

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



BIRD

May 23, 2005

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One Georgia Naval Base Hits the Jackpot
The Associated Press
May 23, 2005

ST. MARYS, Ga. (AP) -- Ann Wade and her daughter have weathered some stormy economic tides over the past three years at Lil' Seabag, their tailor shop about a mile from Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base.

When a paper company, the area's largest private employer, closed in 2002, Wade and daughter Kelley Smith survived by embroidering shirts for maid services and other small business started by laid-off workers.

That same summer, nuclear-missile-armed submarines began leaving Kings Bay for their new home port on the West Coast. A total of

five nuclear subs, half of the base's fleet, will have shipped out by this fall -- bad news when sewing and altering Navy uniforms is about half your business.

Now Wade has a new concern, one she didn't expect until the Pentagon released a list of the military bases it wants to shut down and those that will inherit their missions: "We'll probably have to hire some new seamstresses."

Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base hit the jackpot in the Pentagon's base-closure recommendations announced earlier this month -- becoming the biggest community winner in the shake-up with a gain of more than 5,000 jobs.

Many residents had feared for their economic future in 2002 when the Navy began shuffling its undersea arsenal to the West Coast to focus on the Pacific theater, which includes the Persian Gulf and Korean Peninsula.

"We were constantly on the chopping block. We lost a huge business, we lost the submarines, and people began to wonder," said Christine Daniel, president of the Camden County Chamber of Commerce. "So this is exciting that we're able to regain some of the things we've lost and get a little more."

The Defense Department's plan to save billions of dollars calls for closing or reducing forces at 62 major U.S. bases and reconfiguring 775 others. A commission will review the Pentagon's list before submitting it to President Bush in September.

Though other regions took a hit, many military communities in the Southeast were among the biggest winners, with Georgia, Florida, South Carolina and Alabama set to gain at least 35,000 total jobs.

The coastal Georgia community of St. Marys will gain 5,034 jobs -- including new ones created off-base, expanding its overall work force by 22 percent. It would be the only U.S. city to see a double-digit percentage increase from the military shifts.

"This was at the high-end of my most optimistic scenario," said retired Capt. Walter Yourstone, a former Kings Bay commander who led the local lobbying effort to expand the base. "My worst case was we would stay the same -- no growth and no loss."

Kings Bay has been slated to pick up 3,367 jobs, raising the base's military, civilian and contract workers by 42 percent. It could pick up an undetermined number of fast-attack submarines currently stationed in Groton, Conn.

Yourstone and other community leaders caution that nothing has been finalized. Connecticut leaders planned a fierce campaign to keep their base from being mothballed.

"We're New Englanders, and we fight," Groton Mayor Harry Watson vowed after the closure list was announced.

Residents of St. Marys and surrounding Camden County can empathize with their northern neighbors.

Kings Bay has been the backbone of Camden County's economy since the 1980s, when it became the East Coast base for Navy subs armed with Trident ballistic missiles. With an annual payroll of \$500 million, it employs roughly half the county's workers.

The base covers about 25 square miles, and roughly a fourth of its developable acreage remains available for new construction, said Capt. Mike McKinnon, the base's commanding officer.

In recent years, Camden County managed to offset much of its job losses with steady residential growth among retirees and commuters working in neighboring Florida. As a result, home prices have skyrocketed.

The county's population reached 43,660 in the 2000 Census, reflecting 45 percent growth over the previous decade. Gated waterfront subdivisions have continued to crop up, and homes that once sold for \$80,000 now fetch \$120,000.

"I've been doing real estate here over 20 years. It was all initially 95 percent military driven. It's not anymore," said Nancy Stasinis, broker for ERA Kings Bay Realty. "If a lot of people descend on us at once, we would have a difficult time in the lower price range," she said.

Meanwhile, local taxpayers will have to pay for new infrastructure. Officials already have earmarked \$18 million for various projects.

"We're having growing pains," St. Marys Mayor Deborah Hase said, "but they feel pretty good."

Panel on Base Closings Says the List Is Likely to Change

New York Times

Eric Schmitt

May 23, 2005

WASHINGTON, May 22 - The independent commission assessing the Pentagon's proposed list of domestic base closings will spare some installations but could add others that are not on the list now, the panel's chairman says.

The head of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, Anthony J. Principi, said in two interviews that testimony last week from Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and the civilian secretaries and uniformed chiefs of the armed services effectively presented the Defense Department's argument for closing 180 installations and offices, including 33 major bases.

State and local community leaders will get their turn to rebut the military's recommendations in 16 field hearings, to begin on June 7 in St. Louis and Salt Lake City and run through mid-July.

The hurdle for changing the Pentagon's plan is high. The commission must show that the Defense Department "deviated substantially" from its guidelines to change or remove a site from the list. A simple majority of the nine-member panel can drop a site; seven members must approve adding a site for closing.

Commissions in four prior base-closing rounds changed about 15 percent of the Pentagon's recommendations. Mr. Principi, a former secretary of veterans affairs, said that it was too early to put a figure on what this panel might do, but that the Pentagon's list would not go unscathed.

"I expect there will be changes, and I think there'll be a few additions considered," he said. "The last thing this commission will be is a rubber stamp."

After expressing outrage at the Pentagon's decision, announced on May 13, civic leaders and lawmakers switched gears last week and began to organize their counterattack. On Friday, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, led a state delegation to Cape Cod to show support for the Otis Air National Guard Base, from which F-15 fighters were scrambled on Sept. 11, 2001, to try to intercept the hijacked passenger jets.

"The true military value of Otis was obviously not assessed accurately in the Pentagon analysis," Mr. Kennedy said, "and we will do all we can to reverse this misguided decision."

Last week, Senator John Thune, Republican of South Dakota, joined nine other senators from states that stand to lose thousands of civilian and military jobs in introducing legislation to delay the base closings.

"It doesn't make sense to close bases now," said Mr. Thune, who campaigned last fall on his ability to use Republican connections to preserve Ellsworth Air Force Base, the state's second-largest employer, which is on the list. "We should not be undertaking massive BRAC realignments and closures while we are engaged in a war."

Lawmakers have unsuccessfully tried such delay tactics in the past. Last week, the House Armed Services Committee defeated two measures to slow or cancel the base-closing process.

In interviews, commission members said they would scrutinize the Pentagon's military rationale and estimated cost savings.

"Where there are significant changes taking place," said Gen. Lloyd W. Newton, a retired Air Force officer, "we want to be sure we fully understand it" and to make sure "it adheres to the criteria."

Gen. James T. Hill, a retired Army officer who commanded American forces in Latin America, said, "We'll take a hard look at whether they did the right figuring on the dollars."

In testimony last Monday, Mr. Rumsfeld warned the panel against unraveling the interlinked decisions that Pentagon analysts made after two years of study and tests of some 1,000 different approaches. "I made a conscious decision not to add anything or take anything out or change anything," Mr. Rumsfeld said.

The Pentagon said that its proposal, which, all told, would shut, reduce or reorganize more than 800 facilities in all 50 states, would save \$48.8 billion over 20 years.

At least in the testimony last week, the panel members poked skeptically at many parts of the plan.

They expressed concern that the Army's proposal to close 176 Army Reserve centers and 211 Army National Guard facilities, and to build 125 new, multiservice Reserve centers, could hurt recruiting.

"You're going to have a real enlistment problem," said James H. Bilbray, a former Democratic congressman from Nevada, warning that the closings would increase some reservists' travel time to the next closest training center.

They challenged the Navy on whether a rural county in Georgia was capable of handling an influx of thousands of sailors and their dependents from the submarine base in Groton, Conn., which the Pentagon proposes closing.

And they questioned why the Air Force wants to keep Eielson Air Force Base in Alaska and Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota up and running, largely for training purposes, even though thousands of civilian and military jobs would be sent to other installations.

Panel members also asked why the Pentagon did not go beyond the proposals to merge functions like medical operations and truck-driving school, moving to consolidate other functions, like undergraduate pilot training and the war colleges for each of the armed services.

"I don't think you can push hard enough on jointness," said Samuel K. Skinner, a former secretary of transportation and White House chief of staff under George H. W. Bush.

With a painful plan to close some bases, Rumsfeld launches a new round of reform

US News and World Report

Julian E. Barnes

May 23, 2005

After five years of preaching the necessity of a nimbler military, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld last week took perhaps the most important step in the quest to turn his vision of the future into reality.

The announcement that the Defense Department would propose closing 33 of the nation's 425 major bases sent shudders through communities from Kittery, Maine, to Clovis, N.M. While some cities like Corpus Christi, Texas, would probably little notice the economic impact of the closure, other places, like Rapid City, S.D., would surely feel the loss of their bases acutely. Although Rumsfeld and other officials acknowledged the economic turbulence to come, they emphasized that they were taking advantage of an opportunity to reorganize the armed forces and change the way the nation fights.

There have been four previous rounds of base realignment and closure--BRAC in Pentagon patois--since 1988, and they were all fundamentally about saving money by doing

away with unneeded facilities. The government estimates it saved \$ 29 billion between 1988 and 2003 by closing 97 major bases and scores of minor facilities. This time around the Pentagon certainly intends to save money--a projected \$ 49 billion to \$ 64 billion over two decades. But today reshaping the military is as important as reducing waste. With brigades of tanks stationed in Europe, overlapping domestic research facilities, underused naval stations, and duplicative training centers, Rumsfeld believes America's bases are still arrayed for yesterday's fight, not tomorrow's. "Current arrangements pretty much designed for the Cold War must give way to the new demands of war against extremists and other evolving 21st-century challenges," Rumsfeld said.

As a result, the Pentagon's list contained more reshuffling than outright closure. Fort Knox, Ky., for example, would lose its armor center and school to Fort Benning, Ga., which already has the Army's infantry school--but it would receive a new brigade and combat support units returning from overseas. Each service has a list of shuffled combat brigades, ships, and fighter squadrons. "We got to ask ourselves: If we were king for a day, how would we redo the Air Force?" says Maj. Gen. Gary Heckman, who helped oversee that service's realignment.

No meddling. The realignment of bases provides Rumsfeld with perhaps his most important opportunity to reshape the military for years to come. Although the secretary has managed to kill off some weapons programs he regards as legacies of the Cold War, many of his attempts at modernization have been hampered by lawmakers. But the base closure system has been well designed to keep congressional meddling to a minimum. The Base Realignment and Closure Commission, appointed by President Bush, will now review the Pentagon recommendations and has until September to make changes, though major revisions are unlikely. President Bush then reviews the list and sends it to Congress, which must consider the proposal as a whole; if the legislators don't reject it within 45 days, the closure recommendations go into effect.

Still, there is sure to be congressional opposition. New England was particularly hard hit by the proposed loss of Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Maine and the New London submarine base in Connecticut. Those decisions will most likely spark a fight, despite Congress's limited ability to tinker with the list. The restrictions have increased the amount of grumbling about the process in recent years, and so this round of realignment is likely to be Rumsfeld's last. "You have one shot, and you are not going to have another for a decade," says Ken Beeks, vice president of Business Executives for National Security.

Rumsfeld believes America is ill-served by having heavy forces sitting in garrisons in Germany or even South Korea. Indeed, Rumsfeld began asking his regional commanders about American troops stationed overseas back in August 2001. "All of these questions Rumsfeld asked led us to the strong conclusion that globally we were in a Cold War posture," says Ray DuBois, the acting under secretary of the Army. "And you have to ask yourself: What sort of posture do we need for the next 20 years?"

Location. The essential belief inside Rumsfeld's Pentagon is that because of restrictions other nations put on U.S. troop movements, forces can move to a conflict from the United States as fast as they can from a foreign base--as long as they are positioned domestically near railheads and airports. The Pentagon plans to move about 70,000 troops stationed overseas back home, but there are some who have raised doubts. Last week, to the dismay of the Pentagon, a commission appointed by Congress released a report that questioned the details of the overseas withdrawal. Al Cornella, the commission chairman, said that he did not disagree with Rumsfeld's overall vision but added that the Pentagon is moving too fast. Before the military leaves Germany, Cornella says, the Pentagon must be sure it has enough ships and cargo planes to deploy troops from America quickly. "We will get one chance to do [this]," he said, "and we want to do it right."

The decision to redeploy American troops from Korea and Germany to domestic bases has blunted some of the pain of base closure. Some of the bases that have been considered for closure in earlier rounds, like Fort Riley, Kan., and Fort Carson, Colo., were designated by the Pentagon last week for expansion--because of large training areas and newly renovated railroad connections that allow rapid deployment. Another winner was Texas: Fort Bliss will receive troops coming home from Germany. Some could not resist pointing out that it also made for good politics to move troops back to Colorado, Texas, and Kansas. "Those are red states by the way, if you haven't noticed," says Bill Nash, a retired major general now with the Council on Foreign Relations. "This is a great opportunity to take care of your friends and lessen the impact of BRAC."

The closure list also reflects Rumsfeld's desire for an integrated military in which the Army, Navy, and Air Force not only fight together but train side by side and share facilities. In years past, individual services have largely chosen which bases will close. This time around, Rumsfeld was determined to change the process. "The Rumsfeld people . . . are making the services work together," says Christopher Hellman, a military analyst with the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation.

And the final list reflects that emphasis. Walter Reed Army Medical Center would be largely shuttered and combined with the National Naval Medical Center to create a joint hospital. "Does it really matter what uniform a doctor wears?" Hellman asks. Pentagon officials also pointed to their proposal to create combined training centers for cooks and truck drivers at Fort Lee, Va. (at the expense of Lackland Air Force Base, Texas). Several Army and Air Force bases like Fort Dix and McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey and Fort Lewis and McChord Air Force Base in Washington State would consolidate their operations. And the 7th Special Forces Group would leave Fort Bragg, N.C., to work with Air Force Special Operations at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.

In previous rounds, about 15 percent of the Pentagon decisions have been overturned by the BRAC commission. Pentagon officials believe this time there will be fewer overrides, in part because of new rules and in part because they believe the services have done a better job of evaluating what's needed. The next months will show whether that confidence is merited. But even if the list remains relatively unchanged, it will take years to see just how successful Rumsfeld's plan is. It is easy to talk about making the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines work together more closely. It is more difficult to make it happen.

Base closures throw New England economic forecasters for a loop

The Associated Press
Mark Jewell
May 22, 2005

Recommended military base closings in Maine and Connecticut have suddenly injected pessimism into forecasts that had predicted modest economic growth in coming years.

Most of the two states' New England neighbors enjoy a more mixed outlook, and the impact in Connecticut is expected to be less severe than in Maine because of the Constitution State's larger population and more diversified economy.

A Maine economist expects his state's job growth will be cut by half or more over the next five years if President Bush and Congress adopt recommendations to close the Portsmouth shipyard in Kittery and reduce the Brunswick Naval Air Station's mission and employment.

That prospect caused Charles Colgan, a professor at University of Southern Maine, to offer a caveat after presenting his modestly upbeat state economic forecast at Thursday's spring conference of the New England Economic Partnership.

Colgan said he expected employment growth to average a little more than 1 percent per year through 2009, with the state's gross domestic product rising to an average 2.5 percent per year.

He then abruptly changed course, saying, "That's all probably going to change" because of the proposed base closings. He called the cuts a "dreaded monster" that "may eat much of the state's future economic growth" and result in "a decade of essentially no job growth in Maine."

As a result, a jobs target that Colgan initially predicted the state would reach in 2009 may not be achieved until 2013 or later.

Nearly 12,000 Maine jobs could be lost from the possible cuts at Portsmouth and Brunswick combined with the proposed closing of the Defense Finance and Accounting Center in Limestone.

Not counting indirect jobs losses in the communities, more than 6,600 jobs are expected to be lost - or about seven-tenths of a percentage point of the state's total employment.

Connecticut's more than 8,500 direct job losses from the closure of a submarine base in Groton and other smaller facilities amounts to about half a percentage point of the state's total employment.

Combined, the six New England states are expected to suffer 13,600 jobs losses, or about 47 percent of the total cuts nationwide from the military realignment in a region with just 5 percent of the total U.S. population.

Ross Gittell, the economic group's New England forecaster and an economist at the University of New Hampshire, said the regional impact will be softened somewhat by the gradual phase-in of the cuts and federal aid to help communities make it through economic transition.

Edward Deak, the group's Connecticut forecaster and an economist at Fairfield University, said it could be two years before job losses begin and six years before they are finished.

Connecticut faces a potentially big hit from the loss of the sub base because it is just up the Thames River from Electric Boat shipyard, a

maker of nuclear submarines that could see a big drop in business.

The military cuts, combined with uncertainties about energy prices and instability in the state's insurance industry, have combined to form what Deak called an "instability trifecta" clouding the outlook for the state's economy despite its diverse job base.

Even before the military cuts are taken into account, Deak expected Connecticut to join Massachusetts in posting New England's lowest job growth over the next five years at an annual average gain of less than 1 percent.

In addition to the base closures, another question mark in Maine is the uncertain future of privately owned Bath Iron Works shipyard. The Navy is considering a plan to shift all new destroyer contracts to either BIW or a competing site in Mississippi instead of sharing the contracts between the two.

Maine political leaders will seek to derail the military's closure plans and keep the shipyard open, but Colgan said, "The real battle has in effect already been lost in terms of the Maine economy."

Southeastern New Hampshire is expected to be hit hard by the closure of Portsmouth shipyard, just across the state's border with Maine. New Hampshire, home to many of the shipyard's workers, is expected to suffer nearly 1,900 direct job losses under the Pentagon's realignment plan and 1,200 indirect jobs losses.

Rhode Island is forecast to gain about 600 jobs, with Massachusetts posting a net gain of 500 jobs - a consequence of new jobs at Hanscom Air Force Base offsetting losses at other facilities including Otis Air National Guard Base.

The pace at which New England communities hit by the base closings recover depends largely on how quickly military land can be converted for use by private industry, economists said. Environmental cleanups must be completed at

many of the bases before they can be redeveloped.

"For all of New England, it's going to be a long time getting back to where we were," said Dennis Delay, the regional economic group's New Hampshire forecaster.

Local News Articles

BRAC: Tanker question Conrad discusses possibility of tanker retention, new mission for GFAFB

Grand Forks Herald (Grand Forks, ND)

By Elisa L. Rineheart

As people recover from the initial shock of knowing that Grand Forks Air Force Base has been slated for realignment, they are beginning to question whether or not the tankers can remain in Grand Forks.

Those involved in Grand Forks' base retention efforts said they are working closely with military analysts to find possible flaws in the Pentagon's review of the base's mission and capabilities.

Their goal is to keep the 319th Air Refueling Wing, which operates about 50 KC-135R Stratotankers, from leaving Grand Forks and to gain new missions, base advocates said.

But among the arguments against keeping the tankers in Grand Forks is the fact that the base supports only one mission that could be accomplished cheaper, faster and more efficiently somewhere else, Air Force officials said.

In light of the arguments, Sen. Kent Conrad, D-N.D., said that realistically speaking there is "a chance to keep some of the tankers, but not all of them" in the area.

Grand Forks was one of the many bases built with former Soviet Union targets in mind. Originally, the military installation housed B-52 bombers that quickly could respond to a possible overseas attack. Later, the tanker mission

replaced the bombers and air refueling became the base's primary focus.

But experts said that air refueling missions now conducted out of Grand Forks could be transferred to bases that have closer air refueling tracks - imaginary highways in the sky, where fuel-receiving airplanes rendezvous with tankers.

Most air refueling tracks are concentrated on the east and west coasts and the southern portion of the United States, but very few of them are located near northeast-Midwest bases.

Except for the Air National Guard, 119th Fighter Wing in Fargo, the airplanes that local tankers refuel typically are farther from Grand Forks than they are from other domestic tanker bases and their air refueling tracks. This makes missions last longer than they should. It causes tankers to consume a lot more fuel and adds flying hours to pilots' already crowded schedules, Air Force officials said.

Compared with other northern tier bases such as Fairchild Air Force Base, Wash., Grand Forks is at a disadvantage, experts said.

Fairchild, which was not on the closure list, is in a highly used air space route and has more air refueling tracks nearby.

The military installation supports training missions such as survival school for airmen at risk of being held captive by the enemy and provides aircraft upgrade courses, Air Force officials said.

If the Base Realignment and Closure Commission ratifies the Pentagon's decision to remove most of the tankers from Grand Forks, the airplanes would leave by 2009. This provides ample time for new missions to firm up and come to Grand Forks, Conrad said.

"What we can realistically go after is welcome with open arms the UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) mission, push aggressively to have those assignments made as soon as possible, and

push hard to keep some of the tankers," Conrad said.

The Air Force values lack of air space encroachment, which places North Dakota in a favorable position for receiving UAV missions such as Predator and Global Hawk, Conrad said.

Conrad said he spoke to Maj. Gen. Ronald J. Bath, head of strategic planning for the Air Force, about the use of air space that the state of North Dakota has to offer and he seemed interested in the concept.

Conrad said the Air Force is analyzing the possibility of providing air space over North Dakota for joint air and ground operations that would involve Air Force, Army and special forces.

"It's on the way," Conrad said.

S.C. base situation more clear now Beaufort almost on chopping block

Myrtle Beach Sun (Myrtle Beach, SC)
May 23, 2005

COLUMBIA - Now that the fog of the latest base-closing round has cleared, state leaders have a better idea of what South Carolina is facing in making room for new missions at its military bases and hanging on to ones scheduled to be shuttered.

Nothing will happen right away, however.

For example:

McEntire Joint National Guard Base, near Eastover, is slated to receive nine F-16 fighter jets and 300 to 400 airmen. But they won't arrive until 2011.

Troops and civilians assigned to units in South Carolina that are being closed have been told nothing will happen for four to five years, if that soon.

Meanwhile, Beaufort has learned its air base barely survived the base-closing process.

In the wake of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's May 13 recommendations to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, commonly known as BRAC, there is plenty of fine print local officials must read.

That commission has until Sept. 8 to submit a final base-closing list to President Bush. The president then has until Sept. 23 to OK the recommendations. If Bush gives his approval, Congress will have 45 legislative days to decide whether to accept the recommendations.

Then, if Congress gives its approval, things will start to move - slowly.

Col. Ken Jefferson, operations director for the S.C. Air National Guard, said nine F-16 fighters from Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho, could start moving to McEntire in 2007.

It is possible the jets could arrive earlier, Jefferson said.

In Charleston - where the Pentagon recommended closing two units with 1,100 employees - workers have been told the closures could take years.

For example, workers at a naval engineering office that oversees \$1.5 billion in military construction in 26 states were told it would take four or five years to close that unit.

Meanwhile, Charleston officials plan to appeal the Pentagon's closure decisions.

In addition, the Pentagon's recommendations essentially call for the elimination of the commander's job and 250 other positions at the Charleston Naval Weapons Station, said Tom Mikolajcik, co-chairman of Charleston's base-saving efforts.

Under the plan, Charleston Air Force Base would handle utilities, security, streets and other management functions for the weapons station. But the Pentagon made no provision for increasing the size of the staff at the air base, said Mikolajcik, a retired Air Force brigadier

general and former commander of the Charleston air base.

While Charleston officials muddle through those details, Beaufort leaders are learning that their Marine Corps Air Station was once on the Pentagon's chopping block.

In a report that followed up Rumsfeld's recommendations, the Navy said the Beaufort installation was the Marines Corps' "lowest military value jet base on the East Coast."

Closing the Beaufort base, home to eight F/A-18 squadrons, would save money, the report added. But the Navy, which includes the Marine Corps, decided against closing Beaufort to preserve its future options if another East Coast base is shuttered.

A spokeswoman for U.S. Rep. Joe Wilson, R-S.C., whose district includes Beaufort, said the Navy recognized the importance of the Beaufort air base's "current and future mission capabilities, and the base's impact on overall operational readiness."

"He's confident that the base will remain an asset to the Department of Defense for years to come," the spokeswoman added.

BRAC leaves plenty of time for adjustment

thestate.com (SC)
Chuck Crumbo
May 23, 2005

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Officials seek base options

Philadelphia Business Journal (Philadelphia, PA)

Athena D. Merritt
May 22, 2005

Pennsylvania officials are waging a highly public battle to keep the Willow Grove Naval Air Station, which employs 1,232 and generates \$378 million in economic activity per year, open. But a little-known effort will prove much more important if they fail.

Officials fighting for Willow Grove, like those with other facilities that landed on last week's federal Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) list, have begun to apply for grants to assist them in the conversion and reuse of the property should it become necessary. Federal assistance -- an amount yet to be determined -- will be available to affected communities through the Office of Economic Adjustment and various other U.S. agencies, including the Department of Labor.

Light industrial, residential and mixed development uses have all been floated as possibilities for the Willow Grove site. The site, home to the 913th Airlift Wing and 111th Fighter Wing, also could lure interest from delivery carriers, such as UPS, or Federal Express, governor's Deputy Chief of Staff Adrian King Jr. said.

Local and state officials leading Willow Grove's effort said the main focus for now is finding discrepancies that may have landed the base on the closure list and proving its efficiency and worthiness to keep it open. That focus won't change until the final base closure list is forwarded to President Bush on Sept. 8, King said.

But the Department of Defense and others involved in past BRAC rounds said planning for reuse is an effort that should be taking place alongside attempts to save a facility. Only 10 percent to 15 percent of communities have success in getting removed from BRAC lists and those that don't must clear many hurdles in converting facilities to a new use.

In the past four BRAC rounds, those who developed plans early were most often those who succeeded, said Glenn Flood, spokesman for Defense.

"The worst thing that could happen is the community never got their acts together and the [Defense] Department] tried to close it down, and they can't decide what they want to do," Flood said of Willow Grove's future.

The process of closing Willow Grove could take as long as six years, due to the time it will take to relocate aircraft, said Tim Ford, executive director of the Association of Defense Communities. The group assists areas affected by base closures and realignments. But planning for reuse could take a year or two, which is why it should start now, he said.

One obstacle standing in the way of Willow Grove drawing a reuse plan is the uncertainty over how much land will be available to develop. Under BRAC plans, seven Army Reserve centers in Montgomery, Delaware and Philadelphia counties are to be consolidated and moved to Willow Grove, he said.

"The best result is to keep a significant number of activities there with a functioning airfield or to have the reserve center utilize only that portion of the facility it needs and open the rest of it to private development or private usage," King said.

At issue is how much it will cost the community to get control of the property for redevelopment to occur, King said.

"In the past, the Pentagon has been much more willing to practically give the land away or at a nominal cost to [a development corporation] or a nonprofit or local or state government," King said. "My understanding is in this BRAC round there may be more of inclination to dispose of the land at market rate and to the extent that occurs, that is really going to change the approach."

The actual transfer of property can be difficult. Historically, it has taken a number of years to do, Ford said. Environmental issues are also a concern, as well as bringing the properties, which were never subjected to municipal zoning laws, up to code, said Frederick Strober, office managing partner of the Philadelphia office of Saul Ewing LLP, which assisted in the Philadelphia Navy Yard conversion.

Philadelphia received \$60 million to \$75 million in federal grants to assist in the redevelopment

of the Navy Yard. Assistance in the current round will be instrumental in helping those that stay on the list to successfully redevelop their sites, Strober said.

But, planned right, success can happen, said Robert Bown, project manager and principal of Industrial Investment Inc., which developed a portion of the former Naval Air Warfare Center in Warminster.

The 800-plus acre site, which landed on the BRAC list in 1995 and closed in 1996, now holds a community park, 105 acres of senior housing and 57 acres of mixed light industrial and flex business and office tenants, the latter of which was developed by Industrial Investment Inc. The Philadelphia Navy Yard is still in the midst of being redeveloped after it first landed on BRAC's list in the 1991.

"It's a difficult challenge," Bown said. "But the end result is that rather than having a single user, a single tenant, that like now can say 'we are leaving you' -- you end up with a complex that is a number of different employers that are not all going to leave at the same time, which is more stable for the community."

Is shuttering Walter Reed D.C.'s blessing in disguise?

Washington Business Journal (Washington DC)
Neil Adler
May 22, 2005

D.C. officials aren't thrilled that the nearly 100-year-old Walter Reed Army Medical Center is among the facilities the Department of Defense has recommended for closing. But disappointment could turn to gold.

The opportunities appear endless for the site if the District, a private developer or someone else snatches up the big piece of property near the border with Montgomery County. Some of possibilities: a mixed-use project with housing and office space, a hospital, maybe a medical research campus.

"You're talking about 113 acres in one of the fastest-growing residential markets in the country," says Michael Darby, a principal at D.C. developer Monument Realty. "That is very, very valuable land -- a great long-term play."

Long-term may be the phrase of the day. Any new project will have to go through the city's zoning process. And because the Pentagon's recommendations still must be approved by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC), the president and Congress -- which is likely to come only after a contentious political battle -- whoever sets designs on the site will have to be patient.

Even so, Darby says interest would be high because the Walter Reed property could accommodate, if zoned properly, thousands of residential units and millions of square feet of office space. It's also not far from the ongoing redevelopment of downtown Silver Spring.

"My initial gut feeling, with that many acres, is that [Walter Reed] is an attractive property," Darby says. "It's in an area that is sought after. With that size, you can really create a sense of place."

'Integral part' of the system
Walter Reed Army Medical Center, established 69 years ago, includes a 260-bed hospital and administrative building.

"It's an icon," Bob Malson, a longtime D.C. resident who is president of the D.C. Hospital Association. The military facility is one of Malson's member hospitals, and he'd like it to stay that way. "It's an integral part of our emergency response system."

The Pentagon's recommendations would send thousands of workers from Walter Reed's D.C. campus to Bethesda, where a new 300-bed Walter Reed National Military Medical Center will be built. Army officials say they can save \$100 million by realigning their medical facilities.

According to the Army, Walter Reed's campus at 6900 Georgia Ave. was opened with a design

capacity of 1,200 beds. On average, however, it operates just 189.

A Walter Reed research institute based in Silver Spring will not be affected by the Pentagon recommendations.

Williams wants do-over
Mayor Tony Williams plans to ask Congress to keep Walter Reed open. If not successful, he may try to buy the site for future development.

Williams spokeswoman Sharon Gang says it's "definitely something that we would consider pursuing," as long as the outcome "is in the best interest of the immediate community and the city, of course."

Under city control and with room to expand, the Walter Reed site could accommodate a larger medical facility or perhaps a biotechnology research campus, some people speculate.

In a more likely scenario, the Defense Department, which owns the property, could transfer it to another department -- Health and Human Services, Education or Interior, for example -- to develop something for federal use.

There is still some speculation that the Department of Homeland Security may eventually look for a consolidated campus. Or the Defense Department could simply ask the General Services Administration to help it dispose of the property, a process that could take several years, maybe longer.

Tapping the feds
Another potential hang-up in the redevelopment of closed bases is the large investment needed to prepare them for new uses. That can run hundreds of millions of dollars, says the International City/County Management Association (www.icma.org), a D.C.-based organization that works with local governments to find suitable reuses of closed bases.

There are, however, funding resources at the federal, state and local levels that developers can use, according to ICMA.

Some recent examples: Massachusetts has provided \$200 million in bonds to promote the reuse of Fort Devens. In Illinois, the village of Glenview has obtained authority to issue \$60 million in bonds to improve infrastructure at Glenview Naval Air Station.

Says ICMA: "If you tap these national resources, as well as your own community's expertise and commitment, the long process of base reuse can be made much simpler and ultimately more effective."

Base closure is California city's dream Pentagon plan would clear way for development

Boston Globe (Boston, MA)
Bobby Caina Calvan
May 23, 2005

CONCORD, Calif. -- When the Pentagon announced this month its latest list of proposed base closings, people in this San Francisco suburb, like so many others across the country, hoped for the best.

But while other communities nationwide fretted about the possible shutdown of their military installations, Concord civic leaders took a seemingly peculiar step: They lobbied the Pentagon to close the city's naval weapons station.

Concord wants the site because the facility occupies 13,000 acres of waterfront, marshland, and inland meadows that compose one of the largest remaining undeveloped properties in the heavily urbanized San Francisco Bay Area.

The Pentagon obliged, saying on May 13 that it would release 5,100 acres of prime real estate at the weapons station to the civilian sector as part of the Pentagon's latest round of base realignment and closure recommendations.

For now, the military will hold on to the facility's tidal basin, which despite its expanse provides fewer opportunities for development. The military will continue to operate piers,

which now employ fewer than 100 people. A small flotilla of mothballed ships also will remain.

"Everybody wants to be taken off the list," Mayor Laura M. Hoffmeister said. "We're not opposed to them taking even more. We were hoping that they'd put the whole thing on the list. It would certainly have been better, but we're willing to take anything."

Unlike other towns and cities across the country that have their future riding on an economic engine powered by the military, Concord -- 30 miles inland from San Francisco -- hopes to ride high on a likely real estate boom sparked by the military's partial withdrawal from the weapons base.

The city envisions 13,500 new homes, office buildings, and retail developments over the next 30 years on the property. The development is expected to add 33,000 residents to the city, more than a fourth of Concord's current population, and create about 15,000 jobs.

There is talk of building much-needed affordable housing in the region. The median price of a house in the Bay Area is about \$580,000, a factor that has sent many home buyers farther inland.

"There is a need to find a place to house our workers and a place for new jobs," said Jim Forsberg, Concord's director of planning and economic development.

How the property will be developed is still undecided. City officials acknowledge that pressure will be mounting from many quarters, including from housing advocates, environmentalists, and the business community. "We're still trying size things up," Forsberg said.

"Of course, the developers are all jumping up and down and saying, 'Wonderful, wonderful.' They're excited, to put it mildly," Forsberg said. "But this is something for the entire community."

Once the list of closings is completed later this year, the Pentagon is expected to auction off the 5,100-acre property, Forsberg said. "On the positive side, we think the Navy might be motivated to move very quickly," he said. No one is sure how much the property is worth, but it is certainly in the hundreds of millions, Forsberg said.

"We've been sitting here just looking at that property and watching weeds come up through the roads," said Hoffmeister, Concord's mayor.

Concord has little room to grow.

Last January, the City Council passed a resolution urging that the base be closed, saying that "the continued underutilization of the Concord Naval Weapons Station will result in the further deterioration of this facility." Delaying the closing, the council said, would make redevelopment "more expensive and difficult."

"The military's been out of here for a long time. They're not coming back," the mayor said. "We have to move on, and now we can get on with it."

Concord is hardly an antimilitary town, said Nicholas Virgallito, president and chief executive officer of the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce.

"If it was a base like Travis, we wouldn't want it closed," Virgallito said, referring to Travis Air Force Base, about 20 miles northeast of Concord. The base employs 11,000 people, including 3,500 civilians, and is the only major military installation left in the San Francisco region. The base was spared in the current round of closing recommendations.

Contra Costa County, of which Concord is its largest city, has been exploring shutting down its airfield, a move the business community opposes, to make room for housing and other development.

"It now takes some of the pressure off," Virgallito said. "We see this as sustaining the

economic vitality of the city. We're happy; we're excited. The sky's the limit for Concord."

But others are wary, particularly environmentalists hoping to preserve the region's last remaining wildlife area.

"The 13,000 houses being proposed would make it the biggest sprawl proposal in the Bay Area," said David Reid, the East Bay field representative for the Greenbelt Alliance, based in San Francisco.

"We are concerned about protecting the thousands of acres of rolling hills and wetlands on the base. If Concord's plan is realized, there will be substantial damage done to the environment," Reid said.

The city says it plans to reserve half of the property for parks, recreation, and other open space.

"It's so early in the process that we're still waiting to see what specifically is being planned," said Lisa Anich, cofounder of Friends of Mount Diablo Creek, a community organization that formed a year ago because of concerns about the possible closing of the weapons station.

The creek, which flows 17 miles from its headwaters at Mount Diablo, through the base and into Suisun Bay, is one of the last remaining unobstructed waterways in the county. It hosts a number of endangered and threatened animals, Anich said.

"Since [the base] was put on a mothballed status, the Navy was actually a good land manager, at least environmentally. If it was still an active military base, then my opinion might be different," Anich said.

Dan Helix, a retired Army major general who served on the Concord City Council three decades ago and is a member of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's council on base support and retention, said: "I think things are going to have to be very deliberate because we

live in a very activist time. There will be a lot of groups wanting to provide input."

Helix said that he supports closing the weapons station, but that he did not support the military's decision in 1988 to close the Presidio in San Francisco, home base of the Sixth Army, of which Helix was the deputy commanding general until his retirement in 1989.

"Right now, the city is feeling this euphoria about the opportunities it has," Helix said. "I think people understand how big of an opportunity this is. I think finally we have a chance to move ahead."

Officials: BRAC process has just begun

Dayton Business Journal (Dayton, OH)

John Wilfong

May 23, 2005

In 1995, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base was supposed to receive more than 2,500 jobs.

But when the dust settled after that round of the federal base realignment and closure, or BRAC, process, the base ended up adding only a couple hundred jobs.

Local officials have no intentions of letting history repeat itself this time around.

The U.S. Department of Defense issued its BRAC recommendations May 13, delivering a mixed bag to Dayton. Wright-Patt could gain nearly 500 jobs, but Kettering could lose at least 230 and Springfield could lose about 300 jobs. Overall, the region stands to net 27 jobs. But now the list is in the hands of the federal BRAC Commission, which will do its own review and issue its recommendations to the president by early September.

This is the time local officials hope to sway the recommendations in Dayton's favor.

The Dayton Development Coalition's Wright-Patt 2010, the group fighting to protect the local military bases, hunkered down this week to start piecing together a game plan to carry the region

through the next few months as the BRAC process heats up. As the Defense Department continues to release reports and figures daily, local officials are hoping to find a chink in the armor of the department's plan in order to possibly bring more jobs to Wright-Patt or stop some from leaving. They also will be working to ensure that the jobs slated to move to Wright-Patt actually arrive.

Coalition officials said the group continues to work from the same pot of money that funded early efforts, which included about \$1 million in state funding. J.P. Nauseef, coalition president and chief executive officer, said they also are continuing to raise money to match the state funding.

Michael Gessel, the coalition's vice president of federal government relations, was an aide to former U.S. Rep. Tony Hall in 1995 when the recommended closure of Brooks Air Force Base in San Antonio would have meant adding 2,500 jobs to Wright-Patt. Instead, the commission overturned the decision, evidently because Brooks' home community successfully made the case it was in the military's best interest to keep the base open and the Dayton community did not launch as aggressive an attack, he said.

He said the Defense Department is scheduled to eventually release more detailed reports, such as one for each branch of the military, that could contain more details about the proposed changes. Also, the department will release the data and computer models it used to make its recommendations.

Retired Lt. Gen. Dennis Samic, a member of Wright-Patt 2010 and the Governor's All-Ohio Task Force to Save Defense Jobs, said the local group hopes to find factual errors, or at least illogical deductions, in that pile of information. And that's what it will use in its argument to the BRAC Commission.

"This will not be an emotional look," he said. "We need to get into the details, get behind those numbers and make doggone sure we understand them, whether we like them or not."

Evan Scott, vice president of communications for the coalition, said up until now Wright-Patt 2010's goal was to put the base in a favorable light for defense officials.

But Gessel said the group's focus is shifting.

"Now we have two games -- offense and defense," he said. "We obviously can't fight everything, but at this point we are not ruling out any particular plan as unachievable."

That means the group will pick its battles, while determining the best use of its resources. Gessel said the group, whose first post-announcement meeting was May 18, will determine the economic impact and the long-term value of those proposed changes to the base before devising a strategy.

"The areas we'll focus on may or may not have the greatest immediate economic impact," he said.

The community will have to build its case to the commission by submitting information to the commission and testifying through a series of public hearings it will hold around the country. Commission members, or members of their staff, must visit the affected bases, providing another opportunity to argue the case, he said.

Samic said he isn't sure if one of the nine commission members would personally visit Wright-Patt, the Springfield Air National Guard base or the Kettering Defense Finance and Accounting Service location.

He said he expects Gov. Bob Taft to send Joseph Principi, commission chairman, a letter requesting at least one of the commissioners visit Ohio's facilities that are on the list. While Ohio stands to come out about 240 jobs ahead, Taft has pledged to continue to support each affected community around the state and fight for more. Some of the jobs, such as the potentially 400 slated to be yanked out of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service site in Kettering, could end up simply being shipped to Columbus.

Samic said the governor has scheduled a task force meeting for May 24, the first since the list was published.

"The governor, though on a bigger scale, has the same perspective as we do here in the Miami Valley -- we won some and we lost some," he said. "But with a 13,000 (job) reduction across the nation, we're up 240 jobs for the state. That's a victory."

Opinions/ Editorials

Save the Subs

New York Post
Sen. Joe Lieberman
May 23, 2005

After nearly a century of history, the "Silent Service" will go dark in the Northeast if the U.S. Navy's submarine base in New London, Connecticut, is closed as recommended recently by the Department of Defense.

All of us who care about our national defense will not sit silently and allow this grossly mistaken recommendation to go forward. The fight now goes to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC), which can — and should — reject the plan.

As a senator from Connecticut, I am, of course concerned with the effect this closing would have on my state's economy — estimated at \$1.3 billion annually and about 14,000 jobs.

Closing New London — along with Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Maine and Fort Monmouth in New Jersey — is also part of a continuing and unhealthy trend of shifting military facilities to southern and western states, removing national defense and contact with the military from the daily lives of Northeasterners.

But these factors alone, although critically important, are not reasons enough to keep a base open.

I oppose closing New London for three reasons:

- * It is bad military policy.
- * It is flawed financial and budgetary policy.
- * And it will cripple an industry and workforce vital to our national defense and manufacturing competitiveness.

Let's start with New London's value as a military base. New London is one of the few ports in the United States with the infrastructure and capability to handle nuclear powered vessels. That capability is a strategic national asset that once lost, will never be recovered.

New London also offers the quickest access to deep water and the polar route under the ice caps of the increasingly pivotal Pacific Ocean.

New London also provides great synergy by having the submarine base, the Naval Submarine School and Electric Boat — the dean of global submarine builders — all located within a few miles of each other.

This proximity clearly enables gains in production, research, maintenance and training as the skilled technicians who build and maintain the submarines work side-by-side with those who operate them and those who train the next generation of submariners.

Closing New London would leave the United States with just two east-coast submarine bases — Norfolk, Va., and Kings Bay, Ga. This increases the risk to the entire fleet should one or both ports become incapacitated in an attack, sabotage or natural disaster.

While the military value of New London alone should be enough to keep it open, there are financial considerations as well.

We have been down this road once before. During the last round of base closings in 1993, the BRAC Commission found that the Defense Department's recommendation to close the New London sub base meant substantial new spending would be required at the bases slated to receive the submarine squadrons.

I remember when the chairman of the 1993 commission, former Rep. Jim Courter, said he thought it was strange to spend millions of dollars for new facilities when the submarines already had a safe home with great facilities.

That is truer today than it was then. The Department of Defense has pegged the net cost to close New London at about \$345.4 million over three years and claims that it will save a total \$1.6 billion over 20.

I am more than skeptical. We have yet to see the data used to determine that figure. But I know that New London's nuclear-handling capabilities also make closing it very problematic.

The Pentagon estimates the cost of environmental cleanup of the base at just \$23.9 million. This looks like a staggering underestimation given that the sub base contains 15 identified Superfund sites.

The amount of money it would actually take to make New London safe for private development would itself likely dwarf the savings the Pentagon anticipates from closing the base.

Once they examine the facts, we are confident the BRAC commissioners will not allow the "Silent Service" to slip away from Connecticut waters and into history.

The evidence will clearly show that the submarine mission should continue proudly from New London — "the Submarine Capital of the World" — in defense of our nation and its values around the world.

DoD plan for Fort Sam likely to spark pitched political battle

San Antonio Business Journal (San Antonio, TX)

W. Scott Bailey
May 23, 2005

The Department of Defense (DoD) wants to relocate several thousand military and civilian jobs to Fort Sam Houston under a plan that would create a major regional medical center

used to train and treat personnel in multiple branches of the armed services.

But that plan likely won't be realized without a fight, and the right political push from other communities affected by the recommendations could change everything.

On May 13, the DoD recommended closing Brooks City-Base and 32 other installations across the nation as part of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process. It also recommended several base realignments, including the relocation of the 59th Medical Wing from Lackland's Wilford Hall Medical Center to Fort Sam Houston, where it would be merged with Brooke Army Medical Center as part of a new San Antonio Regional Medical Center.

The BRAC must act on the plan by Sept. 8 and submit its recommendation to President Bush. The president and Congress must ultimately approve the BRAC plan.

If that happens, military officials say Fort Sam Houston would become the hub for training enlisted medical students from all branches of the military. It would also become the home of a new "center of excellence" in battlefield and trauma care.

Col. Richard Agee, chief of staff for the Army Medical Department Center and School at Fort Sam Houston, says the recommendations, if implemented, would be historic.

"It changes the whole shape and scope of what we do here," he says.

According to Agee, those changes would include a doubling of the student population at the Army post, located just northeast of downtown San Antonio.

Texas tussle

"It will be a big boost for San Antonio," says Agee about the DoD recommendations if carried out at Fort Sam Houston. "For us, this will be huge."

But San Antonio's gain of some 9,000 additional military and civilian personnel at Fort Sam Houston would cost a number of other communities thousands of jobs. And leaders in some of those communities are already readying action plans aimed at saving those jobs. That is where a domino effect of political posturing and public outcry could throw a wrench into the entire process.

In all, the DoD has recommended moving 2,600 military and 1,600 civilian personnel, as well as nearly 5,000 students from other military facilities located across the nation, to Fort Sam Houston.

One city that may have to absorb part of the blow is Wichita Falls, Texas.

That community stands to lose more than 2,600 jobs. Leaders there have used words like "confused" and "stunned" to describe the immediate reaction to the DoD recommendations.

Sheppard Air Force Base is Wichita Falls' largest employer and it represents roughly a quarter of that city's economy. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's recommendations call for shifting enlisted basic and specialty medical training operations from Sheppard to Fort Sam Houston.

Asked if his community is going to sit back and let this process unfold without a fight, Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Tim Chase says, "Absolutely not.

"Not only do we depend on the military here," he continues, "we spend a tremendous amount of time and resources on Sheppard in this community. There was no indication this was coming."

Just how great of an impact would the loss of 2,600 or more jobs have on Wichita Falls?

"The quality of life here is driven in large part by the military's presence," Chase explains. "You can see the impact everywhere you look."

Chase says city leaders have been cautioned by the government to expect as many as 1,700 additional non-military jobs to be affected by a realignment of Sheppard. That number, Chase says, could be conservative.

More choppy waters

Another installation that would be hit if Rumsfeld's recommendations are approved is Naval Station San Diego, which would also lose medical personnel to San Antonio.

Erik Bruvold, vice president of public affairs for the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corp., says the realignment of that base could cost San Diego as many as 150 medical instructors and 1,500 students who would relocate to Fort Sam Houston.

"We don't want to lose them," Bruvold says, adding that San Diego leaders are "still wading through the (DoD) data before we determine our next strategy."

In North Chicago, local leaders are also attempting to assess the situation and forge a game plan.

Under the DoD recommendations put forth by Rumsfeld, Naval Station Great Lakes is projected to lose more than 2,000 jobs.

An undetermined number of positions from the base's medical training center would be relocated to Fort Sam Houston.

Some Illinois officials are glad the state is only losing jobs -- not entire bases. But few are in the mood to celebrate.

North Chicago Mayor Leon Rockingham warns that the move could "have an impact on the amount of federal dollars received by the city of North Chicago, such as school-impact aid, motor-fuel tax and census revenue."

No sure bet

If the BRAC Commission, President Bush and Congress ultimately approve the recommendations set forth by Rumsfeld, they

must be initiated within two years and completed within six.

Although Pentagon officials say the proposal would initially cost an estimated \$2.4 billion to implement over the next six years, the plan is projected to save roughly \$400 million annually thereafter.

If recommendations for Fort Sam Houston pan out, it could help soften the blow of shuttering Brooks City-Base and significantly realigning Lackland Air Force Base, as has been recommended by the DoD. But there are no guarantees that all the pieces will come together with regard to plans for Fort Sam Houston.

Could political leaders in affected cities kill the plans for San Antonio?

"There is always that possibility," U.S. Rep. Lamar Smith, R-San Antonio, explains. "If we were losing personnel, I know we'd be trying to do whatever we had to do to fight that.

"But I'm confident this is going to happen," he continues. "That said, we need to do everything that we can to protect our gains."

Those gains, according to Smith, would include more than jobs. He says the implications could positively affect San Antonio's medical community, its pursuit of biomedical companies and its role in the military.

"This is going to have a very significant impact on San Antonio medically and economically," he says.

Additional Notes