

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



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Pentagon gets more time to declassify base-closing data

Congress Daily

Megan Scully

June 13, 2005

After receiving more base-closure and realignment documents from the Pentagon over the weekend, the two leaders of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee have given the Defense Department four extra days to declassify the hundreds of thousands of pages of documents relating to its BRAC recommendations.

Over the weekend, the Pentagon released documents outlining scenarios used by Pentagon officials to make base-closure recommendations, as well as individual installations' responses to the department's requests for information.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld announced his BRAC recommendations May 13.

Since then, lawmakers have demanded the Pentagon speed up its scrub of classified information and make public all the documents.

Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Chairwoman Susan Collins, R-Maine, and ranking member Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., issued a subpoena requiring the Pentagon to release all remaining BRAC information by noon Monday.

"We are encouraged that, following our issuance of the subpoena, the Defense Department is disclosing the documents communities need to make their cases before the BRAC Commission," Collins and Lieberman said in a joint statement.

The senators represent the two states hardest hit by base closures.

"In the spirit of this commitment and assuming continued production throughout the week, we have agreed to extend the deadline to Friday at noon," they said.

Several lawmakers still are not satisfied with the Pentagon's efforts.

"The Defense Department's failure to anticipate the need to declassify the BRAC data well in advance, when they had two-and-a-half years to plan and prepare for this BRAC round, has been

inexcusable," Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., said in a statement Monday.

The Pentagon recommended closing Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota.

Daniel Else, a national defense specialist at the Congressional Research Service, said the department "stumbled over its own feet" in not releasing all documents more rapidly.

"If you want to do a sales job, especially to a group as capable and perceptive as the BRAC Commission, you put information out there, give them whatever they need, and let them make an intelligent decision," he added.

The base-closure process is a frenzied one, with only four months set aside for the nine-member commission to analyze the department's detailed recommendations, including the 33 major installations the Pentagon wants to shutter.

The commission's list is due to the White House by Sept. 8. Any delay in releasing information puts the installations on the list at a disadvantage because it gives lawmakers and lobbyists little time -- and incomplete details -- to mount their defense.

For its part, the department has said it is working quickly to strike classified information from the documents. It also opened classified reading rooms in the House and Senate for lawmakers and staffers with security clearances. But reviewing classified information provides little help in making a public defense to keep a base, congressional sources have said.

Fate of Conn. National Guard base up in the air

The Army Times/ The Associated Press
June 13, 2005

EAST GRANBY, Conn. — Though the submarine base in Groton is getting most of the attention, advocates are also fighting to save another state military installation slated for realignment.

The U.S. Air Force has recommended moving nine of the 17 A-10 Thunderbolts based at Bradley International Airport to Barnes Municipal Airport in Westfield, Mass., about 30 miles away. The rest of the planes would be retired.

Opponents say the Pentagon used flawed data to determine that the Air National Guard base at Bradley has slightly less military value than the Massachusetts Air National Guard base at Barnes, which also has an A-10 squadron.

They're hoping to persuade a federal commission to change the Pentagon recommendation to realign the base at Bradley.

Connecticut's A-10s bear the insignia of the "Flying Yankees," the 118th Fighter Squadron of the 103rd Fighter Wing. The unit has an 82-year history that includes service in World War II, Korea and Iraq.

"We'll have to call Massachusetts and ask them to do fly-overs for Memorial Day," said state Adjutant General Thad Martin.

Military value scores are based on factors such as how much equipment and personnel can deploy from a base and the expandability of the facility.

The difference between Bradley and Barnes is 1/10 of a point, but that was enough for the analysts to recommend sending the 103rd's planes to Massachusetts' 104th Fighter Wing to make one optimally sized squadron.

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.

According to the Pentagon report, the federal government would save \$25 million over the next 20 years and Connecticut would lose about 70 jobs if all the recommendations were implemented.

But Martin said he and other adjutant generals across the country were not consulted. He said

the report fails to consider the real number of jobs that could be lost and the effect of the recommendation on homeland security.

The worst-case scenario is a loss of 384 jobs connected with the aviation mission, Martin said. Those positions include 143 Connecticut Guard members who are also full-time federal employees.

Mayors urged to fight base closings, prepare for the future

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
Dan Caterinicchia
June 13, 2005

When the Navy complex in Long Beach, Calif., closed more than a decade ago, the city lost thousands of jobs, millions of dollars and its identity as a Navy town, Mayor Beverly O'Neill said Monday.

That's why O'Neill urged other mayors whose communities are facing possible base closures or realignments to fight to keep the facilities open but also to have a plan in place to help their cities recover if they close.

"The best advice I can give you is to try and avoid it," O'Neill told attendees during a workshop on base closings at the U.S. Conference of Mayors meeting in downtown Chicago. "No matter how you look at it, it's painful. It's painful for a long time."

O'Neill had just taken over as mayor in 1994 as that community was dealing with the loss of its Navy complex. She estimated that a total of 58,000 local jobs were lost when the Navy personnel left and McDonnell Douglas Corp., the city's largest private employer, also laid off thousands of workers at its aircraft manufacturing facility.

"It's taken us 10 years to get out of the slump we were in," said O'Neill, who takes over as president of the mayors' group when their meeting wraps up Tuesday.

The latest Pentagon base closing proposal, announced May 13 by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, would shutter 33 bases and downsize 29 others, saving an estimated \$48 billion over 20 years.

Patrick J. O'Brien, director of the Defense Department's Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA), told the mayors gathered at the meeting that his office provides technical and financial assistance to affected communities.

Alameda, Calif., Mayor Beverly Johnson said environmental contamination was the biggest issue facing her community after a Navy base closed there.

"The Navy was supposed to be done (cleaning up) by 2000 and they're not even close to done," Johnson said.

O'Brien said he was aware of Alameda's difficulties, but had yet to see a "magic bullet for cleanup" issues.

The nine-member Base Closure and Realignment Commission is currently visiting bases on the Pentagon list and will make its final report to President Bush on Sept. 8, said Rory Cooper, the commission's director of state and community affairs.

Cooper said community members can attend the meetings or submit information to his office to try to convince the committee to alter the recommendations. He urged the mayors to avoid emotional issues and instead explain problems with the Pentagon's data while offering a more effective military option.

In Long Beach, the city has gotten about \$2 million in federal aid to help after the closings and worked with surrounding communities on a recovery plan that focused on tourism, international trade and technology.

While her city has rebounded, O'Neill said the journey was a long one.

"Have a plan for the future that people feel is a good direction for your city," she said.

Local News Articles

Panel Hears Navy Chiefs

Admirals: U.S. Needs More Subs

Hartford Courant (Hartford, CT)

Jesse Leavenworth

June 14, 2005

GROTON -- "Possibly the best" gauge for determining how many submarines the United States needs is the number of daily requests to use them, the U.S. Navy's chief submarine officer told a congressional subcommittee Monday.

Those mission requests from Navy commanders exceed what the current force of 54 submarines can provide, Vice Adm. Charles L. Munns said at a hearing before a subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee.

Munns and two other admirals testified before the panel at the U.S. Naval Submarine Base, which the federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission has recommended be shut down as part of a nationwide tightening of military resources. The subcommittee - which includes U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District - had planned to visit Groton even before the base closure announcement, panel spokesman Josh Holly said.

Testimony was to be focused on the future of the submarine force, including the infrastructure in place to build new boats and the global threats that U.S. submarines are uniquely qualified to answer, such as China's rapidly growing navy.

Nevertheless, Simmons and a Mississippi congressman who also stands to lose a Navy facility took the opportunity to blast the base-closing process at both the hearing and a press conference afterward.

"Both of them are equally stupid decisions," U.S. Rep. Gene Taylor, D-Mississippi, said of the Pentagon's recommendations to shut down the Groton base and the naval station in Pascagoula, Miss.

"I'll remind the people that the same folks that told us that they knew there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq are now the ones telling us that they know we need to close these bases," Taylor said.

At the hearing, the admirals testified that submarines continue to play a vital role in the post-Cold War era. That long and often veiled fight, Adm. Kirkland H. Donald said, "was won to a great extent under the seas."

At the same time, however, submarines cost billions of dollars, and production continues to lag. The Pentagon report to the commission says that the current seven submarine bases are too many. The report placed high military value on the ability of a base to expand and handle multiple missions. That was the main reason that Groton, an old, single-use facility, was put on the closure list.

At the current rate of production and retirement, the Navy eventually will have about 30 submarines. Simmons noted at the press conference, however, that none of the admirals who testified at the hearing had signed off on a fleet that small.

In fact, Donald, head of the Navy's nuclear propulsion section, said that design and manufacturing capabilities and the synergy between the Navy and businesses such as Electric Boat must be preserved. The number of submarine designers in the U.S. now stands at about 2,200 and is headed toward fewer than 1,000 by the end of 2007, Donald said.

"The expertise resulting from our long-term investment is, today, atrophying," Donald said.

At a press conference at the local airport after the hearing, the subcommittee chairman, U.S. Rep. Roscoe G. Bartlett, R-Md., said that the submarine fleet "is assuming increasing importance as we recognize their ability to do something that can't be done any other way. ... On a classified basis, there are some really interesting occasions when our subs just happened to be very serendipitously at the right

place at the right time to gather some very important information."

Bartlett and other panel members - who said that Congress will make the ultimate decision about how large the sub fleet is - also talked about the threat posed by China's growing navy, which includes a substantial submarine force. China is currently building 10 times as many submarines as the U.S., Bartlett said.

As for the Groton base, he said, "When you lose an asset like this, money won't buy it back."

At the press conference, Simmons was standing next to U.S. Rep. Thelma Drake, R-Va., whose state stands to gain if the Connecticut submarine base closes. The Pentagon has recommended that Groton's submarines and repair facilities be moved to Norfolk, Va., and Kings Bay, Ga.

Asked if the BRAC process pits states against each other, Simmons said, "We're at war. We can't afford to be divided for any reason, and the BRAC process is inherently divisive because it does pit one community against another. ...

"We're trying to preserve and protect something that we think is tremendously valuable," he said. "We're not trying to do harm to any other community."

For her part, Drake said that she would welcome the new people and additional jobs, but added, "What we want first and foremost is for the right decisions to be made for our military and the defense of our nation."

Air National Guard Unit At Risk Pentagon Wants To Move Its Warplanes To Massachusetts To Form One Larger Squadron

Hartford Courant (Hartford, CT)

Jesse Leavenworth

June 14, 2005

EAST GRANBY -- Besides the submarines in Groton, the state's biggest military teeth are the 17 A-10 Thunderbolts based at Bradley International Airport.

The highly maneuverable A-10 warplane can spew 65 metal-chewing rounds a second and carry up to 16,000 pounds of bombs and missiles. In the Middle East, the "Warthog" has proved its worth as a heavy-hitting brother in the sky to U.S. ground forces.

Connecticut's A-10s bear insignia of the "Flying Yankees," the 118th Fighter Squadron of the 103rd Fighter Wing, a unit with an 82-year lineage that includes service in World War II, Korea and Iraq. The squadron has a deep bench of flying experience and won highest honors at a worldwide competition among A-10 pilots in 2000.

Now the Pentagon wants to defang the 103rd and consign the Connecticut Air National Guard's combat flying role to history. The U.S. Air Force report to the federal panel considering a host of base closures and changes says nine of the 103rd's Warthogs should be moved to a base 30 miles away in Westfield, Mass., and the others should be retired.

Opponents of the recommendation say the change is based on a flawed report and would unfairly snuff a high-profile piece of the state's heritage.

"We'll have to call Massachusetts and ask them to do fly-overs for Memorial Day," state Adjutant General Thad Martin said ruefully.

The Pentagon analysts found that the Air National Guard base at Bradley has a bit less military value than the Massachusetts Air National Guard base at Barnes Municipal Airport, which also hosts an A-10 squadron. Military value scores are based on such factors as how much equipment and personnel can deploy from a base and the expandability of the facility.

The difference between Bradley and Barnes comes down to 1/10 of a point, but that was enough for the analysts to recommend that the 103rd's planes be sent to Massachusetts' 104th Fighter Wing to make one optimally sized squadron.

Under the military's recommendations to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, the Bradley Air National Guard 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. If all the recommendations were adopted, the federal government would save \$25 million over the next 20 years and Connecticut would lose only about 70 jobs, according to the Pentagon report.

But those figures are highly suspect and the recommendation to yank Connecticut's planes makes no sense, present and former Guard members say. Martin said he and other adjutant generals across the country were not involved in the Air Force's BRAC process. The result, he said, is a report that fails to consider the real number of jobs that could be lost, the effect on homeland security and how the lack of a flying mission will affect recruitment in Connecticut.

The worst-case scenario is a loss of 384 jobs connected with the aviation mission, Martin said. Those positions include 143 Connecticut Guard members who are also full-time federal employees.

The Connecticut and Massachusetts units fought together in Iraq, and 103rd veteran Gregory Hock was one of those who helped plan that mission. First of all, Hock said, the municipal airport in Westfield has nowhere near the infrastructure or spectrum of federal and state personnel that Bradley International has to support a combat flying mission.

A logistical planner who served with the Bradley unit for 32 years, Hock said the Guard's first and foremost mission is to get to where it's needed with the necessary people and hardware as quickly as possible. Barnes not only lacks the personnel to get that done, it also lacks the space to accommodate the number of heavy air lifters such as the C-130 that are critical to timely deployment, Hock said.

Officials at the Massachusetts Air National Guard could not be reached for comment, but Westfield Mayor Richard Sullivan disputed

comments about the lack of capacity at Barnes. Local, state and federal governments have invested heavily in the airport in recent years and the facility can handle "any vehicle that flies," Sullivan said.

"The capacity here is more than enough to handle the mission that the Pentagon has envisioned," he said.

Also, the 104th Fighter Wing has a proud record of service, he said, "and I daresay they are in fact the best in the business."

The town is working on a joint-use agreement with the Massachusetts Guard, Sullivan said. The Connecticut Air National Guard has had such an agreement with Bradley to share all the airport's facilities and services, 103rd Fighter Wing spokesman Maj. George Worrall said. Including the air base's 144 acres, Bradley covers 2,432 acres, while Barnes covers 1,200 acres, according to the Federal Aviation Administration.

U.S. Rep. John Larson, D-1st District, said the capacity of Bradley vs. Barnes to host and deploy personnel and equipment will be a focal issue at the BRAC hearing slated for July 6 in Boston.

"The further we go into the process, [and] the more we look at the data in order to make the case - it seems pretty flawed," Larson said.

Also, the Pentagon's proposed removal of the 103rd's planes would be a violation of state's rights, Hock said. The Air National Guard, he said, is primarily a state militia; its secondary role is to serve as a U.S. military reserve.

"This is changing some of the checks and balances in our system, and there is a huge need for the checks and balances we have," Hock said. "If they're allowed to do this, they take more control over that aspect of things and that's not what we want. That's not what this country needs."

But national defense analyst Loren Thompson said the state's rights issue is hogwash. The state

of Connecticut has no need for tank-killing warplanes, said Thompson, chief operating officer of the Lexington Institute, a Washington think-tank that promotes a strong defense.

"I've talked with senior Air Force officers and it comes down to this: They need to merge together the members of the Air National Guard, the Air Force Reserve and the active duty force into a single war-fighting community," said Thompson, who also teaches military strategy at Georgetown University. "The problem they have now is the force is fragmented among too many sites and costs more to maintain."

The Pentagon report to the BRAC says larger fighter squadrons are more efficient. The same report also says that much money can be saved and efficiency gained by moving the Navy's submarines from Groton to bases in Virginia and Georgia. That move would cost the state at least 8,000 jobs.

Thompson said the state should concentrate on protecting that much more important asset.

"I would not get distracted by something trivial like moving the A-10s to Barnes," he said. "It's not as if the pilots can't drive to Barnes. This is not like a base closing in Texas, where you have to drive 400 miles to the next nearest base."

But those pilots and others attached to the 103rd's flying mission have no guarantee of employment in Massachusetts, Martin said, because the Air Force also has recommended closing another air base in that state.

"Right now," he said, "the [Pentagon] proposal has 500 people who are employed up at Otis [Air National Guard base on Cape Cod] being unemployed in the same state - so they would have priority placement."

The closeness of the military value scores does give Bradley some hope of keeping its planes, Thompson said. Both Martin and Larson said they are hopeful that the BRAC will rule against taking the Warthogs from Connecticut.

The Flying Yankee insignia features 17th-century Capt. Joseph Wadsworth in a full run, on his way to hide the state's charter in thx old oak tree that has become a symbol of Connecticut's leadership in the nation's long fight for freedom.

Like the Charter Oak, however, the Flying Yankee and the "CT" on the tail of a fighter airplane could become only a historic symbol.

Base closing records show North Dakota bases narrowly escape

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Fargo, ND)
June 13, 2005

North Dakota's two Air Force bases and the National Guard base in Fargo appear to have narrowly escaped a Pentagon list of bases recommended for closing.

"It was in the works," said John Marshall, chairman of the Grand Forks base retention committee. "All three North Dakota bases were referenced in closure plans. That is unbelievably scary."

Discussions were held during about 40 meetings since January of the Air Force Base Closure Executive Group, the 22-member committee putting together the Air Force recommendations.

On April 26, less than three weeks before the Pentagon released its base closing and realignment plan, Air Force officials recommended closing the Grand Forks base, The Forum reported Monday, citing minutes taken during the committee meetings.

Fargo's Air National Guard unit remained a strong candidate for closure until March 31, when the Air Force committee instead discussed realignment, the meeting minutes show.

The committee's position on Minot Air Force Base began shifting from closure to realignment by February.

Air Force officials at first talked about keeping B-52 bombers in Minot but eliminating the base's missile wing. But, on April 7, they recommended no changes for Minot, meeting minutes show.

Base supporters and the state's congressional delegation said they learned the bases were in jeopardy and were able to lobby for changes that kept them off the closing list.

"We were within an inch, both in Grand Forks and Fargo, of getting closed," said Sen. Kent Conrad, D-N.D.

"Without question, the fact that we had knowledge of what was being discussed was valuable to us," Conrad said. "That is the result of relationships we've developed over many years."

In the end, the Pentagon recommended that the Grand Forks and Fargo bases be realigned to take on a joint mission involving unmanned aerial vehicles, though it would mean they would lose personnel and planes. The mission of the Minot Air Force Base was not changed.

Hampton puts Monroe cleanup at \$30 million

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Hampton, VA)
June 13, 2005

Nearly two centuries as a military outpost for Hampton Roads has left thousands of unexploded bombs and ordnance that could add up to a \$30 million cleanup if Fort Monroe is closed.

The Defense Department recommended closing Fort Monroe last month and moving its core responsibilities, including the Army's Training and Doctrine Command, to Fort Eustis. The proposal, part of a national base realignment, must pass scrutiny by a federal panel and win approval from President Bush to become final.

The fort would then return to state ownership and serve new purposes.

Hampton city officials estimate a full cleanup of ordnance and hazardous waste would cost approximately \$30 million. The Defense Department would be responsible for cleaning up after a closing.

Generations of soldiers learned how to protect Virginia shores from enemy ships and aircraft from the casemates to the firing ranges, which sent shells into the waters of the Chesapeake Bay and Hampton Roads. Regular artillery practice ended after World War II.

An environmental study before the last base closure effort found more than 150,000 pieces of scrap metal and other objects buried on 285 acres of the fort's property and in the moat.

Engineers estimated that at least 1,300 pieces of unexploded ordnance remain buried in the fort's grounds. Robert Menke, an environmental engineer who led the study in 1994 and 1995, said the risk of finding and accidentally setting off an unexploded bomb is "very low."

Researchers excavated seven pieces of unexploded ordnance. Compared with other bases, Fort Monroe was relatively clean, Menke said.

The Army, however, has documented discoveries of unexploded ordnance since the late 1950s and has found it everywhere on the base, Fort Monroe's environmental officials said in an e-mail response to questions from The Virginian-Pilot of Norfolk. The highest concentrations were in the moat below the casemates, former arsenal yard and in the seacoast batteries and ranges.

Most unexploded ordnance has been found during construction and excavation projects, officials said.

The 1995 study estimated there were more buried metal objects in the moat than on the rest of the base.

In 1978, naval ordnance specialists removed the top two feet of sediment in the moat and

discovered 182 cannonballs, 25,000 rounds of small-arms ammunition and more than 2,000 fuses, according to base environmental officials.

A few years ago at nearby Buckroe Beach, a beachcomber with a metal detector found a spent artillery shell. That find and others prompted an emergency review by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Project workers found about 20 rounds of 45, 75 and 76 mm anti-aircraft ammunition. They may have come from a beach-replenishment project in which sand was dredged from former artillery ranges in the Chesapeake Bay.

That project was completed in 2003, but beachgoers are still forbidden from digging in the sand and using metal detectors.

Hampton city leaders say developers have already approached them about potential projects for the site, but they have disclosed no further information. They hope the base will remain on active duty.

BRAC analysts promise fair evaluation of 130th Airlift Wing

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Charleston, WV)
Allison Barker
June 13, 2005

Analysts with the Base Realignment and Closure Commission who are reviewing whether the West Virginia National Guard's 130th Airlift Wing should lose its aircraft have promised the state's congressional delegation, the governor and others to conduct a fair evaluation

"Our job is to make sure we take a good impartial look at every one of the recommendations," Capt. Dave Van Saun, the commission's chief analyst, said Monday. "That's why we're traveling across the country right now.

"There are eight separate criteria that have been established. The main criteria is military value."

The Department of Defense has recommended stripping the 130th of its eight C-130 Hercules turboprops and transferring them to Pope Air Force Base near Fayetteville, N.C.

The recommendation is part of a national plan to close 33 major bases and downsize 29 others. It aims to save \$48.8 billion over 20 years by eliminating redundant and inefficient facilities and promoting cooperation among the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps.

The recommendation said the Charleston unit based at Yeager Airport did not have enough space to accommodate an operational force of 16 planes.

"The numbers in the report said you have room for eight aircraft. You clearly have room for 12, actually, 13," Van Saun said after the analysts attended a briefing with West Virginia officials.

"The numbers that we actually looked at, we now have improved numbers, based on the presentation."

Rep. Shelley Moore Capito, R-W.Va., said she did not want to give false optimism that the base would be spared because it is competing with units across the nation that also are fighting closure.

However, "If you can dispel facts on which major decisions were based, that's got to go in your favor. And that's what I think we spent a lot of time on, to the point of repeat, repeat, repeat," Capito said.

Sen. Robert C. Byrd, U.S. Reps. Nick Rahall and Alan Mollohan, all D-W.Va., and Gov. Joe Manchin also attended Monday's events. Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., who was in Washington on Senate business, sent a representative.

"We've got the case on our side," Byrd said. "We're here to fight and we've just begun to fight. It's going to be uphill. No one man can do this but we're unified in this delegation. We mean business."

The unit has a reputation for being one of the best-run units in the country. It has the highest personnel strength of any Air Guard C-130 base, 103.6 percent, and is second in readiness and fifth in retention. It also was named the Air Force's outstanding unit four times since the 1970s and was recognized by the National Guard Association four times for best overall operation.

"We should have more planes here," said Mollohan. "The complement should be 15, 16, 17."

Harold W. Gehman Jr., a retired Navy admiral and former NATO supreme allied commander, was scheduled to participate in Monday's briefings with base officials but canceled. Instead, Anthony J. Principi, chairman of the nine-member commission, will visit Charleston on June 24.

The DOD has estimated removing the 130th's planes would wipe out 156 full-time military and civilian jobs and about 700 part-time positions. The unit employs 320 full-time military and civilian staffers. Another 700 National Guard members are assigned to the unit.

On Sunday, Manchin announced he would give \$100,000 from his contingency fund to a group trying to keep the 130th Airlift Wing at Yeager Airport.

The governor also volunteered to be chairman of the group, called Keep 'Em Flying. Former Govs. Bob Wise and Cecil Underwood have agreed to serve as co-chairmen of the organization. Former prisoner of war Jessica Lynch also has agreed to be a spokeswoman for the group.

The group includes military retirees, National Guard families, local and state public officials.

The commission will hold a public hearing on the recommendations for West Virginia and other states in Charlotte, N.C., on June 28. Capito said the West Virginia delegation should get 30 minutes.

The commission can change the list before it is submitted to the White House and Congress this fall.

NM land commissioner will seek return of trust lands if Cannon AFB closes

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (Santa Fe, NM)
June 13, 2005

The state's land commissioner said Monday he would take action to regain state trust lands in eastern New Mexico if Cannon Air Force Base is closed.

State Land Commissioner Patrick Lyons said in a letter to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission that he will seek the return of about 80,000 acres of state trust land that surrounds the base and the Melrose Bombing Range in Clovis.

The land, acquired by the base through Department of Defense exchanges with the state, is worth about \$1.50 per acre per year in agriculture, Lyons said.

The land could also be used for public schools, universities, hospitals and water programs.

Lyons said he would be willing to take the fight to regain the land to court, if need be.

"If the federal government can't see what an asset Cannon is to our military and pull out, I want our land back so we can earn more money for New Mexico's school children," Lyons said.

Joint Military Centers May Offset Closure Plan

Fort Worth Star-Telegram (Fort Worth, TX)
Chris Vaughn
June 13, 2005

On the edge of Randol Mill Park, the 51-year-old National Guard armory sits empty save for the painters and carpenters.

The armory, the only one in Arlington, is undergoing tens of thousands of dollars in renovation while its citizen-soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 112th Armor serve 12 months in Iraq.

But renovation or not, the armory is on the Defense Department's closure list as part of a sweeping realignment of the state's Reserve and National Guard armories.

The Defense Department and the Army have recommended that the Base Closure and Realignment Commission close 23 Army Reserve centers and 42 National Guard armories and replace some of them with new joint facilities.

Officials with the Texas National Guard headquarters in Austin are far from upset by the Army's plan. Instead, the Texas Guard's chief spokesman, Col. John Stanford, said the idea could improve recruiting and retention and save money.

"For the Texas Army National Guard, this could be very good news," he said.

In North Texas, the plan could mean the closure of two Army Reserve centers in Dallas and one in Mesquite and six National Guard armories in Arlington, Irving, Denton, Dallas and Denison.

National Guard armories in Corsicana, Athens, Kaufman, Terrell and Abilene would also close, along with dozens in the Houston, Austin, Amarillo, Brownsville and Texarkana areas.

The authorization to renovate the Arlington facility was given two years ago, Stanford said, when no one knew it would be closed.

Offsetting the closures is the Defense Department's idea to build 17 centers in Texas that could serve the Army Reserve and National Guard.

On paper, at least, that means new training facilities in Lewisville and Seagoville and the expansion of the complex at the former naval air station in Grand Prairie.

The Defense Department says that the plan will cost \$ 220 million but that realignment will save \$ 36 million a year. Not included, the report says, is \$ 231 million that the government would not have to spend to renovate all existing armories.

"Transforming these will improve training, readiness and quality of life" for the reservists and members of the National Guard, said Maj. Desiree Wineland, a spokeswoman for the Army in Washington.

The Army is treading lightly around the topic of closing National Guard armories, apparently out of sensitivity to the governors who partially control them.

But because the federal government pays 75 percent of the cost of each armory, the Defense Department seems to have the authority to close an armory by cutting off funding.

Leaders of the Texas Guard are scrutinizing the plan so they can forward recommendations to newly installed Adjutant Gen. Charles Rodriguez and Gov. Rick Perry. Stanford said Rodriguez wholly supports the plan.

Many of the state's armories are aged and deteriorating, Stanford said, and were built when the National Guard was armor-heavy and largely male.

But the Texas Guard, like most others nationwide, is switching to more light infantry and critical-support roles, such as military police and medical duties, jobs open to women.

Just as important, Stanford said, is the suggested placement of new centers in heavily populated areas, where recruiting and retaining soldiers is easier.

"Of all the soldiers who drill at the armory in Hondo, exactly one of them lives in Hondo," he said. "It's more of a burden for guys to commute to towns where they don't live."

ARMY RECOMMENDATIONS:

-- Close Herzog Army Reserve Center in Dallas and National Guard armories in Arlington and Irving. Move units to reserve complex at former Naval Air Station Dallas.

-- Close Muchert Army Reserve Center in Dallas and National Guard armories in Denton, Irving and Denison. Build center in Lewisville.

-- Close Hanby-Hayden Army Reserve Center in Mesquite and National Guard armories in Dallas, Kaufman and Terrell. Build center in Seagoville.

-- Close Grimes Army Reserve Center in Abilene. Move 490th Civil Affairs Battalion to Grand Prairie complex.

Military facility applies spit and polish; Officials are hoping to stave off closing

Times-Picayune (New Orleans, LA)

Paul Purpura

June 13, 2005

Local officials who hope to keep the Naval Support Activity open are laying out the red carpet for a retired Navy admiral who will visit New Orleans on Friday to review the Defense Department's plan to close the installation.

From television ads expected to appear this week to banners at Louis Armstrong International Airport to billboards posted along the route to Algiers, local officials hope to show retired Adm. Harold Gehman Jr. that the community supports the military and that it values Naval Support Activity.

They also plan to lobby for the base's future as a federal city.

"We're going to make our best case for why the base ought to stay open," said retired Marine Corps Maj. Gen. David Mize, chairman of the Mayor's Military Advisory Committee of Greater New Orleans.

"We're going to try to make the case that Naval Support Activity is a critical federal government

asset" whose costs to operate would be reduced under the federal city concept, Mize said. "The federal city is a key part of the argument for keeping it open."

The military installation, which has portions in Algiers and Bywater, is one of 33 bases nationwide targeted for closure under the Base Realignment and Closure process, or BRAC.

The nine-member, independent BRAC Commission is reviewing the Defense Department's list of recommended closures and realignments. In September, the panel will forward its recommendations to the president and Congress.

As part of the process, Gehman will tour Naval Support Activity on Friday morning on a fact-finding visit, after which local officials will present the federal city concept during a lunchtime meeting, Mize said.

The proposal calls for closing the Bywater site and consolidating the commands and units at an Algiers campus built at no cost to the Defense Department. Gov. Kathleen Blanco has pledged state financial support for the project, which could cost as much as \$200 million.

In closing the base, the Defense Department proposes moving Naval Reserve headquarters functions to Millington, Tenn., and Norfolk, Va. Marine Forces Reserve command elements and other units would move to the Naval Air Station-Joint Reserve Base in Belle Chasse. The Defense Department's proposal would eliminate 1,197 military and civilian jobs in the city.

In closing the base, the Defense Department says, it would save \$276 million over 20 years.

Preparing for Gehman's visit Friday and a BRAC Commission regional hearing July 12 in New Orleans, officials are starting a media blitz aimed to show military personnel and their families that the region supports them, Mize said.

In addition to banners at the airport terminal, four billboards from the Airport Access Road to

the east bank approach to the Crescent City Connection will bear the message that New Orleans supports the military, Mize said.

A mix of private and public money is paying for the campaign, Mize said.

The New Orleans Business Council, a coalition of corporate chief executives from the city's largest corporations, has donated \$75,000 toward the effort, said Jimmy Reiss, the council's chairman.

The military has a "very important presence here," Reiss said. "We're behind doing anything we can to retain all aspects of military operations in New Orleans."

The Algiers Development District has approved \$50,000 and is prepared to give another \$35,000 if needed, said state Rep. Jeff Arnold, D-Algiers, whose district includes Naval Support Activity.

The campaign's intent, Arnold said, is to show military personnel and their families "that we appreciate them" and to show the BRAC Commission that "this is a community that appreciates what it has."

Pentagon turns over documents on bases

Portland Press Herald (Portland, ME)

Bart Jansen

June 14, 2005

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department began complying Monday with a Senate subpoena for documents justifying recommendations to close the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery and move aircraft and military personnel from the Brunswick Naval Air Station. Congressional staffers who are poring over the documents won't know for days how responsive the reply was.

Howard Snow, a special assistant to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's office for legislative affairs, delivered a manila envelope filled with documents and computer discs to the Homeland Security Committee's staff director, Michael Bopp.

"With the secretary's compliments," Snow said at the exchange, held with little fanfare in the committee's Capitol Hill office.

The committee chairman, Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, and its top Democrat, Sen. Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut, issued the subpoena because of concern that the Pentagon was withholding documents about closure recommendations.

Lawmakers and the communities they represent hope to use documents to persuade the nine-member Base Closure and Realignment Commission to overturn the recommendations.

The Defense Department, for example, already released documents that chronicled the strategic value of Brunswick's location, despite the ultimate decision to realign the base. Advocates are pinning their hopes on such revelations to keep bases open.

Rumsfeld has recommended closing 33 bases, including Portsmouth, and shrinking 29, including Brunswick, to save money and consolidate military resources. The commission has until Sept. 8 to review the list, which President Bush and Congress can accept or reject in its entirety.

Collins and Lieberman said they were encouraged that the Pentagon was releasing more documents.

The documents released Monday were summarized as:

- An annotated response to a document list filed on Thursday.
- A response and compact-disc files about the Defense Finance and Accounting Service in Limestone, which is slated for closure.
- Two sets of compact discs that are copies of additional materials requested and provided to the commission and Congress.

- Records that reflect the Pentagon's interpretation of compliance with the law that requires the department to provide information about base-closure recommendations.

The envelope represented a sliver of the information developed in the base-closure process, which in 1995 totaled scores of file boxes containing thousands of pages of documents. The 1995 index alone is held in a notebook that is thicker than a phone book.

The extent of this year's reply is somewhat uncertain because the Pentagon is also releasing information electronically to the commission. The subpoena calls for a series of releases ending Friday at noon.

Part of the dispute about the documents involves the Pentagon's refusal to release information, and part deals with the Pentagon's classification of some material as secret, which would prevent lawmakers and communities from using it publicly to rebut a closure decision.

Bopp said staffers would review the files in the coming days to determine what was produced and whether more will be sought.

"Our task is to figure out whether everything is here," Bopp said.

State allocates \$4.5 million to fight base closings

Beaver County Times (Beaver County, PA)
Alison Hawkes
June 14, 2005

HARRISBURG - The state has allocated nearly three-quarters of its money available to fight military base closures in Pennsylvania, but so far, the two areas slated for shutdown at Willow Grove and in Allegheny County have received a combined 11 percent.

Much of the state's \$4.5 million pot has gone toward administrative and lobbying costs to

support statewide efforts, as well as a slew of studies on Pennsylvania's most vulnerable military facilities in advance of the U.S. Department of Defense's closure announcement a month ago.

About \$300,000 is earmarked for Hurt Norton & Associates, a Washington lobbying firm, to update state officials on Pentagon information, and provide advice on how to prepare and respond to closings.

According to figures provided by the governor's office, the single largest state spending category is for infrastructure improvements to the federal facilities, at \$1.6 million, although none of the state's donations have been accepted yet by the Defense Department. The point is to "treat the Department of Defense just like we treat any private employer and try to provide incentives for them to continue to do business in Pennsylvania," said Adrian King Jr., the governor's spokesman on the base closings.

The state funding is being disbursed through the Department of Community and Economic Development, upon approval of the Pennsylvania Base Development Committee.

The committee consists of 15 retired and active military officials representing bases across the state, appointed by the governor.

In mid-May, the Pentagon announced the proposed list of 33 major base closures around the country, and 29 realignments, as a way to save \$50 billion over the next 20 years. Pennsylvania was largely spared but still hit hard with the placement of Willow Grove on the list, along with the 911th Air Force Reserve base at Pittsburgh International Airport and the Army's Kelly Support Center in Collier Township. An Army Reserve center in Moon Township would be realigned under the plan. Statewide, 1,878 jobs would be lost, still a far cry from the 16,000 jobs lost in the 1995 round of base closings.

In preparation for a fight this year, the state began readying itself in 2003. Communities launched studies on the military value of their facilities and the economic impact of closures,

and put together strategic plans. King, also director of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, said such advance work was crucial in giving military facilities a head start should they be listed.

The time to respond to the announced closings before the federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission makes its recommendations is less than two months.

"The studies are used if worse comes to worst and the base comes on the list of closures," King said. "You're looking at this data yourself, so if your facility ends up on the list, you've got a running start."

The community groups responding to the recommending closings at Willow Grove and the Allegheny County facilities have received about \$289,000 for studies, as well as \$100,000 per region to use as needed. Not all the money has been spent, and spokesmen from both regions said state officials have promised more if needed.

In Allegheny County, studies have been used to show, among other things, the value of linking a medical air squadron to Pittsburgh's well-developed medical industry. But officials said that the main argument there will be that there's room for the 911th Air Force Reserve base to expand. The Defense Department recommended closing the base because it doesn't have room for a full squadron of C-130 planes, though the community group Pit-BRAC says it has letters dating to 1993 proving the airport authority has offered extra land to the military.

Pit-BRAC is spending \$98,000 for office space, full-time secretarial support, copying, and other administrative costs, according to the group's spokesman, Keith Dorman.

"The resources have been adequate, and we've been told if we need more, to ask," he said.

A couple months ago, lawmakers raised concern about how all the money was being spent. But after receiving an update, Rep. Jerry Stern, R-80, Blair County, who sits on the House Veterans

Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, said he is satisfied.

"Thus far, I don't see any discrepancies that I can criticize on the way they spent these funds," he said.

Still, one lawmaker is critical. The spokesman for House Majority Leader Sam Smith, R-66, Jefferson County, questioned why Hurt, Norton & Associates was hired to do the lobbying work when it also represents other states on base closings, and why the company was the only one solicited for a contract proposal.

"Are any of the bases they're representing in competition with Pennsylvania?" Smith's spokesman, Steve Miskin, asked.

David Urban, the governor's lobbyist in Washington who picked out the firm, said the company is considered highly skilled in base closing issues and a relative bargain at \$15,000 per month (some states are spending as much as \$60,000, he said). Just like law firms and consulting groups, this company knows how to build a firewall between clients, Urban said.

"The folks at Hurt, Norton, I would put them against anybody in Washington, and they would beat them in a knowledge, skills and personality test," he said.

Pentagon wrong, analysts say BRAC sees Yeager can hold more than eight C-130s

Charleston Gazette (Charleston, WV)
Joe Morris
June 14, 2005

After concluding a daylong fact-finding tour, analysts from a federal panel reviewing whether the West Virginia National Guard's 130th Airlift Wing should be downsized admitted on Monday just what Guard supporters have been saying all along.

"We now have improved numbers," announced retired Capt. Dave Von Saun, chief analyst on the Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

Though the Pentagon had declared that the base at Charleston's Yeager Airport lacked the space to accommodate more than eight C-130 Hercules cargo planes, the BRAC review on Monday showed there is in fact room for 13, while the base could "easily expand" for more, Von Saun said during a press conference at Guard headquarters in Charleston.

West Virginia National Guard Adj. Gen. Allen Tackett has contended that the base can now handle 16 C-130s and has the resources to expand to 24.

Just to punctuate his argument, Tackett had three extra planes flown in from the Guard base in Martinsburg and parked at Yeager on Monday, so the BRAC analysts could see that the base was sufficiently equipped.

"The picture is worth a thousand words," Von Saun said of seeing the 12 parked C-130s. "You have to see those things firsthand in order to understand."

Tackett clearly felt vindicated by the analysts' findings.

"The same information that was pertinent to taking our aircraft away was not in the report correctly," he said. "We have an opportunity to correct that."

The Department of Defense recommended last month that the Guard's planes be relocated to Pope Air Force Base near Fayetteville, N.C., as part of a cost-saving plan to close 33 bases and downsize 29 others across the nation.

"The way they [defense department analysts] collected the information allowed them to be misled," Von Saun said. There was no "malicious" intent, he added; the analysts simply "asked the wrong kinds of questions."

In part because the recommendations would result in the elimination of 156 full-time jobs

and about 700 part-time jobs, they have prompted stiff opposition from state politicians at all levels.

With the exception of Sen. Jay Rockefeller, who had to attend to Senate business, the state's full congressional delegation — Sen. Robert Byrd and Reps. Shelley Moore Capito, Allan Mollohan and Nick Rahall — were on hand for the BRAC analysts' visit Monday. Also greeting them were Gov. Joe Manchin and Charleston Mayor Danny Jones.

Mollohan said it was Byrd who had "marshaled together this delegation" in support of the base.

"We're here to back up the unit," Byrd said. "We're united in this delegation."

The BRAC analysts' review will be followed up next week with a visit by commission Chairman Anthony Principi. Then on June 28 the commission will hold a public hearing on the recommendations in Charlotte, N.C. It has the power to change the Pentagon's recommendations before they are presented to President Bush in September.

Von Saun said the commission's chief criterion in evaluating bases for closure is their military value.

But other factors to be weighed include the potential savings to be realized from the base's closure; the economic impact on nearby communities; the ability of the local area to accommodate the base's forces, missions and personnel; and the impact of the base on environmental-restoration projects, waste management and environmental compliance.

"We'll evaluate based on the criteria and see if the DOD [Department of Defense] met them" in its report," Von Saun said. "We'll do the actual work to make sure the numbers are good."

Opinions/ Editorials

A Resource Too Valuable to Close

The Washington Post (Washington DC)
Patricia E. Berg

June 14, 2005

The Armed Forces Institute of Pathology is a cherished resource to the national and international scientific community, but it could be gone within the year. The Defense Department and the Base Realignment and Closure Commission have included it on the list of proposed closures. This potential shutdown has been little noticed amid the attention paid to its neighbor, Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Yet AFIP is the world's largest tissue and tumor specimen repository and is a leader in health care research, with 3 million archived cases. It consulted on 60,000 cases last year alone through its 23 disease divisions.

AFIP will be reduced to a warehouse. The Defense Department is salvaging only its medical lawyers, medical examiners and museum; sample collection will cease.

At the laboratory I direct at the George Washington University Medical Center, we found that 80 percent of all breast cancer tumors have the gene BP1 activated -- potentially an immensely significant development for the treatment and detection of breast cancer. Our findings were based on 46 patients. AFIP provided us with more than 300 breast cancer patient samples, and we found an identical positive BP1 activation rate through another scientific technique. Our conclusions have just been published in the journal *Breast Cancer Research and Treatment*.

Because our findings have been substantiated with AFIP's help, we are beginning work to develop a suppressor of the gene, a blood test and a vaccine. We are also trying to determine BP1's relationship to other cancers. We have already discovered and published that it is linked to leukemia as well as breast cancer.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said the closure decisions were based on facilities' "military value." Are the lives of our citizens not also a national security issue?

Since 1862, the institute, close to home, has led the nation and the world in disease research and

prevention. No more, unless the president or Congress reverses the decision.

BRAC plan ignores security risks

Air Force Times (Custer, SD)
Tech. Sgt. Daniel L. Edwards (ret.)
June 13, 2005

For the most part, I agree with the base realignment and closure plan. I agree we need to save money that can be put back into the military system for better equipment and infrastructure. However, to throw out of existence Gen. Curtis LeMay's principles is insane, especially for money. My country's safety and the safety of its military assets are well worth every penny being spent.

Bombers are to be kept deep in the interior for their security, so that they can be moved in a hurry and prepared for war. Dyess and Barksdale Air Force bases violate that golden rule. Plus you never, never put all your eggs into one basket because they can all be taken out in one swift blow.

So why is Ellsworth being closed and Grand Forks getting cut way back? It sure isn't because of a cruise missile threat, unless you allow the terrorists to drive one into the country to fire it. We can make better decisions for our nation's security than this; we had better wake up before it's too late.

Close Dyess and Barksdale and move those bombers up north where they should be for their protection.

BRAC makes us vulnerable

Marine Corps Times (Port Saint Joe, FL)
Lt. Cmdr. Larry Parker (ret.)
June 13, 2005

The latest Base Closure and Realignment Commission list would close 33 major bases, realign another 29 major bases and close or drastically alter an additional 775 smaller facilities, including many Guard and reserve

centers ["Reserve hit hard by base closures," May 23].

I would like to ask Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and his whiz kids a few questions before they cripple our capacity to defend this country.

Not too long ago, dispersing our forces was considered a prudent strategy to prevent a devastating blow by the Soviet Union.

One of our greatest fears today is weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorists. The enemy has changed, delivery systems have changed, but the threat is still there.

So what makes concentrating our forces into fewer bases, and more tempting targets, a viable plan now?

With the closure of so many shipyards and curtailed demand at those few that remain, who will build ships and submarines, and where will they be based, when China's growing blue-water navy can no longer be ignored?

One of the attractions of service in the Guard and reserve was drilling in or near your hometown with friends and neighbors. Retention is already down due to frequent and extended deployments.

What will the recruiting slogan be after BRAC? "Deploy more, deploy longer and drive farther to drill on those rare occasions when you are home?" That will attract people to the service.

BRAC may save money in the short term, but if history teaches us anything, it is that soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines will eventually pay for these shortsighted cost-saving measures in blood.

Don't go too far in BRAC

The Navy Times
ET2(SW) Darrell Larocque
June 13, 2005

As a resident of Vermont, I was shocked to learn of the appearance of New London Submarine Base [in Connecticut] on the BRAC closure list [“Closings would refocus East Coast fleet,” May 23]. In addition, Portsmouth, Maine, and several reserve centers are to be closed and Brunswick Naval Air Station in Maine [will be realigned].

It is disheartening that when the Navy needs as many fine men and women as possible to fill its ranks, our leaders are effectively removing the New England states from any major contributions.

How can there be any justification for limiting the opportunities of our region in order to give the South a boost? The one senior official in the Pentagon mentioned that “The payoff [for sailors] in the long run is the place where they will be stationed — where they will live — will be a place that has everything they want.”

The people making these sorts of decisions have no idea the pride we [New Englanders] take in being the birthplace of freedom. When someone makes the assumption that Georgia and Florida are places where everyone wants to live on the East Coast, there is a huge problem.

When the Navy begins to lose good people because of limited choices of duty stations in the continental United States, that will truly be a shame.

[Southeastern Connecticut Enterprise Region president] John Markowicz is right when he says, “We are not giving up this fight.” Good for you, John. Let’s bring common sense to the process of base closures and realignment.

Additional Notes