

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY **BIRD**

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Department of Defense Releases

BRAC Commissioners Continue Final Deliberations

American Forces Press Service
Donna Miles
August 25, 2005

The Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission began its second day of final deliberations today by approving the Defense Department's recommendation to close Walter Reed Army Medical Center here.

Under the plan, if approved, most of the hospital's staff and services will move to the new Walter Reed National Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., current site of the National Naval Medical Center, and the rest, to Fort Belvoir, Va.

The nine-member panel also reversed its July 19 decision to add the Defense Language Institute and Naval Postgraduate School, in Monterey,

Calif., to the Pentagon's list of bases it hopes to close. Today, the commission members voted to keep both installations open.

As part of that decision, the commission voted to establish a new governing board to coordinate education programs between the Naval Postgraduate School and the Air Force Institute of Technology, at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.

The BRAC commission also voted today to close Brooks City-Base in San Antonio but decided to keep a joint directed energy mission in Texas.

The commission was expected to begin voting on Air Force recommendations later today.

The commission began its final days of deliberations Aug. 24 in Arlington, Va., to vote on DoD's proposal to reshape the military infrastructure and eliminate excess capacity by closing 33 major bases and realigning 29 others.

Initially, plans called for four days of votes, but BRAC commission Chairman Anthony Principi said he hopes to wrap up the session a day early, on Aug. 26.

"We appreciate the important role of the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission in the process at hand," said Michael Wynne, deputy undersecretary of defense for acquisition, technology and logistics, following the first day of voting.

"As we noted when the department submitted its recommendations in May, previous BRAC commissions have recommended adjustments to the department's submission, and we expected that this independent commission may do the same," Wynne said in a statement. "We will begin to carefully review the commission's recommendations and will have no comment on specific commission actions this week."

During Aug. 24 deliberations, the BRAC commission voted to close:

Fort Monmouth, N.J.;

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Fort Gillem, Ga.;
 Fort McPherson, Ga.;
 Fort Monroe, Va.;
 U.S. Army Garrison, Selfridge, Mich.;
 Almost 400 Army Reserve and Army National
 Guard facilities, creating joint centers;
 Naval Station Pascagoula, Miss.;
 Naval Air Station Atlanta, Ga.;
 Naval Station Ingleside, Texas; and
 Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Texas.
 The panel voted to keep open: Submarine Base
 New London, Conn.; Portsmouth Naval
 Shipyard, Maine; and Hawthorne Army Depot,
 Nev.

The panel also voted to:

Wait six months before deciding whether to
 close Oceana Naval Air Station, Va., giving
 local and state authorities time to make proposed
 changes to limit residential encroachment on the
 base;

Realign rather than close Red River Army
 Depot, Texas;

Keep the Night Vision Lab at Fort Belvoir, Va.,
 instead of moving it to Aberdeen Proving
 Ground, Md.; and

Order a study of the practicality of converting a
 chemical weapons incinerator to incinerate
 conventional munitions before deciding whether
 to close Deseret Chemical Depot, Utah.

After wrapping up its deliberations, the panel
 will send its final report to President Bush by
 Sept. 8. The president, if he concurs, will send
 the final list to Congress, which can accept or
 reject it in its entirety, but not change it.

This week's deliberations follow months of
 hearings around the country regarding DoD's
 plan, which defense officials say will save some
 \$49 billion over the next 20 years.

National News Articles

Base-closing plan angers Republicans

USA Today
 Kathy Kiely

August 26, 2005

A Defense Department plan to close hundreds of
 facilities that it says are obsolete has infuriated
 prominent Republican lawmakers at a time when
 their support for President Bush's Iraq strategy
 could be more critical than ever.

"I think they are going to have trouble with
 some of us," says Rep. Ray LaHood, a veteran
 Illinois Republican fighting to save a National
 Guard base. A protégé of House Speaker Dennis
 Hastert, R-Ill., LaHood called the base closing
 process being finalized this week "as bush
 league as I have ever seen."

The president and Defense Secretary Donald
 Rumsfeld "should have paid a lot more attention
 to those of us who supported them in
 Afghanistan and Iraq," he said.

Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman declined
 to answer specific charges about the base-
 closing list. He defended it, saying the base
 closure process "was designed in a way
 specifically to remove many of the political
 concerns that surround it. We support that
 process."

The congressional criticism comes as the Bush
 administration is trying to maintain support for
 an increasingly unpopular war. In a USA
 TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll earlier this month,
 54% said going to war in Iraq was a mistake, the
 highest since last summer.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission
 (BRAC) was created in 1988 to take politics out
 of the process of shuttering military facilities in
 the United States. This year's hit list included
 facilities in the states and districts of some key
 White House allies and that has made some
 angry:

- Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman
 John Warner, R-Va., fighting to save thousands
 of defense jobs in the northern part of his state,
 said the Pentagon's way of picking facilities was
 "rigged" to mirror Rumsfeld's priorities: "I feel
 very strongly that some of these actions were
 never envisioned by those of us who put the law
 together."

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• Sen. Olympia Snowe, R-Maine, a key swing vote on several issues, said she believes the Pentagon targeted two installations in her state (one of which BRAC decided to keep open) because of "a bias in the military in the Northeast." She said the process left her less inclined to trust the Pentagon's decision making "without question."

• Rep. Rob Simmons, R-Conn., serves on the House Armed Services Committee and spent the last two months trying to save more than 8,000 jobs at a historic naval base in his district. The commission spared the Naval Submarine Base at New London, but Simmons is still irked that it was a target.

"I think I have been a good soldier," says Simmons, who faces a tough re-election campaign next year. "So you can imagine my shock on May 13 when the only base in my state, which happens to be 10 minutes from my house, was on the list."

Fueling Republican resentment: The feeling that political favoritism was allowed to influence decisions during the last round of base closings in 1995, when Democrats were in charge. At the time, Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle of South Dakota persuaded President Clinton to take Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota's second-largest employer, off the chopping block.

"I told him how critical this was to me," Daschle said Thursday. "I think it did make a difference that I had access to him."

Republican John Thune defeated Daschle last year and said he'd be in a better position to protect Ellsworth because he and Bush are in the same political party. However, the freshman senator wasn't able to keep the Pentagon from targeting the base again this year.

"I'm extremely disappointed in what in my view was the secretary of Defense's poor judgment," Thune says.

Under the federal law that created BRAC, Congress and President Bush must either accept

or reject the recommendations in their entirety — no picking individual bases. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, said there may be an attempt to reject the final list, but doesn't believe it will succeed.

Hutchison doesn't believe anger about base closings will affect Rumsfeld with Congress, but thinks a sixth round of base closings won't be authorized. "There is a bad feeling about the process," she says.

Commission Votes to Close Walter Reed Army Medical Center

Panel Also Opts to Move Thousands of Jobs From Northern Virginia

Washington Post

Eric M. Weiss and Lori Montgomery

August 25, 2005

The federal base-closing commission voted today to close the storied Walter Reed Army Medical Center in the District and move thousands of defense jobs out of leased office space in Northern Virginia.

While the closure of Walter Reed carries considerable emotional freight, the Virginia office moves could bring tremendous change to the region's economy, traffic, pollution and lifestyles as thousands of workers relocate from transit-friendly locations in Arlington and Alexandria onto military bases in outer suburbs.

The Pentagon has recommended that more than 22,000 military and civilian jobs be moved from leased space in the Virginia suburbs. The commission accepted most of those proposals but opted to keep the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency in Arlington and several smaller research agencies.

The biggest beneficiaries for the transfers accepted today are Fort Belvoir in Fairfax County, the Marine Corps base at Quantico in Prince William and Fort Meade in Anne Arundel County. Earlier, the panel unanimously approved the closure of Walter Reed under a plan that would expand what is now the National Naval Medical Center and create a "world-class

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flagship facility" bearing the Walter Reed name on the Bethesda campus.

"Kids coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan, all of them in harm's way, deserve to come back to 21st century medical care," said Anthony J. Principi, the chairman of the commission and a former secretary of veterans affairs.

When the transfer is complete in 2010, 286 military and 1,090 civilian employees would transfer to the more modern facility, with an additional 340 hospital beds. In addition, a new 140-bed hospital would be built at Fort Belvoir to serve military families in the Northern Virginia suburbs.

In the District, officials said that they were disappointed by the decision and that the surrounding community would mourn the passing of an institution that has been part of the nation's capital for more than 50 years. But they said they have virtually no hope of reversing the decision, given President Bush's stated commitment to stick by the BRAC recommendations.

"I'm very, very disappointed," D.C. Mayor Anthony A. Williams (D) said today. "But, based on the president's comments, what has been perceived as uphill, it's now, like, reverse."

Williams and others said the next step is to determine what federal officials plan to do with the property. The mayor said he would be willing to entertain development of a new federal center similar to one planned for the U.S. Department of Transportation along the Southeast waterfront. But D.C. Council Chairman Linda W. Cropp (D) and Council member Adrian M. Fenty (D-Ward 4), who represents the area, argued that the city should move immediately to persuade federal officials to relinquish the property to the city.

"I really regret that they did close Walter Reed. But now we need to get control," Cropp said in a telephone interview from her vacation home on the Eastern Shore. "This is a major property in the heart of the District of Columbia."

The Walter Reed campus, which lies on 113 acres between Georgia Avenue and 16th Street in Northwest Washington, would be an attractive parcel for residential and commercial redevelopment, real estate experts said.

If the city does gain control, Williams and others said it would create an unprecedented opportunity to develop a neglected stretch of Georgia Avenue, add housing to an already desirable neighborhood and dramatically plump up the city's tax base. As a federal installation, Walter Reed does not pay city property taxes. Fenty and Cropp stressed the need to keep most of the area residential; Williams said he would like to see Georgia Avenue developed as an urban "gateway, like what's happening up in Silver Spring."

Either way, "we've got to act quick," Fenty said in a telephone interview from Jamaica, where he was vacationing with his family. "It would be very bad to come out with a big federal office building on that site. . . . We need to act quickly so that whatever the community wants is at the front of the consideration line, regardless of whatever some congressperson from some other place in the country thinks should go there."

The Defense Department said the Walter Reed plans would have a one-time cost of \$988.8 million and would save \$301.2 million over the next 20 years. But commission members said the plan was less about saving money and more about providing state-of-the-art medical services for military personnel. "Whatever it costs, we need to incur that cost to provide care to the extraordinary men and women in harm's way," said commission member Samuel K. Skinner.

Commission member Sue E. Turner, a retired Air Force brigadier general, said she understood some might be upset about the loss of what she called the "Walter Reed heritage."

"But I was very pleased to see the legacy of Walter Reed, and everything that that name represents, has been preserved in the plan for the new facility," she said.

The closing of bases and vacating of leased office space in Northern Virginia is going to mean a shuffling of jobs, according to a study commissioned by Transwestern Commercial Services, a commercial real estate firm in Bethesda.

One of the biggest effects would be the loss of thousands of employees from leased office space in Northern Virginia to secure military bases or other military facilities. According to the Transwestern study, roughly 15,000 contractors who do \$13 billion worth of contracts with the Defense Department could also leave Northern Virginia and follow the agencies they do work with.

If the contractors leave, that would dump some 3.3 million square feet of office space back on the market -- mostly in Northern Virginia's Crystal City. The proposed move of several thousand workers to Fort Belvoir and Fort Meade, the study says, could add to gridlock.

The study estimates that 84,900 daily car trips would be added to the area's highways by 2015.

"It will take six hours for peak afternoon traffic to get through the Fairfax County Parkway at I-95 in 2010," said Stewart Schwartz, executive director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth. "It will take an estimated five hours to clear peak afternoon traffic from the Fort Belvoir area as a whole, even with already planned road expansion."

"Many of us have grappled with this issue since the very first time we saw the proposals," said James T. Hill, a commission member and retired Army general. He said his first concern was, "How are we all going to get into the gate at Belvoir?"

But he said he has softened his opposition and changed his mind about introducing an amendment that would reduce some of the leased-space moves.

News of Hospital Closing Hits Hard

Washington Post

Theola S. Labbe and Karlyn Barker

August 26, 2005

The word spread quietly and quickly yesterday over lunch in the third-floor cafeteria, in the hallways near nursing stations and along the grassy knolls of the guarded, 113-acre campus off Georgia Avenue NW: Walter Reed Army Medical Center almost certainly was closing for good.

Most of the D.C. hospital's 5,630 workers had suspected as much since May, when the Pentagon issued its recommendation to shutter the facility. But the news that a federal commission had approved the closing of the premier U.S. military hospital, which has helped heal the broken bodies of soldiers and presidents alike for nearly a century, still hit hard.

"This is the flagship of Army medicine," said Capt. Daryl Turner, 33, an operating nurse. "I guess the government has bigger plans in store."

Named after the Army major and physician who discovered that mosquitoes transmit yellow fever, Walter Reed opened May 1, 1909, with 80 beds but expanded to 2,500 soon after the outbreak of World War I. Through six U.S. wars, it was where hundreds of thousands of wounded combatants came to heal.

The current 260-bed medical center opened in 1978, and the original hospital is now an administration building.

In addition to treating members of the armed forces and veterans, the hospital has cared for presidents, members of Congress and foreign dignitaries. President Calvin Coolidge's teenage son had surgery at Walter Reed for septic poisoning in 1924. President Dwight D. Eisenhower stayed overnight for medical checkups before and during his presidency, and he and Gen. Douglas MacArthur spent their final days there.

After the March 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, the hospital reprised its role in treating war veterans for physical and psychological ailments. As of yesterday, doctors and other staff members had seen 4,666 soldiers from the Iraq

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war, for conditions ranging from missing limbs to post-traumatic stress disorder.

The complex has an on-site laboratory that constructs artificial limbs, correction braces and other devices and is the Army's hearing-aid repair center. It also has the service's only ocularist -- a specialist who creates artificial eyeballs -- and employs veterinarians who care for military "working animals" as well as the household pets of service members. The hospital's research includes projects on hepatitis, breast cancer, AIDS and illnesses related to the Persian Gulf War.

Unless President Bush overturns the base-closing commission's decision, Walter Reed will shut down as early as 2010. Under the Pentagon's plan, many of the hospital's jobs and services would be transferred to an expanded teaching and research hospital at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, which would keep the Walter Reed name. Other health care services and workers would be moved to a community hospital to be built at Fort Belvoir in Fairfax County.

Despite two briefings held by military officials last week to prepare employees for the closure, most workers interviewed yesterday said they had little idea whether their job would be sent to Maryland or Virginia.

Even the hospital's public affairs office had no information on the process for reassigning military and civilian employees, or on what would happen to the National Museum of Health and Medicine on the Walter Reed campus, with its more than 1 million archived materials and artifacts.

"We don't know anything," a spokeswoman for the hospital said yesterday afternoon. "We're watching it on television like everyone else."

At the rowhouses outside the gates, residents with a front-stoop view of the center's rose-brick buildings were mourning the recommendation. Darlean White, 59, remembered how she would spread a blanket on the hospital's grassy lawn, enjoying ham sandwiches and fruit drinks while

her granddaughter Taylor bounced a ball. Sometimes she would fall asleep on her front stoop, she felt that safe with a military installation right across the street, she said.

After Sept. 11, 2001, the picnics stopped because officials required identification to enter the campus, White said. Still, it was the hospital's ambulance workers who were first on the scene of a recent car accident in front of her home, even before D.C. police, White said. And in addition to being a good neighbor, White said, the mammoth military campus was a buffer against crime.

"Once Walter Reed leaves, we won't have any security," said White, who has lived in her Georgia Avenue home for 20 years. "People respect Walter Reed. If they put people and apartments over there, I may have to leave."

Less than a block from the main gate, Gabrielle Sawyer, 10, sold lemonade with her cousin for 50 cents a cup as her mother held a small yard sale. Gabrielle recalled a school trip to the Walter Reed museum and the old military uniforms and ancient bones that were on display.

"I just think the building is a treasure," said Gabrielle, who is starting sixth grade next week. "They shouldn't be moving it."

Exodus Would Usher In A New Era for Arlington

Washington Post
Brigid Schulte
August 26, 2005

Arlington would still be home to the Pentagon. But in losing thousands of civilian defense workers and private contractors, the county also would lose some of its identity.

In the prosaic, boxy office buildings of Crystal City and Ballston and Columbia Pike, some of the world's smartest scientists, researchers and analysts have developed some of the most powerful and deadly weapons. Some have devised maps from satellites and divined intelligence. Others simply have balanced the Army's books.

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Arlington, which along with Alexandria could lose more than 20,000 defense-related jobs as a result of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission vote yesterday, was named in 1920 after the estate of a Civil War general. World War II transformed it from a sleepy farm community to an urban center, bustling with workers and a sense of national purpose.

Now, it could have to remake itself.

"We've had a long history with the Department of Defense," said Jay Fisette, chairman of the Arlington County Board. "This is a mixed bag for us."

Mixed, he said, because there could be some initial hardship. People would move. Families would be uprooted. Traffic and the resulting air pollution probably would get worse, as thousands of jobs move south to the self-contained Fort Belvoir in Fairfax County and the Quantico Marine Corps base in Prince William. Office space in Northern Virginia would be vacant and cheaper.

And mixed, he said, because that cheaper office space would fill with other businesses, which could revitalize and reinvigorate such places as the demi-skyscrapers and empty streets of Crystal City, which could be described as sterile at best. "This gives property owners a chance to upgrade," Fisette (D) said. "It creates more opportunities."

In an ironic way, Fisette and other Northern Virginia officials predicted that the decision to move so many defense jobs outside the Beltway might draw far-flung, outside-the-Beltway businesses closer in.

U.S. Rep. James P. Moran Jr. (D-Va.) represents the Northern Virginia area that is slated to lose jobs and the area of Fairfax where they would be moved, which is set to boom. He foresees short-term pain over the forced change of character around the Pentagon. Yesterday's move was the equivalent of four major base closings, he said, and repercussions would be regionwide.

"There won't be tumbleweeds in Crystal City," he said. "Because of Arlington's proximity to D.C. and being on a Metro line, this space will fill right up."

Moran described the defense work in Arlington as the brains behind the military. And, after intense lobbying, Virginia lawmakers persuaded commissioners to leave some of the top defense research agencies right where they are.

Commissioners voted to allow the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency and the Office of Naval Research -- which is in the process of moving into a new, \$12 million building in Ballston -- to stay.

In town hall meetings this summer, Moran found that as many as half the scientists and researchers in these agencies -- people who easily could work in the private sector -- did not want to move.

"I'll flip hamburgers in Arlington before I'll commute to Bethesda," Thomas F. Hafer, a contractor who works with the Office of Naval Research, said at a June meeting.

In Crystal City yesterday, Rodney Millner, 52, a Defense Department analyst who lives in Laurel, said he would move to Virginia if his job were transferred to Fort Belvoir. But he said he doesn't expect his one-hour-20-minute commute to get shorter. "If everybody's moving there, there'll be just as much traffic," he said.

Moran said he would work to get federal money to deal with traffic congestion and other problems associated with moving so many people at once to southeastern Fairfax.

Fairfax officials said they are not against a new community in their county of more than 1 million people. They're opposed to finding themselves unprepared for 18,000 additional people on the roads near Fort Belvoir and for thousands of children looking for spots in schools that are already at capacity. "We will do the best we can to welcome those people," said Supervisor Gerald W. Hyland (D-Mount Vernon), who represents the area around Fort

Belvoir, which is growing faster than any other spot in the county. "But we will be looking to our federal partners to help us."

Despite the vote, Virginia lawmakers said they will not concede defeat. The plan will go to Congress for approval and to various committees for money to fund the job transfers. "We get another crack at that down the road," said U.S. Rep. Thomas M. Davis III (R-Va.). "There are several other ways to attack this thing."

During the base closure hearings, local lawmakers and officials made no secret that they felt unfairly targeted by the Pentagon, which adopted rules requiring leased buildings to be set back 82 feet from traffic and prohibiting them from sitting atop Metro lines or parking garages. None of the buildings in Arlington -- or any urban area, really -- meets those standards. The idea is to prevent terrorist truck bombs or attacks from below.

Moran and others said the Pentagon used these standards to flush jobs from inside the Capital Beltway.

"Terrorists had no idea what all these leased office facilities were," Moran said. "They didn't even know what the acronyms stand for. The Pentagon's the target, and the target's not moving."

Virginians Decry Office Space Decisions by BRAC

Congressional Quarterly
John M. Donnelly
August 25, 2005

Virginia legislators on Thursday criticized decisions by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission to move numerous Defense Department offices in leased properties in Northern Virginia to other locations in the Washington region.

The Pentagon wants to move the offices and roughly 22,000 people who work in them out of leased space that was not up to military standards for protection against truck bombs.

But the Virginia members have contended that the moves are not necessary and will hurt national defense, and they continued that line of attack on Thursday. The offices are mostly in Arlington and Alexandria.

Rep. Thomas M. Davis III, R-Va., called the BRAC decision "shortsighted," because the employees will find work in Northern Virginia's private sector rather than move.

"It will take years, if not decades, to recover from these ill-conceived proposals," Davis said. "In fact, I predict we will have to undo some of these moves once their impracticality becomes evident to Pentagon leadership."

Davis also predicted that the spending needed to accommodate the shift of workers to Fort Belvoir south of Washington would obviate the purported savings. "I trust the Department of Defense will prove a ready and willing partner as we secure the financial resources necessary to accommodate this massive shift in personnel," he said.

John W. Warner, R-Va., the Senate Armed Services chairman, has been critical of the Defense Department plan for Northern Virginia, even suggesting the possibility that the state might sue the federal government to block the proposal. In a statement, Warner suggested the fight is not over, though he did not mention possible legal action.

Warner said he would work with Sen. George Allen, R-Va., and Gov. Mark Warner, D-Va., and other officials "to ensure that properties are developed to provide appropriate force protection measures in a cost-effective manner. We remain concerned with some of the other decisions that have taken place regarding DoD activities in leased office space and will work together to determine the best course of action."

Allen's comments were similar.

"I will continue to work with my colleagues to explore all of our options and I will continue to stand in support of our military and civilian residents in Northern Virginia," he said.

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Many of the vacated facilities are in the district of Democrat James P. Moran.

“The commission ignored well-documented arguments that DoD was operating outside the law in their justifications for including these agencies in leased space on the list, that our highly skilled, specialized work force will not follow many of the agencies slated to relocate and that the cost savings were grossly miscalculated,” Moran said in a statement.

The Virginia members nonetheless applauded several BRAC decisions not to close facilities in their state, including the Office of Naval Research, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, the Air Force Office of Scientific Research and the Army Night Vision Lab at Fort Belvoir.

On Aug. 24, the panel voted to close Virginia’s Fort Monroe and also to move fighter jets from Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia Beach if the community did not undo encroachment of homes, schools and shopping centers near the base.

Another BRAC decision affecting the Washington area was the vote to close the city’s Walter Reed Army Medical Center and consolidate it with other medical facilities in Bethesda, Md.

Ellsworth Vote Expected
Friday’s BRAC votes promise to attract considerable attention. They include a decision on whether to close Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota, which employs 3,753 people. Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., unseated then-Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle last fall after promising that his connections in Washington would keep Ellsworth off the BRAC list. Since the base appeared on the list in May, Thune has campaigned indefatigably to reverse the proposal.

Also on Friday, the panel will consider whether to close New Mexico’s Cannon Air Force Base, with its 2,769 employees.

And the commission plans to offer a compromise plan to replace an Air Force recommendation to reorganize aircraft at Air National Guard bases. Three states have sued to block the changes, which governors say would deprive many of them of aircraft they need for homeland security and disaster relief. The Air Force maintains the proposed reorganization is the most efficient way to array its Guard planes.

Decisions 'Disappoint' D.C., Virginia Officials

Washington Times
Matthew Cella
August 26, 2005

Officials in the District and Virginia said yesterday they were disappointed at the closing of the historic Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the decision to move more than 20,000 jobs outside Northern Virginia.

D.C. Mayor Anthony A. Williams said he was "very disappointed" about the decision and called the hospital "a part of the fabric of our local community for years."

However, he and other city officials said it was unlikely they would mount a last-minute appeal to keep the facility in the District.

The federal Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission voted 8-0 with one abstention to close the medical center, saying it had become too old and outdated.

"Kids coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan, all of them in harm's way, deserve to come back to 21st-century medical care," said Anthony J. Principi, the chairman of the commission.

Under a Pentagon proposal, Walter Reed and most of its 5,600 employees would go to Maryland to the proposed 340-bed Walter Reed National Military Medical Center on the grounds of the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda.

Virginia Gov. Mark Warner, a Democrat, said the commission's decisions will have

"dramatically different impacts" on communities in the state.

Alexandria and Arlington lost 20,000 military and civilian defense jobs from leased office space in the close-in suburbs of Northern Virginia to military bases outside the Beltway.

Nearby Fairfax County could gain about 17,000 of those jobs, which are slated for Fort Belvoir. Marine Corps Base Quantico, farther down the Interstate-95 corridor in Prince William and Stafford counties, is expected to gain roughly 3,000 jobs.

Officials say the moves will hurt the local economy and create traffic nightmares.

Rep. James P. Moran, a Democrat, said the majority of the commission's decisions on leased space were "arbitrary, inconsistent and harmful," and Rep. Thomas M. Davis III, a Republican, described the decisions as "short-sighted."

"It will take years, if not decades, to recover from these ill-conceived proposals," Mr. Davis said. "In fact, I predict we will have to undo some of these moves once their impracticality becomes evident to Pentagon leadership."

The commission also voted to reject several Pentagon recommendations affecting Virginia, keeping nearly 5,420 jobs that had been slated for relocation to other facilities in other states.

D.C. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton, a Democrat, also took issue with the committee's decisions, saying members were predisposed to closing Walter Reed.

"It was clear from the dialogue [yesterday] that the commissioners were lured by the prospect of a new hospital, and everything else was off the table, even homeland security," Mrs. Norton said.

D.C. Council member Adrian M. Fenty, a Democrat who represents Ward 4 where Walter Reed center is located, joined Mr. Williams, a Democrat, and Mrs. Norton in saying that there

would be no further effort to save the medical center.

"You only have so much energy in a community," he said. "I think it's a done deal. The focus should be on what we're going to use the site for in the future."

Under realignment procedures, Walter Reed would have to be closed within six years.

Mr. Fenty said he expects the city will have a tough fight securing a section of or the entire 113-acre facility off Georgia Avenue.

Since it is federal land, federal agencies will have an opportunity to claim it. If no federal agency claims the site, the campus will be turned over to the General Services Administration (GSA.)

That could be beneficial for the District, since Mrs. Norton is the ranking member of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's subcommittee on economic development, public buildings and emergency management, the subcommittee that oversees the GSA.

The District then would have an opportunity to negotiate for the site for public uses, such as parks or schools. Mrs. Norton said it would be more complicated and costly, but still possible, to secure the site for private development.

Many local residents responded with uncertainty about the closing and the impact on the neighborhood.

"I've lived here 48 years, [so] I hate to think of something going away after so long," said Vera M. Majett, 79, who lives in a one-story house on Ninth Street Northwest, one block from the medical center.

Lucille Lewis, who lives with her husband, Tom, in the 7000 block of 16th Street Northwest, said: "We don't know what they're going to put there. That's my biggest concern."

Panel Approves Plan to Close Walter Reed Army Hospital

New York Times
David S. Cloud
August 25, 2005

The independent commission reviewing the Pentagon's plan to close or reorient hundreds of military bases agreed today to close the aging Walter Reed Army Medical Center, which has been treating many of the most severely wounded soldiers from Iraq.

The Base Closing and Realignment Commission voted 8 to 0 with one abstention to close the nearly 100-year-old hospital in Washington's outskirts and combine its operations with the nearby Bethesda Naval Medical Center, which would be expanded to include a new 340-bed hospital.

Commissioners said they believed that the Pentagon's \$989 million estimate for building the new hospital understated the likely cost, but said they were endorsing the move anyway because of the opportunity to build a state-of-the-art facility for treating wounded troops.

"Whatever it costs, we need to incur that cost to provide that world-class care to an extraordinary group of men and women in harm's way," said the commission's chairman, Anthony J. Principi, a former secretary of veterans affairs.

On its second day of deliberations on a final list to present to President Bush and Congress, the commission made few major changes to the Pentagon blueprint, which would close or consolidate a record 62 major military bases and 775 smaller installations and assign new missions to many existing facilities.

Much the panel's work today was devoted to voting on Pentagon plans that would combine certain Army, Navy, Air Force or Marine installations, to reduce duplication and save money.

Over all, the Pentagon has said it will save nearly \$50 billion over the next 20 years if all its proposals are adopted this year. But on

Wednesday the commission removed two major installations from the list—the Navy's submarine base in Groton, Conn., and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Me., which reduced the expected savings by around \$2.9 billion.

The commission is expected to make further changes on Friday, when it takes up proposed Air Force closures, including Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico and Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota, and a proposed shift of people, equipment and aircraft from at least 54 Air National Guard sites.

The commission, which was created by Congress, intends to finish its deliberations on Friday. By Sept. 8, it must send its final recommendations to President Bush, who has said he intends to forward the plan to Congress without changes.

Congress can then vote to accept or reject the list as a whole; it is barred from making changes by the law creating the commission. In the four previous rounds of base closings, Congress has allowed the commission's list to go into effect without a vote.

Today, the commission approved Defense Department plans to move more than 20,000 military and civilian jobs from leased offices in northern Virginia to various military bases in the state, including Fort Belvoir, Fort Lee and the Marine Corps base in Quantico. The Pentagon proposed the shift to save money and to better protect employees from possible terror attacks by putting them within military installations.

The panel also agreed close the Wilford Hall Medical Center, a half-century-old facility in San Antonio, Tex., and relocate most of its operations to Fort Sam Houston in the same city. The new facility will help train medics and other medical personnel for all the services, consolidating training that now occurs at multiple locations around the country.

City officials in Washington have questioned the benefit of relocating Walter Reed to Bethesda, several miles away. But the Pentagon has justified the move by arguing that a single

BRAC Commission Early Bird

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facility that serves all the military services will be more efficient and combine specialists in one place, improving care.

The Pentagon says that the shift of Walter Reed's operations to Bethesda will save \$301 million over 20 years and that most of the facilities 5,630 jobs will move to the new hospital. Gen. John J. Pershing died at Walter Reed in 1948. Gen. Douglas MacArthur died there in 1964, and Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1969.

Hospital officials have said that Walter Reed will remain open while the new facility, which the Pentagon is planning to name the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, is being built and that wounded soldiers will continue to be treated there until the move is completed in several years.

Hoping to save Ellsworth Air Force Base, a B-1 bomber base, the three-member South Dakota Congressional delegation and the state's governor attended today's hearing and said they were making headway at persuading the commission to consider leaving the installation open.

"We really have questioned the cost and I think they have backed off a little bit," Gov. Michael Rounds, a Republican, said.

Despite being told that the base would come up for consideration today, by late in the day it had still not been considered and the delegation was making plans to return on Friday. "We're here for the duration," Governor Rounds said.

Panel Votes to Merge Military Medical Centers

New York Times
David S. Cloud
August 26, 2005

The independent commission reviewing the Pentagon's plan to close or reorient hundreds of military bases decided Thursday to create a major new medical center for troops just outside Washington, by merging the operations of the

aging Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the nearby National Naval Medical Center.

The Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission voted 8 to 0 with one abstention to close the nearly 100-year-old Walter Reed hospital on Washington's outskirts and expand the Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md.

A new 340-bed hospital would be built at the Bethesda site, which the Pentagon is planning to name the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. Walter Reed, which has been treating many of the most severely wounded soldiers from Iraq, will remain open while the new facility is being built, which will take several years. Walter Reed normally operates about 200 beds.

Commissioners said they believed that the Pentagon's \$989 million estimate for building the new hospital understated the likely cost, but said they were endorsing the move anyway because of the opportunity to build a state-of-the-art facility for treating wounded troops.

"Whatever it costs, we need to incur that cost to provide that world-class care to an extraordinary group of men and women in harm's way," said the commission's chairman, Anthony J. Principi, the former secretary of veterans affairs.

City officials in Washington have questioned the benefit of closing Walter Reed and shifting the medical care it provides to Bethesda, several miles away. But the Pentagon has argued that a single facility serving all the military services would be more efficient and improve care, by combining specialists in one place.

The Pentagon said the shift would save \$301 million over 20 years and that most of the 5,630 jobs at Walter Reed will move to the new hospital.

On its second day of deliberations on a final list to present to the president and Congress, the commission made few major changes to the Pentagon blueprint, which would close or consolidate 62 large military bases and 775

smaller installations and assign new missions to many existing facilities.

In a rebuff to the Defense Department, the commission voted 7 to 2 late Thursday against sharply reducing the operations at Eielson Air Force Base near Fairbanks, Alaska, opting to keep 24 F-16 fighters at the base, rather than moving them to an installation in Nevada.

The Pentagon had wanted to shut down most of the base's operations, except for brief periods when planes would be sent there to train on its expansive bombing ranges. The plan would have saved \$1.8 billion over 20 years, the Pentagon said.

But commissioners said partly closing the base was not feasible because harsh Alaska winters required constant upkeep of the facilities. The commission went along with the Pentagon plan to move some A-10 attack planes from the base, but voted to keep the F-16s there, which would ensure the base remains open year-round.

Also on Thursday, the commission approved moving more than 20,000 military and civilian jobs from leased offices in northern Virginia to various military bases in the state, including Fort Belvoir, Fort Lee and the Marine Corps base in Quantico. The Pentagon proposed the shift to save money and to protect employees better from possible terrorist attacks by putting them within military installations.

The panel also agreed to close Wilford Hall Medical Center in San Antonio and relocate most of its operations to Fort Sam Houston in the same city. The new facility will help train medics and other medical personnel for all the services, consolidating training that now occurs around the country.

Over all, the Pentagon has said it would save nearly \$50 billion in the next 20 years if all its proposals are adopted this year. But on Wednesday the commission removed two major installations from the list- the Navy submarine base in Groton, Conn., and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Me., which reduced the expected savings by around \$2.9 billion.

The commission is expected to make further changes on Friday, when it takes up proposed Air Force closings, including Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico and Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota, and a proposed shift of people, equipment and aircraft from at least 54 Air National Guard sites.

The commission, which was created by Congress, intends to finish its deliberations on Friday. By Sept. 8, it must send its recommendations to President Bush, who has said he intends to forward the plan to Congress.

Congress can then vote to accept or reject the list as a whole; it is barred from making changes by the law that created the commission. In the four previous rounds of base closing, Congress has allowed the commission's list to go into effect without a vote.

Taps Plays for a Hospital That Tended All Ranks

New York Times
James Dao
August 26, 2005

For much of the last century, Walter Reed Army Medical Center was considered the Harvard of military medicine. Monarchs, generals and senators sought its care. President Dwight D. Eisenhower died in one of its beds. Soldiers wounded in combat, including thousands from Iraq, went there to replace shattered limbs and rebuild broken lives.

But for Arthur Gang, it was also a neighborhood hospital.

Mr. Gang, a retired soldier and government lawyer who died in 1998, delighted in going to Walter Reed for his medical care because he might encounter a congressman or ambassador there - or be mistaken for one himself, his daughter recalled. He once received flowers intended for Senator Bob Dole, who was in a room down the hall.

"He felt very honored to be there," said his daughter, Sharon Gang, the press secretary for Mayor Anthony A. Williams.

But the hospital's 113-acre campus in northwest Washington may soon be no more. On Thursday, the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission voted to close the center and merge it with the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., three miles to the northeast. There, unless the plan is disapproved by President Bush and Congress, a new 300-bed hospital will be named the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

Though the institution will live on, many in Washington have already begun grieving the loss of the current center, with its Georgian-style buildings, wooded lawns and storied past.

"Walter Reed is more than a building," said Peter B. Esker, secretary of the Walter Reed Society, a nonprofit group. "It's an almost 100-year tradition of the best of military medicine."

The hospital was named after an army major from Virginia who spent the 1880's treating soldiers in frontier outposts and led a commission that confirmed the theory that yellow fever was transmitted by mosquitoes. The breakthrough helped eradicate the disease and paved the way for completion of the Panama Canal.

The hospital opened in 1909 on farmland near the Maryland border with a staff of 65 to care for 10 patients. But with World War I, its patient load ballooned and it established the programs that made it famous, providing prosthetic limbs and rehabilitative therapy for soldiers wounded in combat. "Warrior care" it was called.

"It's more than just treating people who lost limbs," Mr. Esker said. "You name a medical specialty needed by the military, it's there at Walter Reed."

Between the world wars, the campus became home to a research center and a military medical school. World War II, like Korea and Vietnam after it, brought huge new waves of patients. The

care evolved and the prosthetics improved, though the injuries remained much the same.

Throughout those years, the center became the hospital of choice for an array of luminaries. In the 1950's, Winston Churchill could be seen visiting Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who was undergoing cancer treatment. On his deathbed at the hospital, Gen. Douglas A. MacArthur counseled President Lyndon B. Johnson to avoid sending troops to Southeast Asia, according to the historian William Manchester.

And when Senator John C. Stennis of Mississippi was shot twice and critically wounded by a robber in 1973, he told the ambulance attendants, "Please take me to Walter Reed."

King Hussein of Jordan and the exiled shah of Iran went there for care. But so did unheralded potentates from less strategically important nations. More often than not, they were pleased with the results, prompting one commander to quip that providing health care to visiting dignitaries was better for diplomacy than selling them battleships.

In recent years, however, presidents and congressmen have often gone to Bethesda for routine health care. And Walter Reed's 900-bed hospital shrank to a 225-bed capacity as outpatient services expanded.

But the war in Iraq revitalized its mission. Since combat began, the hospital has treated 4,355 people for war-related wounds or illnesses.

Dawn Halfaker, 26, was among them. In June 2004, Ms. Halfaker, then an Army first lieutenant, was brought to the hospital with a grenade wound to her right side.

"I was on a ventilator, in a coma, with my arm and my life hanging in the balance," she said.

Her arm was removed, and she entered a year of wrenching physical and occupational therapy. The hospital staff taught her not only how to use

her prosthetic limb, but also how to pay for groceries and blow dry her hair - with one arm.

"They put me back together," said Ms. Halfaker, who retired from the Army as a captain. "Literally, piece by piece."

With its 5,600 employees, Walter Reed has provided an economic boost to merchants along nearby Georgia Avenue. Many residents also felt secure knowing it was nearby for medical emergencies.

Now, they must begin worrying about what the government will do next with the sprawling campus. New development could be good if the surrounding community is consulted, said Councilman Adrian Fenty, who represents the area.

"But that said, the majority of people still feel we should fight to keep it," he said. "It has represented stability. It represents the good things about the federal government in the District."

Georgia upset with Carter's lobbying that foiled base jobs there

Associated Press (Boston Globe)

Daniel Yee

August 25, 2005

Former President Jimmy Carter, one of Georgia's most famous sons, was the target of scorn, shock and disbelief Thursday for his lobbying to save a Connecticut submarine base at the expense of thousands of jobs for his home state.

At least one member of an independent panel said Carter was part of the reason it voted to reverse a Pentagon recommendation to close the Naval Submarine Base New London -- which would have shifted six subs and 3,367 jobs to Georgia's Kings Bay base.

"What was he thinking?" asked Republican Gov. Sonny Perdue.

Carter, the only president ever to serve as a submariner, sent a letter to the Base Closure and

Realignment Commission last week, pleading to keep open the Groton, Conn., base where he had been stationed as a young engineer in the 1950s.

The Pentagon had estimated that shifting fast-attack submarines, a maintenance facility and the Naval Submarine School from Connecticut to Georgia would grow the overall work force in St. Marys, a coastal town of 14,000, by 22 percent -- the largest predicted percentage gain for any military community in the nation.

"You just hate to have an ex-president, a Navy guy and a Georgian going against the home team," said Rep. Jack Kingston, a Republican whose southeast Georgia district includes Kings Bay.

In St. Marys, the commission's decision, expected to be rubber-stamped by President Bush, has been the talk of the town. Mayor Deborah Hase says people are not pleased with Carter.

"It was a surprise. It was a shock that he would write that letter," Hase said. "You could fit four Groton bases on the Kings Bay base. It's cheaper to live here."

Carter issued a brief statement, saying the panel's decision Wednesday "was made on the merits of the case and not due to any political influences" and that Kings Bay would "continue to provide increasing services to our nation's defense."

His press secretary said Thursday that Carter would not comment any further on the matter. Yet political experts said the statement alone speaks loudly on the way Carter has dealt with political issues throughout his career -- he weighs the evidence and acts, no matter what the political cost.

"Carter's approach is to try to decide what was best for the nation," said Merle Black, professor of politics at Emory University in Atlanta. "He was trained as an engineer -- his approach was to study a problem and reach his own conclusions and proceed. It's Carter being Carter."

As president, Carter was always careful to not make decisions that could be perceived as parochial and he fought to protect that image when the Kings Bay base was created in 1978 while he was in the White House.

"Throughout Carter's career, he's paid a lot of political price for this approach," Black said. "I can't imagine he's very popular in south Georgia this morning. What's unusual is he seems more concerned about the south Connecticut economy than the south Georgia economy."

In his letter to the base closure panel, Carter said he feared that closing the Groton base would result in "a loss of some of the proud submariners heritage of our historic association with service and training in New London."

"I don't profess to speak for other active and retired submariners, but I believe that, overwhelmingly, the consensus would be that transferring the submarine forces from New London would be militarily deleterious," he wrote.

Connecticut officials were understandably overjoyed.

"I want to express my sincere appreciation to President Carter," said Sen. Chris Dodd. "As far as I know, it is entirely unprecedented in the 17 years of the BRAC process for a former commander-in-chief to write to save a particular military base from closure."

Fellow Democratic Sen. Joe Lieberman added: "We are thrilled that he has lent his support to our efforts to save the base."

The 80-year-old Carter, a former Georgia governor who still lives in rural Plains, didn't make his opinions known before visiting Kings Bay two weeks ago to dive in the new submarine USS Jimmy Carter. The sub was built at Groton's Electric Boat shipyards and commissioned at the Groton base. The sub ride came just days before Carter sent his letter to the panel.

"He was a great president and everything, but it's just pretty bizarre he would say that, being from Georgia," said Karen Landry, executive assistant at the Camden-Kings Bay Chamber of Commerce.

Walter Reed medical center to be closed

Associated Press (Boston Globe and USA Today)

Liz Sidoti

August 25, 2005

The base closing commission voted Thursday to shut down the Army's historic Walter Reed hospital and move about 20,000 defense workers away from the nation's capital. The panel also began shuttering Air Force bases.

The nine-member commission endorsed much of Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld's broader plan to streamline support services across the Army, Navy and Air Force. In many cases, it voted to merge programs scattered around military facilities across the country to centralized locations.

Late Thursday, the commission voted to approve its own proposal to close the Galena Airport Forward Operation Location in Alaska, which the Air Force uses to land jets when necessary. The Air Force had wanted to keep it open. The commercial airport there would continue operating.

The panel also approved a Pentagon plan to close Onizuka Air Force Station in California.

Commissioners are to vote on the Air Force's most contentious base closings Friday.

The Air Force wants to vastly reconfigure the Air National Guard, a move that states fiercely oppose. It also wants to close Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota and Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico.

Anticipating the high-stakes votes, the entire South Dakota congressional delegation -- Sens. John Thune, a Republican, and Tim Johnson, a Democrat, and Democratic Rep. Stephanie Herseth -- attended the hearing, as did

Democratic Gov. Bill Richardson of New Mexico.

As the commission tackled proposals that affected all the service branches, members focused on recommendations that sometimes were complex and interconnected.

"In this case, I'm pretty confident we got it right," commissioner Harold Gehman said, while considering a plan to consolidate some research and development activities. "But I'm telling you we're going to be faced with a bunch of these ... where I honestly do not know if we got it right or not."

Commissioner James Hill called the day's deliberations on the joint-services section agony and said the lengthy debate "highlights the complexity of these issues."

The politicians milled around the Arlington, Va., hotel ballroom where the hearings were held near the Pentagon, serving as constant reminders of their efforts to spare the bases that provide thousands of jobs in each state.

The commission signed off on many recommendations to merge education, medical, administrative and training programs, although it made adjustments in some cases. In others, the panel rejected the proposals outright. But those were in the minority. The Defense Department is trying to achieve what it calls "jointness" -- the services combining their strengths, rather than working separately -- to save money and promote efficiency.

Part of that effort was closing Walter Reed -- the crown jewel of U.S. military hospitals -- and moving much of its staff and services across town to the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., which will be updated and expanded. In a nod to the Army hospital's century-old heritage, the expanded facility will be renamed Walter. Some of the old hospital's personnel and operations also will move to a community hospital at Fort Belvoir in Virginia.

The commission said care at Walter Reed, which has treated presidents and foreign leaders as well

as veterans and soldiers, is considered first-rate but the facility is showing its age.

"Kids coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan, all of them in harm's way, deserve to come back to 21st century medical care," said commission Chairman Anthony Principi. "It needs to be modernized."

The panel also largely sided with the Pentagon on shifting more than 20,000 military and civilian defense jobs from leased office space in northern Virginia suburbs of Washington to military bases farther away from the capital city.

Opponents had argued that such a massive job shift could create traffic nightmares. But the Pentagon said military bases will provide a more secure setting, given threats of terrorism following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. On that day, one of the hijacked airplanes slammed into the Pentagon.

The commission must send its final report to President Bush by Sept. 8. The president can accept it, reject it or send it back for revisions. Congress also will have a chance to veto the plan in its entirety but it has not taken that step in four previous rounds of base closings. If ultimately approved, the changes would occur over the next six years.

In May, the Pentagon proposed closing or consolidating a record 62 major military bases and 775 smaller installations to save \$48.8 billion over 20 years, streamline the services and reposition the armed forces.

In the months since, the Air Force proposals have emerged as the most controversial. The Pentagon says they are designed to make the service more effective by consolidating both weapons systems and personnel as the Air Force moves to a smaller but smarter aircraft fleet.

The Air National Guard plan would shift people, equipment and aircraft around at 54 or more sites where Guard units are stationed. Aircraft would be taken away from 25 Air National Guard units. Instead of flying missions, those units would get other missions such as

expeditionary combat support roles. They also would retain their state missions of aiding governors during civil disturbances and natural disasters.

Several states have sued to stop the shake-up and the commission itself has voiced concern that the plan would compromise homeland security.

Closing Cannon would cost Clovis, N.M., a small town on the Texas-New Mexico line, nearly 3,000 jobs on the base and as many as 2,000 more related jobs in the community. Home to four F-16 fighter squadrons, Cannon represents a third of the local economy in the community along the eastern edge of New Mexico.

Commission rejects Hanscom expansion

Associated Press (Boston Globe)

Jay Lindsay

August 25, 2005

An independent commission on Thursday rejected a Pentagon plan to expand research capabilities at Hanscom Air Force, saying the proposal was "a dumb idea" that would have transferred operations to Hanscom that didn't belong there.

Members of the Base Realignment and Closure commission said it appeared the Pentagon "Google searched" the names of different units at three other bases, and sent those to Hanscom that sounded like they fit the Bedford base's high tech research mission.

In fact, most didn't, said commissioner Admiral Harold Gehman Jr.

"We are sweeping up like-sounding names of things ... but they are really quite different," Gehman said.

Commissioner Gen. James Hill called the plan "just a dumb idea done by people who were trying to do something right."

"It didn't work and we need to get rid of it," he said.

The commission voted 7-1, with one abstention, to reject the proposal.

The vote comes three months after the Pentagon issued its recommendations on scores of military bases around the country. While a number of states battled proposed closures that threatened thousands workers, Hanscom looked forward to an expansion that would have added more than 1,000 jobs to the base.

Under the Pentagon plans, three new buildings would have been constructed in 2006 and 2007, adding nearly 616,000 square feet to a base that now has 240 buildings and 3.7 million square feet.

The restructuring would have consolidated the work currently being done at six bases at Hanscom and California's Edwards Air Force Base.

Hanscom would have taken over work from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio, Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama and Lackland Air Force Base in Texas.

The high cost of living in the New England area was cited among several complaints by personnel at those bases, according to commission analyst Les Farrington. But the biggest concern was that their jobs were unrelated to Hanscom's work, and would do nothing to achieve the Pentagon's aims of streamlining Air and Space research.

For instance, the unit from Lackland that would have moved to Hanscom under the Pentagon plan focused on cryptography. The Maxwell unit, the Operations and Sustainment Systems Group, installs and maintains computer software.

"It has nothing to do with research and development, and I see no reason to spend the money to move them," said Gen. Lloyd Newton.

Members of Congress and state and local officials had lobbied hard to keep Hanscom from closing, and the news that it would expand under

the Pentagon's plan was seen as a victory for the state.

U.S. Sen. Edward Kennedy said it was "unfortunate" that the Pentagon misclassified jobs in its proposal, but added it's more important that Hanscom remained open.

"We won this battle on May 13, when the Pentagon decided not to close Hanscom, saving 30,000 jobs in Massachusetts," he said.

Gov. Mitt Romney said he was disappointed the proposed jobs wouldn't be added at Hanscom, "but our expectation is that as military spending and research grows, so will Hanscom."

U.S. Rep. Martin Meehan, D-Mass., whose district includes Hanscom, said he expects the Air Force will give first consideration to the base as it expands research programs.

"I'm pleased the commission recognized Hanscom's unique military value," he said.

Hanscom is a leading research and development center for military technology, including electronic systems, flight management and avionics.

The vote on Hanscom follows major victories for other military bases in New England. On Wednesday, the commission rejected the Pentagon's plans to close a submarine base in Groton, Conn., and a naval shipyard in Kittery, Maine.

The commission is expected on Friday to vote on the Pentagon's proposal to close the Otis Air National Guard base on Cape Cod.

The commission's recommendations will be sent to President Bush, who must give final approval.

Panel approves health-care closures, realignments

Air Force Times
Gordon Trowbridge
August 25, 2005

The independent base-closings commission Thursday approved most of a sweeping Pentagon plan to revise military health-care facilities, including the closing of historic Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

The Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission also approved changes in San Antonio, where the Wilford Hall Medical Center at Lackland Air Force Base will consolidate with Brooke Army Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston.

The Army post also will host joint training for enlisted medical troops, consolidating separate service schools from bases in Texas, Illinois, Virginia and California.

The closing of Walter Reed's Washington, D.C., campus would establish a new center under that name at the site of Bethesda Naval Medical Center, Md. Washington political officials had criticized the plan, saying it would reduce the ability of the nation's capital to react to a terrorist attack or other disaster and destroy decades of history.

And commissioners were skeptical of the Pentagon's costs estimate for building the new center, as well as a new community hospital at Fort Belvoir, Va..

But the promise of better care for troops wounded in combat overcame those concerns.

"These kids coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan deserve the very best care we can provide," said Anthony Principi, the panel's chairman. Principi said he doubted the Pentagon's \$200 million cost estimate, but "whatever it costs, we need to incur that cost."

The Walter Reed plan also won praise from Commissioner Sue Turner, a retired Air Force brigadier general and former head of her service's nursing corps.

Turner, a San Antonio resident, also complimented the reorganization there, which some veterans and military advocates worry

could degrade service to military families and reduce trauma care in the city.

“This is really difficult for me,” said Turner, a former chief nurse at Wilford Hall. But the outpatient care facility that will remain at Lackland Air Force Base will meet local needs and better match current medical practice, she said.

The commission is expected to finish its votes on Friday or Saturday, and must send its final report to President Bush by Sept. 8. If he approves the list, it becomes law unless both houses of Congress reject it.

Three DFAS centers to remain open

Air Force Times
Gordon Trowbridge
August 25, 2005

Defense accounting centers in Ohio, Maine and New York will remain open and one in Colorado will close under a revised plan approved on Thursday by the independent base closings commission.

The Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission added the Defense Finance and Accounting Service center in Denver to its closing list and voted to keep open sites in Cleveland; Limestone, Maine; and Rome, N.Y. The revised plan would consolidate 26 DFAS sites around the country into five — two more than the Pentagon had wanted to keep.

The revised measure would still move more than 6,300 jobs to the new locations and eliminate 1,100 positions. It would retain DFAS facilities in Indianapolis and in Columbus, Ohio, which the Pentagon had recommended, though those sites likely will gain fewer positions under the new plan.

Commissioners said their measure would accomplish the Pentagon’s goal of consolidating to reduce costs, but would ease the plan’s impact on small communities already affected by base closings.

“We’ve got a better proposal, a fairer proposal, one that makes more money for the department,

still does what we need to do and keeps faith with some of the smaller communities,” said Commissioner James Hill, a retired Army general.

Commissioner Lloyd Newton, a retired Air Force general, said the plan alleviated his concerns that the consolidation would hurt the ability of DFAS to process service members’ pay.

“This was about that young airman who just came into the service in the last six months, about them and their families getting their pay and getting it on time,” Newton said.

Chairman Anthony Principi, said keeping Limestone was especially important. A previous commission had closed Loring Air Force Base and added the DFAS facility to help offset the job loss of that closing.

After Fort Monmouth Is Hit, Merger Plan for 3 Other Bases

New York Times
Damien Cave
August 26, 2005

A federal panel voted yesterday to combine three existing Army, Navy and Air Force bases in New Jersey into a joint "mega-base" under one command, but local officials said the move would barely soften the blow from the commission's decision, a day earlier, to close Fort Monmouth and send thousands of jobs to Maryland.

The action yesterday by the Base Closure and Realignment Commission would combine the efforts of Fort Dix, McGuire Air Force Base and Naval Air Engineering Station Lakehurst under a central commander at McGuire, the largest of the three installations in central New Jersey. Few if any jobs would be added.

Members of the state's congressional delegation had sought but failed to persuade the commission to include Fort Monmouth in the new joint base, and yesterday they were still reeling and trying to make sense of the decision to close the installation. In particular, they were

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puzzled by a small caveat introduced into the decision that seemed to offer a sliver of hope that Fort Monmouth could still be kept open.

The vote on Wednesday to close Fort Monmouth was definitive: 7 to 1. But just before making the decision, the commissioners passed an amendment that said the facility could not be closed until the Army proved that the move would not hurt military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

No one seems clear on how long it might take the Army to meet the required condition. Nor are officials sure of who will make that decision.

"This kind of amendment looks like a first," said Vice Admiral Paul Gaffney, retired, who is president of Monmouth University, a former head of research and development for the Navy and chairman of a commission formed to protect New Jersey bases. "No one really knows what it means."

Officials said they were particularly confounded by the vote-caveat combination because commission members, in their remarks at Wednesday's hearing, seemed to recognize that Army research done at the base - including work on devices that combat improvised explosive devices in Iraq - would be disrupted if the Pentagon's proposal to move its operations to Maryland was approved.

"When we first heard them talking about their concerns, we were thinking this is great, they will vote to keep it open," said United States Representative Frank Pallone, a Democrat from Monmouth County. "Then they said, 'We'll close you, but -- ' I don't know how else to describe it except as strange."

"It made no sense," said Maria Gatta, mayor of Oceanport, which has jurisdiction over a third of the base's roughly 1,100 acres. "They adopted all our positions, then turned around and said we're going to close the fort."

Officials with the base closing commission did not respond to e-mail and telephone messages seeking clarification.

The Department of Defense, in its recommendation that the base be closed, said that Fort Monmouth's Communications and Electronics Command should be transferred to the Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, where research efforts could be consolidated. It estimated that closing Fort Monmouth would save \$1 billion, the Army's largest money saver in the current round of proposed realignments. Local advocates dispute the figure.

If President Bush approves the closure nominations next month, nearly 5,200 jobs, both civilian and military, would be lost at the base. He can make changes to the list of nominations before submitting it to Congress for an up-or-down vote, but neither the President nor lawmakers are expected to overturn the commission's decisions.

In another decision announced yesterday, the base commission approved a 600-job expansion at Picatinny Arsenal in Morris County, but local businessmen and officials said that would not offset the economic blow to the largely working-class towns near Fort Monmouth. The Department of Defense has estimated that an additional 4,465 jobs would be lost indirectly with the fort's closing.

Tony Couzo, 55, the owner of Guido's Famous Pizza, a restaurant on Lewis Street, a few blocks from the base's entrance, said that his lunch business could be devastated if his military customers moved on.

The commission's decision and its additional conditions seemed to only deepen the community's limbo, he said. "It's tough to be a businessman during a time of uncertainty."

Several advocates for the base said that there might still be a chance of keeping the base open - if they could force the Army to do a detailed review.

"What we would like to do," Mr. Pallone said, "is go through Congress or the Government Accountability Office and make them set forth some kinds of benchmarks so this isn't open to

the Army just writing a perfunctory letter saying we meet all the conditions."

Mr. Pallone, along with other members of the New Jersey Congressional delegation, including Representative Christopher Smith, a Republican, said they were most concerned with Fort Monmouth's role in the war. They said that it was too risky to close the base because several weapons and communication systems were being developed and maintained at the installation.

A particularly important program based at Fort Monmouth, they said, disrupts the remote controls that are used in Iraq to detonate improvised explosive devices.

Tim Snyder, a spokesman for Fort Monmouth, said that there are about 80 engineers, in addition to other civilian and military employees, at Fort Monmouth who worked on the system, which is called Warlock.

He said that the base also developed, bought and maintained a wide range of battlefield communication systems, including radios, cellphones and hand-held devices that use mapping software to identify troop movements and reduce the likelihood of death by friendly fire.

Still, some officials said they saw no ambiguity in the decision to close the base. "There was no process or procedure put in place to accommodate the conditions," said Gerry Tarantolo, the mayor of Eatontown, where most of Fort Monmouth is located. "I suspect that the final decision was made yesterday and that Fort Monmouth will be closed."

Base-closing panel votes to close Walter Reed hospital, takes up Air Force closures

Associated Press
Liz Sidoti
August 26, 2006

Siding with the Pentagon, the base-closing commission voted Thursday to shut down the Army's historic Walter Reed hospital and move

about 20,000 defense workers miles away from their offices just outside the nation's capital.

The nine-member panel also started deciding which Air Force facilities should be closed or consolidated as part of the Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld's nationwide restructuring of military bases.

Overall, the commission endorsed much of Rumsfeld's broader plan to streamline support services across the Army, Navy and Air Force. In many cases, it voted to merge programs scattered around military facilities across the country to centralized locations.

Just before adjourning for the day, the commissioners decided to shutter Air Force facilities in Alaska and California. But they postponed until Friday votes on the service branch's most contentious recommendations.

The Air Force wants to vastly reconfigure the Air National Guard, a move that states fiercely oppose. It also wants to close Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota and Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico.

Anticipating the high-stakes votes, the entire South Dakota congressional delegation - Sens. John Thune, a Republican, and Tim Johnson, a Democrat, and Democratic Rep. Stephanie Herseth - attended the hearing, as did Democratic Gov. Bill Richardson of New Mexico.

Late Thursday, the commission decided to approve its own proposal to close the Galena Airport Forward Operation Location in Alaska, which the Air Force uses for training and to land fighter jets when necessary. The Air Force had wanted to keep it open, but commissioners say other Air Force bases in Alaska suffice. The commercial airport there would continue operating.

The panel also chose to keep Eielson Air Force Base in Alaska operational, rejecting a Pentagon plan to sharply scale back personnel and aircraft there.

But commissioners did side with military planners in approving the closure of two other major bases - Onizuka Air Force Station in California and Brooks City-Base in Texas.

As the commission tackled proposals that affected all the service branches, members focused on recommendations that sometimes were complex and interconnected.

"In this case, I'm pretty confident we got it right," commissioner Harold Gehman said, while considering a plan to consolidate some research and development activities. "But I'm telling you we're going to be faced with a bunch of these ... where I honestly do not know if we got it right or not."

Commissioner James Hill called the day's deliberations on the joint-services section agony and said the lengthy debate "highlights the complexity of these issues."

The politicians milled around the Arlington, Va., hotel ballroom where the hearings were held near the Pentagon, serving as constant reminders of their efforts to spare the bases that provide thousands of jobs in each state.

The commission signed off on many recommendations to merge education, medical, administrative and training programs, although it made adjustments in some cases. In others, the panel rejected the proposals outright. But those were in the minority. The Defense Department is trying to achieve what it calls "jointness" - the services combining their strengths, rather than working separately - to save money and promote efficiency.

Part of that effort was closing Walter Reed - the crown jewel of U.S. military hospitals - and moving much of its staff and services across town to the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., which will be updated and expanded. In a nod to the Army hospital's century-old heritage, the expanded facility will be renamed Walter Reed.

Some of the old hospital's personnel and operations also will move to a community hospital at Fort Belvoir in Virginia.

The commission said care at Walter Reed, which has treated presidents and foreign leaders as well as veterans and soldiers, is considered first-rate but the facility is showing its age.

"Kids coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan, all of them in harm's way, deserve to come back to 21st century medical care," said commission Chairman Anthony Principi. "It needs to be modernized."

The panel also largely sided with the Pentagon on shifting more than 20,000 military and civilian defense jobs from leased office space in northern Virginia suburbs of Washington to military bases farther away from the capital city.

Opponents had argued that such a massive job shift could create traffic nightmares. But the Pentagon said military bases will provide a more secure setting, given threats of terrorism following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. On that day, one of the hijacked airplanes slammed into the Pentagon.

The commission must send its final report to President Bush by Sept. 8. The president can accept it, reject it or send it back for revisions. Congress also will have a chance to veto the plan in its entirety but it has not taken that step in four previous rounds of base closings. If ultimately approved, the changes would occur over the next six years.

In May, the Pentagon proposed closing or consolidating a record 62 major military bases and 775 smaller installations to save \$48.8 billion over 20 years, streamline the services and reposition the armed forces.

In the months since, the Air Force proposals have emerged as the most controversial. The Pentagon says they are designed to make the service more effective by consolidating both weapons systems and personnel as the Air Force moves to a smaller but smarter aircraft fleet.

The Air National Guard plan would shift people, equipment and aircraft around at 54 or more sites where Guard units are stationed. Aircraft would be taken away from 25 Air National Guard units. Instead of flying missions, those units would get other missions such as expeditionary combat support roles. They also would retain their state missions of aiding governors during civil disturbances and natural disasters.

Several states have sued to stop the shake-up and the commission itself has voiced concern that the plan would compromise homeland security.

Closing Cannon would cost Clovis, N.M., a small town on the Texas-New Mexico line, nearly 3,000 jobs on the base and as many as 2,000 more related jobs in the community. Home to four F-16 fighter squadrons, Cannon represents a third of the local economy in the community along the eastern edge of New Mexico.

Big-ticket Air Force proposals up for votes before base-closing commission

Associated Press
Liz Sidoti
August 26, 2005

Only some of the most contentious proposals - all from the Air Force - are left for the federal base-closing commission to accept or reject as it completes work on the Pentagon's nationwide restructuring of military bases.

The fate of some of the Air Force's largest and smallest facilities hung in the balance Friday, two days after the nine-member panel decided which Army and Navy bases to shutter and consolidate.

Among the decisions the nine-member panel had yet to make was whether to sign off on the Air Force's revamping of the Air National Guard, which some states have sued over, and the service's plans to close two large bases - Ellsworth Air Force Base on the South Dakota prairie and Cannon Air Force Base in Clovis,

N.M. Both facilities contribute heavily to their statewide economies.

"Another sleepless night in Clovis," Stacey Martin, president of local chamber of commerce, lamented after the commission put off a vote on Cannon until Friday.

The panel must send its final report to President Bush by Sept. 8. The president can accept it, reject it or send it back for revisions. Congress also will have a chance to veto the plan in its entirety but it has not taken that step in four previous rounds of base closings. If ultimately approved, the changes would occur over the next six years.

In May, the Pentagon proposed closing or consolidating a record 62 major military bases and 775 smaller installations to save \$48.8 billion over 20 years, make the services more efficient and reposition the armed forces.

While casting doubt on the estimated savings, the commission has largely endorsed Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld's effort to streamline support services across the Army, Navy and Air Force by merging similar programs scattered around small military facilities. However, the panel also bucked the Pentagon on a couple of large Navy base closures in New England that Rumsfeld wanted.

Across the country, communities anxiously awaited word on whether their Air Force bases would be scrapped or spared, as politicians who represent them flew to Washington to be present for the high-stakes votes - and serve as personal reminders of their exhaustive efforts to persuade the commission to save their homestate bases.

"We're all on pins and needles, that's for sure," said Bill Okrepkie, a local council member in Rapid City, S.D.

Top lawmakers from South Dakota, New Mexico and elsewhere were tense Thursday as they awaited the votes that analysts say could drastically reduce employment opportunities. Between television interviews, New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson and Sen. John Thune, R-

S.D., and others filed in and out of an Arlington, Va. hotel ballroom where the commission was holding its hearings, just minutes from the Pentagon.

Throughout the day, the commission plowed through dozens of Pentagon recommendations to consolidate education, medical, administrative and training programs and small facilities spread across the Army, Navy and Air Force.

Just before adjourning, the commissioners started in on the Air Force proposals, deciding to shutter the Onizuka Air Force Station in California and the Galena Airport Forward Operation Location in Alaska, which the Air Force uses for training and to land fighter jets when necessary.

Also in Alaska, the commission chose to keep Eielson Air Force Base operational, rejecting a Pentagon plan to sharply scale back personnel and aircraft there.

"The commission clearly saw our argument that its airspace and training facilities are too valuable and it is impractical to 'warm base' such a cold place," Gov. Frank Murkowski said.

Air Force officials say their proposal as a whole is designed to make the service more effective by consolidating both weapons systems and personnel as the force moves to a smaller but smarter aircraft fleet.

The Air National Guard plan would shift people, equipment and aircraft around at 54 or more sites where Guard units are stationed. Major Air Guard and Reserve facilities in Alaska, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin would close. In some states, aircraft would be taken away from 25 Air Guard units. Those units would get other assignments such as expeditionary combat support roles. They also would retain their missions of aiding governors during statewide emergencies.

The proposed closure of Ellsworth, home to half the nation's fleet of B1-B bombers, has created a huge political headache for Thune, a freshman

senator. He has spent the past few months working almost exclusively on saving the base, and, perhaps, his political future. The Republican had argued during the 2004 campaign that he - rather his Democratic opponent, then-Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle - would be in a better position to save Ellsworth.

Shutting down Cannon would cost Clovis, N.M., a small town on the Texas-New Mexico line, nearly 3,000 jobs on the base and as many as 2,000 more related jobs in the community. The base that is home to four F-16 fighter squadrons represents a third of the local economy.

2 Military Schools Pass Test

Los Angeles Times

John Hendren

August 26, 2005

The base closure panel votes to keep open the Monterey sites and shut a historic Army hospital in the nation's capital.

The panel deciding the fate of U.S. military bases voted Thursday to spare two California institutes but went along with a Pentagon recommendation to close the storied Walter Reed Army Medical Center, ending a century of care to presidents, soldiers and visiting world leaders.

The decisions to preserve the Defense Language Institute and the Naval Postgraduate School, both in Monterey, came as the independent commission met for a second day of votes on the first overhaul of the nation's military installations in 10 years.

Thursday's action by the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission buoyed supporters of the Monterey schools but disappointed officials in Washington who opposed the move of the famed military hospital's staff and services to sites in suburbs of the capital.

The panel is being watched closely by local and state officials, military commanders and the Bush administration, especially after it stunned

the defense establishment this week by overturning a Pentagon recommendation to close two major New England bases, in effect overriding a key portion of Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld's blueprint to restructure the military.

Those reversals have intensified speculation about a decision expected today on a politically charged Pentagon recommendation to shutter the Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota, one of two U.S. bases for the B-1 bomber. That planned closure is among the most contentious still to be considered, along with an Air Force plan to revamp the Air National Guard.

Because of the pending decision on the Ellsworth base, Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) spent time Thursday buttonholing commissioners in the foyer of the suburban Washington hotel where they are meeting as if he were campaigning for reelection.

In a sense, he was.

Thune unseated Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle in 2004 in part by promising that he would do a better job protecting the base, which had been targeted for closure in the past. Ellsworth's shutdown would increase his estrangement from Republican leaders and spur criticism back home.

But Thune and Republican South Dakota Gov. Michael Rounds, predicting the votes of the nine commissioners as best they could, expressed confidence.

"We have an idea about how some of these folks are going to come down," Thune said, without elaborating. "I think we've made the arguments. We consistently are in contact with commissioners. We're hopeful."

The South Dakotans have insisted that the state that is home to Mt. Rushmore is capable of taking unusual measures to spare the base from closure.

"In this state," Rounds told the Omaha World-Herald recently, "when we look at a mountain in front of us, we carve it."

In other instances, the base closure panel has shown its willingness to reject the Defense Department's proposals, voting to leave open two major Northeastern naval bases that the Pentagon had wanted to close — the Naval Submarine Base New London at Groton, Conn., and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine.

The panel also voted to shutter some bases that the Defense Department had sought to keep open, on the grounds that Rumsfeld had "substantially deviated" from the law guiding base closures.

Some cases confronting commission members were complicated. All were contentious, leaving even some commissioners puzzling over whether they had made the right choice.

"I honestly do not know if we got it right or not," said retired Navy Adm. Harold W. Gehman Jr., a commission member, referring to several decisions.

In addition to closing Walter Reed and shifting its 5,600 jobs from the nation's capital to the Maryland suburbs and to Ft. Belvoir, Va., the panel approved the Pentagon's cost-saving plans to combine medical, educational and training programs.

The commission also agreed with the Defense Department's plan to move 20,000 military and civilian defense jobs from leased offices near the Pentagon in Virginia to outlying areas, largely to lessen security threats.

Officials in Washington were upset by the decisions. "We are extremely disappointed to lose this historic military installation," Mayor Anthony A. Williams said of Walter Reed hospital. "This loss will significantly affect residents, employees and neighboring jurisdictions."

The base-closing process is part of the fifth round of closings that began in 1988. The Pentagon issued its recommendations in May, proposing to cut more than 5% of the nation's base capacity and save \$48.8 billion over 20 years.

The commission, appointed by President Bush in consultation with Democratic and Republican congressional leaders, is charged with reviewing the Pentagon's recommendations and reporting to Bush by Sept. 8. The president can forward the panel's report to Congress or send it back to the commission, but the final reorganization plan must go to Congress by Nov. 7.

Advocates for Ellsworth and other bases hoped to share the good fortune of Monterey. The Pentagon had not recommended that the institutes there be shut down, but commission members last month questioned whether they duplicated services provided elsewhere, and threatened to vote to close them.

In opting to keep the schools open, commissioners also voted to establish a governing board to eliminate duplication.

"We're guardedly happy," Defense Language Institute spokeswoman Patrician Ryan said. "Meanwhile, we'll go on with our mission as before: training language students. We did it yesterday, we're doing it today, and we'll do it tomorrow."

Monterey Deputy City Manager Fred Cohn said officials had shuttled back and forth from Washington all summer to keep an eye on the panel's progress.

"This is good news all around," he said Thursday.

The Defense Department has nine commands based in Monterey. They provide 10,000 jobs and pump an estimated \$1 billion annually into the local economy. The Defense Language Institute has been in Monterey since 1946.

The panel also voted to approve the Pentagon's plan to transfer some of its functions from Naval

Air Weapons Station at Point Mugu, part of Naval Base Ventura County, to the Navy station 150 miles inland at China Lake, moving as many as 2,250 military and civilian government jobs and about 2,760 private-sector jobs.

US Panel Sets Back Hanscom

Boston Globe

Bryan Bender and Matt Viser

August 26, 2005

An independent federal review panel dealt a crushing blow to a multimillion-dollar state development plan yesterday when it rejected the Pentagon's proposal to bring more than 1,000 new jobs to Hanscom Air Force Base -- a reversal that will cut more than 200 jobs from the Bedford base under a military consolidation plan.

The surprising decision by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission was issued after the panel's staff concluded that the "vast majority" of the work that the Pentagon wanted to move to Massachusetts from bases in Ohio, Texas, and Alabama was not related to the high-technology aerospace research that is conducted at Hanscom's Electronic Systems Center.

The news stunned Governor Mitt Romney, Massachusetts legislators, and a public-private partnership that had secured more than \$240 million in taxpayer money to help finance the expansion, along with a \$168 million commitment from developers to add housing.

Trying to put the best possible face on the situation, Romney and other officials stressed that in the end the base had been saved from the fearsome consolidation process and that the Pentagon can still decide in the future to expand its activities.

"I am disappointed we are not adding new jobs at Hanscom today," Romney said in a statement, "but our expectation is that as military spending and research grows, so will Hanscom."

Representative John Tierney, a Democrat whose district includes Hanscom, said: "We were

threatened with closure, and the good news is the yeoman's work that the state did paid off and it will stay open. "The bad news," he added, "is we got our expectations up that we would get 1,000 new jobs, and that is not going to happen."

In other moves yesterday, the commission voted to close Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, where many wounded Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans receive treatment.

Its staff will be relocated across town at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., and in a nod to the Army hospital's storied history, the expanded facility will retain the Walter Reed name.

The BRAC commission is scheduled to issue its final recommendations to President Bush on Sept. 8. Bush will have two weeks to approve or reject the recommendations, but he cannot change them. Then Congress must act in 45 days, or the plan becomes law.

Yesterday's deliberations followed a BRAC vote Tuesday to spare Navy bases in Maine and Connecticut, a significant setback to plans the Pentagon and Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld had said would have saved \$50 billion over two decades.

But the reversal on Hanscom renewed jitters that Massachusetts, which had been slated to gain jobs in the nationwide base consolidation plan, could end up losing some instead.

The commission could vote today on plans to relocate 12 F-15 fighter jets and maintenance crews based at Otis Air Guard Base on Cape Cod.

Under the Hanscom proposal, put forward by Rumsfeld in May, the Bedford base would have become the centerpiece of the military's air and space research, making room for high-tech directorates now located at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio, Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama, and Lackland Air Force Base in Texas.

Those moves add up to 1,300 new jobs. With 200 other positions already set to be transferred from Hanscom's Air Force Research Laboratory and Space Vehicles Directorate, the base -- and the Massachusetts economy -- would have netted 1,104 new workers.

But the commission voted yesterday to keep the Ohio, Alabama, and Texas facilities intact, contending the Pentagon had not accurately identified the kind of work there. Rather than conduct research -- Hanscom's specialty -- personnel at the three other bases break codes and oversee some of the military's day-to-day computer operations, the commission concluded.

And when the panel approved the Pentagon recommendation to move the Hanscom laboratory jobs to facilities in Ohio and New Mexico, it trimmed the workforce by more than 200, officials said. Combined, the military facilities at Hanscom and in Natick have a workforce of 33,000.

BRAC commissioner James T. Hill, a retired Army general, said the idea to consolidate unrelated high-technology jobs at Hanscom "was just a dumb idea done by people who were trying to do something right." By lumping the jobs together, the Pentagon caused confusion among commissioners.

Ultimately, the panel's chairman, Anthony Principi, called a 15-minute recess to make sure the commission had its facts straight.

For Romney, yesterday was a dramatic turnaround from three months ago, when the Pentagon announced plans to move jobs to Hanscom. Romney then stood on the State House steps and declared it a day for the ages: "I think history is going to show that this day and this expansion has the most positive economic impact on Massachusetts than anything that's happened in a very long time."

Local officials voiced disappointment that the region's economy would not get the "shot in the arm" that Romney spoke of that day, but seemed happy Hanscom would not be lost entirely.

"There was hope, of course, that the additional people coming would stimulate local job increases. However, frankly, I'm just glad the base is staying open," said Sheldon H. Moll, a Bedford selectman. Moll also said that officials would no longer have to worry about traffic and housing issues that would have come with an infusion of more than 1,000 new Hanscom employees.

It also means that a planned expansion of Bedford High School can probably be scaled back. Children of employees are taught in elementary and middle school on the base by Lincoln educators, and typically move to Bedford High.

The commission's decision also means that the Pentagon will probably scrap its plan to pump \$131.3 million into a massive expansion of Hanscom. The plans called for three new buildings and 615,292 square feet of office space, according to plans described in Defense Department documents.

In February, the Massachusetts Legislature approved \$242 million in bonds to expand office space to 1.25 million square feet if Hanscom was spared. The blueprints for that plan had been intended to demonstrate that Hanscom had plenty of room to expand and enough state support to foot the bill.

The expansion plan also included a provision for 800 units of housing at a cost of \$168 million, funded by a private developer.

But Joyce Plotkin, president of the Massachusetts Software Council, who was part of the state campaign to save Hanscom, said the base's preservation is a boost to technology research in the area -- even without the expansion. "The status quo is \$3 billion of [economic] benefits to Massachusetts annually," Plotkin said. "That's nothing to sneeze at. It's unfortunate that they couldn't grow it because that made a lot of sense. But given that the other alternative was to close it, I think the decision to keep it open isn't too bad."

Representative Martin T. Meehan, a Lowell Democrat, expressed cautious optimism about Hanscom's future.

"We would have preferred to add 1,000 jobs, but we are pleased that the BRAC commission recognized Hanscom's military value," Meehan said. "Over time, this is a base that is prepared to grow and take on new missions," he said.

Local News Articles

Richardson continues lobbying in support of base (New Mexico)

Clovis News Journal
Marlena Harz
August 26, 2005

Shortly after the end of Thursday's Base Closure and Realignment deliberations, with the empty chairs of nine BRAC commissioners as a backdrop, Gov. Bill Richardson called the fate of Cannon Air Force Base fluid.

The Commission moved a Cannon vote, scheduled initially for Thursday, to this morning. In an interview with the Clovis News Journal, the governor said he would use the opportunity to squeeze in more Cannon lobbying.

Richardson canceled several other scheduled appearances to attend the Virginia deliberations.

During breaks and in hallways, he said he pleaded with commissioners to spare Cannon, a base that, if shuttered, would cripple economy in eastern New Mexico by an estimated 30 percent, thereby dubbing it one of this year's weightiest BRAC considerations.

In those unrecorded moments, Richardson said he told the commissioners he needed them.

"This is life and death for New Mexico," Richardson said. "You don't get time for arguments anymore, you just ask them (the commissioners) for their support. I tell them that this is the most important vote for New Mexico."

The governor said he fleshed out three different alternative uses for Cannon with BRAC commissioners Thursday and would continue to do so Thursday night, but he refused to comment on specifics. He also declined to name the supposed Cannon-enthusiastic commissioner he said advised him to stay in Virginia to further build Cannon discussions.

The alternative-mission scenarios are a conglomeration of previously presented scenarios and entirely fresh options, Richardson said.

Five commissioners must fall in the save-Cannon camp to spare the base from closure. Commissioners James Bilbray of Nevada and James Hansen of Utah will recuse from a Cannon vote because Cannon F-16 planes are scheduled to go to bases in their home states under Air Force recommendations, Richardson said. That means Cannon backers must gain support from all but two of the remaining commissioners.

"I just want to say that our governor is doing an excellent job lobbying for Cannon," said Clovis banker Randy Harris, a leader in the region's fight to save Cannon. "He is committed to Clovis, Curry County, and Portales. We owe him a big debt of gratitude."

Harris, however, said he was unable to divulge any information about the governor's new scenarios, although the governor said he had been working closely with Harris and fellow Cannon supporter Chad Lydick of Clovis in scenario development.

By day's end, Cannon supporters had only encouraging words.

"When the story is finally written," said Hanson Scott, New Mexico's director of military base planning and support, "I think Cannon will be in good shape."

Md., Counties Eager to Spend Funds to Widen Rte. 175

Project Considered Key To Fort Meade's Growth
Washington Post
Susan DeFord
August 25, 2005

The anticipated expansion of Fort George G. Meade has received a sizable chunk of federal highway money to widen Maryland Route 175, an early sign of the broadening impact of this western Anne Arundel County Army post.

Maryland highway officials said last week that they're moving quickly to begin spending the money for Route 175 that was included in the \$286 billion transportation bill signed this month by President Bush. Before Congress earmarked \$12.5 million to begin planning improvements to the roadway between Odenton and the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, state officials had not budgeted any money, said Douglas Simmons, deputy administrator for the Maryland State Highway Administration.

Making improvements to Route 175, a two-lane road in some stretches of Howard and Anne Arundel counties, is the region's top transportation priority, Rep. Benjamin L. Cardin (D-Md.) said last week.

"This is a country road now trying to serve a modern purpose," Cardin said. "It has bottlenecks, accidents. As you look towards the future, we are anticipating significant growth."

The state road lies in the path of Fort Meade's growth, outlined this year in the Department of Defense's Base Realignment and Closure recommendations. An additional 5,361 workers, nearly 90 percent of them civilians and defense contractors, would move to Fort Meade over the next six years, constituting the biggest expansion among military installations in Maryland.

"What the regional impact of the growth will be -- we're really trying to define that now," Simmons said. "Do we have a full definition of what needs to be done? No, that's why we need to proceed with the study."

He said the state's detailed planning on traffic counts, right-of-way acquisition, environmental effects and engineering would take two to three years.

Route 175 is a broad four-lane highway in downtown Columbia that eventually narrows to two lanes as it becomes Waterloo Road east of U.S. Route 1. Humming with heavy truck traffic and bounded by county and state correctional facilities, the road crosses from Howard into Anne Arundel at Jessup, then skirts the Army post along its northeastern side before ending in the Odenton area. In Anne Arundel, it varies from a two- to four-lane road between the Baltimore-Washington Parkway and the Odenton area.

Howard transportation officials want to reconstruct the intersection at Routes 175 and 1 to relieve congestion, said Carl Balsler, division chief of transportation planning. Eventually, the county also would like to have Route 175 widened from two to four lanes from Route 1 to the Anne Arundel county line.

Under the BRAC recommendations, two other Maryland military installations also would grow: the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda would add 1,889 workers, and Aberdeen Proving Ground in Harford County would get 2,176 workers. In September, the base commission is expected to make its recommendations to Bush. If approved by Bush, the recommendations would go to Congress.

Beyond the base recommendations, Fort Meade also is feeling the growing pains of the National Security Agency, which is based at the post. The NSA launched an unprecedented expansion last year, with 7,500 more workers anticipated by 2009. Fort Meade is changing from a traditional Army post to a campus-like facility where military personnel and defense contractors focus on intelligence, homeland security and information technology.

Anne Arundel County Executive Janet S. Owens (D) said she made Route 175's expansion her county's top transportation priority two years ago as she watched the area around Fort Meade

become a magnet for new residential and commercial development. "It was just very clear," Owens said. "We knew we had to proceed as quickly as we could."

She said the state's congressional delegation secured the funding even faster than she expected. The money is part of an overall \$100 million plan that envisions a multi-lane Route 175 with interchange improvements and a 30-foot high-noise barrier around Fort Meade's perimeter.

Fort Meade's growth will be felt not only in western Anne Arundel but also in Howard and Prince George's counties, Army officials said.

"We expect the demands on the community and the benefits to the community . . . to increase significantly," Col. John W. Ives, then installation commander, said last spring when the BRAC recommendations were announced. "There will be more military families living in the local community, more children attending local schools and more customers at local businesses."

Balsler said that in Howard, "the magnitude of the [Fort Meade] expansion proposals was a surprise. Now we all have to figure out how to make it work."

Rome Facility Is Spared by Panel

Associated Press (NY Times)
August 25, 2005

A base-closure panel voted Thursday to reject a Pentagon plan to close Rome's 390-person military finance office and instead grow the facility with hundreds of new jobs.

"It was definitely worth the fight," said a relieved Keith Watkins, an accountant at the central New York facility who broke out into cheers along with his co-workers upon hearing the news.

"If they closed it, I would have done whatever it took to get another job, whether that means drive further every day or just move away," said Watkins, adding the likelihood of as many as

BRAC Commission Early Bird

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600 new jobs at the center "will have a huge impact for this community. It means stability for us, and even a chance for advancement."

A nine-member commission passed without opposition a measure preserving the Rome site of Defense Finance and Accounting Services. The panel's decision must still be approved by the president and Congress.

Rome is one of 24 locations around the United States where such work is currently done. As part of the process known as BRAC -- for Base Realignment and Closure -- the Pentagon proposed in May to consolidate all of those jobs into three "mega-center" locations: Indianapolis, Denver, and Columbus, Ohio.

The commission's vote Thursday brought with it some much-needed optimism to Rome, a struggling upstate community that lost the Griffiss Air Force Base as a result of a BRAC decision in the 1990s.

"It was the second time in 10 years that we were on pins and needles," said Chris Tarbania, a DFAS employee. "This was a godsend."

More than two dozen workers streamed out of the DFAS building after watching the vote on television. They hugged, clapped, shouted and posed for pictures as they cheered the outcome.

The jubilation was in sharp contrast to the scene earlier in the day as somber workers filed into their office in silence as they started work Thursday morning.

"After Griffiss 10 years ago, we weren't sure what to expect. But this BRAC voted logically. What they said made total sense," said Frank Pape, an eight-year DFAS employee who lost his job at Griffiss in the 1990s.

Members of the commission previously voted in July to consider closing the three proposed mega-centers as well, indicating they were weighing whether to select a completely different list of accounting sites to remain open.

But Thursday, the commission instead approved a proposal to leave open accounting sites in not only Rome, but Cleveland, Columbus, Ohio, Indianapolis, and Limestone, Maine.

"It keeps offices open in areas that would have a tremendous economic impact," said Commission Chairman Anthony Principi.

The new plan calls for Rome to eventually hold "not less than 1,000" accounting jobs.

Commission staff noted Rome and Limestone would have suffered the worst economic damage of all the accounting sites facing closure.

Rep. Sherwood Boehlert, a Republican who represents the area, saw many of his arguments on behalf of the Rome site echoed by a number of commissioners on the panel.

"We came out the big winner, and we deserved a big win," Boehlert said. "Right from the beginning we had merit on our side, and we're going from a situation where we might go down to zero jobs to 1,000."

Any military finance facilities that survive the BRAC process are likely to see a significant boost in jobs. Rome is also awaiting word from the commission on the fate of a sensor division located there which employs 137 people. The Pentagon wants to move those jobs to a base in Ohio.

Rome teamed up with a number of other cities around the country in fighting the Pentagon's plan to consolidate all the accounting work.

The Department of Defense estimates the immediate job loss of such a move would be about 290 for Rome, but local authorities say the actual figure would be around 390.

The commission spent the weeks leading up to the vote trying to determine if the Pentagon could save more money by consolidating the accounting work in different locations than those first chosen in Denver, Indianapolis, and Columbus, Ohio.

Rome's backers argued they had space available for 600 additional workers without any new construction -- a key concern among commission members overseeing a process aimed at saving money, not adding expenses.

Boehlert contended that Indianapolis doesn't have nearly enough space to accommodate all the additional workers the military would send there.

Pentagon brass made one final pitch last weekend to keep their accounting realignment recommendations intact.

Michael Wynne, head of technology and weapons-buying for the Pentagon, suggested many of those accounting jobs would disappear anyway in coming years as the division modernized.

Commission votes to save finance center in northern Maine

Associated Press (Boston Globe)
August 25, 2005

The base closing commission voted Thursday not only to spare the Defense Finance Accounting Service center but to add up to 250 jobs, a major victory for Aroostook County.

The commission's 7-0 vote calls for bringing the facility from 353 jobs to 600.

Sen. Susan Collins, who grew up 12 miles away in Caribou, watched the vote alongside Gov. John Baldacci and the rest of Maine's congressional delegation at the Applied Technology Center, which, like the center, is housed at the former Loring Air Force Base.

"I was optimistic that we would prevail as far as convincing the commissioners not to close DFAS but this expansion is more than I could have hoped for," she said. "I'm just thrilled about this decision. It's great economic news for northern Maine."

Workers whooped and cheered when the announcement was made, and several bottles of

champagne were produced. Outside, motorists honked their horns.

All told, the Pentagon wanted to reduce its 26 accounting centers across the country to three large centers in Denver, Indianapolis and Columbus, Ohio. Limestone and a center in Rome, N.Y., were among 23 centers that would have been eliminated.

Commissioners said they took into account the severe economic impact of closing the centers at Limestone and Rome, home to the former Griffiss Air Force Base.

"We've got a better proposal. We've got a fairer proposal," commissioner James Hill, a retired Army general, said before the vote.

In the end, the commission voted to retain Columbus and Indianapolis, along with Cleveland, Limestone and Rome. The Denver center will be closed.

"Even though we went through three months of a lot of anxiety, we came out on the other end in really good shape," said Carl Flora, president and chief executive officer of the Loring Development Authority.

The vote was a relief for people in Maine and upstate New York who said closing their centers -- created to offset the impact of the previous base closings -- amounted to a sort of double jeopardy.

"We're keeping faith with people of Maine," said Lloyd "Fig" Newton, a retired Air Force general who visited the Limestone center. He praised Limestone's efficiency and said the workers there had "proved their mettle."

The commission's decision came a day after it voted to close the Brunswick Naval Air Station but to spare the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. The Portsmouth decision would spare 4,500 civilian jobs; the Brunswick decision would eliminate 4,800 military and civilian jobs.

The commission's final report will be sent to President Bush, who can accept it or reject it, or

return it to the commission for further evaluation. Congress could veto the plan but has not taken that step in four previous rounds of closures.

Maine officials had argued not only for keeping Limestone open but for adding jobs because its efficiency and low turnover rate.

The modern facility can easily accommodate up to 480 workers, and there would be room for up to 600 workers by eliminating some storage space, officials said.

Even though the center is relatively small, the jobs are important in an expansive county that has fewer than 76,000 residents.

The center, located at the former Loring hospital, handles the books and ledgers for domestic Air National Guard bases and active duty Air Force bases in Europe, said Larry Conrad, who oversees the operations.

The center has been one of the biggest success stories of efforts to redevelop the former Strategic Air Command base.

Besides the center, the Maine Military Authority, which overhauls military equipment, has grown to 540 workers. Sitel has 250 employees at a call center. A Job Corps center has about 144 faculty and 350 students.

All told, the Loring Development Authority has created 1,450 jobs, which offsets the 1,100 civilian jobs that were lost when the base closed.

Sub fleet's fate still unclear

Associated Press (Navy Times)

Matt Apuzzo

August 25, 2005

While supporters cheered a federal commission's vote to keep open a submarine base in Connecticut and a shipyard on the Maine-New Hampshire border, the fate of the submarine fleet still remains uncertain.

The Base Closure and Realignment commission voted Wednesday to keep open several major Army and Navy bases that military planners

want to shut down, including the New London submarine base in Groton and the Portsmouth shipyard in Kittery, Maine, which repairs submarines.

But while the bases were spared, the number of subs is dwindling. Navy shipbuilding projections show the number of subs dropping from 54 into the 30s.

Currently, the Navy builds one submarine a year or fewer. It needs to increase production to two a year to keep pace with the old submarines that go out of service, said Neil Ruenzel, a spokesman for Electric Boat, which builds submarines in Groton.

"You're going to have a submarine base that's not going to have any submarines," said John Pike, a military analyst with globalsecurity.org. "They're just going to be standing around twiddling their thumbs for some time."

Officials agreed that simply keeping the bases open doesn't guarantee new subs will be built.

"We've got to convince people of the importance of building two a year," said Sen. Christopher Dodd, D-Conn. "We've got a case to make here, to prove the value of it, and that's the next step."

Within hours of hearing that Groton and Portsmouth had been spared, Gov. M. Jodi Rell called on Congress and President Bush to boost submarine production.

The debate is expected to begin late this year or early next year, when the Pentagon releases its Quadrennial Defense Review, a four-year review of the nation's military strategy. That should signal whether the Pentagon remains committed to reducing the size of the fleet.

If submarine production doesn't increase, Pike said, Groton and Portsmouth will find themselves on a future BRAC list.

Celebration in Cleveland, waiting in Mansfield on military jobs

Associated Press

BRAC Commission Early Bird

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Connie Mabin
August 26, 2005

In Cleveland, months of nail-biting ended with cause for celebration - 1,400 jobs on the chopping block were spared by the nation's base-closing commission.

The excruciating waiting continued in Mansfield, where 1,060 Air National Guard jobs at the 179th Airlift Wing were on the line. The commission was expected to vote on the fate of that unit Friday.

The mood was festive Thursday in Cleveland, the nation's largest poor city that has had its share of bad news recently.

Dozens of red, green and blue balloons were let loose by giddy politicians and other leaders who fought to save the good-paying military jobs at the downtown Defense Finance and Accounting Service center.

Employees clapped, cheered and grinned.

"It's a feeling of relief," said Dennis Quarles, 46, a DFAS customer service specialist.

"There were feelings of apprehension because we didn't know where we were headed," he said. "With this finding and recommendation - I can only speak for myself but it would probably be echoed by everyone else around here - it's a feeling of joy."

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission also voted to keep open a finance office in Columbus that employs 2,000 people and decided against merging or moving the Air Force Institute of Technology out of Ohio. The school near Dayton employs 500 workers and trains 900 graduate students in engineering and meteorology.

The commission will send its final report next month to President Bush, who could make his own changes. Congress then will get the chance to reject the plan. Lawmakers haven't done that in previous rounds, and DFAS workers were optimistic.

"We are thrilled," a breathless Troy Marshall said after Thursday's news. "It's been a long fight but it's been worth it."

Not only would DFAS remain open in Cleveland - where it's the fourth largest employer with an annual payroll of \$65 million - but it would gain at least 400 full-time jobs.

Politicians from both parties and other city leaders worked feverishly with the DFAS employees to make their case to the base-closing panel. Hundreds traveled by the busloads in June to a hearing in Buffalo, N.Y., to tell commissioners that closing the office would further devastate a region already hit hard by the loss of steel and other high-paying manufacturing jobs.

Cleveland has laid off hundreds of teachers, police officers and firefighters and cut other spending to try to close a multimillion-dollar budget deficit. Closing DFAS would have meant the loss of \$6.9 million in local tax revenue and affected 1,000 other downtown jobs such as custodial and food service positions that are tied to DFAS, the leaders said.

"Don't you think it's about time we got some good news? It shows that when everyone pitches in together, that we can make a difference," Cleveland Mayor Jane Campbell told The Associated Press in a sidewalk interview near the DFAS offices.

The panel voted 7-0 to maintain the DFAS offices in Cleveland and Columbus, preserving 3,100 jobs in all.

On Wednesday, the commission approved closing eight military Reserve and National Guard centers in Ohio and moving the 350 jobs to nearby sites within the state.

Panel Might Toughen Oversight Of Oceana

Florida Times-Union (Jacksonville)

Gregory Piatt

August 26, 2005

The independent base-closing commission is considering amending a motion it passed Wednesday that would strengthen its oversight of conditions imposed on Virginia to keep open Oceana Naval Air Station.

The amendment would make sure the state, Virginia Beach and Chesapeake act on passing ordinances and legislation that stems encroachment, condemns and buys property in the base's accident zone and sets up a program to buy development rights.

If these measures don't happen by the end of March, Oceana's master jet base would be in line to move to Jacksonville's Cecil Field.

"We are looking at the possibility of perfecting the language to ensure that determination is made that they comply with the mandates of the motion," said Anthony Principi, chairman of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission. "We need to know whether that is completed or not."

The commission is looking at whether the motion is defective and if it can be corrected, Principi told the Times-Union.

The commission also may consider tweaking the March 31 deadline for Virginia to make changes. Laws passed by the Virginia General Assembly cannot take effect until July 1 unless the bills are passed by a super majority on an emergency basis, said Bob Matthias, a key BRAC lobbyist and assistant to the Virginia Beach city manager.

The city has begun "99 percent of the changes" asked but lacks the power of eminent domain to condemn land in a crash zone, he said. Last year, the legislature considered granting the power to Virginia Beach, but the effort failed when "300 people showed up to a hearing and said they didn't want to leave their homes," Matthias said.

That power will be critical to allowing the city to clear unacceptable buildings on up to 1,800 properties in crash zones.

Principi said he expects any changes made to the motion will be done during the commission's voting on the Pentagon's BRAC list. The commission has scheduled voting sessions through Saturday.

It was unclear Thursday whether the commission would enforce the conditions imposed on Virginia or it would have another government entity do it. However, Virginia's deadline to comply comes before the commission is disbanded in mid-April.

In its motion Wednesday, the commission said Oceana wasn't a long-term solution to be the Navy's only East Coast master jet base. The commission urged the Navy to begin planning to move the base to another location.

As soon as the complex motion was passed, Florida officials were saying there was no provision to enforce the conditions and worried that Virginia officials might stall the process.

Florida and Jacksonville officials stayed in Washington a day after the commission voted to seek clarification on how the conditions will be verified.

"I would hope the commission becomes the enforcer," said Mayor John Peyton. "This clarification needs to be made so Virginia Beach delivers by the end of March."

For decades, residential and commercial development has encroached on Oceana, which is in Virginia Beach. This development has moved into the accident-prevention zones at the ends of the base's two runways.

Navy fighter planes fly low patterns over homes in these areas, prompting some residents to complain about jet noise. Pilots have deviated their landing and take-off patterns to lessen the noise and crash risk, and the commission has said this hurts training.

If Virginia fails to or decides not to meet the commission's conditions to buy property, the commission said Florida must make available sufficient funds to move commercial tenants

BRAC Commission Early Bird

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from Cecil Commerce Center, secure funds for Navy housing and hand over the title of the property to the Pentagon by Dec. 31, 2006.

"We will wait and see how this plays out in Virginia," Peyton said. "For the most part, we have done the things the commission asked in its motion."

The state and the city have pledged \$200 million to move the tenants, and Gov. Jeb Bush said he hopes to get more money from the Legislature this fall.

Virginia politicians have said they want to keep the jet base, even though there are up to 1,800 homes along with businesses in the accident zone, which is 6,000 feet from the end of a runway. The initial estimate is \$300 million to \$400 million to purchase the property, said Kevin Hall, press secretary for Virginia Gov. Mark Warner.

"The challenge they have is, do they make the investment because the commission said Oceana is not a long-term solution," Peyton said.

San Antonio Looks To Be 'Huge Winner' In Military's Realignment (Texas)

Houston Chronicle

Michael Hedges

August 26, 2005

The military base-closing commission approved a Pentagon plan to create a major medical center in San Antonio Thursday and will decide today whether to strip Houston's Ellington Field of its F-16 fighter aircraft.

"San Antonio is a huge winner in the (review) process and even added to the gains included in the original base recommendation list," said Texas GOP Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, who attended the first two days of hearings in northern Virginia.

"It has a lot of future growth potential beyond the 4,000 jobs added, with the synergism between medical training and research capabilities," she said.

Houston-area lawmakers were fighting an uphill battle to save the F-16s at Ellington. The Pentagon wants to retire them from service.

Texas National Guard officials and state politicians have insisted that manned fighter aircraft are critical to air defense in the area, especially in a post-9/11 world. During four previous rounds of hearings, about 15 percent of proposed Defense cuts have been restored, giving hope to those fighting for Ellington and other facilities.

Thursday, the Base Closing and Realignment Commission upheld the Defense Department's idea of creating a medical facility at Fort Sam Houston, to be called the San Antonio Regional Medical Center.

It also closed the Air Force portion of the Brooks City-Base in San Antonio but moved laser research to Sam Houston. Other Brooks City functions will be moved to Wright Patterson air base in Dayton, Ohio.

As part of creating the regional medical facility in South Texas, Wilford Hall Medical Center at Lackland Air Force Base near San Antonio would be closed and the dental training school at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls would be moved.

Sheppard also lost out as the commission voted to consolidate training operations for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida.

Sheppard houses the 82nd Training Wing and 80th Flying Training Wing.

The U.S. estimated overall changes in the base-closing process would cost Sheppard nearly 2,000 jobs.

After battering the Pentagon's long-term strategic plan on Wednesday by overturning closure plans at two old Navy bases in the Northeast that planners had considered costly and antiquated, the nine-member commission mostly backed Defense Department recommendations Thursday.

Today, the panel decides the fate of several major Air Force bases — the most politically contentious part of the process nationally. For example, the entire political delegation of South Dakota has been attending the commission hearings, lobbying to save the Ellsworth Air Force Base.

Closing that base would have negative consequences for lawmakers like Republican Sen. John Thune, who was elected in November after emphasizing ties with the Bush team.

A symbol of the commission's willingness to uphold deep cuts despite political pressure was a Thursday vote to close the venerated Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, consolidating part of its functions in the San Antonio medical center.

The Walter Reed name will live on, transferred to an expanded, modernized hospital in Bethesda, Md., that had been a naval facility.

The commission backed a U.S. plan to shift 20,000 military and civilian jobs from leased space in the Washington suburbs to area military sites, a move that was seen as cost effective and as protecting the military's ability to function in case of a major terrorist attack.

The Pentagon released its base-closing plans in May. It said they would save taxpayers almost \$49 billion in the next 20 years, though the realignments would cost hundreds of millions of dollars up front.

By law, the commissioners appointed by President Bush and Congress review and vote on each proposal.

Bush has until Sept. 23 to either accept the recommendations or reject the entire process. He has said he will accept them.

That would leave the final hurdle to approval to Congress. A majority of both bodies would have to reject the plan to stop it — something experts said was highly unlikely.

Big Win For Wright-Pat

Dayton Daily News

Jessica Wehrman and Timothy R. Gaffney

August 26, 2005

Wright-Patterson Air Force Base supporters were jubilant Thursday as the independent Base Realignment and Closure Commission voted mainly to retain important base jobs and missions, and could add about 2,000 research jobs involving medicine and other fields.

Overall, the Dayton Development Coalition estimates a net gain of 5,900 direct jobs from all the moves, including contractors, support and direct government jobs, said John P. Nauseef, president and chief executive officer of the Dayton Development Coalition.

The coalition estimates an additional 5,000 indirect jobs, such as real estate and retail, will result, he said.

The coalition is a nonprofit group of business leaders that spearheaded the campaign to defend area defense jobs.

Good news about the region's largest employer overshadowed the panel's decision to close the Defense Finance and Accounting Service station in Kettering, costing the city 425 jobs by 2009, city officials said.

"I'd say it's a big win for Wright-Patterson. These are high-end, high-tech jobs we're using to brand ourselves for (economic) development," Nauseef said.

The decisions bolster Wright-Patterson's already critical role in the region's economy. The coalition estimates the economic impact of base jobs and contracts at \$2.5 billion a year.

The commission spared Wright-Patterson's Development and Fielding Systems Group — which deals with automated business systems — from a Pentagon recommendation to move it to an Air Force base near Boston, a move the coalition has claimed would have cost the area at least 2,250 jobs.

It also spared the Air Force Institute of Technology from a proposal to either privatize it or merge it with the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif. A merger would have seen the nearly 500 AFIT faculty and staff and 1,000 students transferred to the West Coast.

And several related votes by the panel would make Wright-Patterson a major center for aerospace medical training and research.

Organizations coming to the base include the Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine, the Air Force Institute of Occupational Health, the Naval Aeromedical Research Laboratory, an acceleration training and research centrifuge and a high-acceleration physiological training unit.

Frank Perez, chief executive officer of Kettering Medical Center and a member of a coalition team that analyzed the BRAC medical issues, said the incoming work will create a synergy with resources already here, including Wright State University's aerospace medicine residency program.

The recommendations must still be approved by President Bush and Congress could reject them. But that hasn't happened in the four previous BRAC rounds.

Still, Nauseef said community leaders need to keep their eyes on the process.

"We need to stay on top of it and work with our congressional delegation to make sure these decisions are executed," he said.

AFIT wasn't in the original Defense Department recommendations, but the commission last month put its future in question when it voted to consider merging or privatizing those two schools along with the Defense Language Institute in Monterey.

Community leaders in Dayton and Monterey teamed up in urging the commission to keep the schools in their respective communities.

Ultimately, the commission dropped the language school from discussion and

unanimously supported a proposal to create an oversight board to oversee the Air Force and Navy schools. Commission members said it aimed to formalize a 2002 agreement between the two schools to share resources and eliminate duplicative courses.

Under their plan, the new board will be based in the Washington, D.C. region and will have equal representation from AFIT and the Naval Postgraduate School. The board will have the power to eliminate curriculum duplication, enhance cooperative agreements between the schools, and eliminate excess capacity at both schools.

Instead of just keeping the status quo, the commission's action could help AFIT, said Michael Heil, a retired Air Force colonel who was the school's commandant from 2001 through 2003.

"It'll provide additional advocacy, insight and support for AFIT" at the secretary of defense level, he said.

"We're taking two great graduate schools and allowing them to kind of get the synergies of being great and share their expertise and hopefully avoid some duplication," said Commissioner Samuel Skinner, who visited AFIT this summer.

But it was the proposal to send the Development and Fielding Systems Group to Hanscom Air Force Base near Boston that could have cost the region the most jobs. It would have cost Wright-Pat more than 2,250 jobs, according to Pentagon numbers — which the development coalition challenged as too low.

Les Farrington, a BRAC commission staffer, testified that the Wright-Patterson jobs, as well as Alabama jobs set to move to Hanscom, had little to do with the mission described in the Defense Department recommendation. He said the Wright-Pat program focuses on buying and supporting automated business systems, and had little to do with research and development.

"You have an apple and an orange here," he said.

Commissioner Harold Gehman criticized the defense proposal, saying the department essentially lumped together a bunch of similar-sounding programs that actually had little to do with one another. He introduced an amendment to overturn the entire proposal.

Gehman's amendment passed 7-1, with one recusal. Commissioner James Bilbray opposed the amendment.

"It was just a dumb idea done by people trying to do something right and it didn't work," said Commissioner James Hill. "And we need to get rid of it."

The commission, however, also voted 7-0 to close Defense Finance and Accounting Service offices in Kettering and 19 other locations, leaving open sites in Columbus, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Arlington, Va., Limestone, Maine and Rome, N.Y. Originally, all the centers were to have been merged into three megasites in Columbus, Indianapolis and Denver.

The vote was good news for Cleveland, which stood to lose 1,100 jobs under the original proposal. Instead, the commission voted to keep "not less than 1,500" full-time jobs at the Cleveland site in the consolidation.

Skinner applauded saving the Cleveland site, saying that office is responsible for the payment and reimbursement for the Guard and Reserve serving in theater.

"This amendment ensures that those families and soldiers, sailors and airmen in the theater have their accounting taken care of correctly," he said.

But, for Kettering, the news was bad.

"This is a particularly strong blow to the City of Kettering, which still hasn't recovered the jobs it lost when the 1993 BRAC Commission closed the old (Defense Electronics Supply Center.) Some of the BRAC commission members were

clearly sympathetic to communities like Kettering, which are suffering from a double hit," Nauseef said. "Unfortunately, a majority didn't see it that way."

The DFAS offices are in a building formerly occupied by the supply center. The overall site is now the Kettering Business Park.

"Kettering still maintains a tremendous opportunity for gains" from incoming work, Nauseef said. He said the coalition recommends the business park be used as a "staging site" for the jobs coming to Wright-Patterson.

The commission also supported a proposal to consolidate civilian personnel offices across the Defense Department, including the office at Wright-Patterson. But the commission altered the recommendation, relocating only transactional functions at the office and leaving non-transactional functions necessary to support Wright-Patterson at that base.

The original recommendation would have shipped out an estimated 235 jobs from Wright-Pat. Community leaders Thursday were unsure how many jobs would now be affected.

The commission also modified but ultimately approved a plan to bring missions from Brooks City-Base in San Antonio to Wright-Patterson.

The Defense recommendation would have moved five of the base's missions to Wright-Patterson, but Commissioner Sue Ellen Turner introduced an amendment that would instead send two of those five missions — the Naval Health Research Center Electro-Magnetic Energy Detachment and the Human Effectiveness Directorate of the Air Force Research Laboratory— to Fort Sam Houston in Texas. Turner argued that the two missions need to be located with a similar Army-directed energy research mission so the three services could continue to work together as they had in San Antonio.

Her amendment would mean 100 fewer jobs would move to Wright-Patterson, but James Leftwich of the Dayton Development Coalition,

said the community still stood to gain about 900 jobs from the move.

The commission's votes are considered preliminary until the commission concludes its proceedings at the end of the week. After that, they will go to the president, who can only accept or reject the list in its entirety. If he approves it, it will then go to Congress for approval or rejection before heading back to the president for final passage.

Army Base Closings Could Attract Contractors To Maryland

Washington Post

Ellen McCarthy and Dina ElBoghady

August 26, 2005

The decision by a federal commission to close the Army base at Fort Monmouth, N.J., and relocate other military outfits to Aberdeen Proving Ground and Fort Meade could draw thousands of specialized government contractors into Maryland, fueling growth and bolstering the technology clusters already forming in pockets of the state.

Aberdeen Proving Ground, northeast of Baltimore, would gain 4,000 more government workers as a result of Fort Monmouth's closure, and perhaps twice that many privately employed engineers and software developers could follow Monmouth's specialized communications and engineering units to their new home. That growth, coupled with the expansion of Fort Meade, which is already home to the National Security Agency and is expected to gain 5,000 new workers, could add to the state's high-tech foundation.

"Now it seems all the stars are aligning," said Bill Badger, president and chief executive of the Anne Arundel Economic Development Corp., which has taken a keen interest in the growth around the base. Fort Meade is in Anne Arundel County on the border with Howard County.

Assuming the Army's base-reorganization initiative goes as planned, the migration of tech workers to Maryland could follow quickly. Northrop Grumman Corp., for example, said it

would relocate nearly 200 technology jobs to Aberdeen for work on contracts currently based at Fort Monmouth.

"They are excellent jobs -- highly trained, highly skilled, well-paid positions," said Randy Belote, a Northrop Grumman spokesman. And he said the contractor's relationship with its military employer is simple: "They move, we move."

The addition of thousands of military personnel, plus the lucrative contracting jobs that follow them, would absorb office space, generate tax revenue and drive the creation of new businesses around Aberdeen and Fort Meade.

"The entire community benefits from that kind of an influx," said Brig. Gen. J. Michael Hayes, Maryland's director of military and federal affairs.

To be sure, not everyone is pleased with the base closing commission's overall proposals, which would close Walter Reed Army Medical Center, add 18,000 people to Fort Belvoir in Fairfax County, and move more than 22,000 workers out of Northern Virginia inner suburbs such as Crystal City and Rosslyn. Politicians and industry officials from those areas say they fear there will be a "brain drain" as a result of the dispersal.

But Maryland's boosters are cheering because the jobs being moved to Aberdeen and Fort Meade are the type of positions that will attract a skilled workforce. Though the net growth in federal workers at Aberdeen is only 2,000 because some positions there are being eliminated, the units being moved in from New Jersey should bring in jobs with many of the major information technology companies -- firms such as Northrop, Lockheed Martin Corp., CACI International Inc., and the Mitre Corp.

According to state officials, the median salary at Aberdeen is \$69,000, far above the statewide average, and private contractors are regularly paid far more than their government counterparts. Maryland officials estimate that 2.5 to 3 contractor jobs will follow each government or military position.

"The numbers that we have seen relative to the [Defense Department] jobs coming to the region are eventually going to be dwarfed by the number of contractors they bring with them," said Aris Melissaratos, Maryland's secretary of business and economic development.

A study commissioned by the communities surrounding the New Jersey base found that almost 1,500 contracts worth \$580 million were issued from Fort Monmouth in 2004. Officials from the base estimate that there are 2,500 employees of government contractors working on the base and thousands more in support roles throughout the area.

"Companies follow the work, and I think people follow the work as well," said Alan L. Chvotkin, senior vice president of the Professional Services Council, an industry organization. But, he added, the changes can become a nuisance for companies that have to get out of existing leases, find new office space, pay for relocation expenses and hire people to replace employees who are unwilling to move.

Vish Varma, vice president of corporate development for Falls Church-based AlphaInsight Corp., couldn't be happier about the proposed changes. His company shares in an information technology contract at Aberdeen that is worth about \$80 million over five years. About 10 percent of the firm's 320 employees are already stationed there, doing network engineering and technology support work, and Varma is hoping that number will grow significantly as new units move in.

"We are entrenched at Aberdeen, and to anybody who comes to Aberdeen, the base commander might say, 'If you need IT services, here's a company that does a good job,'" Varma said.

For at least three years, Maryland has prepared for a new round of base closures, bracing for bad news but hoping for good. Groups all over the state formed alliances to make their case for why Fort Meade, already home to about 60,000 contractors and 20,000 employees working at

the National Security Agency, should be a job-gainer.

Maryland's congressional delegation came through with \$12.5 million to widen Route 175, a roadway that passes Fort Meade's gates. Anne Arundel County prevailed on the Army Corps of Engineers to permit commercial development near wetlands in the heart of Odenton, not far from Fort Meade's gates, allowing for more office space to house contractors. And the Department of Labor granted \$1.24 million to help the government recruit workers in case there are slots left open by employees who don't want to move to Maryland.

"If only 80 percent of the people transfer, we're going to try to help fill that other 20 percent," said James D. Fielder Jr., secretary of the state's Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation. "We will help defray the recruitment and advertising costs and fill those vacant jobs."

Some contractors have already started to call real estate brokers about moving to follow the agencies they work with.

"The developers have been very eager to find opportunities near Aberdeen, Meade and Belvoir," said Kurt Stout, a broker with Grubb & Ellis who works with defense contractors looking for space and landlords.

Yesterday, state officials were glued to their television sets, watching the news of their efforts paying off. Hayes, the state's director of military and federal affairs, said he and his staff were at attention, watching the commission's decisions unfold on C-SPAN.

Opinions/ Editorials

Base Closings Are An Open Door

Washington Post
Steven Pearlstein
August 26, 2005

Let's raise a glass to Donald Rumsfeld and the Base Realignment and Closure Commission. They may have just done the Washington region a great big favor.

BRAC Commission Early Bird

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Pay no attention to those whiny politicians who've been running around like so many Chicken Littles, complaining about secret plots or flawed methodology behind the decision to close the Army's Walter Reed Medical Center and relocate more than 20,000 Pentagon employees from leased space in Crystal City and other Northern Virginia locations. Politicians reflexively oppose anything that might dislocate workers, reduce local tax revenue or hurt the bottom line for some local developers.

Economic progress always creates winners and losers. But you can always count on vote-sensitive politicians to take the side of the losers, who are known, rather than the more numerous winners, who are not.

Real leaders, on the other hand, would see this round of Pentagon restructuring as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to diversify a local economy that is becoming dangerously dependent on defense and homeland security while getting higher and better use from some of the region's choicest real estate.

Let's start with the jobs. Although you might not know it from all the political posturing of recent months, ours is truly a regional economy where millions of people cross political boundaries every day to go to work. From a regional perspective, it doesn't matter a whit that jobs move from one part of Northern Virginia to another, or even, heaven forbid, from Maryland to Virginia. Statements to the effect that the District or Arlington are "losing" jobs are meaningless and misguided. What matters is what happens to the region as a whole -- and on that, the potential impact of military restructuring ranges from neutral to positive.

A draft report prepared by Delta Associates, an Alexandria firm that tracks real estate trends, and the Center for Regional Analysis at George Mason University concludes that by 2011, the region stands to lose 7,500 jobs on an employment base of 3.3 million. By 2015, the study predicts, precisely 6,600 jobs would be added. These numbers are so small, and the margin of error on such projections is so large,

that this amounts to no meaningful change in overall employment.

The problem with such studies, however, is that they really can't consider the longer-term impacts of major changes in land use. Nobody knows how the Walter Reed site will be developed, or how the exodus of government agencies will reshape Crystal City, or how the transportation infrastructure will change as a result of the transfer of 20,000 jobs to Fort Belvoir and vicinity.

One could imagine scenarios that turn out quite badly, resulting in years of high vacancy rates and snarled traffic. If that were to happen, the Delta/Mason study might prove wildly optimistic, with significant loss of jobs and tax revenue and a lower quality of life.

By the same token, one could imagine a more favorable outcome:

One in which Walter Reed becomes one of the most desirable, mixed-race neighborhoods in the city, finally spurring the retail development that has eluded Georgia Avenue for decades.

One in which the federal government recognizes its financial responsibility and provides 50 percent of the funding for the extension of Metrorail to Fort Belvoir, bringing with it not only new offices and stores but a residential real estate boom in that part of Fairfax County.

One in which Crystal City is quickly transformed from a second-tier office district catering to government employees and contractors into a hip, urban Ballston-like corridor with Class A office space and condo towers boasting spectacular views of the Potomac.

Were things to work out in such a fashion, the favorable impact on jobs, incomes, profits and tax revenue would be enormous, far exceeding those projected by standard economic models.

Yes, these scenarios are rosy, but hardly fanciful. They come at a time when an already-prosperous region is growing fast enough to

absorb the short-term shocks. All that is needed to make it happen is a bit of luck, foresighted leadership and the leap of faith required for any breakthrough development. Think of Reston in the 1970s, downtown Bethesda in the '80s, or the District's east end in the '90s.

Indeed, a decade from now, someone may propose to erect a statue to Donald Henry Rumsfeld by the squash courts at the Walter Reed Estates, or in front of the Four Seasons Hotel in Crystal City, in recognition of his singular contribution to a region he may privately have hoped to put in its place.

Will base closings sap support for military?

Christian Science Monitor
Mark Sappenfield and Sara Miller
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New England could be a national barometer for public sentiment as the US military moves to fewer facilities.

Almost as far back as Don Russell can recall, planes from the nearby naval air station have roared overhead, an audible assurance of security, especially since the Sept. 11 attacks.

Now that this Maine base has been designated for closure, however, "this is going to leave a tremendous hole," Mr. Russell says wistfully.

New England's experience is in many ways a barometer for the nation, as the military contracts into fewer and larger installations. Despite Wednesday's dramatic decision by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) to keep open a shipyard in southern Maine and a submarine base in Connecticut, the region will have less military presence going forward than at any time in recent history. The concern is not so much one of security, but of society.

Some wonder whether the military, by leaving so many places where it has long been a part of the community, is setting itself up to become too remote from the very people it is charged with protecting. This changes the calculus on

everything from defense budgets to recruiting and retention.

A looming disconnect

"As the military goes for fewer bases, there is an increasing disconnect between the military and the community," says Jeremiah Gertler of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

Those trends have begun to take shape in the Northeast, where a once-strong military presence has slowly ebbed - and recruiting lags behind every other region of the country.

The further erosion of the military industrial complex in the Northeast could accelerate the trend, leaving the region with little stake in the military, either culturally or politically.

"Down the road, in a period when we're not in great danger, it might be hard to muster congressional majorities for defense budgets," Dr. Thompson says. "The irony is that the military's effort to make [BRAC] decisions based on merit might be undercutting its long-term political base."

In Brunswick, for example, quite aside from the reassuring roar of planes overhead, far deeper connections include the local pride in a base that trained pilots for World War II and has since become the state's second-largest employer.

The station was a "thread in the fabric [of the community] for years and years," Russell says.

Yet there are valid reasons why the Pentagon would wish to flee the Northeast and consolidate its bases elsewhere, despite a tendency to read political motives into the Pentagon's actions, analysts say.

After all, with fewer bases, there are fewer installations to protect, and in moving south, the Pentagon is following the model laid out by private business - moving to where costs are lower and land is more plentiful.

In voting to overrule the Pentagon and keep open the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and Submarine Base New London, the BRAC Commission simply decided quality was more important than cost savings; the commission chairman suggested that both the shipyard and sub base were the premier facilities of their kind in the country.

The commission will send its final list to the president Sept. 8, and the president will then decide whether to forward it to Congress for an up-or-down vote.

Getting left bare

But these decisions resonate beyond skill sets and dollars and cents. To residents in places like Brunswick, there is a sense of being left bare.

"Every time the planes fly over our house, I feel safe," says Betty Sanford, sitting on the patio of a Friendly's restaurant near the base. "This will leave me without that good feeling."

The BRAC Commission rejected such safety concerns, saying that the Pentagon could use other airfields in the area if necessary. Likewise, experts suggest that Brunswick - and even the Portsmouth shipyard and Submarine Base New London - have limited strategic value, since the military is still shrinking after decades of cold-war growth, leaving the Pentagon with many more facilities than it needs.

"This is not just an industrial phenomenon, it's a recruiting and retention phenomenon," says Loren Thompson, a defense analyst at the Lexington Institute in Arlington, Va.

A democratic connection

And BRAC Commission chairman Anthony Principi told reporters as much after a hearing last month.

"It's important for our nation that our military and our society be close together," Mr. Principi said. "That's important for democracy. And it's important for recruiting. It's important for

retention. It's important for building support for our engagements overseas."

Already, America is becoming less connected to its armed forces. Today, just 11 percent of American adults have had military experience - down from 20 percent in 1970. Today, 1 in 114 Americans is in the military. But at the end of World War II, the ratio was 1 in 12.

Fewer volunteers

In 2002, Rep. John McHugh (R) of New York told Congress: "Since far fewer people are recruited to serve in a voluntary military, the connection between America and its military is increasingly tenuous and less personal."

With the Pentagon now set to close scores of National Guard armories and other relatively small installations across the country, the Northeast in particular will offer a glimpse into how the departure of the military might reshape a community.

Says Thompson: "As time unfolds, we will see what it means to have very little stake in the military."

Additional Notes

N/A