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DCN





2005 BRAC Commission Schedule

Base Realignment and Closure Commission

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
12 JULY 2005**

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Deputy Director of Communications
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Media Advisory for BRAC Commission Regional Hearing in New Orleans, Louisiana

**PLEASE NOTE UPDATED HEARING INFORMATION. HEARING HAS BEEN RESCHEDULED FOR
FRIDAY, JULY 22, DUE TO HURRICANE DENNIS.**

TIME: Doors Open to Public at 7:30 AM

**Hearing Coverage- Mahalia Jackson Theater
8:30 AM/ MEDIA PRE-SET 6:00AM**

Media Availability – Lobby of Mahalia Jackson Theater

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

LOCATION:

New Orleans Cultural Center
Mahalia Jackson Theater of the Performing Arts
801 North Rampart Street
New Orleans, LA 70116

PARTICIPATING STATES:

Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida

BRAC COMMISSIONERS: Admiral Harold Gehman (USN, Ret.), General Sue Ellen Turner (USAF, Ret.), Honorable James Hansen, General Lloyd W. Newton (USAF, Ret.)

Logistical information for media

- Satellite truck parking available in VIP parking lot of Cultural Center
- 650 ft. Cable run to press risers
- 65 ft. Max camera throw
- TV quality sound and lighting
- Internet will be available

**Credentialing and Media Inquiries: Please register online at www.brac.gov for media credentials.
CREDENTIALS REQUESTED FOR PREVIOUS NEW ORLEANS REGIONAL HEARING DATE WILL STILL HOLD. For all media inquiries, please contact James Schaefer 703-901-7793
james.schaefer@wso.whs.mil.**

**For more information, schedules and future updates.
Please visit our website, www.brac.gov,**

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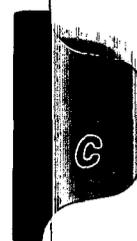
**2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
Suggested Talking Points for Visit to Naval Air Station Pensacola**

- 1. Military value is the most important consideration to the 2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) as the Commission evaluates the suggestion made by the Department of Defense (DoD) to realign Naval Air Station Pensacola.**
 - The Commission will evaluate the economic, environmental, and other effects that the realignment of the installation could have on the surrounding community but the key factor in the Commission's decision as to whether or not to suggest NAS Pensacola for realignment is military value.
 - Although the Commission is keenly aware of the human impact of the suggestion by DoD to realign NAS Pensacola, the Commission will base its decisions, as to whether or not to suggest the installation for realignment, almost entirely upon the current military value of the base.
 - The Commission will carefully consider the role that Pensacola Naval Air Station plays in the defense of the nation from the Gulf Coast region.

- 2. The Commission is aware of the possible economic, environmental, and other effects that the suggestions to realign Pensacola Naval Air Station could have and is taking these 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 full account in the decision to recommend a base for closure or realignment.
 - The Commission will evaluate the economic impact that the installation realignment would have on the community surrounding NAS Pensacola, while basing its decision almost entirely upon military value.
 - The local community and the installation have developed a strong relationship based upon a social and economic synergy. The loss of roughly 1500 jobs can have a significant impact on a community. The Commission understands this and will take it into account as it delineates its final recommendation.

- 3. The Congress established the Commission as a non-political, transparent, and independent entity to perform a thorough evaluation, by a process set forth 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 to serve as accountability to the public for the suggestion, made by DoD, to realign NAS Pensacola.
 - 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 Qs & As for Naval Air Station Pensacola**

Q1. If the Commission adheres to the Department of Defense's (DoD) recommendations, Pensacola will see the largest job loss of all military bases in Florida. Estimates are that 1,579 jobs will be lost in the realignment process. Understandably, this would have a large economic impact on the community. Will the Commission consider these economic ramifications in the Commission's final recommendation regarding NAS Pensacola?

A1. The factors to be included in the Commission's evaluation of the DoD's suggestions for base closures and realignments are set forth by statute. The Commission is keenly aware of the human impact of these suggestions and will take their economic effects on the region into account, while maintaining military value as its most important consideration in this evaluation.

Q2. Governor Bush has vowed to fight the current recommendations in an effort to save jobs in the Pensacola area. Will the Governor's relationship with the President aide him in his effort?

A2. 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 Air Station Pensacola, but will also consider the economic, environmental and other effects that the closure of the installation would have on the surrounding community.

Q3. The BRAC list recommendations suggest bringing the Navy's Undersea Medical Institute to Pensacola from New London, CT. Does DoD have a larger medical role planned for Pensacola in the future?

A3. While DoD creates the military strategy for meeting changing global threats, the entire focus of the Commission is to evaluate whether or not DoD has followed the law in its suggestions to close or realign military installations across the country. The Commission will evaluate current military value of an installation, according to the process prescribed by statute.

Q4. Did damage that NAS Pensacola sustain from Hurricane Ivan play a role in the Pentagon's recommendation to move jobs?

A4. DoD is to maintain a military installation, regardless of the installation's intended future. Recent spending to ensure that the base is able to perform its current military mission will not determine whether or not the installation will be retained for future missions.

Q5. The current recommendations suggest moving the Naval Education and Training Command from Pensacola to Millington, TN. Pensacola already has the

Q5. Continued infrastructure for the Command. Will the Commission consider this in its final recommendation?

A5. The process of evaluation, followed by the Commission, has been set forth by law. In this evaluation, military value is the most important factor to the Commission as DoD seeks to streamline our military to meet changing global threats. The Commission will consider all pertinent factors in its analysis, including the economic, environmental and other effects on the local community, as well as the community's infrastructure to support the installation.

Q6. The Department of Veterans Affairs and DoD's Joint Ambulatory Care Clinic is scheduled to open in 2007. Should Pensacola have a role with regard to the Joint Ambulatory Care Clinic, this could offset the job loss of the potential realignment. Does the Commission anticipate this role for Pensacola?

A6. The sole purpose of the Commission is to independently and transparently evaluate the suggestions made by DoD to close or realign military installations across the country, and to ensure that all pertinent considerations have been taken into account. While the Commission will evaluate the current military value of an installation, DoD is responsible for working with a community, should a suggestion for a realignment be enacted, to ensure continued economic growth. DoD is responsible for the strategy to ensure that our troops are well-prepared to meet today's changing global threats; the Commission is only responsible for evaluating the list of suggested base closures and realignments provided by DoD.

Q7. In addition to the Navy Education and Training Command, Pensacola is slated to lose the Officer Candidate School and the Defense Finance Accounting Service. What were the criteria for moving these away from the Naval Air Station?

A7. The criteria for determining the value of a military installation has been set forth by statute. As outlined by law, the Commission will place priority on military value; while also taking into consideration economic, environmental, and other effects that the closure or realignment of a base would have on the community surrounding that base.

Information that is gathered in the analysis of a base, with the exception of information that is sensitive to national security, will be made accessible to the public. Part of what constitutes DoD's determination of military value is jointness, ease of mobility, and the base's strategic role with regard to today's changing global threats.

Q8. Will the Pensacola Naval Air Station play any role in the proposed arrival of the Joint Strike Fighter to Eglin AFB?

A8. While DoD is responsible for developing the strategy for meeting today's changing global threats, the Commission is solely responsible for ensuring that DoD's suggestions to close or realign various military installations, have been made in keeping with the law. The Commission will perform an independent, transparent, and thorough analysis of these suggestions, through a process set forth by law.

Q9. How can the Community make the Commission aware of information that the Community feels may have been overlooked by DoD?

A9. The BRAC Commission encourages public input into this transparent and objective process. Community groups who wish to submit information for the appropriate regional

A9. Continued

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.

D

NAVAL AIR STATION PENSACOLA FLORIDA

National News Articles

Wynne Approves 'Re-Plan' Strategy For Joint Strike Fighter Program

Clark Defends Plans To Move Mine Warfare Command To San Diego

Closings Would Refocus East Coast Fleet; Pentagon's BRAC List Boosts Southern Bases

Local News Articles

Pensacola Will Get BRAC Panel Appeal

Job Cuts Menace Naval Bases;

The Proposed Transfer Of Several Departments Away From Two Pensacola Area Naval Bases Would Result In Thousands Of Lost Jobs.

Bush Vows To Fight Pensacola Job Cuts;

Visit To Pentagon Disheartens Officials

Pensacola Naval Air Station Targeted For Base Changes

Delegates Hunt Allies On BRAC

Escambia Short On Cash

Opinion/Editorial Articles

Many Help Make A Difference

National News Articles

Wynne Approves 'Re-Plan' Strategy For Joint Strike Fighter Program

Inside the Air Force

June 3, 2005

Pentagon acquisition chief Michael Wynne this week signed off on an acquisition decision memorandum accepting the details of a revised program plan for the Joint Strike Fighter that was implemented last fall.

According to an information paper provided by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Wynne approved the "F-35 (Joint Strike Fighter) Program Review restructured program known as the 're-plan' effort."

JSF program officials first presented the re-plan concept to the Defense Acquisition Board, which Wynne chairs, during a review meeting last October. The joint program office has been working on the new plan since that time and the fiscal year 2006 budget request now before Congress reflects the revised calendar. However, program officials had to return for another DAB review May 5 in order to receive the board's blessing on the exact details of the plan, coupled with the new aircraft design focused on weight reduction, JSF spokeswoman Kathy Crawford told Inside the Air Force June 2.

Last year, Pentagon officials restructured the JSF program, allocating an extra year to remedy weight problems discovered during systems integration and preliminary design review activity.

The weight growth left the fighter unable to meet its key performance parameters -- particularly the short-takeoff-and-vertical-landing version. The delay affected the aircraft's program schedule; initial operating capability for the conventional-takeoff-and-landing variant was moved from FY-11 to FY-13, as reflected in the re-plan. The updated JSF program calendar for next year includes a critical design review, scheduled for early 2006, and a first flight, slated for late summer 2006, according to Crawford.

During last month's DAB review, Wynne also approved an updated acquisition strategy, which was defined after the program down-selected to one contractor -- Lockheed Martin -- for the system development and demonstration phase. The program waited to obtain Wynne's approval on that strategy, however, until it could add in the details of the re-plan effort, Crawford said.

As part of its \$102.9 billion budget request for FY-06, now before Congress, the Air Force is seeking \$2.6 billion for its portion of the JSF program. This amount includes \$2.4 billion for research, development, test and evaluation activity and \$200 million to fund initial long lead items for five aircraft. JSF's customers include the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps, as well as Great Britain and other international customers.

The Pentagon would like to establish a Joint Strike Fighter training site at Eglin Air Force Base, FL, that would bring together the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps personnel learning to fly and maintain the F-35, according to the Pentagon's 2005 report to the Base **Realignment** and Closure Commission.

The recommendation entails moving instructor pilots and operations support personnel from Luke AFB, AZ, Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, CA, and Naval Air Station Oceana, VA, to Eglin AFB. And, if approved, it also would include the relocation of maintenance technician and logistics support instructors from Sheppard AFB, TX and Naval Air Station **Pensacola**, FL, to Eglin.

Clark Defends Plans To Move Mine Warfare Command To San Diego

Inside the Navy
May 23, 2005

As part of the latest base-closure round, the Navy plans to relocate Mine Warfare Command from Corpus Christi, TX, to San Diego, a change that Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Vern Clark believes will help the mine warfare community.

The Navy proposed moving the command and the Mobile Mine Assembly Group to the Fleet Anti-Submarine Warfare Center in Point Loma, CA. The service would also move its Mine Warfare Training Center from Texas to San Diego to consolidate it with the Fleet Anti-Submarine Warfare Training Center there.

The naval station at Ingleside, TX, would be closed and the air base in Corpus Christi would be realigned. The command's ships, along with dedicated personnel, would be relocated from Ingleside to San Diego. Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron 15 (HM-15) and dedicated personnel, would move to the naval station in Norfolk, VA.

"The command is moving west," Clark told Inside the Navy May 17 following an appearance on Capitol Hill before the base closure commission. "The ships are going west. The airplanes are going east."

Asked whether the admiral in charge of Mine Warfare Command would be shifted to San Diego, Clark said, "Yeah. . . . They are going to link up with the ASW Command."

The command could be connected to Fleet Forces Command in Norfolk in terms of organizing, training and equipping forces, but "in terms of functionality and undersea warfare" it is headed to San Diego, he said.

MINEWARCOM, which was established in Charleston, SC, in 1975, moved to Corpus Christi in 1993. Moving the command again will work out better for the mine warfare community, said Clark.

"Well, they're going to be close to the numbered fleet commander. It will facilitate integration with all of the exercising pieces that go on," Clark explained, before a passing lawmaker drew him into another conversation.

According to a 2005 Navy report on the service's base closure and **realignment** plans, the idea is to move mine warfare surface and aviation assets to major fleet concentration areas and to reduce excess capacity. The report says Gulf Coast presence can be achieved as needed with available Navy ports at the naval air bases in Key West, FL, and **Pensacola**, FL. U.S. Coast Guard presence is expected to remain in the Gulf Coast region, according to the report.

Osprey-class minehunting ships now homeported at Ingleside are scheduled for decommissioning between fiscal years 2006 and 2008 and will not relocate, the report states.

Moving MINEWARCOM and the Mine Warfare Training Center to San Diego creates a center of excellence for undersea warfare, combining both mine warfare and anti-submarine warfare disciplines, according to the report. By removing the mine warfare community from "a location remote from" the fleet, the reorganization will better support the shift to organic mine warfare, the report argues.

The relocation of Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron 15 (HM-15) to Norfolk consolidates all mine warfare aircraft in one fleet concentration area. This location "better supports" the HM-15 mission by locating them closer to the base where they would embark aboard C-5 transports for overseas employment and mine countermeasures ship and helicopter coordinated exercises, according to the report.

But lawmakers from Texas are sour on the proposed base-closure changes for their state. As the Base **Realignment** and Closure (BRAC) Commission reviews the Pentagon's recommendations in the coming months, Texas lawmakers plan to fight to keep facilities in their state open, like lawmakers from other states facing base closures.

Sens. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) and John Cornyn (R-TX) have vowed to pull Ingleside from the list of scheduled base closures. Rep. Solomon Ortiz (D-TX) is also fighting to keep Ingleside open.

"Ingleside is the only deep water port in the Gulf of Mexico and it is critical to our homeland security mission," said Hutchison during a recent visit to Corpus Christi, according to a statement released by her office. She called Ingleside the closest naval base to Mexico and Central and South America and the newest and most modern naval base in the country.

In a separate statement released May 19, Hutchison said the BRAC Commission had accepted her

request to hold two regional hearings in Texas. The first hearing will take place in Dallas on June 22 and the second in San Antonio on July 11, according to her office. In addition, the commission has agreed to send one of its members to each of the BRAC locations in Texas, according to the statement.

Ortiz has been pushing for the commission to hold a BRAC hearing in Ingleside, according to a report published in the Corpus Christi Caller-Times.

Closings Would Refocus East Coast Fleet; Pentagon's BRAC List Boosts Southern Bases

Navy Times

William H. McMichael and Mark Faram

May 23, 2005

Pascagoula, Miss., Ingleside, Texas, and New London/Groton, Conn., will cease to be Navy towns if the BRAC commissioners ultimately accept the Pentagon's base closure recommendations released May 13. But northeast Florida and southeast Georgia would grow into what amounts to a fleet concentration area on a par with Puget Sound.

The Pentagon also recommended shutting down the historic naval shipyard in Portsmouth, Maine, and dozens of reserve centers and recruiting district headquarters. And Navy officials apparently are setting the stage for an expected merger of the Navy's personnel and training commands into one "human resources" command, by consolidating all major personnel, training and recruiting functions at the Naval Support Activity in Mid-South Millington, Tenn.

The list, awaited with trepidation in communities fearing the loss of bases and their economic benefit, includes 54 large and small Navy bases and 46 small facilities. If fully implemented, the Navy estimates annual savings of \$1.5 billion.

"The payoff [for sailors] in the long run is the place where they will be stationed - where they will live - will be a place that has everything they want," said a senior Navy official who briefed reporters at the Pentagon May 13. "They will be close to the ship, close to maintenance and close to training opportunities, so that when they're not deployed, they will have the opportunity to do everything in one place."

Recommended for outright closure on the long-awaited list are the naval stations at Pascagoula and Ingleside. According to an internal Navy document obtained by Navy Times that details the Navy's recommendations, Pascagoula's two frigates would be moved to Mayport, Fla., while the cruiser Thomas S. Gates is slated for decommissioning. Along with the Navy's plan to decommission all of its mine hunter coastal ships, all of Ingleside's mine countermeasures ships and Mine Warfare Command would be moved to San Diego.

The Pentagon also would shut down New London Submarine Base, the Navy's first, built in 1868 and a submarine base since 1915, and move its 16 attack submarines to the much newer facility at Kings Bay, Ga. - 40-odd miles from the Navy activities in Jacksonville, Fla., and Mayport - and to Norfolk Naval Station, Va. The move would colocate attack and ballistic missile submarines at Kings Bay, a first for the Navy. To be determined: how many subs each base would get.

"I did not, in my wildest imagination, think we would get closed," said John Markowicz, a retired naval officer and president of the Southeastern Connecticut Enterprise Region in New London,

Conn., which had been tracking the BRAC process for local municipalities. "We had been led to believe by the Navy that we would be realigned and lose 400 to 500 military and civilian positions, but that was all."

Markowicz said he thought the cost of relocating all the submarines and commands would be too great and not give the Navy enough savings to justify the move.

"We are not giving up this fight," Markowicz said.

Another historic closure would take place in Portsmouth, Maine, where the naval shipyard has been in continuous operation since 1800 and now focuses on nuclear submarine overhaul. The region would lose 4,510 jobs, most of them civilian positions, and the Ship Depot Repair Function would be split up and transferred to Norfolk, Puget Sound and Pearl Harbor.

Other major bases recommended for closure are Atlanta Naval Air Station and NAS Willow Grove, Pa.

If the Millington merger takes place, the Navy would be the first military service to totally integrate its manpower and personnel functions with its training and education counterparts. As a result, the service also is recommending closure of the New Orleans Naval Support Activity and moving the Enlisted Placement Management Center and Naval Reserve Personnel Center to Millington. Naval Reserve Recruiting Command, which recently merged with its Millington-based active counterpart, would relocate to the base near Memphis as well.

The Naval Reserve's headquarters also would leave New Orleans for Norfolk, where it would be located with Fleet Forces Command.

Pensacola would lose 2,161 military and civilian positions, the bulk of them if Naval Education and Training Command is moved to Millington, as now recommended. Officer Training Command, which includes all officer candidate schools, would move to Newport Naval Station, R.I., and merge with the Officer Training Center. But **Pensacola** would gain 679 positions with the relocation of the Naval Undersea Medical Institute from New London and Undergraduate Navigator Training from Randolph Air Base, Texas.

The Jacksonville-Mayport-Kings Bay area would grow substantially. In addition to the New London submarines and the Pascagoula frigates, Jacksonville would gain Patrol Wing 5 and its P-3 maritime patrol aircraft squadron from Brunswick Naval Air Station, Maine, which is being realigned.

Gains, losses

Major changes for naval installations on the 2005 base closure and **realignment** list.

Closures

. Submarine Base New London, Conn., losing 7,096 military, 952 civilians.

. Naval Air Station Atlanta, losing 1,274 military, 156 civilians.

- . Naval Supply Corps School Athens, Ga., losing 389 military, 108 civilians.
- . Naval Support Activity New Orleans, losing 1,997 military, 652 civilians.
- . Naval Shipyard Portsmouth, Maine, losing 201 military, 4,032 civilians.
- . Naval Station Pascagoula, Miss., losing 844 military, 112 civilians.
- . Naval Air Station Willow Grove, Pa., losing 865 military, 362 civilians.
- . Naval Station Ingleside, Texas, losing 1,901 military, 260 civilians.

Realignments

- . Naval Medical Center San Diego, losing 1,596 military, 33 civilians.
- . Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla., losing 302 military, 1,180 civilians.
- . Naval Station Great Lakes, Ill., losing 1,989 military, 23 civilians.
- . Naval Air Station Brunswick, Maine, losing 2,317 military, 61 civilians.
- . Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Texas, losing 926 military, 89 civilians.

Gains

- . Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, Calif., gaining 154 military, 2,315 civilians.
- . Naval Station San Diego, gaining 1,084 military, 84 civilians.
- . Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Fla., gaining 1,902 military, 65 civilians.
- . Submarine Base Kings Bay, Ga., gaining 3,245 military, 102 civilians.
- . National Naval Medical Center Bethesda, Md., gaining 982 military, 936 civilians.
- . Naval Air Station New Orleans, gaining 1,407 military, 446 civilians.
- . Naval Support Activity Mid-South, Tenn., gaining 372 military, 601 civilians.
- . Naval Shipyard Norfolk, Va., gaining 177 military, 1,774 civilians.
- . Naval Station Norfolk, Va., gaining 3,447 military, losing 729 civilians.
- . Naval Support Activity Norfolk, Va., gaining 567 military, 205 civilians.
- . Naval Station Bremerton, Wash., gaining 1,401 civilians.

Local News Articles

Pensacola Will Get BRAC Panel Appeal

Gannett News Service
LARRY WHEELER
May 26, 2005

WASHINGTON -- **Pensacola** base boosters will get their day before a national base-closing panel in July, Florida lawmakers and their staffs confirmed Wednesday.

The nine-member Base **Realignment** and Closing (BRAC) Commission will meet in New Orleans on July 12 to hear presentations from community groups representing bases in Florida, Mississippi and Louisiana.

The 1,579 jobs the Defense Department wants to shift out of Naval Air Station **Pensacola** and Saufley Field in Escambia County are expected to dominate the Sunshine State's allotted time.

BRAC staff recently informed Sen. Bill Nelson, D-Melbourne, that, as the state's senior senator, he is responsible for coordinating Florida's presentation to the commission.

"We're going to work with state officials to develop a schedule," said Bryan Gulley, a spokesman for Nelson.

Gulley added that Nelson would work closely with the Governor's Advisory Council on BRAC in the coming days.

NAS **Pensacola** would see the biggest job loss of all military bases in Florida if the Pentagon's base **realignment** proposal, unveiled May 13, becomes reality. Naval Air Station Whiting Field and Corry Station were not on the list of bases the Pentagon wants to close or reorganize.

Florida officials don't yet know how much time they will have to address the commission, which has scheduled 16 regional hearings.

The New Orleans hearing will be attended by some but not all of the commissioners.

The purpose of the hearings is to give communities whose military bases have been recommended for closure or reorganization by the Pentagon a chance to tell the commission that they disagree with those recommendations.

Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Chumuckla, expects **Pensacola** representatives will be given a significant block of Florida's time since the community has more jobs at stake than any other in the state, said Dan McFaul, Miller's chief of staff.

Overall, Florida bases would gain 2,796 military and civilian jobs, according to an analysis by the non-partisan Northeast-Midwest Institute.

Miller will work with Nelson to present a compelling case to the commission, McFaul said.

To get a base removed from the Pentagon's list of bases targeted for closure or restructuring, community officials must convince the commission that the Navy violated base closure and **realignment** criteria in recommending the jobs be moved elsewhere.

Pensacola officials could also try to convince commissioners that other Defense Department recommendations were wrong, in an attempt to steer additional work to the region's military installations.

**Job Cuts Menace Naval Bases;
The Proposed Transfer Of Several Departments Away From Two Pensacola Area
Naval Bases Would Result In Thousands Of Lost Jobs.**

The Miami Herald
May 24, 2005

A group of local officials and other boosters came away from a visit to the Pentagon disheartened about their chances of preventing two **Pensacola** area Navy bases from losing 1,579 jobs, mostly well-paying civilian positions.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has proposed various moves to the Base **Realignment** and Closure Commission that would result in the net loss for **Pensacola** Naval Air Station and Saufley Field.

The 50-member **Pensacola** group last week asked Pentagon officials about the odds of saving those jobs.

"They said there is hope, but not much," said Escambia County School Superintendent Jim Paul.

That won't stop the Military Regional Oversight Committee from appealing the proposal to the BRAC Commission at a July 12 hearing in New Orleans.

"I may not agree with the loss, but I understand why they made those decisions," said Escambia County Commissioner Marie Young.

Military officials told the delegation that moving the Naval Education and Training Command, headed by a three-star admiral, to Millington, Tenn., would eliminate redundancies through a merger with the Bureau of Naval Personnel already based there.

"It's hard to overcome that," said Gulf Breeze Mayor Lane Gilchrist.

"They're not going to change their minds easily."

The Navy also wants to move education and training support personnel at Saufley to Millington and its Officer Candidate School from the naval air station to Rhode Island.

A military accounting and payroll office at **Pensacola** also would be closed.

Yet another move would send about 400 technicians and mechanics from **Pensacola** to nearby Eglin Air Force Base as part of a training program for the new Joint Strike Fighter, which will be used by the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps.

While **Pensacola** will be the biggest net loser in Florida, Eglin would be the state's biggest gainer with 2,218 positions, including the addition of an Army Special Forces group.

Bush Vows To Fight Pensacola Job Cuts; Visit To Pentagon Disheartens Officials

The Tallahassee Democrat
May 24, 2005

Gov. Jeb Bush said Monday that he will fight to prevent two **Pensacola** area Navy bases from losing 1,579 jobs, mostly well-paying civilian positions, although local officials were disheartened after a visit to the Pentagon last week.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has proposed various moves to the Base **Realignment** and Closure Commission that would result in the net loss for **Pensacola** Naval Air Station and Saufley Field.

Bush met with military boosters in **Pensacola** to begin developing a strategy to save the jobs here.

"We're going to fight," Bush told reporters. "I think we have a great case here in Florida."

He cited state legislation passed to support military families, Florida's cutting-edge efforts to prevent development from encroaching on bases, a solid workforce and an attractive quality of life.

Bush's visit here follows a trip to the Pentagon by 50 **Pensacola** boosters who asked about the odds of keeping the jobs.

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While **Pensacola** will be the biggest net loser in Florida, Eglin would be the state's biggest gainer with 2,218 positions, including the addition of an Army Special Forces group.

Pensacola Naval Air Station Targeted For Base Changes

Pensacola News Journal (Florida)

May 23, 2005

The Base **Realignment** and Closure list released in May by the Department of Defense delivered bad news for **Pensacola** Naval Air Station. If the cutbacks turn into a reality this fall, **Pensacola** will take the largest hit among the state's military installations, losing 1,579 jobs.

Whiting Field Naval Air Station near Milton as well as Corry Station in **Pensacola** were spared by BRAC.

Eglin Air Force Base near Fort Walton Beach was the state's biggest winner, standing to add 2,218 jobs.

Only 15 percent of the recommended changes were altered by the BRAC Commission in 1995, the most recent round in the Department of Defense's efforts to reorganize its base structure to more efficiently and effectively support forces, increase operational readiness and facilitate new ways of doing business.

The **Pensacola** losses would include 302 armed forces employees and 1,180 civilian positions, according to Defense Department documents. Ninety-seven contractor positions also would be lost.

Those jobs pay an average of about \$50,000 a year, estimates economist Rick Harper, director of the Haas Center For Business Research and Economic Development at the University of West Florida.

The job cuts could result in an estimated \$150 million spending loss each year. That doesn't include the income of the employees' spouses if families move out of the area.

If those families have children who also move, the financial hit soon could reach area schools.

Enrollment figures are tallied in the fall and spring. Increases in student enrollment from the fall count means growth dollars for the districts. A decrease in enrollment means dollars are taken away from school districts.

Political clout also is affected. Losing the Naval Education and Training Command to Tennessee would be a big hit.

At the top of the command is a three-star admiral - the only active admiral in Northwest Florida.

The command's Navy Education and Training Professional Development and Technology Center at Saufley Field could be moved to Millington, Tenn.

Also on the list is Officer Candidate School, which could return to Newport, R.I., and the Defense Finance Accounting Service, which faces nationwide consolidation.

The Haas Center said the job losses from BRAC could be countered by several potential gains.

The Department of Veterans Affairs and the Pentagon's Joint Ambulatory Care Clinic is scheduled to open in 2007 and could bring as many as 350 jobs to the area.

Local leaders say after BRAC, they plan to concentrate on making **Pensacola** the destination for military medical research, despite the loss of the Naval Aeromedical Research Laboratory to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio.

The BRAC list recommendations include bringing the Navy's Undersea Medical Institute to **Pensacola** from New London, Conn.

Damage that **Pensacola** NAS sustained from Hurricane Ivan played no role in the Pentagon's recommendation to move jobs, officials said. Physical damage is not on the list of criteria the Pentagon was allowed to use in deciding where to cut and where to add.

The BRAC Commission is scheduled to forward its report on the recommendations to the president by Sept. 8. The list still must be approved by the BRAC Commission, Congress and President Bush.

GRAPHIC: File photo for the **Pensacola** Business Journal; **Pensacola** Naval Air Station would lost 1,579 jobs if the Base **Realignment** and Closure recommendations are approved. However, the plan does call for bringing the Navy's Undersea Medical Institute to **Pensacola** from New London, Conn.

Delegates Hunt Allies On BRAC

Pensacola News Journal (Florida)

Nicole Lozare

May 20, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Two federal lawmakers on Thursday tried to rally a **Pensacola** Bay Area delegation concerned about recommended job cuts at local military bases, but they offered little hope that the positions can be saved.

U.S. Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Chumuckla, encouraged the 50-member group of community leaders to celebrate that the Pentagon did not recommend closing any Florida bases when it announced its Base **Realignment** and Closure list last week.

"You don't know why they didn't close some of these bases -- for example, Saufley Field," he said. "Other missions may be coming to the base."

Eglin Air Force Base was the big winner in Miller's district, standing to gain 2,218 jobs. But the BRAC list targets **Pensacola** Naval Air Station and Saufley Field for 1,579 job cuts among

military and civilian personnel.

Under the **realignment** plan, the Naval Education and Training Command, the Officer Training Center and the Naval Aero-Medical Research Laboratory would move from **Pensacola**. The **Pensacola** branch of the Defense Finance Accounting Service would close.

U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson, D-Melbourne, told the group that he has spoken to two of the nine BRAC Commission members about **Pensacola's** plight.

"I know (retired Navy) Admiral Harold Gehman and (retired Army) General James Hill very well," he said. "I've already made the argument to General Hill that it is more logical to keep the Naval Education and Training Command in **Pensacola** than move it to Millington, Tennessee. Just look at the infrastructure we already have at **Pensacola**."

A member of Nelson's staff also announced that two members of the BRAC Commission most likely will visit the **Pensacola** area soon to study firsthand the recommended cuts.

The local delegation moves on today to the Pentagon to meet with Navy officials to emphasize members' opposition to the BRAC recommendations for **Pensacola**.

But retired Navy Vice Adm. Jack Fetterman, a member of the delegation, believes that "few at the Pentagon will talk about BRAC."

Military officials usually are instructed to refrain from discussing BRAC until final decisions are made, Fetterman said. That might not occur until next spring.

Nevertheless, he said, this week's trip by local leaders provides a good way to keep **Pensacola** in the minds of decision-makers.

Assistant Secretary of the Navy B.J. Penn said he will speak generally about the BRAC process at today's meeting. He also said the **Pensacola** delegation should understand that the process is nonpolitical and data-driven.

The delegation's meetings Thursday at the Cannon House Office Building near the Capitol were not what some members expected.

"The focus shifted away from BRAC," said **Pensacola** City Council member P.C. Wu, who is most worried about the projected job losses compounding area economic problems after Hurricane Ivan.

"I was a little disappointed that we didn't talk more about it."

U.S. Rep. Joel Hefley, R-Colo., told the group that Northwest Florida's wide expanse of controlled airspace -- 18,700 square miles -- most likely helped keep its bases open.

Hefley, who chairs the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness, also told the group that he believes this year's round of BRAC should have been postponed.

"It's wrong to do BRAC in the middle of a war," he said. "They should have put it off a couple of years."

Hefley said there have been several unsuccessful attempts to pass an amendment to postpone the BRAC process.

Some members of the Military Regional Oversight Committee, which lobbies to protect local bases, are part of the delegation. The committee is brainstorming this week to frame its arguments to keep the **Pensacola** jobs.

The committee is expected to finalize its rebuttal to the BRAC recommendations by June 1, Fetterman said.

The group will have a chance to state its case before the BRAC Commission at a June 30 regional meeting in Atlanta.

Each community is allowed 45 minutes, but Fetterman said he expects a majority of that time will be used by Gov. Jeb Bush and U.S. senators and congressmen representing Northwest Florida. The committee is likely to have only about 20 minutes, Fetterman said.

Escambia Short On Cash

Pensacola News Journal (Florida)

Brett Norman

May 19, 2005

Escambia County's funding of nonprofit agencies and pay raises for its 2,500 employees next year might become another casualty of Hurricane Ivan, County Administrator George Touart said Wednesday.

Touart is scheduling a meeting with Gov. Jeb Bush during the governor's visit to **Pensacola** on Monday in a last-ditch effort to convince the state to offset a projected \$4.8 million shortfall in property taxes lost to the storm's devastation.

Absent a commitment from the governor, Touart said he will send a letter to the more than 20 nonprofit groups that depend on \$2 million annually from the county's general fund, warning that they likely will have to find some or all of that money elsewhere.

"It's going to be very tough on a lot of people," said Susan Senkarik, director of community impact for Escambia County United Way.

United Way distributes about \$148,000 of its county funds to agencies such as the Salvation Army, ARC Gateway and the Boys & Girls Club.

"All of them will end up having to restructure and re-evaluate how their services are delivered," Senkarik said.

Finding the \$3.5 million necessary to give county employees a 3 percent raise was his top priority, but locating those funds is far from certain, Touart said.

"They've worked tireless hours after this hurricane, and -- with the cost of living shooting up like it is -- I just can't stand not to" give the raises, he said. "But this is the position we've been put in."

The county's funding crunch came into focus with the May 6 close of the 2005 legislative session, which allocated \$5.5 million to Escambia County, well short of the estimated \$10.3 million loss

in property-tax revenue.

The difference -- \$4.8 million -- is only 3 percent of the county's \$158 million general fund budget, but the county relies almost exclusively on increased property values each year to fund budgets that grow with rising insurance costs and employee raises, Touart said.

The problem is a one-time crisis brought on by the hurricane that should be alleviated by next year as the tax rolls increase with reconstruction and new growth, he said.

But this year, the fate of nonprofit funding and employee raises will rest largely on whether the governor can tap discretionary funds to help, and whether the county is reimbursed for its 5 percent share of hurricane cleanup costs, estimated at \$10 million, Touart said.

Fearing the worst, Touart has asked the county's constitutional officers to prepare three budgets:

One based on the same funding of the current fiscal year, meaning no raises.

A second that includes employee raises.

A third that is appropriate to a normal budget year.

"We'll only know which we have to go with after the governor's visit next week," Touart said.

Also pending, however, is Escambia County Property Appraiser Chris Jones' final assessment. An initial estimate to local officials is due June 1. The final submission is due July 1, two weeks ahead of the county's July 15 deadline for submitting a balanced budget.

As county employees and nonprofit leaders wait for the financial picture to come into focus, they are hoping for the best with a combination of understanding and apprehension.

The nonprofits are especially vulnerable because so much of their funding depends on matching funds based partly on the county's contribution, said Jeff Nall, spokesman for the Council on Aging of West Florida Inc.

The council received \$68,000 of county funds distributed last year by United Way. Each dollar the agency raises locally can bring up to 10 times that amount in matching state and federal funds, Nall said. Taking that money away could have terrible consequences, both for the people receiving the agency's services and for taxpayers down the road.

"There are 800 people who get our services to stay in their homes and out of nursing homes," he said. "If 25 percent of those 800 had to go into nursing homes, that would cost taxpayers \$8.2 million per year."

The **Pensacola Bay Area Chamber of Commerce**, which received \$637,000 last year, is the largest recipient of county funds among those outside agencies.

"We're aware that our funding is all or part at-risk, and we're working with the county to see how we can address that," said Mike Frey, the chamber's economic development director.

"Recovering from the hurricane is hard enough, and now it looks like we're potentially facing some major job losses coming from the (Base **Realignment** and Closure Commission process),"

Frey said.

With the battle for relief from the Legislature concluded, Touart said his only recourse is an appeal to the governor.

"Jeb Bush feels our pain in Escambia County. He's told me that," Touart said. "I just want to talk to the governor and see if he can pull a rabbit out of the hat one more time for us."

Opinion/Editorial Articles

Many Help Make A Difference

Pensacola News Journal (Florida)

Debbie Ritchie

May 23, 2005

I've been looking forward to bringing you this "Business Behind the Scenes" edition for months. There are many people in our area who go above and beyond to make our community a better place to live and work. Oftentimes, the leaders of an effort are called upon to be the spokesman or spokeswoman to be out front and in the public view. However, there are many others outside the spotlight working just as hard, sometimes even harder, to make something positive happen. This issue of the Business Journal is intended to recognize some of them.

We contacted some of the high-profile business leaders in the **Pensacola Bay Area** to assist us in identifying our first group of unsung heroes. They provided us with an excellent list of nominees. I want to thank all those who helped by providing their recommendations. I would also especially like to thank those who were able to attend a meeting to review the list and select our group - the spotlight begins on page 26.

This issue has several other articles that I hope you will find interesting and informative. Phyllis Pooley once again provides tremendous insight into business issues on pages 6 and 43. We also have provided you with an update on the changes to occur with the implementation of the increase in the state's minimum wage.

The big economic news to impact our area in recent days involves the news that the BRAC (Base **Realignment** and Closure) process will result in a loss of 1,579 out of 11,500 military and civilian jobs at **Pensacola Naval Air Station** if the Pentagon's BRAC list is adopted. Also, the Navy Education and Training Professional Development and Technology Center at Saufley Field could be moved. The good news, however, is that to date Whiting Field Naval Air Station near Milton and Corry Station in **Pensacola** were not cut, and Eglin Air Force Base near Fort Walton Beach may gain 2,218 jobs. Political and economic leaders are promising to do what they can to reverse or mitigate our losses.

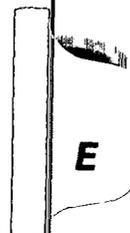
Finally, I want to let you know that in our July edition, we will review our group of "40 Under 40" emerging leaders selected last year. We've kept up with them as best we can, and now we're eager to report back to you what they've been up to and what they have accomplished over the past year. This past year certainly brought on changes and challenges to those living and working in the **Pensacola Bay Area**.

Since the "40 Under 40" project was published over a year ago, I've been contacted by businesspeople wanting to know when we would be selecting our next group of emerging leaders

younger than 40. We are planning to do this again.

But we hoped that the "40 Under 40" initiative would not only recognize those with the potential to lead our community in the years ahead but also to encourage them to step forward and assume even greater leadership responsibility. Stay tuned as we reintroduce them to you one year later.

Until next time ...



**2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
Suggested Talking Points for Visit to Naval Ordnance Test Unit Cape Canaveral**

- 1. Military value is the most important consideration to the 2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) as the Commission evaluates the suggestion made by the Department of Defense (DoD) to realign the Naval Ordnance Test Unit located at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station.**
 - The Commission will evaluate the economic, environmental, and other effects that the realignment of the installation could have on the surrounding community but the key factor in the Commission's decision as to whether or not to suggest Naval Ordnance Test Unit for realignment is military value.
 - Although the Commission is keenly aware of the human impact of the suggestion by DoD to realign the Naval Ordnance Test Unit, the Commission will base its decisions, as to whether or not to suggest the installation for realignment, almost entirely upon the current military value of the base.
 - The Commission recognizes the role that the Naval Ordnance Test Unit plays in testing weapons systems, launching missiles, and hosting submarines.

- 2. The Commission is aware of the possible economic, environmental, and other effects that the suggestions to realign the Naval Ordnance Test Unit could have and is taking these 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 full account in the decision to recommend a base for closure or realignment.
 - The Commission will evaluate the economic impact that the installation realignment would have on the community surrounding Cape Canaveral, while basing its decision almost entirely upon military value.
 - The local community and the installation have developed a strong relationship based upon a social and economic synergy. The loss of roughly 700 jobs can have a significant impact on a community. The Commission understands this and will take it into account as it delineates its final recommendation.

- 3. The Congress established the Commission as a non-political, transparent, and independent entity to perform a thorough evaluation, by a process set forth 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 to serve as accountability to the public for the suggestion, made by DoD, to realign the Naval Ordnance Test Unit.
 - 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 Naval Ordnance Test Unit, Cape Canaveral**

Q1. If the Commission adheres to the Department of Defense's (DoD) recommendations, the Naval Ordnance Test Unit closure would result in a loss of roughly 700 jobs—136 military, 59 civilian, and nearly 500 defense contractors. Understandably, this would have a large economic impact on the community. Will the Commission consider these economic ramifications in the Commission's final recommendation regarding Cape Canaveral?

A1. The factors to be included in the Commission's evaluation of the DoD's suggestions for base closures and realignments are set forth by statute. The Commission is keenly aware of the human impact of these suggestions and will take their economic effects on the region into account, while maintaining military value as its most important consideration in this evaluation.

Q2. Governor Bush has vowed to fight the current recommendations in an effort to save jobs in the Cape Canaveral area. Will the Governor's relationship with the President aide him in his effort?

A2. 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 Ordnance Test Unit Cape Canaveral, but will also consider the economic, environmental and other effects that the closure of the installation would have on the surrounding community.

Q3. Overall, Florida will see a net gain in jobs through the current BRAC recommendations. Will this fact influence the Commission's decision in looking at individual communities?

A3. The Commission will evaluate each of the DoD's recommendation individually. The Commission will not evaluate the economic impact of the DoD's recommendations on a macro-level. Rather, the Commission will evaluate economic impact on local communities.

Q4. Currently, resources located at the Naval Ordnance Test Unit at Cape Canaveral are slated to be relocated to the submarine base at Kings Bay, GA. Will the Commission evaluate the ability of Kings Bay to receive an influx of personnel and equipment?

A4. The Commission will evaluate an installation slated for closure or realignment based primarily upon its military value. Military value is determined through three criteria—jointness, ease of mobility, and the base's role in the changing global threat paradigm. The Commission will also evaluate an installation's capability to accept incoming missions, personnel, and equipment. With regard to Cape Canaveral, the Commission will evaluate Kings Bay's ability to receive resources from the installation.

Q5. The Port Canaveral location allows submarines quick access to deep water. From many other ports on the Atlantic Ocean, deep water is only accessible within a days travel. Will the Commission take into account various strategic benefits such as deep water access in its evaluation?

A5. The process of evaluation, followed by the Commission, has been set forth by law. DoD has evaluated our bases to ensure our military is best prepared to face the changing global threats. Military value is of pre-eminent importance and the Commission will ensure that DoD has followed the process prescribed by law.

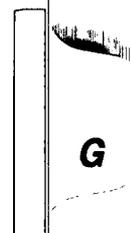
Q6. If the Naval Ordnance Test Unit at Cape Canaveral closes, the Canaveral Port Authority has already expressed interest in using the property for commercial expansion. What rules govern federal property following the BRAC process?

A6. 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.

Q7. How can the Community make the Commission aware of information that the Community feels may have been overlooked by DoD?

A7. 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 ORDNANCE TEST UNIT CAPE CANAVERAL, FLORIDA

National News Articles

BRAC commissioner gets earful from Pensacola boosters

Local News Articles

Retired veterans enjoy tax-free, low-cost perks at base

Official: BRAC list not gospel

JOBS AT STAKE

Editorial/Opinion Articles

National News Articles

BRAC commissioner gets earful from Pensacola boosters

The Associated Press

BILL KACZOR

June 15, 2005

State and local officials and business and civic leaders got their first chance Wednesday to present arguments against proposals to cut 1,579 Pensacola military jobs to a Base **Realignment** and Closure commissioner.

It would be the biggest loss for any Florida community if the BRAC commission approves eight reductions the Defense Department has recommended for Pensacola Naval Air Station and Saufley Field. More than 1,000 of the jobs are held by civilians.

Retired Adm. Harold W. Gehman Jr., one of nine BRAC commissioners, met with the state and local advocates over lunch before visiting the two Pensacola bases.

"It's pretty predictable what their views are," Gehman told reporters. "It was very helpful and very informative."

BRAC commissioners are visiting about 75 bases facing the most serious losses. Cape **Canaveral** Air Force Station is the only other Florida base on that list, standing to lose 136 military and 59 civilian jobs. It received a visit June 9.

Florida bases, overall, would see a net gain of 2,575 jobs from the Pentagon's recommendations.

Gehman declined to discuss specifics. Pamella Dana, director of the Governor's Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development, was "cautiously optimistic" about reversing four of the eight proposed reductions.

"There is some pretty good rationale as to why they merit serious consideration," she said.

Dana said Gov. Jeb Bush, U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson, D-Fla., and U.S. Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., will argue Florida's case at a regional hearing July 12 in New Orleans.

The commission must give its recommendations to President Bush, the governor's brother, by Sept. 8. He can send them to Congress for approval, but neither he nor lawmakers can make changes.

Retired Vice Adm. Jack Fetterman, who serves on the governor's BRAC Advisory Council, said Pensacola's strongest case is against moving the Navy's Officer Training Command to Newport, R.I.

"First of all, 30 or 40 percent of the product of OTC comes into the aviation pipeline," Fetterman said. That means those officers will have to come to Pensacola, anyway, for the next phase of their training.

Fetterman, president and CEO of the Naval Aviation Museum Foundation, pointed out that the Officer Candidate School, part of OTC, moved here in 1993 from Newport and merged with a similar school for aviation officers. The course was cut from 16 to 14 weeks because the move was so efficient, he said.

Florida will push, instead, to move some small educational activities from Newport to Pensacola but leave the Naval Academy Prep School there.

"It's cost-efficient, the climate is right," Fetterman said. "We've got a strong case. The second one is a little more complicated."

The Pentagon wants to combine the Naval Education and Training Command, headed by a three-star admiral, with the Navy's personnel bureau at Millington, Tenn.

"I don't know where you get efficiency out of that," Fetterman said.

Instead, Florida will propose a different consolidation: Keep the command here and add the Navy's air training headquarters from Corpus Christi, Texas, Fetterman said.

Two more top priorities are a 106-member Navy intelligence unit and a finance and accounting office with about 500 workers. Florida will propose that Pensacola replace Denver as one of three consolidated finance and accounting sites.

The other four cuts will be harder to defend: moving a Navy brig to South Carolina and the Naval Aerospace Medical Research Laboratory to Ohio, merging regional Navy commands at Jacksonville and shifting about 400 jobs to Eglin to support Joint Strike Fighter training.

Local News Articles

Retired veterans enjoy tax-free, low-cost perks at base

Press Journal (Vero Beach, FL)

Ed Bierschenk

July 5, 2005

PATRICK AIR FORCE BASE -- In addition to protecting our shores, the famed military installation south of Cocoa Beach plays a vital role for thousands of military retirees who journey to the facility for everything from medical help to groceries.

Sebastian resident Becky Mitchell travels to the base four or five times a year to avail herself of some of the benefits accrued by putting in 23 years in the military.

While many Indian River and Brevard County veterans go to the base to take advantage of the pharmacy, Mitchell and others also go there to shop at the base exchange and commissary.

"It's got nice quality things in there, and you don't have to pay taxes," said Mitchell, of the base exchange, or BX, that she compared to Sears. Groceries at the commissary also are supposedly quite a bit less than what one would pay at area supermarkets, and Mitchell said there are regular special sales events.

The types of perks Mitchell enjoys have Lt. Elizabeth Kreft, who works in the public relations department at Patrick AFB, considering staying in the military for 17 more years. Retirees with 20 years of service and their spouses, as well as certain disabled veterans, can take advantages of the various services offered at the base.

Kreft notes that if she wanted to travel to Italy, for example, she could stay at lodging at a base in that country. Mitchell stays at lodgings such as Fort Gordon when she travels to Augusta, Ga. In addition to the extra security one gets from staying at a military facility, Mitchell said, the accommodations are good quality at a low cost.

In many cases, military retirees choose where to live based on the proximity of a base. In fiscal 2004, Kreft said, there were about 14,000 military retirees in Brevard County.

Some of the facilities retirees can take advantage of at Patrick include a clinic, dry cleaners, outdoor recreation areas, a barber shop, bowling center, service station, mortuary affairs center, a golf course, a fitness and sports center and dining and drinking establishments. Kreft said military retirees can also keep their boats at the base marina for a nominal monthly fee.

"I've sent veterans up there for legal services, to do their wills," said Mitchell, who is the assistant veterans services officer overseeing the Sebastian office.

Fortunately, the Department of Defense did not propose closing Patrick as part of its most recent recommendations to the Defense Base Closure and **Realignment Commission**. Unfortunately, the commission did propose the **Naval Ordnance Test Unit** at Cape Canaveral be relocated to the submarine base at Kings Bay, Ga. If the recommendations are approved, it could mean the loss of about 200 military and civilian personnel, and impact 500 contractors who help support the operation.

The commission will make its recommendations to President Bush by Sept. 8.

State Rep. Ralph Poppell, R-Vero Beach, said he believes Florida and Brevard County made out well when it came to the recommendations, and the state is going to see a net gain overall.

According to the Department of Defense Web site, the state will see a direct gain of more than 2,700 military and civilian jobs based on the current recommendations.

Despite the possible loss of the jobs at the **Naval Ordnance Test Unit**, U.S. Rep.

Dave Weldon, R-Melbourne, does not believe Patrick will lose its status as an important base for the military.

"Patrick Air Force Base will continue to play an important and crucial role on the Space Coast for years to come," Weldon said. "The minor **realignment** that is proposed could bring a few changes; however, I do not believe Patrick's future is threatened."

Poppell also did not believe the possible closures would impact the Treasure Coast, and area military retirees are "still going to be in good shape."

"They are going to be able to still have the facilities at Patrick Air Force Base," he said.

Although he said he would hate to see the naval operations relocated, "in the grand picture, I think Florida is going to make out well."

Official: BRAC list not gospel

FLORIDA TODAY (Brevard County, Florida)

PATRICK PETERSON

June 10, 2005

PORT CANAVERAL -- Some 15 to 20 percent of military bases scheduled for closing could be spared by the Base **Realignment** and Closure commission, said former U.S. Rep. James Bilbray, a BRAC commission member.

Bilbray toured the Navy Ordnance Test Unit at the Port on Thursday to help the commission decide whether it will remain on the closure list that will be sent to President Bush by Sept. 8.

Bilbray did not hint whether he would recommend that the Brevard County installation, considered a tenant of Patrick Air Force Base, remain open.

The Space Coast could lose 135 military and 59 civil-service jobs by 2007, while another 400 civilian jobs also are at risk, if the submarine unit closes. Weapons on subs are calibrated there.

"Once you close (a base), you're not going to get it back," said Bilbray of Nevada, a Bush appointee and attorney who specializes in government issues.

About 50 Space Coast citizens demonstrated to support the base as Bilbray entered a press conference.

The actual cost of relocating the base would be three times the estimated \$100 million, said demonstrator Keith Houston, board member of the Space Coast Defense Alliance.

"It's not as simple as moving a small Navy base," he added.

Houston said the Port Canaveral location allows subs quick access to deep water. A submarine can leave the port, submerge in deep water and return to port in one day. From other Atlantic ports, deep water is more than a day's travel.

The Navy plans to move the **Naval Ordnance Test Unit** to King's Bay, Ga., in 2008.

Bilbray admitted that the cost of moving military bases often is underestimated. He added that the need for military bases in the U.S. could increase to accommodate an estimated 70,000 troops and 100,000 dependents based in Europe who are slated to return.

Federal maintenance of the channel would continue, even if the Navy leaves, said Stan Payne, Canaveral Port Authority chief executive officer.

The Naval base, with its turning basin, might be used for commercial expansion.

"It would seem to be an area we would be interested in," Payne said.

JOBS AT STAKE

FLORIDA TODAY (Brevard County, Florida)

R. NORMAN MOODY

June 9, 2005

PATRICK AIR FORCE BASE -- A base-closure commission member today will visit the **Naval Ordnance Test Unit**, which is on the Defense Department's list of installations to be shut down.

James Bilbray of the Base **Realignment** and Closure commission will visit the Navy installation at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. Other commissioners are visiting other bases on the list before making recommendations to President Bush in September.

The **Naval Ordnance Test Unit**, which tests weapons systems, launches missiles and hosts submarines at Port Canaveral, is expected to lose 135 military and 59 civil-service jobs by 2007. Another 400 civilian jobs also are at risk.

Patrick Air Force Base itself was spared in the May 13 announcements of military installations targeted for shutting down.

The BRAC commission will analyze and evaluate the list and send its findings and suggestions to President Bush by Sept. 8. The president must then forward it to Congress or send it back to the commission for further work. Congress must get a president-approved list by Nov. 7.

Congress then has 45 days from the day it receives the report to enact a joint resolution to reject the full report or it becomes law.

Today's visit to the Navy facility is not open to the public.

Editorial/Opinion Articles

NAVAL SUPPORT ACTIVITY NEW ORLEANS LOUISIANA

National News Articles

La. Could Lose New Orleans Naval Support Center

Local News Articles

Base Closure Commission Will Travel to New Orleans

Commander: Belle Chasse Can Easily Support Additional Personnel

Louisiana Economic Development Comments on BRAC

N.O. Base Takes Hit in Round 1

State Leaders Bemoan Possible Loss of Military Bases

Editorial/Opinion Articles

National News Articles

La. could lose New Orleans Naval support center

May 13, 2005

By Ana Radelat

Gannett News Service

WASHINGTON - Louisiana would be nicked, but not hard, by the Pentagon's plans to close down military bases and move units.

The Naval Support Activity Center in New Orleans is on a list released Friday of military bases the Pentagon wants to close or restructure. Closing down the base would cost about 2,700 jobs in the state, the Pentagon said.

But Barksdale Air Force Base and Fort Polk, the state's two largest military installations, would not be hurt by this year's round of base closings and reorganizations. Barksdale, in fact, would grow by 65 jobs under the Pentagon's plan.

Most of Louisiana's congressional lawmakers breathed a sign of relief that the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process did not hit the state harder.

"All things considered, it's a good thing for the state," said Sen. David Vitter, R-Metairie. "It could have been far worse."

But Vitter and others expressed dismay at the prospect of closing the Naval Support Activity Center.

Vitter said he had immediately appealed to Anthony Principi, the head of a nine-member base-closing panel that will review the Pentagon's recommendations.

The Pentagon's plans would relocate the Naval Support Activity Center's missions to bases in Tennessee and other states.

"This recommendation consolidates reserve personnel and recruiting headquarters... in a single location and eliminates stand-alone headquarters," the Pentagon's base closing report said.

While one New Orleans facility would lose, another would gain. The Belle Chase Naval Air Station would add more than 1,800 jobs.

Under the Pentagon's plans, the air station would get a Marine Corps Reserve headquarters that was at the Naval Support Activity Center and a Marine Corps Reserve unit from Kansas City.

"It is disappointing that despite our gains at Belle Chase and Barksdale, the (defense) secretary did not fully appreciate the vital resources Naval Support Activity provides," said Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-New Orleans.

Barksdale would gain nine new airplanes. Three would come from the Wiesel Air Force Base in Alaska and six from the 926th Fighter Wing at New Orleans Air Reserve Station. The change would result in 60 new military jobs and five civilian jobs.

"I believe that Barksdale not only survived this round of BRAC, but will thrive as a result," said Rep. Jim McCrery, R-Shreveport.

Gov. Kathleen Blanco, a Democrat, also said the proposed increase in Barksdale's strength indicates the Pentagon values the base.

"Fort Polk is also a valuable asset to the military and Louisiana, and its absence from the report is evidence of its long-term importance to our national security," Blanco said.

The Pentagon also plans to consolidate its reserve units in the Shreveport area by closing the Army Reserve centers in Shreveport and Bossier City and relocating them to a new facility that would be built near the Naval-Marine Corps Reserve Center in Bossier city.

But the Pentagon said the consolidation would occur only "if the Army is able to acquire suitable property for construction of its facilities."

Louisiana has been hit by base closings in the past. Lake Charles Naval Station was marked for shutdown in the 1988 round and England Air Force base was closed after the 1991 round.

The nine-member base closing panel, whose members were chosen by the White House and Congress will hold hearings in Washington and across the nation to review the Pentagon's reasons for recommending the shut down of a base or transfer of a military mission from one base to another..

But rules for the new commission will make changes to the list more difficult this time.

While many members of Congress opposed this BRAC round, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has said it is necessary to modernize the military to fight terrorism and save money.

Rumsfeld said this week that he expects the recommended closures and realignments to save the Pentagon of \$48.8 billion over 20 years.

The commission is supposed to make its decisions free of political considerations, although

politics could creep into the process. The commission will consider the economic and environmental impact of potential closures, but the top criterion is supposed to be national security.

The commission is the only player in the BRAC process that can change the list. Congress and the president must accept or reject it in its entirety.

Local News Articles

Base closure commission will travel to New Orleans

KATC-3 TV

WASHINGTON The commission reviewing the Pentagon's recommended base closings will travel to 16 cities this summer, including New Orleans, to hear from communities potentially affected.

Between June seventh and July 14th, commissioners will hold hearings in Salt Lake City; Saint Louis; Dallas; Atlanta; Boston; Los Angeles; Fairbanks, Alaska; Portland, Oregon; Rapid City, South Dakota; Grand Forks, North Dakota; Clovis, New Mexico; Buffalo, New York; Charlotte, North Carolina; Baltimore; San Antonio and New Orleans.

The Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, appointed by President Bush, can change the Pentagon list before it is submitted to the White House and Congress this fall.

In Louisiana, the Pentagon wants to close the Naval Support Activity center in New Orleans

Commander: Belle Chasse can easily support additional personnel

KATC-3 TV

BELLE CHASSE, La. The Naval Air Station-Joint Reserve Base commander in southeastern Louisiana says the base has more than enough room to handle the additional 1,700 people who will move in if the Defense Department's proposed base closure and realignment plan is adopted. Captaint A-J Rizzo says the base can easily accommodate the changes.

The base currently has 5,000 personnel and about 7,500 when family members and reservists are counted. The personnel from the Marine reserve headquarters would move to Belle Chasse from the Naval Support Activity station in New Orleans, which is slated for closure.

In a loss for Belle Chasse, the Pentagon recommended the disbanding of the Air Force Reserve's 926th Fighter Wing. The wing's 15 A-10 Warthog attack planes would be shifted to Barksdale Air Force Base in Bossier City and Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri, with the loss of 312 jobs.

The wing's commander said today that he was still "numb" from that announcement.

Louisiana Economic Development Comments On BRAC

Military

May 13, 2005

Bayoubuzz

BATON ROUGE, La.—May 13, 2005—Louisiana Economic Development learned today of the Pentagon's recommendations to the Base Realignment And Closure (BRAC) regarding military installations in Louisiana. LED has expected this announcement for some time, and has prepared for the challenges of the BRAC process. In a global list of closures and realignment, the Pentagon recommended the Naval Support Activity (NSA) New Orleans for closure. The Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base (NASJRB) and Barksdale Air Force Base face realignment, under which the numbers of military and civilian personnel at both installations would increase.

Louisiana Economic Development has played a lead role in working with numerous city, state and federal officials for more than two years on a strategic plan to address recommendations that would affect any of the four Louisiana military bases. As part of the planning for the NSA recommendation, LED and New Orleans Federal Alliance (NOFA) drafted several possible scenarios for the (BRAC) commission to consider. Each plan incorporates converting the NSA base into a Federal City to include the Navy, Marines, Coast Guard or some combination of each. LED has also carefully planned for the future of the NASJRB and Barksdale, and expects realignment of both to be economic growth opportunities for the Belle Chasse and Shreveport-Bossier areas.

Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco understands the impact this announcement carries. "I am disappointed by the decision to list Naval Support Activity in New Orleans on the list of installations recommended for closure," Governor Blanco said. "For some years now, the city of New Orleans and the state of Louisiana have been preparing for the development of Federal City. The announcement of the proposed closure of the Naval Support Activity has been feared, but I am hopeful that it offers us an opportunity to present our Federal City concept to the full commission."

LED Secretary Michael J. Olivier also recognizes the impact of this announcement. "We have worked very hard preparing for this day. Now that it has arrived, we will continue to pursue our best options for the NSA and embrace the opportunities that come with this recommended realignment. All of these installations are vital to Louisiana's economy," said Olivier.

The BRAC commission is scheduled to tour each base on the Pentagon's list to assess their military value. Governor Blanco now looks to the leadership of Louisiana's Congressional delegation to ensure the state's interests are protected and advanced in Washington. "Ultimately, this is a decision that will be made, not by the Pentagon or by BRAC, but by the U.S. Congress," Governor Blanco said. "I am pleased that our delegation members in the House and Senate have good relationships with the White House and the leadership of both houses. Therefore, I expect that they will rely on those relationships to ensure that Louisiana's interests are protected and advanced in Washington."

N.O. base takes hit in Round 1

2theadvocate.com

Sandy Davis, Ned Randolph and Joe Gyan

May 14, 2005

Baton Rouge came out a potential winner as the first round of base closures in a decade was announced Friday by the Pentagon.

The city could be home to a proposed Armed Forces Reserve Center that the Pentagon is proposing building near Metro Airport. The center would house Army, Navy, and Marine reserve centers along with a Louisiana Army National Guard unit.

New Orleans was not so lucky.

Despite an all-out offensive by federal, state and local leaders to save it, the Pentagon recommended that the 102-year-old Naval Support Activity facility straddling the Mississippi River in New Orleans be shut down.

In all, the Pentagon proposed closing about 180 military installations from Maine to Hawaii, including 33 major bases, in the first base closure recommendations in more than 10 years.

Some Louisiana bases did gain personnel. The Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base in Plaquemines Parish is to be expanded, adding more than 1,700 workers.

The military called the plan to build the Baton Rouge facility a "transformation" because it includes housing units with three branches of the military along with a state guard unit all under one roof.

"I have to say, it is unusual," said Bob Williams, a spokesman for the U.S. Army Reserves 90th Regional Readiness Command, which covers five states including Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, New Mexico and Oklahoma.

The report proposed moving the Roberts U.S. Army Reserve Center and the Naval-Marine Reserve Center out of the buildings they're occupying near Metro Airport and moving them to the proposed center. The plan also includes building a field maintenance shop next to the center.

The Pentagon said it would purchase state land next to Metro Airport and construct the center.

The report said it was offering space in the building to the Louisiana National Guard, but acknowledged it would be up to the Guard whether it accepted the offer.

By Friday afternoon, the National Guard issued a statement saying it would move the Guard's 769th Engineer Battalion along with a maintenance shop associated with that unit into the proposed building.

Guard officials said Friday morning they were caught by surprise and had no idea the report would include such an invitation for them.

After meeting with the governor, the Guard issued the statement agreeing to the proposal.

There are about 500 soldiers in the battalion, said Major Ed Bush, a spokesman for the Guard.

Also on the list to move into the proposed center is the 1190th Army Reserve Support Brigade, Williams said.

Petty Officer 1st Class Rob Kerns, a spokesman for the Naval Reserve Force, said close to 160 reservists who are trained at the Naval-Marine Center could be affected by the move.

"We're just trying to put our forces where they're needed and get the best bang out of our buck," Kerns said of the proposal.

The Pentagon said the plan will greatly improve training and deployment capabilities and create significant cost savings by housing the units under one roof.

"This recommendation provides the opportunity for other local, state or federal organizations to partner with the Reserve Components to enhance Homeland Security and Homeland Defense at a reduced cost to those agencies," the report stated as one reason why it proposed consolidating the units under one roof.

But Reserve officials were quick to say the proposal has not been approved.

"The whole thing is a proposal," said Steve Stromvall, an Army Reserve spokesman in Ft. McPherson. "We don't know how much this would cost yet. This is all new."

The report estimated that there would be a one-time cost to the Pentagon "to implement this plan" of \$30.7 million.

But the report added that the Pentagon expects to save \$13.6 million a year having the reserve centers in one building.

"But remember, no money has been appropriated, no land has been purchased and there are no building plans at this point," Williams said. "At the very least, it will take about 2% years to just get all of that completed before the construction would even begin."

Williams said the Pentagon has four years from the time the Base Realignment and Closure Report is approved to complete the projects.

In New Orleans, Mayor Ray Nagin and Louisiana's two U.S. senators aren't waving any white flags.

Nagin said his administration will continue to push a plan to keep the Naval Support Activity facility open and turn it into a so-called "federal city" campus to house a Coast Guard office and Navy, Marine and Army units now spread around New Orleans and a yet-to-be-awarded regional homeland security center.

"We will continue to sell our 'federal city' initiative that we've already rolled out. The federal city initiative is still a viable option to consolidate all the remaining military operations into one facility," the mayor said.

Gov. Kathleen Blanco and Nagin have pledged at least \$166 million in state and city bonds to streamline the Naval Support Activity, the bulk of which is based across the river from New Orleans in Algiers.

Under the Pentagon's proposal, the Naval Support Activity's loss will be the Naval Air Station-Joint Reserve Base's gain.

U.S. Sen. David Vitter, R-La., said the 1,800-worker national Marine Reserve headquarters will be moved from the Naval Support Activity to the Belle Chasse base.

The Pentagon said the NSA's closure would cost the state roughly 1,000 jobs -- about half military and half civilian.

Before base closings can take effect, the proposed closures must be approved or changed by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission by Sept. 8. Communities with bases on the closure list will have an opportunity to lobby BRAC Commission members to try to keep them open. Congress and President Bush must approve or reject the commission's closure list in its entirety. U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La., stressed that Friday's recommendation "is not the end of the BRAC process, but still very much a beginning."

"We know that our Louisiana military assets and the New Orleans 'federal city' are vital to our long-term national defense and homeland security needs, and will proudly continue our fight to demonstrate this value to the BRAC commission," she said.

Nagin said if the federal government refuses to take NSA off the base closure list and rejects the federal city concept, the city will ask the military about donating that land to the city of New Orleans.

Nagin said the city would look at it for "development options."

Those involved with the federal city proposal have not discussed publicly any other contingency plans for the Algiers site. But city officials have proposed closing the New Orleans location and turning it into another cruise ship terminal.

For now, though, officials are intent on removing the NSA from the closure list. The vast majority of bases on four closure lists in previous years eventually were shut down.

Capt. Lafe Dozier, commanding officer at the Naval Support Activity, said the base-closure process could take anywhere from two to six years to complete.

"It's not something that will happen overnight. There's no reason for everyone to get overanxious," he said. "There are programs out there that are offered by the Office of Economic Analysis that can help the community."

In all, the Naval Support Activity -- which houses only offices and has no military mission or combat training -- employs more than 4,600 civilians and service personnel, has a \$142 million annual payroll and is home to the national headquarters for the U.S. Marine and Naval Reserves, as well as more than 40 other commands, Vitter said.

Louisiana's other major military posts -- Barksdale Air Force Base in northwest Louisiana and the U.S. Army's Fort Polk post in the west-central part of the state -- were largely unaffected by the Pentagon's latest round of recommended base closings.

Economist Loren Scott said the state and Baton Rouge in particular dodged a bullet.

"To me, I'm breathing a great sigh of relief on this because we didn't lose as much as we were concerned about losing," he said. "Baton Rouge is in no position to lose 165 jobs because we're just limping along, but if we can get some realignment things going, maybe the city escaped."

Scott said the state could have lost a total of 8,400 military-related jobs. Its largest bases -- Barksdale in Shreveport, Fort Polk in Leesville, and Belle Chasse Naval Air Station in New Orleans -- are actually expanding through realignment.

New Orleans, with a proposed displacement of more than 900 personnel, appears to bear the brunt of the closings. That's an economic impact of 1,800 job losses, Scott said.

All of the military personnel would be reassigned, and civilians would be given priority for employment at other installations.

"They will be given the opportunity to go where we're going," said Petty Officer First Class Robert Kerns from New Orleans.

In the mid-1990s, Alexandria weathered a similar loss with the closing of England Air Force Base. The city acquired the assets from the government and transformed it into a business park.

"If the City of New Orleans can mimic what Alexandria did, they might be able to turn it into something positive," Scott said. "The good news is the hit did not occur in rural areas ... If they had closed Fort Polk, then that would have been an extremely difficult hit to reverse."

Meanwhile, state officials were poring over the documentation on Friday for clues on how the Defense Department plans to implement its sweeping plans.

"We're studying all of these documents coming out of BRAC. It's hard to tell what is what,"

Economic Development Secretary Mike Olivier said.

Gov. Blanco has offered \$100 million in state money to help offset the closing of the Naval Air Support Center in Algiers with a "federal city" installation.

It would be modeled after Stennis Space Center in Mississippi, which is home to not only NASA but 17 other federal agencies.

"This is what our discussion has been about -- probabilities and possibilities," Olivier said. "Our proposal always has been we wanted the feds to know we had committed to the federal city concept."

He added, "We're going to have to spend a lot of time in Washington and at the Pentagon to figure this out in the next year."

State leaders bemoan possible loss of military bases

Michelle Millhollon and Gerard Shields

Advocate staff writers

5/14/05

Gov. Kathleen Blanco said Friday she depends on the state's congressional leaders to sway the Pentagon on possible base closings announced Friday.

"I'm asking the congressional delegation to do all they can," Blanco said. "It's a federal decision." Blanco said she wants the state to break even in the shuffling of federal military closures and expansions.

Some of the Pentagon's recommendations were expected, she said, such as the suggested closure of the Naval Support Activity Center in New Orleans.

"We knew it was at risk," Blanco said.

Blanco said she's skeptical about the military being able to cut costs by moving personnel to other offices.

"The strange thing with the military is the more consolidation, the more money they spend," she said.

U.S. Sen. David Vitter, R-La., said he already is lobbying the nine members of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission and top Pentagon officials.

Vitter sent letters to the commission members Thursday inviting them to visit Louisiana facilities, he said.

The delegation will have four months to present its case on closures before the panel makes final recommendations.

Vitter greeted the news of NSA's closing with mixed feelings, he said. "Certainly the proposed closure in Algiers is bad news," Vitter said. "But it's mitigated by the Belle Chasse news."

In a written statement, U.S. Rep. William Jefferson, D-New Orleans, called news of the shutdown "extremely devastating."

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld announced Friday the closure of 180 military installations, including 33 major bases. The move will result in the net loss of 29,000 military and civilian jobs in an effort to save the Pentagon \$49 million over the next 20 years.

Since its arrival in 1903, the Naval Support Activity site has been vital to Louisiana and New Orleans, Jefferson said. The base has a \$7.8 million impact on the New Orleans metro economy and contributes to 4,650 military, civilian and spinoff jobs, he said.

"Neither our city nor our state can afford that kind of loss," Jefferson said.

Although not pleased with the announcement, Jefferson said the change would allow the state to move forward with a plan to establish a "Federal City" in New Orleans.

The site would be a state-of-the-art facility housed on the NSA's east bank and include the Coast Guard, Army Reserve and possibly a regional department of Homeland Security.

The base closure is scheduled in two years.

U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La., in New Orleans on Friday, questioned the reasoning of the closures. Landrieu has voted to delay the round of base closings pending the redeployment of troops from Europe.

"With 70,000 troops returning from overseas, it just doesn't make sense to be closing facilities at a time when they could be welcoming these troops home," Landrieu said in a written statement.

U.S. Rep. Charles "Charlie" Melancon, D-Napoleonville, said the announcement is a setback.

"When you think about the talks we've had on the Federal City, I'm disappointed," Melancon said. "This is the most central location for the coastal region in the Gulf of Mexico."

U.S. Rep. Jim McCrery, R-Shreveport, breathed a sigh of relief Friday. The Barksdale Air Force Base and Fort Polk both reside in McCrery's district. That neither facility was on the list is a testament to their importance, McCrery said.

"Fort Polk plays an indispensable role throughout Louisiana and the entire nation," McCrery said in a written statement. "As a military base that is vital to our nation's defense, I am confident that Barksdale will continue to exceed the standards of the BRAC commission."

U.S. Rep. Richard Baker, R-Baton Rouge, could not be reached for comment. A call placed to his office was not returned.

Lt. Gov. Mitch Landrieu said, "I stand ready to help Gov. Blanco and our congressional delegation as we work to overcome the challenges dealt to Louisiana through the BRAC recommendations."

"I know that Louisiana will turn this challenge into an opportunity," he said.

Landrieu said the former England Air Force base, now the England Industrial Airpark, is a model for turning military facility closures to the state's advantage.

"England Industrial Park even houses a prosperous senior living community, England Oaks," Landrieu said.

The lieutenant governor oversees the Louisiana Retirement Development Commission, which promotes Louisiana as a retirement destination.

Editorial/Opinion Articles



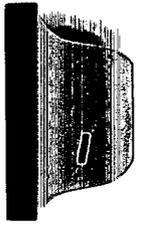
2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
Suggested Talking Points for Visit to Naval Support Activity (NSA) New Orleans

- 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 NSA New Orleans.**
 - The Commission will evaluate the economic, environmental, and other effects that the closure of the installation could have on the surrounding community but the key factor in the Commission's conclusion as to whether or not to suggest NSA for closure is military value.
 - The Commission understands the long history of NSA--dating back over 100 years--but the Commission will evaluate the current military value of the facility as the DoD seeks to streamline and transform our military to meet changing global threats.

- 2. The Commission is aware of the human impact that the suggestions to close NSA New Orleans 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 understands that while some see the opportunity for development and community growth through a different use of the land and facilities which the facility now occupies, for others it would be at least temporary strain and hardship. The Commission will evaluate the economic impact that the facility closure would have on the community surrounding it, while basing its decision almost entirely upon military value.
 - The local community and the nation have woven a rich history around NSA. The NSA has housed many of the military commands that have contributed to the nation's long and distinguished military history. The Commission is aware of the valuable contributions NSA New Orleans has made to the nation's defense in years past.

- 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 Naval Support Activity New Orleans**

Q1. Over its 100-year history, the Naval Support Activity New Orleans facility has served the nation's defense interests. Will the Commission consider the historic value of NSA in its final recommendation?

A1. The Commission takes all pertinent factors into account, as prescribed by statute, as it performs an evaluation of the suggestions made by the Department of Defense (DoD) and formulates its own suggestions. The Commission is keenly aware of the human impact had by the closure or realignment of a base, and although current military value is the most important consideration, the Commission will also consider the effects that the closure of an installation would have on the surrounding community.

Q2. The NSA—which houses only offices and has no military mission or combat training—employs more than 4,600 civilians and service personnel and houses more than 40 commands. Estimates state that the NSA contributes more than \$7.8 million annually to the New Orleans economy. Will the Commission consider the possible economic effect on D.C. as the Commission reaches its final conclusion?

A2. The Commission will perform a thorough, accurate, and objective analysis which will take into account, chiefly, the military value of NSA, but will also consider the impact that the closure 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.

Q3. Under the Pentagon's plans, the Belle Chase Naval Air Station is slated to receive more than 1,800 jobs from the realignment of NSA New Orleans. Of note, the air station is to receive the Marine Corps Reserve headquarters that had been located at NSA New Orleans. Some have suggested that the Belle Chase Naval Air Station does not have the infrastructure to cope with such a large increase in personnel. Will the Commission consider this factor as it makes its suggestion regarding NSA New Orleans?

A3. The Commission will perform a thorough, accurate, and objective analysis which will take into account, chiefly, the military value of the base, but will also consider other factors. The ability of the surrounding community to support a military installation is very important, as is the effect that the closure of that installation would have on the 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.

Q4. The NSA facility is situated on a large tract of land on the Mississippi River. If the NSA is closed, would the property be used for another federal agency? Or would the property sold to the City of New Orleans or private developers?

A4. 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.

A4. Continued

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 New Orleans City government or to private developers at market value.

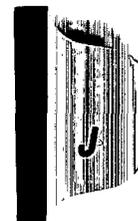
Q5. Currently, several officials in Louisiana have proposed the removal of NSA New Orleans from the closure list and presented the idea of creating a "federal city" on the site. The concept involves a federal campus that would house Coast Guard, Navy, Marine, and Army units currently spread around New Orleans. In addition, the site would house a yet-to-be-awarded regional homeland security center. Does the Commission have any comments on this proposal?

A5. The Commission will perform a thorough, accurate, and objective analysis which will take into account, chiefly, the military value of the base, but will also consider other factors. The scope of the Commission evaluation is limited to an evaluation of which bases should be recommended for closure or realignment and an analysis of DoD's suggestions.

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.



NAVAL SUPPORT ACTIVITY NEW ORLEANS LOUISIANA

National News Articles

La. Could Lose New Orleans Naval Support Center

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State Leaders Bemoan Possible Loss of Military Bases

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National News Articles

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May 13, 2005

By Ana Radelat

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Gov. Kathleen Blanco, a Democrat, also said the proposed increase in Barksdale's strength indicates the Pentagon values the base.

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KATC-3 TV

WASHINGTON The commission reviewing the Pentagon's recommended base closings will travel to 16 cities this summer, including New Orleans, to hear from communities potentially affected.

Between June seventh and July 14th, commissioners will hold hearings in Salt Lake City; Saint Louis; Dallas; Atlanta; Boston; Los Angeles; Fairbanks, Alaska; Portland, Oregon; Rapid City, South Dakota; Grand Forks, North Dakota; Clovis, New Mexico; Buffalo, New York; Charlotte, North Carolina; Baltimore; San Antonio and New Orleans.

The Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, appointed by President Bush, can change the Pentagon list before it is submitted to the White House and Congress this fall.

In Louisiana, the Pentagon wants to close the Naval Support Activity center in New Orleans

Commander: Belle Chasse can easily support additional personnel

KATC-3 TV

BELLE CHASSE, La. The Naval Air Station-Joint Reserve Base commander in southeastern Louisiana says the base has more than enough room to handle the additional 1,700 people who will move in if the Defense Department's proposed base closure and realignment plan is adopted. Captaint A-J Rizzo says the base can easily accommodate the changes.

The base currently has 5,000 personnel and about 7,500 when family members and reservists are counted. The personnel from the Marine reserve headquarters would move to Belle Chasse from the Naval Support Activity station in New Orleans, which is slated for closure.

In a loss for Belle Chasse, the Pentagon recommended the disbanding of the Air Force Reserve's 926th Fighter Wing. The wing's 15 A-10 Warthog attack planes would be shifted to Barksdale Air Force Base in Bossier City and Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri, with the loss of 312 jobs.

The wing's commander said today that he was still "numb" from that announcement.

Louisiana Economic Development Comments On BRAC

Military

May 13, 2005

Bayoubuzz

BATON ROUGE, La.—May 13, 2005—Louisiana Economic Development learned today of the Pentagon's recommendations to the Base Realignment And Closure (BRAC) regarding military installations in Louisiana. LED has expected this announcement for some time, and has prepared for the challenges of the BRAC process. In a global list of closures and realignment, the Pentagon recommended the Naval Support Activity (NSA) New Orleans for closure. The Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base (NASJRB) and Barksdale Air Force Base face realignment, under which the numbers of military and civilian personnel at both installations would increase.

Louisiana Economic Development has played a lead role in working with numerous city, state and federal officials for more than two years on a strategic plan to address recommendations that would affect any of the four Louisiana military bases. As part of the planning for the NSA recommendation, LED and New Orleans Federal Alliance (NOFA) drafted several possible scenarios for the (BRAC) commission to consider. Each plan incorporates converting the NSA base into a Federal City to include the Navy, Marines, Coast Guard or some combination of each. LED has also carefully planned for the future of the NASJRB and Barksdale, and expects realignment of both to be economic growth opportunities for the Belle Chasse and Shreveport-Bossier areas.

Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco understands the impact this announcement carries. "I am disappointed by the decision to list Naval Support Activity in New Orleans on the list of installations recommended for closure," Governor Blanco said. "For some years now, the city of New Orleans and the state of Louisiana have been preparing for the development of Federal City. The announcement of the proposed closure of the Naval Support Activity has been feared, but I am hopeful that it offers us an opportunity to present our Federal City concept to the full commission."

LED Secretary Michael J. Olivier also recognizes the impact of this announcement. "We have worked very hard preparing for this day. Now that it has arrived, we will continue to pursue our best options for the NSA and embrace the opportunities that come with this recommended realignment. All of these installations are vital to Louisiana's economy," said Olivier.

The BRAC commission is scheduled to tour each base on the Pentagon's list to assess their military value. Governor Blanco now looks to the leadership of Louisiana's Congressional delegation to ensure the state's interests are protected and advanced in Washington. "Ultimately, this is a decision that will be made, not by the Pentagon or by BRAC, but by the U.S. Congress," Governor Blanco said. "I am pleased that our delegation members in the House and Senate have good relationships with the White House and the leadership of both houses. Therefore, I expect that they will rely on those relationships to ensure that Louisiana's interests are protected and advanced in Washington."

N.O. base takes hit in Round 1

2theadvocate.com

Sandy Davis, Ned Randolph and Joe Gyan

May 14, 2005

Baton Rouge came out a potential winner as the first round of base closures in a decade was announced Friday by the Pentagon.

The city could be home to a proposed Armed Forces Reserve Center that the Pentagon is proposing building near Metro Airport. The center would house Army, Navy, and Marine reserve centers along with a Louisiana Army National Guard unit.

New Orleans was not so lucky.

Despite an all-out offensive by federal, state and local leaders to save it, the Pentagon recommended that the 102-year-old Naval Support Activity facility straddling the Mississippi River in New Orleans be shut down.

In all, the Pentagon proposed closing about 180 military installations from Maine to Hawaii, including 33 major bases, in the first base closure recommendations in more than 10 years.

Some Louisiana bases did gain personnel. The Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base in Plaquemines Parish is to be expanded, adding more than 1,700 workers.

The military called the plan to build the Baton Rouge facility a "transformation" because it includes housing units with three branches of the military along with a state guard unit all under one roof.

"I have to say, it is unusual," said Bob Williams, a spokesman for the U.S. Army Reserves 90th Regional Readiness Command, which covers five states including Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, New Mexico and Oklahoma.

The report proposed moving the Roberts U.S. Army Reserve Center and the Naval-Marine Reserve Center out of the buildings they're occupying near Metro Airport and moving them to the proposed center. The plan also includes building a field maintenance shop next to the center.

The Pentagon said it would purchase state land next to Metro Airport and construct the center.

The report said it was offering space in the building to the Louisiana National Guard, but acknowledged it would be up to the Guard whether it accepted the offer.

By Friday afternoon, the National Guard issued a statement saying it would move the Guard's 769th Engineer Battalion along with a maintenance shop associated with that unit into the proposed building.

Guard officials said Friday morning they were caught by surprise and had no idea the report would include such an invitation for them.

After meeting with the governor, the Guard issued the statement agreeing to the proposal.

There are about 500 soldiers in the battalion, said Major Ed Bush, a spokesman for the Guard.

Also on the list to move into the proposed center is the 1190th Army Reserve Support Brigade, Williams said.

Petty Officer 1st Class Rob Kerns, a spokesman for the Naval Reserve Force, said close to 160 reservists who are trained at the Naval-Marine Center could be affected by the move.

"We're just trying to put our forces where they're needed and get the best bang out of our buck," Kerns said of the proposal.

The Pentagon said the plan will greatly improve training and deployment capabilities and create significant cost savings by housing the units under one roof.

"This recommendation provides the opportunity for other local, state or federal organizations to partner with the Reserve Components to enhance Homeland Security and Homeland Defense at a reduced cost to those agencies," the report stated as one reason why it proposed consolidating the units under one roof.

But Reserve officials were quick to say the proposal has not been approved.

"The whole thing is a proposal," said Steve Stromvall, an Army Reserve spokesman in Ft. McPherson. "We don't know how much this would cost yet. This is all new."

The report estimated that there would be a one-time cost to the Pentagon "to implement this plan" of \$30.7 million.

But the report added that the Pentagon expects to save \$13.6 million a year having the reserve centers in one building.

"But remember, no money has been appropriated, no land has been purchased and there are no building plans at this point," Williams said. "At the very least, it will take about 2% years to just get all of that completed before the construction would even begin."

Williams said the Pentagon has four years from the time the Base Realignment and Closure Report is approved to complete the projects.

In New Orleans, Mayor Ray Nagin and Louisiana's two U.S. senators aren't waving any white flags.

Nagin said his administration will continue to push a plan to keep the Naval Support Activity facility open and turn it into a so-called "federal city" campus to house a Coast Guard office and Navy, Marine and Army units now spread around New Orleans and a yet-to-be-awarded regional homeland security center.

"We will continue to sell our 'federal city' initiative that we've already rolled out. The federal city initiative is still a viable option to consolidate all the remaining military operations into one facility," the mayor said.

Gov. Kathleen Blanco and Nagin have pledged at least \$166 million in state and city bonds to streamline the Naval Support Activity, the bulk of which is based across the river from New Orleans in Algiers.

Under the Pentagon's proposal, the Naval Support Activity's loss will be the Naval Air Station-Joint Reserve Base's gain.

U.S. Sen. David Vitter, R-La., said the 1,800-worker national Marine Reserve headquarters will be moved from the Naval Support Activity to the Belle Chasse base.

The Pentagon said the NSA's closure would cost the state roughly 1,000 jobs -- about half military and half civilian.

Before base closings can take effect, the proposed closures must be approved or changed by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission by Sept. 8. Communities with bases on the closure list will have an opportunity to lobby BRAC Commission members to try to keep them open.

Congress and President Bush must approve or reject the commission's closure list in its entirety. U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La., stressed that Friday's recommendation "is not the end of the BRAC process, but still very much a beginning."

"We know that our Louisiana military assets and the New Orleans 'federal city' are vital to our long-term national defense and homeland security needs, and will proudly continue our fight to demonstrate this value to the BRAC commission," she said.

Nagin said if the federal government refuses to take NSA off the base closure list and rejects the federal city concept, the city will ask the military about donating that land to the city of New Orleans.

Nagin said the city would look at it for "development options."

Those involved with the federal city proposal have not discussed publicly any other contingency plans for the Algiers site. But city officials have proposed closing the New Orleans location and turning it into another cruise ship terminal.

For now, though, officials are intent on removing the NSA from the closure list. The vast majority of bases on four closure lists in previous years eventually were shut down.

Capt. Lafe Dozier, commanding officer at the Naval Support Activity, said the base-closure process could take anywhere from two to six years to complete.

"It's not something that will happen overnight. There's no reason for everyone to get overanxious," he said. "There are programs out there that are offered by the Office of Economic Analysis that can help the community."

In all, the Naval Support Activity -- which houses only offices and has no military mission or combat training -- employs more than 4,600 civilians and service personnel, has a \$142 million annual payroll and is home to the national headquarters for the U.S. Marine and Naval Reserves, as well as more than 40 other commands, Vitter said.

Louisiana's other major military posts -- Barksdale Air Force Base in northwest Louisiana and the U.S. Army's Fort Polk post in the west-central part of the state -- were largely unaffected by the Pentagon's latest round of recommended base closings.

Economist Loren Scott said the state and Baton Rouge in particular dodged a bullet.

"To me, I'm breathing a great sigh of relief on this because we didn't lose as much as we were concerned about losing," he said. "Baton Rouge is in no position to lose 165 jobs because we're just limping along, but if we can get some realignment things going, maybe the city escaped."

Scott said the state could have lost a total of 8,400 military-related jobs. Its largest bases -- Barksdale in Shreveport, Fort Polk in Leesville, and Belle Chasse Naval Air Station in New Orleans -- are actually expanding through realignment.

New Orleans, with a proposed displacement of more than 900 personnel, appears to bear the brunt of the closings. That's an economic impact of 1,800 job losses, Scott said.

All of the military personnel would be reassigned, and civilians would be given priority for employment at other installations.

"They will be given the opportunity to go where we're going," said Petty Officer First Class Robert Kerns from New Orleans.

In the mid-1990s, Alexandria weathered a similar loss with the closing of England Air Force Base. The city acquired the assets from the government and transformed it into a business park.

"If the City of New Orleans can mimic what Alexandria did, they might be able to turn it into something positive," Scott said. "The good news is the hit did not occur in rural areas ... If they had closed Fort Polk, then that would have been an extremely difficult hit to reverse."

Meanwhile, state officials were poring over the documentation on Friday for clues on how the Defense Department plans to implement its sweeping plans.

"We're studying all of these documents coming out of BRAC. It's hard to tell what is what," Economic Development Secretary Mike Olivier said.

Gov. Blanco has offered \$100 million in state money to help offset the closing of the Naval Air Support Center in Algiers with a "federal city" installation.

It would be modeled after Stennis Space Center in Mississippi, which is home to not only NASA but 17 other federal agencies.

"This is what our discussion has been about -- probabilities and possibilities," Olivier said. "Our proposal always has been we wanted the feds to know we had committed to the federal city concept."

He added, "We're going to have to spend a lot of time in Washington and at the Pentagon to figure this out in the next year."

State leaders bemoan possible loss of military bases

Michelle Millhollon and Gerard Shields

Advocate staff writers

5/14/05

Gov. Kathleen Blanco said Friday she depends on the state's congressional leaders to sway the Pentagon on possible base closings announced Friday.

"I'm asking the congressional delegation to do all they can," Blanco said. "It's a federal decision."

Blanco said she wants the state to break even in the shuffling of federal military closures and expansions.

Some of the Pentagon's recommendations were expected, she said, such as the suggested closure of the Naval Support Activity Center in New Orleans.

"We knew it was at risk," Blanco said.

Blanco said she's skeptical about the military being able to cut costs by moving personnel to other offices.

"The strange thing with the military is the more consolidation, the more money they spend," she said.

U.S. Sen. David Vitter, R-La., said he already is lobbying the nine members of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission and top Pentagon officials.

Vitter sent letters to the commission members Thursday inviting them to visit Louisiana facilities, he said.

The delegation will have four months to present its case on closures before the panel makes final recommendations.

Vitter greeted the news of NSA's closing with mixed feelings, he said. "Certainly the proposed closure in Algiers is bad news," Vitter said. "But it's mitigated by the Belle Chasse news."

In a written statement, U.S. Rep. William Jefferson, D-New Orleans, called news of the shutdown "extremely devastating."

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld announced Friday the closure of 180 military installations, including 33 major bases. The move will result in the net loss of 29,000 military and civilian jobs in an effort to save the Pentagon \$49 million over the next 20 years.

Since its arrival in 1903, the Naval Support Activity site has been vital to Louisiana and New Orleans, Jefferson said. The base has a \$7.8 million impact on the New Orleans metro economy and contributes to 4,650 military, civilian and spinoff jobs, he said.

"Neither our city nor our state can afford that kind of loss," Jefferson said.

Although not pleased with the announcement, Jefferson said the change would allow the state to move forward with a plan to establish a "Federal City" in New Orleans.

The site would be a state-of-the-art facility housed on the NSA's east bank and include the Coast Guard, Army Reserve and possibly a regional department of Homeland Security.

The base closure is scheduled in two years.

U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La., in New Orleans on Friday, questioned the reasoning of the closures. Landrieu has voted to delay the round of base closings pending the redeployment of troops from Europe.

"With 70,000 troops returning from overseas, it just doesn't make sense to be closing facilities at a time when they could be welcoming these troops home," Landrieu said in a written statement.

U.S. Rep. Charles "Charlie" Melancon, D-Napoleonville, said the announcement is a setback.

"When you think about the talks we've had on the Federal City, I'm disappointed," Melancon said. "This is the most central location for the coastal region in the Gulf of Mexico."

U.S. Rep. Jim McCrery, R-Shreveport, breathed a sigh of relief Friday. The Barksdale Air Force Base and Fort Polk both reside in McCrery's district. That neither facility was on the list is a testament to their importance, McCrery said.

"Fort Polk plays an indispensable role throughout Louisiana and the entire nation," McCrery said in a written statement. "As a military base that is vital to our nation's defense, I am confident that Barksdale will continue to exceed the standards of the BRAC commission."

U.S. Rep. Richard Baker, R-Baton Rouge, could not be reached for comment. A call placed to his office was not returned.

Lt. Gov. Mitch Landrieu said, "I stand ready to help Gov. Blanco and our congressional delegation as we work to overcome the challenges dealt to Louisiana through the BRAC recommendations."

"I know that Louisiana will turn this challenge into an opportunity," he said.

Landrieu said the former England Air Force base, now the England Industrial Airpark, is a model for turning military facility closures to the state's advantage.

"England Industrial Park even houses a prosperous senior living community, England Oaks,"

Landrieu said.

The lieutenant governor oversees the Louisiana Retirement Development Commission, which promotes Louisiana as a retirement destination.

Editorial/Opinion Articles



**2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
Suggested Talking Points for Naval Station Pascagoula**

- 1. To the 2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC), military value is the most important consideration as the Commission evaluates the suggestion made by the Department of Defense (DoD) to close Naval Station Pascagoula.**
 - The Commission will evaluate the economic, environmental, and other effects that the closure of the installation could have on the surrounding community but the key factor in the Commission's decision as to whether or not to suggest Naval Station Pascagoula for closure is military value.
 - The Commission will carefully consider the role that Naval Station Pascagoula and its nearly 1,000 personnel play in the defense of the nation.
 - The Commission is aware that Naval Station Pascagoula is located in a strategic location on the Gulf of Mexico and played a role as a homeport for the Aegis missile cruisers.

- 2. The Commission is aware of the possible economic, environmental, and other effects that the suggestions to close Naval Station Pascagoula could have and is taking these 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 full account in the decision to recommend a base for closure or realignment.
 - The Commission will evaluate the economic impact that the installation closure would have on the community surrounding Naval Station Pascagoula, while basing its decision almost entirely upon military value.
 - The Commission will evaluate the economic impact on the community of losing nearly 1,000 jobs.

- 3. The Congress established the Commission as a non-political, transparent, and independent entity to perform a thorough evaluation, by a process set forth 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 to provide accountability to the public for the suggestion, made by DoD, to close Naval Station Pascagoula.
 - The Commission encourages public input. Members of the community wishing to submit information that they feel may have been overlooked by DoD, are encouraged to submit their 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 Naval Station Pascagoula**

Q1. Under the current BRAC recommendation, Mayport Naval Station in Jacksonville, FL would receive 1,000 personnel and 4 ships from the closure of Naval Station Pascagoula. Will the Commission evaluate Mayport's infrastructure to determine whether the installation can accommodate such a large influx of resources?

A1. The Commission will perform a thorough, accurate, and objective analysis which will take into account, chiefly, the military value of the base, but will also consider other factors. The ability of the community to support a military installation is very important, as is the effect that the closure of that installation would have on the 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. Recently, the Navy has recommended retiring the aircraft carrier John F. Kennedy. Is the decision to close Naval Station Pascagoula and award Naval Station Mayport an effort to alleviate Mayport's claims for an additional aircraft carrier?

A2. 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 Pascagoula, but will also consider the economic, environmental and other effects that the closure of the installation would have on the surrounding community. The Commission will not comment on movement of ships or compensation for retirement of ships.

Q3. Representative Gene Taylor (D-Miss), a long-time opponent of base closings, and Senator Trent Lott have vowed to fight the BRAC recommendations concerning Mississippi military installations. Will the political influence yielded by these men affect the Commission's final recommendation?

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 Pascagoula, but will also consider the economic, environmental and other effects that the closure of the installation would have on the surrounding community—as prescribed by law.

Q4. Some contend that Naval Station Mayport was slated to receive all of Pascagoula's resources because of the ties between Governor Jeb Bush and President Bush. Will the Commission evaluate these allegations?

A4. The Commission will review the Pentagon's proposal based upon an evaluation of the current military value of the installation. In addition, the Commission will analyze the projected economic costs and human impact of the DoD BRAC recommendations.

A4. Continued

The Commission will not factor political allegations in its evaluation of the recommendations.

Q5. Since the retirement of the Aegis missile cruisers, Naval Station Pascagoula now has only one primary mission—interdiction of drug smuggling operations in the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean. Did the lack of multiple missions lead to the DoD's recommendations? Will the Commission consider alternatives to closing Pascagoula?

A5. The process of evaluation, followed by the Commission, has been set forth by law. In this evaluation, military value is the most important factor to the Commission as DoD seeks to streamline our military to meet changing global threats. Military value is determined primarily through three criteria—jointness, ease of mobility, and the installations role in the changing global threat paradigm. The Commission will evaluate the DoD's recommendations based upon these criteria while also considering alternative economic and environmental impacts.

Q6. If both Naval Station Pascagoula and Naval Station Ingleside close, then Naval Air Station Key West and Naval Air Station Pensacola would be the only installations to provide protection to the Gulf of Mexico. Both of the latter installations are equipped with training and not tactical airframes. Will the Commission review the strategic implications of the DoD recommendation?

A6. Questions of long-term DoD strategy are out of the scope of the Commission in reviewing the BRAC recommendations. The Commission will evaluate installations primarily based upon the current military value. In addition, the Commission will evaluate any economic costs and the human impact of the Pentagon's proposal. Strategic questions are best posited to the Department of Defense.

Q7. Naval Station Pascagoula has avoided closure in past BRAC rounds. Why should the current BRAC round yield a result different from the others?

A7. The statute, *not precedence*, establishes the criteria. As outlined by the statute, the Commission will place priority on military value; while also taking into consideration economic, environmental, and other effects that the closure or realignment of a base would have on the community surrounding that base. Information that is gathered in the analysis of a base, with the exception of information that is sensitive to national security, will be made accessible to the public.

Q8. Naval Station Pascagoula occupies 187 acres of a 437-acre property. The community has already expressed interest in potential businesses on the property of the base closes. What is the process for returning the property to the local community?

A8. 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.

Q9. How can the Community make the Commission aware of information that the Community feels may have been overlooked by DoD?

A9. 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 PASCAGOULA MISSISSIPPI

National News Articles

Pentagon's Brac Recommendations Prove Contentious On Capitol Hill
Base Closing Commissioner To Tour Pascagoula Naval Station
Panel Members Fail To Halt Brac At Authorization Markup
No Mississippi Bases Completely Safe From BRAC, Official Says
First the BRAC List, Then the Recriminations
Military Housing Complex Still Scheduled Despite BRAC Plans
Cries Of 'Flat Wrong' Greet Pentagon's Base Closings List

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Pascagoula Naval Station Could Be Tough To Save
Ingleside Official Questions Logic Of Closing Down Base
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Triple Threat;
The Possible Loss Of The Naval Support Activity May Be Only The First Of A Trio Of
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BRAC: SPECIAL REPORT
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Pentagon's Brac Recommendations Prove Contentious On Capitol Hill

Inside the Navy
 May 23, 2005

The Pentagon's proposals to close Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, ME; the New London submarine base in Groton, CT; and naval stations in **Pascagoula**, MS, and Ingleside, TX, are drawing loud complaints from members of Congress representing those states.

Some lawmakers, including Maine's senators, are also turning their attacks on the whole base-closure process, teaming up with Sen. John Thune (R-SD), who last week proposed a bill to delay the process. He offered his bill after the Pentagon announced its 2005 base-closure recommendations, a list that includes South Dakota's Ellsworth Air Force Base.

If the Base **Realignment** and Closure (BRAC) process continues unimpeded, the Pentagon's recommendations will be reviewed in the coming months by the Bush administration's BRAC

commission. The panel will decide which recommendations to approve and whether to make any changes to the list. Based on that review, the commission is supposed to send the White House a report by Sept. 8.

By law, President Bush must approve or reject the commission's list by late September. The recommendations will become final if the president approves the commission's proposals and Congress does not object within 45 legislative days.

Thune's bill would delay the BRAC process until Congress considers various reviews, including the work of the Commission on Review of Overseas Military Facility Structure of the United States (which is separate from the BRAC Commission that is reviewing U.S. facilities) and the ongoing Quadrennial Defense Review.

Sens. Olympia Snowe (R-ME) and Susan Collins (R-ME) were among a handful of senators who joined Thune at a press conference May 19.

"I said last week that the Pentagon was dead wrong to recommend closing Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota," Thune said. "And today I'm here to say that I think the Pentagon is dead wrong for recommending we close a single domestic base while we're at war and before the completion of the overseas BRAC commission and the Pentagon's QDR." He acknowledged it would be an uphill fight to delay the next BRAC round.

Asked by Inside the Navy whether he would be offering such a bill had the Pentagon spared South Dakota's Ellsworth Air Force Base, Thune said, "Well, that's a hypothetical question. I would love to be here today having Ellsworth not made it on the list. But I think there's information that came out about this process that's fairly recent, fairly current. The overseas BRAC commission's report came out last week. I was not here for the vote on this two years ago. So I'm fairly, in terms of this round of BRAC, new to it."

He added, "I am persuaded, irrespective of what happens with my individual circumstance with Ellsworth Air Force Base that there are serious concerns . . . about the overall . . . threat assessment, the need to slow down until we know what those force structure needs are, until we know what that military strategy is going forward."

In addition to Snowe and Collins, other sponsors of the bill include Sens. Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Pete Domenici (R-NM), Judd Gregg (R-NH), Tim Johnson (D-SD), Trent Lott (R-MS), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Ted Stevens (R-AK) and John Sununu (R-NH).

During the press conference, Snowe said that the Northeast would be hurt the most by the Pentagon's BRAC recommendations. She reiterated the point after the event.

"Maine is the second hardest hit and Connecticut is the first," she told ITN.

She noted the Portsmouth yard had recently received a special citation from the Navy in recognition of its service from Sept. 11, 2001, to Aug. 30, 2004. "The personnel of Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and tenant activities consistently and superbly performed their mission while establishing a phenomenal record of cost, schedule, quality, and safety performance," the citation states.

The Navy's plan to close the submarine base in Groton, CT -- a proposal that has sparked criticism from Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-CT), Sen. Chris Dodd (D-CT), Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-

CT), Rep. Rob Simmons (R-CT), and Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA), the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee -- could be one of the most contentious in the 2005 BRAC process.

When the BRAC commission took testimony from top naval officials May 17, there was a fair amount of discussion about the sub base. Navy Secretary and acting Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Vern Clark, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Michael Hagee and Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Infrastructure Strategy and Analysis Anne Rathmell Davis testified before the commission.

BRAC commission Chairman Anthony Principi asked whether the facilities at Kings Bay, GA, would be adequate to accommodate the forces that would be moved there from Groton. England said it would cost \$238 million to make the necessary changes at Kings Bay. The total cost of closing the base at Groton and upgrading Kings Bay would be \$679 million, England said.

Closing the sub base is a perfect example of "very, very difficult choices" for the BRAC process, said Clark, who argued changed circumstances support closing Groton's base.

"A few years back we had almost 100 attack submarines," he said. "Our number is in the 50s now and I've testified and submitted documentation that my belief is the number in the future is going to be somewhere in . . . the low 40s. My number is 41."

That comment had Lieberman, who was sitting in the audience with Dodd, visibly shaking his head side-to-side in disagreement.

"We've got too much structure," Clark continued. "In order for us to have the Navy that we need to have in the future, we have got to redirect resources to the recapitalization process."

Clark said the Navy must approach BRAC by weighing strategic and military implications not merely for next year, but also looking ahead for the next 20 years. "The recommendation that we provided is the direction to get us where we think we need to be 20 years from now," said Clark.

During an impromptu session with reporters outside the hearing, Lieberman and Dodd vowed to fight the recommendation to close the submarine base, questioned the Navy's arguments and challenged the service's cost estimates.

"Communities that lose a base are almost like a spouse that got divorced," Rep. Gene Taylor (D-MS) told reporters at a media event last week. "There's a lot of resentment. They felt like, we did everything you asked. We were a good neighbor. And you're leaving us. You're just leaving us." That event was sponsored by Defense Today.

In other news, the commission raised the possibility of closing the Navy's air base in Oceana, VA, noting the facility already suffers from range encroachment.

Further, the Navy's plans to close and realign facilities in Texas have also drawn objections from lawmakers (see related article).

Base Closing Commissioner To Tour Pascagoula Naval Station

The Associated Press

May 21, 2005

A member of the federal base closing and **realignment** commission will tour **Pascagoula** Naval Station on June 16, Jackson County officials have announced.

Jackson County officials also will make a presentation July 12 at a BRAC hearing in New Orleans.

Naval Station **Pascagoula** and the Lakeside Naval Support Unit, which is a residence for crews for ships being built at Northrop Grumman Ship Systems, are scheduled for closing in the 2005 BRAC list. About 180 civilian employees are affected by the proposed closing.

The base tour and the regional hearing are part of the commission's review process before presenting its recommendations on the list to President Bush in September.

"I believe the sooner the better," Jerry St. Pe, chairman of the Jackson County Economic Development Foundation, said Friday. "The sooner this community can have the opportunity to make its case before the commission during the visit in June and the regional hearing in July, the better it serves our purpose."

Den Knecht, Singing River Island Diversification Committee chairman, said the group is putting information and making plans for the base visit and the hearing.

"We intend to vigorously defend our base," Knecht said. "We're reviewing the information the DOD used to make their decision as part of our analysis."

BRAC Commissioner Harold W. Gehman Jr., a retired Navy admiral, will tour the naval station on June 16. Gehman, who retired in 2000, was NATO Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic and Commander in Chief of the U.S. Joint Forces Command, one of five regional joint combined commands.

"Adm. Gehman, as an admiral in the U.S. Navy, understands the strategic importance of the home port program and I fully expect that he will appreciate both the message that we present well as the key point that Naval Station **Pascagoula** is in a strategic position in the Gulf of Mexico," St. Pe said.

Gehman will also be one of the three commissioners presiding at the July 12 regional hearing in New Orleans.

The other commissioners at the hearing will be retired U.S. Air Force Gen. Lloyd "Fig" Newton, a Vietnam veteran and former commander of the Air Force Air Education and Training Command at Randolph Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas; and James Hansen, a former congressman from Utah.

Panel Members Fail To Halt Brac At Authorization Markup

National Journal's CongressDaily
May 19, 2005

Several House Armed Services Committee members Wednesday attempted to use the markup of the FY06 defense authorization bill to halt the work of the Defense Base Closure and **Realignment** Commission, to no avail.

The committee defeated an amendment offered by Rep. Jeb Bradley, R-N.H., to terminate the

process. Bradley then introduced a subsequent amendment to delay base closings until the Pentagon completes several strategic reviews and forces deployed to Iraq return. It was defeated on a voice vote.

Armed Services Readiness Subcommittee Chairman Joel Hefley, R-Colo., who last year led the drive to delay the BRAC round by two years, indicated that now is not the right time to shutter bases around the country, but conceded that it is too late.

"This train has left the station," Hefley said. "I don't see any way to call it back."

Bradley's amendment measure was supported by Rep. Rob Simmons, R-Conn., whose district might lose up to 8,500 jobs if the commission agrees with Defense Secretary Rumsfeld's recommendation to close the New London Submarine Base.

Rep. Gene Taylor, D-Miss., a longtime opponent of base closings, likewise voiced support for Bradley's amendment. His district is home to **Pascagoula** Naval Station, also slated for closure.

Lawmakers also pushed for changes in Pentagon weapons-buying, a key piece of subcommittee markups.

During the full committee mark, members unanimously passed an amendment, introduced by Rep. Neil Abercrombie, D-Hawaii, that requires the Pentagon to study using "capital budgeting" approaches for major acquisition programs.

"We continue to use an acquisition system that would be worthy of a Dickens novel," Abercrombie said.

Used by many local and state governments, the capital budgeting approach to acquisition separates revenues and outlays for major programs from revenues and outlays from operating budgets.

It also provides budget authority to spread acquisition of a major asset over several years, rather than pay for everything in the first year of acquisition.

In missile defense, the committee defeated an amendment introduced by Rep. Ellen Tauscher, D-Calif., along party lines, to change authority over ballistic missile defense testing from the Missile Defense Agency to the Pentagon's director of operational test and evaluation.

At presstime, the panel was expected to take up an amendment to the FY06 defense authorization bill that would lessen restrictions placed on female soldiers' combat roles during subcommittee marks last week.

Armed Services Chairman Hunter and Personnel Subcommittee Chairman John McHugh, R-N.Y., pushed forward the restrictions, which would have barred all women soldiers in forward-deployed support units from moving to the front lines during combat operations.

Their language, approved along party lines, immediately generated a maelstrom of criticism from Army officials and military organizations, who said limiting women's roles in the military would further strain an already stressed force.

McHugh planned to introduce the softer language as an amendment.

The new language would prohibit the assignment of women to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct ground combat, defined in the provision as using individual or crew-served weapons to engage an enemy while being exposed to hostile fire and leaves the door open for other restrictions.

Several other issues were yet to be addressed at presstime, including a \$49 billion "bridge" funding supplemental spending package.

No Mississippi Bases Completely Safe From BRAC, Official Says

The Associated Press

May 16, 2005

The announcement of the Pentagon's base closing list is no reason for spared Mississippi military communities to rejoice, an officials says.

Bill Crawford, deputy director for community assistance with the Mississippi Development Authority, who is advising military communities on base closings, said Mississippi has fared relatively well so far in the 2005 round of base **realignment** and closure recommendations, or BRAC.

But Crawford said other bases could be added to the list later this summer.

"Communities with closed or realigned bases have until the end of July to convince the BRAC Commission to add other bases to take their places," Crawford told the editorial board of The Meridian Star newspaper. "Mississippi bases that have not been impacted will not be completely safe until the add deadline has passed."

On the recommended **realignment** of the Mississippi Air National Guard's 186th Air Refueling Wing in Meridian, Crawford said elected officials and community leaders are ready to fight to protect the mission.

"The legality and propriety of the Pentagon moving Air National Guard units through BRAC is being challenged and offers one avenue of recourse," Crawford said.

"The high performance history of the unit, its relatively lower operating costs, its capacity to expand, and its joint operations with the 172nd Airlift Wing in Jackson form the basis for a strong case."

Crawford said the retention of Naval Air Station Meridian was a major victory.

"Keesler Air Force Base took a hit in its medical center but remains one of the world's top electronics schools as home of the 2nd Air Force and Mississippi's major military facility.

"The plus-up of Columbus Air Force Base was a strong positive. Retention of the Seabee base at Gulfport and the Army Corps of Engineers and Waterways Experiment Station in Vicksburg was very positive. Camp Shelby and Camp McCain survived strong and intact," Crawford said.

Crawford said the proposed closure of Naval Station **Pascagoula** was not a surprise after the retirement of its Aegis missile cruisers. But he said the closure recommendation ignored the strategic value of the base.

"The consolidation of Navy personnel services (Hancock County) and Army Reserve headquarters (Vicksburg) may cost the state jobs, but are not devastating to the surrounding communities as many BRAC recommendations are.

"The closure of the mothballed Army Ammunitions Plant at Stennis Space Center was at the request of the community and the state so that it can be redeveloped," he said.

Crawford said losing the KC-135R air refueling mission at Key Field may be the most contentious recommendation.

Crawford said the state is gearing up to help fight the closings.

"The state will provide gubernatorial, technical and financial support to communities that choose to fight for their facilities," he said. "The state will provide similar support to those communities that focus on re-use opportunities for closed facilities."

Crawford said the Mississippi Military Communities Council will continue to provide community-to-community coordination and provide advice to the state.

He said each community with a closed or negatively realigned base will be given a chance to persuade the BRAC Commission to change the Pentagon's recommendation.

"To succeed in this effort ... takes a strong community effort in close coordination with our strong congressional delegation. A factual case must be built using both volunteers and expert consultants. A competent presentation team must be formed to deliver the case to the BRAC Commission, its staff and to military leaders.

"Such fights cost money. The state will help, but communities must raise funds, too. Finally, communities need to show BRAC commissioners they care about their facilities by turning out at regional hearings and at base visits and by writing support letters to the commission," Crawford said.

First the BRAC List, Then the Recriminations

Roll Call

Nicole Duran

May 16, 2005

No sooner had the Pentagon released its list of recommended base closings on Friday than the first political barbs were exchanged.

The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee struck first, trumpeting the fact that Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) - in his heated race last year against then-Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D) - had played up his relationship with the White House and Republican leaders as a way to save Ellsworth Air Force Base from the chopping block.

Unfortunately for the DSCC, and luckily for Thune, he has five and a half years to weather the fallout if the base is ultimately closed.

Other Members are not so lucky.

Of Senators up for re-election next year, Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.) faces the most bleak prospects - a possible net loss of 8,586 jobs - if the independent nine-person Base **Realignment** and Closure Commission follows the Pentagon's advice.

Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) comes next with almost 7,000 jobs potentially lost, followed by freshman Missouri Sen. Jim Talent (R) with 3,679.

Though news of a home-state base closure is never good for politicians, it's also not sufficient to keep a Member from re-election.

The BRAC process was specifically designed to insulate base-closing decisions from political considerations, said Paul Hirsch, a one-time BRAC staffer who now represents clients in the BRAC arena.

"For example, why would the administration want to hurt [Connecticut Rep.] Rob Simmons, who's a Republican?" said Hirsch, president of Madison Government Affairs. "Why would the administration want to hurt [GOP Sen. Susan] Collins and Snowe in Maine? Why would they want to hurt [Sen. Pete] Domenici [R-N.M.]? These decisions are based on military issues. I don't see how anybody can draw any political conclusions to this list."

Jack Deschauer, a partner at Patton Boggs and a retired naval officer who served as director of Senate affairs inside the Pentagon during a previous BRAC round, noted that "a base doesn't get closed because of the lack of effort on the part of whoever the elected leaders are, Senators, Congresspeople, mayors."

Still, he added, "there's no way that in the next election your opponent can't make a big deal about it."

On Friday, the day of the announcement, the Democrats took the most swipes. They accused Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) of complicity in the potential demise of suburban Philadelphia's Willow Grove Naval Air Station and Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss.) of not having the clout to save the naval station in his hometown of **Pascagoula**.

"Santorum Enabled Base Closures in Pennsylvania," read the headline of a Pennsylvania Democratic Party release.

"The responsibility for Willow Grove Naval Station lies squarely at the feet of Rick Santorum," state Democratic Party Chairman and Rep. T.J. Rooney said in the statement. "Santorum not only voted to allow the base closures to move forward but made negative comments about Willow Grove that gave political cover to people deciding whether it should be shut down."

In Lott's case, the DSCC noted that President Bush "thwarted" the former Majority Leader's attempts to end-run the process by appointing a chairman to the commission during a Congressional recess, thereby rendering Lott's hold on the nomination useless.

The committee also pointed out that one of Lott's home-state papers editorialized that Mississippi likely would not fare as well without Lott in a leadership position.

Majority Leaders are allowed to appoint two members to the BRAC Commission.

But Democrats, still smarting from Thune's dramatic and narrow ouster of Daschle last year,

concentrated most of their firepower on Thune.

The DSCC reminded recipients of its message that a full-page, pro-Thune ad in the Rapid City Journal before the election read: "John Thune will have the ear of the President and the Republicans who will nominate even members of the nine-member base closure commission. A vote for Tom Daschle may well be a vote to close Ellsworth."

The DSCC then accused Thune of flip-flopping when he told CNN on Friday afternoon that the process is purposely designed to be apolitical.

"If there was a political component in this process we had that covered," Thune said. "Frankly the law is very clear and very plain that this is insulated from politics."

The Republican campaign committees refrained from issuing counter-releases targeting Democratic Members, with the National Republican Senatorial Committee trying to seize the high road.

"This blatant political opportunism demonstrates a clear lack of understanding of the BRAC process by partisan hacks," NRSC spokesman Brian Nick said. "It's also downright shameless that the Democrats cannot control their giddiness and are playing politics with potential job losses."

The DSCC said Republicans are trying to have it both ways.

"If that's not the pot calling the kettle black, I don't know what is," spokesman Phil Singer said. "One of the central tenets of John Thune's campaign was his political connections to the White House, and he directly linked it to the base-closure process."

Political observers agreed that it is too early to tell what effect, if any, the Pentagon's proposed list will have on next year's elections. While the impact will most likely vary contest by contest, the issue could cause problems for some Members.

"I was surprised at the sort of tepid response by Santorum," said Terry Madonna, a public policy professor at Franklin and Marshall College in Pennsylvania.

Santorum's presumptive opponent, state Treasurer Bob Casey Jr. (D), can be expected to use the issue to his advantage, Madonna said. Pennsylvania is 45th in job creation, so Santorum likely will suffer some for his votes to move the BRAC process forward.

"There's a couple of arguments Casey will make against Santorum," he said, suggesting that one will be that Santorum has "been insufficiently concerned with and active in promoting the Pennsylvania economy."

But Santorum has survived tough opposition in the past and got a boost from a joint press conference with Democratic Gov. Ed Rendell on Friday, outlining their efforts to save bases in the Keystone State.

In fact, in his official statement about trying to keep Pennsylvania bases open, Santorum chose to highlight not fellow Republican Sen. Arlen Specter but rather Rendell, who spent much of his tenure as Philadelphia mayor trying (unsuccessfully) to stave off closure of the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard.

Democrats think Republican Members have more to lose on the issue, since the GOP currently controls both Congress and the White House.

Moreover, many Republicans campaigned last year on the theme that they would have more clout in a GOP-dominated Washington than their Democratic opponents.

In Alaska - which just chose Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R) over former Gov. Tony Knowles (D) last year, largely because Sen. Ted Stevens (R) told voters he needed a Republican colleague to help make things happen in the nation's capital - 4,619 jobs could be lost under the current proposal.

Nevertheless, base closings will hit red and blue states alike, though the states and districts of Congressional leaders seemed to fare better in the initial round than those represented by rank-and-file Members and even committee chairmen.

Maryland stands to be the biggest winner, gaining almost 9,300 jobs, followed by Texas, the home of both Bush and House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R), which could add 6,150 more military personnel.

Tennessee and Nevada, home to Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R) and Minority Leader Harry Reid (D), respectively could gain 1,088 and 1,059 jobs.

Illinois could lose almost 2,700 jobs but none in the district of Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.). Ditto with California, which has 2,018 jobs at risk because of **realignment** but none in the home district of House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D) and no major installation on the chopping block.

One political observer noted that it is folly to predict what will sway elections 18 months ahead of time.

John Tomlinson of Mississippi State University quoted Yogi Berra when asked how the news may affect Lott: "It's not over 'til it's over. This is just the first round."

Military Housing Complex Still Scheduled Despite BRAC Plans

The Associated Press

May 14, 2005

Construction of a \$19.6 million military housing complex on Mississippi 57 will continue despite the proposed closure of Naval Station **Pascagoula**, U.S. Rep. Gene Taylor says.

The new complex, which is scheduled to open this summer, has 160 three- and four-bedroom units. It was expected to accommodate military officials at Naval Station **Pascagoula**.

However, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld on Friday announced the first round of base closings and **realignments** in a decade. The Pentagon recommends shutting down Naval Station **Pascagoula**, the U.S. Army Reserve Center at Vicksburg and the Mississippi Army Ammunition plant in Hancock County.

Taylor, D-Miss., said even if Naval Station **Pascagoula** is closed, the housing complex will not go to waste. Taylor said he already has spoken to Capt. Will McKerall, commanding officer of the Naval Construction Battalion Center in Gulfport, about having Seabee families make use of

the housing.

"We checked it and it's less than a 25-mile commute to the Seabee Base," Taylor said. "While that seems like a long way for us here, in most places that's not a bad commute."

McKerall said he and Taylor have spoken about the housing in Jackson County.

"There is a process to go through and the military does have the first right of refusal," McKerall said. "We have a clear record that we have a deficit in housing here. Even if these are added, we would still have a deficit of 50 or 60 units, based on our current figures."

Gautier Mayor Ken Taylor said airmen from Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi could also live in the housing. "I'm pretty comfortable that these apartments will be utilized in one way or the other. I'm not at all concerned about that," he said.

Cries Of 'Flat Wrong' Greet Pentagon's Base Closings List

The International Herald Tribune-The New York Times

Eric Schmitt And David Stout

May 14, 2005

The Pentagon recommended Friday the closing of more than 30 big military bases from Maine to Hawaii, setting off immediate and furious reaction from the affected communities and the politicians who represent them.

The bases proposed for closing include some familiar names in military history: the navy's submarine base in New London, Connecticut, Fort McPherson in Georgia, Fort Monmouth in New Jersey, and the **Pascagoula** Naval Station in Mississippi. Scores of smaller installations would also be closed and others would be consolidated.

"Today's announcement is a very important component of the military transformation that President Bush asked us to conduct in 2001," Michael Wynne, under secretary of Defense for acquisition, technology and logistics, said at a news briefing.

While the list of recommended closings was smaller than expected, the reaction from those affected was intense.

Senator Joseph Lieberman, Democrat of Connecticut, called the recommendation to close the New London base "irrational and irresponsible."

"It insults our history and endangers our future," he told The Associated Press.

Governor Sonny Perdue of Georgia pledged "a vigorous defense" of the bases in his state. "The battle is not over," he said at a news briefing.

His state would be hit by six closings if the Pentagon's recommendation is followed by the **Base Realignment and Closure Commission**, or BRAC.

That independent nine-member commission will hold public hearings and visit bases through the summer. The panel can add or subtract bases from the list, but it needs seven panel members to approve any changes.

Senator Trent Lott, Republican of Mississippi, has fought hard to protect the **Pascagoula** facility, and is certain to do so again.

The recommendation to close Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota sparked bipartisan reaction from the state's two senators.

"Flat wrong," Senator John Thune, a Republican, told The Associated Press. His Democratic colleague, Tim Johnson, agreed. "We're not throwing in the towel at all," he said.

Texas would be hit with 14 closings, if the Pentagon recommendations are followed.

Alabama and California would be hit with 11 closings, Pennsylvania with 10. New York would lose eight bases, including three in the economically pressed Buffalo and Niagara Falls region.

Perdue offered a comment that could have come from any one of scores of politicians Friday: "When it's you, it makes a big difference."

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said Thursday that the Pentagon would recommend closing fewer domestic bases than originally expected because the military had less surplus space and capacity than were initially estimated. The military earlier estimated it had 20 percent to 25 percent more capacity than it needed.

But Rumsfeld said military officials had found only 5 percent to 10 percent excess capacity once they took into consideration the need to accommodate 70,000 troops returning from Europe, as well as Pentagon agencies moving from leased commercial space to less vulnerable offices on military bases.

He also cited the need to preserve the ability to step up operations at ammunition plants and maintenance depots in times of crisis.

Although the closings and consolidations are less severe than anticipated, the changes will still significantly alter the operations of many of the nation's 425 bases, and the local economies that depend on them, as the reaction Friday indicated.

Many National Guard and Reserve bases will close and their functions will be consolidated at active-duty installations or other reserve bases. Maintenance depots, research laboratories and hospitals now operated by each of the armed services will be merged.

Rumsfeld said the closings and **realignments** would save about \$5.5 billion a year after initial closing costs were paid, and \$48.8 billion over 20 years.

Local News Articles

Pascagoula Naval Station Could Be Tough To Save

Gannett News Service

Ana Radelat

May 21, 2005

WASHINGTON -- **Pascagoula** Naval Station could be one of the hardest bases to get off the Pentagon's closing list, but its supporters say they're going to try.



"No one ever said it would be a cakewalk," said Jerry St. Pe, former president of Ingalls Shipyard and one of the naval station's biggest backers.

The naval station is one of 33 major bases the Pentagon wants to shut down to save money and consolidate missions.

A nine-member commission will review those recommendations, make any changes it considers appropriate and forward the list to the president.

Commissioners have saved some bases targeted for closure on past lists, including the **Pascagoula** Naval Station, which originally was on the 1995 base closure list.

But this time the commissioners may side with the Pentagon.

Adm. Vern Clark, chief of Naval operations, told commissioners this week that **Pascagoula** Naval Station is "a relatively new base that's matured nicely." But he said the decision to eliminate it was based strictly on the facility's lack of "military value."



No one challenged the admiral's assertions. One commissioner even said it was more efficient to close **Pascagoula** Naval Station than a large submarine base in Groton, Conn., also on the hit list.

The Pentagon said closing the naval station would save nearly \$666 million over 20 years.

St. Pe said he wasn't surprised the base was on the list. The base, which used to have six commissioned ships, now has just three.

Sen. Trent Lott, R-Miss., the naval station's staunchest defender, said the base was "small potatoes" compared with other bases on the shutdown list. Having only one mission -- mainly searching for drug smuggling in the gulf and the Caribbean -- also makes **Pascagoula** less competitive than naval bases with several missions, Lott said.

But Lott said the Pentagon's plans to reshuffle missions would provide an opportunity to persuade the commission that the naval station could be used for other purposes.

"I'm going to see what we can do," Lott said.



According to the Pentagon's plan, the naval station's personnel and ships would be transferred to

Mayport Naval Station in Jacksonville, Fla. The Florida base's harbor can accommodate 34 ships.

The Pentagon estimated that the shutdown of **Pascagoula** Naval Station would cost 963 military and civilian jobs. Some of those jobs exist now and some would be created over the next six years if the naval station is kept open.

If it is on a final list of shutdowns and consolidations President Bush gets in September, the Pentagon must start closing the base within two years and complete the transfers to Mayport in six.

Dan McCarthy, a retired Navy captain who works as the director of military affairs in Jacksonville, said the city worked for two years to convince the Pentagon of Mayport's merits. Sobered by the shutdown of Cecil Field in a previous round, the city hired a retired admiral and two top Washington lobbying firms to fight for Mayport.

"We very much understand the blow of a closure to the community," McCarthy said. "I lived for two years worrying, 'Have we done enough?'"

The state also fought for Mayport by spending millions to improve a nearby highway. Florida also proved it was military-friendly by giving the families of troops deployed overseas a property tax break.

The immediate impact of the Pentagon's recommendations -- which also include shutting down a medical center at Keesler Air Force Base and eliminating an Air National Guard unit in Meridian -- would be the loss of 1,678 military and civilian jobs on Mississippi bases.

Florida would be among the top gainers in this round of base **realignments** and closures, or BRAC, getting 2,757 military jobs.

Some say the state has been helped by the influence of Gov. Jeb Bush, the president's brother, in the White House.

But McCarthy said Florida gained because of the merits of its military bases.

"This was not a 'help your brother' deal," he said.

St. Pe said the **Pascagoula** community is not giving up efforts to save the base. He said the Jackson County Economic Development Foundation and other base boosters will make their pitches to a commissioner scheduled to visit the base in early June and at a regional BRAC hearing in New Orleans later this summer.



If there's no way to save the base, the Jackson County Economic Development Foundation will promote a plan to bring in Coast Guard operations or civilian industries and homeland security agencies.

There's also another way **Pascagoula** Naval Station could survive, but it's a long shot.

A group of senators this week introduced a bill that would make the Pentagon delay base closures at least until U.S. forces withdraw from Iraq. All of the bill's sponsors, including Lott, represent states with bases on the shutdown list.

Ingleside Official Questions Logic Of Closing Down Base

Corpus Christi Caller-Times (Texas)

Fanny S. Chirinos

May 18, 2005

Ingleside City Manager Mike Rhea said he didn't understand the Navy's thought process after it gave "global change" in its mine-hunting fleet as the reason for putting Naval Station Ingleside on its closure list.

The reason might be related to the development of organic mine-warfare systems, Rhea said.



"If those organic systems were deployable, that statement would be true," Rhea said. "Even if they were working, you'd still need to train people. There's no reason to do away with the base and split up the ships, the air support and the training center."

Organic mine warfare is a system of mine hunting using a combination of air, land and sea support. Current mine warfare is based only on specialized mine-hunting ships.

Naval Station Ingleside is the only homeport for U.S. mine warfare ships and home to the Mine Warfare Center for Excellence. Speculation on the future of those ships and the facility has centered on decommissioning 12 Osprey-class mine hunters, divvying up 12 Avenger-class ships between ports on both U.S. coasts and moving the training center to San Diego, Calif.

Ingleside Mayor Gene Stewart said the Navy might be thinking too far ahead of the reality of working organic technology. With the oil refineries scattered along the coasts of Texas and Louisiana, Stewart said, protecting the Gulf of Mexico was critical.

"It's not a proven technology and years from being tested and used," Stewart said. "If they decide to do away with the current technology and training, it puts the country at risk."

Navy officials also said that if Ingleside and Naval Station **Pascagoula** in Mississippi close, Naval Air Station Key West and Naval Air Station Pensacola would provide protection in the gulf.



"Those are training facilities with training, not tactical, airplanes," Rhea said. "How are they going to protect us?"

"There's a lot more justifications why (Naval Station Ingleside) should not have been on the list."

Biloxi's surplus' Ain't what It used to be

Biloxi Sun Herald

May 15, 2005

But then, it never was a surplus

As recently as the end of 2002, Biloxi had more than \$30 million in the bank. Not surplus cash collected from the casinos, but money the city had borrowed to pay for multimillion-dollar construction projects such as Popp's Ferry Road, Back Bay Boulevard and Caillavet Street. As planned, that money has steadily declined as the city has paid for those ambitious public works projects.

The balance dropped to \$24 million in 2003, to \$17 million in 2004 and is expected to be less than \$10 million by the end of this year.

Since it takes more than

\$4 million to operate the city each month, a reserve of less than \$10 million would not provide the city with an adequate cushion should a hurricane devastate its casino industry, which provides nearly a third of the city's income.

So the city is considering purchasing an insurance policy which would replace tax revenue lost during an interruption of business activity in the city. For around \$150,000 a year, the city could have as much as a \$20 million policy, which ought to be enough money for the city to weather the loss of tax revenue caused by even a severe storm.

Unfortunately, the city cannot insure itself against acts of the Legislature, which still entertains notions from time to time of sharing less of the tax revenue from casinos with the cities and counties where the casinos are located. If such an insurance policy were available, we would support Biloxi signing up for it as well.

Preparation softens the blow in

Pascagoula

As has been long expected, Naval Station **Pascagoula** is on the latest list of military installations that may be shut down. While the future of the facility remains uncertain, there is one thing to be thankful for: Officials in Jackson County have not been idle. Anticipating that the Naval Station could be closed, members of the public and private sectors have quietly but earnestly been looking into alternative uses for the site that could have an even bigger economic impact.

Such foresight and flexibility should be appreciated - and duplicated - by all communities faced with similar possibilities.

In addition to Naval Station **Pascagoula**, the Base **Realignment** and Closure (BRAC) list also contains the Mississippi Army Ammunition Plant at Stennis Space Center in Hancock County. But that facility hasn't been operational for a long time and has had commercial tenants for years.

Elsewhere in South Mississippi, BRAC calls for the **realignment** of operations at the Human Resources Center at Stennis and at Keesler Air Force Base's 81st Medical Group in Biloxi.

That so few military installations in Mississippi were targeted for closure is a clear indication that, for the time being, the state's defense-related economy is both sound and secure.

Triple Threat;

The Possible Loss Of The Naval Support Activity May Be Only The First Of A Trio Of Potentially Crippling Economic Blows To The Region

Times-Picayune (New Orleans)

Bill Walsh

May 15, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Hurricane season looms on the horizon, but what has Louisiana political and business leaders most worried these days is a possible economic storm bearing down on metropolitan New Orleans.

The announcement Friday that the Pentagon wants to close the Naval Support Activity base, which pours an estimated \$4.5 billion into the local economy each year, was enough by itself to set off alarms about a wave of job and business losses.

Yet the situation could grow far worse, depending on what happens with the uncertainties facing two of the area's other big employers: Northrop Grumman's Avondale shipyard and NASA's Michoud Assembly Facility. The potential loss of federal contracts has placed thousands of jobs at the two facilities in jeopardy, raising fears that the region could sustain a withering triple blow at a time when the local economy is barely crawling along.

"It could be devastating," said Dell Dempsey, a retired Marine Corps colonel who directs military and defense affairs for the Louisiana Department of Economic Development. "What is really coming together is a lot of things that were kept in place for years by the state's clout in Congress. Now they are ripe for the picking."

Together, the three facilities employ more than 11,000 people full-time and represent a source of income for many more, a loss that would quickly ripple through the region's housing, service and retail sectors. Even a robust economy would have difficulty absorbing such a dramatic hit.

"Every time I go to an economic development meeting, these are the top three issues of concern," economist and University of New Orleans Chancellor Timothy Ryan said. "If the worst-case scenario happens in all three cases, we are talking about some big problems."

How big? Ryan said that when oil prices plunged in the mid-1980s, it wiped out 27,000 jobs in the oil and gas sector and many more connected to it in the New Orleans area. Ryan doesn't predict a bust at all three employers, and he said it wouldn't be as severe as the collapse of the oil sector two decades ago. But, he said, the comparison is instructive because it highlights the relative economic vulnerability of the region.

A precarious position

Although the local economy is more diversified than in the 1980s, and with the tourism industry posting strong numbers lately, Ryan said the military and federal contracting represent two pillars

of the region's economy that wouldn't easily be replaced.

"There aren't a lot of businesses and industries waiting in line if these closed down," he said. "These are very important parts of our economy. When you get into trouble is when you aren't creating new businesses to replace normal business deaths, when you have an outside hand taking business away."

That "outside hand" in all three cases is the federal government.

The planned closure of the Naval Support Activity, which is home to the Navy and Marine Reserve, is part of a nationwide belt-tightening at the Pentagon, which recommended Friday the closure of 33 major bases and the **realignment** of 29 more. According to Pentagon estimates, closing the New Orleans installation would cost 2,711 jobs through 2011. The decision still could be reversed, but many observers believe it will be extremely difficult to get the Algiers base off the list.

The shipyard at Avondale likewise faces layoffs because of shifting federal policy. The Navy's decision late last year to reduce its orders of "landing platform dock" ships, known as LPDs, from 12 to nine, caused shipyard owner Northrop Grumman Corp. to project cutting as many as 2,500 jobs at Avondale and its sister yard, Ingalls, in **Pascagoula, Miss.**, in the next three years.

Similarly, because of uncertainty surrounding plans by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, more than 2,000 jobs at its assembly plant in eastern New Orleans are at risk. As the lone manufacturer of external fuel tanks for the space shuttle, it is unclear what will happen to the plant, operated by Lockheed Martin Space Systems, as the shuttle program winds down. Industry experts speculate NASA will need 28 additional tanks for the shuttle program, and a company official said 11 already have either been delivered or are in some stage of production.

Two other facilities that rely on federal contracts also have fallen under a cloud in the past year. The Navy's Information Technology Center at the University of New Orleans, which employs 1,100, came under scrutiny by the U.S. Senate in 2004 for questionable spending by its former director. The National Finance Center, which employs 1,600 people in eastern New Orleans, has seen its work administering the federal retirement program steadily decline. The entire contract is being rebid, although the facility has had success attracting work in other areas.

Political fallout

Some say the sudden uncertainty surrounding the federal presence in New Orleans is a symptom of the state's diminished political clout in Washington. Since 1999, Louisiana has seen the retirement of three veteran lawmakers who held prime positions to steer federal policy and federal pork back home: House Appropriations Chairman Bob Livingston, House Energy and Commerce Chairman Billy Tauzin and longtime Sen. John Breaux, a noted deal maker. Nowadays, the seven-member House delegation has three freshmen. Its senior senator, Mary Landrieu, is in the minority party, and Republican Sen. David Vitter arrived in the Senate only in January.

Although the Louisiana delegation has been vigilant in guarding the interests of Avondale shipyard, its best hope of getting additional work could lie with making alliances with Mississippi's delegation. Sen. Thad Cochran, R-Miss., is chairman of the Appropriations Committee, which decides how federal money will be spent. Cochran is expected to use his influence to boost the fortunes of Northrop Grumman and its **Pascagoula** shipyard, which could spill over some of the work to the company's yard in Louisiana.



In a similar vein, the Louisiana delegation recently hailed a decision by NASA to locate a new operation at John C. Stennis Space Center in Mississippi. The reason for the cross-border enthusiasm? The project would create nearly 500 jobs, and 30 percent of Stennis employees already live in St. Tammany Parish.

Others say any unpredictability surrounding the federal government's presence in New Orleans reflects a broader weakness in the region's economy. Even the most optimistic forecasts say job growth in Louisiana will hover around 1 percent through 2006, an anemic pace that, along with Mississippi, ranks at the bottom of Southern states.

"It shouldn't be a surprise that we are facing challenges on the public side if we are facing them on the private side as well," said Rep. Bobby Jindal, R-Kenner.

Rep. William Jefferson, D-New Orleans, whose district encompasses the Avondale shipyard, the NASA facility and the Naval Support Activity base, is skeptical that the region is in for a major economic storm.

"I'm concerned, . . . but I'm not biting my nails," Jefferson said. "I think there are solutions in each situation, even if the worst case occurs."

Storm-ready



Unlike the oil bust, when policy-makers had few contingencies in place, local political, business and civic leaders have long been planning for the worst. They knew the possibility was good that the Naval Support Activity would be on the list of recommended closures. They developed a plan for a \$200 million "federal city" to house military personnel and a regional Homeland Security outpost at the riverfront site. Members of the state's delegation have shopped the plan at high levels at the Pentagon and the Department of Homeland Security.

Although base closures can decimate a community, there are ample success stories as well. The city of Alexandria feared the worst when in 1991 England Air Force Base, which had 3,700 military and civilian employees, appeared on a base closure list. But a coalition of business and community leaders negotiated the transfer of the property for a locally controlled business park and airport. According to the city, the park now generates more than \$5 million in annual revenue from leases alone, and the airport serves 80,000 passengers annually.

Fearful for the future of the NASA assembly plant at Michoud, New Orleans area business groups, including GNO Inc., recently joined forces with the state and the city to form a partnership to make sure the facility remains in a position to be productive. It hired former NASA general counsel Paul Pastorek to develop options.

Already, the plant has gotten some non-NASA work building engine covers for the Joint Strike Fighter. And Lockheed Martin has bid on an Air Force satellite rocket known as the Falcon that would be built there. Meanwhile, the company is pressing NASA to continue a modified shuttle program that would use the shuttle's heavy-lift capacity, and its locally made external fuel tanks, to transport parts and equipment into space. Lockheed also is one of two companies bidding on a prototype of a manned space vehicle that the agency said it wants to launch by 2014.



"There are options out there, and they aren't pipe dreams," said Marion LaNasa, a company spokesman. "The worst case is no one has a job. The best case is there are more jobs. The reality

is probably somewhere in the middle."

There also are positive signs at Avondale. The state and Northrop Grumman together have pledged \$110 million in improvements to the yard, and the company has promised to keep at least 5,000 workers at the facility through June 2006. On Capitol Hill, Congress last week reversed a Navy directive that would have awarded a lone contract for a new fleet of deep-water fighting ships. Now the work will be split between two yards, which likely means that Avondale will get some of it. And an accounting provision added to the federal budget bill two weeks ago also bodes well for the shipbuilding industry. It allows the Navy to pay for ships over several years, rather than all at once, meaning large projects won't suck up all the financial oxygen at one time.

"That was a very important change," Landrieu said. "Now there will be more money available for shipbuilding in any given year."

Jefferson said any community with a heavy federal government presence should expect to live with uncertainty. Like it or not, its fortunes are subject to the ebb and flow of the politics of Washington, which no one can predict.

"Federal contracts are wonderful things to have in a city. But you are subject to changes in Congress," he said. "It's kind of like hurricanes. You learn to live with it."

BRAC: SPECIAL REPORT

Biloxi Sun Herald

Karen Nelson And Quincy Collins

May 14, 2005

Naval Station **Pascagoula** made the Pentagon's hit list on Friday, but there will be at least three months of wrangling before its fate is settled.

Still, its future as a significant Navy base hasn't looked good for some time, some say.

If it's going to get off the list, it will have to prove it has military value, the criteria by which it will be judged, and many believe that doesn't look good in light of the number of ships it has lost. When the last of the cruisers is decommissioned next year, Naval Station **Pascagoula** will be down to two older frigates.

So strategic value may be the key when the local committee formed to fight for the base begins making its pitch to the Base **Realignment** and Closure Commission. The base sits right in the middle of the Gulf Coast and is close to deep water.

Cmdr. Terry Rea announced the closure list to sailors and officers on the base in an all-hands meeting Friday morning. She said the base has handled its military mission well, and she would leave to the community the argument of keeping it open.

Sun Herald asked eight community leaders to come together to provide a clearer picture of the reaction to Friday's announcement and what lies ahead.

County Supervisor Tim Broussard said he hopes there will be no need to negotiate to keep the U.S. Coast Guard ships docked at the Navy Station if it closes. He said he hopes it would be a given that the Coast Guard would stay. The Coast Guard is not military.

But Jackson County Economic Development Foundation Chairman Jerry St. Pe said there are no givens.

"Closure could have a variety of definitions. It could mean closing the base for the Navy and keeping it open for the Coast Guard. But any change in the base would mean negotiations," said St. Pe.

"We've talked to the right people. We want the Coast Guard to stay. We'll work with them to have them stay and hopefully expand," said Den Knecht, chairman of the foundation's committee to diversify Singing River Island, where the Navy homeport is located. "Our goal is to bring the entire island to full economic advantage for what's out there. Long-range outlook for Singing River Island is very positive."

Knecht added: "We want to keep some semblance of the Navy here, possibly continue to have a ship here."

Royce Cumbest is president of Merchants & Marine Bank, which has 10 branches in Jackson County. He said, "I feel we will bounce back from this, move on and do other things. I don't think this is anything that will send any kind of shock wave through the business community."

Kay Kell, city manager for **Pascagoula**, said, "Our public is feeling like we've worked so hard to get it and now we're going to lose it."

But she said **Pascagoula** will not give up on its Naval station.

The methods used fight to keep it will be more analytical this time, St. Pe said.

Having people line the streets to greet the BRAC commissioner upon his site visit isn't likely to happen, he said.

"That will be less of an influence if it ever had an influence," St. Pe said. It has already been established that this is a community friendly to the military, he said. "This BRAC is more focused on thorough analysis."

And Broussard reminded the group, "We are not in this alone. The state is also involved and so is our Congressional delegation, which still wields a great amount of power. This goes all the way to Washington, D.C."

Rea said the Pentagon's announcement was an unpleasant recommendation for a lot of people on the base but she supports the report. It balanced the base's capacity and military value against a 20-year plan.

"It's a sad day for our folks here," Rea said. "Naval Station **Pascagoula** has been through BRAC before. I've got a lot of civilians, especially who have been through BRAC before and they know how the process works. They know that the recommendation is in the best interest of the Navy, the nation and really the taxpayers."

Community Won't Give Up Without Fight

The Clarion-Ledger (Jackson, Mississippi)

Andy Kanengiser

May 14, 2005

PASCAGOULA - Jackson County leaders saved Naval Station **Pascagoula** during base closings in 1995. And community leaders want to do it again.

The installation, which employs nearly 1,000 civilian and military workers, was marked for closure Friday when Defense officials announced closings at 33 major bases around the country.

"A lot of people depend on them for jobs. They've helped here for so long," said **Pascagoula** resident Marcus Kinnard, 29, a machine operator at Northrop Grumman, which builds ships within sight of the base. The Singing River Diversification Committee will be one group leading the battle to keep the Navy anchored in town.

They plan to make their first sales pitch when officials with the Base **Realignment** and Closure Commission visit in the weeks ahead and at a regional public hearing within two months.

Den Knecht, chairman of Singing River Diversification Committee, said they've been concerned about the naval station because of the reduced number of ships docked at the base.

He said the group will work with state and federal lawmakers including U.S. Sen. Trent Lott, whose home offers a picturesque view of the naval facility.

"Mississippians understand that today's Pentagon recommendations are not an end, but merely the next step of an ongoing process of constantly promoting and protecting Mississippi's military installations," Lott said in statement Friday.

Curley Clark, president of the Jackson County NAACP, said he's asking people to lobby to keep the base. "It's vital that all segments (of the community) be involved."

Navy families accepted the news with sadness.

"We moved here for a reason. I like Mississippi. We had a five-year tour and now have to cut it short," said Navy wife Misty Kidon, 34, of Ocean Springs.

"We just bought a house, too," Kidon said at the idea of moving from the Gulf Coast.

At the naval station, Cmdr. Terry Rea wouldn't allow reporters to interview base employees. She said about 100 co-workers quietly watched the news conference featuring Rumsfeld and military leaders.

"We are confident the recommendations are based on good data that is good for the 21st Century Navy. It's good to streamline the military forces," Rea said in a parking lot near the facility's huge water tower. "It is good for the taxpayers. It's a good move for the nation."

Still, Rea, a 22-year Navy veteran, said there are many at the base who "enjoy living here."

At McLeod Marine on U.S. 90, three miles from the base, sales manager Joe Lander, 56, sells boats and accessories to sailors and other Navy personnel. "This is not going to be good. Our economy is already in bad shape."

Lander said he won't just miss the extra sales. He will miss the friendly people who touch many lives in this Gulf Coast town. The Navy "does a lot of community service - they have a ball for

old folks every year."

Should the Navy be forced to pull out and move its ships to a base in Florida, the Singing River Island site will remain a station for the U.S. Coast Guard with its 200 employees.

The community does recognize the base is valuable property that could be a home for federal agencies and private industry.

Kinnard said the land would be a good site for Grumman to expand. The company has 13,000 employees working its Gulf Coast facility adjacent to the base.

The Navy site occupies 187 acres of the 437-acre property that is connected to U.S. 90 by a causeway. They see the potential to bring in other federal agencies, and civilian industries and expand the Coast Guard's operations.

But the closure would impact businesses throughout the county including neighboring Moss Point.

"It will be money out of my pocket," River City Marine owner Paul Hans said of the potential closure.

PULLOUT QOUTE:

"We moved here for a reason. I like Mississippi. We had a five-year tour and now have to cut it short."

Opinions/ Editorials

Letters To The Editor

Biloxi Sun Herald

May 17, 2005

Be realistic, and find a new use for homeport

It is understandable that people are upset about the proposed closing of Naval Station **Pascagoula**, but they should realize that this base has no strategic value. It never did.

It was created in 1985, during the Reagan administration, when the Navy had a strategy of scattering homeports all over the country, primarily to stimulate public support for a larger Navy. The BRAC has now closed almost all of these homeports, some before they were even opened. It's amazing that **Pascagoula** has survived this long.

It is also understandable that our political leaders should fight to save the base; that's what politicians do, even if it doesn't make good business sense.

The important thing now is to develop a re-use plan for the base as quickly as possible, to be implemented while the workers whose jobs the politicians hope to save are still there. If we procrastinate, we lose. The base will still be closed and we will be wondering what to do about an empty facility. Workers vote with their feet: if they think that their jobs are going to be eliminated, they move on. A good worker can get another job easily enough, especially around

here.

The public and the politicians should also understand that commercial use of a facility usually generates more jobs and economic impact than does military use. Naval bases are not industrially efficient operations: they are not designed to be and are not required to be.

So, the message is, let's not fight the closing of Naval Station **Pascagoula**, let's embrace it and create something that's even more valuable to the community.

System Flawed

The Clarion-Ledger (Jackson, Mississippi)

May 14, 2005

While Mississippi fared relatively well in the Pentagon's Base **Realignment** and Closure recommendations released Friday, the BRAC system is far too political and subject to partisan political, not military, objectives.

BRAC reprieve?

State mostly dodges closure bullet

The long-awaited 2005 Base **Realignment** and Closure recommendations from the U.S. Department of Defense were release Friday and Mississippi fared relatively well with a few exceptions.

The initial BRAC report called for closing Naval Station **Pascagoula**, the U.S. Army Reserve Center at Vicksburg and the Mississippi Army Ammunition plant in Hancock County and making minor **realignments** at Keesler Air Force Base, Naval Air Station Meridian, Key Field Air Guard Station in Meridian and a Naval Human Resources Center in Hancock County.

Hardest hit was NAS **Pascagoula** - which will lose 844 active duty military personnel, 112 civilian workers and seven contractors, if the BRAC report is finally approved.

Columbus Air Force Base was recommended for a gain of jobs. Statewide, Mississippi would lose 1,678 jobs at the military installations.

The Pentagon's recommendations now go to the BRAC commission, which will hold public hearings before presenting its recommendations to President Bush by Sept. 8. Congress ultimately must approve the final list.

Congressional debate is where the real BRAC battle will begin in earnest - and it's the point in the process in which Mississippi's most formidable weapon can be deployed.

With Mississippi's senior U.S. Senator Thad Cochran currently serving a chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, the state wields a powerful weapon to keep the bases open. The problem is, BRAC is always subject to political clout and political whim rather than military necessity and sound military judgment.

That is what's ultimately wrong with the BRAC process.



**2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
Suggested Talking Points for Visit to Keesler 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 remove in-patient care capability at Keesler AFB medical center.**
 - The Commission will evaluate the economic, environmental, and other effects that the re-alignment of the installation's medical center could have on the surrounding community but the key factor in the Commission's conclusion as to whether or not to suggest the Keesler AFB medical center for realignment is military value.
 - The Commission understands the important role that the medical center plays in the greater Gulfport/Biloxi community, but the Commission will evaluate the current military value of the medical center as the DoD seeks to streamline and transform our military to meet changing global threats.
 - While the Keesler AFB medical center may be affected, the Commission would like to recognize the importance of Keesler AFB as the home to the 2nd Air Force and one of the world's top electronics schools.

- 2. The Commission is aware of the human impact that the suggestions to realign the Keesler AFB medical center 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.
 - The local community has developed a close relationship with the medical center. The Commission understands that the medical center is one of the last remaining Air Force hospitals that provide "full-service" in-patient care to dependents. The Commission also recognizes the strong residency program that exists at the medical center which is reliant upon its in-patient capability.

- 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 Keesler Air Force Base**

Q1. The Pentagon has justified its recommendation to close the in-patient capability at Keesler AFB medical center because of its proximity to accredited civilian facilities with inpatient capability. Does the Commission understand that this change would have a direct fiscal impact on soldiers as they would be responsible out-of-pocket for certain medical expenses?

A1. The Commission takes all pertinent factors into account, as prescribed by statute, as it performs an evaluation of the suggestions made by the Department of Defense (DoD) and formulates its own suggestions. The Commission is keenly aware of the human impact had by the closure or realignment of a medical center, and although current military value is the most important consideration, the Commission will also consider the effects that the removal of a medical capability would have on the surrounding community.

Q2. Estimates are that Keesler AFB will lose 402 jobs (181 military, 31 civilian, and 190 contractor personnel) if the medical center closes. In addition, the Gulfport-Biloxi metropolitan area could lose another 352 jobs if there is no economic recovery. Will the Commission consider the possible economic effect on the area as the Commission reaches its final conclusion?

A2. The Commission will perform a thorough, accurate, and objective analysis which will take into account, chiefly, the military value of Keesler AFB medical center, but will also consider the impact that the closure 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.

Q3. Estimates are that some 10,001 military retirees live within a 50-mile radius of Keesler AFB. Under the proposed recommendations these retirees would be required to pay for medical expenses out-of-pocket. Will the Commission consider how these changes will affect costs for retirees?

A3. The Commission will perform a thorough, accurate, and objective analysis which will take into account, chiefly, the military value of the base, but will also consider other factors. The economic repercussions resulting from the closure of in-patient care at the medical center is an important factor to the Commission. Please be assured that the Commission will make a full evaluation, as prescribed by law, before coming to its conclusions and formulating its suggestions.

Q4. The Pentagon has rationalized closing the VA hospital in Gulfport because of its proximity to the medical center at Keesler AFB. However, the Pentagon has also recommended the closure in-patient care at the Keesler AFB medical center. How will the Commission approach such an obvious oversight/discrepancy in the Pentagon's recommendations?

A4. The Commission will perform a thorough, accurate, and objective analysis of the DoD's proposed recommendations. In doing so, the Commission will be sensitive to any discrepancies that might exist within the Pentagon's recommendations.

Q5. The Keesler AFB medical center provides many residency programs. In order for residency programs to be successful, a hospital needs to maintain in-patient care capability. If the Pentagon's recommendations occur, the residency programs at Keesler will likely close and this will have a dramatic effect on the level of medical care in the area. Will the Commission consider this likely effect?

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 this medical center deliberately and carefully.

Q6. Keesler AFB medical center is one of 2 remaining Air Force institutions that provides full-service in-patient care for the Air Force dependents. Full-service refers to the level of subspecialty care that patients receive at Keesler AFB medical center. There is no other facility in the Biloxi/Gulfport region that provides this service to pediatric patients, civilian or military. Will the Commission consider the cost to the community of closing a medical center of Keesler's caliber?

A6. The Commission is keenly aware of the human impact had by the closure or realignment of a medical center, and although current military value is the most important consideration, the Commission will also consider the effects that the removal of a medical capability would have on the surrounding community.

Q7. How can the Community inform the Commission of information that the Community feels may have been overlooked by DoD?

A7. 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.



KEESLER AIR FORCE BASE MISSISSIPPI

National News Articles

Lawmakers Worry about Health Care Impact from BRAC; Moves Will Shift Thousands of Medical Jobs

Local News Articles

Taylor Wants a Closer Look at BRAC Changes to Soldier's Healthcare

No Mississippi Bases Completely Safe from BRAC, Official Says

Armed Services Retirees Get 'Thank You' for Contributions

Editorial/Opinion Articles

National News Articles

Lawmakers worry about health care impact from BRAC; Moves will shift thousands of medical jobs

Army Times
Debaorah Funk

From training to research to patient care, military medicine would become a more joint structure under the Pentagon's base **realignment** and closure plans.

But some lawmakers already are voicing concerns that the potential impact of the proposals on health care beneficiaries has not been sufficiently thought out.

The House Armed Services Committee wants a quick report from government auditors on how the changes might affect out-of-pocket costs for service members, retirees and their families.

The biggest changes under the Pentagon plan, unveiled May 13, would occur around Washington and San Antonio.

Walter Reed Army Medical Center in the nation's capital would move seven miles and combine with the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., to create Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

Center could 'rival Mayo Clinic'

The new center would operate with a joint staff for complex and subspecialty care as the "centerpiece of military health care, clinical practice, education and research," said Lt. Gen. (Dr.) George Peach Taylor Jr., Air Force surgeon general, who chaired the Medical Joint Cross Service Group that developed the plan. "It will rival Mayo Clinic, Johns Hopkins and other great medical institutions of the world."

The BRAC plan also would affect Fort Belvoir, Va., just south of Washington, which would get a

new 165-bed community hospital to focus on primary and specialty care. An expansion of Belvoir's DeWitt Army Community Hospital had been in the works, but this proposal will exceed those earlier plans.

The Air Force's Malcolm Grow Hospital at Andrews Air Force Base, Md., would convert from an in-patient hospital to a same-day surgery center.

The moves would shift 2,069 military and civilian jobs to DeWitt and 797 to Bethesda. According to the Army Medical Command, about 60 percent of the jobs leaving Walter Reed will remain in the capital region.

The goal is to make the best use of facilities while improving access to patient care, officials said. Many of the beds in military hospitals around Washington are empty, yet DeWitt's patient load has increased because many military families and retirees have moved to Northern Virginia.

San Antonio to expand trauma unit

Meanwhile, San Antonio's Brooke Army Medical Center would become the San Antonio Regional Medical Center and would have a joint-service staff for an expanded trauma center.

The in-patient and trauma business of Wilford Hall Medical Center at nearby Lackland Air Force Base would shift to Brooke. Wilford Hall would convert to an outpatient clinic and surgery center. Brooke is a newer building and more centrally located than Wilford Hall.

In addition, the Pentagon plan would convert hospitals to outpatient clinics with outpatient surgery services at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo.; MacDill Air Force Base, Fla.; Naval Station Great Lakes, Ill.; Scott Air Force Base, Ill.; Fort Knox, Ky.; **Keesler Air Force Base**, Miss.; Naval Hospital Cherry Point, N.C.; and Fort Eustis, Va.

The medical functions of the clinic at McChord Air Force Base, Wash., would move to nearby Fort Lewis.

The congressional request for a Government Accountability Office report on the impact of the proposed changes on beneficiaries came from Rep. Gene Taylor, D-Miss., who said military retirees living near military bases that closed in the past were hurt when hospitals and clinics shut down, forcing them to move or seek treatment in the private sector.

Review requested by July 1

He offered an amendment to the House Armed Services Committee's version of the 2006 defense authorization bill asking for a GAO review of the Pentagon's medical base-closing proposals by July 1, before the bipartisan Base **Realignment** and Closure Commission completes its review of the Pentagon plan.

The report would look at the potential costs to the Defense Department for off-base care and to other federal, state and local governments for each proposed military hospital or clinic closure.

It also would look at whether patients would pay more, less or the same for treatment. Taylor said it is important to know, for example, how much more an E-4 or E-5 would pay for the birth of a child at an off-base hospital if the local military hospital closes.

Joyce Raezer, government relations director for the National Military Family Association, said military officials need to ensure Tricare networks in areas where military hospitals or clinics might close are sufficient to meet needs. She also said Tricare Prime, the military's health maintenance organization benefit that centers largely on military installations, should remain in place in areas where bases are closing.

The Pentagon's proposals also would shuffle medical training and research.

Basic and specialty enlisted medical training now at Naval Training Center Great Lakes, Ill.; Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas; and the Naval Medical Centers in Portsmouth, Va., and San Diego would transfer to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, where the Army already trains.

Pascagoula Naval Station could be tough to save

Gannett News Service

Ana Radelat

May 21, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Pascagoula Naval Station could be one of the hardest bases to get off the Pentagon's closing list, but its supporters say they're going to try.

"No one ever said it would be a cakewalk," said Jerry St. Pe, former president of Ingalls Shipyard and one of the naval station's biggest backers.

The naval station is one of 33 major bases the Pentagon wants to shut down to save money and consolidate missions.

A nine-member commission will review those recommendations, make any changes it considers appropriate and forward the list to the president.

Commissioners have saved some bases targeted for closure on past lists, including the Pascagoula Naval Station, which originally was on the 1995 base closure list.

But this time the commissioners may side with the Pentagon.

Adm. Vern Clark, chief of Naval operations, told commissioners this week that Pascagoula Naval Station is "a relatively new base that's matured nicely." But he said the decision to eliminate it was based strictly on the facility's lack of "military value."

No one challenged the admiral's assertions. One commissioner even said it was more efficient to close Pascagoula Naval Station than a large submarine base in Groton, Conn., also on the hit list.

The Pentagon said closing the naval station would save nearly \$666 million over 20 years.

St. Pe said he wasn't surprised the base was on the list. The base, which used to have six commissioned ships, now has just three.

Sen. Trent Lott, R-Miss., the naval station's staunchest defender, said the base was "small

potatoes" compared with other bases on the shutdown list. Having only one mission -- mainly searching for drug smuggling in the gulf and the Caribbean -- also makes Pascagoula less competitive than naval bases with several missions, Lott said.

But Lott said the Pentagon's plans to reshuffle missions would provide an opportunity to persuade the commission that the naval station could be used for other purposes.

"I'm going to see what we can do," Lott said.

According to the Pentagon's plan, the naval station's personnel and ships would be transferred to Mayport Naval Station in Jacksonville, Fla. The Florida base's harbor can accommodate 34 ships.

The Pentagon estimated that the shutdown of Pascagoula Naval Station would cost 963 military and civilian jobs. Some of those jobs exist now and some would be created over the next six years if the naval station is kept open.

If it is on a final list of shutdowns and consolidations President Bush gets in September, the Pentagon must start closing the base within two years and complete the transfers to Mayport in six.

Dan McCarthy, a retired Navy captain who works as the director of military affairs in Jacksonville, said the city worked for two years to convince the Pentagon of Mayport's merits. Sobered by the shutdown of Cecil Field in a previous round, the city hired a retired admiral and two top Washington lobbying firms to fight for Mayport.

"We very much understand the blow of a closure to the community," McCarthy said. "I lived for two years worrying, 'Have we done enough?'"

The state also fought for Mayport by spending millions to improve a nearby highway. Florida also proved it was military-friendly by giving the families of troops deployed overseas a property tax break.

The immediate impact of the Pentagon's recommendations -- which also include shutting down a medical center at **Keesler Air Force Base** and eliminating an Air National Guard unit in Meridian -- would be the loss of 1,678 military and civilian jobs on Mississippi bases.

Florida would be among the top gainers in this round of base **realignments** and closures, or BRAC, getting 2,757 military jobs.

Some say the state has been helped by the influence of Gov. Jeb Bush, the president's brother, in the White House.

But McCarthy said Florida gained because of the merits of its military bases.

"This was not a 'help your brother' deal," he said.

St. Pe said the Pascagoula community is not giving up efforts to save the base. He said the Jackson County Economic Development Foundation and other base boosters will make their pitches to a commissioner scheduled to visit the base in early June and at a regional BRAC hearing in New Orleans later this summer.

If there's no way to save the base, the Jackson County Economic Development Foundation will promote a plan to bring in Coast Guard operations or civilian industries and homeland security agencies.

There's also another way Pascagoula Naval Station could survive, but it's a long shot.

A group of senators this week introduced a bill that would make the Pentagon delay base closures at least until U.S. forces withdraw from Iraq. All of the bill's sponsors, including Lott, represent states with bases on the shutdown list.

Local News Articles

Taylor wants closer look at BRAC changes to soldier's health care

Associated Press State and Local Wire

Holbrook Mohr

May 19, 2005

JACKSON, Miss.

A congressional committee has approved a proposal by U.S. Rep. Gene Taylor to require an evaluation of changes to military health care systems recommended in the latest round of base **realignment** and closures.

The proposal from Taylor, D-Miss., was added Wednesday as an amendment to the 2006 National Defense Authorization Act by the House Armed Services Committee. The full U.S. House is expected to consider the bill next week, said committee chairman Duncan Hunter, R-Calif.

The 81st Medical Group at **Keesler Air Force Base**, which is in Taylor's district, and eight other military medical facilities were targeted by the Pentagon for **realignment**.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld announced this past week the first round of base closings and **realignments** in a decade. The Pentagon recommends shutting about 180 military installations nationwide, including 33 major bases.

The Pentagon's recommendations go to the BRAC commission, which will hold public hearings before presenting its own recommendations to President Bush by Sept. 8. Congress will ultimately approve the final list.

Keesler officials have said the Pentagon justifies the changes to its medical unit by relying on civilian facilities with accredited inpatient capacity that are located within 40 miles of the base.

Base officials released a statement the day of the BRAC recommendations, saying they were "reviewing this recommendation in order to assess the possible impact on base personnel and resources."

Keesler officials had no immediate comment when contacted on Thursday.

Taylor said the recommendations to change military inpatient service missions to outpatient clinics and ambulatory surgery centers could have a devastating impact on soldiers.

"If these changes are implemented, we're looking at a situation where a young airman and his wife used Keesler Medical Center free of charge when they had their first baby," he said.

"Now, you're telling that same young airman that in addition to saving up for all the expenses that come with having kids, he'll need to put aside even more money from his paycheck to pay part of the cost for a civilian doctor.

"That's not what these kids signed up for, and they deserve better," Taylor said in a statement.

Taylor is also concerned with the potential impact on military retirees.

He said retirees between the ages of 38 and 65 are going to be forced to pay out-of-pocket for health care in the form of enrollment fees and co-payments.

Keesler officials estimate that some 10,100 military retirees live within an 50 mile radius of the base. There are about 25,000 military retirees in Mississippi, with an average of 1.5 dependents.

"I think it's fair to ask for the true costs before we saddle our servicemen and retirees with the catastrophic expense of private health care, especially when they've been promised otherwise," Taylor said.

No Mississippi bases completely safe from BRAC, official says

Associated Press State and Local Wire

May 16, 2005

MERIDIAN.

The announcement of the Pentagon's base closing list is no reason for spared Mississippi military communities to rejoice, an officials says.

Bill Crawford, deputy director for community assistance with the Mississippi Development Authority, who is advising military communities on base closings, said Mississippi has fared relatively well so far in the 2005 round of base **realignment** and closure recommendations, or BRAC.

But Crawford said other bases could be added to the list later this summer.

"Communities with closed or realigned bases have until the end of July to convince the BRAC Commission to add other bases to take their places," Crawford told the editorial board of The

Meridian Star newspaper. "Mississippi bases that have not been impacted will not be completely safe until the add deadline has passed."

On the recommended **realignment** of the Mississippi Air National Guard's 186th Air Refueling Wing in Meridian, Crawford said elected officials and community leaders are ready to fight to protect the mission.

"The legality and propriety of the Pentagon moving Air National Guard units through BRAC is being challenged and offers one avenue of recourse," Crawford said.

"The high performance history of the unit, its relatively lower operating costs, its capacity to expand, and its joint operations with the 172nd Airlift Wing in Jackson form the basis for a strong case."

Crawford said the retention of Naval Air Station Meridian was a major victory.

"**Keesler Air Force Base** took a hit in its medical center but remains one of the world's top electronics schools as home of the 2nd Air Force and Mississippi's major military facility.

"The plus-up of Columbus Air Force Base was a strong positive. Retention of the Seabee base at Gulfport and the Army Corps of Engineers and Waterways Experiment Station in Vicksburg was very positive. Camp Shelby and Camp McCain survived strong and intact," Crawford said.

Crawford said the proposed closure of Naval Station Pascagoula was not a surprise after the retirement of its Aegis missile cruisers. But he said the closure recommendation ignored the strategic value of the base.

"The consolidation of Navy personnel services (Hancock County) and Army Reserve headquarters (Vicksburg) may cost the state jobs, but are not devastating to the surrounding communities as many BRAC recommendations are.

"The closure of the mothballed Army Ammunitions Plant at Stennis Space Center was at the request of the community and the state so that it can be redeveloped," he said.

Crawford said losing the KC-135R air refueling mission at Key Field may be the most contentious recommendation.

Crawford said the state is gearing up to help fight the closings.

"The state will provide gubernatorial, technical and financial support to communities that choose to fight for their facilities," he said. "The state will provide similar support to those communities that focus on re-use opportunities for closed facilities."

Crawford said the Mississippi Military Communities Council will continue to provide community-to-community coordination and provide advice to the state.

He said each community with a closed or negatively realigned base will be given a chance to persuade the BRAC Commission to change the Pentagon's recommendation.

"To succeed in this effort ... takes a strong community effort in close coordination with our strong congressional delegation. A factual case must be built using both volunteers and expert

consultants. A competent presentation team must be formed to deliver the case to the BRAC Commission, its staff and to military leaders.

"Such fights cost money. The state will help, but communities must raise funds, too. Finally, communities need to show BRAC commissioners they care about their facilities by turning out at regional hearings and at base visits and by writing support letters to the commission," Crawford said.

Armed Forces retirees get 'thank-you' for contributions

Biloxi Sun Herald
Amanda Creel

BILOXI

Keesler Air Force Base honored military retirees Friday, a day in which change was in the air.

"Today is to say thank you for your contributions while in uniform and your help outside of uniform. This is for your contribution to our Department of Defense," said General William Lord in his address to the retirees. The annual Retiree Appreciation Day is sponsored by the 81st Training Wing.

It was also the day the Pentagon announced its recommended **realignments**, including some medical services at Keesler.

Chief Lonnie Arnold, director for the retiree activities program, said the day was "recognition for all retirees from all generations. It gives the men and women and their spouses a chance to mingle with one another."

James Caire, Air Force retiree, said: "I think this is the kind of day that people should send a card in and say thank you."

More than 500 retirees attended the festivities throughout the day.

"Always try to keep in touch with our military friends even though we are retired," said Billy Bean, retired from Special Forces.

Retirees weren't there just for recreation. The base also provided beneficial information about services for them.

"I think it is nice to look after retirees," said Daniel Acosta, Army retiree. "It is nice for them to let us know what's going on and what will affect us."

Keesler medical wing may be cut

Biloxi Sun-Herald
HUGH S. MOORE

WASHINGTON

The medical center at **Keesler Air Force Base** was recommended, to the surprise of some, for **realignment** in the Pentagon's BRAC report released Friday, putting 402 military and civilian jobs at stake.

According to the report, Keesler would lose a total of 181 military, 31 civilian, and 190 contractor personnel by closing the in-patient mission at Keesler and converting the medical center to a clinic with an "ambulatory surgery center."

Patients needing extended care would be sent to nearby civilian hospitals.

The report also said **realignment** at Keesler could cost the Gulfport-Biloxi metropolitan area another 352 jobs, "assuming no economic recovery."

The move to cut the medical wing at Keesler drew sharp criticism from Rep. Gene Taylor, D-Bay St. Louis.

"If these changes to the mission at Keesler are implemented, it will be a major blow to military personnel, dependents and retirees in South Mississippi," Taylor said. "Rather than receiving the free health care that our airmen and veterans were promised, they would have the additional expense of paying for a portion of their care at nearby civilian hospitals."

Taylor said he found the situation odd considering the Pentagon rationalized closing the VA hospital in Gulfport by pointing to its proximity to Keesler.

Brig. Gen. William Lord, commander of the 81st Training Wing, said the potential **realignment** is still being evaluated by staff at Keesler and the base would do its best to keep the community informed.

"Keesler was recognized today as a valuable installation," Lord said. "However, there were some **realignment** recommendations in patient care.

"We understand the impact BRAC has on military members, the local community, retirees, employees and their families."

"Rest assured I will make every effort to keep the lines of communication open to share information and answer questions as we continue through this process."

Editorial/Opinion Articles