bend is expected to bounce back from BRAC; Strong market for developers, builders is cited

Editorial/Opinion Articles

National News Articles

Local News Articles

Base fans get ready to line up; Week's BRAC site visits give commissioners chance to tour Coastal Bend bases

Corpus Christi Caller-Times

Brad Olson

July 3, 2005

When Base Realignment and Closure Commissioners James Hill and Sue Turner visited Texarkana last month, thousands of people lined the streets, wearing yellow T-shirts that have become something of a trademark for those fighting the Defense Department's plan to close Red River Army Depot.

Similar rallies have been documented from Fairbanks, Alaska, to New London, Conn., as communities struggle to convince visiting base closure commissioners of their enthusiasm and

their base's importance to the military.

This week, two commissioners will tour facilities in Ingleside and Corpus Christi. Commissioner James Hill will visit Thursday and Friday and Commission Chairman Anthony Principi will come July 10 before a San Antonio regional hearing the next day.

Local boosters have urged residents to line the streets on those days wearing yellow and black "Americans For Gulf Security" T-shirts. U.S. Rep. Solomon Ortiz also initiated a petition drive that collected 20,000 signatures at Circle K stores in an effort to emphasize Naval Station Ingleside's potential for securing the Gulf of Mexico and the area's extensive oil and gas assets.

Site visits have been touted by commissioners as opportunities to experience the communities that are on the list, not as fact-finding efforts. In most cases, they have toured facilities with military personnel and base advocates have not been invited, but have instead given brief presentations about why they think the Defense Department erred in trying to close their base.

Commissioners often have responded by clarifying their role and assuring residents they would evaluate the Pentagon's closure plans fairly. Boosters have most often cited homeland security concerns or disputed Defense Department data in arguing against closure.

In some cases, commissioners have greeted presentations about additional base uses favorably, but for the most part, they have stated their intent to evaluate the Defense Department's recommendations thoroughly and accurately.

Regional BRAC-listed bases

Corpus Christi Caller-Times

Brad Olson

July 3, 2005

Here are the details of four site visits last month to other bases not far from the Coastal Bend:

NS Pascagoula

Naval Station Pascagoula in Pascagoula, Miss., has often been compared to **Naval Station Ingleside** because it was created as a part of the Navy Homeport initiative in the mid-1980s.

JOBS AT STAKE: 1,762

THE VISIT: BRAC Commissioner Harold Gehman visited the area on June 16 for four hours - his eighth base visit that week.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE: Local official Manly Barton said the community did not line the streets but instead saved that effort for a regional hearing scheduled for July 12.

ARGUMENT AGAINST CLOSURE: "Within documents presented as part of the base closure list, we felt like there were problems with the numbers," Barton said. "And we have a strategic placement in the Gulf."

New Orleans

Naval Support Activity in New Orleans, La., home to several Navy reserve commands and Marine Corps aircraft wings, was established in the early 1900s, making it one of the older Navy bases in the country.

JOBS AT STAKE: 2,096

THE VISIT: BRAC Commissioner Sue Turner visited New Orleans on June 17.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE: Accompanied by two motorcycle police escorts, Turner was greeted at the base's main gate by about 60 sign-wavers.

ARGUMENT AGAINST CLOSURE: Retired Maj. Gen. David Mize told Turner in a one-and-a-half-hour briefing that the Pentagon had overestimated its savings from closing the base. He and other officials also promoted a plan to turn the base into a homeland security and military hub, which Turner called "a really neat kind of idea," according to the Times-Picayune of New Orleans.

Red River Army Depot

Red River Army Depot in Texarkana is one of only five remaining Army depots and survived being put on the list in 1995. The depot repairs or maintains the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, Multiple Launch Rocket System and Patriot and Hawk missiles.

JOBS AT STAKE: 4,176

THE VISIT: BRAC Commissioners James Hill and Sue Turner visited Texarkana June 21.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE: Between 5,000 and 10,000 people lined the streets wearing yellow T-shirts that said: "It still ain't over." One of the commissioners called the showing "incredible."

ARGUMENT AGAINST CLOSURE: "We know that there are some things that Red River does that are unique in the nation," said U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, who attended a briefing during the visit. "I'm afraid that the Department of Defense simply overlooked some key information in the process of making their proposal to close Red River."

Cannon Air Force Base

Cannon Air Force Base in Clovis, N.M., is home to the 27th Fighter Wing, an F-16 wing dedicated to the Air Force's new "expeditionary" concept, meaning it is capable at any time of flying anywhere in the world for combat operations.

JOBS AT STAKE: 4,780

THE VISIT: BRAC Chairman Anthony Principi, Commissioners James Hansen, James Hill and Sue Turner visited the base June 23.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE: Gov. Bill Richardson's office established a committee of 50 to help prepare for the site visits and regional hearing the next day, who came up with the theme:

"Operation Keep Cannon." Residents lined the streets, held a rally and decorated with billboards and yard signs proclaiming loyalty to the base.

ARGUMENT AGAINST CLOSURE: "The Defense Department made errors by calling the base a '12-hour runway,' which it is not," said Bill Sparks, spokesman for Richardson. "There are no encroachment issues here and 320 flying days a year. No one else can come close to that."

Now's the time to show your support for bases; Thousands of jobs of your friends and neighbors depend on the BRAC decision.

Corpus Christi Caller-Times

Libby Averyt

July 3, 2005

Imagine a Corpus Christi where all city employees got up and left town.

Add to that everyone employed locally at H-E-B grocery stores, Del Mar College and the Caller-Times.

Those hypothetical job losses equal about the same number that could vanish as part of the Pentagon's recommendation to close **Naval Station Ingleside** and realign Naval Air Station Corpus Christi and the Corpus Christi Army Depot. Those changes would affect at least 7,000 civilian and military jobs.

These numbers represent more than just jobs; they represent our neighbors and friends. Men and women with whom we share our lives and our homes.

We've built a community with our military family here for the past 65 years. It's part of who we are.

As families do, it's now time for us to offer support. Actually, it's critical. We're in serious competition with other cities for the survival of our bases. Thousands have turned out to show their support for the military. We must do the same.

"They'll know what we stand for when we come out united," Congressman Solomon Ortiz said last week as he urged community-wide support for our bases. "We're going to be together in this battle."

We've seen such competition before, and we'll see it again. For centuries, cities have competed against each other for businesses, residents and visitors, Joel Kotkin, a consultant and author, told a Corpus Christi Regional Economic Development Corp. luncheon last week.

But what sets some cities apart, Kotkin said, is their sense of identity and their sense of what makes them sacred. Cities that welcome ideas from the outside and aren't too interior-focused,

thrive in competitive situations, he said. Having a military presence, with personnel from all over the country, helps deepen our pool of ideas.

"Great cities understand who they are and where they want to go," Kotkin said.

We're a wonderfully diverse area with a historically significant past and a promising future. We've got a deep love for the water and our beaches, our tropical weather and our easy way of life. We're a tourist destination, a medical center, an industrial hub and a military area.

And as corny as it may sound, we've got incredibly caring people who reach out to each other every day.

Ron Kitchens, our outgoing economic development corporation director, recognized that as he left our city last week.

"What I'm really going to miss is you all," Kitchens told those at the EDC lunch. "For us, you've been our family and we've been privileged to call Corpus Christi home."

It is a privilege to live in this area, and as my parents taught me, with privilege comes responsibility. Now it's time for us all to take responsibility for our community and do what we can to support our military neighbors.

We can't all afford to travel to Washington, D.C., to visit lawmakers, and we may not all know who to write to explain our bases' importance to this community and our national security.

But you can help and here's how:

On Thursday, line up along Chaparral Street between Interstate Highway 37 and the Ortiz Center by 7:30 a.m. to greet **BRAC** Commissioner James T. Hill, who will be here to tour our bases.

Later that day, attend a reception for Hill, a retired Army general, at the American Bank Center from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. TV host Johnny Canales will record his weekly TV show there, and entertainment will include Jimmy Gonzalez y Mazz, La Onda and Control. "We need to pack this place," Rep. Ortiz said of the arena. "We need the commissioner to walk in and say, 'This is the biggest crowd I've seen.'"

On Friday, when Hill visits **Naval Station Ingleside**, you can line up along Highway 361 between Gregory and the base by 7:30 a.m.

Commission Chairman Anthony Principi will visit Ingleside on July 10. Texas bases will make their case to commissioners on July 11 at the state's regional hearing in San Antonio.

A dozen buses will be available to take supporters to San Antonio for the hearing.

Port Commissioner Judy Hawley, a member of the South Texas Military Facilities Task Force, summed up the challenge before us well:

"Our task, as a community, is to let them know how valuable the military is."

**Congressman sees strength in numbers; BRAC visits to area bases start on July 7;
Lining Up Support for Ingleside**

Corpus Christi Caller-Times

Fanny S. Chirinos

June 29, 2005

Supporters of Naval Air Station Corpus Christi and **Naval Station Ingleside** were urged to line South Texas streets on July 7 and 8 when Base Realignment and Closure commissioner James T. Hill tours area bases. That was the main message at a Tuesday news conference by Americans for Gulf Security, a community group aimed at keeping area bases open.

The Pentagon recommended the closure of **Naval Station Ingleside** and four other Texas military facilities on May 13. It also recommended the realignment of Naval Air Station Corpus Christi and the Corpus Christi Army Depot. The closure and realignment would affect 8,000 civilian and military jobs.

Standing on the Harbor Ferry dock in front of the American Bank Center, Lencho Rendon, chief of staff for U.S. Rep. Solomon P. Ortiz, D-Corpus Christi, said a great show of support could make a difference with the **BRAC** commissioners when they visit area bases next week.

Hill, a retired Army general, will visit Naval Air Station Corpus Christi on July 7 and **Naval Station Ingleside** on July 8. **BRAC** Commission Chairman Anthony Principi will tour **Naval Station Ingleside** on July 10.

"We want them lined up in support of Ingleside so they see we mean business," Rendon said.

Ortiz, who also attended and helped organize Tuesday's news conference, addressed skeptics who have said **Naval Station Ingleside** would close no matter what efforts are made.

"The commission isn't closing as many bases as the Department of Defense recommended," Ortiz said. "We're very much in this and we're not giving up. This is not only Navy country, it's military country and it has been so for the past 50 years. We need everyone to come out. We will salvage Ingleside."

Americans for Gulf Security members - which include people from the South Texas Military Facilities Task Force, the Port of Corpus Christi and various civic organizations - asked supporters to line up along Chaparral Street between Interstate Highway 37 and the Congressman Solomon P. Ortiz International Center on Harbor Street by 7:30 a.m. July 7 to greet Hill. On July 8, when Hill visits **Naval Station Ingleside**, the group asked that supporters line up along Highway 361 between Gregory and the base by 7:30 a.m.

A reception for Hill will be from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. July 7 at the American Bank Center with music, entertainment, food, drink and guest speakers, whose names will be released early next week.

"We'll show our unity and commitment," Ortiz said. "They all know what it means when we come out in numbers."

Americans for Gulf Security has been collecting signatures from base supporters for almost three weeks. More than 30,000 signatures have been collected to date and will be presented to Hill during his visit to the area.

Petition forms are available until July 6 at area Circle K stores and online at www.savingingleside.com.

New Ingleside leader mum on BRAC; Watkins could be final commander

Corpus Christi Caller-Times

Fanny S. Chirinos

June 25, 2005

The new commanding officer installed Friday at **Naval Station Ingleside** may be the base's last as it faces possible closure.

Capt. Patricia Jackson, who took command of the base June 2003, handed the reigns to Capt. Timothy Watkins during a routine change of command ceremony on the base's dock.

Jackson and Watkins would not comment on the Base Realignment and Closure process or the fate of the base, although Watkins said he was excited to lead the mine warfare command. During her farewell speech, Jackson commented on the need to trust in the Navy's ultimate decision.

"The future here is uncertain, but we have faith," Jackson said. "Whatever happens, it will benefit us whether we know it or not."

San Patricio County Judge Terry Simpson said it's the Navy's custom to change commands of a base every one or two years and is no reflection of the base's future.

"We've already told Capt. Watkins he's not here to close the base, but to enhance the mission," Simpson said after Friday's ceremony.

Retired Gen. James T. Hill will visit the Ingleside base July 8, and **BRAC** Chairman Anthony Principi will visit the base July 10. A regional **BRAC** hearing is scheduled for July 11 in San Antonio.

Watkins hails from U.S. Joint Forces Command, Joint Warfighting Center in Norfolk, Va. Jackson will move to Washington, D.C., where she will be the director of personal development on the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations.

Graphic: CAPT. TIMOTHY WATKINS

Born: San Jose, Calif.

1982 Graduated from the Naval Academy

1992 Attended U.S. Naval War College

1993 Earned Master of Arts in National Security Affairs and Strategic Studies

2001 Served aboard USS Nassau as air boss

2004 Deployed in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, served as deputy chief, deployable training division, at U.S. Joint Forces Command, Joint Warfighting Center

Hundreds rally to save Texarkana military sites

Corpus Christi Caller-Times

Angela K. Brown

June 21, 2005

Holding signs that read "SOS" and "Red River Defense Complex: Our Best, Nothing Less," about 5,000 people rallied Tuesday as some Base Realignment and Closure Commission members arrived to tour two military facilities that could be shuttered.

The Red River Army Depot, one of the Texarkana area's largest employers, and one of its tenants, Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant, are among four major Texas military installations that the U.S. Department of Defense has recommended for closure.

As two of BRAC's nine members arrived at the Texarkana, Ark., airport and rode in a convoy to the military sites just west of Texarkana, Texas, thousands stood along the route waving U.S. flags. Many wore yellow T-shirts that read "It still ain't over." The depot survived after being on the closure list in 1995.

"I just cannot believe this is happening again," said Brenda Rochelle, a real estate agent. "Keeping the Red River depot and Lone Star plant open is good for America, not just Texarkana."

The BRAC members, retired Army Gen. James T. Hill and retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Sue Ellen Turner, toured the sites Tuesday afternoon. The commission is to meet in July in San Antonio and will submit its own list of base closures to President Bush in September.

The depot, which provides kits to reinforce armor for Humvees in Iraq and repairs Bradley Fighting Vehicles, would lose at least 2,500 jobs, mostly civilians, plus about 1,500 indirect jobs. The work would be spread to military bases in five states.

The ammunition plant, would lose about 150 jobs plus another 80 indirect jobs, the Pentagon estimated.

"We're there because we know the soldiers are fighting the terrorists that threaten to come into America," said Sharon Wilson, a 23-year depot employee who wore a green frog suit Tuesday to boost morale as residents rallied. "We put out the best product of any depots, and there's really no down time for us."

Texarkana, Ark., Mayor Horace Shipp said the closure would devastate the community, forcing many people to move. He said three generations of folks have worked at the Red River complex, which opened in 1941, and that training a work force in other towns would take 20 years.

"The purpose of an Army depot is to support war, and look at the contributions this depot makes," Shipp said. "That's an invaluable service."

In the report released last month, the DOD also recommended closing **Naval Station Ingleside** in South Texas and Brooks City Base in San Antonio, as well as several smaller installations.

But the department recommended adding thousands military and civilian jobs to Texas, many reassigned from Europe. The biggest gains would be Fort Bliss in El Paso and Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio.

BRAC chief to attend San Antonio hearing next month

Associated Press State and Local Wire

June 21, 2005

The head of a national panel reviewing which military bases should be closed said Tuesday that he will attend a hearing in San Antonio next month about Texas installations.

Anthony Principi, chairman of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, told U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, and other members of the state's congressional delegation that he will be on hand to discuss the futures of military bases in Texas.

"The overall impact on Texas is enormous and the chairman's presence indicates his interest in hearing the facts on which the commission must base its decisions," Hutchison said.

The Tuesday morning meeting also included U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, U.S. Rep. Ralph Hall, R-Rockwall, Sens. Blanche Lincoln and Mark Pryor, both Arkansas Democrats and Rep. Dan Boren, D-Oklahoma.

The lawmakers were concerned about the future of the Red River Army Depot and the Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant. Both installations near Texarkana employ many workers from Arkansas and southeastern Oklahoma.

The Pentagon has recommended the closure of Red River and Lone Star, as well as **Naval Station Ingleside** near Corpus Christi and Brooks City Base in San Antonio. Other installations are to be realigned under the plan.

The nine-member **BRAC** commission has until Sept. 8 to make recommendations to President Bush, who must accept or reject them by Sept. 23. The list becomes final if Congress doesn't reject it within 45 days.

In past years, about 85 percent of base closures recommended by the Pentagon have remained on the **BRAC** list.

Texas official: Assets may save NS Ingleside; Secretary of State to present case against its closure

Corpus Christi Caller-Times

Fanny S. Chirinos
June 9, 2005

INGLESIDE - Texas Secretary of State Roger Williams said Wednesday that **Naval Station Ingleside's** \$50 million facility, location and offer of the American dream are enough to remove it from the Base Realignment and Closure list.

These assets make a strong case against closing the base, when the **BRAC** commission meets in San Antonio July 11, Williams said after a tour of the facility.

The Pentagon recommended closing the base on May 13, the same day Gov. Rick Perry created the **BRAC** Response Strike Force, which Williams chairs. The strike force's mission is to help in efforts that may prevent the closure of Texas military installations. Williams also will visit the Red River Army Depot, Brooks City Base in San Antonio and Lone Star Army Ammunitions Plant, which are also on the base closure list.

The Pentagon also recommended the closure of three other bases and the realignment of six, including Naval Air Station Corpus Christi and the Corpus Christi Army Depot, but Williams said each base's case will be presented to the commission individually, not as a package.

The base's \$50 million electromagnetic roll facility, the U.S. Navy's only facility to demagnetize mine warfare ships, is something people will be made aware of along with its training facilities and deepwater port, Williams said.

"It's not about jobs lost. Every base will have that in their case," Williams said. "When the Department of Defense decided to bring the base to Ingleside, someone thought it was the right thing to do. We'll remind the commission of that."

Another factor Williams said he found at Ingleside was the opportunity for servicemen and women to buy homes.

"Having home equity is the American dream," Williams said. "Other locations don't offer that."

Concern about homeland security is also a reason to keep the base open, said William Ehrie, chairman of the Texas Military Preparedness Commission.

"The needs of national defense are different than they were during the last round of closures," Ehrie said. "This is not the time to be cheap, but invest wisely in the future."

The strike force meets with area leaders today to discuss strategy for July's hearing.

Although the history of the closure process shows the odds are against having the base removed from the list, Williams said the base is a great sale.

"I don't see the pits, I see the cherries," Williams said. "We can save this base."

Texas wants military bases safe from closure

Texas via University Wire

Marie Delahoussaye

June 9, 2005

Texas Secretary of State Roger Williams began a statewide tour of military facilities Wednesday in an effort to preserve them from potential closure.

The Pentagon released its recommendations last month for base closures and reorganization which Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said will save \$49 million and streamline the military for the modern era.

Texas military installations received mixed news. While the state as a whole will have a net gain if the recommendations are followed, three major military bases are scheduled to close -- **Naval Station Ingleside** near Corpus Christi, Red River Army Depot outside of Texarkana and Brooks City Base in San Antonio.

Williams is leading a governor-appointed task force to assist threatened military installations in making their case to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission next month, which can amend the Pentagon's suggestions before President George W. Bush gives final approval in September. Texas has lost 13 major military institutions in the four rounds of **BRAC** since the first commission was created in 1988.

Williams made his first stop Wednesday at **Naval Station Ingleside**. He said he was struck by the facility's excellent condition.

"You're surprised by how modern it is," said Williams. "It looks like a college campus."

Williams said the task force is a first in Texas and will bring together local communities and powerful politicians, including U.S. Senators Kay Bailey Hutchinson, R-Texas, and John Cornyn, R-Texas, in an effort to save military installations.

Now that the Pentagon has released its list, "it's going to be our responsibility to come up with a case showing that their recommendations may be somewhat flawed," Williams said.

Historically, the **BRAC** Commission has not significantly altered Pentagon recommendations for base closures. However, Williams said he feels Texas has a strong case.

"It's not a case of protecting jobs, it's a case of what's going to be good for America," Williams said. "A stronger America will benefit from a stronger Texas, and that means having presence here." While state and national leaders step up efforts to help preserve Texas bases, local communities continue strategies they have been quietly developing for years.

Ingleside City Manager Mike Rhea said local task forces have been gathering information on base realignment and closure for the past three years.

"We had a pretty good idea we were going to be on the list," Guerra said.

Currently, Rhea said the task force working on compiling information from the federal level in order to present an effective argument to the **BRAC** Commission.

"Before we can make a case against closure, we've got to know what the basis of the recommendation was," said Rhea.

Rhea said it has been difficult to follow the Pentagon's decision-making process because of tight security of relevant documents.

Last week, the Department of Defense released papers documenting the Pentagon's **BRAC** decisions but only to members of Congress and congressional staff members with special security clearance.

In a June 3 letter to Rumsfeld, Cornyn and Hutchinson urged the declassification of these documents so communities can respond to the recommendations.

"Communities were promised an open and honest dialogue with full and unfettered access to all of the data," the letter reads. "The process continues to be jeopardized as long as the information is not available."

Rhea said his task force has overcome security hurdles through government connections. However, he said it seems "curious" that the Department of Defense would maintain such a high degree of secrecy given the short timeline of the **BRAC** process.

After the **BRAC** Commission hears the case for Texas bases on July 11, it will have until Sept. 8 to send the list to the president, who must uniformly accept or reject it by Sept. 23.

Rhea said he feels confident that **Naval Station Ingleside** has a chance.

"We've got a tremendously strategic location in the western Gulf," Rhea said. The Gulf of Mexico, Rhea said, is much more important now than it was during the Cold War, a point the Department of Defense is undervaluing.

Though he retains hope for the naval station's future, Rhea said Ingleside is well-prepared for the economic damage the loss of a military installation can inflict on a community,

"We're a very active economy," Rhea said. If the naval station is forced to close, Rhea said the possibilities are endless for what could replace it, including a technical college, business campus, or cruise ship loading dock.

**Gathering facts for BRAC counterattack; Texas official visits Ingleside today,
Thursday**

Corpus Christi Caller-Times

Fanny S. Chirinos
June 8, 2005

Area community leaders said they will emphasize the value of the area's military presence to Texas Secretary of State Roger Williams, head of the state's BRAC Response Strike Force, when he visits Ingleside today and Thursday.

Judy Hawley, a member of the South Texas Military Facilities Task Force, said leaders plan to show Williams the assets of **Naval Station Ingleside** including the base's potential for expansion, the training facilities, its double-decked pier and deepwater port.

"That, along with the local perspective, will further help the strike force in the getting the base off the list," Hawley said.

The Defense Department recommended **Naval Station Ingleside** for closure May 13 when it released the Base Realignment and Closure list. The Pentagon also recommended realigning Naval Air Station Corpus Christi and the Corpus Christi Army Depot. The area faces a potential loss of 3,335 jobs, according to the Pentagon.

Gov. Rick Perry created the strike force in response to the recommendations, which would close a total of four Texas military bases and realign six others.

Williams plans to tour the Ingleside base today and meet with community leaders for a strategic session Thursday morning in Portland. He also will take an aerial tour of NAS Corpus Christi and NAS Kingsville.

He will offer the community assistance with analysts and coordinate grassroots efforts to prepare for the July 7 BRAC commissioner visit to Corpus Christi and a July 8 visit to Ingleside. He also will assist the area in the July 11 BRAC Commission hearing in San Antonio.

"This can be an emotional issue, but we're not going to give the commission our emotions, we're going to give them our facts," Williams said. "And we believe that's a strategy that can work. We have a short time and the opportunity to change some minds."

Ingleside Mayor Gene Stewart said his primary focus is pointing out the small amount of money that will be saved by closing the base.

"Even if some money is saved, moving the ships and personnel to either coast would still be costly for the Navy," Stewart said. "We won't be able to nail down specific numbers, but can make the point in generalities."

Josephine Miller, executive director of the San Patricio County Economic Development Corporation, said the Defense Department might be overlooking the Ingleside base's greatest asset.

"It's the only Navy base located next to deep water that is built on real land, not filled land," Miller said. "It's a deepwater port on the Gulf. If they let that go, they'll never get it back."

The strategic location also offers more protection from hurricanes than any other coastal port on the gulf and is surrounded by oil refineries, Miller added.

"We're trying to put forth our best arguments as to why base jobs should be saved," said Terry Carter, president and CEO of the Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce. "It's a team effort. It's about keeping our installations open and viable."

Also this month, Williams plans to visit the Red River Army Depot and Lone Star Ammunition facility near Texarkana, Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Brooks City Air Force Base in San Antonio and Ellington Field in Houston.

Lawmakers hit Capitol in effort to save bases; Salesmanship must be rapid, Seaman says

Corpus Christi Caller-Times

Tim Eaton

May 24, 2005

AUSTIN - In 1779, the British ship HMS Serapis blasted a hole in the Bon Homme Richard, a ship captained by American Revolutionary War hero John Paul Jones. The British captain called on Jones to surrender. But no. Jones replied, "I have not yet begun to fight!"

Fast-forward 226 years. Sen. Craig Estes, R-Wichita Falls, paraphrased those words at the Capitol on Monday. Estes' 2005 version of Jones' famous line summed up the goal of a gathering that focused on the Pentagon's recommendations to the federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

Estes talked about saving 2,624 jobs that could be taken from Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls as part of realignment. He was joined by others, including a Coastal Bend contingent, who spoke about potential problems associated with base realignment and closure.

Naval Station Ingleside is one of nine Navy bases the Pentagon has recommended for closure and one of 46 Navy bases it decided to realign. Most of Ingleside's mine-sweeper and mine-hunting assets are being relocated to San Diego except for the Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron 15 (HM-15), which is going to Norfolk, Va., where the other remaining helicopter mine countermeasures squadron, the HM-14, is based.

Commissioners from the Texas Military Preparedness Commission and Texas military community representatives pledged to fight the federal recommendations.

Texas Secretary of State Roger Williams, who serves as chairman of the state's **BRAC** response taskforce, said Texans need to stand together with one voice in the face of base closure and realignment.

"Do everything we can to sell Texas to the U.S.," Williams said.

Former Corpus Christi Mayor Loyd Neal said commissioners need to realize Naval Air Station Corpus Christi is an important hub for homeland security. The base is set for realignment and the loss of 92 jobs.

Rep. Gene Seaman, R-Corpus Christi, who attended a portion of the meeting, said he would like

to see federal decision-makers visit **Naval Station Ingleside** before the final list is crafted in September. He said that is the only way "to get a fair shake."

In the meantime, area leaders will have to promote NS Ingleside, which is slated for closure and the loss of 2,218 jobs.

"Any salesmanship that the community has to do has to be done rapidly," Seaman said, adding that officials have to remind **BRAC** officials about the potentially lost opportunities.

Ingleside City Manager Mike Rhea noted the port at Ingleside is the only military facility on the Gulf of Mexico that can handle all types of the Navy's ships.

Rep. Abel Herrero, D-Robstown, said his two concerns were the economic impact on the Coastal Bend and the possible misstep of losing strategic military positions in Ingleside and Corpus Christi.

In other parts of Texas, Fort Sam Houston and Fort Bliss are recommended to add personnel, 11,501 and 9,364, respectively. In all, Texas could gain 6,150 positions if federal officials go with the recommendations, making Texas the third biggest gainer of personnel in the country behind Maryland and Georgia.

U.S. Senators: Spare Ingleside; Officials meet to determine plan of action

Corpus Christi Caller-Times

Jaime Powell

May 16, 2005

Like other officials from the area and state, U.S. Senators Kay Bailey Hutchison and John Cornyn on Sunday in Corpus Christi vowed to jump into the fight to pull **Naval Station Ingleside** off the Pentagon's Base Realignment and Closure hit list.

Hutchison said she couldn't imagine shutting down such a base on the Gulf of Mexico that is so important to homeland security. Cornyn said he and Hutchison have had assurances from the **BRAC** Commission that it will not serve as a rubber stamp for the Department of Defense's recommendations.

"Ingleside is the only deepwater port in the Gulf of Mexico and it is critical to our homeland security mission," Hutchison said. "It is the closest Naval base to Mexico and Central and South America and it is the newest and most modern Naval base in the nation."

The two Texas senators and Republicans, along with U.S. Rep. Solomon Ortiz, D-Corpus Christi, met with leaders from Nueces and San Patricio counties at the Corpus Christi International Airport.

Hutchison, the chairwoman of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee, said she could not imagine that the Department of Defense would consolidate operations on the East and West coasts and not leave a base in the Gulf of Mexico. Yet both **Naval Station Ingleside** and Naval Station Pascagoula in Mississippi are on the hit list.

Ingleside also is the only base on the Gulf coast with water deep enough to accommodate any ship in the Navy's fleet, area officials reiterated.

In addition to **Naval Station Ingleside**, Red River Army Depot, the Lone Star Army Ammunitions Plant and the Brooks City Base, the Pentagon has recommended reorganization of six Texas facilities. Those include Naval Air Station Corpus Christi and Corpus Christi Army Depot. Altogether, the recommendations would mean a loss of 3,335 direct jobs and 3,680 support jobs for the Corpus Christi region. The total job loss would top \$364 million in salaries.

The Pentagon's recommendation now goes to the independent **BRAC** Commission for review.

The strategy to save local military facilities will be for state and local leaders to work as a team to make sure that the **BRAC** Commission understands the ramifications of closing **Naval Station Ingleside**.

Hutchison and Cornyn's visit came a day after Gov. Rick Perry came to Corpus Christi to discuss the formation of the **BRAC** Response Strike Force. It will be made up of 14 state agencies that will be asked to make the best possible case to the commission about why the Texas bases should be kept open.

Perry said the strike force would be the lead agency in the fight to keep Texas bases open.

The strike force's work will begin today, when the Pentagon releases the information it used to make its recommendations. Strike force members then will begin combing through the data to find areas of flawed reasoning or erroneous facts.

Anthony Principi, the 2005 **BRAC** Commission chairman, has told Cornyn and Hutchison that he will send at least one **BRAC** commissioner to each affected base and to work with the Texas senators on the appeals process, they said.

Ortiz told gathered leaders Sunday that he wants to take that assurance one step further by collectively pushing for a **BRAC** Commission hearing in Ingleside.

"I want to believe that this decision is only temporary," Ortiz said. "We want a hearing for Ingleside because Ingleside has a huge impact. Some of them have never been to Ingleside. We need to bring them here to show them what a mistake has been made."

Hutchison said that in the last round of closures, 15 percent of the facilities on the list escaped closure.

"I think we should be in the 15 percent this time," she said.

Cornyn said overall, Texas did not fare too badly.

"Actually we made it through pretty well statewide," he said. "But some of the stories such as Ingleside we think need to be corrected."

After the meeting Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce President Terry Carter and Nueces County Commissioner Chuck Cazalas discussed what Carter termed the economic devastation the federal government could be forcing on the Coastal Bend.

"This consolidation on the east and west coast is pre-Pearl Harbor mentality in a post 9/11 environment," Carter said. "It just does not make sense."

Graphic: **BRAC** Dates

Sept. 8: Deadline for the **BRAC** commission to make its own base closure recommendations.

Sept. 23: Deadline for a presidential decision on whether to accept or reject the **BRAC** recommendations in their entirety -- the White House's only option. If President Bush accepts the plan, it becomes final within 45 legislative days, unless Congress passes a joint resolution to block the entire package.

Oct. 20: If Bush rejects the **BRAC** recommendations, the commission has until this date to submit a revised list of proposed closures.

Nov. 7: Deadline for the president to approve or disapprove the revised recommendations.

April 15, 2006: The commission terminates.

Texans gearing up for a close look at base closure report

San Antonio Express-News

Sig Christenson

May 16, 2005

Texans today begin the task of dissecting the Pentagon's voluminous base-closure report with an eye on finding glaring errors and fault lines in logic that could save three installations.

They have no hard evidence that Defense Department decisions to close Brooks City-Base, **Naval Station Ingleside** and Red River Army Depot in Texarkana were blown calls, but they do have one advantage in their battle to save 12,938 jobs: a variation of the NFL's instant replay.

The referees are the nine members of the 2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, commonly referred to as **BRAC**. They start the review this afternoon by quizzing top Pentagon officials about their desire to shutter 33 installations nationwide.

"In instant replay when a mistake has been made on the field, the replay officials are given the opportunity to look at the play from several directions over and over again, and the call can be changed," former Mayor Howard Peak said Sunday. "We have yet to know for sure whether any mistakes have been made."

The future of communities around Red River, Ingleside, Corpus Christi, Brooks and Wilford Hall Medical Center is at stake as the **BRAC** recommendations go under the microscope. Altogether those facilities have a \$1.6 billion-plus economic impact. They're cogs in homeland defense and the war on terrorism, but are seen as expendable by planners seeking to cut costs and create joint missions.

The Air Force wants to shift about half its 3,700 Brooks workers to Ohio. Wilford Hall would shutter its Level 1 trauma center, end its status as an inpatient facility and become an ambulatory clinic.

Peak said local leaders would scrutinize the **BRAC** list for mistakes while continuing to lure private firms to Brooks, which is owned by the city and leases space to the Air Force. New deals are in the works, he said, but he declined to elaborate.

Neither Brooks' demise nor that of Wilford Hall was unexpected by some, but many were surprised to see Fort Sam gain 9,364 jobs. The post graduates Army medics and will become a Defense Department Center for Joint Enlisted Training.

But Rep. Charlie Gonzalez, D-San Antonio, said leaders must learn how many Wilford Hall workers will move to Brooke Army Medical Center. The **BRAC** report is vague on the point, he said.

Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff said it's possible Wilford Hall might remain an inpatient center if University Hospital or another system here cuts a deal.

He said the trauma center likely won't remain, leaving the city with two such facilities; but Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-Laredo, called it critical to the South Side, adding, "I know it's going to be a difficult fight, but I'm not going to give up on this, no way."

That was the prevailing sentiment among politicians of both parties in the wake of **BRAC**'s bad news. Two Team Texas co-captains, Republican rivals Gov. Rick Perry and Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, praised the gains the state posted in this **BRAC** while vowing to fight for installations now on the chopping block.

Both toured towns hit hard by **BRAC** in whirlwind trips and agreed in separate San Antonio visits last weekend that the process had just begun.

"I'm here today to reassure the people of San Antonio and the surrounding area that we're not going to merely accept yesterday's news," Perry said while downtown Saturday.

He touted Brooks' role in developing such high-tech innovations as virtual reality training systems.

In an appearance Sunday at San Antonio International Airport, Hutchison talked of Ingleside's status as the Navy's only deep-water port in the Gulf of Mexico and Red River's role in rebuilding armored personnel carriers and Humvees battered by the Iraqi insurgency.

"Red River Army Depot has done the most in relation to the war in Iraq and Afghanistan probably of any depot in the Army," she said, noting it runs 24-hour shifts to rebuild vehicles ruined in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"They have gone the extra mile time and time and time again. Their productivity is the best. They win all the awards for excellence given by the Army. Their motto is, 'We work as if our lives depended on it.'"

As Hutchison, Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, Wolff and other leaders gathered here in a bipartisan show of solidarity, Red River worker Doug Scott said he had high hopes that Team Texas would

uncover evidence needed to persuade the **BRAC** commission to spare the depot.

"I think if we get that data in front of the right people and maintain our concentration on what we're doing (at the depot), we'll have a real good shot at getting off (the list)," said Scott, 59, of Atlanta, about 40 minutes southeast of Red River. "If we didn't have much of a workload right now it would be really bad, because you'd have time to cry in your milk. But we've got too much to do to concentrate on."

Texarkana needs the depot. It's the No. 1 employer with the town's best-paying jobs and a staple of life in East Texas since 1942. The Army, in turn, has needed its work force, which stood at 1,520 as Gulf War II began but has since nearly doubled to keep pace with the many vehicles and weapons systems that need to be refurbished.

Some here have put in 12 hours a day, seven days a week, for months. The workload has jumped from 2.3 million labor hours before the 9-11 attacks to 4 million.

The Pentagon wants to send Red River's workload to Alabama, Georgia and Pennsylvania, among other places, saying it would reduce the Army's industrial footprint for ground and missile systems and save \$539 million over 20 years.

Whether that's true isn't clear to retired Air Force Col. William Ehrie, chairman of the Texas Military Preparedness Commission.

Ehrie said Sunday he hadn't read the Pentagon's thick **BRAC** report and couldn't judge its recommendations.

But the best chance Texarkana and other impacted communities have, he suggested, is to debunk the Defense Department's case and prove why the bases should survive -- using facts, not emotional pleas.

Red River "got turned around in '95, and there's no reason why it can't be done again," Ehrie said. "But on the other hand, the case has to be made based on the facts."

Officials mum on Ingleside's future uses; Many say priority still lies in saving the Naval station

Corpus Christi Caller-Times
Alison Beshur
May 15, 2005

The Port of Corpus Christi, which has the right to acquire **Naval Station Ingleside** if it closes, won't even consider it as long as there's hope of saving the base, port officials say.

The base is on the Base Realignment and Closure Commission list disclosed Friday.

"We need stronger military presence, not a diminished military presence," Port Chairman Ruben Bonilla Jr. said, because future trade routes moving Chinese imports through Latin America to Gulf of Mexico ports would need increased military protection from potential terrorist attacks.

Port Commissioner Yolanda Olivarez declined to forecast future uses for the naval station. That would send the wrong message, she said.

"Premature speculation is not in the best interest of the community," Olivarez said last week, before the list's release. "We need to stay focused on supporting the site as a military base."

The port authority bought the land now occupied by the base with a \$25 million bond issuance in the mid-1980s.

A 576-acre tract was purchased for \$13.9 million and deeded to the Defense Department in September 1987. The authority also bought a 336-acre tract for \$3.7 million and deeded it in June 1989, according to port records.

It used the remaining \$7.3 million to make improvements to nearby waterways, docks, piers and bulkheads.

The State of Texas matched local funds and the City of Ingleside contributed \$5 million for the base's initial infrastructure, said San Patricio County Judge Terry Simpson.

Both deeds included reversionary interest clauses, allowing the port first dibs to purchase back the land should the Defense Department no longer need the land for maritime purposes, said port attorney Jimmie Welder with Welder, Leshin & Mahaffey.

To get it back, the port would have to pay for improvements made since the transfer. A breakdown of that amount has not been made available, but the total value of the base is about \$200 million, said Navy spokeswoman Fifi Kieschnick.

Comparisons

Port officials have no specific vision for redeveloping the base land, near the intersections of La Quinta Channel and the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway with the Corpus Christi Ship Channel in Corpus Christi Bay.

But the same can be said for all of the port's major land acquisitions during the past 10 years.

In 1996, the port authority paid about \$3.7 million for 75 acres to complete a tract on Harbor Island acquired through a land swap with Koch Pipeline Co. In late 1993, the authority bought about 43 adjoining acres from American Petrofina for \$655,000.

"It's considered a valuable piece of land at the entrance to the harbor," said port executive director John LaRue. "It looked like a good site for future development. That's the reason we bought it."

In 1998, the port authority paid \$3.2 million for 1,100 acres near La Quinta Channel, according to a transaction summary prepared by the authority.

Studies later showed the Harbor Island land could be developed as a fabrication site in the short-term and as a resort with condos, apartments and a resort-style golf course in the long-term, LaRue said. The land still has not been developed.

A separate study indicated the best possible use for the property along La Quinta Channel would

be a container terminal capable of off-loading containers sized to fit on the back of tractor trailers or rail cars.

"I can't say we bought it with the idea of it being a container terminal," LaRue said.

In 2002, the authority purchased a 311-acre tract next to **Naval Station Ingleside** for \$3.4 million. A proposal has been made to use that land to build a humidity-controlled facility for the military, but ground hasn't been broken and other best uses haven't been outlined.

If the port authority acquired the naval base, it would add more than 900 acres to its current inventory of 24,000 acres or 37.5 square miles of mostly undeveloped land available for economic development.

Best steward

Despite their reluctance to speculate, most port officials say the authority would make the best and most logical steward of the base land.

"Having the contiguous property would give us the opportunity to market the two together and offer a more comprehensive development site," said port Secretary Mike Carrell.

Bonilla said proposed projects for nearby port-owned land could be expanded to the base area. This includes land for marine or offshore, liquefied natural gas terminal fabrication, ship layberth facility, military storage facility or a cruise ship terminal.

Port Commissioner Kenneth Berry agreed the base could be used to layberth ships. It inevitably would continue to provide jobs whether in the hands of the military, port authority or private industry, he said.

"Certainly, if private industry is willing to pay more for it than the Port of Corpus Christi, then that would be much better for the local community, because it puts the site back on the tax rolls," Berry said. "Government shouldn't continue to spend money where it does not need to."

Richard Valls, president of Valls Group, a stevedoring, vessel and customs clearance company, said the port could guide the use of the land with deepwater access - a precious commodity, even in Corpus Christi.

"It (naval station) has a lot of nearby infrastructure that inherently make it a unique opportunity and facility," said Valls, who served as a port commissioner from 1982 to 1996. "You'd be hard-pressed to go and find one that was so well located for so many uses."

Graphic: Locator map

PORT-OWNED LAND

The Port of Corpus Christi owns about 24,000 acres or 37.5 square miles. If **Naval Station Ingleside** closes, the port

authority has reversionary rights included in the deed transferring the more than 900 acres of land to the Department of Defense.

Port's major land purchases in the past 10 years:

* Harbor Island

* La Quinta

* National Steel

La Quinta

In 1998, the port purchased 1,100 acres for \$3.2 million from El Paso Development Co.

National Steel

In 2002, the port bought 311 acres for \$3.4 million from Ingleside Holdings.

Harbor Island

In 1993, the port purchased 43 acres for \$655,600 from American Petrofina and in 1996, it bought 75 acres for

\$3.7 million from Fin-Tex Pipeline Co. and gained about 300 acres in land swaps with Koch Pipeline Co. and American Petrofina.

Naval Station Ingleside:

The port used \$25 million in bonds to:

* Purchase 576 acres for \$13.9 million, then deeded land to Department of Defense in September 1987.

* Buy 336 acres for \$3.7 million, then deeded land to Department of Defense in June 1989.

* Used \$7.3 million for improvements of dredging, docks, piers and bulkheads.

Coastal Bend is expected to bounce back from BRAC; Strong market for developers, builders is cited

Corpus Christi Caller-Times
Fanny S. Chirinos and Amanda Nelson
May 15, 2005

The red-hot real estate market has sufficient momentum to overcome the Defense Department's base-cutting plans for the Coastal Bend, agents say.

"I think it will have an effect, but I don't think it will be devastating," said Edd Price, a local Realtor with Century 21 Hallmark and secretary/treasurer for the Corpus Christi Association of Realtors board of directors. "It may slow it down a little bit, but I think it will pick up and go on."

Local communities initially expect the worst from a base closure - lost population, lost jobs, collapsing housing markets and a poorer quality of life for those left behind.

Those fears are substantiated by a 2005 Base Reutilization Status report from the Government Accountability Office stating only one-third of all communities have rebounded to pre-base-closure economic status. A cause for further concern is the estimated direct and indirect loss of about 7,000 jobs that would result in the Coastal Bend from the proposed closures announced Friday.

But local Realtors and developers remain optimistic, based on the recent boom years for real estate sales and the signals they've seen for future growth independent of the military.

Residential housing activity has increased steadily in the Corpus Christi area since 1992 and gross retail sales have almost doubled since 1992, according to the Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University.

The increase went from steady to precipitous the past two years. Last year was a record for home sales in Corpus Christi - the most sold and the highest average price - based on figures from the Coastal Bend Multiple Listing Service. The sales generated 26 percent more money than 2003, which also was a stellar year. The Corpus Christi Association of Realtors reports that 2004 was a record year for the number of homes sold, almost 5,000.

Corpus Christi is ahead of the state average in home price appreciation, according to the Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight.

Commercial real estate broker Matt Cravey said if there was ever a time for the local economy to withstand realignment of Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, this is it.

"Obviously any loss is not good," he said. "The good news is that Flour Bluff, which probably will be hit the hardest, has unbelievable growth right now."

Cravey said major retailers are looking for sites in Flour Bluff, and the area soon will see some major announcements about new and expanded retail.

Local Realtor Gene Guernsey said it's important to remember the final decision on realignment won't be made until September, and then there still will be a delay to the procedure in actually moving personnel out of the area. Out of the 1,000 military personnel from Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Guernsey said just a few hundred own homes in the area.

"The loss of jobs and income will be gradual and can be absorbed," Guernsey said. "In any event, it is correct to say that we've got such a seller's market that having a few more houses on the market can easily be absorbed," he said.

Even in Ingleside, with its Navy base recommended for closure and the possible loss of more than 2,000 military and civilian personnel, the outlook was confident.

"It will definitely affect the market, but I don't think it's going to be long term," said Stella Herrmann, a Realtor and city councilwoman in Ingleside.

"I think that people are going to start getting nervous, and they're going to put their homes on the

market, but there are a lot of people out there looking," she said. "The market's been excellent."

Military and military support personnel make up a large part of the area, but not the majority, Hermann said.

"People are moving in who have no ties to the military and property values have gone up," she said. "They're moving here because they're retiring, to be closer to the hospital and to live a better quality of life."

Naval Station Ingleside has more than 900 acres that could attract businesses needing a pier and a deep-water channel, said Herrmann, and area builders aren't worried about the **BRAC** list.

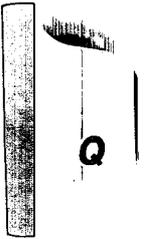
Ingleside City Manager Mike Rhea agreed, saying people are buying homes before they are completed. Even with military personnel amounting to 20-25 percent of the city's residents, Rhea said, a base closure would not be as detrimental as people might think.

"Other projects are taking place in the area and people are being brought in constantly," Rhea said. "Builders aren't worried about the base closing. They're looking at the potential of the area independent from the base."

Bill Underbrink, owner and broker of Underbrink and Associates L.L.C., said he wants to keep the base open but its closure could mean better things in the long run.

"I'm spending a lot of money in the area because that's how sure I am that the area will have an economic boom. Five years ago, if the base had closed, I would have led the parade out of town. Today, it will hurt the area for about a year and then it'll rebound."

Editorial/Opinion Articles



**2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
Suggested Talking Points for Visit to Sheppard AFB**

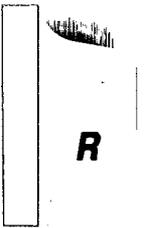
- 1. Military value is the most important consideration to the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) as the Commission evaluates the suggestion made by the Department of Defense (DoD) to realign Sheppard AFB.**
 - The Commission will evaluate the economic, environmental, and other effects that the re-alignment could have on the surrounding community but the key factor in the Commission's conclusion as to whether or not to suggest the Sheppard AFB for realignment is military value.
 - The Commission understands Sheppard AFB's commitment to the Joint Strike Fighter program and is aware of recent renovations made to the installation. The Commission will evaluate the military value of the installation and compare it to Eglin AFB which is slated to receive the Joint Strike Fighter program.

- 2. The Commission is aware of the human impact that the suggestions to realign the Sheppard AFB could have and is taking this into consideration.**
 - The Congress established the Commission as an independent entity to ensure that all critical factors have been evaluated, and that the effects on the surrounding community have been taken into account in the decision to recommend a base for closure or realignment.
 - The Commission will evaluate the economic and social impact that the base's realignment would have on the surrounding community, while basing its decision almost entirely upon military value.
 - The Commission is aware of the economic impact that a loss of roughly 2,600 jobs can have on a local community.

- 3. The Congress established the Commission as a non-political, transparent, and independent entity to perform a thorough evaluation, through a process set out by law, of the bases suggested for closure or realignment by DoD.**
 - The Commission serves to ensure that all pertinent factors have been evaluated and that the impact that the suggestions to close or realign a base would have on the surrounding community, have been taken into full account.
 - The Commission encourages public input. Community groups wishing to submit information that they feel may have been overlooked by DoD, are encouraged to contact their Congressional representative. Additionally, the public may submit comments directly through the Commission's official website: www.brac.gov.

Facts compiled from included press clippings.




R

**2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
Suggested Q's & A's for Visit to Sheppard Air Force Base**

Q1. Under the Pentagon's proposal, the Wichita Falls area would lose approximately 2,624 jobs due to the realignment at Sheppard AFB. Will the Commission evaluate the economic impact of the realignment at Sheppard AFB?

A1. The Commission will perform a thorough, accurate, and objective analysis which will take into account, chiefly, the military value of Sheppard AFB, but will also consider the impact that the realignment of the installation would have on the surrounding community. Please be assured that the Commission will make a full evaluation, as prescribed by law, before coming to its conclusions and formulating its suggestions.

Q2. Under the BRAC recommendations, the DoD will relocate a sufficient number of maintenance technicians and logistic support personnel from the Joint Strike Fighter to Eglin AFB in Florida. Will the Commission review Eglin's AFB's capabilities to support the Joint Strike Fighter program?

A2. The Commission will perform a thorough, accurate, and objective analysis which will take into account, chiefly, the military value of Sheppard AFB. Military value is determined through three primary criteria—jointness, ease of mobility, and role in the changing global threat structure. In reviewing the proposal regarding the Joint Strike Fighter program the Commission will also evaluate Eglin AFB's ability to receive incoming missions, personnel, and equipment.

Q3. Recently, Governor Rick Perry has said that he would establish a "strike force" to coordinate with communities that would be negatively impacted by the BRAC recommendations. In addition, Senators John Coryn (a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee) and Kay Bailey Hutchison have stated that they will fight certain BRAC recommendations. Will the Commission's evaluation of the DoD be non-partisan? Does the Commission expect Texas to receive a favorable evaluation given that the President was previously governor of the state?

A3. The Congress established the BRAC Commission as an entirely non-partisan and non-political entity to independently evaluate whether DoD made its recommendations in accordance with the law. The Commission will serve to provide accountability to the public and ensure that all suggestions have been based upon the criteria set forth by statute. The Commission will perform a thorough, accurate, and objective analysis, in a completely open and transparent manner, which will take into account, chiefly, the military value of Sheppard AFB, but will also consider the economic, environmental and other effects that the closure of the installation would have on the surrounding community.

Q4. Under the BRAC recommendations Texas will have a net gain of 6,150 jobs. Will the overall net gain in jobs for Texas influence the Commission's decision on individual communities that may be negatively impacted?

A4. The Commission will consider the full impact of the DoD's recommendations on the local communities surrounding installations that are negatively impacted. Each

installation will be evaluated independently and on its own merits—primarily through criteria established to determine military value.

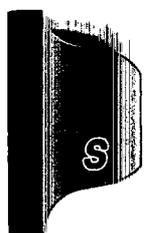
Q5. The changes proposed at Sheppard AFB include the relocation of some medical training resources. Will the Commission evaluate the negative impact that the relocation of medical assets would have on the installation and the community?

A5. The Commission will consider the full impact of the DoD's recommendations on the local community. The Commission understands that decisions regarding health care may have a dramatic impact on a community. Oftentimes, the decision to remove a medical capability at one location requires that it be performed at another. The Commission will analyze the DoD's recommendations regarding these medical resources deliberately and carefully.

Q6. How can the Community inform the Commission of information that the Community feels may have been overlooked by DoD?

A6. The BRAC Commission encourages public input into this transparent and objective process. Community groups who wish to submit information for the appropriate regional hearing are urged to contact their Congressional representative. Additionally, the public may submit comments through the Commission's official website, which is www.brac.gov.

Facts compiled from included press clippings.



SHEPPARD AIR FORCE BASE TEXAS

National Articles

Local Articles

Base list leaves Texas cities relieved or rethinking plans; El Paso would gain 11,500 troops at Fort Bliss

Senators vow fight to save facilities

Pentagon announces Texas base closings

State may gain jobs but lose four bases

23K jobs ride on BRAC; List to be out today

Senator Hutchison Questions BRAC Recommendation List

Texas Bases Brace for Military's 'Hit List'; Enormous effort has been made to keep installations

Editorial Articles

Bases for arguments

National Articles

Local Articles

Base list leaves Texas cities relieved or rethinking plans; El Paso would gain 11,500 troops at Fort Bliss

Houston Chronicle

John W. Gonzalez, Terri Langford, Thomas Korosec

May 14, 2005

Texas military communities faced the Pentagon's base closure recommendations with clashing sentiments Friday after waging aggressive campaigns to avert any loss of jobs or prestige.

While Fort Hood in Central Texas, Fort Bliss in El Paso and Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio were enthusiastic about possible increases in personnel, other installations were reeling from the specter of downsizing or closing.

Naval Station Ingleside, **Sheppard** Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Brooks City Base in San Antonio and two Army installations in Northeast Texas could be the hardest hit, but their advocates were planning strategies to immediately contest the Department of Defense recommendations to the Base Closure and **Realignment** Commission.

"I'm going to Washington (D.C.) on Sunday," said retired Brig. Gen. John Jernigan of San Antonio, whose community showed a net gain of personnel despite plans to withdraw Air Force aerospace medical research projects from Brooks City Base, which will remain a business park,

and shift some programs out of Lackland Air Force Base.

The big winners

Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio could be one of the state's biggest gainers, adding more than 9,300 troops. All enlisted medical technician training - for all the military service branches - would be concentrated at its Brooke Army Medical Center.

But Wilford Hall Medical Center at Lackland Air Force Base would lose its renowned trauma center and training wing and would be transformed into a "world-class" outpatient and ambulatory surgery center.

El Paso would benefit even more, officials said. About 11,500 troops would be added to Fort Bliss as Army units were relocated there.

Fort Hood initially would show a 9,000-troop gain, but it would gradually lose that many soldiers as units are shifted around the nation, officials said.

Leaders at each of the major Army installations said they were examining the voluminous **realignment** plans.

Officials in Wichita Falls were sorting out the details of their projected loss of 2,624 military personnel at **Sheppard** Air Force Base, the city's largest's employer.

It's not the first time the base appeared on a **realignment** list, but it is the first time it's meant personnel losses for the area, officials said.

"We're happy we didn't make closure," said City Manager Darron Leiker. "We're disappointed, we're surprised to be on the loss end of the **realignment**."

In Texarkana, two facilities that doubled the city's population when they first opened during World War II were recommended for closure: the Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant and the adjacent Red River Army Depot.

"It's going to have a tremendous impact on this community," Mayor James Bramlett said. About 2,500 civilian and military jobs would be lost in a community of 61,000 residents.

"Everyone's going to be hurt: grocery stores, car dealers, medical facilities, you name it," Bramlett said.

Red River had been targeted to close in 1995. But the federal base closing commission left it open to work on Bradley Fighting Vehicles.

The Lone Star plant, which makes grenades, mortar shells and other ammunition, has seen production decline since the Vietnam War era. Its demolition grounds have been designated a federal Superfund site because of soil and water contaminants.

Somber mood in Ingleside

The mood was sullen in Ingleside with its naval station on the Pentagon's "hit-list."

After living in the shadow of coastal neighbor Aransas Pass, Ingleside shed its wallflower status in 1985 when the Defense Department chose it for a \$ 140 million home port for the Navy. Suddenly, the town with one stop light and roughly 5,000 people was poised to become an economic generator.

"It was supposed to be a home port for a carrier battle group and the USS Lexington and battleship Wisconsin," recalled Mike Rhea, Ingleside's city manager.

"(But) They (the Navy) retired the Lexington and it's a museum in Corpus Christi and the Wisconsin is a museum in Norfolk (Va.)," Rhea said. "There goes the reason for being."

Naval Station Ingleside languished until 1995. Then, the Navy began moving some of its minesweepers to Ingleside and established a training facility. Ingleside doubled its population to about 10,000 by 2000.

Senators vow fight to save facilities

Associated Press State and Local Wire

May 15, 2005

Asserting that military bases in Texas are vital to national defense and homeland security, the state's two U.S. senators vowed Sunday a fight to save facilities the Pentagon targeted for closure.

Republican Sens. John Cornyn and Kay Bailey Hutchison visited local officials in four cities that would be among those hardest hit by the Department of Defense's list of military bases recommended for closure or realignment.

The Red River Army Depot and Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant near Texarkana, Naval Station Ingleside and Brooks City Base in San Antonio have been recommended for closure. Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls is set to be realigned, which officials there said would cost the city 2,624 jobs.

"This is not the beginning of the end," Cornyn said in Monday's edition of the Texarkana Gazette.

Hutchison tried to reassure Texarkana officials by pointing out that 15 percent of the 1995 recommendations were ultimately changed by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

In Corpus Christi, Hutchison said she could not imagine that the Department of Defense would consolidate operations on the East and West Coast and not leave Naval Station Ingleside in the Gulf of Mexico.

"Ingleside is the only deep water port in the Gulf of Mexico and it is critical to our homeland security mission," Hutchison said in Monday's editions of the Corpus Christi Caller-Times.

In Wichita Falls, Hutchison said they were surprised by the call for reductions at Sheppard because of the millions of dollars that had been spent in recent years on improvements at the base.

She said she thought the Joint Strike Force maintenance training should remain at Sheppard instead of being moved to Elgin Air Force Base in Florida, as the list recommends.

"The testing and maintenance training need to be in Texas," Hutchison said in a story in Monday's Wichita Falls Times Record News. "Keeping it all together will be an important part of our case."

"It is important for us not to overreact to this because it is only the beginning," Cornyn said. "It is entirely conceivable that they made mistakes in the original inquiry."

The DOD recommendations advance to the commission, which has until Sept. 8 to send its recommendations to President Bush. Bases can be removed and added to the list.

Despite the proposed base closings, Texas would gain 6,150 military and civilian jobs under the proposal.

Pentagon announces Texas base closings

Associated Press State and Local Wire

Suzanne Gamboa

May 13, 2005

The Pentagon on Friday recommended closing Naval Station Ingleside, Brooks City Base, Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant, Red River Army Depot and several smaller military installations in Texas.

However, Texas would see a net gain of more than 9,000 military jobs under the plan, led by growth at Fort Bliss in El Paso and Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, according to the Pentagon. Six bases would be realigned, including Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Naval Air Station Corpus Christi and **Sheppard** Air Force Base.

The Base **Realignment** and Closure Commission will review the Pentagon's list and send its recommendations to President Bush. He must issue a list to Congress by Sept. 23. Congress has 45 days to reject it before it becomes official.

Rep. Ralph Hall, R-Rockwall, whose district includes Red River Army Depot and the Lone Star ammunition plant, said he plans to fight the recommendations.

"We're at war and fighting a terrorist that hates us, and both those facilities have been the difference in wars in the past and will be the difference in wars of future," he said. "I think it's a mistake, and we are going to look into it, and we have to take them on."

Red River has been previously recommended for closure but survived. Although its work had slowed in peacetime, the Iraq war has sent numerous damaged Humvees and Bradleys its way for repair and reinforcement.

The closures would cost Danny Whitt, owner of Shorty's Southern Maid Donut Shop & Diner in Texarkana, \$1,000 in monthly revenue. He'll also have to let one employee go. The shop sells doughnuts, rolls and other pastries to both plants.

"I hate it," said Whitt, 48. "It's devastating. I really thought we would miss the list."

Fort Bliss in El Paso is recommended for significant expansion with a net gain of about 11,500 military and civilian jobs. Fort Sam Houston would add about 9,000 jobs.

The Defense Department is proposing to create a San Antonio regional medical center by moving the medical function of the 59th Medical Wing at Wilford Hall on Lackland Air Force Base to Brooke Army Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston, also in San Antonio. Wilford Hall would be converted to an ambulatory care center.

Army National Guard Reserve Centers recommended for closing are located in Dallas, El Paso, Ellington Air Field in Houston, Lufkin, Marshall and New Braunfels. Naval Reserve stations in Orange and Lubbock also are recommended for closing along with an Army Reserve base in Houston.

One of the unexpected moves came at **Sheppard Air Force Base** near Wichita Falls.

The Pentagon's plan calls for relocating "a sufficient number" of maintenance technicians and logistic support personnel from the Joint Strike Fighter site to Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. A Pentagon list says the base would lose about 2,624 military and civilian jobs.

Nearly a quarter million uniformed personnel and civilians are connected with the state's 18 major military installations, pumping about \$43 billion a year to the state. Texas also is home to several guard and reserve sites.

Since 1988, 17 Texas military bases have been closed and several others realigned.

Texas Gov. Rick Perry said he would create a "strike force" to work with communities that could be negatively impacted by the proposed closure list.

"For more than a year, Texas officials have been working aggressively to position our military installations as vital to the overall mission of the U.S. military," Perry said in a statement. "Our goal will be to convince federal officials of the importance of these bases to the war on terror and the overwhelming support from communities all across Texas for our men and women in the military so that those bases remain open."

Lobbyists, elected officials and communities have been playing cheerleader to the state's bases for a couple of years, with their boosterism intensifying in recent weeks.

"Our effort has been to make Texas be seen legitimately as a very good value to do business in," said Michael Smith, a retired Air Force general who headed the state's Military Preparedness Commission.

State may gain jobs but lose four bases

Fort Worth Star Telegram
Chris Vaughn; Dave Montgomery
May 14, 2005

Naval Air Station Fort Worth, for example, would grow under the Pentagon's base-closing plan.

Gov. Rick Perry vows to fight the closings. The Congress fought it, and the public feared it. After four years in the making, the breathlessly awaited list of bases and facilities that the Pentagon no longer wants was unleashed by the Department of Defense -- on Friday the 13th, no less.

Texas would lose four major bases but come out ahead overall in the battle for jobs under the Pentagon's closure list, which targets 33 large bases in 22 states. The announcement brought howls of protest from community and congressional leaders in the hardest-hit parts of the country.

But the Pentagon recommended hundreds more **realignments** that would ultimately increase the number of service members based in Texas and several other states.

Texas' overall job gain, military and civilian, would be 6,150, the third-highest in the nation. Naval Air Station Fort Worth would grow by at least 426 jobs.

That's of no comfort to people in the Texarkana area, where leaders are coping with the realization of potentially losing 2,650 jobs through the closure of the Red River Army Depot and the Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant.

"They've got their heart and soul in protecting the soldier in the field, and they're working 24/7," said Bowie County Judge James Carlow. "All of a sudden this list comes out and tells them, 'What you're doing doesn't make any difference. We don't need you anymore.'"

Texas leaders had been bracing for bad news, despite an intense campaign to preserve the state's 18 major installations that produce an annual economic impact of \$77 billion, according to the Texas Military Preparedness Commission.

Hardest-hit were South and East Texas, where the Pentagon targeted Naval Station Ingleside, Brooks City Base in San Antonio and the Red River depot for closure. Each would lose more than 2,000 people.

Also on the list were seven Army National Guard facilities, most in East and far West Texas, and a handful of reserve centers.

Spared for closure but facing reductions in missions and troop levels are Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, **Sheppard** Air Force Base in Wichita Falls and Naval Air Station Corpus Christi.

Texas lawmakers condemned the recommended closures and have vowed a unified effort to restore the bases during a four-month review by the nine-member Base **Realignment** and Closure Commission. The panel is headed by Anthony Principi, former secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Sen. John Cornyn, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said he planned to meet with leaders of the affected communities beginning Sunday as the state prepares to "press our case" before Principi's commission.

"Overall, Texas comes out a net winner," Cornyn said, "but obviously there are a lot of concerns with some specific decisions."

Gov. Rick Perry announced the creation of a state "strike force" aimed at vigorously fighting the Texas closings recommended by the Pentagon.

"These are world-class facilities that help our men and women in uniform, and they're essential assets in the war on terror that America cannot afford to lose," Perry said. "The state of Texas is prepared to make every effort to keep these bases open."

Perry signed an executive order creating the Base **Realignment** and Closure Response Strike Force that will review the closure proposals and marshal state and community support to reverse the decision.

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison said Rumsfeld's list "is a first step in the base-**realignment** process and is by no means final."

Focus on joint bases

The Bush administration and the Defense Department, buffeted by the costs of the war in Iraq and the staggering prices associated with new weapons systems, have sought since 2001 to reduce the military's infrastructure.

At one time, officials said the military didn't need 25 percent of its base capacity. In the end, the closings list wasn't nearly that large, mostly because the Pentagon needs the room for tens of thousands of troops returning from overseas.

The focus of much of the **realignment** was on establishing joint facilities, which more than one service can use.

"Because jointness is key to creating military value, that was our goal," said Michael Wynne, the Pentagon's technology and weapons-buying chief, who oversaw the base-review project.

A few bases qualified as winners under the resulting **realignments**, two of them hitting the Army jackpot. Fort Bliss in El Paso and Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio stand to gain 11,500 and 9,300 troops, respectively, under the **realignment**.

Texas would have a net gain of 9,838 military positions and a net loss of 3,688 civilian and contractor jobs under the plan, putting the state 6,150 jobs ahead.

Naval Air Station Fort Worth, the nation's first joint reserve base, is scheduled to get an additional two squadrons and additional aircraft from two existing squadrons.

At least 426 military and civilian jobs could be added at the west-side base at the expense of bases in Georgia, Oklahoma and Arizona that would be closed or realigned.

"We have always felt we had a very compelling case" for expanding the base, said Rep. Kay Granger, R-Fort Worth.

Bill Ehrie, chairman of the Texas Military Preparedness Commission and a former commander of Dyess Air Force Base in Abilene, said the **realignments** recommended were more extensive than he anticipated.

"It's a good day for some, a rough day for others," Ehrie said. "We lost some installations I would have liked to have kept. But we gave it our best shot. Now we'll have to address some issues with the BRAC commission at the regional hearings."

Wichita Falls' loss

In Wichita Falls, stunned local leaders spent Friday trying to assess the fallout from the potential loss of 2,600 Air Force personnel from **Sheppard** Air Force Base, a major training facility for pilots and enlisted personnel.

Sheppard had been on few of the analysts' impact lists, while Goodfellow Air Force Base in San Angelo had appeared on most of them. But Goodfellow was untouched.

The Air Force wants to move some medical training from **Sheppard**, which accounts for 20 percent of the Wichita Falls economy, to Fort Sam Houston and aircraft-maintenance training to Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.

What is unknown is whether the more than 2,600 positions **Sheppard** is to lose are permanently stationed personnel or whether fewer students would rotate through **Sheppard**.

"It certainly will have a negative economic impact," said Tim Chase, president of the city's Board of Commerce and Industry. "There's no way to minimize that. But there are several factors that lead me to believe the economic impact will not probably be as significant as it would lead you to believe."

Carlow said East Texas leaders will immediately begin trying to convince base-**realignment** commissioners of the value of Red River, which rebuilds and repairs Bradley vehicles, Humvees and Patriot missiles.

Although Red River barely survived past base closings, people thought the pace of Iraq-related work made it safer this time.

"I think they made a mistake," Carlow said. "I intend to show them they did."

The news was mixed in San Antonio, with about 70,000 jobs at its four Air Force and Army bases, but hard to complain about in the end. Even with the removal of the Air Force from Brooks City Base, the city could gain 3,100 jobs.

"We knew Brooks was going to be vulnerable again," said Ed Davis, economic-development manager for the city. Brooks had appeared on the Pentagon's 1995 list but was later removed by commissioners.

"Although we hate to lose the jobs at Brooks, we've already got a redevelopment process under way. We're about three years ahead of any other community," Davis said.

Lackland would lose about 3,100 jobs under the **realignment**, and service at Wilford Hall Medical Center would be reduced. But Davis said officials hope that those positions would only be shuffled to Fort Sam Houston, scheduled to become the military's joint medical-training site.

"We support what the [Department of Defense] is doing, and we know why they're doing it," he said. "We're not saying that all their recommendations are sound, though."

Perry was asked how the state stood to lose four military bases with two Republican senators and

a Republican governor who personally knows President Bush, also a Texan.

Perry said that the Pentagon followed a "relatively blind process" and that the state will use its clout to try to stop the closures.

"I'm sure glad we've got a president that's from Texas and our senators are doing a good job," Perry said. "This is a team approach, and we will use every person on that team in whatever way that we can."

Staff Writer Jay Root Contributed to This Report, Which Includes Material From the Associated Press.

Base-closing timeline

Monday: Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld testifies before the nine-member base-closing commission.

May through August: The commission will hold public hearings, visit sites and collect data on each facility on the Pentagon's list to determine whether the Defense Department proposal was justified. The commission can change the list.

Sept. 8 The deadline for the commission to forward its report of recommendations to the president.

Sept. 23 The deadline for the president to accept or reject the recommendations in their entirety. If they are accepted, they will become final unless Congress rejects the recommendations in their entirety by the end of its 2005 session.

Oct. 20: The deadline for the commission to submit a revised report to the president.

Nov. 20, 2005: The deadline for the president to approve a revised report and send it to Congress. The Pentagon will then have six years to close, downsize or move bases on the final list.

23K jobs ride on BRAC; List to be out today

Corpus-Christi Caller Times

Brad Olson

May 13, 2005

After years of anticipation, the Defense Department's day of reckoning - when it will release recommendations for closing many of the nation's 440 military bases - is here.

Last-minute speculation about the Coastal Bend's four military facilities- Naval Air Station Corpus Christi and Corpus Christi Army Depot, Naval Air Station Kingsville and Naval Station Ingleside - focused on Naval Station Ingleside as a likely victim.

Lawmakers, defense officials and local boosters all said they had not seen the list and that any information released before this morning would be speculative at best. The list is set to be released after a morning news conference with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld on the

department's Web site at www.defenselink.mil/brac, including details about why certain bases were recommended for closure or **realignment**.

The four area military facilities generate about \$1 billion a year and about 23,000 jobs.

Local base commanders returned this week from a two-day conference in Washington, D.C., part of which was dedicated to preparations for today's release.

Capt. Paula Hinger, the base commander at Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, said all bases were represented at the conference and no specifics were given, only general information. Base spokesman Robert Torres said Hinger won't see a closure list until about an hour before Rumsfeld's recommendations, the same time members of Congress will be notified.

Gary Bushell, a local military consultant for two area military groups, said no list would be valid until Rumsfeld's announcement.

"There is no official list you can rely on until then," he said. "People are still working on trying to affect the decision, whatever it is, as we speak."

Loyd Neal, chairman of the South Texas Military Facilities Task Force, is on vacation until May 19 in Germany.

Bushell said whatever the outcome of today's announcement, the task force will be ready.

"Through three previous rounds of base closures, we've been extremely fortunate and have grown our military presence," he said. "If we're on the list in a negative way, we will work to change that. If we're not on list in a negative way, we will be working to add missions for the region."

Over the past six months, much of the speculation has focused on Ingleside, as local boosters and key lawmakers have stated publicly that the Navy was recommending the base for closure. But all of the bases have vulnerabilities. Depots similar to the Corpus Christi Army Depot have not fared well in past rounds, and rumors about the possibility of removing air training from Corpus Christi have circulated since the first closure round in 1988.

Judy Hawley, chairwoman of the North Bay Military Task Force, said she was optimistic about Ingleside's chances and ready to fight on its behalf.

"If we are on the list, clearly that will be a budget-driven decision and we think that's a false economy," Hawley said. "We're going to give it everything we can to tell our story and make sure the (Base **Realignment** and Closure Commission) is advised of the merits of Naval Station Ingleside.

"Our story is succinct and it's extremely strong."

Once the list is released, the commission whose task it is to review the recommendations will have until Sept. 8 to submit a revised list to President Bush, which he will send to Congress Nov. 7. By Dec. 22, Congress must vote either yes or no on the final recommendations.

Graphic: NAVAL STATION INGLESIDE

* Civilian employees: 365

* Military reserve, active-duty employees: 3,044

* Home to 20 ships: 10 mine countermeasure ships and 10 coastal minehunters.

NAVAL AIR STATION KINGSVILLE

* Civilian employees: 892

* Military active-duty employees: 479

* Base trains about 150 aviators per year for Navy and Marine Corps.

NAVAL AIR STATION CORPUS CHRISTI

* Civilian employees: 1,500

* Military reserve, active-duty employees: 1,883

* The base is home to four pilot training squadrons training about 300 aviators per year, Corpus Christi Army Depot and the Mine Warfare Command and also houses the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Customs and the Naval Hospital.

CORPUS CHRISTI ARMY DEPOT

* Civilian employees: 2,700

* Military employees: 7

* Maintains Army aircraft and aeronautical equipment, trains military personnel, prepares and distributes aircraft for overseas shipment.

Source: Navy, Corpus Christi Regional Economic Development Corp.

Graphic: THE ROAD AHEAD FOR MILITARY BASES

Pentagon officials say they are looking at all 425 military installations in the United States for the coming round of military base closings. The process will be handled by an independent commission, working from a preliminary list from Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld.

Main deadlines in the process

MAY 16

Rumsfeld must send his list of proposed closings to the commission and Congress.

JULY 1

GAO must issue its analysis of the list to Congressional defense committees.

SEPT. 8

Commission must send its list to President Bush

SEPT. 23

Bush must either accept or reject the list in its entirety.

OCT. 20

Commission must issue revised list if Bush had objections.

NOV. 7

President must forward revised commission list to Congress.

Secretary Rumsfeld

Base-closing commission

President Bush

Congress

Congress studies the list

No

Yes

Congress must disapprove of the list within 45 legislative days or before adjournment; otherwise it becomes binding.

Sources: Department of Defense; Congressional Research Service; Government Accountability Office

Credit: New York Times News Service

Graphic: TEXAS BASES

Here's a brief look at the major Texas military installations, with locations and number of employees:

- * **Sheppard** Air Force Base, Wichita Falls, 9,575 military personnel, 1,442 civilian personnel.
 - * Fort Worth Joint Reserve Base, 267 military, 1,342 civilian.
 - * Dyess Air Force Base, Abilene, 5,271 military, 391 civilian.
 - * Fort Bliss, El Paso, 10,431 military, 1,491 civilian.
 - * Goodfellow Air Force Base, San Angelo, 2,899 military, 574 civilian.
 - * Laughlin Air Force Base, Del Rio, 1,407 military, 928 civilian.
 - * Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, 17,096 military, 3,916 civilian.
 - * Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, 7,963 military, 3,979 civilian.
 - * Randolph Air Force Base, San Antonio, 4,577 military, 6,540 civilian.
 - * Brooks City-Base, San Antonio, 1,196 military, 1,228 civilian.
 - * Naval Station Ingleside, 585 military, 229 civilian.
 - * Corpus Christi Naval Air Station and Corpus Christi Army Depot, 2,207 military, 4,088 civilian.
 - * Kingsville Naval Air Station, 434 military, 229 civilian.
 - * Fort Hood, Killeen, 43,522 military, 3,641 civilian.
 - * Ellington Field, Houston, 2 military, 344 civilian.
 - * Lone Star Ammunition Plant, Texarkana, no numbers available.
 - * Red River Army Depot, Texarkana, 3 military, 1,844 civilian.
-

SENATOR HUTCHISON QUESTIONS BRAC RECOMMENDATION LIST

State News Service

May 13, 2005

The following information was released by the Office of Texas Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison:

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX), Chairman of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee, today released the following statement in response to the Department of Defense's Base **Realignment** and Closure (BRAC) recommendation list released today:

"In the big picture, Texas will keep and enhance its status as a military state, a state that respects and supports the men and women who are serving our country," Senator Hutchison said. "I spoke with Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England this morning. He has reinforced confidence in Texas' military installations with an overall statewide gain of more than 6,150 military and civilian jobs.

"Regarding bases slated for major losses and closure, this recommendation list is a first step in the base **realignment** process and is by no means final. Sen. Cornyn and I are scheduling meetings with local officials on Sunday as the next step in making sure the final recommendations are in the best interest of our national security and local communities," Sen. Hutchison said. "Texas is the proud home for multiple Army, Navy, Air Force and Reserve and National guard installations. The overall gain of more than 6,000 military and civilian jobs is a show of confidence in Texas' military resources and facilities from the top leaders of the strongest military in the world."

Details from the BRAC Recommendations are listed below along with the military and civilian gain and loss figures:

Realignment Gains:

Dyess Air Force Base: 374

Fort Bliss: 11,501

Fort Sam Houston: 9,364

Laughlin Air Force Base: 182

Naval Air Station Fort Worth Joint Reserve Base: 314

Randolph Air Force Base: 182

Carswell Naval Air Station: 112

Closures:

Red River Army Depot

Lone Star Ammunition Plant

Naval Station Ingleside

Brooks City-Base

Defense Finance and Accounting Service, San Antonio

Realignment Losses:

Corpus Christi Army Depot: 92

Ellington Field: 3

Fort Hood: 191 (However, Ft. Hood gained nearly 4,000 new personnel via Army transformation over the past two years)

Lackland Air Force Base: 3,140

Naval Air Station Corpus Christi: 1, 025

Sheppard Air Force Base: 2,624

As Chairman of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee and a member of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, Sen. Hutchison has been a leading

advocate for Texas' military facilities and defender of Texas bases during the current BRAC process. She has consistently urged the Department of Defense to overhaul America's global base **realignment** - bringing troops home from overseas before shutting down any U.S. installations. On May 11, Senator Hutchison invited the 2005 Base BRAC Commission Chairman Anthony Principi to meet with fellow members of the Texas Delegation in her office. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce Chairman Principi to the members of the delegation and to highlight the significant military value of Texas bases.

Sen. Hutchison and Sen. Cornyn attended a February 8 meeting at the Pentagon with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld who told them the adverse impact of the 2005 BRAC process on military bases will be significantly reduced due to foreign reassignments to domestic bases. The Pentagon focused on Europe and Korea and subsequently announced last year that at least 70,000 U.S. troops are scheduled for recall to U.S. bases - with some headed to Texas bases.

Key Dates for BRAC Process

Sept. 8: Deadline for the BRAC commission to make its own base closure recommendations.

Sept. 23: Deadline for a presidential decision on whether to accept or reject the BRAC recommendations in their entirety - the White House's only options. If Bush accepts the plan, it becomes final within 45 legislative days, unless Congress passes a joint resolution to block the entire package.

Oct. 20: If Bush rejects the BRAC recommendations, the commission has until this date to submit a revised list of proposed closures.

Nov. 7: Deadline for the president to approve or disapprove the revised recommendations.

April 15, 2006: The commission terminates.

Texas Bases Brace for Military's 'Hit List'; Enormous effort has been made to keep installations

The Houston Chronicle
John W. Gonzalez

At least \$ 300 million has been spent or promised to retain Texas' military bases and preserve their \$ 50 billion annual impact.

Now, the state and cities that host Texas' 18 major bases can only hope they did everything possible to persuade the Department of Defense to keep the installations and their missions alive.

The base hosts' Washington lobbyists, consultants and cadres of local volunteers have been on the case two years or more, trying to influence the Base **Realignment** and Closure process, which presents its "hit list" of proposed closures by May 16.

Retired generals, business leaders and elected officials throughout Texas have been doggedly defending their hometown bases, some of which have been considered vulnerable since they survived the last round of closures in 1995.

While many base communities are hopeful no economically disastrous changes are in the works, Corpus Christi and San Antonio are bracing for the potential loss of some of their installations, despite costly infrastructure investments and persuasion campaigns.

Only El Paso's Fort Bliss and Killeen's Fort Hood seem assured their military activity will

expand.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has called for significant shrinkage - perhaps 20 percent - in the military-facility inventory. In Texas alone, there are 3,600 DOD facilities, including sprawling bases, individual buildings and radar outposts.

Anxious wait in Del Rio

The Pentagon embarked on its forthcoming analysis in 2003, prompting some communities to pay from \$ 3,000 to \$ 15,000 a month for BRAC lobbyists. But most rely heavily on local volunteers.

"We are on pins and needles waiting," said Mayor Dora Alcala, of Del Rio, home of Laughlin Air Force Base, which narrowly avoided closure a decade ago.

In San Antonio, where \$ 1 million has been committed from public and private entities to retain military installations, Brooks City Base has been called a "dead man walking," said Brooks Development Authority Director Tom Rumora.

After that Air Force installation was almost closed in 1995, it was transferred to the city in 2002 and converted to civilian and military uses. Once again, its remaining Air Force projects are susceptible to relocation or elimination.

"We have worked very hard to make ourselves the smallest target we could be," Rumora said.

Ingleside at risk

Former Corpus Christi Mayor Loyd Neal, who serves on the Texas Military Preparedness Commission appointed by Gov. Rick Perry, said his community, Kingsville and Ingleside, want its installations to thrive. Yet Naval Station Ingleside is at risk amid predictions the minesweepers based there are becoming obsolete.

"The mood is very testy," said Neal, whose community has retained a BRAC lobbyist since 1991.

"We've done a lot of things in these communities to try to enhance military value," he said, adding, "there's not much else we think we can do."

San Angelo's Goodfellow AFB, Wichita Falls' Sheppard AFB and Abilene's Dyess AFB also await word on their future roles. As single-base military towns, they, too, have been girding for BRAC for months, if not years. They've relied on elected officials and task forces to do the work.

One common tactic has been for communities to pledge utility and road upgrades, on and off base.

At least \$ 50 million, mainly highway funds, has been spent or set aside, and the state approved a \$ 250 million low-interest loan to underwrite base-improvement projects. Additionally, the first bill Perry signed into law this legislative session was a measure allowing communities to use some sales-tax proceeds to enhance installations.

Still, even those with planned base-enhancement projects, well-organized campaigns and positive outlooks know the BRAC process usually yields surprises.

"We in Central Texas are not worried about the 'C' portion of BRAC, the closure. We see no circumstances in which the DOD would recommend Fort Hood to be closed. So obviously we're watching the 'R' portion of BRAC, the **realignment**," said Heart of Texas Defense Alliance Director Bill Parry, a retired Fort Hood general.

Fort Hood still has room for several thousand more soldiers and families, Parry said, but surrounding communities are trying to manage growth cautiously.

The full array of overseas missions that could be relocated to the states hasn't been disclosed, but U.S. Sens. Kay Bailey Hutchison and John Cornyn, both R-Texas, have urged the Pentagon to move as many overseas troops and missions as possible to Texas. Like other elected officials, they've been in frequent contact with the Pentagon to make the case for Texas installations.

Because the Pentagon has changed the way it collects and analyzes data, Parry predicted the initial list would be "less political and a lot more objective than previous rounds have been."

However, there will be more political wrangling - and community hand-wringing - after May 16, Parry said.

The efforts to influence the process have subsided in recent months while the Pentagon has been involved in its secretive deliberative process.

Ellington office proposed

But earlier this month, U.S. House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, R-Sugar Land, urged the Department of Homeland Security to locate a regional office at Ellington Field, a former Air Force base that serves as a joint reserve base.

Creating "value" for the Pentagon and facilitating "jointness," the collaboration of the service branches, are frequent buzzwords in discussions to save installations.

"We can't control the BRAC process. All we can do is make sure that our military bases have as much value as possible to the DOD," said Robert Black, a spokesman for the governor.

"We're the first state that has taken state resources and applied them to military bases, with the intent of expanding and enhancing those bases," Black said.

Outlays are carefully thought out by communities determined to retain their military character, said Alcalá, of Del Rio, another member of the governor's military commission.

Her community hopes to raise \$ 2 million for a \$ 20 million highway bridge that would run over railroad tracks that sometimes impede access to Laughlin AFB.

"Enhancing the (military) mission is very important. We can do our little part by building that overpass," she said. Her mission is to ensure that Laughlin remains one of the main Air Force facilities for pilot training, with its vast airspace and flight-friendly weather.

"Everyone has to be concerned" about the May 16 list, Alcalá said, recalling that Laughlin was on the same initial list in 1995 but was kept open when Reese AFB in Lubbock was closed instead.

Getting off the list difficult

"The really hard work begins after you get on that list, to try to get off that list, which is very tough," Alcala said. That's why Del Rio has a Military Affairs Association to protect its defense interests, she said.

A similar entity has been guarding Corpus Christi and surrounding communities. The 2-year-old South Texas Military Facilities Task Force is led by Neal, who left office last week after eight years as mayor of Corpus Christi.

"We have made literally hundreds of presentations to elected and appointed officials and high-ranking military officials all over the U.S. The secretary of the Navy has been here more than once, and the Marine Corps commandant was here," he said.

Efforts to retain area bases are nothing new, Neal said. The community has long retained the Karalekas & Noone lobbying firm in Washington, D.C., but lately the region has been faced with predictions of deep cuts in Navy facilities and gradual elimination of minesweepers.

"With relocation of Army troops from Korea and Germany, it does appear that the Army bases are going to be the least affected by this round of BRAC the Navy is the one that seems to be taking the biggest hit," Neal said.

The outlook for the mine-warfare fleet based at Ingleside is admittedly mixed, Neal said. "A lot is going on about making the mine-detection capability organic to the vessels themselves. There is discussion about decommissioning the current mine-warfare vessels."

But Neal said community leaders don't dwell on closure hypotheticals.

"We have not discussed it (closure) publicly," Neal said, although in private meetings of the regional task force there have been talks about how the community should respond to a closure notice.

Worst-case scenarios are openly discussed in San Antonio, where the former Brooks AFB serves as a national model for gradual base conversions. The city-owned base still has the Air Force as its largest tenant, but its few remaining military missions could be moved to Wright-Patterson AFB in Dayton, Ohio, Rumora said.

"I have, right here in our own community, people who will tell me that in fact we're 'dead man walking,'" Rumora said. That reputation grew from Brooks' narrow survival in the 1995 BRAC, he said, and the popular belief that Brooks was spared "compassionately" because another San Antonio facility, Kelly Air Force Base, was being shuttered.

"So if you use that logic, some would say Brooks was dead in '95, and it surely is going to be dead this time. On the other end of the spectrum you have people who say we are the poster child of innovation," Rumora said, citing the base's mixture of military, educational, private and city projects.

"We think that's a winning combination. The 'dead man walking' people are dead wrong," Rumora said.

...

TEXAS MILITARY INSTALLATIONS

Cities across Texas are anxiously awaiting the Base **Realignment** and Closure commission's "hit list" of what military installations should be closed. BRAC must release its recommendations by May 16. A host of military installations are located in Texas, including:

Air Force

Brooks City Base, San Antonio

Dyess AFB, Abilene

Goodfellow AFB, San Angelo

Lackland AFB, San Antonio

Laughlin AFB, Del Rio

Randolph AFB, San Antonio

Sheppard AFB,

Wichita Falls

...

Army

Corpus Christi Army Depot

Fort Bliss, El Paso

Fort Hood, Killeen

Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio

Lone Star Ammunition Depot, New Boston

Red River Army Depot, Texarkana

...

Navy

Naval Station Ingleside

Naval Air Station Corpus Christi

Naval Air Station Kingsville

Joint Reserve Bases

Fort Worth Joint Reserve Base

Ellington Field Joint Reserve Base, Houston

Editorial Articles

Bases for arguments

Fort Worth Star-Telegram

May 15, 2005

The main criterion for whether a military facility should remain open is its military value rather than its employment value.

Sometimes waiting is the worst part when people are expecting bad news, but leaders in communities with military bases targeted for closure would argue that point this morning.

On Friday, the Defense Department released Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's recommendations for base closures and **realignments**. The list is something well short of "the mother of

all BRACs" that had been earlier feared. But for the 33 communities targeted for major base closures, that's small comfort.

In Texas, the losers are Brooks City Base in San Antonio, with 2,923 people; Naval Station Ingleside near Corpus Christi, with 2,218 personnel; and the Red River Army Depot's 2,500 near Texarkana -- all on the potential closure list.

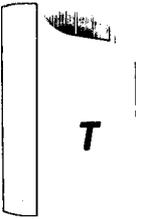
Realignments may be equally painful elsewhere in Texas. Lackland and **Sheppard** Air Force bases could see 3,140 and 2,624 personnel, respectively, lost or reassigned to other facilities.

It is important for elected officials to keep in mind that the Defense Department is not a works project for American cities, nor should a BRAC fight be the basis for a politician's re-election campaign.

The main criterion for whether a base should remain open is its military value -- does it adequately and effectively support the country's overall defense posture?

In the public hearings that will occur in the next four months before the BRAC Commission must submit its list to President Bush, Texas leaders will be provided with opportunities to make their case for why Ingleside and Brooks and Red River should stay open.

They had best be prepared to argue issues such as global posture, operational readiness and mission capabilities, and not just jobs.



**2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
Suggested Talking Points for Ft. Smith**

- 1. Military value is the most important consideration to the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) as the Commission evaluates the suggestion made by the Department of Defense (DoD) to realign Fort Smith.**
 - The Commission will evaluate the economic, environmental, and other effects that the re-alignment could have on the surrounding community but the key factor in the Commission's conclusion as to whether or not to suggest the Fort Smith for realignment is military value.
 - The Commission understands the importance of the mission of the installation, and the fact that it currently has troops stationed in the Middle East, and will consider the contributions of the installation as it participates in the current defense strategy to meet changing global threats.

- 2. The Commission is aware of the human impact that the suggestions to realign the Ft. Smith could have and is taking this into consideration.**
 - The Congress established the Commission as an independent entity to ensure that all critical factors have been evaluated, and that the effects on the surrounding community have been taken into account in the decision to recommend a base for closure or realignment.
 - The Commission will evaluate the economic and social impact that the medical center's realignment would have on the surrounding community, while basing its decision almost entirely upon military value.

- 3. The Congress established the Commission as a non-political, transparent, and independent entity to perform a thorough evaluation, through a process set out by law, of the bases suggested for closure or realignment by DoD.**
 - The Commission serves to ensure that all pertinent factors have been evaluated and that the impact that the suggestions to close or realign a base would have on the surrounding community, have been taken into full account.
 - The Commission encourages public input. The public may submit comments directly through the Commission's official website:
www.brac.gov.

Facts compiled from included press clippings.



**2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
Suggested Qs & As for Fort Smith**

Q1. The Department of Defense (DoD) has suggested that 670 jobs be cut from Fort Smith, and that six F-16s be moved to Fresno and 8 F-16s be retired, ensuing in the largest suggested cut in the state. Will the BRAC Commission take the military value of the installation into full account, especially in a time of war when troops from the base are deployed in the Middle East, prior to reaching its conclusions?

A1. The Congress established the BRAC Commission to independently evaluate, in a transparent, thorough manner—as set forth by law—the suggestions by DoD to close or realign various installations around the country. All pertinent factors will be taken into account before any conclusion is reached and the final decision will be based almost entirely upon the current military value of the installation.

Q2. While some suggest that Arkansas fared well, overall, in the DoD's proposed list of bases for closure or realignment, the effects of the loss of Ft. Smith would still be felt. Will the Commission take the economic effects that the loss of Ft. Smith would have on the surrounding community into account?

A2. While the preeminent consideration to the Commission is military value, the Commission will also consider the economic, environmental, and other effects that the suggested realignment would have on the surrounding Community. The factors to be included in the Commission's evaluation have been specifically set forth by statute.

Q3. Will the Commission take into account the effect that the realignment of Ft. Smith would have on the morale of the troops?

Q4. The factors to be included in the Commission's evaluation have been set forth by law. DoD is seeking to streamline the military to ensure that the military is as streamlined and efficient as possible without having to support excess infrastructure, ineffective in meeting modern global threats. The Commission was established by the Congress to ensure that DoD's proposals to close or realign various installations around the country was made in accordance with the law and after all pertinent factors were taken into account.

Q4. DoD has suggested that Ft. Smith's fire department be moved to the Air National Guard's 138th Fighter Wing in Tulsa. Will the Commission take into account the effect that this loss could have on the installation?

A4. The factors to be included in the Commission's evaluation have been specifically outlined by law. The Commission will perform a full evaluation of all pertinent factors before coming to its conclusion regarding the installation.

Q5. How can members of the community make the Commission aware of factors that they feel were overlooked in DoD's evaluation and suggestion regarding the installation?

A5. The Commission welcomes input from the community; it is an important part of the evaluation process. The public is encouraged to submit comments through the Commission's official website: www.brac.gov.

Facts compiled from included press clippings.



FORT SMITH ARKANSAS

National News Articles

Local News Articles

As hearing nears, Fort Smith prepares to preserve 188th Wing

BRAC chairman to visit Fort Smith's 188th Fighter Wing

\$1 million to help offset base changes

Fort Smith seeks more panel time to make base case

Pryor will push Arkansas military bases at base-closings hearing

Trends in the Region: Eying Net BRAC Gains, Southwest Digs in All the Same

Arkansas delegation gets plum meeting with BRAC chairman

Sen. Pryor Calls BRAC Recommendations 'Mixed Bag' Laudes LRAFB, Pine Bluff, But

Pledges To Fight Closures

Closings list out; Arkansas spared big hit; Jacksonville base to gain; 188th Wing to lose

F-16s

LRAFB big winner under proposed plan

Arkansas bases await Pentagon decision

Editorial/Opinion Articles

National News Articles

Local News Articles

As hearing nears, Fort Smith prepares to preserve 188th Wing

Associated Press State and Local Wire

Caryn Rousseau

July 8, 2005

Anger and frustration temper Lori Greer's voice when she talks about her family's situation.

She's expecting her first child in September and her husband, Tech Sgt. Jay Greer, is deployed to Iraq. But the Lavaca couple's future in Arkansas is uncertain.

Greer is one of 670 of 980 workers who may lose their jobs at **Fort Smith's** 188th Fighter Wing under proposed Department of Defense cuts.

"You're asking someone to risk their life in a very dangerous situation," Lori Greer said. "And at the same, you're saying your service really might not mean that much to us because we're considering closing your base and doing away with your position. It's horrible timing."

The 188th flies F-16 fighter jets and stands to lose them all. Seven would go to a base in Fresno, Calif., and eight would be retired. The 188th is scheduled to fight the cuts at a hearing Monday in San Antonio before the Base Realignment and Closure Commission. Commission Chairman

Anthony Principi is to visit the 188th in **Fort Smith** that afternoon.

Lori Greer says she's frustrated and confused. Before her husband left three weeks ago he was trying to decide if he should job hunt. He's not due back for another six to eight weeks.

"It was very hard to see someone who has given so much of himself to the military and yet he's thinking, 'I'm about to have a son. I have all these responsibilities. How will I take care of my family?'" she said. "We were very secure in his job situation. He's been in the military for 15 years. He has made this his career."

When word of the proposed cuts came down in May, **Fort Smith** officials jumped to action. They hired a marketing firm and formed a local task force. Now they're prepared with a 30-minute presentation that they will give Monday.

Fort Smith City Manager Bill Harding said they've run through it dozens of times.

"My gut feeling right now is 50-50, which is better than I had before," he said. "In reality, we're probably looking at a job loss higher than 650."

Bus loads of residents were scheduled to caravan to San Antonio and members of Arkansas' congressional delegation will testify. The statistic that spurns worry: The base has a \$52 million economic impact on **Fort Smith** each year.

Rep. John Boozman, R-Ark., whose district includes Northwest Arkansas, plans to testify in San Antonio about growth in the **Fort Smith** area. Boozman said he will argue to keep the 188th jets rather than move the aircraft to larger bases in San Diego or San Francisco, where affordable housing is unavailable and the cost of living is higher.

"The good thing with this thing is that we truly have a great story to tell," Boozman said.

The congressman, who has been on NATO visits to bases in Europe, said the **Fort Smith** base can compete worldwide and the Arkansas group has a good chance of convincing the commission. If not, the next step would be to find another mission for the base, he said, since the military does not plan to close it.

"I think what we're trying to do is fight one battle at a time. We feel like the best place for those planes is in **Fort Smith**, Arkansas, versus someplace else," Boozman said.

Maj. John Weisenfels, spokesman for the 188th, said Principi's visit was a good sign. He said the local taskforce is sorting through the data that **BRAC** provided outlining why the 188th should be cut. If loopholes or inaccuracies can be found that's good, he said.

"We're crunching the numbers and seeing how we stand," he said. "Did we get a fair shake?"

All this effort is a ray of hope for Greer, who says she always envisioned life in Arkansas near her family.

"We're just hoping the 188th will be given some mission, whether we keep the F-16s or given another aircraft," she said. "We just want to stay here."

BRAC chairman to visit Fort Smith's 188th Fighter Wing

Associated Press State and Local Wire

Caryn Rousseau

July 7, 2005

The chairman of the commission that holds the fate of hundreds of military bases in its hands will visit **Fort Smith's** 188th Fighter Wing on Monday.

Anthony Principi, chairman of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, will come to **Fort Smith** from San Antonio to review the base and hear why it should not be gutted, as the Department of Defense has recommended.

BRAC announced Principi's visit Wednesday. It brings hope for **Fort Smith**, said Mark Myers, spokesman for the local commission fighting a proposed 670-personnel cut at the wing, which would also lose seven F-16 fighter jets to Fresno, Calif., and have eight more jets retired.

"Getting a visit increases our chances of saving the 188th tremendously," Myers said. "We believe once he shows up here, he will see there is extreme value militarily to keeping planes in **Fort Smith, Arkansas.**"

Members of Arkansas' congressional delegations had written the Defense Department requesting a site visit to **Fort Smith**, along with former Undersecretary for Homeland Security Asa Hutchinson, who is running for the Arkansas Republican gubernatorial nomination.

"In this growing age of terrorism, it is vital that each region of our country have the military capabilities to protect targets of interest," Hutchinson wrote.

Hutchinson and members of the Arkansas delegation plan to testify at Monday's hearing in favor of keeping the 188th intact.

Maj. John Weisenfels, spokesman for the 188th, said when word came that Principi would be on the base Monday the scrambling to prepare began.

"We're extremely glad to have the opportunity to show him right up front, here's who we are, here's what we have," Weisenfels said.

Weisenfels said the advantage to the timing of Principi's visit - right after the hearing - couldn't be better.

"He just heard about everything, now he gets to come up and see it," Weisenfels said.

Under the Pentagon's proposals, the 188th Fighter Wing at **Fort Smith** would lose more than two-thirds of its military and civilian personnel. The Red River Army Depot at Texarkana, Texas, where Arkansans hold about 500 of 2,500 jobs, has been recommended for closure. Members of **BRAC** visited that site last month.

The Little Rock Air Force Base in Jacksonville would gain nearly 4,000 jobs, and the Pine Bluff Arsenal escaped any proposed cuts.

Final recommendations will be made to President Bush in September.

\$1 million to help offset base changes

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

Katherine Marks

June 30, 2000

The winners and losers in the latest round of proposed base closures all stand to gain from a \$1 million Labor Department grant to the state.

The money will help communities deal with the loss and gain of civilian jobs, said Kimberly Friedman, a spokesman for the Arkansas Employment Security Department, which applied for the grant.

"We're trying to coordinate with the communities to determine their current and longrange needs," Friedman said.

In all, the Labor Department is awarding more than \$28 million to 35 states, the District of Columbia and Guam. All could be affected by the latest round of base closures and realignments recommended by the Department of Defense.

Officials fighting to keep installations in Arkansas open said Wednesday the money will be welcome if the recommendations are adopted, but stressed that their first priority is to keep installations off the final closure list.

Arkansas will see some of the biggest gains under the Department of Defense's recommendations. Little Rock Air Force Base near Jacksonville stands to gain 3,898 employees - 319 civilians and 3,595 military personnel - and 77 C-130 cargo planes.

Fort Smith will be the hardest hit location in the state if its recommendation is adopted. It calls for the 188th Fighter Wing in **Fort Smith** to lose 670 employees - 186 full-time and 484 part-time - out of its nearly 1,000 employees. Under the recommendation, which calls for phasing out F-16s, 17 F-16C fighter planes used by the wing would be transferred or retired.

Two installations that could be closed - the Red River Army Depot and the adjacent Lone Star Arsenal in Texas - are 18 miles from Texarkana. More than 400 Arkansans work at the two facilities.

The Defense Department's recommendations call for the Pine Bluff Arsenal to gain a reserve center and for nine reserve centers to be replaced, including the one at El Dorado. North Little Rock stands to lose the 90th Regional Readiness Command at Camp Pike.

Friedman said it's not yet clear what each community's share of the \$1 million would be. "We haven't determine all the logistical things," she said.

The money will be used in part to help avert layoffs by providing for additional training and job

placement opportunities, as well as helping bases that are gaining employees identify what they need to better accommodate them.

Jacksonville Mayor Tommy Swaim said the city is confident it can handle the influx of new employees at the base. Not all the new employees will choose to live in Jacksonville, for example, but will commute from Cabot, Little Rock and other parts of central Arkansas. He said the grant will help the transition be as smooth as possible.

Other officials said they hoped they wouldn't need the grant.

"We haven't accepted the recommendations of the BRAC [Base Realignment and Closure Commission]," Sen. Blanche Lincoln, D-Ark., said Wednesday. She said she hopes the state can persuade the commission not to touch the installations in **Fort Smith** and near Texarkana.

The Red River Army Depot, where Bradley Fighting Vehicles and humvees damaged in Iraq are rebuilt, was on the closure list in 1995 and was removed during commission hearings.

Lincoln said if the recommended installations are closed, the state will need to do all it can to help ease the transition for workers who lose their jobs. "When families are displaced, we need to minimize the effects of that," she said.

Bases that stand to gain employees also need assistance, Lincoln said. "A lot of times the bases aren't equipped to take on those additional personnel," she said.

Fort Smith City Administrator Bill Harding said Wednesday that he hadn't heard of the grant.

"I guess that's good news," said Harding, a member of the task force opposing scalebacks of the 188th Fighter Wing. The 188th has been stationed at Ebbing Air National Guard Base at **Fort Smith** Regional Airport since 1953.

"Frankly, our focus is on gearing up for the hearing in San Antonio," Harding said, referring to the commission's July 11 hearing on the recommendations.

If the recommendation for the 188th does pass, Harding said, the city will work with its chamber of commerce and local businesses to encourage hiring of displaced employees, among other things, Harding said.

While the grant money would be welcome, Harding said \$1 million split among so many communities "is certainly not going to be the panacea."

The final recommendations will go to President Bush by Sept. 8. He will have until Sept. 23 to accept or reject them in their entirety. If accepted, Congress will have 45 days to reject the recommendations in their entirety or they will be adopted.

Fort Smith seeks more panel time to make base case
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

Dave Hughes
June 25, 2005

FORT SMITH - Fort Smith will have 25 of the 30 minutes allocated to Arkansas during a Base Realignment and Closure Commission meeting in July to defend the 188th Fighter Wing. City officials want more.

Fort Smith City Administrator Bill Harding said Friday that **Fort Smith** needs more time before the commission at its July 11 hearing in San Antonio. He wants the time allotted to Little Rock Air Force Base, which is to gain about 60 C-130 cargo planes under the commission's plan.

Harding is a member of a task force formed to organize **Fort Smith's** defense of the Arkansas Air National Guard's 188th Fighter Wing from a Department of Defense recommendation to transfer or retire its 17 F-16C fighters and cut 670 of its 1,000 jobs.

The 188th has been stationed at Ebbing Air National Guard Base at the **Fort Smith** Regional Airport since 1953.

"Our position is the **BRAC** hearing is for the purpose of hearing rebuttal from the military installations being closed or realigned," he said Friday.

Jacksonville Mayor Tommy Swaim, heading up the area's response team for Little Rock Air Force Base, said though the base is gaining aircraft, it still needs its time before the commission to emphasize the base's value to the military and its ability to handle the larger mission.

"We need a little bit of time to let the commission know the value of Little Rock Air Force Base and why the Department of Defense made the right decision," he said.

He said it is important to testify before the commission because of the other officials from affected bases nationwide who will be asking the commission not to send their C-130s to Arkansas.

Base spokesman Lt. Jon Quinlan said Little Rock Air Force Base is scheduled to get 25 C-130s from Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina, 24 from Dyess Air Force Base in Texas and 20 from Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve units in New York, Nevada, Ohio, Wisconsin and South Dakota.

The base has 74 C-130s, Quinlan said.

U.S. Sens. Mark Pryor and Blanche Lincoln, both Democrats, are trying to get more time before the commission for the Arkansas delegations, Pryor spokesman Rodell Mollineau said Friday.

Fort Smith's task force will ask five speakers to present **Fort Smith's** case: Pryor and Lincoln, 3rd District Rep. John Boozman, R-Ark., retired Col. Brock Strom and Arkansas GOP gubernatorial candidate Asa Hutchinson, a former **Fort Smith** resident, 3rd District representative and Homeland Security Department undersecretary for border and transportation security.

Boozman grew up in **Fort Smith** graduating from high school there.

Strom, recently retired as chief of operations at the Air National Guard headquarters in

Washington, was hired to analyze the commission's criteria for its recommendations for the 188th and to testify about the value of the base.

Pryor will push Arkansas military bases at base-closings hearing

Associated Press State and Local Wire

Annie Bergman

The importance of Arkansas and Texas military installations to the nation's security needs to be brought to the attention of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, U.S. Sen. Mark Pryor says, and he plans to do that.

Pryor said Wednesday he would attend a commission hearing at San Antonio next month.

In a telephone news conference, Pryor said commission members should hear about the military value of each base and the effects of cutbacks and closures proposed by the Pentagon.

Anthony Principi, BRAC chairman, and at least two other commissioners have scheduled a regional hearing in San Antonio on July 11. The commission is reviewing the Defense Department's proposed military cuts before final recommendations are presented to President Bush in September.

Under the Pentagon's proposals, the 188th Fighter Wing at **Fort Smith** would lose more than two-thirds of its military and civilian personnel, although the Little Rock Air Force Base in Jacksonville would gain nearly 4,000 jobs.

The Pine Bluff Arsenal escaped any proposed cuts and also was recognized by the Pentagon for its role as an ammunitions development and training center.

In Texas, Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant and Red River Army Depot at Texarkana, where Arkansans hold about 500 of 2,500 jobs, have been recommended for closure.

"I look forward to making the case for the Arkansas installations and even the two that are right outside Arkansas," Pryor said. "I continue to push that not just Red River and Lone Star and not just **Fort Smith**, but Little Rock Air Force Base and Pine Bluff have time before the commission."

At a Washington meeting Tuesday, Pryor said, he asked that Principi or another BRAC commissioner visit the 188th Fighter Wing in **Fort Smith**. Sen. Blanche Lincoln, D-Ark., also attended the meeting and plans to attend the hearing in July, as well.

"Hopefully, we'll get a good site visit to **Fort Smith**. We know the more time they spend at the facility they'll realize how important it is to the nation's security," he said.

Also in the teleconference, Pryor said the Senate's approval Tuesday of climate-change measures that he and Sen. Chuck Hagel, R-Neb., proposed will probably be the only such legislation that

will pass the Senate this year. Pryor said their proposal, though not a final solution, would be an important first step in addressing the threat of global warming.

Trends in the Region: Eying Net BRAC Gains, Southwest Digs in All the Same.

Elizabeth Albanese

The Bond Buyer

June 7, 2005

DALLAS -- Of the eight states in the Southwest region, only Colorado faces no base closures under what Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has coined the "mother of all" base realignment and closure proposals.

But even though base closures in the remaining seven states—Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, New Mexico, could dramatically affect some local communities, proposed realignments and additions to other military facilities would make the Southwest a net winner in the process.

Some officials say the southern part of the United States, which boasts relatively inexpensive land compared with the Northeast or other regions, is a more economical place to expand bases.

Closures could play havoc with some local economies, and a taxable military housing bond issue sold for housing close to Lackland Air Force Base, near San Antonio, could see revenue come in lower than expected. Lackland faces a realignment expected to cost it both military and civilian jobs.

As in other parts of the country, the lobbying to spare local bases on the **BRAC** list has begun.

A committee of presidential employees will wade through the arguments for and against closures, and report to President Bush with a new list on Sept. 8. Congress and the president then have until November to approve or reject the list submitted by the committee. They have no power to line-item veto any of the suggestions made by the panel.

The original report was relatively good news for Texas. The state stands to gain nearly 10,000 military positions, while it would shed about 3,000 civilian jobs.

The **BRAC** list does include the closure of several major bases in Texas and realignment of others. The list included closing the Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant and the Red River Army Depot, both near Texarkana, as well as the Naval Station Ingleside, near Corpus Christi. Brooks City Base in San Antonio and Naval Reserve stations in Lubbock and Orange would also be closed.

Army National Guard Reserve centers in Dallas, El Paso, Ellington Air Field in Houston, Lufkin, Marshall, and New Braunfels also face closure, as would an Army Reserve base in Houston.

Texas officials have banded together to stave off closure of bases. Last week, U.S. Sens. Kay Bailey Hutchison and John Cornyn, both Republicans, sent a second letter to Rumsfeld asking him to release information used by the Pentagon to determine which bases would be scheduled

for closure or realignment.

According to the letter, Hutchison and Cornyn take issue with the fact that such information would be made available only to lawmakers and staffers who hold security clearances. The information could only be viewed in a Washington reading room.

"Communities were promised an open and honest dialogue with full and unfettered access to all of the data," the letter stated. **BRAC** chairman Anthony Principi "has already postponed one regional hearing because of a lack of data. The process continues to be jeopardized as long as the information is not available. We urge you to make all of the data available."

In the recently adjourned Texas legislative session, lawmakers filed more than 50 bills offering tax benefits and other services for military personnel. In 2003, the state approved the issuance of as much as \$ 250 million of general obligation bonds to enhance military base communities.

Hoping to prevent the closure of bases in the Corpus Christi area, local officials have organized the South Texas Military Facilities Task Force.

In that area, the Naval Air Station Ingleside is slated for closure, which would spur a loss of 1,901 military jobs and 260 civilian jobs. Through realignment, the Corpus Christi Army Depot would lose 92 civilian jobs, and the Naval Air Station Corpus Christi is slated to lose 926 military jobs and 89 civilian jobs.

The task force is composed of area economic development leaders and political officials. Working at the state and federal levels, they have a plan to provide local enhancement to bases that might convince government officials to spare them.

Success is critical for the region's economy. All together, military installations in the Corpus Christi region employ 14% of the area's work force and account for 21% of wages in the region.

Of the states in the Southwest region, New Mexico would be hit the hardest, based on the initial **BRAC** list. It recommends closing the Cannon Air Force Base near Clovis, a shutdown that would result in the loss of 2,385 military jobs and 384 civilian jobs.

State and local officials have put together a committee to try to convince the **BRAC** commission that Cannon's training initiatives cannot be replicated at other facilities.

Four fighter squadrons currently make their home at Cannon. According to the base's Web site, Cannon had a fiscal impact of \$ 211.2 million on the area's economy in 2003, boasting a payroll for military and civilian employees of \$ 116.2 million that same year.

In Arkansas, the Little Rock Air Force Base stands to gain 3,595 military jobs and 319 civilian jobs through realignment, but state officials are working to protect the 188th Fighter Wing in **Fort Smith**. Gov. Mike Huckabee has recommended the facility be converted to a training base for drone aircraft to avoid closure.

Arkansas officials met three weeks ago with Principi to discuss Pentagon recommendations to close not only the **Fort Smith** Air National Guard Unit, but also the Red River and Lone Star Army depots.

In a statement, U.S. Sen. Blanche Lincoln, D-Ark., said: "We have conveyed our unified voice

and have indicated to the **BRAC** Commission that their recommendations would have severe impacts in Arkansas. Over the next several weeks, I look forward to providing evidence and documentation to the **BRAC** Commission of the invaluable contributions Red River, Lone Star, and the 188th Fighter Wing are currently making to our national defense."

Utah stands to lose a total of 523 civilian jobs, but will gain 77 military postings. The Utah Legislature approved a plan to spend \$ 5 million on projects to save the Hill Air Force Base, and though it won't be closed, it will face a realignment that will cost it 423 civilian jobs. Also under the **BRAC** proposal, the Deseret Chemical Depot will be closed, costing the state 186 military and 62 civilian jobs.

Officials are looking at possible alternative uses for the facility. Conversions of military facilities have worked in places such as Colorado, where the former Fitzsimons Army Base has been converted into a medical care and research facility boasting several hospitals and university facilities. The lion's share of that conversion was funded with revenue bonds backed by patient and other revenue.

188th Guard unit to lose 670 jobs under Air Force plan

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

Dave Hughes

FORT SMITH - The Arkansas Air National Guard unit in **Fort Smith** will lose 670 of its nearly 1,000 members, according to an Air Force recommendation released Wednesday.

The announcement Wednesday left civilian and military officials in Arkansas unsure how the base realignment and closure process will affect the 188th Fighter Wing in **Fort Smith**. A Department of Defense announcement last Friday said the 188th would lose 78 jobs.

Officials with the Arkansas National Guard on Wednesday were trying to assess which recommendations will go before the Base Realignment and Closure Commission and whether there are different recommendations still to come, spokesman Capt. Kristine Munn said Wednesday.

"There are several **BRAC** documents floating around right now, and we are trying to track them down," she said.

Patrick Creamer, a spokesman for U.S. Rep John Boozman, R-Ark., said Wednesday that Boozman's office confirmed the Air Force recommended 670 jobs be cut from the 188th.

The recommendation, which was publicized Wednesday in a news release from the 188th, said 186 of the job cuts would be fulltime personnel and 484 would be part-time guardsmen.

"These numbers reflect a huge impact on the 188th Fighter Wing and the city of **Fort Smith**," Col. Kevin Wear, 188th vice wing commander, said in the news release.

Wing Commander Col. J.R. Dallas is out of the country on active duty in Iraq.

Fort Smith officials were upset by the new figures, not only because of the potentially larger impact but because they feel military officials were less than honest with the public.

The Defense Department "was less than forthcoming when it released that initial information," City Administrator Bill Harding said Wednesday.

Fort Smith Regional Chamber of Commerce President Tom Manskey said he was disappointed that new numbers surfaced days after the Defense Department said the 188th would lose only 78 jobs.

"They needed to give the communities all the information, and they didn't do it," he said.

The Defense Department recommendation said seven of the 188th's F-16C fighters would be transferred to the Air National Guard's 144th Fighter Wing in Fresno, Calif., as an action directly related to base realignment and closure.

But Creamer said that he learned the retirement of the 188th's remaining eight fighters was a long-term Air Force plan and not a direct action of the commission. As a result, the job losses from the retirement of the fighters were not included in the base realignment and closure figures released last week, he said.

Munn confirmed Wednesday that the retirement of the eight F-16s was part of an Air Force transformation plan not directly related to the base realignment and closure process. She could not say, though, that the additional job losses released Wednesday would be due to the retirement of the fighter jets.

The increase in lost jobs won't change the strategy of local and Washington, D.C., officials trying to save the positions.

Harding and Manskey said a team of more than a dozen community leaders is being assembled to devise plans for saving the 188th's current mission or getting a new mission to replace it.

"We're going to do what we can to put our cards on the table" and persuade the government to leave the 188th in place, Manskey said.

Creamer said Boozman will continue to work with the rest of Arkansas' congressional delegation to save the 188th's mission and jobs.

In addition to the loss of the 188th's fighters, the Defense Department has recommended that the unit's fire department be transferred to the Air National Guard's 138th Fighter Wing in Tulsa. Also, the Regional Training Site at the airport, which instructs fire and civil engineers, would be transferred to Savannah, Ga., according to the Defense Department's recommendations.

Arkansas delegation gets plum meeting with BRAC chairman

Associated Press State and Local Wire

David Hammer

Arkansas' congressional delegation used time with the chairman of the commission deciding the fate of military bases across the country to question him about the future of the 188th Fighter Wing in **Fort Smith** and the Red River Army Depot in Texarkana, Texas.

Sen. Mark Pryor, D-Ark., was credited with arranging the lunch meeting with Anthony Principi of California, the chairman of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, or **BRAC**. The commission received the Pentagon's recommendations for about 150 closures and hundreds of other realignments Monday.

"It was very timely. The Department of Defense comes out with the list on Friday, (Defense Secretary Donald) Rumsfeld testifies before the commission on Monday, and Tuesday we're sitting with the chairman," Democratic Rep. Mike Ross said.

The Pentagon listed the **Fort Smith** unit for realignment that will cost more than 70 jobs, and Texas base is slated to close and, while not in Arkansas, sits just across the river and employs about 500 Arkansans.

"The thing was they weren't bashful about closing bases, so the fact that (**Fort Smith**) wasn't closed shows they want us to be realigned with a mission in the future," said Rep. John Boozman, R-Ark., whose district contains the 188th.

But the Arkansas delegation was in a tough bargaining position because it came out of the Pentagon's recommendations with a net gain of more than 3,500 jobs, particularly at Little Rock Air Force Base.

"We were careful in the meeting to acknowledge that Little Rock Air Force Base and the Pine Bluff Arsenal did great and I was very pleased with the construction of the new reserve centers," Pryor said. "But that's why we wanted to find out about the process and the best way to affect it."

Ross said the proposed closure of Red River Army Depot and an adjacent base was especially hard for him to accept because there are Arkansans he's known all his life who have worked there for decades. Still, he was energized by the meeting with Principi.

"I didn't expect to walk in there and have him say, 'OK, we'll take it off the list.' But getting it on his radar screen this early has got to be a positive," Ross said. "This is affecting people who I grew up with. I don't know if we can save it but it won't be because we didn't try."

Sen. Blanche Lincoln, D-Ark., said she would work to gather evidence and documentation to show that the 188th, Red River and Lone Star are critical to national defense. Pryor said the work Red River does with armoring Humvees and repairing armored vehicles is more important than ever. He acknowledged that the F-16 fighter jets at **Fort Smith** are likely to be phased out soon, but said he would look for new missions for the installation.

"I'd like to hold onto the F-16 as long as possible," he said. The ones at **Fort Smith** "can be the last F-16s in our fleet, as far as I'm concerned."

Boozman said the delegation benefited from a good rapport with Principi from his time as Veterans Affairs chairman.

"He knows we have a reputation that when we do meet with him, we are productive and aren't crying wolf," he said.

SEN. PRYOR CALLS BRAC RECOMMENDATIONS 'MIXED BAG' LAUDS LRAFB, PINE BLUFF, BUT PLEDGES TO FIGHT CLOSURES

US Fed News

May 15, 2005

The office of Sen. Mark Pryor, D-Ark., issued the following press release:

Sen. Mark Pryor today said the Base Realignment and Closure (**BRAC**) announcement by Defense Secretary Rumsfeld is a mixed bag for Arkansas military installations, and vowed to continue promoting the necessary role they each play in our nation's overall defense strategy as the **BRAC** process moves forward.

Pryor said he was very excited the Department of Defense (DOD) has recognized the critical role the Little Rock Air Force Base plays in our overall national defense strategy and has opted to bolster that role, but he expressed disappointment that the DOD did not see the value and potential of some of Arkansas' other military installations, especially as it pertains to **Fort Smith** and the Red River and Lone Star Army Depots.

Pryor stressed that Rumsfeld's recommendations are only one step in the **BRAC** process. The **BRAC** Commission has until October to revise the list and the President will not certify it until November. He pledged to play an active role in protecting Arkansas' military installations throughout the **BRAC** process.

"I will continue to work with community leaders and fellow delegation members to promote and protect our military bases - in particular I will be submitting testimony to the **BRAC** Commission in the upcoming weeks and I have set up a delegation meeting with **BRAC** Commission Chairman Anthony Principi this week."

Little Rock Air Force Base

Pryor said the Little Rock Air Force Base is a big winner in the **BRAC** process gaining 3,898 personnel and 74 C-130 aircraft. There are currently an estimated 7,156 civilian and military personnel at the base. Pryor said he was proud of the base's strong showing, and pleased even more personnel will benefit from the base's new C-130J training facility, intelligence communications equipment, and child development center that he helped secure through the appropriations process.

Pryor added that Rumsfeld's decision to honor pending C-130 J contracts adds to the fortunes of the LRAFB. For several months, Pryor worked with Senator Saxby Chambliss (R-GA) to convince the Pentagon of the importance of the C-130 J.

"Today's recommendation means that the LRAFB will remain this country's premier C-130 training facility, and Central Arkansas will receive a tremendous economic boost," Pryor said.

"This victory is a testament to the dedication and skill of the individuals at the base and to the community as a whole." Pine Bluff Arsenal

Pryor said he is also pleased with the DOD's recommendation to sustain production at the Pine Bluff Arsenal, and he commended Arsenal officials for receiving a designation as a multi-functional Munitions Center of Excellence. The Arsenal already stores 12 percent of the nation's chemical weapons stockpile and maintains an important mission in destroying dangerous chemical weapons no longer used by the military.

Pryor said the delegation has made the Arsenal stronger over the past two years with a \$1.87 million appropriation to modernize its processing equipment and \$24.3 million for its white phosphorous facility - the only one of its kind in the nation.

Pryor noted that the Stone United States Army Reserve Center in Pine Bluff will be moved to the Arsenal, which will require a federal investment of \$8.9 million to build a new Armed Forces Reserve Center.

"The Pine Bluff Arsenal remains a strong installation that plays a critical role in our overall national defense strategy. The entire Pine Bluff community knows this, but we can all sleep a little easier knowing that the Pentagon agrees with us," Pryor said.

Fort Smith Air Guard

Pryor said he was disappointed with Secretary Rumsfeld's decision to realign the **Fort Smith Air Guard**, which involves relocating seven F-16s, retiring eight more and moving the fire fighter positions to Tulsa, OK and the Home Station Training Site to Savannah, GA. Pryor expressed his strong desire to prevent the realignment by working with the delegation to keep the F-16s and helping the 188th find a new, long-term mission, if necessary. Pryor said the \$6 million Aerospace and Maintenance Complex he secured last year provides a valuable asset that he hopes will not go unnoticed by the **BRAC** committee.

"I am disappointed and frankly a bit puzzled that the Secretary would make a decision to realign the 188th, especially at this time. These aircrafts and their pilots right now are proving their combat worthiness by being deployed to Afghanistan," Pryor said. "I will continue to work with the delegation to make sure the **BRAC** Commission understands the value and potential of **Fort Smith.**"

Lone Star Army Depot & Red River Army Depot

Pryor said he is disappointed the **BRAC** recommendation calls for the closure of the Lone Star Army Depot. It would move the Depot's storage and demilitarization functions to McAlester, IL; the mines and detonators, relays, and delays functions to Iowa, IA; the demolition charges functions to Crane Army Ammunition, IN; artillery and mortar functions to Milan, TN. He said 229 employees would lose their jobs.

Pryor said Rumsfeld's plan would to close the Red River Army Depot would have a significant adverse economic impact, costing the community 4,176 jobs.

Red River provides depot maintenance for the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, Multiple Launch Rocket System, and Combat Tactical Wheeled Vehicles. Its electronics repair facility supports the Bradley, Multiple Launch Rocket System, and a variety of missile support and aircraft armament

subsystems. The depot is also the worldwide center for Patriot and Hawk missile re-certification. It also has an ammunition storage mission, intern training center, civilian training, and rubber production facilities

"I am disappointed that Secretary Rumsfeld has not seen the obvious value and potential of the Red River and Lone Star Army Depot. They both provide support and maintenance for some of our most critical weapons systems and vehicles including the Bradley Fighting Vehicle and Multiple Launch Rocket System, both of which have been critical to our efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq," Pryor said.

Camp Pike, North Little Rock

Pryor said he will also fight the recommendation to close Camp Pike, which serves as the headquarters for an Army Reserve regional command. He said 177 positions could be lost from this closing.

Closings list out; Arkansas spared big hit Jacksonville base to gain; 188th Wing to lose F-16s

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

Amy Schlesing

May 14, 2005

Arkansas escaped the brunt of the federal ax in the first round of military installation closings in a decade, with recommendations to expand Little Rock Air Force Base and ground the Arkansas National Guard's 188th Fighter Wing.

In a 1,000-page Base Reallocation and Closure report released Friday, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld recommended the closure of more than 190 bases, 33 of which are considered major military installations. California, Texas and Connecticut were hit the hardest, with numerous major bases and administration facilities on the cut list.

The massive report is the first step in the process of closing bases and moving military operations.

"We don't know all the answers yet," said Bob Williams, spokesman for the Army Reserve 90th Regional Readiness Command at Camp Pike in North Little Rock. "We're not really sure what they're going to do."

The nine-member Base Reallocation and Closure Commission begins hearings next week with military and congressional leaders to formalize the recommendations. Those final recommendations must be given to the president by Sept. 8. If he approves them, they become final unless Congress issues a joint resolution of disapproval.

Cuts are recommended at bases around the globe as well as domestically, with 70,000 military personnel set to shift to stateside bases. Base reallocation and closure began in the 1980s as a way to transform the military by cutting out excess facilities and combining others to make a more efficient fighting force.

Friday's recommendations reflect Rumsfeld's initiative to combine National Guard, Reserve and active-military components at facilities. His plan also calls for phasing out the F-16 fighter jet used by the Arkansas Air National Guard's 188th Fighter Wing in **Fort Smith**.

"We got a lot of good news and a little bit of bad news, too," said U.S. Sen. Mark Pryor, D-Ark. "Little Rock Air Force Base is a big winner. Really in my mind that is an acknowledgment of the importance of the base."

Arkansas fared better than most states, with further recommendations to strengthen the 189th Airlift Wing of the Arkansas Air National Guard and sustain the Pine Bluff Arsenal.

Little Rock Air Force Base stands to gain 50 C-130 cargo planes under the plan and an additional 3,600 personnel. The planes and personnel indicate an expansion of the C-130 school at the base, the largest of its kind.

The 50 new planes would be in addition to 20 planes the base would receive to replace the most aged of its fleet. The planes and personnel would shift from Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina and Dyess Air Force Base in Texas, as well as from National Guard bases in New York, Nevada, Ohio and Wisconsin.

The six C-130J model planes that the base was expected to receive this year would be diverted under the recommendation, however. The J model is the controversial newest version of the C-130 cargo plane.

Most of the base's J models would go to the 189th Airlift Wing of the Arkansas Air National Guard, which plays a major role in training flight crews at Little Rock Air Force Base in Jacksonville.

Additionally, the 189th is to bolster its fleet from 10 C-130s to 18.

"We're still trying to dig through all of it and make sense of it all," said Staff Sgt. Bob Oldham, spokesman for the 189th.

Lt. Jon Quinlan, spokesman for Little Rock Air Force Base, said the proposal to increase the active-duty and National Guard fleets indicates plans to expand the C-130 training program.

Close to \$200 million federal dollars have been pumped into the base in the past two years to support the growing C-130 school.

"At this point, we don't know exactly how it's going to work out," he said. "But we're looking at maybe doing a program where active duty and the Guard work hand-in-hand."

Pine Bluff Arsenal was untouched in the report although it likely will be one of nine locations across the state recommended for a new Army Reserve Center. The Reserve centers in Pine Bluff and El Dorado are recommended for replacement with the loss of a handful of personnel. Another seven Reserve centers in the state are recommended for replacement with personnel holding steady.

"We certainly support the recommendations and view them as beneficial for the Army and the arsenal," said Larry Wright, civilian executive director of the arsenal. "This represents the first step in a very detailed analysis of our military value."

Wright and his staff answered 1,700 questions and submitted 300,000 pages of data requested by Pentagon officials over the past year as they worked on closure recommendations.

"I think we're being positioned for the future," Wright said.

Despite the good news, the Pentagon's recommendations to end the 188th's F-16 fighter program and close Red River Army Depot and Lone Star Arsenal, about 18 miles outside Texarkana in Texas, hit hard.

The report recommends retiring seven of the 188th's F-16 fighters and transferring the remaining seven to a National Guard unit in Fresno, Calif., effectively grounding the small **Fort Smith** unit. The report gives no indication about what the unit's new mission would be, but it does not dissolve the 188th, either.

The recommendation is part of Rumsfeld's plan to phase out the older fighter jets like the F-16 and F-15 and place more emphasis on newer models like the F-22 Raptor.

"It appears the F-16s are going away, but the facility is not going away," said U.S. Rep. Vic Snyder, D-Ark.

About 208 full-time workers are associated with the 188th. The wing just left last week for a four-month deployment to Iraq.

"I have some real concerns about what I'm hearing about **Fort Smith**," Pryor said. "It doesn't make a lot of sense to me. They're being used right now. Hopefully we can find them a mission."

North Little Rock stands to lose the 90th Regional Readiness Command at Camp Pike, as well. Under the Base Reallocation and Closure plan, the 10 regional readiness commands of the Army Reserve would be reduced to four. The five-state area currently under the command of the North Little Rock camp would move to Moffett Field, Calif., home of the Air Force Regional Command.

"We haven't been given any indication of what our headquarters is going to look like," Williams said. "The 90th would be dissolved to create a sustainment brigade. And we don't know what that is. There is nothing on paper showing the number of personnel we'll have."

The Base Reallocation and Closure report recommends that the unit reduce personnel by 177 people.

More than 400 Arkansans work at the facilities, said Belinda Lee, spokesman for Red River Army Depot. The depot is one of two facilities where Bradley Fighting Vehicles and humvees destroyed in Iraq are rebuilt for return to the theater. It is also one of five major production facilities for add-on armor used to shore up humvees against roadside bombs and rocket-propelled grenades.

"We're shocked," Lee said. "But this is a recommendation, so now we move into validating and analyzing data to make sure it is a true reflection of what we do here. And we'll continue to focus on what we're doing - shipping the products to the soldiers who need them."

The demand for armor kits and rebuilt humvees and Bradleys is constant in Iraq. The facility

moves 18 rebuilt humvees back into Iraq every week. The amount of armor it produces each week is not known.

"Red River Army Depot surprised all of us, really," said U.S. Sen. Blanche Lincoln, D-Ark. "The rumor here was that there would not be any depots or arsenals included in this round of BRAC."

Closely linked to the Lone Star Arsenal is the East Camden munitions business. Patriot missiles and Hawk missile parts are made at both locations, tying them together in production. Closing the arsenal could drastically affect the private contractors in East Camden.

U.S. Rep. Mike Ross, D-Ark., said the recommendations for the arsenal and depot "make no sense at all."

"But then again, this list is coming from an agency that spends \$800 on a hammer and \$600 on commode seats, so it shouldn't be a surprise," Ross said. "If there is any good news in this, there are 4,405 jobs at those two facilities. They are in Texas and the president is from Texas."

The Red River Army Depot was on the closure list in the 1995 Base Reallocation and Closure round, but it was saved by the commission during hearings with Congress. It was decreased by several thousand acres.

Arkansas' delegation is prepared to fight for it again.

Pryor set up a meeting next week with Arkansas' delegation and the Base Reallocation and Closure Commission chairman, former Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony Principi. And over the next four months the commission will visit the facilities recommended for closure and listen to testimony from military and legislative leaders.

"Now we kick into gear with meetings and testimony," Lincoln said.

"We've definitely locked arms on the issue as a delegation."

How Arkansas' bases would be affected by the proposal :: Nine U.S. Army Reserve Centers replaced.

:: 188th Fighter Wing in **Fort Smith** grounded for proposed reorganization.

:: Little Rock Air Force Base expanded by 50 planes and 3,600 personnel.

:: Pine Bluff Arsenal unaffected, gaining a Reserve Center.

:: Red River Army Depot and the adjacent Lone Star Arsenal in Texas closed.

LRAFB big winner under proposed plan

Associated Press State and Local Wire

David Hammer

May 13, 2005

Some Arkansas military bases would see cutbacks under a Pentagon plan announced Friday, but the state overall would enjoy a net gain with nearly 4,000 additional personnel proposed for the Little Rock Air Force Base.

"We do feel like we fared remarkably well compared to other states," U.S. Sen. Blanche Lincoln, D-Ark., said. "We'll go through the processes available to us (to argue against layoffs). I don't think we'll be quiet about that. But it's the volume we use. To a certain degree, we may not be as shrill."

Arkansans who braced this week for major base closures learned instead that the air base north of Little Rock in Jacksonville would gain 3,898 people and 74 C-130 cargo planes under the proposed Base Realignment and Closure plan. The Pine Bluff Arsenal escaped any proposed cuts, and the BRAC proposal also acknowledged the arsenal's greater importance as an ammunitions development and training center. Also, while the 188th Fighter Wing at Fort Smith would lose 78 people, it would keep its F-16 jet program.

Personnel increases at the air base, already home to 13,475 military and civilian employees and military family members, represented the ninth-largest gain among military facilities targeted for staffing hikes around the nation. Arkansas ranked sixth highest among the states in net gains under the plan.

U.S. Rep. Vic Snyder, D-Ark., was ecstatic.

"We've known it's an excellent facility for a long time, and now we know the Pentagon knows. It's a tribute to the men and women there," Snyder said.

The Pentagon recently gave a vote-of-confidence to the new C-130J program, and additional C-130 E and H models would come to the air base. Base spokesman Lt. Jon Quinlan said Friday that 25 of the aircraft would come from Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina; 24 from Dyess Air Force Base in Texas; eight each from Niagara Air Reserve Station in New York and Reno-Tahoe Air Guard Station in Nevada; and four each from Mansfield Air Guard Station in Ohio, General Mitchell Air Reserve Station in Wisconsin and Schenectady Air Guard Station in New York.

He also said the base would retire 27 old C-130 planes under the proposal.

"Today's recommendation means that the LRAFB will remain this country's premier C-130 training facility and Central Arkansas will receive a tremendous economic boost," U.S. Sen. Mark Pryor, D-Ark., said.

But the Pentagon lists also included the proposed closing of the Red River Army Depot in Texarkana, Texas, which would be a considerable loss to Arkansas workers, who hold about 500 of the 2,500 jobs at the installation. Rep. Mike Ross, D-Ark., said he was disappointed and baffled by the decision to eliminate the major armored vehicle repair center by 2011.

"When we needed (armored Humvees) in Iraq they were not built, so they went to the Red River Army Depot to get them. And this is how they reward them? You would think the Pentagon

would have learned," he said.

The Pentagon's preliminary list also showed two installations in Arkansas would suffer losses. Camp Pike in North Little Rock, which serves as headquarters for an Army Reserve regional command, would lose 177 positions, although some of those could be staffers in other states who report to the headquarters.

The El Dorado Armed Forces Reserve Center and the Stone U.S. Army Reserve Center in Pine Bluff were recommended for closure, costing 58 jobs, all but four military positions. But Pine Bluff Arsenal said the Stone center could simply relocate to a new \$8.9 million building on the arsenal grounds.

Pryor said he still was concerned about the future of the 188th and would look for a new mission there if the F-16 program of 15 fighter jets is phased out. Lincoln said the future of the 188th wasn't certain.

"Clearly, they're downsizing the fleet of F-16s, but I don't think they're completely sure where they're going from there," she said. "Fort Smith has the capacity to grow and they're not boxed in like they are on each coast, so they don't want to close those doors, I don't think."

Although disappointed by the plans for the Red River depot, Ross tried to focus on the gains for the arsenal.

"The bottom line is that Pine Bluff Arsenal is not on this list, and that means a bright future once the chemical demilitarization process comes to an end," Ross said. "A lot of us were concerned about the future of the arsenal after that (chemical weapons incineration) came to an end" in 2010.

Gov. Mike Huckabee said Arkansas will work with civic leaders in the Texarkana area to help the community adjust if the depot is closed.

"As someone who lived 10 years in Texarkana, I'm saddened by the planned closure of the Red River Army Depot. Even though that facility is in Texas, it employs a lot of Arkansans," Huckabee said.

Overall, the governor said, Arkansas was "one of the big winners" in Friday's announcement.

"Our major military facilities near Pine Bluff, at Fort Smith and in central Arkansas will remain open," he said. "And, if the plan is implemented, almost 4,000 jobs will be added at Little Rock Air Force base, which will provide a huge boost to our state's economy."

Before the recommendations are finalized, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld will testify before a nine-member base closing commission next week then the commission will hold public hearings from May through August. The Base Realignment and Closure Commission will then send the recommendations to President Bush to accept or reject. And if he accepts the recommendations, Congress then acts on the list.

"If there's one bright spot, Red River Army Depot is located in President Bush's home state and he will have the opportunity to not accept (the closing)," said Ross, who has already pledged to work with Rep. Ralph Hall, R-Texas, to fight the recommendation.

Snyder, however, said the silver lining of **BRAC** lies in its overall results; Rumsfeld said the closure of 150 bases and hundreds of realignments nationwide would save \$48.8 billion over 20 years while making the military more mobile and better suited for the global effort against terrorism.

"There are winners and losers when we look at economic vitality issues, but the overall winner in this process will be the military and the American people," Snyder said. "While communities will lose workers and bases, ultimately this will help the military be more efficient and have more money to defend our country."

Once a final list is approved, the Pentagon has six years to close, relocate or downsize bases on the final list.

Arkansas bases await Pentagon decision

Associated Press State and Local Wire

David Hammer

May 12, 2005

The chemical-weapons destruction program now under way at the Pine Bluff Arsenal, while important for the short-term future of that facility, has little bearing on the arsenal's long-term prospects, officials say.

"What really counts is how it stacks up against the Defense Department's military value criteria," said Jim Bacon, chairman of military affairs at the Economic Development Alliance of Jefferson County. "The chemical-weapons destruction doesn't come into play in figuring the longer-term security and military value of the base."

When the arsenal began burning 3,850 tons of chemical weapons in March, some base employees joked they had worked themselves out of a job. The process is scheduled to end in 2010, bringing to a close a major function of the base.

But other activities have been developed at the base over the course of many years that should keep it relevant well after the chemical weapons are destroyed. The Clara Barton Center, for example, has trained more than 5,000 first-responders nationwide to handle a biological or chemical attack.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is to release a preliminary list Friday of military bases targeted for closing or restructuring. Four Arkansas operations - the arsenal, the 188th Fighter Wing at the **Fort Smith** Airport, the Little Rock Air Force Base, and Camp Robinson in North Little Rock - are bracing for the announcement. The Red River Army Depot in Texas also is of concern to Arkansans who work there.

The Pentagon's target list will be turned over to the Base Realignment And Closure - or **BRAC** - Commission for a final decision by the fall. Congress and the president must accept all or none of the recommendations before a final report is produced. In the past, the commission has accepted 85-90 percent of the Pentagon's initial recommendations.

Rep. Mike Ross, D-Ark., said the Bush administration's penchant for privatization shouldn't affect the arsenal.

"This administration believes if the private sector can do it, the government shouldn't do it," he said. "I happen to believe the uniqueness of the missions at Pine Bluff Arsenal is the reason we won't see its name on the list. They do the missions the private sector doesn't want to do."

One of the areas of greatest concern is the 188th Fighter Wing, housed at the **Fort Smith** Municipal Airport, which narrowly escaped major cuts last summer as part of an Air Force consolidation program.

Capt. Kristine Munn, spokeswoman for the Arkansas National Guard, said the consolidation program should have no bearing on **BRAC**, even though it was initially devised as a way to avoid mandated base closures. U.S. Sen. Mark Pryor, D-Ark., also noted that Congress appropriated \$6 million for an aerospace and maintenance complex at 188th headquarters.

But Chris Goode, a Washington lobbyist and former director of administration for the 1995 **BRAC** Commission, said he's heard Air Force programs are on the chopping block.

"The intel we have is that you're going to see a lot of realignments, and, unlike previous **BRACs**, we anticipate the Air Force and Air National Guard will be looked at with a lot of scrutiny," Goode said.

That also puts the Little Rock Air Force Base in Jacksonville on notice. It's generally been safe because it's a premiere training center for the C-130 transport plane, but recent problems with the newest J-model had called that into question.

Rumsfeld's announcement Wednesday that the Pentagon would not terminate a contract with Lockheed Martin for more C-130J aircraft should bode well for the base.

Arkansas lost Eaker Air Force Base near Blytheville during the 1991 **BRAC**.

Munn said Camp Robinson in North Little Rock is counting on a diversified mission, with one of the largest guard installations, the Army reserve, Navy reserve and the Marine Corps reserve, to escape cuts. However, Fort Chaffee near **Fort Smith** served many purposes and had a long history when it was closed as an Army base by the 1995 **BRAC**.

The Red River Army Depot in Texarkana, Texas, barely avoided the ax in the 1995 **BRAC**, and while Ross is "very optimistic" about the arsenal's chances, he is only "cautiously optimistic" about Red River and its 3,000 civilian employees, about a third of whom live in Arkansas.

"If the decision were based on current workload and current need, there's no way Red River is on the list because employment is at an all-time high and they are making armor kits for Humvees in Iraq," Ross said, pointing out that armor has been a well-publicized problem. "Unfortunately, this will not just be based on that."

Editorial/Opinion Articles