

## Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

# EARLY



# BIRD

September 15, 2005

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**[Katrina Recovery Might Affect BRAC Plans](#)**

**The deployments for hurricane response might give lawmakers new ammunition to save military bases.**

Newport News Daily Press

David Lerman

September 15, 2005

WASHINGTON -- A plan to close military bases may need to be re-examined because of the potential need to enlarge troop strength in response to Hurricane Katrina, said Virginia Sen. John W. Warner.

The chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee said the need for tens of thousands of troops to be stationed on the Gulf Coast to assist in relief efforts could increase pressure to expand the National Guard and Reserve. And more troops, he suggested, might require more bases than an independent commission has recommended keeping.

"Given the Katrina situation, it might require some rethinking," Warner said of the base-closure recommendations that were submitted to the White House last week.

"Situations like this sometimes dictate you re-examine the end strength of the Guard and

Reserve to determine whether or not they are adequate," he told reporters at an informal gathering Tuesday. "There is a relationship on what our base structure is in this country."

The Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission, appointed by President Bush with input from Congress, recommended closing 22 major bases, including Hampton's Fort Monroe, and restructuring many others.

Warner declined to identify any bases he would want to save. But Mississippi and Texas lawmakers are already asking the White House to save the Pascagoula Naval Station and Ingleside Naval Station, saying they would be needed in any future crisis on the Gulf Coast.

Although Warner has been a strong proponent of the base-closure effort, he has declined to take a position on the recommended closure list before the White House issues its decision. Bush has until Sept. 23 to accept the commission's report or request changes to it.

While the president has expressed general support for the commission's work, it is not clear whether he would seek changes. If he does, the commission would have until Oct. 20 to submit a revised list.

If Bush approves the list, Congress will have 45 legislative days to reject it. Otherwise, it automatically becomes law.

Warner, meanwhile, said he wants to delay Senate consideration of a \$491 billion defense authorization bill until Bush acts on the base-closure recommendations.

The annual defense bill was pulled from the Senate floor in July, partly because of an effort to scrap the base-closure process.

Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., is pushing an amendment to Warner's bill that would delay any base closures until after military operations in Iraq have ended. But since introducing his amendment, Thune won his fight to save Ellsworth Air Force Base in his home state, and support for a delay is said to be waning.

Even so, Warner said he would prefer holding off on the bill at least until Sept. 23 "in the hopes that there would be some finality to the process" of base closure. The bill is needed to authorize all military programs for the new fiscal year that begins Oct. 1.

Separately, the House Armed Services Committee announced plans Wednesday to conduct its own review of future military requirements in what amounts to a rebuke of Pentagon planning efforts.

The Defense Department is scheduled to complete its Quadrennial Defense Review - a once-every-four-years examination of all military missions and programs - by February. But House members complained they have not had much confidence in previous reviews because they were driven by cost constraints, not actual needs.

"I think we owe the American people at least the option - at least the blueprint - of what we need to defend the United States," said Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., the committee chairman.

Dov Zakheim, a former Pentagon finance chief, said an independent congressional review could be useful, but could also be dismissed as unrealistic if costs are not taken into account.

## **USA Today Says Bush Should "Pick A Fight" Over Base Closures**

The Fronrunner  
September 14, 2005

An editorial in USA Today (9/14) says President Bush must decide by the end of next week "what to do with a list of military base closings and realignments he received Thursday from a special commission. The president has two choices: approve the list, or kick it back to the commission for further review.

Because the panel gave the Pentagon most of what it sought, and because Bush is occupied with Hurricane Katrina and other issues, he's not expected to pick a fight. But this is a fight worth

picking. ... The president has a full plate right now, but he shouldn't pass up a chance to save money and improve defense - even if it means putting the commission back to work."

With Ellsworth Open, Thune Can Expand Nationally.

Roll Call (9/14, Preston) reports, "A few days before a federal commission was scheduled to decide the fate of Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota's two Senators," John Thune (R) and Tim Johnson (D), "preemptively released a lengthy statement pledging to work together on issues of importance to the state." Soon afterwards, the commission voted to keep it open. "The Ellsworth victory now allows Thune to spend part of his time helping the national Republican Party." Ellsworth's closing "would have been so damaging" because "it would have forced Thune to shore up support in his home state rather than advancing his national ambitions."

### **Bush: Florida Seeking All Of Virginia Base, Not Part Of It**

The Associated Press  
Bill Kaczor  
September 15, 2005

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. -- Florida is committed to reopening Cecil Field, a former Naval air station at Jacksonville, only if a Virginia base is entirely closed and moved there, not just part of it, Gov. Jeb Bush told lawmakers Wednesday.

Shifting about 11,500 military and civilian jobs to Cecil from Oceana Naval Air Station, Va., would make Florida the biggest winner in the Base Realignment and Closure, or BRAC, process, Bush said during an appearance before the House Military and Veterans Affairs Committee.

He said he expects to call a special legislative session, although no date has yet been set, to cement a \$200 million state-local commitment to help reopen Cecil. Bush said he told BRAC commissioners that offer is good only if all of Oceana's planes and personnel move to Florida.

"We're not going to ask the City of Jacksonville and the State of Florida to make a financial commitment and get half a jet base, or get the winter home of the East Coast jet base or get half a loaf," Bush told the committee.

Bush said the state would pay up to \$150 million and the city \$50 million toward relocating businesses that have leased space at Cecil since it closed in 1999. The actual cost may be lower, particularly if Boeing, which does maintenance on Navy F/A-18 Hornet jets at Cecil, is allowed to remain there.

The BRAC commission sent its recommendations to President Bush, the governor's brother, without a final resolution of the Oceana-Cecil issue.

The panel agreed to leave Oceana open only if Virginia and local governments there take certain steps by March 31 to reduce safety problems in crash zones around the base, including condemning 1,800 houses.

Bush was worried that the Pentagon rather than the BRAC commission would decide whether those conditions are met.

"Any time that you have a decision-making process where political influence has a lot to do with it, it improves Oceana's chances, to be honest with you, because that's their only chance," Bush said later.

"Oceana wasn't closed maybe when it should have because of politics," he said. "Cecil was closed when it shouldn't have been because of politics. If it's based on national security interest then we do better."

Even without Cecil, Florida is among the biggest winners in the BRAC process with a net gain of 3,720 jobs, said retired Adm. Robert Natter, the state's paid BRAC consultant.

Natter and retired Army Gen. J.B. Davis, chairman of the governor's BRAC Advisory Council and a 1995 BRAC commissioner, also appeared before the committee.

Pensacola was Florida's biggest loser with a job cut of about 1,100. Natter said it could have been worse because BRAC commissioners rejected a Pentagon proposal to move the Naval Education and Training Command, including a three-star admiral and about 700 staffers, from Pensacola Naval Air Station and nearby Saufley Field to Millington, Tenn.

### **President to see plan on bases**

Capital News Service  
Robert Salonga  
September 15, 2005

The commission charged with trimming and consolidating the nation's military bases expected to submit its final report to the White House today, with Maryland likely to gain a significant job boost.

Fort Meade, Aberdeen Proving Ground and the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda are slated to be the state's biggest gainers from the Base Realignment and Closure process, as more than 9,000 incoming personnel would be distributed among those and other installations in the state.

"The BRAC announcements have been great news for Maryland and the nation," Maryland Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski (D) of Baltimore said in a statement. "The recommendations are a testament to the strength of Maryland's military bases, our military and the communities that support them."

The federal commission planned to submit its report despite active lawsuits in other states attempting to block the commission's decisions from reaching President Bush. On Sept. 8, the Bush administration asked the Supreme Court to protect the BRAC decisions.

The suing states, including Massachusetts, Missouri and New Jersey, had key military bases marked for closure in the BRAC evaluation. Many jobs resulting from those changes will move to Maryland if the report is approved.

Overall, the base closures are aimed at eliminating 20 percent of the nation's defense infrastructure and using the projected \$7 billion in annual savings toward modernizing the armed forces.

Once he receives the report, Bush has until Sept. 23 to approve and send it to Congress or reject and send it back to the commission for revision, which would have to be completed by Oct. 20. He cannot make changes himself, but would then have until Nov. 7 to send the revised report to the Capitol. If he rejects the revisions, the process ends and no action is taken on the bases.

After the president approves the report, Congress has 45 days to decide whether to reject the recommendations. If 45 days pass without congressional action, the BRAC report goes into effect.

House Democratic Whip Steny H. Hoyer, who represents Maryland's 5th Congressional District, successfully fought to ensure that the Indian Head Naval Surface Warfare Center, in Charles County, and Patuxent River Naval Air Station, in St. Mary's County, survived this latest round of base closures.

"I am very pleased with the results of the BRAC process for Maryland and especially Southern Maryland as it continues to advance today to the White House," Hoyer (D-Dist. 5) of Mechanicsville said in a statement.

### **Local News Articles**

#### **State Has A Strategy For Appeal**

Hartford Courant (Hartford, CT)  
The Associated Press  
September 15, 2005

Connecticut will not immediately appeal to the Supreme Court a decision allowing the national base closure commission to place the Bradley Air National Guard Base on its realignment list.

A challenge to the high court at this time would be risky, and there may be limited potential for success, Gov. M. Jodi Rell and Attorney General Richard Blumenthal said Wednesday.

State officials said they instead plan to return to U.S. District Court in Hartford in mid-November, after the realignment process is complete. The 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Friday that Connecticut's case can be heard by the lower court before the base is stripped of its planes, even if the process has been finalized, Blumenthal said.

"The main reason we chose this course is that the appeals court's decision safeguards the state's right to make its case on the merits and we have a very powerful case to make," Rell said.

President Bush is currently reviewing the Base Realignment and Closure Commission's recommendations. He has said he would probably pass the commission's final report without changes. After Congress receives it, lawmakers will have 45 days to consider it. Congress has never rejected a realignment report.

"This battle will be fought tenaciously and vigorously with every ounce of energy that we have," Blumenthal said.

The commission voted to send several of the A-10 Thunderbolts currently stationed at Bradley to the Air Force's pool of planes and retire the rest. State officials said the plan would make Connecticut the only state without an Air Force flying mission, and would leave nearly 400 National Guard troops without a mission.

They claim the decision would put Connecticut at risk during natural disasters or terrorist attacks, and said the announcement to close has already negatively affected recruiting.

The state contends the commission cannot realign the Bradley base without Rell's permission, because she is commander in chief of the Connecticut National Guard. The government argues the commission's decisions are not reviewable in court.

## **Governor urges cities to work together to preserve military presence here**

Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk, VA)  
Battinto Batts  
September 15, 2005

VIRGINIA BEACH -- The municipalities of Hampton Roads need to come together to fight to keep the jets flying at Oceana Naval Air Station, Gov. Mark R. Warner said Wednesday.

"We are at a crossroads on this BRAC issue,"

Warner said while speaking to a group of local business and political leaders at the Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront. "What is at stake here is not just the jets. Do not think for a moment that it's just about that. It's about the carriers, too."

Warner implied that if the Navy's jets are moved to Jacksonville, Fla., the aircraft carriers based at Norfolk Naval Station may be moved there, too. Such an exodus would be disastrous for the region's economy, the governor said.

"Whether you live in Suffolk, Norfolk or Portsmouth, we all need to step up," he said.

Maintaining the area's presence as a military hub is critical for the future of its economy, Warner said. The governor said Hampton Roads has an opportunity to become a major center for the development and testing of modeling and simulation technology.

"I would love for Hampton Roads to be known" as the simulation "capital of the world," he said.

Warner predicted that there will be increased need for modeling and simulation for homeland security and to prepare responses to natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina.

"With modeling and simulation, there are enormous, enormous opportunities," he said.

With only four months left in his term, Warner is reflecting on his accomplishments and the problems and opportunities facing Virginia.

"Four years ago, we were faced with some unprecedented challenges," he said. "In most areas we have made significant improvement ."

Warner touted the state tax changes that have resulted in a budget surplus of \$ 1 billion and the consolidation and streamlining of services, which he said has made government more efficient. In the presence of Sen. Kenneth W. Stolle, R-Virginia Beach, the state senate's majority whip, the Democratic governor also praised his administration's efforts to overcome partisanship for the good of the state.

But Warner, who has been identified as a potential presidential candidate, said the state -- particularly South Hampton Roads -- has some challenges ahead. He specifically cited transportation needs and military base realignment.

"We must find a permanent revenue source," Warner said, in reference to the lack of money to address the region's transportation needs. He cited the failed referendum on transportation in 2002 as "probably the single biggest disappointment" of his term.

Warner admitted that the referendum, which would have raised the state sales tax to provide money for a number of state transportation projects, was not the right vehicle to fund transportation needs.

Warner joked that he thinks of the referendum opponents when he sits in traffic on Interstate 64. "I say, 'What in the hell were you all thinking?'"

## **State won't appeal Bradley decision to Supreme Court**

Associated Press (CT)

Noreen Gillespie

September 15, 2005

HARTFORD, Conn. -- Connecticut will not immediately appeal to the Supreme Court a decision allowing the national base closure commission to place the Bradley Air National Guard Base on its realignment list.

A challenge to the high court at this time would be risky, and there may be limited potential for success, Gov. M. Jodi Rell and Attorney General Richard Blumenthal said Thursday.

State officials said they instead plan to return to the U.S. District Court in Hartford in mid-November, after the realignment process is complete. The 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Friday that Connecticut's case can be heard by the lower court before the base is stripped of its planes, even if the process has been finalized, Blumenthal said.

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"This battle will be fought tenaciously and vigorously with every ounce of energy that we have," Blumenthal said.

The commission voted to send the 15 A-10 Thunderbolts currently stationed at Bradley to the Air Force's pool of planes and retire the rest. State officials said the plan would make Connecticut the only state without an Air Force flying mission, and would leave nearly 400 National Guard troops without a mission.

They claim the decision would put Connecticut at risk during natural disasters or terrorist attacks, and said the announcement to close has already negatively affected recruiting.

The state contends the commission cannot realign the Bradley base without Rell's permission, because she is commander in chief of the Connecticut National Guard. The

government argues the commission's decisions are not reviewable in court.

## **Two towns send BRAC a letter urging no job changes**

Bedford Minuteman (Bedford, MA)  
Maureen O'Connell  
September 15, 2005

Following the lead of the Lexington Board of Selectmen, the Concord board met Tuesday afternoon to draft a letter to the chairman of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission asking it to spare the 230 jobs it plans to take from Hanscom Air Force Base.

On Aug. 25, the BRAC Commission dashed the hopes of Bedford, Concord, Lexington, Lincoln and other friends of the Air Force Base when it recommended that Hanscom would not expand, as it has been announced in May, but continue to operate minus two operations. With the Sensors Directorate and Space Vehicles Directorate moving to Ohio and New Mexico, respectively, under BRAC's August recommendation, approximately 200 jobs are expected to move from Hanscom.

The letter, signed by Selectmen Chairman Anne Shapiro, expresses gratitude to BRAC for recognizing Hanscom's importance to both the Defense Department and the region, but asks it to reconsider its recommendation to remove the two units from Massachusetts.

"The deadline for decision-making is fast approaching, but we believe strongly that the analysis of this proposal should be reviewed immediately, before the final recommendations are made," the letter states. "This decision should be reversed."

It continues, "The proposed move would result in an enormous loss of valuable technological know-how for the Air Force. (Department of Defense) operations at Hanscom benefit from the constant, daily collaboration between personnel at the base and the Boston scientific and academic community.

"Many of the civilian researchers working on (Department of Defense) projects are unlikely to relocate to these other bases, and it is quite likely that their experience and expertise will be lost," Shapiro wrote.

Lincoln selectmen did not consider a letter at its meeting Tuesday night, but Bedford's board said such a letter was not something it would be undertaking.

Calling the letter a "bad move," Bedford Selectman Sheldon Moll said the letter was discussed at the last selectmen's meeting, but was not signed.

"This is not something that I think is appropriate at this time. We are basically blessed in having the base remain...," he said. Moll said he felt sympathy for the 200 people that would be asked to move or retire, but noted he was happier the bulk of jobs at the base would remain unaffected by any BRAC decisions.

"We should be thankful for what we have," he said.

Concord board members disagree.

"The loss of (these) operations from Hanscom (Air Force Base) will not only be a significant economic loss for our region, but it will also represent a very real loss to our nation's defense capability," wrote Shapiro.

## **Virginia officials seek legal advice on BRAC Commission actions**

The Associated Press (Norfolk, VA)  
September 14, 2005

NORFOLK, Va. -- The state and the city of Virginia Beach are seeking legal advice in response to the federal base-closing commission's decisions to close and realign military installations in Virginia.

The Virginia Beach City Council, which was given a directive to condemn and acquire property around Oceana Naval Air Station in order to keep the master jet base, directed its city

attorney Tuesday to investigate possible legal action.

Council members said they wanted to know whether the Defense Base Closing and Realignment Commission overstepped its authority with its demand that the city and state spend \$15 million a year to acquire property near the base most prone to accidents. If the condition is not met, the commission said, the jets will be moved to Cecil Field in Florida.

Virginia Beach officials initially estimated that some 1,800 homes would have to be acquired, but said Tuesday they had miscalculated and increased the number to 3,000.

Kevin Hall, a spokesman for Gov. Mark R. Warner, stressed that the state's decision to retain the services of Hunton & Williams law firm was to explore "all of our options" as officials determine exactly what the BRAC Commission is requiring. He said the action would not necessarily lead to a lawsuit.

Also Tuesday, Virginia's two U.S. senators, John Warner and George Allen, said they do not plan to appeal to President Bush to try to alter the BRAC Commission's vote on Oceana. The president has until Sept. 23 to accept the commission's report or call for changes.

Besides its order on Oceana, the commission voted to close Fort Monroe in Hampton and relocate more than 20,000 military and civilian defense workers from leased office space in Arlington County and Alexandria.

### **Opinions/ Editorials**

### **Additional Notes**