

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



BIRD

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Collins, Lieberman put Pentagon subpoena threat in writing

Associated Press
May 28, 2005

Sens. Susan Collins and Joseph Lieberman have threatened to use subpoena power to force the Pentagon to live up to its promise to release the data used to support its base closing recommendations.

Unless the data is released promptly, they wrote in a letter to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld on Friday, the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs will investigate the Defense Department's "decision-making process underlying its recommendations for potential improprieties."

"As part of that investigation, the committee will issue a subpoena to the (Defense) Department to compel production of the information required by the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act," the senators wrote.

Collins, R-Maine, is chairwoman of the committee and Lieberman, D-Conn., is the ranking Democrat.

The Pentagon has been under fire for missing its May 23 deadline to release the data. Officials promised Friday to release much of the data by

Tuesday afternoon to congressional staffers who have security clearances.

The Defense Department has blamed the delay on security checks needed because some of the information is classified.

Only a complete release of data including e-mails, memoranda, spreadsheets, analyses, raw data, handwritten notes and telephone logs is acceptable, Collins and Lieberman wrote.

Connecticut was the hardest hit by the recommendations, with four facilities making the list, including the U.S. Naval Submarine Base in Groton. The state would lose about 8,600 jobs -- nearly 30 percent of the net national job losses.

In Maine, nearly 8,000 jobs would be eliminated by closing the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard on the New Hampshire border and a Defense Finance Accounting Service center in northern Maine, as well as stripping aircraft and half of the military personnel from Brunswick Naval Air Station.

The Pentagon's announcement that it would provide the data by Tuesday came the same day Anthony Principi, chairman of the independent base closing commission, said the panel can't do its job unless the material is released promptly.

"We cannot make informed decisions without the data, and that's critical to our work," he said Friday after meeting with officials from Maine and New Hampshire.

Bush calls base closings crucial; President tells Naval Academy grads that the cuts will help pay for the war on terror

Houston Chronicle
Julie Mason
May 28, 2005

ANNAPOLIS, MD. - The estimated \$ 48 billion in savings over 10 years from closing and reorganizing outmoded military bases will help

pay for advanced weaponry to fight terrorism, President Bush said Friday.

In a commencement speech to the 976 graduates of the U.S. Naval Academy, Bush said current and future warfare requires new thinking and a more agile, downsized military.

"I know firsthand how hard base closings can be on local communities," Bush said. "I was governor of Texas during the last round of base closures, when facilities were shut down in places like Lubbock and Laredo and Austin."

The Pentagon's Base Closure and Realignment Commission is recommending closing four major military bases in Texas and realigning six others.

The plan calls for closing the Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant and the Red River Army Depot, both near Texarkana, along with Naval Station Ingleside near Corpus Christi and Brooks City Base in San Antonio.

The Pentagon plan includes realigning Sheppard Air Force Base near Wichita Falls at a cost of 2,624 jobs.

In addition, it wants to retire 15 F-16s belonging to the 147th Air National Guard at Houston's Ellington Field and close its Army National Guard Reserve Center, transfer the defense artillery school out of Fort Bliss in El Paso and transfer inpatient services at Wilford Hall on Lackland Air Force Base to Fort Sam Houston, both in San Antonio.

Nationwide, the Pentagon has proposed closing or downsizing 62 major domestic military facilities.

"We'll do everything possible to help affected communities make the transition as smoothly as possible, by providing economic development aid, job training, and assistance with redevelopment plans for affected bases," Bush said.

Addressing the graduates, the president said, "It will result in a military that is more efficient and

better prepared, so you can better protect the American people against the dangers of this new century."

It was the first time since 2001 that Bush attended the Annapolis graduation ceremonies, which included a cannon salute and a flyover by the Blue Angels, a precision flying team.

His previous appearance before the Naval Academy graduates was four months before the 2001 terrorist attacks. The 2005 graduates will soon join their predecessors of the past four years in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere.

"The midshipmen I addressed here four years ago are now serving bravely in this struggle," Bush said.

"The new officers who sat in the chairs where you now sit could not have known that their strength and character would be tested so soon."

For two hours, Bush stood under a hot sun, handing out diplomas to each of the graduates. Among the 2005 class are 750 Navy ensigns, 207 Marine Corps lieutenants, four Air Force lieutenants, three Army lieutenants and one Coast Guard ensign.

"Today, we face a brutal and determined enemy, men who celebrate murder and incite suicide and thirst for absolute power," Bush said. "These enemies will not be stopped by negotiation or concessions or appeals to reason. In this war, there is only one option and that is victory."

Military Must Adapt to Terror Era, Bush Says; The imperative to redeploy resources, including closing bases, has grown since 9/11, the president tells Naval Academy graduates.

Los Angeles Times
Warren Vieth
May 28, 2005

President Bush told U.S. Naval Academy graduates Friday that the war on terrorism has heightened the need to transform the military by

closing unneeded bases at home, adopting new deployment strategies abroad and spending more on advanced weaponry.

Bush said much had changed since he spoke to graduating midshipmen in May 2001, four months before the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. At the time, he called for a sweeping military overhaul to "to help us keep the peace" in the post-Cold War era.

In Friday's address to the class of 2005, Bush said that the U.S.-led offensives in Afghanistan and Iraq had underscored the importance of building a "21st century military" that relied more on mobility, speed and technology than on sheer size and strength.

"We need you to take on two different missions at once," Bush told the 976 new Navy and Marine Corps officers, who were dressed in starched white uniforms and sitting in folding chairs on the grass playing field of the Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium.

"We need you to defeat the terrorists who want to destroy what we stand for and how we live," Bush said. "At the same time, we need you to transform our military for the 21st century, so we can deter and defeat the new adversaries who may threaten our people in the decades ahead."

A necessary part of that process, Bush said, was the closing or consolidating of dozens of military bases across the country, even over the objections of communities that rely on the facilities for employment and economic activity.

Two weeks ago, the Pentagon proposed closing 33 major domestic bases and downsizing 29 others. It presented its recommendations to the independent Base Realignment and Closure Commission, which is to refine the list after visiting the sites and hearing from officials there. The final roster will go to Congress, which will be permitted to accept or reject it in its entirety but not to amend it.

"The military services have each done a review of their requirements, and they have concluded that we have more bases than we need," Bush

said. "Supporting these facilities wastes billions of taxpayer dollars, money that can be better spent on giving you the tools to fight terrorists and confront 21st century threats."

Compared with four previous rounds of base closings dating to 1988, California would fare well under the latest Pentagon recommendations. However, many other states and communities are protesting the economic hardship they would incur under massive closures.

Bush said he knew firsthand the trauma of base closings because he was governor of Texas when the last round shut down bases in Lubbock, Laredo and Austin. He promised that this year's round of base closings would be "impartial and fair" and that they would save \$48 billion over the next 20 years.

"We'll do everything possible to help affected communities make the transition as smoothly as possible, by providing economic development aid, job training and assistance with redevelopment plans," he said.

In his remarks, Bush sought to restate, in the context of the war on terrorism, the military transformation campaign he outlined four years ago.

The president said the plans involved the gradual reduction of Cold War-era troop deployments overseas and increased spending on high-technology weapons.

The Iraq war called into question some of the assumptions underlying the administration's initial restructuring mandate. Bush came into office eschewing the kind of peacekeeping missions that characterized the Clinton era. Yet in Iraq, the Pentagon found it needed more troops for a longer period of time than initially envisioned.

In a sign that his remarks were intended for a broader audience of U.S. military officials, some of whom had questioned the wisdom of the overhaul launched by Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, Bush said the changes he had in

mind required a new attitude on the part of the officer corps.

"Transformation requires more than high-tech weapons," he said. "It requires creativity, ingenuity and a willingness to try new things. All the advanced technology in the world will not transform our military if we do not transform our thinking."

Bush praised the valor of several members of the 2001 graduating class, including Midshipman Bobby Rashad Jones, the designated "anchorman" because he had the lowest grade-point average. Jones went on to serve as a deck officer on the amphibious assault ship *Germantown*, which ensured the safe landing of Marines during counter-terrorist operations in the Philippines, Bush said.

Jones, who gave the president an unexpected bear hug after receiving his commission in 2001, attended Friday's ceremony. "Four years later, my ribs still hurt," Bush told him. "So don't get any ideas."

After delivering his 30-minute address, Bush spent two hours shaking hands and posing for photographs with each of the graduates as they crossed the stage to receive their diplomas. The class comprised 148 women and 828 men, survivors of an initial group of 1,239 inductees.

The 3 1/2 -hour ceremony began with a 21-round cannon salute and a low-altitude flyover by the Blue Angels flight team, and ended with the traditional farewell of the new graduates, who shouted "hip hip hurray" as they tossed their white hats into the air. Later, they were to trade their midshipman anchors for the shoulder boards of a Navy ensign or the gold bars of a Marine Corps second lieutenant.

Bush was the 17th president to deliver a commencement address to Naval Academy graduates, a practice that began in 1869 with Ulysses S. Grant.

Friday's speech was his second commencement address this month. He had urged graduates of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich., to

become involved in public service by working with government, civic groups or religious organizations.

Senators demand Rumsfeld release base closing data

CNN.com

May 28, 2005

Two senators from New England have sent a letter to U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld demanding the release of documents on proposed military base closures.

In a statement Saturday, Sens. Susan Collins, R-Maine, and Joseph Lieberman, D-Connecticut, said the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs would subpoena the documents if necessary, including e-mails, memos, handwritten notes and telephone logs.

Collins is chairwoman of the committee, while Lieberman is the ranking member.

The senators represent states "disproportionately affected" by the proposed changes announced this month, their statement said.

The Pentagon has recommended that 33 major military bases in the nation be closed and forces at another 29 major bases be reduced. Officials have said the Base Realignment and Closure, or BRAC, process would save billions of dollars annually.

The letter to Rumsfeld cites federal law requiring the release of supporting documents to Congress.

"Despite repeated requests from members of Congress, the department has thus far failed to make available to Congress this critical information," it says.

"The department's failure to disclose all of this information prevents Congress from conducting a thorough and meaningful review of those recommendations. ... The integrity of the base closure and realignment process depends on

openness and transparency."

Collins and Lieberman said they want to investigate "for potential improprieties" in the decision-making process.

"The integrity of the BRAC process depends on the release of these documents," the senators said. "In addition, it is unfair to bases that have early visits from BRAC commissioners, such as those in Connecticut and Maine, to not have immediate data available to them."

The failure to turn over documents "undermines our confidence in the department's decision-making process and undoubtedly raises similar concerns across the American public," the letter to Rumsfeld says.

The senators also have written to President Bush, asking him to intervene and compel the Defense Department to release the documents.

Bush defended the proposed closures and realignment in an address Friday at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. He said the process is unfortunate but a necessary means of moving the military into the 21st century.

"Supporting these facilities wastes billions of taxpayers' dollars," Bush said, adding that everything possible would be done to assure a smooth transition in the affected communities.

Bases on the chopping block include a Navy submarine base in New London, Connecticut, which would mean a loss of more than 8,000 jobs.

When the recommendations were announced May 13, Lieberman vowed to "fight shoulder to shoulder with the rest of the Connecticut delegation to reverse this wrongheaded decision and save the sub base."

A Naval shipyard in Portsmouth, Maine, also is slated for closure, and a Naval Air Station in Brunswick, Maine, would lose more than 400 personnel in the realignment.

The Pentagon's final report on the base closings is not due until September 8. Congress would have to sign off on the closings before November 7.

Base commission chairman joins push for Pentagon data

Associated Press
Lolita C. Baldor
May 28, 2005

The chairman of the commission charged with reviewing the proposed military base closings said Friday his panel can't do its job unless the Pentagon quickly releases detailed data on its recommendations.

Anthony Principi, head of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC), said he understands there are security issues. The panel has already begun visiting bases to gauge the effects on the communities and bases' military value.

Members are heading to Connecticut next week, but they've have been waiting for the information for two weeks.

"It needs to be soon," said Principi, joining a chorus of federal and state officials demanding the data. "We cannot make informed decisions without the data, and that's critical to our work."

Meanwhile, two Republican House members from Connecticut provided the swing votes late Thursday to kill a measure that would have cut funding for the base closings.

Rep. Rob Simmons, who has been a vocal critic of the Pentagon's process and decisions, and Rep. Nancy Johnson initially voted in favor of cutting \$169 million from BRAC and moving it to veterans programs and funding for families of troops killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. Their support gave the measure enough votes to pass.

But under pressure from GOP leaders, several Republicans including Johnson and Simmons changed their votes at the last minute, and the

amendment lost by one vote - 213-214. Neither would provide an explanation for the change.

The Pentagon delivered its biggest blow to Connecticut, recommending that four military facilities close, including the U.S. Naval Submarine Base in Groton. The cuts would slash about 8,600 jobs - nearly 30 percent of the net national job losses in the base closing plan.

Since the proposal was released by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld two weeks ago, officials have been scrambling to gather information they can use to persuade Principi's commission to remove bases from the Pentagon's hit list.

Principi's concerns about the data bolster complaints from a growing chorus of Congress members and state and local officials who have been demanding that the Pentagon release thousands of pages of information on each of the bases reviewed and recommended for closure or realignment.

Key data includes how the Defense Department calculated the scores given to each facility, particularly ranking its military value.

Sen. Olympia Snowe, R-Maine, said she is gathering increased support for legislation that would postpone the BRAC decision one day for every day the Defense Department missed its May 23 deadline to provide the data to the commission. Both Connecticut Sens. Christopher J. Dodd and Joe Lieberman said they will co-sponsor the bill.

"You can't put a puzzle together without all the pieces," Dodd said. "Our national defense shouldn't be left to guesswork and it is my hope that this information will help us make our case to keep Sub Base New London open."

Dodd and other Connecticut lawmakers plan to meet with Principi and members of the commission next week when they visit the Groton submarine base.

Principi said acting Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England, the No. 2 official at the

Pentagon, assured him this week that the data would be delivered very soon.

Graduates told pursue change

Washington Times

Bill Sammon

May 28, 2005

ANNAPOLIS — President Bush yesterday urged Naval Academy graduates to challenge the status quo in the same way he is challenging congressional Democrats to enact his conservative agenda.

"This advice comes with a warning: If you challenge established ways of thinking, you will face opposition," Mr. Bush said in his commencement speech at Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium. "Believe me, I know — I've lived in Washington for four years.

"The opponents of change are many, and its champions are few, but the champions of change are the ones who make history," he told 976 uniformed graduates. "Pursue the possibilities others tell you do not exist."

It was the first time Mr. Bush has delivered the commencement speech at the Naval Academy since the spring of 2001, just months before the terrorist attacks of September 11.

"When I spoke to the class of 2001, none of us imagined that a few months later we would suffer a devastating surprise attack on our homeland, or that our nation would be plunged into a global war unlike any we had known before," the president said.

"The midshipmen I addressed here four years ago are now serving bravely in this struggle," he added. "The new officers who sat in the chairs where you now sit could not have known that their strength and character would be tested so soon."

Mr. Bush rattled off a list of 2001 graduates who went on to serve in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, including Edward Slavis, whose battalion helped pull down the statue of Saddam

Hussein in Baghdad. The president quoted the graduate as calling the invasion of Iraq "America's golden moment."

Another 2001 graduate became a Navy SEAL who captured dozens of Taliban terrorists in raids throughout Afghanistan. The man went on to guard first lady Laura Bush when she visited Afghanistan, so the president kept his name secret.

"If he's out there listening, I've got a message for that courageous Navy frogman: Thanks for defending America," Mr. Bush said. "And thanks for taking such good care of my bride."

The president also used yesterday's speech to defend the Pentagon's recommendation to close 33 military bases and downsize 29 others.

"We have more bases than we need," he said. "Supporting these facilities wastes billions of taxpayer dollars, money that can be better spent on giving you the tools to fight terrorists and confront 21st-century threats."

Yet Mr. Bush made clear the list of base closings is subject to change. The list was presented two weeks ago to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, which has not made a final recommendation.

"This is only the beginning of the process," the president said. "Commission members will now visit all the sites that the military has recommended for closure, and communities will have the opportunity to make their case directly to the commission."

Mr. Bush empathized with military communities that will be financially hurt by base closings. He was governor of Texas during the last round of base closings, which included Austin, Laredo and Lubbock.

"I know firsthand how hard base closings can be on local communities," he said. "We'll do everything possible to help affected communities make the transition as smoothly as possible, by providing economic development aid, job training and assistance with redevelopment plans for affected bases."

Local News Articles

Nevada Town Clings to Targeted Army Depot

Associated Press

Martin Griffith

May 29, 2005

HAWTHORNE, Nev. -- For more than 50 years, this struggling desert town that proudly calls itself "America's Patriotic Home" has held what's billed as the nation's biggest Armed Forces Day parade. Some 3,500 people turned out earlier this month for the celebration, complete with water fights, a watermelon eating contest, dunk tanks and horseshoe pitching. But the pride masked fears: The Pentagon wants to close the nearby Army Ammunition Depot, which accounts for nearly half of all jobs in the remote Nevada town of 3,800, about 130 miles south of Reno.

"This base is the heart and soul of town. It's going to kill the town if they do away with it," home-maintenance business owner Larry Grant, 43, said as tanks, torpedoes, rockets and missiles paraded past.

Buster Pringle, right, and Bucky Cuzick, ride their bikes Friday, May 20, 2005, in Hawthorne, Nev. The small town, about 130 miles south of Reno, calls itself America's Patriotic Home. Now, some residents are fearing the worst because the Pentagon wants to close the nearby Army Ammunition Depot, which accounts for nearly half of all jobs in the town of 3,800. (AP Photo/Joe Cavaretta) (Joe Cavaretta - AP)

"It would basically turn this place into a ghost town," said Operation Desert Storm veteran John Stroud, 47.

To the surprise of residents and Nevada's congressional delegation, the depot was included this month on the Defense Department's Base Realignment and Closure list, commonly known as BRAC. A nine-member commission can change the list before it is submitted to the White House and Congress this fall.

Many residents attending the Armed Forces Day festivities sported T-shirts reading "No BRAC _ No Ghost Town _ NO WAY!!"

"If you don't have people living here, there's no one to buy," said Dean Shellenbarger, 40, a supermarket clerk. "Sooner or later you just have a huge hole in the ground."

"I wonder if we'll even have a school left," said sixth-grade teacher Christy Grant, 41.

Although it sits on sagebrush-covered desert more than 200 miles from the ocean, the 147,230-acre depot opened as a Naval Undersea facility for submarine munitions in 1930. It features more than 2,400 bunkers that hold bombs, mortar shells and other munitions, and has shipped explosives for conflicts from World War II to the war in Iraq.

Today, Hawthorne seems frozen in its heyday era of World War II, a pit stop town of motels, gas stations and fast-food places framed by miles of bunkers. Travelers passing through on U.S. Highway 95, which doubles as the town's main drag, are greeted by a huge American flag flying from a 150-foot pole.

But the Pentagon says moving the depot's storage and recycling functions to the Tooele Army Depot in Utah would cut duplication and save money.

Supporters of the Hawthorne depot say the BRAC recommendation grossly underestimates the facility's economic impact on the town and neglects cleanup costs that would total more than \$400 million. They also say it fails to take into account the facility's superior ability to store and ship ammunition, and to decontaminate and recycle military explosives for use by the mining and construction industries.

"All we want is a fair shake and the true numbers presented," Stroud said.

The depot commander, Lt. Col. Johnny Summers, warns that Congress upheld 85 percent of recommendations in earlier rounds of base closures.

"It's not good odds, but we're cautiously optimistic," Summers said.

Buster Pringle, right, and Bucky Cuzick, ride their bikes Friday, May 20, 2005, in Hawthorne, Nev. The small town, about 130 miles south of Reno, calls itself America's Patriotic Home. Now, some residents are fearing the worst because the Pentagon wants to close the nearby Army Ammunition Depot, which accounts for nearly half of all jobs in the town of 3,800. (AP Photo/Joe Cavaretta) (Joe Cavaretta - AP)

A local committee is mounting a letter-writing campaign to newspapers and politicians, starting a Web site, sending delegates to cities that successfully fought closure recommendations and applying pressure on the state's congressional delegation.

The depot's 534 workers are nearly half of the town's 1,200-member work force, and the depot also accounts for many indirect support jobs in the community. The town's second biggest employer is the El Capitan casino.

Hawthorne has been hanging by frayed economic threads for years because of the drought-threatened fishery in scenic but shrinking Walker Lake, mine closures and layoffs at the depot. At its zenith, it employed more than 5,600 people, and more than 2,000 military personnel were stationed here.

Shelley Hartmann, executive director of the Mineral County Economic Development Authority, said Hawthorne "is not going to become a ghost town."

"With that said, we realize we face some challenges, perhaps even some hard times," she said. "It is frustrating for a small town with limited resources to deal with such a blow."

Larry Mortensen, 78, a depot supervisor for 43 years until he retired in 1991, is prepared for the worst.

"I'm not very optimistic because once the Army gets something in mind they go stupidly forward," Mortensen said.

Guard officer expects double-digit job cuts if F-16s leave

Great Falls Tribune (Montana)

May 28, 2005

The possible removal of the Montana Air National Guard's F-16 fighters here may involve fewer job losses than initially estimated, an officer says.

"We are probably talking double digits, and that can be managed through attrition and things like that," said Col. Brad Livingston, a top adviser to Adj. Gen. Randy Mosley, the state's top National Guard official.

As part of the Base Realignment and Closure process, the Pentagon recently recommended removing 15 F-16s operated by the Montana Air National Guard in Great Falls. Six of the planes would go to Iowa and Alabama, and the others would be retired.

The Pentagon said the move would eliminate 107 full-time jobs here, and a former top official with the Montana Air National Guard put the number closer to 500. The Air National Guard functions with about 300 full-time and 700 part-time jobs in Great Falls.

"None of the numbers at this particular time are accurate," Livingston said Friday. The National Guard Bureau will use a computer model to determine how many jobs will be affected, if the Pentagon recommendations become reality. Air National Guard spokesman Capt. Jeff Pepke said a final decision on operations in Great Falls is about three months away.

A nine-member commission could alter the Pentagon recommendations before presenting them to President Bush by early September.

Livingston, who joined Mosley and other Montana military brass in Washington, D.C., earlier this week, was a Montana Air National

Guard officer for many years before joining Mosley's staff in Helena. Mosley oversees both the Air National Guard and the Army National Guard in Montana.

Livingston said Montana officials who went to Washington met with Lt. Gen. Daniel James, head of the National Guard Bureau.

"We made our concerns known to the Guard Bureau that we would like the (job) numbers as soon as possible so we can tell our people," Livingston said. A new mission could do much to lessen job losses if the F-16s are removed, he said.

Montana Guard officials have joined political leaders in questioning whether moving and retiring the F-16s would be wise, but they also are trying to bring new military missions here.

SCALED-DOWN BONDS

Bangor Daily News (Maine)

28 May, 2005

The bond-rating downgrade this week from Moody's Investors Service adds to base closure and the borrowing in the state budget as a reason for reducing the amount of money the state proposes to borrow this year. This is less a reflection on the value of the projects than the reality of difficult times for state government and for the taxpayers of Maine.

Gov. Baldacci has proposed a bond package worth \$197 million and containing money for job growth, primarily through research and development, highway funding, land-purchase money, as well as funds for construction at the University of Maine and Community College systems, environmental measures, hospice care and homeland security. It is an ambitious list and one that in better times would be worth supporting. These aren't better times.

To his credit, the governor recently said he was willing to reconsider the size of the proposal after the Base Realignment and Closure Commission chose three sites in Maine to severely cut back or close. The decision by

Moody's to reduce Maine's credit rating from Aa2 to Aa3, which has been hanging over Maine for a couple of years, reinforces that inclination because the downgrading makes borrowing more expensive.

The state has an obligation to fund certain programs such as municipal drinking water infrastructure and waste-water disposal, which it has typically done through bonds. Similarly, university and community-college renovations fall under the category of either paying something now or a lot more later and need support. But neither of these items are major costs in the bond package. Instead, it is an expansive definition of R&D (\$79 million), highways and waterfront (\$38 million) and land purchases (\$50 million) that account for most of \$197 million total.

The competing visions of Maine's future budgets, modified somewhat by the BRAC announcement, are between the governor's view that Maine is in severe but temporary difficulty vs. the Republican view that it is in severe and chronic difficulty. These views matter more when deciding whether to fund permanent programs, but they also affect what the state bonds for and how much.

If both sides at least agree that money to repay bonds will be scarce for at least the next few years, the programs they fund should add revenue to the state. That would be, first and most important, the R&D bond, in which university and biomedical programs leverage \$7 for every \$1 the state invests in addition to attracting new industries to Maine and creating permanent new careers. Second is highway money that also has large federal match rates, funds Maine's share of the Waldo-Hancock Bridge and provides work at least for the length of the bond. Third is the land bond, which is desirable and especially valuable long term but less so short term.

The Legislature has the difficult job of saying no to many advocates for bond requests. It will be easier for lawmakers if they look at the condition of Maine's revenues and realize, in some cases, it has little choice.

Texarkana on front line of base-closings battle; Area's efforts to save a way of life mirror other fights around the nation

Houston Chronicle

Kim Cobb

May 28, 2005

TEXARKANA - Workers at the Red River Army Depot repair and rebuild battered combat and tactical vehicles coming out of Iraq and Afghanistan, and these days the shifts run around the clock.

They bolt, blast and mold everything from new rubber for old tank treads to armored truck cabs that look like bank vaults. Then they slap on each vehicle a Red River sticker featuring the silhouette of a soldier and these words: "Building it as if our lives depend on it - theirs do!"

But in a cost-saving move, a federal commission has put Red River and the nearby Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant on a list of proposed base closures.

Now community leaders will spend big bucks on lawyers, lobbyists and cross-country travel as they try to persuade the commission to reverse the decision. After all, almost 4,500 residents of the area work at the depot and adjacent defense industry businesses.

Will high-dollar lobbyists and tricky political footwork help? Maybe a little, maybe not at all, say the experts. But across the nation, communities like Texarkana are afraid not to try.

"This is important enough that we're going to have to break the piggy bank on this one," Bowie County Judge James Carlow said. "We'll have a raffle on everything you can think of, and the local governments will have to step up with the money."

Base-saving campaigns, in fact, are a kind of industry.

States and communities have paid more than \$10 million to military base lobbyists since 2002,

according to an examination of congressional lobbying records by Media General News Service.

Team effort promised

Texarkana has spent about \$ 120,000 a year since 2003 on the Rhodes Group, one of the big guns in the business of defending communities targeted for base closures.

"They've done some good and they can help us make some contacts within the Pentagon," Carlow said. "But what's scary is we didn't get the intelligence that told us we were on this list. They didn't get that, either, and that concerns us."

Gov. Rick Perry has promised a team effort with the state's two U.S. senators, Kay Bailey Hutchison and John Cornyn, to fight for Texas bases. Hutchison and Cornyn have met with Base Closure and Realignment Commission members and community leaders, and sent a letter last week urging the Department of Defense to release the full set of data used to determine which bases should be closed to allow communities to fairly defend themselves.

"Congress designed this process to be open and transparent, and we are troubled by the lack of information the department has released," the letter stated.

Carlow said the community is counting on help from the state in analyzing the data.

"And I hope we can get a financial commitment from the state for the expense of getting off this list," Carlow said.

Only 15 percent of the bases on the closure list in 1995 were able to negotiate their way off using congressional clout and lobbyists. It's expected to be even tougher this time.

"Moving people here, sending people from a particular base - pieces of missions are being shifted all over the country," said Tim Ford, executive director of the Association of Defense Communities. Because the proposed changes are

linked at a very basic level, he said, it will be difficult to cherry-pick bases off the list without creating ripples in the overall plan.

And if towns like Texarkana can't argue their way off the list, another industry stands ready to make money off the losers in this high-stakes game: developers and business brokers offering to convert abandoned military real estate into office space, industrial parks and housing.

The offers already are coming in to Texarkana, but Carlow isn't biting. "I am not into redevelopment right now," he said. "I am totally focused in getting off that list."

Bruce Donnelly, president of Global Direct Investment Solutions, said some people call him an ambulance chaser.

"No, I'm like someone who's invested in an ambulance service," Donnelly said. "I'm ready to help them make the best of a bad situation. My business is helping companies figure out where to set up operations."

The Pentagon has closed 17 Texas military bases since 1988 in the name of efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the post-Cold War era.

This time, the goal is to save \$ 48.8 billion over the next 20 years and make the American military more flexible in its response to terrorism and 21st-century warfare. Fifteen more Texas military installations are proposed for closure.

4 major closures

The Pentagon calls four of them major because the cost of replacing them would top \$ 100 million: Red River, Lone Star, Brooks City Base in San Antonio and the Naval Station Ingleside.

The nine-member commission has until Sept. 8 to study the recommendations, conduct public hearings and site visits and turn over a final list for President Bush to submit to Congress for approval .

The Defense Department likes to cite examples of communities that have successfully redeveloped abandoned military facilities. The Denver suburb of Aurora is the popular example, having redeveloped the former Lowery Air Force Base into high-end housing and office space.

But the primary rule of real estate applies here, as well. Location is king. And Texarkana is not Denver.

Red River Depot has been down this road before: It made the closure list in 1995, but commission members eventually were persuaded to realign the depot instead. The Army shut down part of the base, reduced the amount of work done there and cost the community 800 jobs.

Local leaders created the Red River Redevelopment Authority, and have since lured businesses to take over some of the property abandoned by the military, bringing back about half the jobs that were lost.

But those replacement businesses are mostly tied to the defense industry and the operations at the depot. If the depot shuts down, it likely will mean the death of many of them.

"The first instinct is protecting your communities," Ford said. "But at the same time, we know what every elected official knows. There is a reality to this and they have to start planning for closure. Everybody is not going to win the battle."

Texarkana is expecting members of the commission to visit the Red River Depot and Lone Star plant June 21.

The primary standard for keeping the bases open is supposed to be military value, though the impact on the surrounding community is a consideration.

And the word Texarkana officials keep using about the impact is "devastating."

Parades, banners, greeting committees and the traditional chamber of commerce pitch is the standard for the site visits. But an attorney who has worked both sides of the struggle between base-closing and base-saving warned that there's a certain fatigue that sets in for the commission members.

"When you're talking about a small town, everybody loves their base, everybody's supportive, everybody loves their job," said the attorney, who asked not to be identified. "They're going to go from city to city, base to base. After 35 days, the last thing these guys want to see is another parade and smiling faces.

"But there will be a point in time when the news is over and you have these communities faced with thousands of acres of contaminated property," he said. "That's the long story. That's what takes 10 years."

State lawmakers invited to hearing; Group had not been alerted to meeting on military base closures

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (Wisconsin)
Katherine M. Skiba
May 28, 2005

Washington - After Wisconsin lawmakers complained Friday that they had not been invited to a regional hearing examining military base closures, a federal official said they would be heard at a meeting June 7 in St. Louis.

Wisconsin's 10-member congressional delegation, joined by Gov. Jim Doyle, on Friday wrote a letter saying they were "distressed" that none of them had been invited to one of the upcoming regional meetings.

Robert J. McCreary, a spokesman for the Base Closure and Realignment Commission, later told the Journal Sentinel that the lawmakers were going to be included in the St. Louis session.

Melanie Fonder, Doyle's press secretary, said later Friday that there still had not been official word from the commission with respect to the

St. Louis meeting. The commission "has not told us that we have any time reserved" at that meeting, she said.

The Pentagon on May 13 unveiled a massive blueprint to close or realign bases from coast to coast. Hit hardest in Wisconsin was the 440th Airlift Wing, an Air Force Reserve unit, which would see its aircraft dispersed to other installations while the wing itself moved to North Carolina.

The lawmakers from Wisconsin, writing to commission chairman Anthony Principi, also requested a site visit at the 440th, which is housed at Mitchell International Airport in Milwaukee.

According to McCreary, one of the nine commissioners is scheduled to visit Wisconsin, although he did not specify a location. Commission officials "are just working out the details," he said.

Fonder said the governor, meantime, had not been informed that a commissioner would be visiting the state. "That's exactly what we want, to demonstrate to the commission how valuable the 440th is, and we await the details," she said.

The lawmakers, in their letter, expressed disappointment with the recommendation that Mitchell lose the 440th. They said they believed a full review by the commission would demonstrate the military value of the Air Reserve Station at Mitchell, which houses the 440th.

CLOSING PANEL TO TOUR HERE

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

Nicole Fuller

May 28, 2005

An independent commission will visit the region in June to tour two military facilities targeted for closure this month by the Department of Defense.

The 2005 Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission, or BRAC, plans to tour

Air Force and Army facilities at the Pittsburgh International Airport Air Reserve Station on June 21.

The Pentagon recommended that 33 major bases across the nation be closed and hundreds of others reorganized.

The closures included the Air Force Reserve 911th Airlift Wing in Moon and the Army Charles E. Kelly Support Facility in Collier. The plans also call for the 99th Regional Readiness Command in Moon to move to Fort Dix, N.J.

The Pentagon estimates that the region could lose nearly 700 military and civilian positions. The changes are to cost \$24 billion nationwide but should save \$49 billion over 20 years.

"The 2005 BRAC Commission is not going to serve as a rubber stamp," commission Chairman Anthony Principi, a former Veterans Affairs secretary, said in a statement.

"We will look at the [Defense Department] recommendations carefully and closely to see if they complied with, or substantially deviated from, the selection criteria and force structure against which all bases are to be measured," he said.

The fact-finding visits will involve briefings by base representatives and facilities tours. BRAC representatives will assess the facilities' military value as well as "economic, environmental and other effects the closure or realignment of a base would have on the surrounding community," said a news release announcing the visit.

The commission yesterday said Principi would not visit Willow Grove Naval Air Station on Tuesday, as previously planned. He is tentatively scheduled to visit it July 6 instead.

The 1,100-acre Willow Grove base outside Philadelphia, which employs 1,200, is home to the 913th Airlift Wing, which trains and equips reservists to perform aerial resupply, and also provides air logistic support for active and reserve Navy units.

A bipartisan coalition -- including Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa., Reps. Tim Murphy, R-Upper St. Clair, and Melissa Hart, R-Bradford Woods, as well as Gov. Ed Rendell and Allegheny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato, both Democrats -- vowed this month to persuade the commission to save the Pennsylvania facilities.

Maine, N.H., keep up pressure for base background data

Associated Press
May 28, 2005

Members of Congress and governors from Maine and New Hampshire kept up the pressure Friday for public release of documents that helped land northern New England bases on the Pentagon's closure list.

In a meeting with closure boss Anthony Principi, the lawmakers "in no uncertain terms demanded that the data be made available," Sen. John E. Sununu said after the closed meeting in Washington.

"It's unfair to taxpayers and national security not to have transparent data available so that people understand how decisions are being made," said Sununu, R-N.H.

New Hampshire Gov. John Lynch said Principi made no promises to provide that data, but expressed a willingness to look at information and analyses of northern New England bases provided by lawmakers.

"He said he would be fully independent in his thinking and very objective, and that his ultimate recommendations would be data-driven," Lynch said.

Principi heads the Base Closure and Realignment Commission, which must review the Pentagon's choices and send a final list to the president this fall.

The Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine, and the Defense Finance and Accounting Service Center in Limestone, Maine, are on the closure list. The Brunswick (Maine) Naval Air

Station would be stripped of planes and personnel.

Rep. Tom Allen said Principi appeared to be surprised by the costs of closing the shipyard.

As for Brunswick, also in his district, he said the Pentagon was "confused and indecisive."

"The action they took seems to recognize that the airfield is strategically important. But without an ongoing military mission it's bound to deteriorate. My feeling is that if they want to keep the airfield, then they should keep the planes," he said.

Governors and delegations from states with affected bases have been demanding documents to show how the Pentagon made its decisions. Sen. Susan Collins has threatened to subpoena the documents and Sen. Olympia Snowe has introduced a bill to force their release. Both are Maine Republicans.

Sununu said the meeting went well and he believes Principi will take a fresh look at the shipyard when commission members visit it next week.

Delegation questions base closing efficacy

Associated Press
Matthew Barakat
May 28, 2005

The drive from Crystal City to Fort Belvoir is less than 10 miles. From Crystal City to Fort Meade in Maryland is less than 30 miles.

But the military's plan to move more than 20,000 jobs out of leased office space in Northern Virginia to military bases beyond the Capital Beltway will do far worse than aggravate the commutes of some civil servants, Virginia political leaders said yesterday.

The proposed changes will disrupt the confluence of factors that draw so many of the region's best and brightest into government service and destroy the efficiency that comes from keeping so many defense jobs clustered

around the Pentagon, according to Virginia Gov. Mark Warner and members of the state's congressional delegation.

Arlington County has forged a regional reputation as a haven for smart growth and urban planning that allows people to find good jobs in which they can walk or bike to work and enjoy easy access to public transportation.

Many of those who work in Arlington will balk at a job relocation even a short distance away because the region's strong economy will give them access to other good jobs and because a move to Belvoir or Meade will dent their quality of life by forcing them to commute on clogged highways, Mr. Warner said.

"In this corridor, you've got a place where highly educated young folks like to live, work and play," Mr. Warner said. "If you break up that cluster of intellectual capital, it will really hurt the military's effectiveness."

Mr. Warner, a Democrat, U.S. Sens. George Allen and John W. Warner, both Republicans, and Rep. James P. Moran, a Democrat, spoke to reporters after sitting in on a meeting between local military leaders and the Base Realignment And Closure Commission (BRAC), which is reviewing the military's recommendations to close dozens of bases and consolidate other operations nationwide.

Northern Virginia, home to many military, civilian defense and contractor jobs, has been slated for some of the most radical changes in the nation.

The Defense Department estimates that its proposals would move 23,000 jobs out of leased office space in Arlington County and Alexandria.

Many of those jobs would be moved to Fort Belvoir in southern Fairfax County.

Fort Belvoir estimates that the BRAC recommendations will add 18,000 jobs there.

The military has said it wants to get out of the leased office space primarily because of new security requirements.

But Mr. Allen said the discussions yesterday seemed to revolve more around cost-savings and the efficiency of consolidating operations.

"Our view is that it will cost more" to relocate these jobs than to keep them in place, Mr. Allen said.

Young explains BRAC vote

Associated Press

Fairbanks Daily News, Alaska

May 28, 2005

Rep. Don Young voted against an amendment to slow down a military base review because it's the wrong way to defend Eielson Air Force Base near Fairbanks from proposed cuts, the Alaska Republican said Thursday.

Trying to stop the process is not realistic, Young told the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner on Thursday after a House of Representatives floor session.

Instead, efforts should be directed at modifying the Pentagon's recommendations.

"We have to express the need to keep that base there," Young said.

His comments came the same day members of the U.S. Senate and 14 governors sent separate letters of protest about the Base Realignment and Closure plan. Senators scrambling to head off proposed military base closings in their states are pressing Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld to release all data used to decide which facilities to shut down.

Nearly two dozen senators signed the letter, saying they need to know how the Pentagon ranked the bases and determined their military value.

Governors from 14 states, including Alaska Gov. Frank Murkowski, sent a similar letter to

President Bush asking him to direct Rumsfeld to release all the information and request a delay in the base closing process until the data is made available and there has been time for review.

Federal statute, said the governors, requires the information be delivered no more than seven days after the list of proposed closings is released. The list was made public May 13.

The Pentagon proposed moving Eielson's fighter aircraft and most of its approximately 3,000 Air Force personnel.

Alaska Sens. Ted Stevens and Lisa Murkowski have signed onto a bill in the Senate that would delay the BRAC process until most troops have returned from Iraq, overseas bases have been reworked and an overall military strategy has been finished.

Young voted Wednesday night against an identical amendment to the House's annual authorization bill for defense spending.

"I think it's the wrong way to go," Young said. Most members of the House agreed with him. The amendment failed 316-112.

Stevens and Murkowski have both said that getting Senate approval of the BRAC-delaying bill will be difficult. They said, however, it was important to send a message of disapproval to the Pentagon.

That sentiment did not prevail in the House. Young noted that many House members whose bases face possible closures and reductions voted for the process to continue.

"I wasn't the only one," he said.

Young said the BRAC commission can be persuaded to modify the Pentagon proposal.

"The commission has said there is going to be changes," he said.

Stevens has suggested the economic damage from the removal of Eielson's Air Force personnel might be overstated by the Pentagon

report. If, as Air Force officials have suggested, the base becomes a major training site for crews from around the country, it will continue to make a significant economic contribution.

Young also saw hope in the situation.

"It could have been closed," he said. "This is a realignment."

Rell leans toward signing sub base bill

Associated Press
Noreen Gillespie
May 28, 2005

A fast-tracked bill that would invest \$10 million to save the U.S. Naval Submarine Base in Groton from a Pentagon shutdown list is close to winning the support of Gov. M. Jodi Rell.

Rell said Friday she still needs to look over the final language of the legislation, but thinks she will sign it.

"I have every intention of supporting it," she said.

The \$10 million in state bond money would go toward infrastructure improvements at the base to bolster its military value. A possible project could be dredging the Thames River so that Trident submarines could be homeported at the base. Energy conservation measures, such as fuel cells, are also on the table.

The money would not be allotted if the base closed.

Lawmakers said they wanted to send a message to Washington that Connecticut was committed to keeping the base and supporting it. They also may include \$40 million in general obligation bonds in the state budget to help the base and the nearby Electric Boat shipyard, maker of the nuclear submarines.

"This first \$10 million is to say 'Wake up. We're ready to help. We'll partner with the federal government,'" said Sen. Cathy Cook, R-Mystic.

Members of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission will tour the base next week and meet with state officials. On July 6, the commission will hold a public hearing in Boston on the proposed closing. The Pentagon has said it wants to move the Groton subs to Kings Bay, Georgia.

The state is planning to send a three-member team to Kings Bay to study whether that community has enough housing, transportation and other services to handle the influx of people who would move there.

Rell said that the state has begun receiving some of the 1,000 pages of documents that lays out the U.S. Navy's case for closing the Groton base. She has asked the state's Congressional delegation to pressure officials to get the information to them faster.

"We cannot make a case unless we have the documentation to back it up," Rell said.

Missouri senators want more time to review base closure data

Associated Press
Sam Hananel
May 28, 2005

Missouri's senators are asking for more time to review data the Pentagon used to make its base closure decisions, even if it means delaying hearings set to begin early next month.

Republicans Kit Bond and Jim Talent - and more than a dozen other senators - signed a letter Friday to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and the Base Closure and Realignment Commission, saying they need at least two weeks to study any newly released data before public hearings or site visits take place.

"If this process is to have any credibility, it is critical that communities have time to prepare their case," said Sen. Kit Bond, R-Mo. "The Pentagon has had two years to review this data. We are simply asking for two weeks."

The request comes a day after the Defense Department said it was in the process of releasing additional material - demanded by many of the same senators - that was previously classified. Missouri lawmakers are still waiting for the Pentagon to release the additional data they requested.

The commission has already scheduled a hearing in St. Louis on June 7, but that would have to be pushed back if the commission grants the lawmakers' request.

None of Missouri's major bases were on the closure list, but the state stands to lose nearly 3,700 jobs from plans to close or consolidate other offices and installations.

Proposed cuts include the Missouri Air National Guard's 131st Fighter Wing in St. Louis, the Army Human Resources Command in Overland, and two Defense Finance and Accounting Service offices in Kansas City and St. Louis.

A commission member visited the human resources command and the state's DFAS offices earlier this week.

Base closure panel member reviews Idaho base

Associated Press
Christopher Smith
May 28, 2005

Although the Pentagon wants to move dozens of aircraft and hundreds of jobs away from Idaho's largest military installation, Defense Department officials have told an independent review panel that Mountain Home Air Force Base is a prime candidate to host future weapons systems.

Base Realignment and Closure Commissioner James Hansen, a former Utah Republican congressman, spent several hours Friday touring the southwestern Idaho base and adjacent training range in preparation for a June 6 hearing in Salt Lake City. At the hearing, Idaho officials will try to persuade the panel to reconsider the Pentagon's plan to cut at least 569 jobs and

transfer 36 fighter jets from the home of the 366th Fighter Wing east of Boise.

"We would characterize (Friday's) meeting as beneficial to both the Air Force base and the BRAC commission," said 366th Commander Col. Charles Shugg. "We feel Mountain Home is a tremendous military asset and we will continue to train hard and provide air dominance whenever and wherever needed by our nation."

In response to questions Hansen asked about Mountain Home's realignment during a BRAC hearing last week in Washington, D.C., Air Force officials said they want to transfer older F-16 and F-15C jets off the Idaho base so that the flight line is strictly F-15E Strike Eagle jets, rather than a mix of different aircraft.

The Air Force wants to "go to a more homogeneous mix at Mountain Home to take advantage of the great training areas there and the relative lack of encroachment," said Maj. Gen. Gary Heckman of the Air Force's plans and programs department. "We think there is room to grow there and I think it'll be an excellent candidate for future weapons systems."

Idaho's congressional delegation has said they hope Mountain Home will be in the running for hosting a future wing of F-35 Joint Strike Fighters, the Air Force's new multi-role plane that is scheduled for its first test flight in August 2006.

But Hansen said he is worried about flight restrictions on the Air Force's Saylor Creek Training range 25 miles from Mountain Home due to wilderness protection and endangered species habitat, including the Bruneau hot springsnail, which is only found in thermal springs along a five-mile section of the Bruneau River in the high desert of southwestern Idaho within the range's airspace.

"You feel that's a great training range when they're limited on when they can fly because of the slimy slug in the river?" Hansen asked Heckman. "I've had more complaints from pilots on Mountain Home than anything in my years in Congress."

Heckman told Hansen the Air Force had not found any indication that environmental considerations were restricting access to the 100,000-acre training range but "it's certainly something we can explore during these hearings," he said. "I hadn't bumped into slimy slugs."

In spite of Hansen's concerns over Mountain Home's training range, his visit to Idaho should be seen as a good sign for possibly reducing the hit the base will take under the realignment plan, said Christopher Hellman, a base closure analyst with the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation in Washington.

"This is a case where it is better to be visited by the grim reaper than not," he said. "The commission is going to do 15 hearings and only 50 or 60 site visits and that barely covers the major closures and realignments, so the fact he came to Idaho is an indication the commission wants to hear the other side present their case."

The BRAC commission has until Sept. 8 to recommend to President Bush whether he should adopt or modify the closure and realignment plans in the Pentagon's report.

Diverging views emerge on base closings in Michigan

Associated Press
Ken Thomas
May 28, 2005

In Michigan, responding to the latest round of military base closings can be summed up this way: contest the Defense Department's plan or keep a low profile and count your blessings.

Republican Rep. Joe Schwarz vows to fight to save an installation from closing in his hometown of Battle Creek. He wants to meet with members of the commission deciding the fate of his base and argues the hard work could save hundreds of jobs in the coming decade.

But Rep. Candice Miller, a fellow Republican from Macomb County's Harrison Township,

says bringing members of the commission to Michigan could open up a Pandora's box of problems - potentially costing the state jobs and threatening the long-term viability of Selfridge Air National Guard base in her district.

"At some point in this process, we need to be happy we were spared the fate of those in other states facing the loss of thousands of jobs, declare victory and look to the future," Miller wrote Gov. Jennifer Granholm in a letter Thursday.

Both members of Congress want to protect the military presence in their districts, but Schwarz and Miller represent diverging strategies on how best to react to the Base Closure and Realignment Commission, or BRAC.

A Pentagon plan announced two weeks ago said Michigan would gain 125 jobs, helped by an expansion of the Detroit Arsenal and additions at Selfridge. But the proposal outlined two significant closings: the W.K. Kellogg Airport Air Guard Station in Battle Creek and the U.S. Army Garrison at Selfridge, near Detroit.

Michigan's delegation largely expressed relief and support for the plan because it avoided shutting down major installations and was expected to provide a slight boost in jobs at a time when the state's unemployment rate ranks among the nation's highest.

But Granholm and some members of Congress want to protect the two installations targeted for closing and are concerned Michigan advocates may not get the chance to present their cases to commissioners at regional public hearings in St. Louis or Buffalo next month.

They also want Anthony Principi, the BRAC commission chairman, to have a commission member visit Michigan, a move that could build the case for the facilities' solvency.

Closing Kellogg Field would cost 274 jobs and the loss of the garrison would mean 300 fewer jobs, along with various spinoff jobs and economic consequences in both locations.

"From the governor's perspective, we're going to fight for every job as long as we can fight for them, and those are jobs in Battle Creek and Macomb County," said John Burchett, Granholm's top aide in Washington. "It makes no sense to me to just give up."

Schwarz opposes the shifting of A-10 aircraft at Kellogg to Selfridge and contends the plan deals a harsh blow to units of the state's Air National Guard.

He also has pored over military documents with his staff and contends the proposed changes ultimately would lead to a loss of about 1,000 jobs by 2011 and offer little savings for the military.

"The more we delve into the rationale used for the realignment between Battle Creek and Selfridge, the more an absolute airtight case can be made that this doesn't benefit Michigan in any way," Schwarz said.

Miller, however, worries that seeking an alteration to the list could harm Michigan military facilities this year or in future base closing rounds. She notes that the bulk of the state's military-related jobs - at Selfridge, the Hart-Dole-Inouye Federal Center in Battle Creek, and the Detroit Arsenal - were maintained or enhanced.

While disappointed the garrison is slated for closing, she said she remains hopeful the commissary and base exchange at Selfridge will remain open.

When members of the delegation circulated a letter this week urging a BRAC commissioner to visit Michigan and give the state an audience with the panel, she declined to sign it. That approach could jeopardize Selfridge and other military installations down the road, she said.

"We're not on the list now. Goodness, we don't want to give them an opening to put us on the list," Miller said. "We survived."

"It's not perfect, but go to Connecticut where they just lost 8,900 jobs," she said.

Burchett says adding a new facility to the list would require support from seven of nine commissioners. During a closed-door session with gubernatorial aides shortly before the release of the list, Principi said he was "disinclined" to add facilities, Burchett said.

The commission will consider the plan this summer and send their recommendations to the White House in September. The closures and downsizings would begin in 2006, but the commission stresses it wants to hear from the states.

"We are here to listen," Principi said Thursday. "The commission's purpose in holding regional hearings over the next few months is to receive community input from affected stakeholders."

"There will be multiple opportunities for affected states and communities to influence the process and make their voices heard," he said.

Retired admiral visits unit on closure list

Birmingham News (Alabama)

Stan Bailey

May 28, 2005

MONTGOMERY - A federal panel reviewing military base closings and realignments will call on the Defense Department to justify its proposal to move the Air Force's information technology center in Montgomery to Massachusetts, a member of the panel said Thursday.

Harold Gehman, a retired admiral, toured the Operations and Sustainment Systems Group at Maxwell Air Force Base's Gunter Annex.

The Base Closure and Realignment Commission, of which Gehman is a member, will look primarily at the military value of the Pentagon's plan to move the unit to Hanscom AFB, Mass.

Montgomery would lose more than 1,200 jobs with an annual payroll of at least \$60 million if

the move becomes final, local officials have said.

Gehman had lunch in Gov. Bob Riley's office with Alabama Republican U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions, Montgomery Mayor Bobby Bright and others.

Sessions said Gehman's influence will be important. "I believe Admiral Gehman is a heavyweight, and if he could be convinced that we have a good case, I believe he would share that with the other commissioners," Session said.

The BRAC commission's regional hearing is in Atlanta June 30.

Opinions/ Editorials

A Military Base That the East End Needs

Tim Bishop, Congressman, 1st District,

Southampton, NY

May 29, 2005

I disagree with Lawrence Korb's view that the Pentagon's decision to keep the 106th Air Rescue Wing at Francis S. Gabreski Airport is "not in the best interests of the country or the state" ("Off Base," Op-Ed, May 22).

Mr. Korb does not mention that this is the first time in history the Pentagon has recommended closing bases during wartime. Still, the Pentagon recognizes that maintaining the 106th's unique pararescue training mission is more valuable than the savings to be gained from closing the base.

The 106th - as one of only three pararescue bases in the nation, and the only one on the Eastern Seaboard - serves a dual mission for New Yorkers: terrorism preparedness and responding to emergencies.

Mr. Korb views Gabreski as prime real estate for development. Those of us living on the East End understand Gabreski's value, particularly the 1,200 employees who depend on those jobs. We are very proud of our jobs, our heroes and our base.

Additional Notes

N/A