

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



BIRD

August 27, 2005

Department of Defense Releases

Lawsuit Challenges BRAC Air Guard Recommendations

National News Articles

S.D., N.M. Air Force Bases Get Reprieve

Thune Delivers on Campaign Vow

Crystal City: Ghost Town or New Town?

Committee Spares Air Force Base In South Dakota

In Final Slap To Pentagon, Bases Are Spared In S. Dakota, New Mexico

Panel Votes To Shut Otis Air Base

Connecticut Governor Vows Court Fight Over Planned Transfer Of Jets From Base

After Defense Decision, A Realigned Landscape

Exodus Would Usher In A New Era for Arlington

Freshman Senator Can Finally Breathe Easy

Illinois loses air wing but mounts a defense

Local News Articles

BRAC approves plan for new missions at McConnell, Forbes

BRAC panel: Ellsworth to stay open

GOP Leaders Joined Carter in Lobbying for Groton Sub Base

Beach council airs BRAC doubts

BRAC confirms role for Burlington Air Guard

BRAC Commission: Fargo can have future flying missions

Panel OKs Air Guard Shake-Up; Local Unit Would Lose Its Planes

Panel Votes To Remove F-16s From Ellington

Willow Grove Base Axed

Last-Minute Compromise Keeps 911th Airlift Wing At Airport

State Vows A-10 Battle

BRAC Commission Early Bird

Use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement.
Reproduction for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

Vote To Move F-15s Was Unanimous

Panel Votes To Make Pope An Army Air Field

Portsmouth Loses Out On Jobs From New England Facilities

Air Guard Won't Get F-15s From 3 States

Upstate Base Off Chopping Block

Huachuca Jobs Saved In Reversal

BRAC OKs Changes For Guam Bases

BRAC votes to pull Meridian refueling wing

GOP may rap Corzine for Monmouth closing

Base losses much smaller this time

Opinions/ Editorials

Silent Service Deserves A Shout

The Walter Reed Vote

Additional Notes

Department of Defense Releases

Lawsuit Challenges BRAC Air Guard Recommendations

American Forces Press Service

By Donna Miles

August 26, 2005

WASHINGTON, Aug. 26, 2005 – A federal judge handed down a decision today that the Defense Department has no authority to

eliminate a Pennsylvania Air National Guard fighter wing without the state governor's okay. U.S. District Judge John Padova called DoD's recommendation to deactivate the Pennsylvania Air National Guard's 111th Fighter Wing "null and void" because Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell had not consented with the decision, a Department of Justice official confirmed.

Today's decision came as the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission voted today to close Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Willow Grove, Pa., the 111th Fighter Wing's home.

The BRAC commission's decision on the suburban Philadelphia base was among many expected later today as the commission deliberates on sweeping recommendations to revamp the Air National Guard.

The panel was slated to continue its deliberations tonight.

News reports said the state of Illinois has filed a lawsuit similar to Pennsylvania's involving its Air National Guard and Missouri has threatened to do the same.

During a mid-July interview with the American Forces Press Service, Army Lt. Gen. Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau, acknowledged that the Defense Department's recommendations could have a big impact on the Air Guard.

But the proposed changes are important measures that will increase the Air Guard's contribution to the Air Force and U.S. military, Blum said. "We want (the Air National Guard) to be an organization that has modern capabilities and a vital essential part of the Air Force."

"Overall, BRAC equals transformation," Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Richard Smith, Air National Guard command chief master sergeant, said when the BRAC proposals were initially announced in May. "The Air National Guard is always changing. Change has been done for generations before, and now it's our turn."

BRAC Commission Early Bird

Use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement.
Reproduction for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

National News Articles

S.D., N.M. Air Force Bases Get Reprieve

The Washington Post

By Bradley Graham

Washington Post Staff Writer

Saturday, August 27, 2005

The independent base-closing commission overruled Pentagon plans yesterday to shut two major Air Force bases in South Dakota and New Mexico, setting back Air Force efforts to consolidate its B-1 bomber fleet but preserving thousands of jobs in the states involved.

Commissioners described the votes to save the South Dakota's Ellsworth Air Force Base and New Mexico's Cannon Air Force Base as among the most difficult they had faced in trying to balance the Pentagon's desire to streamline operations with concern about the impact on local economies.

As the commission turned to its final and arguably most politically charged issue -- the reshaping of the Air National Guard -- a note of heightened drama was added to the proceedings by a federal court in Philadelphia. A judge there ruled that the Defense Department lacked authority to dissolve a Pennsylvania Air National Guard division without the governor's approval.

But the commission proceeded anyway. It approved a measure that skirted the ruling by preserving the Guard unit in question while still removing the fighter jets at the installation, Naval Air Station Willow Grove.

Running late in the evening, the commissioners accepted a large part of the Pentagon's plan to remove planes from nearly 30 Guard bases. But they also voted to keep aircraft at some locations the Pentagon had wanted stripped, citing homeland defense and other considerations.

It was by far the most emotional and longest of three days of voting on the Pentagon plan, which aimed to close, reduce or enlarge more than 800

installations to make U.S. forces more efficient and save nearly \$50 billion over 20 years. By the end of the day, the commission had ended up preserving this week at least a dozen of the larger bases the Pentagon had wanted shut or shrunk, reducing the projected savings to about \$37 million, according to Anthony J. Principi, the commission's chairman.

In the case of Ellsworth, the Defense Department had proposed shifting 24 B-1 bombers there to Texas and consolidating the entire B-1 force at Dyess Air Force Base. But the commission disputed the Pentagon's argument that closure would save \$1.8 billion, figuring instead that the result would be a net cost over 20 years of \$19 million. The gap reflected a disagreement over how to count 1,520 military and civilian job losses at the base -- one of many disputes the commission has had with the department over the proper accounting of troops whose positions at a base would be eliminated but who themselves would move on to other assignments.

Additionally, the commissioners expressed concern about the devastating economic impact that closure of Ellsworth, the second-largest employer in South Dakota, would have on Rapid City. And they noted little real difference in the facilities and training ranges between the South Dakota base and Dyess.

In Rapid City, people gathered at the Chamber of Commerce cheered and applauded as the 8 to 1 vote was announced.

"Happy days," said Bruce Rampelberg, who headed a task force to save the base. A Pennington County Commission member, Mark Kirkeby, told the Associated Press he had tears in his eyes. "Oh, my God, it's a fantastic day," he said.

The sense of victory was particularly sweet for Sen. John Thune (S.D.), a freshman Republican who unseated Senate Minority Leader Thomas A. Daschle (D-S.D.) last year partly on promises to save Ellsworth.

BRAC Commission Early Bird

Use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement.
Reproduction for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

3

The question of what to do about Cannon was even more wrenching for the commissioners. They were faced with figures showing that shutting the base would result in a 29 percent loss of local employment for Clovis, a city of 32,000 in eastern New Mexico. Commissioner Samuel K. Skinner said he had awakened at 4 a.m. thinking about what would happen to Clovis if the base were shut. Others noted the base's excellent ramp and airfield facilities, its extensive training ranges and supportive local population.

But Principi called closure "absolutely necessary" if the Pentagon is going to meet its changing needs.

"Painful basing decisions cannot be and should not be avoided or deferred simply because they are difficult," he said. "Postponing necessary decisions simply makes a lot of pain even worse."

Commissioner Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton, a retired general who once oversaw Air Force recruitment and training, offered a compromise that would have transferred a fighter training program to the base. Fellow commissioners rejected that idea, arguing it would not be appropriate for the panel to dictate a specific alternative to the Pentagon. But they settled on another compromise, agreeing to transfer all 60 F-16 fighter jets at Cannon to other bases but ordering that the facility remain open as an "enclave."

The move bought more time for Cannon by directing the Pentagon to try to come up with another mission by the end of 2009. If a new role for the facility cannot be found by then, the action gave the secretary of defense authority to close the base.

New Mexico politicians called the decision a partial victory.

"This is not a total loss," said Sen. Pete V. Domenici (R-N.M.). "We will be putting a lot of pressure on the administration and the secretary of defense to find new missions for Cannon as quickly as possible."

In yesterday's court ruling, U.S. District Judge John R. Padova said Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld should have obtained consent from Pennsylvania Gov. Edward G. Rendell (D) before moving to deactivate the 111th Fighter Wing of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard. The Pentagon had recommended that the Guard unit, with more than 1,000 jobs, be deactivated and that its aircraft be retired or relocated to other Air National Guard bases.

Several commissioners insisted, however, they were still on firm legal ground. Justice Department lawyers issued an opinion earlier in the month arguing that the base-closure act supersedes federal law requiring gubernatorial consent.

"We think we're on very solid legal ground," Newton said.

But after beginning work on the Guard reshaping plan, the commission suspended deliberations for three hours to try to ensure they would be proceeding properly through a complex set of proposed reshuffling of assets and personnel.

"We're going to be subject to legal challenges," Skinner told reporters. "We've got to dot our i's and cross our t's."

The Pennsylvania case did not involve a challenge to the Pentagon's authority to close Willow Grove, only whether the federal government could deactivate the 111th Fighter Wing based there. But other suits have been filed in Illinois and Tennessee that take issue with the Pentagon's ability to shift Guard aircraft without state approval.

The Air Guard restructuring has upset many state politicians and Guard leaders who complained they had no part in drafting the plan. Unable to compel the Air Force and adjutants general who oversee Guard state units to work out a compromise, the panel fashioned its own.

Thune Delivers on Campaign Vow

Senator's Future Brightens as S.D. Base Survives the Cut

The Washington Post

By Mike Allen

Washington Post Staff Writer

Saturday, August 27, 2005; A06

Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) sat tense, crouched and glowering as the base-closing commission delivered its verdict about Ellsworth Air Force Base in the ballroom of a Crystal City hotel yesterday, then leapt up gleefully when the bomber base's death sentence was commuted.

The 44-year-old's political career may have been spared as well.

Last fall, Thune unseated Senate Minority Leader Thomas A. Daschle (D-S.D.) in part by claiming that a Republican tight with the White House would have a better chance of saving the perennially impaired Ellsworth, a Cold War arsenal in the middle of the prairie. So it was potentially calamitous for Thune back home in May when the Pentagon put Ellsworth on the list of closure recommendations for the independent Base Realignment and Closure commission.

Thune, a former House member whose status as the Daschle slayer has made him a popular speaker before GOP groups, had long told the White House that losing Ellsworth -- South Dakota's largest employer after the state government -- was the one issue that could make him a one-term senator.

"There's something about my Scandinavian heritage that knows that life shouldn't be easy -- life's got to be hard," a relieved Thune said by telephone shortly after the commission's 8 to 1 vote to discard the Pentagon recommendation to close Ellsworth and move the base's B-1B bombers to Texas.

Thune, who has traveled the country raising money for Republicans, said he has done almost nothing but focus on Ellsworth since the May announcement. He personally lobbied Vice President Cheney, White House Chief of Staff Andrew H. Card Jr. and Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld. He dined one-on-one with

BRAC commissioners and showed up at hearings where he was not able to speak, just so he could stare them down.

"It's been a 24-7 proposition," Thune said.

The senator even took the risky move of expressing his displeasure with the administration by announcing his opposition to President Bush's controversial nomination of John R. Bolton as ambassador to the United Nations.

Thune said "a couple of things that we did late in the game were pretty persuasive," including calling attention to a lawsuit that could tie up airspace around Dyess Air Force Base in Texas, where the bombers were to go. Thune also argued in a marathon series of interviews over the summer that putting the whole bomber fleet at one base was not smart because more of them could be destroyed by a tornado or a terrorist strike. And commissioners publicly questioned the Pentagon's savings estimates.

Larry J. Sabato, founder and director of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics, said Thune "was on the fast track to a national ticket or Senate leadership until Ellsworth was threatened."

"Now he can claim another great triumph, and he's established some independence from the White House," Sabato said. "Given Bush's unpopularity, Republicans may be looking for a non-Bush figure who still keeps the conservative faith."

Steve Hildebrand, Daschle's campaign manager, said Thune, who won by two percentage points after losing a Senate race two years before, is likely to have a strong challenger when he seeks reelection in 2010. "He's still going to have to watch his back every step of the way," Hildebrand said.

Crystal City: Ghost Town or New Town?

The Washington Post

By Stephanie McCrummen

Washington Post Staff Writer

BRAC Commission Early Bird

Use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement.
Reproduction for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

Saturday, August 27, 2005; B01

It was lunchtime, and James Suttles, defense contractor, was walking back to work with his Quiznos sandwich along Crystal Drive, somewhere near Crystal Mall and Crystal Forum, not too far from Crystal Gateway and Crystal Plaza, and, incidentally, a few steps from a shiny new Starbucks.

Around him rose the place known as Crystal City, a grid of 12-story beige-mauve and brown glass office buildings, about a mile from the Pentagon and within sight of the Capitol.

"I just feel sorry for the guy who owns this place," Suttles said, referring to those responsible for finding new tenants for perhaps 3 million square feet of office space if Thursday's federal base-closing commission decision stands. "I think it could be a ghost town for a while."

The place took a particularly hard blow from the Base Closure and Realignment Commission, which voted this week to move more than 20,000 jobs from Arlington and Alexandria, a good chunk of which would come from Crystal City.

For those who work there, it was difficult to say yesterday what might become of Crystal City, whether the possible exodus of military workers and defense contractors portends tumbleweeds or a gleaming era of new businesses, good shopping and swank condominiums.

"I used to work for NAVSEA here," said Bob Morrison, a defense contractor, referring in the language of Crystal City -- acronym -- to the Naval Sea Systems Command. "They moved, and everyone said, 'That's the end of Crystal City,' and it wasn't."

Crystal City has been targeted by BRAC before and managed to survive.

"There's the river," said Deborah Bair, Morrison's colleague at the defense contractor Computer Sciences Corp., pointing to the Potomac. "You have the Metro, there's plenty of

parking, and now they've added all these new restaurants, which is appealing to young people.

"And they've got a Starbucks," she added. "What more could you want?"

For years, Crystal City, which was built in the 1960s and 1970s, endured a reputation as a sterile place where lanyard-wearing workers scurried to offices through underground tunnels and lunched in basement food courts.

There was always the appeal of the river, the squares of green and mounds of pink impatiens, but in general, the streets were rather lifeless except for noon on a pleasant day, people said.

That has changed quite a bit over the past year, however, as the old streetscape has given way to a slick gray and glass mall along Crystal Drive, where orange and red banners reading "Dine" and, somewhat cryptically, "World" now flutter overhead.

These days, people who make some of the most sophisticated weapons systems on the planet can grab a toffee crunch ice cream from Cold Stone Creamery or lunch on wings at Ted's Montana Grill.

Yesterday, notes of light jazz floated with the air conditioning out of the Crystal City Shops and onto the brick sidewalks, where workers, some in military fatigues, others in casual Friday attire, lunched on benches in the sun.

"I think it all depends on how they market it," said Robert Broadus, 35, of Alexandria, who preferred to keep his line of work a mystery. "I think the only reason people come here now is to work here."

Many of the shops close at 7 p.m., he noted. And although it's an improvement to have Bailey's Pub and Grille, there could be more restaurants.

"It's dead at night," Broadus said. "They need to put some clubs, someplace where people can spend money and have a good time -- they have to bump it up."

BRAC Commission Early Bird

Use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement.
Reproduction for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

6

To some extent, that is what planners have in mind.

Charles E. Smith Commercial Realty, which owns more than 70 percent of Crystal City's 20 million square feet of office space, is marketing the area as a "brand new downtown."

At least two office buildings are being replaced with residential ones, and tenants such as the Public Broadcasting Service and the Bureau of National Affairs are moving into the area, said Terry Holzheimer, director of economic development for Arlington County.

With the Pentagon still there, with rent cheaper than in the District and with a location more convenient than office parks further out, Holzheimer said, he does not foresee difficulty signing new tenants.

Harry Velasquez, a project manager who has worked in Crystal City for years and said it used to be "a wasteland," more or less agreed. "I think it's just a question of turnover," he said. "With the war effort continuing, there's always going to

Committee Spares Air Force Base In South Dakota

New York Times
By David S. Cloud
August 27, 2005

ARLINGTON, Va., Aug. 26 - The military base closing commission voted on Friday to keep open Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota and to delay the closing of Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico for at least four years.

The decisions came as the independent panel neared the end of three days of deliberations that led to several major changes in the Pentagon's plans for its bases.

Although much of the Defense Department's plan for closing or shrinking hundreds of bases emerged from the review intact, the panel, the Base Closure and Realignment Commission, overturned several of the plan's largest pieces, preventing the Pentagon from moving dozens of

submarines, hundreds of aircraft and thousands of military personnel to new locations around the country in coming years.

Even so, unless the plan is voted down by Congress, which does not appear likely, the Pentagon will be able to proceed with its most far-reaching retrenchment in decades and consolidate many previously far-flung military units at a smaller number of bases.

But the commission's revisions appear likely to reduce the nearly \$50 billion in savings the Defense Department hoped to achieve from the plan and to spare thousands of jobs in communities with bases that the Pentagon hoped to close.

In the most dramatic example on Friday, the nine-member commission voted 8 to 1 to overturn the proposed closing of Ellsworth, the second-largest employer in South Dakota, after concerted lobbying by the state's Congressional delegation and the governor, who camped out in the hotel ballroom a mile from the Pentagon where the commission was conducting its deliberations.

Although the commission's changes were few, they involved some of the largest bases in the Pentagon's plan, and some where the Defense Department had predicted large savings.

The commission completed its deliberations late Friday but decided to return Saturday for a final vote.

The chairman, Anthony J. Principi, told reporters that changes in the blueprint approved by the commission had reduced the estimated savings to \$37 billion over 20 years from \$48 billion, though he called the revised number "very preliminary." The savings could be as little as \$14 billion, Mr. Principi said, if expected savings from eliminating jobs and moving military personnel around the country failed to materialize.

The revisions to the Pentagon plan approved by the commission "accomplish a great deal" of what the Pentagon sought, another

BRAC Commission Early Bird

Use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement.
Reproduction for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

commissioner, Samuel Skinner, said, adding that the commission "made sure there were no miscarriages of justice."

After the panel makes its final vote, it will send the base-closing list, along with its revisions, to President Bush for his consideration. With the House and Senate apparently set to let the plan become law, the biggest remaining threats to it were several lawsuits filed by governors seeking to block the loss of Air National Guard planes from their states.

The Defense Department and state governors share authority over guard units, and the lawsuits contend that the Pentagon cannot remove them without the governors' permission. The commission, relying on a Justice Department opinion issued earlier this summer, says the Pentagon does not need state acquiescence.

But the issue was thrown into confusion on Friday, when a federal district judge in Philadelphia ruled that the Defense Department lacked authority to close a Pennsylvania Air National Guard fighter base without the approval of the governor.

The Pentagon had proposed deactivating the 1,023-member unit, the 111th Fighter Wing, as part of its plan to close the Willow Grove air station near Philadelphia, where the unit is based.

The base closing commission voted on Friday to close Willow Grove despite the ruling by the judge, John R. Padova, removing language that would have deactivated the unit itself. But Gov. Edward G. Rendell, a Democrat, who brought the lawsuit, asserted that the commission's vote was "meaningless because it voted on a recommendation that is illegal." Mr. Rendell called the panel's vote, which came shortly after Judge Padova's decision, "pretty mean."

In an interview, Mr. Rendell said he believed that Judge Padova's order also blocked the Pentagon from removing the unit's 15 A-10 jets, heavily armored aircraft used to support ground troops.

Mr. Rendell acknowledged, however, that Judge Padova's decision might not prevent the Pentagon from eventually closing Willow Grove, which is also home to Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force reserve units.

Mr. Rendell had argued that the unit was vital to the region's security, providing defense for Philadelphia and a nearby nuclear reactor. "If the president were appearing at Independence Hall," he said, "you'd want those A-10's at Willow Grove."

Several commission members said they did not expect the court challenge, which the Justice Department is appealing, to succeed.

"We think we're on very solid legal ground," said one commissioner, Lloyd W. Newton.

But Mr. Skinner added: "We're going to be subject to legal challenge. We've got to dot our i's and cross our t's."

Connecticut is one of the states losing all its National Guard combat planes. The Pentagon wants to move nine of the state's 17 A-10 Thunderbolts now based at Bradley International Airport near Windsor Locks 30 miles away to an Air National Guard base in Massachusetts. The rest of the planes would be retired, and 384 jobs connected with the squadron would disappear.

The commission voted 9 to 0 on Friday to endorse the move, which Representative John B. Larson, a Democrat who represents the Windsor Locks area, called a "painful" decision that "serves no greater purpose." But combining the Connecticut squadron with a unit in Massachusetts is part of a larger Pentagon push to consolidate understrength guard units to save money and to bring depleted reserve units up to effective strength.

Nationwide, the Pentagon plan involves removing aircraft from 29 of the 88 Air National Guard units and consolidating the planes at new locations. That would leave more than two dozen states with no aircraft, which officials from affected states contend would leave them

vulnerable to terrorist attacks and hamper their ability to call on Guard aircraft to fight forest fires or deal with other natural disasters.

The sensitivity of the issue led the commission to look closely at where aircraft would be going and, in many cases, to make adjustments, sometimes by ordering minute changes.

While the Defense Department wanted to remove all guard F-16 fighters from Atlantic City, for example, the commission ordered 18 fighters to be based there. Instead of 24 aircraft at the air guard base at Toledo, Ohio, the panel recommended having 18.

In rejiggering the Pentagon's blueprint, panel members said they were trying to ensure that as many states as possible had at least some airplanes, in part because of rising concerns about domestic defense. But with the Air Force's total size shrinking and many older planes being retired, it was not always possible.

The panel's efforts to move forces around at times struck even some commissioners as verging on micromanagement. "We are on the very edge of the competency of this commission," Harold W. Gehman Jr., a commissioner and retired admiral, said in the discussion of shifting the Air Force's introductory fighter pilot training to Cannon Air Force Base, a move the Pentagon had not proposed.

In rejecting the proposal to close Ellsworth, the commissioners handed a significant victory to Senator John Thune of South Dakota, a freshman Republican who had vowed in his campaign last year to keep the installation off the base-closing list.

Several commissioners said the Pentagon estimate that closing the base and moving its 24 B1 bombers to Dyess Air Force Base in Texas would save \$1.8 billion over the next 20 years was greatly overstated. More than 2,000 of the 3,300 military jobs at Ellsworth would move to Dyess, resulting in little cost savings.

"We're essentially moving the airplanes from one very, very good base to another very, very good base," Mr. Gehman said.

The only commissioner to vote against keeping the base open was Mr. Newton, a retired Air Force general.

The panel opted to follow the Pentagon's plan to move Cannon Air Force Base's F-16 aircraft but decided not to close the installation. Several panel members said the base's vast airspace was ideal for training. But if no additional tenants for Cannon are found by 2009, the base could be fully closed, the commission decided.

In addition to the big Ellsworth and Cannon bases, the commission earlier in the week gave reprieves to the Navy submarine base in Groton, Conn., and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Me.

It also spared Eielson Air Force Base near Fairbanks, Alaska, the Red River Army Depot in Texas and several other smaller installations, often seeming to disregard a warning from Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld against second-guessing the Pentagon's plan.

"They've done what the secretary of defense told them they shouldn't do: take it all apart, one thread at a time," said David Berteau, a former Pentagon base-closing official. "It's hard to tell what the total savings are going to look like here, but my guess is a lot less."

James Dao contributed reporting from Washington for this article.

In Final Slap To Pentagon, Bases Are Spared In S. Dakota, New Mexico

Los Angeles Times

By John Hendren, Times Staff Writer

August 27, 2005

ARLINGTON, Va. — Continuing to defy Pentagon proposals, the military base closure commission Friday spared South Dakota's B-1 bomber base and rejected the proposed

shutdown of a major Air Force base in New Mexico.

Ellsworth Air Force Base was kept open after feverish lobbying by South Dakota lawmakers, while New Mexico officials claimed a "partial victory" from a compromise that keeps Cannon Air Force Base open at least through 2009. The Pentagon recommended both bases be closed, eliminating or shifting more than 6,600 military and civilian jobs.

The panel's action came in a day of setbacks for the Pentagon, which also was on the losing end of a federal court decision in Pennsylvania that could derail another part of the base closure plan approved Friday. U.S. District Judge John R. Padova ruled that the Defense Department had no authority to shut down an Air National Guard base without the approval of Gov. Ed Rendell. If upheld and applied nationally, the ruling could bar the Air Force from carrying out its plans to consolidate Air National Guard bases nationwide.

The independent Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission ended three days of meetings Friday, rebuffing parts of the Pentagon's restructuring plan. The Pentagon had been seeking \$48.8 billion in savings over 20 years. The commission's changes on large installations alone would force the Defense Department to forgo at least \$4.7 billion in projected savings. The panel is not required to find cuts to make up the difference.

The base closure commission acted on recommendations submitted by the Pentagon in May, and its report will be sent to President Bush. Without changing individual recommendations, Bush may accept them or send them back to the commission. Congress is due to receive the finished report by Nov. 7.

In each of the most politically controversial base closure recommendations, the panel overturned the Pentagon at least in part. The nine-member panel voted to spare the Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton, Conn.; the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine; Ellsworth and Cannon air bases; and several others.

"The more high-profile a recommendation by the Pentagon, the more likely [the commissioners were] to change it," said Jeremiah Gertler, a staffer for the commission during previous base closings and now a military analyst for the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank.

Past base closure commissions have agreed with the Defense Department's recommendations about 85% of the time.

"So far, this commission is going along 66% of the time," Gertler said. "But those 33% to 34% where they voted against the department were the big bases."

The disagreements between the commission and the Pentagon appeared more dramatic in part because, after four previous rounds of base shutdowns, all of the obvious closures had been made, leaving increasingly difficult choices and close calls, said Christopher Hellman of the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation in Washington.

"The ones that we're watching are high profile because they were controversial," Hellman said. "And by and large, the reason that they were controversial was that they're not slam-dunks."

Pentagon strategists had sought to close Ellsworth, a hub for nuclear bombers and missiles during the Cold War, and move its fleet of B-1 bombers to Dyess Air Force Base outside Abilene, Texas. But freshman Republican Sen. John Thune and other South Dakota base supporters argued that national security would be threatened by keeping the nation's entire fleet of B-1 bombers at one site.

For Thune, it was an important battle because he had waged a successful political campaign against former Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle in part by arguing he could do a better job of protecting Ellsworth and its 4,000 jobs.

"This whole decision was about the merits," said Thune, who had become a regular presence at

the panel's meetings. "It had nothing to do with politics."

Factors that persuaded commissioners to keep Ellsworth open, they said, were the open air space surrounding the base and their staff's analysis of the financial impact of the base's closure. The staff report concluded that although the Pentagon estimated a savings of \$1.8 billion over two decades, the plan would have actually cost nearly \$20 million. It also found that the Pentagon listed some personnel costs as savings when the employees would have remained on the payroll at other bases and that the Defense Department did not account for the expense of moving the operations.

"We have no savings. We're essentially moving the airplanes from one very, very good base to another very, very good base, which are essentially equal," Commissioner Harold W. Gehman Jr., a retired Navy admiral, said during the debate.

The panel's decision on Cannon, in eastern New Mexico near the Texas Panhandle, marked a middle ground between leaving it open indefinitely and shuttering it entirely, as the Pentagon had sought to do. Rather than closing the base in 2006, the commissioners voted to strip it of its four F-16 fighter squadrons but keep it open through the end of 2009. They ordered the Air Force to look for new missions beyond 2009. But the base would close if no new uses were found.

New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson deemed the compromise a "partial victory." Saying the base affected one in three jobs in the town of Clovis, state officials held out hope that new missions — and perhaps new political leaders — would help extend the base's life.

"We may have another fight in 2010," said Richardson, a Democrat. "But I believe at that time there will be enough missions to keep Cannon Air Force Base open."

When deciding on the fate of Pennsylvania's Naval Air Station Willow Grove, commissioners didn't take into account Friday's federal court

ruling, approving the Pentagon's recommendation to close the base. However, they revised the Pentagon plan, preserving the base's Guard unit.

Panel Votes To Shut Otis Air Base State leaders vow fight; jets to go to Westfield Boston Globe

By Bryan Bender and Matt Viser, Globe Staff
August 27, 2005

WASHINGTON -- In a compromise that "baffled" Massachusetts leaders, a federal commission voted yesterday to close Otis Air National Guard Base on Cape Cod but transfer its fighter jets to a municipal airport in Western Massachusetts instead of shipping them to bases in Florida and New Jersey as the Pentagon wanted.

The decision by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, or BRAC, to disband one of the nation's oldest Air Guard units puzzled Bay State officials, who assured their constituents that they would work to save the 505 jobs at stake in Falmouth. They also expressed surprise at the decision to send 18 F-15s to Barnes Municipal Airport Air Guard Station in Westfield, which would lose all 10 of its A-10 attack jets to bases in New Mexico, Idaho, Arkansas, and Maryland.

State officials have insisted that dissolving the 102d Fighter Wing at Otis would leave the Northeast vulnerable to attack and will hurt the Coast Guard air station and the Army National Guard's Camp Edwards -- military units that share the sprawling 22,000-acre Massachusetts Military Reservation site on the Upper Cape.

Though Otis's fate seemed sealed, Bay State officials' hopes were buoyed by a federal court ruling in Pennsylvania yesterday that said the state's governor should have a say in relocating Air National Guard units. The central argument in that case is the same one Massachusetts officials made to try and save Otis.

According to Pentagon documents, Otis would close by 2008. The Pentagon has estimated that

BRAC Commission Early Bird

Use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement.
Reproduction for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

11

shutting down the Guard base at Otis would save \$336 million over the next 20 years. Massachusetts officials have challenged that estimate, however, and argue that closing the unit would actually cost the government \$163 million.

The BRAC commission vote came during a confusing afternoon session in which the commission held little debate before unanimously approving a sweeping package of proposals the commission staff put forward on a number of Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve bases. Otis and state officials said the move left a lot of questions unanswered, including how many members of the 102d Fighter Wing would move along with their jets, or how Barnes maintenance crews trained to maintain A-10 attack jets will work on the F-15s, which are vastly different aircraft.

"We are somewhat baffled, quite frankly, about how they made this decision," Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, told a gathering outside the Otis gates, against a backdrop of two large jet fuel tanks and a fleet of F-15s sitting outside their hangars. Kennedy, Governor Mitt Romney, and other local politicians pledged to fight the decision, or at least cushion the economic blow, if they lose.

"Perhaps there will be someone on the BRAC commission who will be able to tell us why it makes sense to move this whole wing an hour and a half down the road," Kennedy said. "It defies logic. It defies intuition. It defies understanding. It makes no sense at all."

Regardless of the base's ultimate fate, Kennedy said, "I pledge that I will work with you to enhance the Massachusetts Air Guard and the operations at Otis."

"The fight isn't over," said Romney, who promised to consult with Massachusetts Attorney General Thomas F. Reilly to determine whether the state has legal options. "We're going to continue our process to preserve this air wing. But obviously our chances get thinner when the BRAC commission makes a decision like this."

Overall, though, New England fared better than expected in the final deliberations of the nine-member BRAC commission, which will send a report to President Bush by Sept. 8; he can either approve or reject the entire list before it goes to Congress.

This week, among the hundreds of facilities it considered, the independent panel chose to spare Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine, and Submarine Base New London in Groton, Conn., saving nearly 13,000 jobs and preserving two of the region's economic lifelines. Those reversals more than offset the commission's decision to quash the military's plan to expand Hanscom Air Force Base in Bedford, slashing more than 200 jobs.

But the Hanscom decision -- which voided a multimillion-dollar expansion and housing deal the state had assembled -- and the vote to close Otis marked significant economic losses for Massachusetts, which must now determine what to do with the portion of the Cape Cod base that the Air Guard will abandon.

The unit is among the oldest in the country, first established at Logan Field in Boston in 1921. In various incarnations, the squadron has played a critical role over the decades: its pilots and crews fought in World War II, were deployed to France in 1961 during the Berlin Crisis, and were scrambled after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. After the attacks, Otis fighters flew round-the-clock patrols along the East Coast.

"Whenever I saw aircraft flying that week of 9/11, it was 102d aircraft I saw," said Leonid Kondratiuk, a retired colonel and the Massachusetts National Guard's historian. "Now they will fade away."

But commissioners said they thought to keep National Guard aircraft in as many states as possible. Under the BRAC commission's compromise, Massachusetts will not be as vulnerable to attack as some had feared, since the F-15s will be just a few hundred miles away. That, however, was cold comfort for Bay State politicians.

BRAC Commission Early Bird

Use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement.
Reproduction for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

Representative William D. Delahunt, a Quincy Democrat whose district includes Otis, said he would work to overturn the decision in Congress. "The Pentagon, and now the BRAC commission, got it dead wrong," he said. "Closing Otis puts both the Coast Guard mission on the Cape and our nation's homeland defense at serious risk. It is my hope the governor and attorney general will continue to pursue all possible legal avenues available to the state."

Senator John F. Kerry, Democrat of Massachusetts, said the decision "makes no sense" and argued that both Otis and Barnes units "play a critical role in our defense and homeland security."

Coincidentally, just before the commission voted, US District Judge John R. Padova ruled in favor of Pennsylvania Governor Edward Rendell in a lawsuit filed against Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld in July. The lawsuit asserted that the Air National Guard is primarily under the control of state governors and, therefore, cannot be legally removed without state input. Rendell argued that dissolving the 111th Fighter Wing of the Pennsylvania National Guard would hamper his ability to respond to floods and other state emergencies; Bay State officials involved in the campaign to save Otis had made a similar argument to the commission.

The judge said the Pentagon's recommendation to close the unit is "null and void," but legal specialists said the effect of that ruling on other base closings is unclear.

But there appeared to be several options. "It would not surprise me that one of the next decisions was to bring a similar suit on behalf of Massachusetts and Otis," said Beth Mitchell, a partner at the Boston law firm of Nutter, McClennen & Fish and a specialist on base closings. "If that doesn't work, there will be some efforts on the political front to convince President Bush to make changes."

In Falmouth, some were taking the Otis vote in stride.

"We worked hard, we put our best foot forward, and we'll move on," said George Baker, the Mashpee fire chief and spokesman for the Save Otis Coalition.

Connecticut Governor Vows Court Fight Over Planned Transfer Of Jets From Base

New York Times
By William Yardley
August 27, 2005

HARTFORD, Aug. 26 - Gov. M. Jodi Rell said Friday that she would go to court to oppose the planned transfer of fighter jets from the Bradley Air National Guard base, saying that the 15 A-10 Warthogs affected were crucial to the state's homeland defense and that federal law required her permission to make the transfer.

An independent federal commission that is reviewing Pentagon plans to close or realign hundreds of bases nationwide, including major bases in the New York metropolitan region, voted Friday to approve the Pentagon's plan to transfer some planes at Bradley, about 20 miles north of Hartford, to bases in other states and to take others out of service.

The plan includes moving a maintenance unit to Bradley as well as a unit capable of scrambling jets from other bases. But the base, which would have a net loss of about 70 jobs out of 926 total positions, no longer would have active aircraft.

"It makes no sense to close an Air National Guard base when we are doing so much every day to promote and enhance homeland security," the governor said in a written statement.

"I continue to believe that a base like this cannot be closed without my permission," she said, "and I have not, and will not, grant that permission."

Several governors have made similar claims and filed lawsuits. On Friday, while commissioners were deliberating over the air bases, a federal

judge in Pennsylvania ruled that the Pentagon did not have the right to deactivate the Air National Guard's 111th Fighter Wing without the permission of Gov. Edward G. Rendell. That ruling left some people unclear on whether the commission's decisions could be overruled.

The Bradley base reduction came on the third day of votes by the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission.

In New York, the commission voted to keep open the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, the second-largest employer in Niagara County. Home to eight C-130 Hercules aircraft and eight KC-135 tankers, the base employs more than 640 people full time. The Pentagon had planned to close the base.

"What we saw on the map today is that the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station remains in business, planes stay here and there is a flying mission," said Neil E. Nolf, public affairs officer at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station.

On Thursday, the commission overruled a Pentagon plan to close a finance and accounting unit at the Griffiss Business and Technology Park, in Rome, N.Y., a move that threatened as many as 400 jobs. Instead, it decided to expand work in Rome with as many as 600 new jobs.

Connecticut, despite the removal of planes from the Bradley base, was perhaps the region's biggest winner in the base closing process. On Wednesday, the commission voted to keep open the Navy submarine base at Groton, preserving its 8,500 jobs and as many as 22,000 more that economists say are linked to it.

The commission also voted to close three small Army reserve centers, which the Pentagon said employ 56 people.

New Jersey was less fortunate than Connecticut and New York. On Wednesday, the commission voted to close Fort Monmouth, an 88-year-old Army base that now employs 5,085 civilian workers and 467 military personnel. About 1,500 of the jobs at the base will be eliminated under the commission's plan; the rest will be

moved to the Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland.

Some New Jersey bases, including Picatinny Arsenal and Fort Dix, gained jobs through the transfer of units from elsewhere. But over all, New Jersey will give up more than 4,900 jobs.

Some experts said the decision to keep open the Groton base, along with the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Me., was important to recruitment efforts and public support of the military in the Northeast.

The Pentagon has closed or reduced several bases in the Northeast in recent years while expanding bases in the South and West.

"When you're really looking long term at the future of the all-volunteer force and the future of the military, you really do want to attract from all parts of the country," said Eric Wertheim, a military industry consultant and author.

Damien Cave, in New Jersey, and David Staba, in Niagara Falls, N.Y., contributed reporting for this article.

After Defense Decision, A Realigned Landscape

D.C. Considers Future of Hospital Site

Washington Post

By Lori Montgomery, Washington Post Staff Writer

August 27, 2005

Hours after a federal commission recommended closing Walter Reed Army Medical Center, District officials started drawing up wish lists for the 113-acre site. Council members imagined acres of housing, while the mayor conjured visions of an "urban gateway" with the commercial pizzazz of downtown Silver Spring.

Realizing those dreams will be neither quick nor easy, federal and local officials said yesterday. A host of obstacles stands in the way, from potential environmental contamination on the site to the possibility that the federal government

might want to keep Walter Reed for purposes of its own.

But the District should move quickly to map out a new master plan for the property, according to those familiar with the base-closure process. And within the next few months, they said, city officials should begin the labor-intensive process of persuading Congress and the Pentagon to buy into their vision.

"It's not going to be D.C.'s decision. The Department of Defense has to sign off. The Army has to sign off. But the community can have a major impact on how this plan is shaped," said Tim Ford, executive director of the National Association of Defense Communities, a nonprofit group that has been helping cities deal with the economic implications of military installations for 25 years.

"It's important for the community to get started early and figure out what it wants," Ford said. "Because the [armed] services are going to be pushing to get things done."

With the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission scheduled to finish work today, as many as 20 communities nationwide face the loss or reduction of major military installations, Ford said. Many have started planning for reuse of the sites. Others, like the District, have put their efforts into fighting the closure recommendations.

D.C. officials, for example, have yet to formally decide whether they want to take control of the Walter Reed site, though key council members, including Chairman Linda W. Cropp (D), have called on the mayor to do so.

The Walter Reed complex occupies a prime piece of real estate in a neighborhood of leafy streets and high-priced homes near the District's northern tip. Wedged between two major thoroughfares -- 16th Street and Georgia Avenue NW -- its potential development value is almost incalculable.

Ellen McCarthy, interim director of the mayor's Office of Planning, said her office must research

a bewildering array of issues associated with the property.

"Walter Reed has been part of the fabric of the community for 100 years. It's in the middle of a residential neighborhood. We would definitely want the site," McCarthy said. But first, the city must determine "whether there is any medical waste, contamination or any other environmental issues," she said. In addition, part of the site is subject to historic preservation requirements.

The answers to those questions would have enormous impact on the value of the property should the Department of Defense decide to auction it. Other factors to be assessed: What sort of infrastructure exists on site? Is it up to code? Would the military raze the buildings or leave the city with a huge demolition project? Is there asbestos? PCBs? If so, would Congress pay for cleanup?

"Those are a lot of tough questions," said Jeffrey Finkle, president of the International Economic Development Council, a nonprofit trade group. "The question is: Can you make lemonade out of these lemons?"

The District might have more time than other communities, Finkle said. Although some troops could pull out of closed bases in short order, the Walter Reed complex cannot be abandoned until a new medical center is built in Bethesda and other functions are shifted to new quarters, a process the base-closing panel estimates would cost \$988 million. Planning for the Bethesda facility is likely to take years, McCarthy said. And it could take just as long for Congress to come up with the money, said Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D), the District's nonvoting representative in the House.

Once the new hospital is running, the Pentagon or the General Services Administration will dispose of the site, federal officials said. By law, it must be offered first to other federal agencies, either for their own use or for a public benefit, such as serving the homeless or providing recreational facilities. If no federal agency wants it, the property could be sold on the open

market, to the District government or to a developer.

In Southern California, Orange County and the city of Irvine battled for more than a decade over whether to build a commercial airport at El Toro Marine Corps Air Station, which was ordered closed in 1993. The Navy finally sold the site this year to a private developer.

In Alexandria, 2,000 housing units, commercial space and recreational facilities began to bloom on the former Cameron Station a little more than a year after the Army locked the gates in September 1995. The Army's departure, however, came nearly seven years after the base was ordered closed in 1988.

Norton predicted it will be at least 10 years before Washington sees any significant changes at Walter Reed.

"We better enjoy Walter Reed, 'cause it's going to be there for a long time," she said.

Exodus Would Usher In A New Era for Arlington

The Washington Post

By Brigid Schulte

Washington Post Staff Writer

Friday, August 26, 2005; A01

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.

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 Fiset, 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," Fiset (D) said. "It creates more opportunities."

In an ironic way, Fiset 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."

Staff writers Lisa Rein, Michael D. Shear and Lila de Tantillo contributed to this report.

Freshman Senator Can Finally Breathe Easy

The New York Times
By Carl Hulse
August 27, 2005

WASHINGTON, Aug. 26 - It was election night all over again for Senator John Thune as he fidgeted while awaiting returns that would decide his political fortunes. He was about to be either a goat or a hero

With a decisive 8-to-1 vote, the Base Closure and Realignment Commission on Friday saved both Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota and the promising political career of Senator Thune, the South Dakota Republican who

BRAC Commission Early Bird

Use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement.
Reproduction for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

unseated the Senate Democratic leader last year by arguing that strong ties to the Bush White House would give the state new clout.

That proposition became highly suspect in May when the Bush administration put Ellsworth on its hit list, sending Mr. Thune on an intense scramble to demonstrate that he could be as effective as Tom Daschle - the man he defeated - in protecting the state's second-largest employer from Pentagon cost-cutters.

"It lifts a heavy burden," said a wrung-out Mr. Thune, who needed to be gently reminded by his staff to smile at the celebratory news conference. "It is a huge sense of relief."

In a coordinated effort, Mr. Thune, Gov. Michael Rounds, a Republican, and Senator Tim Johnson and Representative Stephanie Herseth, both Democrats from the state, set out to refute Pentagon claims that moving the base's fleet of long-range B-1 bombers to Texas would save millions of dollars. The commissioners apparently listened and also expressed concerns about concentrating all the bombers at one location.

"They took the time to gather the facts," Mr. Rounds said, praising the commission members for their willingness to override the Pentagon.

Mr. Thune readily acknowledged that he would have preferred a political intervention by the White House to protect the base from the start. But he said carrying the day on substance made victory all the better.

"It is sweet to win on the merits because you don't owe anybody anything," Mr. Thune said.

Mr. Thune has already shown that the Ellsworth matter could alter his relations with the White House. In the aftermath of the decision to put Ellsworth on the list, Mr. Thune - who was personally courted for the Senate by President Bush - threatened to withhold his support for John R. Bolton, then the embattled nominee for ambassador to the United Nations. And the senator curtailed his productive fund-raising and other political work for the party.

Stuart Rothenberg, a nonpartisan political analyst, said Ellsworth's narrow escape should strengthen Mr. Thune's political hand. "He looks independent," Mr. Rothenberg said.

Before the vote, Mr. Thune and his top advisers conceded it would be pivotal to his political future, with a final decision to close the base looming as a huge embarrassment that would undercut his campaign message that he could deliver as a member of the Republican majority.

He pulled out all the stops and virtually camped out at the commission hearings being held at a hotel just outside Washington, buttonholing anyone he could to make the case for Ellsworth. "I've spent more time with this BRAC commission than I've spent with my wife and my family in the last three months," he said.

Mr. Thune noted that in his 2004 run for the Senate, he had never run advertisements or made statements promising to keep the base open. But the idea that a Republican lawmaker could be more useful to the state given the party's hold on Washington - more influential than even the Senate's top Democrat - was a persistent undercurrent of the campaign.

"There was a debate about connections and clout, and those issues in general were a significant part of his campaign," said Senator Johnson, who defeated Mr. Thune in the latter's first Senate race, in 2002. The White House played a role in that election as well when Mr. Bush, during an appearance in South Dakota, resisted calls for drought relief for the state's farmers, a position that was seen as aiding Mr. Johnson.

But the Ellsworth crisis drove the two former Senate foes to work closely together to try to protect the base, a development Mr. Johnson described as a welcome change after bitter back-to-back Senate contests. "It has left the state politically exhausted," he said. "I think a little more civility and a little more cooperation is good for us all."

Mr. Johnson and others said that Mr. Daschle, who is now consulting on public policy and will be a visiting professor at Georgetown this fall, largely stayed out of the Ellsworth fight. Reached Friday, Mr. Daschle politely sidestepped inquiries about the political implications of the decision. "I'm very happy for South Dakota," he said in an e-mail message.

Mr. Thune shared the credit for the commission decision with his colleagues. "This team worked extremely well together, and as a result we've got a great outcome," he said.

Asked if the tension equaled that of his own recent election vigils, he said, "It would be a close call."

**Illinois loses air wing but mounts a defense
South Dakota and New Mexico win big as 2 bases are spared**

The Chicago Tribune

By Stephen J. Hedges, Washington Bureau.
Tribune staff reporters M. Daniel Gibbard in Chicago and Christi Parsons in Springfield contributed to this report

August 27, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Illinois lost its bid to keep its Air National Guard fighter jet wing in Springfield during a final day of deliberations Friday by the base closing commission, while two other states--South Dakota and New Mexico--won hard-fought victories to save major Air Force bases the Pentagon wanted to close.

The nine-member, independent Base Closure and Realignment Commission voted 8-1 to move the 15 F-16s of the Illinois' Air Guard's 183rd Fighter Wing to Ft. Wayne, Ind. The decision was part of a larger effort to significantly reorganize Air Guard units nationwide as the number of available planes shrinks in the years ahead.

Ft. Wayne will retire its 15 aircraft and the commission approved a plan that will place a total of 18 fighters there.

The move was adopted as part of a larger plan that will affect 27 Air National Guard units that fly F-16s. Ten, including Springfield, will lose all their planes, while others will gain.

Illinois, Pennsylvania and Tennessee have filed suit to block the decision, arguing that the governors, not the Pentagon, have control over the Air National Guard units.

On Friday, a U.S. District Court judge in Philadelphia said the Defense Department should have obtained the consent of Gov. Ed Rendell before moving to deactivate the 111th Fighter Wing of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard. Judge John Padova said the Pentagon's move to close the unit was "null and void."

Legal issues don't halt 'no' vote

Mindful of those legal challenges, the commissioners delayed their vote on the realignment for three hours late Friday afternoon to meet with the commission's lawyers.

"We're aware of the legal issues," said Commissioner Sam Skinner, a Chicago attorney. "We just want to make sure all the 'i's' are dotted."

In the end, however, the commissioners decided they had the legal authority to approve a plan to consolidate the guard units.

There was little debate on the Guard issue later Friday; Skinner was the only one who voted against it, noting that Springfield and Hulman, Ind.--another base moving nine planes to Ft. Wayne--had been ranked higher for military value by the Pentagon.

State officials called the decision shortsighted.

"First the Pentagon ignored the law," Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich said. "Now the BRAC Commission has ignored the facts and the criteria it was supposed to follow and apparently is paying off political debts in states like South Dakota, Florida and Texas. Taking the F-16s out of Springfield would compromise our ability to

BRAC Commission Early Bird

19

Use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement.
Reproduction for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

protect the people of Illinois and will impact the safety and security of the entire Midwest."

Earlier, in separate votes, the commission chose to preserve Ellsworth Air Force Base near Rapid City, S.D., and Cannon Air Force Base in Clovis, N.M., the latter as a special military "enclave," awaiting a new mission.

The vote in favor of Ellsworth, home to 24 B-1 bombers of the 28th Bomb Wing, was a lopsided 8-1. The commission's staff said that the Pentagon had overestimated the \$1.8 billion in savings that closing the base would provide. A large portion of those savings, they said, were personnel costs that would simply be shifted with the bombers to their proposed new home, Dyess Air Force Base in Texas.

The staff also said the Pentagon significantly underestimated the local economic impact of closing Ellsworth. Local leaders estimated that it would cost the area 11,000 jobs, positions that were unlikely to be replaced in rural South Dakota.

Senator plays down politics

Friday's decision was the culmination of an intense lobbying campaign by state and local officials in South Dakota, and represented a significant political victory for freshman Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.). He often cited the need to save Ellsworth during his 2004 campaign to unseat Sen. Tom Daschle, who had been the Senate Democratic leader.

Thune brushed aside suggestions that saving the base will increase his political capital.

"People can do all the theorizing they want about politics," Thune said after the vote, "but frankly this whole decision was about the merits, not politics."

Whether to preserve Cannon Air Force Base caused greater consternation among commissioners, proving to be one of the most difficult decisions over the course of three days of base-closing discussions.

The commission considered Pentagon proposals to close 33 major military bases and shifts in duties and personnel that would affect nearly 800 facilities nationwide. This week's hearings followed three months of visits and hearings by panel members across the U.S.

The three days of decisions featured some surprising reversals, including a vote Wednesday to keep two New England submarine bases open, against a Pentagon recommendation. On Thursday the panel voted to close the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and establish a new military medical center on the grounds of the nearby Bethesda Naval Hospital.

It also voted to move an estimated 2,000 medical training slots at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center in North Chicago to Ft. Sam Houston in San Antonio.

Great Lakes numbers disputed

At Great Lakes, a spokeswoman played down the shift of 2,000 personnel to other bases.

Of the lost positions, 1,700 were trainees not permanently assigned to the base and who had limited economic impact on neighboring towns, said Lt. Cmdr. Melissa Schuermann. Only 23 civilian jobs were cut, she noted.

"This number 2,000 keeps getting thrown out [but] 1,700 of those are students," she said.

Overall, the commission has approved most of the Pentagon's recommended closures and realignments, an effort that the Pentagon originally said would save an estimated \$49 billion over 20 years. The projected savings of the changes the commission adopted are still unknown.

The commission, which planned to meet Saturday to conclude its work, must present its recommendations to President Bush by Sept. 8. Bush then can accept the commission's decisions or send them back for revision. If accepted by Bush, the closing and realignment list becomes law within 45 days unless Congress votes to

BRAC Commission Early Bird

Use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement.
Reproduction for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

20

veto it. Congress cannot, however, make changes to the list.

Local News Articles

BRAC approves plan for new missions at McConnell, Forbes

San Jose Mercury News (CA)
Associated Press
SAM HANANEL
27 August 2005

WASHINGTON - New missions and jobs will come to McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita and Forbes Field in Topeka, a federal panel decided Friday.

The Base Closure and Realignment Commission voted Friday in favor of the Pentagon's plan for the Kansas bases as it spent a third day weighing proposals to close, shrink or expand hundreds of bases across the country.

At McConnell, the Air Force's 22nd Air Refueling Wing would receive 17 additional KC-135R tankers from the Grand Forks, N.D., Air Force Base, raising its total to 48 aircraft. The move results in a net increase of 522 employees and an economic impact to the region of \$430 million.

The 184th Air Refueling Wing at McConnell would gain new missions in intelligence and homeland security.

"Today's decision by the BRAC Commission has moved us one step closer in keeping McConnell Air Force Base open and bringing hundreds of new jobs to south central Kansas," said Rep. Todd Tiahrt, R-Kan., whose district includes the base.

At Forbes Field, the 190th Air Refueling Wing of the Kansas Air National Guard would retire its old tankers and receive a total of 12 KC-135R aircraft. That's four more tankers than it previously had.

Forbes stands to gain 247 employees and see a regional economic impact of \$86 million.

Overall, the state would gain more than 3,500 jobs by 2011 under the plan if Congress approves all the commission's recommendations. The big winner is Fort Riley, which is gaining more than 2,700 new personnel from the return of the 1st Infantry Division headquarters and other moves.

Commissioners have until Sept. 8 to submit their list to President Bush, who can send it back for revisions. Bush must either approve or disapprove the list by Sept. 23 and submit it to Congress by Nov. 7. Congress then must either accept or reject the list in its entirety.

BRAC panel: Ellsworth to stay open

Sioux City Journal (IA)
08/26/2005 03:55:39 PM

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The federal base-closing commission voted Friday to keep Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota open, bucking the Pentagon's recommendation to shutter the state's second-largest employer.

The vote is a major political victory for Republican Sen. John Thune, who argued in the state's Senate race last year that his close ties to President Bush would help save the Rapid City base. He defeated Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle, who said he would be better positioned to save it.

Bush appeared to stay out of the process, leaving many to speculate that Ellsworth would be closed. But Thune and the rest of the state's delegation aggressively lobbied the independent commission, making the argument that the Pentagon's savings estimates were too high.

The commission agreed with the delegation's argument, saying it could actually cost money to close Ellsworth. It voted 8-1 to keep the base open.

"Politics had nothing to do with this," Thune said at a news conference held immediately after

BRAC Commission Early Bird

Use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement.
Reproduction for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

the decision. "This fight was not about me, it was about all of the people in Rapid City."

In a telephone interview, Thune said he has been in contact with the White House but has not "recently" talked to President Bush about Ellsworth.

He said the White House has "made it clear they are not going to be involved" with the BRAC issue, but added that "everyone in the administration knows the importance of this issue to me and to South Dakota."

Thune said the victory was due to the merits of the delegation's case for keeping the base open.

South Dakota Gov. Mike Rounds said saving Ellsworth was a "team effort," adding, "It could have very well have gone in a different direction."

Democratic Sen. Tim Johnson, who defeated Thune in his 2002 re-election bid, said the delegation "worked closely in a coordinated fashion" to save the base, which is home to about 4,000 military and civilian employees.

"South Dakota has gone through four tumultuous political years, but we don't have to keep that going," Johnson said.

"We did what South Dakotans always do when we are dealt a bad hand," said Democratic Rep. Stephanie Herseth. "We rolled up our sleeves, we got to work and we helped each other out."

The Pentagon estimated it would save \$1.9 billion from closing Ellsworth over the next 20 years. Commission staffers estimated that it could actually cost \$19 million to close the base.

Staff on the commission also agreed with the delegation's argument that the Pentagon's plan to consolidate Ellsworth's B-1B bombers with the rest of the fleet at Dyess Air Force Base would be a threat to homeland security.

In addition, BRAC staff expressed concerns about ongoing litigation at Dyess over noisy training missions in the area.

The list of closures and realignments now goes to the White House and Congress.

President Bush can accept or reject the list in its entirety or send it back to the commission for revisions. Congress also will have a chance to veto the plan but it has not taken that step in four previous rounds of closures.

As it made decisions this week on the first round of base closings in a decade, commissioners also bucked Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld by voting to keep open two major Navy bases in New England -- a submarine base in Connecticut and a shipyard in Maine.

GOP Leaders Joined Carter in Lobbying for Groton Sub Base

King's Bay won't see the shift it expected

The Savannah Business Report (GA)

By Christian Livermore

TBR Staff

Friday, August 26, 2005

Former President Jimmy Carter is being blamed for the recent decision to keep open Submarine Base New London in Groton, Conn. - depriving Naval Submarine Base King's Bay in Brunswick of jobs and equipment - but lobbying from powerful congressional leaders such as Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) and House Armed Services Committee Chairman Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.) also influenced the decision, according to congressional sources.

The Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) commission considering Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's recommendations for closing and restructuring U.S. domestic military bases voted Wednesday to keep the Groton base open against the Pentagon's recommendation to close it. Under the Pentagon plan, King's Bay was earmarked to get much of the Groton base's personnel and equipment and its submarine school. The plan would have brought 3,188

military personnel, six submarines and the sub school to King's Bay by the year 2011.

To reject a recommendation, the commission has to find that the Pentagon substantially deviated from criteria that focus on an installation's military value.

Rep. Jack Kingston of Savannah expressed concern that the country, in the words of BRAC Commissioner Jim Hansen, "will now be saddled with too many parking spaces for too few submarines." He said the decision about whether to close the Groton submarine was the most emotional issue facing the commission, and that heavy lobbying against the closure by everyone from top leading lawmakers such as Connecticut senators Christopher Dodd and Joseph Lieberman to former President Carter had a big effect.

"In the end it was not about how great a job Kings Bay could do, it was about how difficult it is to close a large and deeply entrenched base like New London," said Kingston, whose district includes Kings Bay.

Before announcing the vote, commission member James H. Bilbray, a former congressman from Nevada, noted that former President Carter, a former submarine commander, endorsed keeping the base open, even though his home state would stand to benefit from its closure. Bilbray said a letter from Carter was key in his decision to vote to keep the base open.

"Jimmy Carter, a former Navy man, in opposition against his own state of Georgia," Bilbray said. "I think that's very important."

In the letter to the commission shortly before the vote, Carter wrote: "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."

But congressional sources said lobbying from Speaker Hastert and Chairman Hunter also had a strong impact on the commission's vote.

Fuhrer influence on behalf of Groton was exerted by House Armed Services Committee's Subcommittee on Projection Forces Chairman Roscoe Bartlett (R-Md.) and House Appropriations Committee Chairman Jerry Lewis (R-Calif.).

Congressional sources said Groton is the only base these House leaders spoke up against closing.

Part of the rationale for keeping Groton open may be that Electric Boat Corp.'s General Dynamics builds nuclear submarines about a mile downriver from the Groton base, making training and transfer easier than at King's Bay. The only other company that builds nuclear submarines for the U.S. Navy is Northrop Grumman Newport News, in Newport News, Va.

Commission member Samuel K. Skinner, a former White House chief of staff, said the commission's deliberations were hampered by the fact that it could not examine which of the three submarine bases on the East Coast would be the most logical to close because Rumsfeld had targeted Groton for closure, a comment that may or may not prove ominous for King's Bay in future BRAC rounds since it is the only one of the three bases that is not near a nuclear submarine manufacturing facility. The third base, Naval Station Norfolk, is near Northrop Grumman Newport News.

"I think the secretary picked the wrong one to eliminate," Skinner said.

The commission also voted Wednesday to close Georgia's Fort Gillem in Forest Park and Fort McPherson in southwest Atlanta as the Pentagon proposed.

The commission was also set to vote on whether to accept the Pentagon's proposal to close Naval Air Station Marietta. If Marietta is also closed, the closure of all three bases will represent a loss

of nearly 6,500 military and civilian jobs and about \$560 million in annual payroll. The commission will also consider whether to accept the Pentagon's proposal to close the Naval Supply Corps School in Athens, which would represent a loss of about 513 military and civilian jobs and \$8.7 million in annual payroll. The bases had survived all four previous BRAC rounds.

On the plus side for Georgia, the commission accepted the Pentagon's proposal to re-locate the Army's Armor School and Center from Fort Knox in Kentucky to Fort Benning in Columbus. This will bring about 9,800 military and civilian jobs to Georgia.

The BRAC commission must forward its report to President Bush by Sept. 8, 2005. The president will have until Sept. 23, 2005, to accept or reject the recommendations in their entirety. If he accepts them, Congress will have 45 legislative days to reject the recommendations in their entirety or they become binding on the department.

In all, Rumsfeld recommended closing or consolidating 62 major military bases and 775 smaller installations. He said the closures would save \$48.8 billion over 20 years and will streamline the military.

Beach council airs BRAC doubts

The Virginian-Pilot (VA)
By MARISA TAYLOR
August 26, 2005

VIRGINIA BEACH — The City Council opted not to go behind closed doors today, instead openly airing their doubts and frustrations about the demands of a federal base-closing panel to save Oceana Naval Air Station.

Council members said they wanted more time to digest Wednesday's ultimatum by the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

The commission demanded, among other things, that Virginia Beach condemn and buy all

incompatible buildings in the riskiest accident-potential zones around Oceana.

That would include about 1,800 homes with total assessments of \$268 million. The actual cost, including businesses in the accident zones, is expected to be much higher.

"We really don't have enough information to go anywhere at this point," Councilwoman Rosemary Wilson said. "It's frustrating for us and our citizens."

The council had been scheduled to discuss overall goals for the city in a two-day annual workshop in Town Center. City Manager James K. Spore and City Attorney Leslie Lilley planned to brief the council on property around Oceana in a closed-door afternoon session.

But council members said they wanted to talk about Oceana immediately in the morning, and agreed that the discussions should be held openly because of the public's interest in the future of Oceana.

They immediately launched into a question-and-answer session with staff members about what the BRAC decision meant for Virginia Beach.

Before any action is taken, council members agreed that they needed to debate the city's options and hear from residents.

"We need to formulate a plan that the general public can see and understand," Councilman Harry E. Diezel said. "We also need to understand the financial implications across the board."

"There are so many unknowns," Councilwoman Reba S. McClanan added. "It's hard to make decisions based on unknowns."

Bob O'Connor, president of the Citizens Action Coalition, a Virginia Beach grassroots organization, said the council should keep the debate public over the next several weeks and months.

“Let’s put it all out on the table,” he said.
“Otherwise, it’ll engender more suspicion,”

Some council members have already weighed in publicly on whether the city should accept BRAC’s ultimatum, but a consensus has yet to be reached by the entire elected body.

Councilman Richard Maddox has argued that the city should reject the demands, while other council members say the city should try to meet them.

But those who accept the ultimatum are unsure of what is being required of the city. The commission gave the state, Virginia Beach and Chesapeake until the end of March to meet its terms or face the loss of the master jet base to Florida.

“We said we will try to comply with the edicts,” Mayor Meyera E. Oberndorf said. “But we really need to know what they are.”

Oceana is the city’s largest employer with about 12,000 military and civilian jobs.

“While we have off-the-cuff estimates, we really don’t know what the cost would be to comply,” Vice Mayor Louis R. Jones said.

Council members were most troubled by the possibility that they might have to condemn homes without a guarantee that the base would remain open. The General Assembly must first approve legislation to allow Virginia Beach to condemn land around Oceana.

“The BRAC motion has totally unsettled the lives of 1,800 families in Virginia Beach,” Spore said.

Spore said he would set up a task force by next week to look at how the city might comply with BRAC’s demands, while planning a long-term strategy in case the jet base is moved.

“There are a lot of questions out there that are not going to be answered in a couple of days or even a couple of months,” he said.

Dan Baxter, president of the Virginia Beach Council of Civic Organizations, which represents 104 civic groups, said the City Council needs more time to figure out the best course of action.

“Part of the problem that we face right now is that we don’t have a clear sense of what has been put on the city,” Baxter said. “We’re not sure what we’re up against. What is clear is that none of this is something that will be solved overnight.”

BRAC confirms role for Burlington Air Guard

August 26, 2005
Boston Globe Online

MONTPELIER, Vt. --The federal commission that is in the process of realigning the U.S. military has voted to accept the Air Force's recommendation and keep open the Air National Guard base at the Burlington International Airport.

The vote by the nine-member Base Realignment and Closure Commission late Friday means the existing jobs and F-16 aircraft based in Burlington are safe.

"We've cleared the last major hurdle and made it safely through another tough round of base closures," Vermont Sen. Patrick Leahy, a Democrat, said in a statement. "Our people, our facilities, and our record have made the Vermont guard a valuable and valued defense asset."

One the commission completes its work it will submit its list to President Bush, who has said he would accept it. The list will then be submitted to Congress, which can only accept or reject the list in its entirety.

Leahy's office said it remained to be seen if the commission would recommend the expansion of the Vermont Air Guard base as the Air Force wants.

BRAC Commission Early Bird

Use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement.
Reproduction for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

In May, the Air Force recommended adding three additional F-16s to the Burlington base, as well as 53 full-time and 97 part-time jobs.

Leahy and Vermont National Guard officials have worked for years to ensure the air base, home to 15 F-16s and about 1,000 jobs, continued to play an important role in the national defense establishment.

Over the last several years the Vermont Air National Guard base has received millions of dollars in upgrades. A detachment of Vermont Air Guard members is based at Shaw Air Force Base in South Carolina where two planes are always on alert.

And the Vermont Guard is set to begin a pilot program for the Air Force where active duty recruits will train in South Burlington alongside Air Guard technicians.

BRAC Commission: Fargo can have future flying missions

Grand Forks Herald
MARY CLARE JALONICK
Associated Press
August 26, 2005

WASHINGTON - The federal base-closing commission has approved the Pentagon's recommendation to retire all of the Fargo Air National Guard's F-16 fighter planes but added language that would allow future manned flying missions.

The commission voted Friday to remove a provision from the Pentagon's May recommendation that the Hector International Airport Air Guard Station would not have additional manned flying missions once its F-16s are parked in two years.

Commissioners did not discuss the action but approved it as part of a larger package, Sen. Kent Conrad, D-N.D., said. The commission also approved language to ensure that fire and rescue support would remain at Hector, he said.

Without planes, North Dakota would be one of only a handful of states without an Air Guard flying mission, Conrad said.

Under the recommendation, all of the base's F-16s would be retired but none of its personnel would be moved. Fargo is home to the 119th Fighter Wing, whose pilots - known as the "Happy Hooligans" - have won awards for proficiency in aerial combat.

Fargo is expected to get an unmanned flying mission starting in 2007, the same year the F-16s will be retired. Guard pilots would operate flying drones based at Grand Forks Air Force Base.

The unmanned aerial vehicles are the Global Hawk, which can relay images and sensor information to battlefield commanders, and the Predator, a missile-firing craft that also can be used for reconnaissance and surveillance.

The commission approved language that would ensure the Predator would be flown from Fargo, Conrad said. The planes would be based at Grand Forks, along with Global Hawks.

"We could get the best of all worlds here," Conrad said. "We could end up with a manned flying mission and an unmanned flying mission."

The 119th has 22 F-16s, and 300 active-duty and 700 part-time Guard members. It also stations pilots at an alert post at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia.

Panel OKs Air Guard Shake-Up; Local Unit Would Lose Its Planes

Legal battles in store over states' rights issues
Baltimore Sun
By Phillip McGowan, Sun Staff
August 27, 2005

A federal commission voted yesterday to shake up the Air National Guard - including transferring out of state eight airlift planes from a Baltimore County unit - laying the foundation for a legal showdown over whether these

BRAC Commission Early Bird

Use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement.
Reproduction for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

airborne state militias are controlled by their governors or the Pentagon.

The Pentagon had proposed removing all aircraft from nearly two dozen Air National Guard bases across the country while realigning dozens of other operations to cut costs.

The nine-member Base Closure and Realignment Commission endorsed restructuring the Air Guard but did not accept Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld's proposal in its entirety, picking and choosing from his list.

"In parts, we concur with their recommendations. In other areas, we're making some changes," Chairman Anthony J. Principi said.

The governors of the states affected by the Air Guard consolidations - including Maryland's Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. - said they were not consulted.

The chief executives of Illinois, Pennsylvania and Tennessee have filed lawsuits in recent weeks arguing that their right to form militias, vested in the Constitution and enshrined in the nation's Revolutionary War history, supersedes the Pentagon's authority.

Legal experts said the commission's decision sets up a showdown over states' rights that could end up in the Supreme Court.

The states won an early round yesterday when a federal judge in Philadelphia ruled that the Pentagon lacks the power to dissolve a Pennsylvania Air National Guard division without the governor's approval.

U.S. District Judge John R. Padova said Rumsfeld should have gotten consent from Gov. Edward G. Rendell before moving to deactivate the 111th Fighter Wing of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard. The judge said the Pentagon's recommendation to close the unit is "null and void."

Diane Mazur, a law professor at the University of Florida and an authority on civil-military

relations, said, "If this decision is upheld and affirmed by other courts, there will need to be a pause in how BRAC is carried out in regard to National Guard units.

"The governors have the right to be consulted and to agree and to disagree" about matters that pertain to their National Guard units, Mazur said. "BRAC gives them no formal role in the process."

Rep. C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger, a Democrat who represents the district including Martin State Airport in Baltimore County, where the Maryland unit is based, described as "overreaching" the Pentagon's efforts to realign Air National Guard units without consulting the affected governors.

"I agree with the decision," Ruppersberger said of the Philadelphia judge's ruling. He said that Guard units protect their states and that the Pentagon's action would handicap their ability to recover from such emergencies as natural disasters and terrorist attacks.

Among the most significant Air Guard decisions, the commission sided with the Pentagon in voting to shut down Kulis Air Guard Station in Alaska. The panel also decided to scale back W.K. Kellogg Airport Air Guard Station in Michigan and Naval Air Station Willow Grove in Pennsylvania.

Commissioners voted to take away all aircraft at those sites and to give the states the authority to decide on the future use of those bases. The Pennsylvania base was the subject of the federal lawsuit, but commissioners said that was not their reason for keeping the base open.

The commission approved late last night the Pentagon's recommendation to transfer eight C-130J cargo aircraft from their base at Martin State Airport in Middle River to Rhode Island and California. There are 123 jobs at the base associated with the planes.

Maryland leaders, while opposing the move of the 135th Airlift Wing, have largely taken a behind-the-scenes approach. The state, which

BRAC Commission Early Bird

Use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement.
Reproduction for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

stands to benefit greatly from the Pentagon's realignment proposals, expects a net gain of 6,600 jobs, many of them high-paying science and communications workers, chiefly at Aberdeen Proving Ground and Fort Meade.

At a regional hearing last month in Towson, Ehrlich asked the commission to reconsider the Air National Guard transfer.

Maj. Gen. Bruce F. Tuxill, adjutant general of the Maryland National Guard, said the security needs of the New York-Washington region demanded the presence of a full-time Guard unit.

"Moving them out will deny the Department of Homeland Security immediate airlift capabilities for the National Capitol Region," he said, adding that the nearest base with such planes is 212 miles away, in Youngstown, Ohio.

The planes in Ohio, he said, belong to a reserve unit, so they are not under the control of the governor. They could be dispatched by the federal government, but not by the state to help another state.

"The governor is the commander in chief of the Maryland National Guard. He has the ability to call us to active duty. One would think he'd be advised about changes in the Guard structure. That was the crux of the [Pennsylvania] lawsuit," Tuxill said.

Rendell is seeking to hold on to more than 1,000 Air National Guard personnel at the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base at Willow Grove, north of Philadelphia. The Pentagon wants to distribute the A-10 aircraft of the 111th Fighter Wing to other states.

The commission's general counsel has sided with the states, but the Justice Department said the Defense Department could move ahead.

Pentagon officials said that National Guard units are often dispersed to other states in emergencies and that the practice would continue if some states were left without their own units.

Air Force officials said their proposal is designed to make the service more effective by consolidating weapons systems and personnel while moving to a smaller but smarter fleet.

The votes on the Air National Guard wrapped up three days of hearings in Arlington, Va., during which the commission formally revised Pentagon recommendations for the first national military alignment in a decade.

By Sept. 8, the panel must send its final report to President Bush, who can accept it, reject it or send it back for revisions. Congress also will have a chance to reject the plan in its entirety but has not taken that step in four previous rounds of closings.

If approved, the changes will be made over the next six years.

Sun staff writer Anica Butler and the Associated Press contributed to this article.

Panel Votes To Remove F-16s From Ellington

One member says U.S. would be left vulnerable; others cite base in San Antonio

Houston Chronicle

By Michael Hedges and Samantha Levine,
Houston Chronicle Washington Bureau
August 27, 2005

WASHINGTON - The military base-closing commission refused to spare the Texas Air Guard's F-16 fighters based at Ellington Field on Friday, a decision that would cost the area jobs and, critics say, leave Houston more vulnerable to terrorist attack.

Months of work by Texas lawmakers and others failed to reverse the Pentagon's recommendation in May that the 147th Texas Air National Guard fighter wing lose its 17 fighter aircraft, part of a broad downsizing of state Air Guard units.

When the aircraft are retired, by 2007, the base could lose hundreds of jobs involved in flying and maintaining the aircraft and supporting the

BRAC Commission Early Bird

Use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement.
Reproduction for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

wing, officials said. The move would also leave the area's oil refineries, chemical plants and other potential targets less safe from attacks, critics said.

One of the nine Base Closing and Realignment Commission members, former Utah Congressman James Hansen, made an impassioned plea to save the aircraft, citing fears of terrorist attacks.

"If there is one place I could put my finger on where if a rogue aircraft came in it would really cause a huge amount of trouble, it would have to be Houston, Texas," Hansen said, citing area oil and chemical plants. "Boy, that could just bring America to its knees almost."

But other panel members cited U.S. Air Force assurances that fighter aircraft at Kelly Air Force Base in San Antonio could cover the area. After a brief debate, the panel voted 7-2 to retire Ellington's fighter aircraft.

The decision was a crushing disappointment to Texas officials who had tried to save the aircraft.

"We are disappointed ... the military value and homeland security value of Ellington wasn't realized by the commission," said John Cook, chairman of the Ellington Field task force, a civilian group that led the Ellington struggle.

"You are actually downgrading our homeland security and not adding to it in a time of war. That is shortsighted," said Chris Paulitz, a spokesman for Texas Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison.

Rep. Tom DeLay, R-Sugar Land, pledged that Ellington will receive new missions in coming months. "While we're all obviously disappointed, the Houston region has reason to be confident about Ellington Field's future," he said. "We know for a fact that Ellington's role in our homeland security and defense missions will be expanded very soon."

The vote was seen as a setback by Texas Guard officials.

"The wing would have a greatly diminished capacity, and there would be a tremendous impact on about 550 people's careers," said 147th wing spokesman Lt. Col. Karl Schmidt. "Our mission would be reduced to being available to deploy to support other units."

Texas lawmakers will now seek to have the commission recommend to the Pentagon in its final report that it work with federal Homeland Security officials to find new missions for Ellington and Navy facilities in Corpus Christi that the commission moved to close earlier this week.

But for now, the Texas Air Guard at Ellington will have to be content with a new job given it earlier this month by the Air Force when it agreed to base 12 Predator unmanned aerial vehicles at the base. The Predators, widely used in Iraq and Afghanistan, are part of a new generation of unmanned aircraft that can fly over enemy territory, spy on potential targets and even deliver air-to-ground missiles launched from a distance.

The 147th has four of its F-16s, about 20 pilots and 400 support troops in Iraq now, Schmidt said. On Sept. 11, 2001, two F-16s from the 147th flew escort for Air Force One after news of terrorist attacks reached President Bush.

The Ellington decision was part of an overall restructuring of the Air Guard units recommended by the Pentagon in its May report. The Defense Department is looking to retire older F-16 fighter aircraft and reduce the number of facilities where aircraft are based as it awaits the delivery of the next generation of fighter aircraft.

But even as the commission met Friday, a federal judge in Pennsylvania ruled that the Pentagon had no authority to seek to deactivate the A-10 attack aircraft of the 111th fighter wing of the Pennsylvania Air Guard without the state governor's permission — throwing into confusion the entire effort to close Guard units across the country.

The Justice Department, which contested the suit brought by Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell, declined to comment.

The commission must file a report to President Bush by Sept. 8. Bush has said he likely will endorse the process. That would leave Congress 45 days to vote to throw out the entire round of base closings, a move experts say is very unlikely.

The Pentagon plans to comment on the panel's decisions after analysts review all of the decisions, a spokesman said.

Some areas fared better on the final day of deliberations, especially South Dakota where Ellsworth Air Force Base was salvaged. Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico got a partial reprieve, losing its aircraft but being kept open with the recommendation that the Defense Department seek another mission for it before the end of 2009.

The nine-member panel charged with reviewing Pentagon base-closing plans knocked a significant chunk out of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's plan to streamline military facilities, which the Pentagon had claimed would save nearly \$49 billion over the next two decades. Major facilities from a submarine base in Connecticut to the Western air bases were resurrected in the last three days.

The Ellsworth decision had a direct impact on Dyess Air Force Base, near Abilene.

Had Ellsworth closed, Dyess stood to receive its B1-B bombers, becoming the nation's sole home of that aircraft. But it would have lost its fleet of C-130 transport planes to other bases to make room for the bombers.

Willow Grove Base Axed

Philadelphia Inquirer

By Larry Fish and Marc Schogol, Inquirer Staff Writers

August 27, 2005

Willow Grove Naval Air Station will close, with the loss to the area of as many as 1,200 jobs, but Gov. Rendell claimed a victory of sorts because the base's National Guard unit will survive, though without airplanes or a mission.

The federal Base Closure and Realignment Commission dropped the Pentagon's request to deactivate the 111th Fighter Wing of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard, the base's primary operating unit.

If the unit remains on duty, however, it is unclear what it will do, because 15 A-10 "Warthog" attack planes now at the base will be reassigned.

"Willow Grove is a disappointment. They are losing the aircraft, but keeping the unit," said U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum (R., Pa.). "That is something we will have to get to work on. The unit has to find a mission. There is hope for Willow Grove, thanks to the unit."

Rendell had gone to U.S. District Court to argue that the federal government had no authority to shut down the fighter wing, because it is a unit of the state militia answerable to the governor.

Only hours before the commission voted, U.S. District Judge John R. Padova ruled in Rendell's favor.

"Deactivation... would deprive the governor of nearly 1/4th the total strength of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard," the judge wrote, hurting the state's "capability of addressing homeland security in Southeastern Pennsylvania."

The decision forced a brief recess at the commission meeting in Arlington, Va. A short time later, when the commission got ready to vote on the Pentagon's proposal to close Willow Grove, it was amended to drop any reference to disbanding the 111th.

The unanimous vote to close Willow Grove came on the last day of the panel's session to accept or reject Pentagon recommendations to

close or modify dozens of military bases around the country to save money.

Commission members expressed regret at the Willow Grove decision but said military efficiency demanded the move.

"This closure of the Joint Reserve Base of Willow Grove... is part of the total air guard restructuring, said commission member Harold Gehman.

"I regret that it's come to this, but the greater good of the department and the country requires that we take this action," he said, adding: "Our vote here today should in no way be taken as a signal... that something is not right" on the base.

The panel also voted to transfer the Naval and Marine Corps Reserve units at the base. The moves will occur over a period of years, according to the Pentagon. Horsham residents and employees at the base will see no immediate change in operations.

After the commission vote, Rendell tried to sound optimistic that Willow Grove could continue as an Air National Guard operation, suggesting that the 111th could continue to operate there with its federally owned aircraft.

"If the Department of Defense came and asked for the planes, our answer would be no," Rendell said after the vote.

"The base will be operated as an Air National Guard base," he said.

The governor argued that the court had made the commission's vote "null and void" and meaningless, because the 111th would survive.

But others seemed to concede that the odds against Willow Grove appeared long.

"They didn't deactivate the 111th, but they gave away the airplanes," said Dan McCaffrey, cochair of the regional military affairs committee of the Suburban Horsham Willow Grove Chamber of Commerce.

"Gov. Rendell has 1,700 air guardsmen but no planes," McCaffrey said, referring to part-time and full-time service people. "Now the question is: Do they still have any funding?"

Adrian King, director of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency and Rendell's point man on the lawsuit, said the base-closing committee had the power to close the base and move the aircraft.

"Overall, the BRAC does have the discretion to close the real estate, and they appear to have done that," King said.

At the other end of the state, the commission voted to expand the Pittsburgh International Air Reserve Station.

The station is home to the Air Force's 911th Tactical Airlift Group, which recruits and trains personnel and provides airlift of airborne forces.

The 911th unit and planes could be leaving with the ruling, but the jobs will remain.

Earlier in the day, the commission overturned the Pentagon's attempt to try to close Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota, home to half of the nation's B-1B bombers.

Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico also was slated for closing, but the commission voted to keep it open, though without assigned aircraft, until at least 2010 while officials try to define a new mission.

The commission was working into the evening to wrap up its votes on dozens of bases, nearly all of them the objects of political fights to save them.

The commission is to present a final list of base closings to President Bush by Sept. 8. The President can accept or reject the closings as a package, but he cannot make changes.

The President has until Sept. 23 to decide. If he accepts the list, Congress will have 45 days to accept or reject it.

What Happened

Under yesterday's decision by the federal Base Closure and Realignment Commission:

The 15 A-10 attack planes operating out of Willow Grove Naval Air Station will be moved to other bases or retired.

The 111th Pennsylvania Air National Guard unit that operates the planes will not be deactivated as proposed by the U.S. Department of Defense. But what the unit's 1,000 reservists will do without airplanes is unknown.

Smaller Navy and Marine units that operate P-3 Orion reconnaissance planes and C-130 transport planes will be moved to McGuire Air Force Base.

Last-Minute Compromise Keeps 911th Airlift Wing At Airport It will be regional hub with homeland security emphasis

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

By Maeve Reston, Post-Gazette National Bureau
August 27, 2005

WASHINGTON -- In what appears to be a substantial victory for the Pittsburgh region, the Base Realignment and Closure Commission yesterday agreed to a last-minute compromise that would keep the 911th Airlift Wing at Pittsburgh International Airport by turning it into a new type of regional military center focused on homeland security.

The commission also voted to send the C-130 transport aircraft housed at the base to Arkansas or North Carolina, as the Pentagon requested.

The decision to reorganize the 911th into a regional emergency response center involved a certain leap of faith on the part of the commissioners that the Pittsburgh region's medical and bioterrorism capabilities could be integrated into the airlift wing's operations. Many details remained to be worked out yesterday, as the commissioners whipped

through scores of decisions on Pentagon recommendations to close or alter bases across the country.

State and local officials were pleased, figuring that the Pittsburgh area fared as well as could be expected.

"We're smiling today," said Allegheny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato during a news conference at the airport. "This was a big win for the region."

In another significant decision for Pennsylvania, the nine-member commission yesterday voted to shut down the Willow Grove Naval Air Station north of Philadelphia, which could result in the loss of more than 1,000 jobs. But the state did manage to keep open, at least for now, the 111th National Guard Fighter Wing at Willow Grove after winning the first round in a federal lawsuit.

Democratic Gov. Ed Rendell and U.S. Sens. Arlen Specter and Rick Santorum, both R-Pa., had sued Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, challenging his authority to unilaterally deactivate a National Guard operation without the consent of the governor because guard units are jointly commanded by federal and state governments.

In a brief ruling, U.S. District Judge John R. Padova agreed with Pennsylvania. The Pentagon is expected to appeal because the decision could have broad ramifications, particularly because of the number of guard units deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan and under consideration for closure across the country.

Rendell applauded the decision. "You would have taken Air National Guard capabilities away from the most populous area of the state -- an area that has a nuclear reactor, an area that has the fifth-largest city in America," he said. "To lose the Air National Guard defensive capabilities there would have been crippling for us."

As members of Pennsylvania's state and congressional delegations tried to sort out the consequence of the commissioners' decisions

BRAC Commission Early Bird

Use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement.
Reproduction for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

32

yesterday, they acknowledged that the results were mixed but seemed excited about the possibilities for the homeland security readiness center at Pittsburgh International Airport. They also were relieved that the Air National Guard unit at Willow Grove had been granted at least a temporary reprieve.

"We have fought like tigers to try to do as well as we could, and, all facts considered, I think we're not doing too badly," Specter said. He described the judge's ruling as "huge," and the work of the base commission as "extraordinary," especially in trying to "accommodate us as best they can."

The persistent lobbying by local and state officials over the past four months -- and particularly in the past two days -- appeared to help convince the commissioners that the Pittsburgh base, particularly because of its proximity to the city's network of hospitals and research facilities, was strategically situated to provide emergency services in the event of a terrorist attack in the Northeast.

In private meetings, public presentations and during visits by commissioners and commission staff to the Pittsburgh area, state and local officials emphasized the vast medical resources available in the region and shredded the Pentagon's initial analysis that the 911th base was hemmed in and could not easily expand.

They showed the commissioners more than 50 acres that are available for expansion at the Pittsburgh airport, a point reflected in the presentation of a senior commission analyst just before the vote on the 911th. He told the commissioners that the Pentagon's recommendations to close the 911th and realign a related facility in Yeager, W. Va., were based on "outdated or incorrect information." He said the Pittsburgh base could accommodate more than twice the number of C-130 aircraft as now use it without further construction, and he praised the installation's cost-effectiveness.

The commissioners were sufficiently persuaded that they specified yesterday that the 911th facility would remain open "at current manning

levels," preserving its ability to "support continued operations of the reserve station unit, including flight operations" of the Air Reserve and Air National Guard.

U.S. Rep. Tim Murphy, R-Upper St. Clair, and Santorum yesterday said this language suggests that transport planes eventually will be stationed again at the 911th, and that, in the meantime, its airlift maintenance and training missions will continue.

Santorum, who said he had spoken to nearly all of the commissioners over the past two days and was constantly on the phone with Rendell to strategize, said state officials really pushed plans for the Pittsburgh regional readiness center as they realized in the final hours that they did not have the votes to keep open the 911th Airlift Wing.

"We worked out a compromise -- and a compromise with an upside," Santorum said. He said his understanding is that, even though no planes would be based at the 911th, the only staff the base stands to lose are pilots, navigators and crews that fly them. The wing now employs 44 military personnel and 278 civilians.

Santorum said he hoped to see new planes assigned to the base, but that "in my mind [the Pittsburgh decision] is almost the best-case scenario because it gives us additional missions that are going to grow, as well as keeping the existing mission that we have. While we are in a somewhat-precarious position, it gives us an opportunity and some time to build that mission back up."

In a phone interview, Rendell credited the local Pit-BRAC task force for successfully bringing home to the commission the economic impact of closing a base near an "airport and region that's been hit pretty hard," and of the potential for creating a new emergency response center with access to Pittsburgh's medical and bio-terrorism expertise. He said the task force had "won the day."

"There's a possibility here that, five years from now, there are actually going to be more jobs [in

BRAC Commission Early Bird

Use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement.
Reproduction for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

the Pittsburgh] area than there are now," Rendell said.

Several state officials yesterday said the vagueness of the wording the commissioners used to describe the new readiness facility could give local military, government, business and medical leaders wide latitude in developing the center's capabilities.

The commission specified only that the new Pittsburgh readiness center would provide "community-based medical support" and other services, while jointly serving the Defense and Homeland Security departments as part of the nation's homeland security quick-response infrastructure.

Santorum yesterday said the next step for the Pennsylvania congressional delegation would be to find a way to fund the new center.

Santorum already had calls in to Rumsfeld to discuss the new facility and urge the defense secretary not to appeal the Willow Grove federal court ruling.

"This is tremendous lesson of what can happen to our region if we all pull together," Murphy said.

In other action yesterday, the commissioners voted against the Pentagon recommendation to close Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota and to shrink rather than close Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico -- two of the most significant decisions they have made in the course of their three-day deliberations.

On Wednesday, the commissioners also denied the Pentagon's request to shutter two major bases in the Northeast -- the New London Naval Submarine Base in Connecticut and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine, which would have cost New England more than 12,000 jobs.

The commission's final list of decisions must be sent by Sept. 8 to President Bush, who can accept them all or send the list back for reconsideration.

Once the president forwards a base realignment and closure list to Congress, lawmakers have 45 days to vote against it, or it will become law.

Bush has said he expects to approve the commission recommendations.

Post-Gazette staff writers Jerome Sherman and Jack Kelly contributed to this story.

State Vows A-10 Battle Leaders Set For Court Over Air Guard Closing

Hartford Courant

By David Lightman and Jesse Leavenworth,
Courant Staff Writers

August 27, 2005

ARLINGTON, Va. -- Although a federal panel voted Friday to remove the state's sole fighter plane squadron, the governor and other state leaders promised to go to court next week to keep it home.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission voted to take away the Connecticut Air National Guard's 17 tank-killing jets from Bradley International Airport. The Pentagon's original recommendation was to move nine of the A-10 Thunderbolts to a nearby base in Westfield, Mass., and retire the rest. But that plan has apparently changed, and it was not clear late Friday where the planes would be moved.

In any case, the commission's vote, if it stands, would mean the end of the "Flying Yankees" of the 103rd Fighter Wing, a unit with an 82-year lineage and service in three wars. Nothing is going to happen, however, without a hard battle, state leaders said.

"I want to reassure the people of Connecticut, and the men and women of our Air National Guard, that we will fight on," Gov. M. Jodi Rell said in a prepared statement.

The decision came just two days after Connecticut officials celebrated the BRAC

commission's decision to remove the Naval Submarine Base at Groton from the closing list.

Rell's stance has been that the federal government has no legal right to remove the Air Guard unit without her consent, since governors command National Guard units until they are activated. Her case was bolstered Friday by U.S. District Judge John R. Padova, who ruled that Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld should have gotten Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell's permission before recommending removal of forces from the Air National Guard base at Willow Grove, outside Philadelphia.

"We are now armed with powerful new ammunition in today's federal court decision," Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal said. He is "ready and able, locked and loaded" to file the state's suit in U.S. District Court in Hartford on Monday, Blumenthal said.

"I think we have an extra strong hand, and it's made stronger by what happened in Philadelphia," U.S. Rep. John Larson, D-1st District, said.

Commission members had met privately for hours before many of their votes affecting Air Guard transfers. One commissioner, retired Gen. Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton, said confidently Friday, "We think we're on very solid legal ground."

The Pentagon says Air Guard changes throughout the country are meant to reshape the Air Force "into more effective fighting units" by consolidating a force that is now "fragmented into small, inefficient units."

The Pentagon had recommended that the A-10s from Bradley be combined with the Warhogs of the 104th Fighter Wing at Barnes Municipal Airport in Westfield to make one optimally sized squadron. The Connecticut and Massachusetts units had fought together in Iraq.

In a surprise move on Friday, however, the BRAC commission voted to move 18 F-15 fighter jets from the Air National Guard base at Otis, Mass., to Westfield. The move played into

the confusion about what would happen to the A-10s from both Connecticut and Massachusetts. It's unlikely that Westfield could base both types of aircraft.

As originally proposed by Rumsfeld, the Bradley base would retain support missions, such as firefighting, and gain greater roles in air security and in the maintenance and repair of A-10 engines. The federal government has estimated the changes will save \$25 million over the next 20 years, and Connecticut would lose only about 70 jobs.

But state Adjutant General Thad Martin has said Connecticut could lose up to 384 jobs connected with the aviation mission. Those positions include 143 Connecticut Guard members who are also full-time federal employees.

Also, at a hearing before the BRAC commission in July, Martin said the Pentagon had miscalculated potential savings and the Bradley base's military value. The Defense Department analysts also mistakenly assumed that Bradley's A-10 pilots and maintenance staff "could simply move with nine aircraft up to Massachusetts," Martin testified in July.

The reality is that Massachusetts Air Guard personnel will be offered employment at Westfield before anyone from Connecticut, Martin said. The BRAC commission on Friday voted to close the Otis air base on Cape Cod, where about 500 people are employed.

The BRAC commission's decision would make Connecticut and Washington the only two states without a combat flying capability, officials said.

U.S. Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn., described the Connecticut unit as battle-hardened, with "a distinguished record of providing close air support to our soldiers and Marines on the ground. To lose their contributions is a disservice to the military and to our nation, and will leave our state's Air National Guard without any flying mission."

BRAC Commission Early Bird

Use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement.
Reproduction for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

Newton, a former command pilot and a Connecticut resident, acknowledged the controversy surrounding the changes and complaints from state officials that they were left out of the decision making. But he also said, "If [state officials] had been a part of the process, it is my estimation the layout would have come as the secretary of defense presented it."

Throughout its three days of deliberations, the commission had been critical of Pentagon estimates of savings and military value at several major bases. This time, though, members were more sympathetic.

"We must all remember the secretary of defense must have full authority and flexibility" to move equipment and personnel around as he sees fit, Newton said. "This exercise is about helping the nation and helping the secretary of defense."

Although the commission recessed to discuss the judge's decision in the Pennsylvania case, it appeared to have little effect on the panel's deliberations. In the end, the commission voted to remove all air operations from Willow Grove. The Justice Department has argued that the commission's rulings override gubernatorial action, but there was clearly concern among members about the suit.

Commission member Samuel K. Skinner said "it was a declaratory judgment, saying the secretary violated one section of the statute. It didn't enjoin anything. What will happen is once we take action, Pennsylvania may try to enjoin the secretary from implementing our recommendation."

The governors of Illinois and Tennessee also have filed lawsuits against the Air National Guard base closures and realignments, and other states are considering legal action.

In May, Rumsfeld proposed shutting or consolidating 62 major U.S. military bases and hundreds of smaller facilities.

Only a fraction of the \$49 billion Rumsfeld says his plan will save over 20 years would come

from the Air Guard reorganization. But the impact on the Air Guard would be dramatic. With roughly 106,000 members, the Air Guard has units stationed at about 95 Air Force bases and separate Air Guard installations and on leased land at about 78 civilian spots, including local airports.

The BRAC panel has until Sept. 8 to send its final report to President Bush. 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.

Courant Staff Writer David Owens contributed to this story. Wire reports were included.

Vote To Move F-15s Was Unanimous

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

By Philip Dine, Post-Dispatch Washington Bureau

August 27, 2005

WASHINGTON - For the second consecutive day, St. Louis' military installations took it on the chin as the Base Realignment and Closure Commission took away the F-15 fighter jets from the 131st Air National Guard Fighter Wing at Lambert Field.

The unanimous commission vote Friday followed the stripping Thursday of 2,400 defense accounting and human resource jobs from St. Louis.

"The commission's vote is disappointing to everyone who cares about St. Louis and the security of our country," said Rep. Todd Akin, R-Mo., of the House Armed Services Committee. "The proposal to move the 131st Fighter Wing from Lambert Field is ill-advised and creates significant problems for the Missouri National Guard and the personnel attached to the wing. The decision diminishes our ability to defend our country."

The panel also voted to shift the F-16s based at the 183rd Fighter Wing in Springfield, Ill., to Fort Wayne, Ind.

Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich said the action would compromise his ability to protect the state. He said he would continue to fight for the Guard unit.

One bright note was that the commission voted to approve Pentagon recommendations to bring 800 new jobs to Scott Air Force Base, along with some additional missions.

"Scott Air Force Base is a vital and integral part of our area and our nation's defense system, and I am very pleased," said Rep. Jerry Costello, D-Ill.

The F-15 planes at Lambert are to be split among bases in Nevada and New Jersey. Missouri Gov. Matt Blunt called the decision on the 131st, with its 249 jobs, "incomprehensible" and directed Attorney General Jay Nixon to file suit against the action.

Commissioners acted despite vigorous efforts over the past three months by Missouri's congressional delegation and governor, as well as professional lobbying efforts, to save the 131st Fighter Wing. They argued that the area's homeland security would be imperiled if the planes were to leave.

Commission members said the Pentagon's recommendations for Air National Guard bases were among the most difficult for the panel. Governors and other public officials have argued that any changes might leave them vulnerable in cases of terrorism or natural disasters, but Pentagon officials have insisted that the country would be better served with fewer yet larger units.

Ruling in Pennsylvania

In a ruling that could complicate the matter, U.S. District Judge John R. Padova in Philadelphia ruled Friday that Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld should have received consent from Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell before

recommending deactivation of the state Air National Guard's 111th Fighter Wing.

Padova called the recommendation to close the unit "null and void" - prompting Rendell to say he was "exceptionally gratified." Justice Department lawyers had argued that the Base Realignment and Closure Act takes precedence over any need for gubernatorial consent.

Nixon filed suit Friday, joining Illinois and Pennsylvania in challenging the Pentagon's authority over the Guard units. Blunt said the "Pentagon substantially deviated from the evaluation criteria for some of our state's facilities, and the BRAC Commission has failed to recognize or remediate those errors."

While voting to send the planes from Lambert, commission members did spare several other F-15 Guard units, including one in Portland, Ore., allowing them to retain at least some planes. Commissioners cited homeland security concerns for Portland - as Missouri officials had argued in vain for Lambert.

"This decision creates a hole in the St. Louis region's homeland security protection," said Rep. William Lacy Clay, D-Mo. "I am appalled that the BRAC Commission has approved this foolish recommendation."

Talent may vote no

Missouri's two Republican senators, Jim Talent and Christopher "Kit" Bond, said the Pentagon and the BRAC Commission had ignored the area's homeland security concerns. Talent said he would probably oppose the BRAC recommendations, once President George W. Bush sends them to Congress.

Commissioners had heard testimony in recent weeks from Pentagon officials that homeland security would be improved by the formation of larger squadrons able to respond when necessary, even if from greater distances. The consolidations would also save money, defense officials said.

But Marlin "Buzz" Hefti, Missouri's consultant on the BRAC process, expressed "extreme disappointment" at Friday's decision, and said he was surprised, particularly by the unanimous vote.

"We had nobody who was willing to object to the recommendation, and I guess if I were to surmise anything, it's the way it was presented," Hefti said. "They had us listed at the bottom of the chart. They listed it by military value, and we were ranked low on military value. We had argued early in the process that they had not considered us properly on military value, but they obviously took the Department of Defense position on that, and we were not able to convince them otherwise.

"I was hoping to win this one, in particular, but I guess it wasn't to be."

Some commission members said that while many state and Guard officials felt they had not taken part or even been consulted in the decision-making process, it was unlikely that the Pentagon's decisions would have been altered had the process been more open.

Panel Votes To Make Pope An Army Air Field

Fayetteville (NC) Observer
By Henry Cunningham, Military editor
August 27, 2005

ARLINGTON, Va. -- The Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission unanimously accepted an alternate proposal on Friday afternoon to turn Pope Air Force Base over to the Army with an Air Force presence that is smaller than what the base has now and larger than what the Pentagon recommended.

"Very, very well," Chairman Anthony Principi said after the vote. "Thank you very much."

The motion included the stationing of 16 C-130H airplanes at Pope. Earlier in the day, the commission rejected a recommendation from its

own staff that Pope be left with no permanently assigned aircraft.

The commission agreed with the Pentagon's recommendation that Pope's 36 aircraft move to Moody Air Force Base in Georgia.

The Pentagon on May 13 recommended that the 43rd Airlift Wing at Pope Air Force Base be replaced with a reserve-active associate squadron with 16 airplanes currently in the National Guard and the Air Force Reserve. The wing's 25 C-130E airplanes, which are mostly grounded by age-related maintenance problems and flying restrictions, would go to Little Rock Air Force Base in Arkansas.

Retired Navy Adm. Harold Gehman introduced a lengthy motion to address concerns expressed by North Carolina officials that the smaller unit would be unable to meet the rapid-deployment needs of the Army at neighboring Fort Bragg.

Portsmouth Loses Out On Jobs From New England Facilities

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot
By Meghan Hoyer
August 27, 2005

PORTSMOUTH — In the crush of worry over Oceana Naval Air Station, South Hampton Roads quietly suffered another blow from the federal base-closing commission's decisions this week.

Much of the attention in recent weeks has been paid to political posturing between Florida's and Virginia's competing interests in a master jet base. Yet interests also competed in Hampton Roads and three New England states.

Under the Pentagon's initial recommendations, military installations in Norfolk and Portsmouth and other parts of the region would have gained a windfall of more than 5,600 new jobs from proposed closings or realignments in the Northeast.

It would have been a devastating loss for New England, particularly Maine and New

Hampshire, beneficiaries of a shipyard, and Connecticut, home to a spared submarine base.

On Wednesday, the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission voted against closing bases in Connecticut and Maine. Those jobs stay put.

That's a win for New Hampshire, since an estimated 40 percent of the Kittery, Maine-based Portsmouth Naval Shipyard's civilian workers live there.

Under initial recommendations, Norfolk Naval Station had been slated to get 2,807 military and civilian jobs and Portsmouth's yard would have seen about 2,000 new workers walk through the gates.

"We're crying in our tea, quietly," Portsmouth Mayor James W. Holley III said Thursday. "It definitely is a letdown. We wanted to get the 2,000 new employees, which ultimately would've been like adding 2,000 new citizens. So we're saddened by the fact they reversed themselves."

Adding insult to Hampton Road's injury, commission chairman, Anthony J. Principi, called Maine's shipyard the "gold standard." Some perceived the comment as a slight at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth, a historic place that was a navy yard before there was a Navy.

Steve Milner, spokesman for the Norfolk Naval Shipyard said it would be inappropriate to comment on Principi's statement about the Maine facility.

However, Rick T. Dillon, a 56-year-old Virginia Beach man who has spent 30 years working at that shipyard, didn't mind addressing Principi's statement.

"We seem to get the bolts out faster than the other shipyards," Dillon said, speaking proudly of setting standards on jobs. "This is the best shipyard the Navy's got."

As for jobs, Dillon said the yard could have used new work, but the workers would survive.

The yard in New England, while named for Portsmouth, N.H., is located on an island in the Piscataqua River.

Though Hampton Road's publicly owned yard is in Portsmouth, it was called Gosport and in 1862 renamed for Norfolk, the largest local city at the time.

In Portsmouth especially, developers had anticipated new workers. They had hoped the new employees would lure more shopping and help fill residential developments like the 1,600-home New Port neighborhood, now under construction.

Although the city had been careful not to pitch the potential workforce increases to developers until the commission made its call, city officials in Portsmouth had been analyzing the impact the new shipyard jobs would have, economic development director, Steven L. Lynch, said.

New people meant more money for the city, he said.

"This was a host of new citizens who already had jobs," Lynch said. "They were potential purchasers of new homes, visitors to our retail areas. I would have welcomed them."

The possibilities – or hopes – in Norfolk were not as pronounced as in Portsmouth.

Numbers have gone up and down in Norfolk's conversations with the Navy, and Norfolk still expects to benefit from the defense shuffle.

"We anticipate getting about 800 jobs, perhaps 1,000, at the Norfolk Naval Station," Mayor Paul D. Fraim said. "We still think those are coming, but all that's going to happen over years. ... The bottom line is that it appears to have been a net gain for the city."

Staff writers Harry Minium and John-Henry Doucette contributed to this report.

Air Guard Won't Get F-15s From 3 States

A federal panel rejected the Pentagon plan to reassign the jet planes to a fighter wing near Atlantic City.

Philadelphia Inquirer

By Donna De La Cruz, Associated Press
August 27, 2005

WASHINGTON - A federal panel yesterday rejected a Pentagon plan to send 24 F-15s from other parts of the country to the New Jersey Air National Guard 177th Fighter Wing outside Atlantic City.

The 177th, known as the Jersey Devils, had been slated to receive 12 F-15s from Otis Air Force Base in Massachusetts, six F-15s from an Oregon Air National Guard base and six from a St. Louis unit. But the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission specified that the New Jersey unit should receive no planes from any of the three bases. The commissioners gave no reason for the decision.

State Rep. Frank LoBiondo, (R., Vineland), whose district includes the 177th, said he was disappointed with the decision.

"At the end of the day, however, I am pleased the 177th will remain in our community and will continue to play a critical role in the defense of our homeland," LoBiondo said. "I will continue to work with my colleagues in Congress in an effort to provide the 177th with upgraded aircraft."

The fighter wing is a 24-hour air defense alert site. Its current aircraft are F-16s.

Upstate Base Off Chopping Block

New York Daily News

By Richard Sisk, Daily News Washington Bureau

August 27, 2005

WASHINGTON - New York notched a second victory over Pentagon cost-cutters yesterday,

saving an air base in Niagara Falls from closing after earlier sparing a central New York administrative facility.

"It's a big victory for us, a home run for New York," said a Washington spokesman for Gov. Pataki, who lobbied hard to save the Niagara base along with upstate Rep. Tom Reynolds (R-N.Y.) and Sens. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) and Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.).

The independent Base Realignment and Closure Commission voted against the Pentagon's recommendation to close the Niagara Falls Air National Guard Station, home to the 107th Air Refueling Wing, and move most of its assets to Arkansas.

In a last-minute deal worked out with Anthony Principi, the commission's chairman from the Bronx, the 107th's jet tankers will move to Maine but the base's eight C-130 Hercules cargo aircraft and 642 jobs will stay in Niagara.

The commission's action followed Thursday's vote to keep open military accounting and research facilities in Rome that also were targeted for closing by the Pentagon.

The commission also took off the table two of the major bases slated for closing under Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's plan to trim and consolidate bases nationwide.

Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota, home to a B-1 bomber wing, was spared. Under a restructuring deal, Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico would become an air base without any planes.

Its F-16 jet fighters would be moved to other bases, but Cannon would stay open as a training facility until at least 2010 while the Air Force determines whether it is worth getting another mission.

Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.), who pegged his victory last year over Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) to a "Save Ellsworth" campaign, said the commission's decision "was

about the merits. It had nothing to do with the politics."

Despite sparing Ellsworth and several other major installations, the commission generally went along with Rumsfeld's plan to close or consolidate 62 major military bases and 775 smaller facilities to save \$48.8 billion.

Huachuca Jobs Saved In Reversal Panel deliberating base closures cuts 16 positions instead of 371

Arizona Daily Star (Tucson)

By Arthur H. Rotstein, Associated Press
August 27, 2005

The federal commission deliberating reductions and closures of military bases nationwide reversed a decision that had cut 371 jobs from Fort Huachuca, leaving all but 16 positions intact, a state-level military adviser said Friday.

On Wednesday, the base-closing commission approved a Pentagon-recommended realignment that would have trimmed 212 direct jobs and another 159 indirect jobs at the fort in Sierra Vista, said retired Army Col. Thomas Finnegan, co-chair of Gov. Janet Napolitano's Military Affairs Commission.

But on Friday, the fort's garrison commander received word that only 16 positions will be transferred to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, Finnegan said.

The decision is great news for Fort Huachuca, he said.

"It means that we don't lose all those jobs and actually the fort will grow slightly," he said.

"I really think it was a last-minute add-on and there was some sloppy work to get it all on the list," Finnegan said.

Finnegan said about 40 new positions would be added at the fort with transfers from Alaska.

Meanwhile, the commission approved another Pentagon recommendation Friday realigning

activities eliminating some jobs involving F-16 aircraft at Luke Air Force Base in Glendale. It was expected to take up several other functions at the Phoenix-area pilot-training base.

The Defense Department recommended relocating base level intermediate maintenance from three air bases, including Luke, to Hill Air Force Base, Utah.

The move would remove 30 direct jobs and 23 indirect jobs between 2006 and 2011 from the Phoenix metropolitan economy, assuming no economic recovery.

If the commission, as anticipated, adopted the Pentagon's recommendations on at least three other proposed realignments involving Luke - the Air Force's primary base for training F-16 fighter pilots - another 248 direct jobs and 251 more indirect jobs, or 499 in all, would be cut.

BRAC OKs Changes For Guam Bases

Pacific Daily News (Guam)

By Steve Limtiaco, Pacific Daily News
August 27, 2005

The military's plans for Guam's Air Force and Navy bases were approved by the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission yesterday without changes.

If the commission's final recommendations are approved by the president, base management functions at Andersen Air Force Base will be consolidated at Naval Station Guam. The change is expected to affect 95 positions at the air base, including 31 civilian jobs.

The commission currently is meeting to adopt or amend the military's base closure and realignment plans across the nation.

A delegation from Guam last month traveled to Los Angeles to testify in support of the military's recommendations for Guam and to state Guam's interest in increased military activity here. While the proposed changes for Guam's military bases

are minimal, the delegation wanted to protect the island against additional shifts or closures.

Guam Delegate Madeleine Bordallo, who led the delegation, yesterday said she is pleased by the commission's action, which she said is in the best interests of the people of Guam.

"Along with the governor and the Chamber of Commerce, I am pleased to have been able to protect Guam's bases from any damaging closures," she said in a written statement. "I fully expect that the realignment accepted by the commission today will produce greater efficiency and help prepare Guam's military bases for continued growth."

According to Bordallo, more than \$1 million has been set aside for Guam to help the proposed transition from Andersen to the Navy base. Gov. Felix Camacho has said some of that money is intended to re-train the affected civilian workers.

BRAC votes to pull Meridian refueling wing

The Clarion Ledger

By Ana Radelat

Clarion-Ledger Washington Bureau

August 27, 2005

ARLINGTON, Va. — The 186th Air Refueling Wing at Meridian's Key Field will be stripped of all its planes in a federal base-closing panel's endorsement Friday of a Pentagon plan.

Mississippi Adj. Gen. Harold Cross said state leaders did everything they could to persuade base-closing commissioners to spare the unit and would now "fight just as hard to acquire a new flying mission for Meridian."

The Pentagon wanted to move the base's nine KC-135s to bases in Wisconsin, Tennessee and Maine.

But the Base Realignment and Closure Commission members decided to put all planes they took from units such as the 186th Refueling Wing in a "bucket" and let the Air Force decide how to redistribute them.

The loss of the KC-135s would cost the Meridian area 175 full-time National Guard jobs and about 400 part-time positions.

But the move would take time. The commissioners must give President Bush a final base-closing list by Sept. 8. The president can accept the list or send it back to the commissioners for revision. Congress also must vote whether to accept or reject the list the president approves.

The Pentagon would not begin shutting down bases or realigning them until at least two years after the president and Congress approve a final list.

In addition, bases that inherit Mississippi's KC-135s need trained pilots to fly them. It could take time to train the new pilots, Cross said.

The BRAC commission also voted Friday to move 107 jobs from Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico to Columbus Air Force Base, a pilot-training center.

The 186th Air Refueling Wing was the subject of two Air Force investigations that substantiated dozens of allegations of wrongdoing.

However, the Pentagon said the probes had nothing to do with its decision to move the planes, citing strategic reasons and the Key Field units' low military value compared to other bases.

The Mississippi Air Guard unit was one of 29 Air National Guard units that would lose all of its planes under Pentagon plans. But after hours of debate and closed-door meetings Friday, the commission rejected and changed much of the Pentagon's plans for the Air National Guard.

During three days of hearings, the commissioners voted on hundreds of closings and restructurings, rejecting some of the Pentagon's most ambitious plans, including its recommendation to shut down Ellsworth Air

Force Base in South Dakota and Naval Submarine Base New London in Connecticut.

But one base closing commissioner, retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd Newton, said the Pentagon's plans for the Air National Guard were "the most difficult for the commissioners to understand and execute."

The commissioners have been caught in a crossfire between the Air Force, which wanted to move Air Guard planes to streamline its operations and expand key bases, and states that say they need to keep the planes and the guardsmen attached to them for homeland security purposes.

But the nation's governors and its adjutant generals argued that the Air Force did not have the authority to move National Guard planes without their approval. They also complained that the Pentagon drew up its plans without consulting them.

Several commissioners said they sympathized with the governors. "There's some that would say they did it about right," Newton said of the Pentagon's recommendations. "It's a shame they did not share it with anyone."

Just as the commissioners began their work on Pentagon's plans for the Air National Guard Friday, a federal judge in Pennsylvania ruled that the Pentagon lacks the authority to close a unit at the Naval Air Station Willow Grove in Pennsylvania without Gov. Ed Rendell's approval.

GOP may rap Corzine for Monmouth closing

Home News Tribune Online
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
August 27, 2005

WASHINGTON — When it comes to saving jobs, politicians want to be seen as leaders who will stop at nothing to protect their constituents' livelihoods.

So when Pentagon budget-cutters recommended closing Fort Monmouth in May, Democrats tapped gubernatorial candidate Jon Corzine to be the man spearheading state efforts to save the fort.

However, Corzine wasn't at the Virginia hotel with Democratic Reps. Rush Holt and Frank Pallone where a federal panel on Wednesday voted to close the Army post. The U.S. senator was campaigning in New Jersey, where Republicans criticized Corzine for a 2003 vote against canceling this round of base closings. Sen. Frank Lautenberg also voted against canceling the base closing round, as did 51 other senators.

The state's looming loss of the Central New Jersey base is seen as a political gain for Doug Forrester, Corzine's GOP candidate. Still a private citizen, Forrester could easily say he was against closing Fort Monmouth without having to lift a finger to save it — or take the rap for its demise.

David Rebovich, director of the Rider Institute for New Jersey Politics, predicted that Forrester will try to say Democrats have not been aggressive advocates of the state's needs in Washington and will argue that Corzine has little clout in the nation's capital.

"What the Republicans want to do is suggest that a GOP governor would have better access to the congressional leadership and the White House, and I do think Forrester will try and make some hay in that regard," Rebovich said.

But Rebovich said Republicans pushing Forrester's candidacy have to answer why the state's six GOP congressmen, some with considerable seniority, were not successful in

saving Fort Monmouth from the Base Realignment and Closure panel. Three of the GOP congressmen — Rodney Frelinghuysen, Jim Saxton and Chris Smith — fought hard for the post.

"So why would Republicans in Washington pay attention to a Gov. Forrester?" Rebovich said.

Republicans stand a better chance of being heard in Washington than Democrats, contended Tom Wilson, chairman of New Jersey's Republican State Committee.

"Jon Corzine's vote to convene the BRAC has come home to roost," Wilson said. "When he had a chance to stand up for a strong military and stand up for the people of Monmouth County by voting "No" on base closures, he didn't."

Forrester spokeswoman Sherry Sylvester said Corzine did "little to nothing" for Fort Monmouth.

"It was only when the cameras turned on late in the process that he got involved in the issue," Sylvester said. "This is another example of his nonexistent record of advocating for New Jersey during his tenure in the Senate."

But Allyn Brooks-LaSure, a Corzine campaign spokesman, said Corzine has been part of "every step of the fight to save Fort Monmouth."

"Doug Forrester's efforts on Fort Monmouth have consisted of a hastily called press conference and a passing statement, both of which were unhelpfully partisan and neither of which were addressed to the officials responsible for this wrong-headed decision," Brooks-LaSure said.

"Mr. Forrester's finger-pointing won't save the fort, but his partisan game-playing will surely undermine the hard work of both Republicans and Democrats to keep it open," Brooks-LaSure added.

Corzine chose not to attend Wednesday's hearing and instead spent that morning receiving an endorsement from the United Auto Workers Region 9 in Cape May, and then addressed a group of senior citizens in Cape May Court House.

Corzine's Senate office issued a statement after the commission voted to close the post, expressing his deep disappointment with the

decision. Corzine added that he is "prepared" to vote against the entire BRAC package because of the Monmouth decision. Lautenberg was more definitive, saying he "will" vote against the package when President Bush sends it to Congress later this fall.

The BRAC panel has until Sept. 8 to send its final report to President Bush.

Base losses much smaller this time California should end up with loss of about 1,000 jobs

The Monterey Herald
By ERICA WERNER
Associated Press
August 27, 2005

WASHINGTON - A Pentagon base closing plan mostly spared California, and the independent commission reviewing the plan only improved matters, California officials said Friday as commissioners completed their work.

"I have to say, out of all of the BRAC rounds that California has been through, California has done very well in this round," said Leon Panetta, co-chairman of the California Council on Base Support and Retention. BRAC refers to base realignment and closure. "A lot of our facilities were net gainers," Panetta said.

In four earlier rounds from 1988 to 1995, California lost more than two dozen major bases and some 93,000 jobs, a hit that accounted for nearly 30 percent of the total bases closed or consolidated nationwide.

This time around, California should end up with a net job loss of little more than 1,000, Panetta said Friday, though he was still crunching the numbers. That estimate would be an improvement on the projected net job loss of about 2,000 under the recommendations Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld released in May.

President Bush must still sign off on the recommendations by the nine-member Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, and Congress will have a chance to veto the plan in

BRAC Commission Early Bird

Use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement.
Reproduction for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

44

its entirety, but it has not taken that step before. If ultimately approved, the changes would occur over the next six years.

State officials attributed the good news to several factors, including a more united lobbying effort by the state and the fact that with such big losses in years past, there was little left to go.

"What was recognized is that California was more hit than anybody in the past," said Rep. Sam Farr, D-Carmel. "We had been decimated in the last BRAC rounds, and I think people were sensitized that we couldn't take much more."

Farr's district is home to the single largest base closure in U.S. history: Fort Ord, shuttered in 1991, which at its peak was home to 33,000 people.

This time around, Farr got only good news. He saw the commission spare two military schools in his district, the Defense Language Institute and the Naval Postgraduate School. And some 70 jobs were added at Fort Hunter Liggett in southern Monterey County.

Other bases adding significant missions in California were Naval Station San Diego, which picked up more than 1,000 jobs, most from Naval Station Ingleside in Texas, and Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, which will gain some 2,000 jobs.

But China Lake's gain was Naval Base Ventura County's loss -- that base was losing more than 2,000 jobs, out of a total work force on the base of 17,000. Other sour notes for California included downsizing the Marine Corps Logistics Base, Barstow, at a loss of 419 jobs, and the closure of Riverbank Army Ammunition plant, costing 89 jobs.

Another in-state transfer was the shutdown of Onizuka Air Force Station in Santa Clara County, with its 278 jobs going to Vandenberg Air Force Base.

In its strongest move to buck a Pentagon recommendation on a California base, the

commission decided to keep open the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Norco. Closing the base would have cost 892 jobs, some of which would have gone to Naval Base Ventura County, Point Mugu, but others would have gone out-of-state or disappeared.

Overall, the Pentagon had proposed closing or consolidating a record 62 major military installations and 775 smaller ones nationwide to save \$48.8 billion during 20 years, streamline the services and reposition the armed forces to face current threats. About three dozen of those changes were recommended in California.

"I think that we made a very good case to both DOD and the BRAC commission about the importance of these bases to our national security," Panetta said. "We didn't just talk economic impact, which we used to do in the past. We really talked military value, and I think that all paid off."

Opinions/ Editorials

Silent Service Deserves A Shout

Hartford Courant
By Stan Simpson
August 27, 2005

If the folks who made the case to eliminate Groton as part of military strategic planning are the same ones who make the case for overseas war operations - excuse my Ebonics - we in trouble.

I don't know an attack sub from a tuna sub. But, unlike the Pentagon, I sure as sugar would have given a heads-up to Homeland Security if I planned to drastically alter America's military. Unbelievable.

It was befuddling to watch the Pentagon try to sink the "Submarine Capital of the World" to save the government money and to build more surface ships.

But the changes would have decimated Connecticut's acclaimed submarine industry. Not only would it have severed a unique alliance

BRAC Commission Early Bird

Use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement.
Reproduction for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

with boat builder Electric Boat in Groton, it would have ignored potential strategic partnerships with the Coast Guard in New London and the possible hookups with military helicopter giant Sikorsky in Stratford and jet engine maker Pratt & Whitney in East Hartford.

Guess everyone is more aware now of the state's military might after Team Connecticut - a juggernaut of politicians, business leaders, community folks and base advocates - exposed the Defense Department's cockeyed reasoning, half-baked notions and dubious math in deciding to waylay Groton.

"I think a lot of people were embarrassed this time around, both on the government side and others," said retired Navy Capt. Frank O'Beirne Jr., a 30-year Navy veteran and a key contributor in countering government efforts to scuttle Groton's base in 1993 and this year.

"In that respect, what we showed for the local submarine base was that somebody was pretty slipshod in putting together the data. We found too many mistakes. I spent 30 years in the Navy and to see them come up with a set of numbers that an independent [committee] flat-out says it doesn't trust, that's terrible."

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission publicly questioned the savings calculations and the Defense Department's criteria for eliminating bases.

And while Team Connecticut celebrated its second rescue operation of the sub base in 12 years, you have to wonder how the nation's submarine capital continues to find itself undervalued.

The ladies and gentlemen elected to serve as Connecticut's advocates in Washington have been startlingly inept in keeping a prolific military and economic engine like Groton a "hands-off" amenity. Time to get some new blood down there.

Meanwhile, as we wait for the next time Connecticut is put on the military chopping block - the Air National Guard planes at Bradley

International Airport may be next - there is long-overdue talk now of diversifying the sub base's base.

The Coast Guard is expanding its small boat fleet. Homeland Security is still in its infancy. Think "new alliances."

"We are halfway between Boston and New York. Don't you think we could become a Homeland Security center of excellence as well?" said state Sen. Cathy Cook, R-Mystic, who represents the Groton-New London district. "With the Coast Guard expanding and the immediate access to the Atlantic Ocean, there's all kinds of cross-training we could do for each other with the Navy, the Coast Guard and the Department of Homeland Security."

Tourism could also be enhanced through the military. With a sparkling new convention center in downtown Hartford, the casinos don't always have to be the first place conventioners check out.

And when the Connecticut Center for Science and Exploration is completed, why not - as Cook suggests - have facsimiles of a submarine and a Navy ship to showcase the role of science on the high seas?

"We could do a better job of marketing, no question about it," O'Beirne said. "We have to sit down and think what we tell people to show them what the submarine force is doing these days without endangering some of the actual operations."

The submarine sector is known as the Silent Service. You know, loose lips sink ships. OK, that's the other guys. But you get the idea.

Well, the quiet ones finally got all loquacious on us. In doing so, they buoyed an essential economic and military asset - one that was sinking fast.

Stan Simpson's column appears Mondays and Saturdays.

The Walter Reed Vote

The Washington Post

Editorial

Saturday, August 27, 2005; Page A16

WALTER REED Army Medical Center has been in the District of Columbia longer than most residents of the city. For people living in the Washington area, the 96-year-old hospital on Georgia Avenue is as much a part of the city's landscape as the shrines on the National Mall. That alone helps explain why news of the federal base-closing commission's vote to close Walter Reed is being taken so hard by so many. The reality, however, is that the storied medical center is not leaving the nation's capital anytime soon. And if and when it does, the United States's premier military medical facility will still remain a part of the region, in name and certainly in function.

A 340-bed Walter Reed medical center on the Bethesda campus of what is now the National Naval Medical Center means the area will still retain many of the jobs and services now located at the 113-acre Walter Reed campus in the District, though primary patient care may move to Fort Belvoir in Fairfax County. The real impact, in addition to the transfer of jobs out of the city, is the shuttering of an institution that, for generations, has been an integral part of the District's landscape.

Just as there will be years before Walter Reed becomes part of Montgomery County, the District also has a long wait to learn the ultimate disposition of the parcels on which the hospital now sits. That Walter Reed occupies prime real estate is without question. The desire of District leaders to have the federal government turn over control of the property to the city is understandable. The campus would provide a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to transform that segment of Northwest Washington into a location of vibrant commercial and residential properties. Before getting there, however, D.C. Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton said yesterday that the federal government will have to follow complicated procedures to find a new use for the land, starting by giving other federal agencies a

chance to snap it up. The District, she suggested, is at the end of the line. But need that be the case?

President Bush may not be inclined to reverse the base-closing commission's recommendation, according to Mayor Anthony A. Williams (D). That isn't to say the White House can't recognize the importance of giving the District an unprecedented opportunity to improve its tax base as well as increase development in Northwest Washington. District leaders should shed their disappointment with the commission's vote. It's not too soon to begin work on a strategy to persuade the federal government to make the Walter Reed campus part of the city's land inventory.

Additional Notes