

## Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

# EARLY



# BIRD

August 4, 2005

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#### **Bush Says He Will Accept BRAC Recommendations**

Fed News Online  
August 3, 2005

President George W. Bush told a small group of Texas newspaper reporters Monday that he will accept the Base Realignment and Closure Committee's recommendations later this month.

"In order for this process to be nonpolitical, it's very important to make it clear that the decision of BRAC will stand, as far as I am concerned," Bush told the San Antonio Express during a White House interview in the Roosevelt Room.

The Committee, which is still investigating bases on the list, has until Sept. 8 to present its recommendations to Bush, who must accept or reject the recommendations in their entirety before Sept. 23.

If Bush accepts the recommendations, Congress has 45 legislative days to reject the recommendations in their entirety before the closures and realignments become official.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld released the list of bases DoD recommended closing or realigning May 13. That list slated 33 bases for closure and 29 others for realignment.

The Committee added 15 installations to the list July 19, stressing that these bases would not necessarily be affected, but that they were only being considered.

The Pentagon estimates the 2005 BRAC round will save the DoD nearly \$49 billion over the next 20 years. The reshaping will shift DoD away from a Cold War era position to one geared toward the war on terror.

### **President says politics won't play a role in base closings**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire  
August 3, 2005

President Bush said he understands what's at stake in Maine during the latest round of base closings and that he'll take a "close look" at the final list that's presented to him by Sept. 8.

But Bush also stressed he will not let politics enter into the matter, saying, "What I'm not going to do is politicize the process. That's important for people to understand."

"I understand this is difficult," Bush said during a round-table discussion at the White House with reporters from eight regional newspapers, including the Portland Press Herald and Maine Sunday Telegram. "I know Maine fairly well. It's a fantastic place. It's difficult for folks."

The Defense Department wants to close the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery and Defense Finance and Accounting Service center in Limestone, and scale back the Brunswick Naval Air Station. About 7,000 jobs would be lost if all three proposals are approved.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission must submit a final list of closures, which Bush and Congress can either accept or reject, but not change.

Bush said that as governor of Texas, he pressed to keep open bases that were slated for closure in his state. So he said he understands why Maine Gov. John Baldacci and the state's congressional delegation are standing up for their bases.

But at the same time, Bush said, the Cold War is over and fewer troops are needed.

"This country faces different threats," Bush said. "We believe we can achieve the objectives of stability and security with fewer troops and different equipment alignments."

In other issues, Bush promoted energy legislation he expects to sign next week, threatened to veto pending legislation to expand embryonic stem-cell research and praised the Medicare prescription-drug benefit.

On the war in Iraq, he insisted that progress is being made, but said that setting a timetable for withdrawing American troops would invite terrorists to wait.

"As the Iraqis stand up, we'll stand down," Bush said.

### **Virginia Lawmakers Get Last Chance To Salvage Jet Base**

Congress Daily  
Megan Scully  
August 3, 2005

The Virginia delegation is gearing up for a critical public hearing Thursday, with the fate of the Master Jet Base at Oceana Naval Air Station -- and about 10,000 military and civilian jobs --

on the line. If the Base Closure and Realignment Commission opts later this month to shutter the southern Virginia base, the community stands to lose more jobs than any other in the country. The Pentagon passed over Oceana when it announced its base-closure recommendations in May, but the commission last month voted to add it to the list for consideration, giving the state only a month to make its case against closure.

The state's lawmakers -- including Senate Armed Services Chairman Warner -- began lobbying the commission to spare Oceana immediately after it was added to the list. In letters to the commission, and during a site visit Monday, they argued that, despite overcrowding issues, the Navy believes Oceana still is the best location on the East Coast for a jet base. "The bottom line is that Sen. Warner's position is the same as the Navy's position in that there is no viable alternative," a Warner spokesman said today. Warner, along with Sen. George Allen, R-Va., and Democratic Gov. Mark Warner, will have one hour to persuade the commission. They will be joined by Adm. Michael Mullen, the chief of naval operations, who agreed to testify in response to a July 26 letter from Sen. Warner. "I believe on such a critical matter of national security and military readiness, commissioners must be provided the department's best military judgment and professional advice available on the military value of Naval Station Oceana," Warner wrote. "You are the most qualified to provide this testimony."

During a hearing on Capitol Hill last month, commissioners said they were concerned that development in surrounding Virginia Beach was impeding flight-training missions. Oceana is the Navy's busiest jet base -- with more than 200 aircraft -- and takeoffs and landings occurring every 2.5 minutes. If it is closed, the Navy would be forced to set up a new jet base in a less populated area. During its own base-closure discussions, the Navy realized it would eventually have to relocate the jet base, but decided doing so would take longer than the six-year timeframe mandated under BRAC law. Commissioners, however, see the move as inevitable and said they might offer short-term

solutions to the problem. Commission Chairman Anthony Principi and member Harold Gehman will be at the hearing. Gehman, a retired Navy admiral and a Virginia resident, has recused himself from voting on all Virginia recommendations. He can, however, participate in deliberations, a commission spokeswoman said.

### Local News Articles

#### **Florida Steps Into Oceana Fray, Offering Defunct Base**

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk, VA)  
Dale Eisman, The Virginian-Pilot  
August 4, 2005

WASHINGTON — Florida officials are making a late but energetic bid to offer Cecil Field, a major naval airfield near Jacksonville that was shut down in 1999, as a replacement for Oceana Naval Air Station in Virginia Beach.

With a federal base closing commission set to hear testimony today in Washington on Oceana's future, Florida Gov. Jeb Bush has asked for a chance to make the case for Cecil Field during a hearing next week.

There was no word Wednesday from the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission on his request.

But in interviews, Virginia officials said they're confident they can show that Oceana is superior to Cecil Field as a site for the Navy's East Coast master jet base and asserted that the Navy itself already has studied and rejected the Cecil Field alternative.

"The Navy has determined after exhaustive study that there is no alternative that even approaches" Oceana's value as a hub for fighters assigned to the Atlantic Fleet, U.S. Sen. John W. Warner's office said in a prepared statement.

Navy leaders briefing the BRAC Commission have "said unequivocally that Cecil Field will not work" as an option, added George

Foresman, Gov. Mark R. Warner's top aide on base closing issues.

A Navy spokeswoman, Lt. Christine Ventresca, said Wednesday that it "would be inappropriate" to comment on the service's position.

But the Navy did not consider Cecil Field as an alternative to Oceana during a formal review of basing options it conducted in preparing for the 2005 base closing round, she added.

Gov. Warner, Sen. Warner and U.S. Sen. George F. Allen are to testify on Oceana's behalf during an hourlong commission hearing this afternoon. Also on the witness list – at Sen. Warner's urging – is Adm. Michael G. Mullen, the chief of naval operations.

The Defense Department disclosed July 1 that it wants to replace Oceana with a new master jet base, built "from the ground up" at a still-to-be-determined site along the Eastern seaboard.

But Pentagon officials insist that job can't be done in the six-year window for BRAC Commission actions and that Oceana remains the best currently available site for the Navy's East Coast fighter hub.

A new base probably would cost nearly \$2 billion.

Today's hearing should help commissioners "separate rhetoric from reality" on Florida's claims about Cecil Field, Foresman said.

In a letter sent to the commission on Monday, Gov. Bush promised that the state will remove civilian firms that have leased portions of the base property since the Navy departed and has estimated that the Navy would need to invest about \$250 million to return the base to service.

"Cecil Field is the last site on the Eastern seaboard capable of accommodating the NAS Oceana mission and personnel," Bush wrote.

A return to Cecil Field would be a dramatic turnabout for the Navy and the Pentagon, which

decided in 1993 to give up the Florida base, in part because of the environmental "encroachment" issues now bedeviling Oceana. The closure occurred six years later.

Virginia officials are likely to focus on questions about the limited availability of airspace along the Florida coastline for Navy fighter jet training in any discussion of Cecil Field, Foresman suggested.

"That problem is only going to get worse," he said.

The 1995 BRAC Commission decided to move most of the nearly 6,000 F/A-18 Hornet pilots, mechanics and other support personnel assigned to Cecil Field to Oceana.

Once surrounded by farmland, Oceana is now the center of a busy suburban community. The placement of shopping centers and subdivisions near the base has spawned complaints about jet noise and the potential for civilian injuries or deaths should a Navy plane crash while approaching or leaving the base.

Though the letter from Bush to the commission came in response to a request for comment on Cecil Field from BRAC Chairman Anthony J. Principi, one independent analyst said the commission is unlikely to order an Oceana-to-Cecil-Field transfer.

There's clear evidence that "the Navy is not interested in closing Oceana right now," said Christopher Hellman, who tracks BRAC issues at the Center for Arms Control in Washington.

**Finance Center Wins No Pledge  
2 representatives of base-closing panel shed  
no light on future of facility or new jobs.**  
Indianapolis Star (Indianapolis, IN)  
Tammy Webber  
August 4, 2005

The Defense Department's finance center in Lawrence received praise but no assurances Wednesday from two members of an

independent military base-closing commission that will determine the facility's future.

Commission members Samuel K. Skinner and retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd W. Newton visited the center to review whether the nine-member commission should heed a Pentagon recommendation to add about 3,500 jobs there. The center now employs about 3,000.

"We were very impressed with what we saw today," Skinner said, praising Indianapolis as "one of the great places to work and live."

But Newton said it was too soon to say whether they thought the Lawrence center should stay open or get the additional jobs.

The commission voted last month to add the Defense Finance and Accounting Service center, at the former Fort Harrison, to the list of military installations that could be closed or realigned.

The Pentagon has projected a cost-saving of \$1.3 billion over 20 years by consolidating 26 centers into three.

State and local officials said they don't think the center will close, especially since more than \$123 million in renovations were completed recently.

The question, they think, is whether the center will receive more jobs and, if so, how many.

"We are very confident we will not see any reduction (in jobs) and hopefully will get some addition to the jobs here," said Lawrence Mayor Deborah Cantwell.

She was one of several local and state leaders who met with the commissioners.

"They saw we are willing to welcome and have the capability to accommodate" additional jobs, said Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman.

Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson said the facility "sells itself."

The commission's final list, due Sept. 8, must be rejected or approved in its entirety by the president and Congress.

### **Lobbying continues against base closings**

Beaver County Times (Beaver County, PA)

Patrick O'Shea

August 3, 2005

MOON TWP. - Members of a local task force geared toward saving three western Pennsylvania military bases recommended by the Pentagon for closure or realignment has met for a fourth time with staff of the congressional committee reviewing the Defense Department process.

Keith Dorman, spokesman for the Pittsburgh Base Realignment and Closure Task Force, said members of his group joined Gov. Ed Rendell and U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Penn Hills, in a presentation Monday before representatives of the BRAC Commission, which has until Sept. 8 to forward its own list of recommended adjustments to the nation's military bases to President Bush.

Dorman said more than half of the hourlong meeting was spent on discussions about saving Willow Grove Naval Air Station near Philadelphia, the first opportunity for its supporters to meet with BRAC staff.

But much discussion also took place on keeping open the 911th Air Force Reserve base in Moon Township and maintaining the commissary and post exchange (PX) from the Army's Charles E. Kelly Support Center in Collier Township, both of which are on the Pentagon's list for closing. They also discussed changing a recommendation that the 99th Army Reserve Regional Readiness Command in Moon be realigned to move much of its operations to Fort Dix, N.J.

Dorman said task force members again stressed that the 911th has more space available than the Pentagon initially listed and pushed for creating a joint operations facility in Moon that would make use of all the military units in the region as

well as federal agencies such as the Secret Service and Treasury Department.

He said task force members answered some questions about possible cost savings to the government from implementing their suggestions and were asked to provide further information.

Dorman said he expects the commission to formally stop accepting community input around Aug. 12 so commission staff can begin to put together their position papers on recommendations that will be forwarded to the nine-member group for review before a final vote is taken by the end of the month.

"We will continue to pull together data and look for opportunities to argue in favor of bases," Dorman said. "I feel we are making progress."

Once Bush receives the commission's list, he has 45 days to reject the plan or forward it to Congress for an all-or-nothing vote.

### **State unlikely to sue over National Guard realignment**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire  
(Oklahoma City, OK)  
August 4, 2005

Gov. Brad Henry said Wednesday he likely won't join other states in a lawsuit against the Department of Defense over its plan to realign some National Guard units.

"I think it is very unlikely that Oklahoma will join any litigation," Henry said.

Henry has asked Oklahoma's adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Harry "Bud" Wyatt III, to come up with a plan for using the state's Guard units more effectively.

"We've set the standard in the past and we want to continue to do that," he said.

At least two states have filed lawsuits over the BRAC impact on their Air National Guard units, and others are considering legal action.

The lawsuits cite a federal statute that prohibits the relocation or withdrawal of Guard units without the consent of a state's governor.

Before the announcement of the Defense Department's recommendations, which spared Oklahoma's major bases, Henry said he would consider using the law if it became necessary.

He said Wednesday that he has visited with other governors, including several who are "very bent on litigation." Most, however, are not, he added.

"We want to work with the Department of Defense on these issues," Henry said.

The specifics of the plan are up to Wyatt and other Guard officials, the governor said. The goal is to make sure that the Oklahoma National Guard has improved funding and resources as its mission is revised, he said.

Oklahoma National Guard spokesman Col. Pat Scully said the plan, which could take a few more weeks to complete, would be presented to Henry for review.

"The plan is still very fluid," Scully said.

The Defense Department's recommendations to the BRAC Commission, announced in May, not only spared Oklahoma's major installations, they could result in a net gain of about 3,919 jobs, mostly at Fort Sill.

### **Commissioners noncommittal on Indianapolis finance center**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire  
(Indianapolis, IN)  
Ken Kusmer  
August 3, 2005

A defense finance center where the Pentagon wants to move 3,500 jobs received a glowing review Wednesday from two members of the base closing panel that recently added it to list of installations under review.

Sam Skinner and Lloyd Warren Newton of the nine-member Base Closure and Realignment Commission toured the 1.6 million-square-foot Maj. Gen. Emmett Bean Center, the largest U.S. military office building after the Pentagon. About 3,000 accountants, contractors and other staff now work there.

Local officials are hoping a \$123 million renovation completed two years ago will help it retain its current jobs and add the 3,500 proposed by the Pentagon when it presented a plan to consolidate 26 current Defense Finance and Accounting Service centers into just three, in Indianapolis, Denver and Columbus, Ohio.

"A lot of money was spent a number of years ago upgrading this facility, and it shows," Skinner said during a brief news conference in front of the Bean Center.

After the Pentagon recommendations came out, U.S. Rep. Steve LaTourette, R-Ohio, said the building, with 99,000 square feet of available unused space, did not have enough room for 3,500 extra workers, but Skinner and Newton dismissed that idea.

Skinner said the defense finance agency is slimming down through automation and centralization of duties, with a work force once topping 20,000 down to about 14,000 now. The goal was 10,000, he said.

The two visitors were noncommittal, however, on how well the Bean Center was stacking up against other DFAS sites, including the 23 the Pentagon proposed closing. Skinner and Newton said they were collecting information to share with their seven fellow commissioners.

"One of the reasons for coming to visit here is to ensure that we have the full picture of all the facilities," Newton said.

The Bean Center was part of Fort Benjamin Harrison until the Army base fell victim to an earlier round of base closings in 1991. Today it oversees about 40 percent of the Pentagon's finance and accounting work, including eight smaller DFAS centers from Europe to

California. It disburses more than \$39 billion annually and serves 1.9 million people.

Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman, who headed the local delegation that met with Skinner and Newton, said the two offered no insight on how the Bean Center would fare when the commission makes its own base-realignment recommendations this month. President Bush and Congress will make the final, binding decision this fall.

"They always hold these decisions very close to their chest," said Skillman, who also testified before commissioners during a regional hearing in St. Louis in June.

Gov. Mitch Daniels will lead the Indiana delegation that will testify in support of the Bean Center before the commission Aug. 10 in Washington.

When the panel voted last month to add the Bean Center to its list of installations to review, it caught some local officials by surprise, but Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson suggested the additional scrutiny will help the center and those who depend on its jobs.

"I think that was probably a good thing it was added to the list," Peterson said. "It gave them the opportunity to come out here and make a visit."

### **Ageing jets keep Fargo unit scrambling**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire  
(Fargo, ND)

August 3, 2005

The ageing F-16 fighter jets flown by the Air National Guard unit here are to be retired in two years, but keeping the wing at full strength in the meantime has been a challenge, Maj. Gen. Mike Haugen says.

Haugen, the North Dakota Guard commander, said seven of the 22 F-16s built in the early 1980s have been grounded because of serious defects. However, the 119th Fighter Wing, nicknamed the "Happy Hooligans," has been

able to acquire some newer-model F-16s from an Air Force training site in Arizona.

"What has happened is that some of the ... internal structure of the (older) aircraft are developing cracks," Haugen said. "When you fly it straight and level like an airliner it's no problem. But when you put weapons and external fuel tanks on ... it becomes a problem."

The base is slated for realignment. The Pentagon has recommended no new flying mission once the F-16s are retired, though state leaders say they are confident that military officials will decide to keep a flying mission in Fargo.

"The Happy Hooligans have a national reputation for superb performance, and I believe that will be recognized when the dust clears," Sen. Kent Conrad, D-N.D., said Wednesday.

The Air Guard also is likely to end up operating unmanned drone aircraft that will be based at Grand Forks Air Force Base.

The Pentagon has recommended that Grand Forks stay open but lose its air refueling tanker mission and most of its personnel.

Conrad said officials are still trying to get the military to keep some tankers at the base.

### **Columbus DFAS is deemed to be safe from closing**

Cleveland Plain Dealer (Cleveland, OH)

Becky Gaylord

August 3, 2005

Columbus — Officials deciding which military bases to close later this month signaled yesterday that a sprawling military pay office here will likely keep its workforce of more than 2,000.

Left unclear, however, is whether the Base Realignment and Closure Commission will back the Pentagon's plan to expand the Columbus Defense Finance and Accounting office by 1,300 positions, some taken from the Cleveland DFAS office.

"It's still going to be here in some role," Commissioner Samuel Skinner told reporters.

Skinner's assessment of Columbus is far more optimistic than the officials have been willing to express publicly about the future of DFAS in Cleveland, which employs 1,200 downtown.

Cleveland DFAS, which landed on the Pentagon's base closure hit list in May, handles pay for the navy, military retirees, reservists and others.

Skinner spoke after he and Commissioner Lloyd "Fig" Newton toured the concrete and tinted-glass facility in Columbus called Building 21, where workers handle payments to large military contractors.

They scheduled the visit after recently adding the office — as well as offices in Denver and Indianapolis — to the list of bases to consider for closure.

The Pentagon originally proposed to keep those three offices open and expand them.

The plan calls for closing all other military pay offices nationwide, including Cleveland's.

Supporters of Cleveland's pay and accounting office unearthed significant flaws in the Pentagon's analysis, found math errors and raised questions about the high costs of consolidation.

Commissioners could decide that more than three offices are necessary. Commission Chairman Anthony Principi indicated as much to Ohio Sens. George Voinovich and Mike DeWine in a meeting last month.

But just weeks from the deadline for final recommendations, the issue isn't set yet. Yesterday, Skinner said: "The question is how many we're going to have."

If the commission keeps more than three pay offices, Cleveland's prospects would brighten considerably.

Next week, the panel will hold hearings on the bases added recently for consideration, including the pay office in Columbus.

### **BRAC staff compiling recommendations**

Norwich Bulletin (Norwich, CT)

Ray Hackett

August 3, 2005

NORWICH-- Two of the three prongs in the base-closing process have been completed -- the Pentagon's May 13 recommendation to close the Groton base and the "community" position refuting those assessments and reasoning.

Now, the independent Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission staff will compile its recommendations -- the third prong in the process the nine commissioners will use to determine a final base-closing list.

Visited Groton

Five of the nine commissioners have visited the Groton base. Local sub base supporters said Wednesday they are confident the staff has heard and understands the state's argument.

"(The staff) seems to have captured the major points of our argument," Subbase Realignment Coalition Chairman John Markowicz said Wednesday, after a final meeting with BRAC staff in Washington the day earlier.

After deliberating for the next three weeks, the commission will vote on whether to uphold the Pentagon decision and close the base, or remove it from the closure list,

That will happen during three days of public meetings, beginning Aug. 23.

The commission has until Sept. 8 to forward its final recommendations to the president.

Coalition members, state and congressional staff met with the BRAC staff Tuesday, reviewing the major points the state made in its presentation to commissioners July 6 in Boston. Additional and

more detailed information gleaned from further review of the Pentagon data was also presented.

"It was cordial, non-confrontational and very business-like," Markowicz said of the meeting. "I think we were able to very effectively amplify some of the key points and I left feeling like we were heard."

Cost and savings

Markowicz said the most important points stressed concerned new information refuting the Pentagon's initial cost and savings projections. Coalition and state Strike Force analyst Hank Teskey provided new figures putting the actual, one-time cost to close Groton at \$1 billion, with only \$17 million annually in recurring savings -- a dramatic difference from the initial Pentagon projections.

The initial Department of Defense projections placed the cost of closing the base at \$680 million, with \$1.6 billion in savings over 20 years.

State Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Gina McCarthy gave the staff more detailed environmental data disputing the Navy's initial \$23 million estimate to clean up the site. The state contends that figure is more likely around \$125 million.

The BRAC commission has scheduled an Aug. 11 meeting with Defense Department analysts to go over environmental and economic impact data submitted by the Pentagon with its initial May 13 recommendations. Later that day, it will also meet with Pentagon officials to discuss recommendations to close or realign Air National Guard units nationwide, including Connecticut's Air Wing at Bradley. It is the most controversial of the Pentagon base-closing recommendations.

"We'll probably go down for that hearing," Markowicz said of the early session on environmental and economic impact, "and then respond appropriately depending on what is said."

Any responses now will have to be sent directly to the nine commissioners.

The state's congressional delegation said earlier this week continued discussion with individual commissioners will be a priority over the next two weeks.

"We'll continue to fight to the very last minute," U.S. Sen. Christopher Dodd said. "Our work isn't done."

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### The Arguments

Here's a summary of the Pentagon and community arguments as they relate to the Groton submarine base. The independent Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission staff will develop its own recommendation over the next two weeks. All three positions will then be presented to the nine commission members for their consideration, and vote later this month:

#### The Pentagon position:

Because of an anticipated 21-percent reduction in the size of the submarine force over the next 20 years, it is no longer necessary to maintain three submarine bases on the East Coast. Groton, the nation's oldest facility, represents the best opportunity for cost savings and the elimination of excess capacity.

The Pentagon is recommending two submarine squadrons (12 subs) and the Northeast Command be transferred to Norfolk Naval Station in Virginia. One squadron (six subs) and the Submarine School are slated for transfer to Kings Bay Submarine Base in Georgia.

The Pentagon projects the initial one-time cost to close Groton at \$680 million, including \$23 million for environmental clean-up costs. The Pentagon projects closing Groton will result in a \$1.6 billion savings over 20 years.

The community position (as drafted by the BRAC Commission staff):

Closure would deny critical military strategic presence and flexibility in the Northeast.

Closure would sever the synergy relationships with the Submarine School, Submarine Development Squadron, Electric Boat, the Naval Undersea Medical Institute and naval submarine support facilities in nearby Rhode Island, such as the Naval Underwater Warfare Center and Naval War College, along with the loss of nearby college and university centers of undersea research.

The 20-year Force Structure plan projecting a smaller submarine fleet is less than what is required.

The military value for the Groton facility was greatly undervalued with no consideration given to the Submarine School, piers and synergy opportunities.

Closing costs are underestimated because of environmental, personnel relocation, reconstitution of facilities at Norfolk and Kings Bay and increased cost associated with geographic separation from Electric Boat. The state contends the actual one-time closing cost at \$1 billion.

The Pentagon overestimated savings because of unrealistic personnel savings, overstated recurring savings and construction requirements at Norfolk and Kings Bay. The state contends the actual savings would only amount to \$17 million annually.

There is a greater economic impact to the local and extended area. The Pentagon recommendation accounts for 8,000 jobs lost. The state contends it could be as high as 31,500, with a \$3 billion annual economic loss.

### **Virginia base a lame duck?**

Washington Daily News (NC)

Bill Sandifer

August 4, 2005

Virginia heavyweight Republican U.S. Sen. John Warner took the gloves off this week,

sparring for Virginia Beach to defend the title to the Navy's East Coast master jet base, reported The Virginian-Pilot Friday. Warner has enlisted the Navy's newly appointed chief of naval operations to plead Oceana's case at a Base Realignment and Closure hearing today.

Warner, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, has traditionally wielded a punch that has kept Naval Air Station Oceana stocked with the newest Navy fighters. His efforts were viewed as key in relocating all F/A-18 Hornet squadrons to Oceana following the mid-1990s BRAC decision that shut down NAS Cecil Field in Jacksonville, Fla., in late 1999 (Jacksonville city fathers, like jilted lovers, have long made it clear the Navy and its assets are welcome to come home).

Despite heavy lobbying -- and expectations -- on North Carolina's part to base some of the squadrons at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, Warner prevailed in capturing all the squadrons for Virginia.

Warner's odds of success now, however, appear less certain.

In a friendly, but frank, letter to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld (addressed to "Don"), BRAC chief Anthony J. Principi made it clear the Pentagon had to justify Oceana's existence in order to keep it off the closure list. The base was, indeed, added to the list July 19. The addition has been widely regarded as significant but far from definitive. Adding the base to the list simply postpones a firmer decision for 30 days, allowing all sides some breathing room for more study.

Indeed, Principi and four BRAC commissioners spent Monday touring Oceana in the company of both Warners -- Gov. Mark Warner and the senator. Following the session, commissioners hinted that progress had been made to keep Oceana open, reported The Associated Press. One of the commissioners said none of the alternatives to Oceana appeared "viable." Commissioners, however, stopped short of endorsing the base, said AP.

Of note during the two-hour visit is a comment Principi made regarding Oceana's status as a training facility. Navy officials, he said, had told him the flight training environment at Oceana is similar to conditions at other bases around the country and does not warrant limiting operations or closing the base, reported AP.

Navy attorneys, however, have argued just the opposite before federal judges, contending Oceana provides "degraded" training that could compromise national security.

#### BRAC, OLF link

The shifting BRAC landscape is important to North Carolina for several reasons. The state's military-friendly posture and huge tracts of open space have already attracted a large military presence. And state and congressional leaders have made it abundantly clear Oceana's assets would be welcome almost anywhere in the state -- almost.

"If it's a bad site for an (outlying landing field), it's a horrible site for a master jet base." said Derb Carter, one of a team of attorneys suing the Navy to stop the building of an OLF on the border of Washington and Beaufort counties.

Opponents argue the site's location value -- it's roughly midway between Cherry Point and Oceana -- would disappear if Oceana shut down or saw its fighter squadrons relocated. The Navy and opponents continue court battles over use of the site.

The final throes of the current round of litigation -- there could be more rounds, say attorneys -- have played out in lockstep with the BRAC process, heightening interest and tension all around. A 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals decision on the lower court ruling that halted the OLF is expected around the time BRAC decisions will firm up -- Aug. 19.

The president and Congress, however, will have the final say when the BRAC package is submitted on Sept. 21. Once the recommendations are submitted, a decision can

only be made on the whole, no "line-item" adjustments.

So what are the Navy's and North Carolina's options?

Navy officials have made it clear that, in an ideal world with no funding restrictions, a new East Coast base -- built from the ground up -- would be their choice. Such a base would likely spur a territorial attitude in Navy planners, understandably tired of encroachment and eager to protect turf surrounding a new base. Oceana's downfall -- likely when and not if it occurs -- will be encroachment, say observers.

Beach-front property

Navy protests spurred by a decade of explosive growth around its Virginia Beach-area installations were paid little heed by city fathers, a saga chronicled in local news reports.

That, say some observers, makes it clear the Navy has grand plans for the 33,000 acres in Washington and Beaufort counties coveted by Navy planners, intent on buying -- and holding -- encroachment buffers.

Bunk, say others, including military experts who have studied Navy bid specifications on the proposed Washington County installation. The plans and specs, they say, are tailored -- plain and simple -- to the relatively basic needs of a remote landing strip endowed with few amenities.

The lay of the land, the proximity to federal and state parklands, prevailing winds and other factors leave little wiggle room for adjustment, say observers. Cultural and urban amenities, important to base personnel, are virtually nonexistent in the area.

The Navy has already conceded it may have to move its OLF flight pattern to the west to provide additional clearance for fighters skirting airspace over Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, less than five miles from the airstrip. That shift, however, would likely see jets flying

over Van Swamp Gamelands, purchased and designated by the state within the last few years. That suggestion has further rankled both state officials and hunters who view the area as prime black bear territory.

Location, location, location

But it's clear Eastern North Carolina has other open spaces, an asset not lost on Sen. Elizabeth Dole, a Republican member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Dole hinted in a July 25 news release she senses a Navy interest in building a new base in the state.

"Now the Navy has indicated an interest in the creation of a 21st century master jet base in North Carolina, which would build upon the existing joint mission ties and bring thousands of jobs and billions of dollars to the state."

Dole spokeswoman Lindsay Taylor says Dole's statement is not mere political puffery but based on interests voiced during military meetings. Taylor emphasized that no specifics or possible locations were discussed, and such a project remains down the road if it ever happens.

But why not, indicated Dole, arguing the climate is right.

"North Carolina supports a unique military infrastructure in the Eastern part of the state. Strong joint mission ties between the Army, Air Force, Special Forces, and Marines provide strong possibilities for expansion."

But in the here and now, Navy officials say a new base, although ideal, is outside the current BRAC six-year window, adding that Oceana is satisfactory for training needs until a long-term solution is found.

BRAC commissioners have suggested Moody Air Force Base near Valdosta, Ga., as a home for Oceana's squadrons, a suggestion that doesn't sit well with the Navy. The base, it argues, was built in the '40s and would cost at least \$500 million to upgrade. The price tag for a scratch-built base, however, could surpass \$2 billion, say some.

Cherry Point boosters have argued the Marine base is currently configured to handle at least four Super Hornet squadrons, more with some upgrades.

So where does that leave the OLF?

Litigation aside, the issue remains up in the air, a philosophical orphan. The turmoil surrounding its fate was reflected by J. Harvie Wilkinson III - lead judge on the three-judge appeals court panel -- who asked the \$64 question early in the July 20 hearing.

"(Washington County) was picked in part in the anticipation Oceana would remain open," said Wilkinson. "Does that have any importance (for the OLF case)?"

Down on its luck?

If Oceana is a lame duck, molting squadrons, then a \$200 million OLF in Washington County -- not even scheduled for full operation until 2010 -- would appear to make little sense.

If, at the other extreme, Moody AFB is the new home of the Super Hornets, all North Carolina OLF arguments become moot.

In the middle, however, is a whole array of options suggested by state and local leaders. Those options range from converting to an OLF at the Kinston-based Global TransPark, to state Senate chief Marc Basnight's offshore platform, to Gov. Mike Easley's pick of Open Grounds Farm in Carteret County. All of these suggestions have been called workable by leaders with no small clout.

Former head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and North Carolina native, retired Gen. Hugh Shelton, has called for an OLF at the Global TransPark.

In an 11th-hour move, Florida Gov. Jeb Bush -- the president's brother -- on Monday added his voice to those calling for restoring Cecil Field as the Navy's master jet base, reported a Jacksonville newspaper. The governor has asked

BRAC commissioners to visit the former base and schedule time for a presentation at an Aug. 10 BRAC hearing.

Cecil Field, refurbished as Cecil Commerce Center, already boasts an OLF, appropriately named -- Whitehouse Field. The state of Florida, promised Bush, will see that both installations will remain free of encroachment.

Ironically, former Atlantic Fleet Commander Adm. Robert J. Natter, now retired, is Florida's contract BRAC consultant and is charged with overseeing efforts to bring squadrons he once commanded back under his wing. Natter is the author of the infamous October 2000 letter, citing community concerns over increasing jet noise as the driving force behind creation of a North Carolina OLF.

Despite the heavy courting, the Navy has clearly remained steadfast in its desire for Washington County.

What has changed in the ongoing saga is the air of expectation and sense of imminent change that surrounds the issue.

The next two months should provide a cornucopia of conversation for OLF proponents and opponents alike.

### **Opinions/ Editorials**

N/A

### **Additional Notes**

#### **Jumper provides insight to BRAC, joint basing initiatives**

Air Force Print News  
August 4, 2005

SAN ANTONIO (AFPN) -- The largest Base Realignment and Closure proposal in history calls for the closing of 10 Air Force installations and the realignment of 62 more.

In his Aug. 3 Chief's Sight Picture, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John P. Jumper explains how BRAC and joint basing will help maximize the

Air Force's warfighting capability while at the same time eliminating excess physical capacity.

Part of that change includes joint basing, a concept that calls for two or more adjacent or nearby installations to consolidate support services and be run by a designated service. It is a winning combination that could save the Defense Department more than \$2 billion over a 20-year period, he said.

### Chief's Sight Picture

3 August 2005

2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) -- Joint Basing

The Department of Defense recently released the largest BRAC proposal in our history, including the recommendation to close ten Air Force installations and realign 62 more. These changes maximize our warfighting capabilities, realign our infrastructure within the future defense strategy, eliminate excess physical capacity, and capitalize on opportunities for joint operations. They also include a concept called "joint basing" where two or more adjacent or nearby DoD installations are run by a designated service -- be it Army, Navy, or Air Force. By consolidating installation support services at conjoined or nearby bases under one Military Department, the Department of Defense hopes to save \$2.3B over 20 years.

Under this BRAC recommendation, the Air Force will become the lead installation support provider at six locations (Charleston AFB/Naval Weapons Station Charleston, Joint Base McGuire-Fort Dix, Joint Base Andrews-Naval Air Facility Washington, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Lackland AFB / Randolph AFB / Fort Sam, and Langley AFB / Fort Eustis.) The Air Force will be the supported service at one Army (Joint Base Lewis-McChord) and three Navy locations (Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Navy Guam/Andersen AFB, and Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling-Naval Research Laboratory.)

Modern warfare is Joint warfare. In addition to saving scarce funds, this move to Joint Basing will allow us to build closer relationships and

forge stronger ties between services. We will not only train as we fight, we will live as we fight.

The Air Force has a long and successful history of working toward common goals in a joint environment without compromising Air Force principles and the well being of our people -- joint basing will be no different. Our guiding precepts as we move forward with joint basing are:

- Maintain uncompromised warfighting capability, including expeditionary combat support forces
- Preserve our installations as fighting positions and training platforms for our expeditionary force
- Airmen will command Airmen -- our unity of command at home station will remain intact
- Airmen open and operate airfields -- airfields will be operated and maintained by Airmen
- Provide quality services at the best value

Establishing joint bases will take time. We are working with the Army and Navy to ensure that we do it smartly and are mindful of the lessons learned from past joint basing initiatives. The Office of the Secretary of Defense expects to establish the basic implementation policy by the end of this summer, with work on common standards and metrics continuing in the following months. Together, we will undertake pilot projects to explore how to best establish mutually acceptable joint basing agreements. However, until these projects are complete and BRAC is signed into law, it is premature to enter into any additional cooperative or inter-service joint basing agreements.

Joint basing will neither lower our standards nor compromise our warfighting capabilities. Combining capabilities and eliminating unnecessary duplication and redundancy will save scarce funds and result in more efficient

installations from which we, and our sister services, will more effectively project combat power for our Nation.

