Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY BIRD

June 1, 2005

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National News Articles

Senate Committee Threatens to Subpoena Base-Closing Justifications
CQ Today
John M. Donnelly
May 31, 2005

Leaders of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee are threatening to resort to a subpoena unless Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld promptly turns over documents detailing the basis for proposals to close or consolidate hundreds of military bases.

Members of Congress from states with bases recommended for closure say the Pentagon has failed to meet a deadline for providing the detailed information to the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) commission and Congress.

Susan Collins, R-Maine, and Joseph I. Lieberman, D-Conn., the chairman and ranking member, respectively, of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, escalated the war of words with their letter to Rumsfeld on Friday.

Collins and Lieberman restated the requirement of the 1990 Base Realignment and Closure Commission law as amended that the secretary provide to Congress "all information used by the secretary to prepare the recommendations" no later than seven days after the Pentagon sent its recommendations to the BRAC commission on May 13.

"Should the department continue to violate its statutory obligation and refuse to produce all such information immediately and completely," the two senators warned, the committee will launch an investigation into the Pentagon's "decision-making process" in search of "potential improprieties."

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

The list of military facilities targeted by the Pentagon includes not only those slated for closures but also bases to be downsized and others to be bolstered. The commission can add or subtract bases. The president must then approve the commission's list. The list becomes law by year's end unless Congress passes a joint resolution of disapproval.

Both Collins and Lieberman have a direct interest in the process. The biggest single closing recommended by the Pentagon was the Naval Submarine Base New London at Groton, Conn., with 8,048 jobs at stake. The third largest cut would come at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine, affecting 4,233 jobs.

Several members of the BRAC were scheduled to visit the Submarine Base New London on Tuesday and Portsmouth Naval Shipyard tomorrow.

The senators said they "expect" the documentation from the Pentagon to include not only the kinds of reports summarizing the decisions that have already been made available and the classified force-structure plan. They also expect that internal Pentagon documents such as e-mails will be included, records that have sparked clashes between the Bush administration and Congress previously, as with the vice president's energy task force and the Boeing Co. air tanker e-mails.

Moreover, the senators demanded to see documents not only showing how the department met the criteria set forth in the BRAC law, such as establishing the military value of a base, but also any records that show "the influence or consideration of factors not authorized in the act."

The status of the Pentagon records was described in a May 27 letter from Acting Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England to the

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Senate Armed Services Committee, according to Pentagon spokesman Glenn Flood.

By Tuesday, the BRAC commission, members of Congress and their staff with Secret clearances will have access to the entire digital BRAC database in secure reading rooms in Crystal City, Flood said. A similar room will be opened up on Capitol Hill.

June 4 is the Pentagon's goal for completing the security review necessary to make portions publicly available via the BRAC commission, it said.

Lawmakers from states hit by the BRAC recommendations are crying foul about the lack of data.

For instance, the Georgia congressional delegation wrote President Bush on May 26 reminding him of the statutory requirement for the information and urging him to delay the BRAC process until all information has been confirmed as received and reviewed.

On May 26, prior to final passage of a bill funding Veterans Affairs and military construction programs (HR 2528), the House included an amendment reiterating the statutory requirement for disclosure.

BRAC panel, lawmakers visit New England bases

Congress Daily
Megan Scully
May 31, 2005

The Maine and Connecticut congressional delegations are taking the fight to save major military bases in their states to their home turf Tuesday and Wednesday when members of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission head to New England to evaluate the Pentagon's recommendations to shutter the installations.

The site visits are likely the only time commissioners will tour the massive facilities before submitting their recommendations to the White House Sept. 8.

Connecticut's New London Submarine Base and Maine's Portsmouth Naval Shipyard are among the largest installations to make Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's base-closure list. With about 15,000 military and civilian jobs at stake in both states, the site visits have become a top priority for lawmakers in Connecticut, Maine and New Hampshire, which would be affected by the closure of the Portsmouth shipyard.

Congressional delegations and state lawmakers will accompany commissioners on part of the base tours and then meet with them privately, said spokesmen for the delegations.

The visits are intended to fill in the details of base missions and the potential impact of the Defense Department's recommendations on the military and local community. This is the only on-site look at the installations, making the base tour a particularly crucial piece of the BRAC process.

"Obviously, it's very beneficial [and] very important if it's done right," said Paul Hirsch, a BRAC lobbyist for Madison Government Affairs and a staffer on the 1991 commission. "It can be the kiss of death if they don't do it right."

Aside from the site visit, the BRAC commission will hold a regional public hearing July 6 in Boston for New London, Portsmouth and other area bases.

BRAC Chairman Anthony Principi will visit both sites, while retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd Newton, former Pentagon official Philip Coyle, and former Rep. James Bilbray, D-Nev., also will tour the New London base. Only Newton will accompany Principi to Portsmouth, the smaller of the two installations. Newton is from Connecticut, potentially giving the sub base a hometown advocate on the commission.

Several commissioners appear concerned about the Pentagon's decision to close the Connecticut base. During public hearings earlier this month,

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Principi and others quizzed Navy officials on what alternatives they considered when weighing whether to close the facility, a decision that would affect 8,500 jobs at the base. They also questioned how much closing the base would cost and how much it would save. Principi said he was particularly concerned that plans to move thousands of jobs to Kings Bay Submarine Base, Ga., would flood the community and overwhelm its already-stressed infrastructure.

4 Members Of US Panel Visit Otis, Hear Pleas

Boston Globe
Matt Viser
June 1, 2005

BOURNE -- Four of the nine members on the military base closing commission toured Otis Air National Guard Base yesterday and emerged saying that they were impressed with the facility, but that that did not mean it would be taken off the closure list.

"This base has a long, proud history, and they're fulfilling an important mission," commission chairman Anthony J. Principi, said during a brief press conference yesterday. In the next breath, he added: "Quite honestly a few of them have to be closed. There's excess capacity."

On May 13, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld recommended closing 33 major bases to save $48.8 billion over the next 20 years.

The Pentagon estimates that closing Otis and combining its mission with facilities in Florida and New Jersey would save $336.1 million.

Closing Otis would also eliminate 505 direct jobs and 322 indirect jobs, according to Pentagon estimates. Commission members said yesterday they would take local economic impact into account, but that it would not be a primary consideration.

A group of local officials, led by Governor Mitt Romney and Senator Edward M. Kennedy, met with the commissioners on the base yesterday morning and gave presentations to make the argument that the base is worth saving.

"This was a very, very solid interaction," Kennedy said in an interview.

Primary in the argument for keeping Otis open is that the base supports the Coast Guard and an Army National Guard post, all of which make up the 22,000-acre Massachusetts Military Reservation in Sandwich, Mashpee, Falmouth, and Bourne.

Proponents have argued that if Otis closed, the others could soon follow.

One commissioner, James H. Bilbray, said in an interview that this was one of the most persuasive arguments he had heard for keeping the base open. "It's like dominos," he said. "If one falls, they're all going to fall, and we will all take that into consideration."

He added, "I think there's some things to be optimistic about with Otis, but I'm only one of the nine."

Earlier at the press conference, Principi insisted that no decisions have been made, "and none of us can predict what's going to be the outcome for Otis or any other facility around the country. Other than the fact that we will be open, transparent, comprehensive, and we will not politicize this process."

Otis's fighter wing monitors terrorist activity and was the first unit to respond during the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

The nine-member Base Closure and Realignment Commission is evaluating Rumsfeld's proposal before making a recommendation by Sept. 8 to President Bush. The independent commission -- made up of retired military officers, Pentagon officials, and lawmakers -- can add a base to the list with seven votes or remove a base with five votes, but the president must vote the entire list up or down by November.

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The commissioners also visited the New London Naval Submarine Base in Groton, Conn., yesterday. Today, they plan to visit Portsmouth Naval Shipyard.

Costs of Shutting Down Base Are Focus of Groton Tour

New York Times (New York, NY)
William Yardley
June 1, 2005

GROTON, Conn., May 31 - Gov. M. Jodi Rell and members of Connecticut's Congressional delegation, who are fighting to keep open the historic Naval submarine base here, expressed cautious optimism after touring the facility Tuesday with members of an independent federal commission considering whether the base should be closed.

Four of the nine members of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, including its chairman, Anthony J. Principi, visited the base and asked questions of Navy staff members. The Pentagon has proposed closing the base as part of a nationwide restructuring that would include shutting down 33 major bases. The commission, known as BRAC, will recommend to President Bush by Sept. 8 whether to adopt the Pentagon plan.

On Tuesday, state and federal elected officials along for the tour and briefing said the commissioners questioned Navy officials on issues ranging from the cost of relocating the base's training school, to quality of life in the area for base employees and their families, to the importance of the close relationship between the base and a large private contractor, Electric Boat, which builds and repairs submarines just south of the base on the Thames River.

"Their questions are very much: 'Are we saving money? Are we actually going to produce the results that the Department of Defense claims? Would we in fact be better off if we did something else?' " Mrs. Rell told reporters afterward. "And again, those kinds of questions, while the Navy has to give data and a factual response, I thought boded very well for us."

The possible base closing has brought together political leaders in both parties. Mrs. Rell, a Republican, joined Senator Christopher J. Dodd, a Democrat, and Representative Rob Simmons, a Republican whose district includes the base, on the tour. Representative John Larson, a Democrat from East Hartford, also attended.

The BRAC commissioners did not speak to reporters Tuesday, but were expected to hold a news conference Wednesday morning after hearing again from state officials and members of a coalition fighting to keep the base open.

So far, state officials have shaped their argument around military and economic issues. They say that the Pentagon has underestimated the environmental cleanup costs of closing the base, that a closing could devastate the local economy and that the Pentagon has not properly weighed the military value of the base's proximity to Electric Boat.

Their argument expanded somewhat Tuesday, with Mr. Dodd and Mr. Simmons floating the possibility that the Navy could realign its submarine operations at Groton, rather than close them entirely. Mr. Dodd said commissioners expressed interest in the base's relationship with Electric Boat.

"There's real concern about breaking up the synergy," he said. Mr. Dodd also said that he asked Navy officials Tuesday what it would cost to relocate the base's training school alone and that he was given a rough estimate of $700 million to $750 million. "I think the commission was frankly sort of startled at that number," he said.

The officials said some commission members echoed their frustration that the Pentagon had yet to release a more detailed explanation of its decision-making process. Mrs. Rell said she expected the information to become available as soon as Tuesday evening.

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The Pentagon has said closing the base would take 8,460 military jobs out of southeast Connecticut, the largest job loss of the 33 major bases it has proposed closing. The base's personnel and 18 submarines likely would be transferred to Naval bases in Kings Bay, Ga., and Norfolk, Va. The Pentagon says the closing would save $1.6 billion over 20 years.

BRAC documents being reviewed

The Associated Press
June 1, 2005

Military aides for New Mexico's U.S. senators and Rep. Tom Udall were analyzing information released by the Pentagon to back up its recommendations to close military installations across the nation, including Cannon Air Force Base near Clovis.

Glen Loveland, spokesman for Udall, D-N.M., said he didn't expect comments on the documents Tuesday. Congress is in recess until June 6.

Sens. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., and Pete Domenici, R-N.M., were among lawmakers who urged President Bush to make sure information was released associated with the base closure list.

Lawmakers hope to use analyses to persuade the independent commission reviewing the closings to remove certain installations from the hit list.

The state is fighting the decision to close Cannon, and more than $800,000 has been pledged to the battle.

Randy Harris of Clovis' Committee of Fifty said Cannon supporters had not had an opportunity to look at the newly released material in detail and weren't sure the documents they have represent everything there is.

Officials in areas affected by the Pentagon's decisions have been uneasy about how much they'll get to see. Parts of the report are classified, and the Pentagon said lawmakers and staff with security clearances who want to see the classified information must review it at a secure location in northern Virginia.

Harris said the initial review indicates the decision to close Cannon was based more on quantitative measures than qualitative ones.

For example, he said, "there might be an airspace that was larger than what we see at Cannon, but there might be encroachment that's not quantifiable. In other words, you might have a bigger airspace but you can't use it all the time ... which does not give a true picture of the assets available for the Department of Defense and the Air Force."

New Mexico's congressional delegation has expressed frustration that the Pentagon's decision did not take into account the fact the Air Force has been working to expand the training range around Cannon, home to four F-16 fighter squadrons.

The Pentagon has estimated it would save $2.7 billion over 20 years by closing Cannon, costing the base's 2,385 military employees and 384 civilian jobs and about 2,000 more indirect jobs. The economic impact of the base has been estimated at $200 million a year - about a third of the local economy.

The release of the list May 13 is only the first step in the process.

The nine-member Base Realignment and Closure Commission appointed by President Bush will analyze the list and hold hearings before turning in a final report to the president by Sept. 8. The president may accept the entire list or refuse it. It must then go to Congress.

The commission can remove a base from the list with five votes.

Some commissioners will attend a June 24 hearing on Clovis on the proposed Cannon closure.

Closure opponents eager to make cases to BRAC panelists

The Associated Press

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Glenn Adams
June 1, 2005

Hundreds of yellow "Save our Shipyard" T-shirts were passed out to supporters of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard who hoped to make a strong impression Wednesday when four members of the base closing commission visit the base on the Maine-New Hampshire border.

Anthony Principi, chairman of the commission, was bringing three others from the nine-member panel to the nation's oldest federal shipyard to gather information. On Thursday, they planned to head up Maine's coast to the Brunswick Naval Air Station.

Maine Gov. John Baldacci said it's significant that four commissioners - two more than were expected earlier - will tour the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, which could be closed, and the Brunswick Naval Air Station, which could be scaled back sharply.

"It's our one opportunity to demonstrate to a live commissioner what we are talking about," said William McDonough, a retired Navy captain and former shipyard commander from Kittery who leads the drive to keep the Portsmouth shipyard open.

Baldacci showed off one of the T-shirts Tuesday at the Statehouse in Augusta, Maine. All told, 7,000 of the T-shirts were being distributed.

The campaign leaders said they are eager to highlight the military value of the bases and their performance records, and express their strong view that the Defense Department's estimates of the cost of the base closings are out of line.

Baldacci said a visit by commissioners to the Defense Finance and Accounting Center in Limestone, Maine, which would be shut down, could not be arranged. Baldacci said he was told that BRAC commissioners are not visiting any targeted DFAS sites.

In New Hampshire, Gov. John Lynch released a new state report on the eve of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission visit that suggested the Pentagon's analysis understated the economic effect of closing the shipyard on Maine and New Hampshire.

The report said the Pentagon looked at the Portland-South Portland-Biddeford metropolitan area - an area that does not represent the commuting patterns of the shipyard. Also, New Hampshire was left out altogether, the report said.

Of the three Maine counties - Cumberland, Sagadahoc and York - included in the DOD analysis, only one, York, had a significant number of shipyard workers.

"By spreading its analysis over this large area, and excluding the impact on New Hampshire, the Department of Defense distorts and minimizes the true economic impact on communities in the shipyard area," said George Nazer, director of the Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau of New Hampshire's Department of Employment Security.

The report says the closing would raise the unemployment rate in Maine by 0.7 percent and the unemployment rate in New Hampshire by 0.5 percent.

"We can think of no business closure in northern New England, in recent memory, that involved the direct loss of so many jobs," the report said.

The report said the yard's closure "would be not much short of an economic disaster" for many communities. It noted that job losses would account for between 5 percent and more than 11 percent of the employed residents in 12 communities in Maine and New Hampshire.

BRAC commissioners visit Groton sub base

The Associated Press
Matt Apuzzo
June 1, 2005

An independent commission considering a Pentagon recommendation to close the Groton

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submarine base spent three hours at the facility Tuesday, taking a tour and questioning military officials.

The visit was to conclude Wednesday, when up to 10,000 people were expected to line the streets to show their support for the base.

Gov. M. Jodi Rell said members of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission asked questions that signaled they understood the importance of the base.

"We spent a lot of time talking about Norfolk, Va., and Kings Bay, Ga., and how the sub base in Groton - I can say it, I'm entitled - is far superior."

The Pentagon has recommended moving personnel and submarines from Groton to existing shipyards in Norfolk and Kings Bay.

The nine-member BRAC commission is reviewing a Pentagon list of 180 bases slated for closure. Commissioners have until Sept. 8 to issue their final recommendations to President Bush.

State and congressional leaders were allowed to ask some questions on Tuesday, but their primary role was to come Wednesday, when they planned to meet directly with the commission.

In selecting which bases should be closed, commissioners must first consider the military value of each base, then may consider cost savings, the economic effect of closing the base and the environmental impact. Submarine base supporters have tried to tie the base to national security.

"I think Connecticut had a good day today," said U.S. Sen. Christopher Dodd, D-Conn. "More importantly, the country had a good day today."

Town officials and base supporters worked the phones at Town Hall all day recruiting volunteers and residents to wave flags Wednesday along Route 12, which leads to the base. Organizers said they expect about 10,000 people.

Electric Boat, a submarine maker that is one of the region's largest employers, has told employees scheduled to work Wednesday that they can go to the rally.

EB operates a number of repair facilities on the base.

"There's a real concern about breaking up that synergy," Dodd said. "If we heard that word once, we heard it 50 times."

Rell and congressional leaders said commission members were as frustrated as they were about the Pentagon being slow to release the data it used to make its recommendations.

Before commissioners make a recommendation, commission spokesman Robert J. McCreary said they will want to see any new data state and local officials have gathered since the Pentagon finished compiling its information months ago.

U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-Conn., whose district includes the base communities, said officials have been hindered in that effort because the military has been slow to release the data.

"It just shows what a flawed process this is, and we're undertaking it at a time of war," Simmons said.

Commission Chairman Anthony J. Principi toured the base Tuesday with commissioners James H. Bilbray, retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd W. Newton and Philip Coyle, McCreary said. Newton is from Connecticut.

The commissioners planned to attend a community meeting Wednesday morning and have scheduled a July 6 hearing in Boston to discuss the proposed closing.

Signs of support were already waiting when commissioners arrived Tuesday. Several stores along Route 12, including John Wenrich's auto parts business, displayed "Save The Base" signs.

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In the nearly three weeks since the Pentagon's closure list was released, Wenrich's business has fallen off 20 percent. He said the base is the life blood of the region's economy.

"Unless we want to deal cards or check coats at the casinos, this is the economy right here," he said.

He said 50 percent of the people who walk through the door come from the base and the base is "50 percent of my customers' customers."

Stephen Woodruff said 80 percent of the business at his U-Haul franchise comes from the base. Closing it would mean more business in the short term, but disaster once everyone is gone, he said.

"I'm optimistic about our chances if the BRAC commission pays attention to our arguments. I think the facts are on our side," he said.

Michigan asks BRAC commission for hearing and visit

The Associated Press
Ken Thomas
May 31, 2005

Members of Michigan's congressional delegation asked the base closing commission on Tuesday to visit their state and let them lobby for two installations scheduled to be closed.

The delegation, led by Democratic Sens. Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow, expressed concern that Michigan may not receive a visit by a member of the commission or be allowed to advocate for their installations at an upcoming regional meeting.

The W.K. Kellogg Airport Air Guard Station in Battle Creek and the U.S. Army Garrison at Selfridge Air National Guard Base in Macomb County, near Detroit, were included on a list of bases to be closed or realigned.

Levin and Stabenow and nine members of Congress said in a letter to commission chairman Anthony Principi that the two installations were among the list of 33 "major closures" included in the list.

"We believe that it is appropriate that the communities of any of these 33 facilities listed as major base closings by the DOD, upon their request, be given the opportunity to make the case for their facilities before the BRAC Commission and receive a visit from a member of the Commission," the letter said.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm's office was told last week that Michigan may not receive a visit from the commission or be allowed to attend one of the hearings because job losses at the facilities were not extensive enough.

Michigan is expected to gain 125 jobs under the proposal, including nearly 650 positions at the Detroit Arsenal in Warren.

Megan Riffle, a spokeswoman for the commission, said Michigan has received time to present its case at a hearing in St. Louis. The meeting originally was scheduled for next Tuesday, but Riffle said it would be rescheduled.

Riffle said she could not comment directly on whether a commission member would visit Michigan.

The letter was not signed by six members of the delegation. Rep. Candice Miller, a Republican whose district includes Selfridge, has said the base and the state's military presence could be threatened by actively contesting the plan.

But Rep. Joe Schwarz, a Republican who represents the Battle Creek facility, has said the plan would devastate the state's Air National Guard units and cost Michigan about 1,000 jobs by 2011.

Members of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) began visiting bases last week, and have scheduled the first regional hearings on the closings for next week.

A plan announced by Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld would close 33 major bases and

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downsize 29 others, saving an estimated $48 billion over 20 years.

Communities seen in tough fight to save U.S. bases

Reuters
David Lawder
May 31, 2005

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Reuters) - Communities facing military base closings and devastating job losses are pouring their energy into saving their facilities -- an effort that base redevelopment experts see as a losing battle.

Many communities would be better off accepting the change and getting a head start on plans to reuse their bases as business parks or housing sites, say those who worked on both sides of previous base closing rounds in the 1990s.

"There's life after base closure, but it's really hard and it takes a long time," said Hilarie Portell, spokeswoman for the Lowry Redevelopment Authority in Denver, which has been rebuilding the former Lowry Air Force Base into homes, schools and businesses for 11 years.

"You should look at it as an economic development opportunity because you really have no choice," she said.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld on May 13 proposed closing 33 major military installations and cutbacks at hundreds of others at a cost of more than 26,000 jobs.

Members of the Base Realignment and Closing Commission, which has the power to overrule the recommendations, are visiting installations and will begin a series of regional hearings on June 6.

"There will be plenty of time to work on Plan B later, but we're putting 100 percent of our effort into saving our sub base right now," said Linnea Lindstrom, executive director of the Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce in Connecticut.

The New London Submarine Base at Groton, Connecticut, is the largest single base marked for closure, with 8,460 jobs. Thousands of area residents will greet commissioners on Wednesday with American flags "to let them know what the base means to our community," Lindstrom said.

If lawmakers and city officials cannot make persuasive military arguments for keeping the base, it will stay on the closure list, said Steve Grundman, the top defense and aerospace analyst at consulting firm CRA International in Boston.

Given the war in Iraq and the Bush administration's strong determination to reshape the military, it will be difficult for the commission to overrule Rumsfeld, said Grundman, who served in the defense secretary's installations office in the 1990s.

But Connecticut "has got a chance," he added. He suggested the community argue that combining maintenance operations at the nearby General Dynamics (GD.N: Quote, Profile, Research) Electric Boat shipyard would save money and enhance an existing center of excellence in nuclear submarines.

The panel by Sept. 8 can make additions to or subtractions from Rumsfeld's list. President George W. Bush and Congress must then accept or reject it in its entirety but cannot make changes.

TWO-PRONGED ATTACK

Clovis, New Mexico, would suffer the worst economically of any city in the country, losing 4,779 jobs, or 20.5 percent of its workforce, with the proposed closure of Cannon Air Force Base, according to Pentagon data.

Clovis City Manager Joe Thomas intends to argue the Air Force ignored a planned expansion of supersonic airspace over the vast emptiness of eastern New Mexico that would enhance the base's value as a fighter training center.

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"We feel like we've got several areas to attack the decision to put it on the (closing) list, but we're not oblivious to the fact that we may have to seek redevelopment of the area," Thomas said.

He said officials from the city of 32,000 had already started contacting companies that might be interested in using the base as an air freight hub or light manufacturing center.

He said he was heartened by efforts in Lubbock, Texas, to turn Reese Air Force Base into a business and research park anchored by Texas Tech University. Lubbock lined the streets with flag-waving residents when the base commission visited in 1995, but closure still came in 1997.

LOCATION, LOCATION

Base redevelopment officials say reconstruction will come faster if the facility is blessed with an attractive location for businesses or homes, preferably in or near a major metropolitan area.

Even communities in good locations must reach consensus quickly on how to redevelop the land. When New Hampshire's Pease Air Force Base, about 50 miles (80 km) north of Boston, closed in 1991, development authority chief George Bald said he resisted pressure to quickly build retail outlet malls. He chose instead a business park, which took longer to develop but now boasts 5,000 higher-paying jobs.

But environmental problems can drag out the process. Alameda Naval Air Station in California has sensational views of San Francisco Bay but has languished for seven years as city and Navy officials wrangle over cleanup costs and land transfer.

Local News Articles

Stevens: Military ignores strategic importance of Eielson

The Associated Press (Anchorage, AK)
Dan Joling
May 31, 2005

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The visit was to conclude Wednesday, when up to 10,000 people were expected to line the streets to show their support for the base.

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"It just shows what a flawed process this is, and we're undertaking it at a time of war," Simmons said.

Commission Chairman Anthony J. Principi toured the base Tuesday with commissioners James H. Bilbray, retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd W. Newton and Philip Coyle, McCreary said. Newton is from Connecticut.

The commissioners planned to attend a community meeting Wednesday morning and have scheduled a July 6 hearing in Boston to discuss the proposed closing.

Signs of support were already waiting when commissioners arrived Tuesday. Several stores along Route 12, including John Wenrich's auto parts business, displayed "Save The Base" signs.

In the nearly three weeks since the Pentagon's closure list was released, Wenrich's business has fallen off 20 percent. He said the base is the life blood of the region's economy.

"Unless we want to deal cards or check coats at the casinos, this is the economy right here," he said.

He said 50 percent of the people who walk through the door come from the base and the base is "50 percent of my customers' customers."

Stephen Woodruff said 80 percent of the business at his U-Haul franchise comes from the base. Closing it would mean more business in the short term, but disaster once everyone is gone, he said.

"I'm optimistic about our chances if the BRAC commission pays attention to our arguments. I think the facts are on our side," he said.

North Dakotans talk strategy for base commission hearing

The Associated Press (Grand Forks, ND)
Dave Kolpack
May 31, 2005

Supporters of the Grand Forks Air Force Base are hoping that people will line the streets when three members of a federal base closing commission come here later this month.

State officials met Tuesday to plan their strategy for the June 23 hearing, which will include discussion about plans for the Grand Forks base and the National Guard's 119th Fighter Wing in Fargo.

Teresa Grimsley-Reichert, of Thompson, was one of about 30 area residents who attended the meeting here. She was a member of the life support crew at March Air Force Base in California when it went through a base closing process.

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"It's terrifying," she said. "I'm going to do anything they want me to do on the day of the hearing. If I have to hold a sign in the middle of the street, I'll do it."

John Marshall, who led two previous efforts to keep the Grand Forks base open, said a strong turnout could "turn perception into reality" with the base closure commission. A similar parade route from the airport to the city was set up in 1994, when the Grand Forks base was a candidate for closure.

"If you're not there that day," Marshall said, shaking his head, "it's a bad day for all of us."

Marijo Shide, a Larimore resident, said she's worried that people aren't taking the base situation as seriously this time because the Grand Forks unit is not on the closure list.

"This is an open invitation for people who support the military in North Dakota," Shide said. "We need them all to show up."

State officials said they won't downplay a proposed new mission involving unmanned vehicles as a "consolation prize," though they will fight to keep refueling tankers at the Grand Forks Base and fighters at the Guard base.

The state's congressional delegation, along with Gov. John Hoeven and National Guard officials, told base supporters Tuesday that plans for unmanned aerial vehicles, or UAVs, are bigger than first imagined.

"I feel better about our circumstances now than I did on BRAC Friday," said Rep. Earl Pomeroy, D-N.D., referring to the day the Pentagon proposals for base closures and realignments were announced. "The Pentagon does not view the UAV mission as some sort of consolation prize."

The Grand Forks Air Force Base would lose its air refueling tankers and most of its personnel under Pentagon recommendations released earlier this month. The Guard base would lose its fighter jets.

The Pentagon has indicated the Guard base would be involved in a new expeditionary force that would support units in other countries, as well as support the UAVs at Grand Forks.

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

Officials say they have asked for more specifics on the Pentagon's plans for Fargo and Grand Forks. Sen. Kent Conrad D-N.D., said he expects a more detailed report in the next week to 10 days.

The federal Base Closing and Realignment Commission will decide whether to accept or change the Pentagon plan. It is to send its own report to President Bush by Sept. 8.

New panel acknowledges tough odds in saving Missouri bases

The Associated Press (Jefferson City, MO)
David A. Lieb
May 31, 2005

A new commission created to protect the state's military facilities decided to seek some expert advice for what it acknowledged Tuesday was a late-starting, long-shot effort to keep 15 fighter planes and thousands of jobs in Missouri.

The state commission was created under a law enacted the same week the Pentagon released base realignment recommendations that would eliminate nearly 3,700 jobs in Missouri and close the Missouri Air National Guard's 131st Fighter Wing in St. Louis, among other things.

Meeting for the first time Tuesday, the state Military Preparedness and Enhancement Commission decided to search for a consultant who could help the panel, the governor and the state's congressional delegation make their case to reverse some of the recommendations.

A good portion of the efforts are focused on saving the 15 planes permanently assigned to the

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St. Louis fighter unit. Under the Pentagon's recommendation, the planes would be transferred to bases in Nevada and New Jersey.

Missouri's congressional delegation has suggested the move could jeopardize homeland security, because it would leave the Midwest without any F-15 Air National Guard units.

Missouri Adj. Gen. King Sidwell suggested the move could also have other negative effects. The Air Force could lose experienced pilots because Missouri's Guard members would be unlikely to follow the planes to other states, he said, and closing Guard units would lessen community ties to wars in Iraq or elsewhere.

But it is not easy to reverse the recommendations.

The independent Base Realignment and Closure Commission, which is considering the Pentagon's recommendations, can remove a facility from the list only if it finds the Pentagon deviated from the criteria used to decide which facilities should be closed or realigned. In past years, about 85 percent of installations have remained on the list.

"History would tell us that the odds are pretty slim right now," acknowledged state commission member Kent Thomas, a retired Army operations officer who is chancellor of Southwest Missouri State University-West Plains.

It was unclear Tuesday how much money the sought-after consultant would be paid, or from where that money would come.

Gov. Matt Blunt's policy adviser, Jared Craighead, said it would have made more sense for the state to hire a consultant several years ago, instead of after the Pentagon's recommendations were released.

But "we could use all the help we could get in formulating these arguments," Craighead told the commission. "It's an uphill battle. Right now, the feeling is let's do everything we can."

The commission decided to hold several regional meetings at which it would accept public testimony - June 29 in St. Louis, July 12 in Kansas City, July 13 at Whiteman Air Force Base, and July 26 at Fort Leonard Wood.

Shays continues effort to protect Groton base

The Stamford Advocate (Stamford, CT)
John Nickerson
June 1, 2005

NORWALK -- U.S. Rep. Christopher Shays will go to Groton today, where he and other Connecticut members of Congress will lobby to keep the Navy's submarine base there from closing.

If the Pentagon closes the base, there would be more pressure on Fairfield County to pay the state's bills, Shays said, because the loss of income tax and other revenue would be large.

At a press breakfast in Norwalk yesterday, the Republican congressman from Bridgeport also talked about his support for a stem cell research bill and federal funding for transportation projects. Shays said he and other members of the congressional delegation from Connecticut will have a morning meeting with four members of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission on their second day of a tour of the base and Groton.

Shays said he believes some of the bases will be taken off the closure list and that Groton may not be closed if five of the nine members of the commission can be persuaded to keep it open.

Rich Harris, spokesman for Gov. M. Jodi Rell, said he expects U.S. Sens. Joseph Lieberman and Christopher Dodd, both Democrats, and U.S. Rep. Robert Simmons, R-Stonington, to join Shays and meet the commission in Groton this morning.

The governor has thanked the delegation for taking part in the state's fight to keep the base, Harris said.

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"If this base closes, it's going to be a serious problem for the southeastern part of this state. It's going to mean that the economic engine in Connecticut is going to be even more dependent on Hartford and Fairfield counties,"

Besides Groton, Pentagon officials last month recommended closing Sgt. Libby U.S. Army Reserve Center in New Haven, Turner U.S. Army Reserve Center in Fairfield and the U.S. Army Reserve Center Maintenance Support Facility in Middletown.

The closures could affect about 8,600 jobs, nearly all in Groton. The closure plan includes moving Groton's 18 attack submarines to Norfolk, Va., and Kings Bay, Ga., and moving the submarine school to Kings Bay.

The Department of Defense last month recommended closing 33 major bases worldwide.

Shays said shutting down Groton, last threatened with closure in 1993, does not make strategic or economic sense.

"We thought this base has very high military value and we thought this was a compelling reason to keep the base open," he said. "We thought that the environmental remediation is going to be extraordinarily expensive, so there really won't be any savings. You close down the base, by law you have to clean it up."

Just after the 700-acre base was put on the list, Environmental Protection Commissioner Gina McCarthy questioned the government's $23.9 million estimate to clean it up.

"They underestimated the cleanup costs and overestimated the ease to which the Kings Bay submarine base in Georgia would be able to absorb them," Shays said.

The commission is scheduled to send its closure list to President Bush by Sept. 8.

Shifting from defense to science, Shays said he voted last week for legislation that would lift the ban on using federal funds for new embryonic stem-cell research.

Although Bush has threatened to veto the bill, it passed the House 238-194 a week ago.

"I believe that the opposition to stem-cell research is very misguided. To connect it to the so-called abortion issue, I think, is really misplaced," Shays said.

Embryonic stem-cell research should be done by the government to make sure it will be shared, so when there are breakthroughs, all may benefit, he said.

"There is a movement that seems to want to deny basic science and deprive the public of this basic science," Shays said. "I don't think if the president vetoes this bill, history will be very kind to this president."

Reviewing earlier House of Representatives business, Shays said a March transportation bill could give Stamford and Norwalk $3.5 million in road construction projects and fully authorize the Stamford Urban Transitway and the Stamford train station.

Norwalk would receive $2 million to improve Route 1 between East Avenue and Belden Avenue, and $500,000 for the Pulse Point Joint Development Intermodal Facility at the River View Mall.

Stamford would receive $1 million for the Stamford Underpass project, which will study raising and widening rail bridges.

Leaders mull possible uses for Ellsworth

The Jackson Hall Star Tribune (Rapid City, SD)
June 01, 2005

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) -- Among the options for Ellsworth Air Force Base if the Pentagon follows through on plans to shut it down is to use the base as a hub for a large aircraft-based delivery business, community leaders say.

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The base has a 13,500-foot concrete runway, 4.4 million square feet of office, warehouse and residential building space, and 5,400 acres of land.

Locally, some have speculated that Federal Express, United Parcel Service or a similar company might want the base.

Bob DeMersseman, head of the Rapid City Economic Development Partnership, said his office contacted Federal Express and other firms during the last base-closure round to gauge interest in Ellsworth facilities. They didn't have any interest at the time, but he plans to try again.

"We'll contact anybody that moves freight or people," DeMersseman said. "No stone will go unturned."

Spokesmen for both Federal Express and United Parcel Service told the Rapid City Journal it was doubtful they would need Ellsworth.

"We've been in business for a long time, and we have a mature network at this point," FedEx spokesman Ryan Furby said. "We operate out of many established airports, and we have strong relationships with those airports."

However, Furby did not completely reject the idea, saying it was too soon to tell whether Ellsworth could offer such an opportunity.

UPS spokesman Mark Giuffre said UPS would have no interest in the base.

"First and foremost is the fact that our hubs are strategically located and already well established," Giuffre said in an e-mail.

The company has regional hubs in Ontario, Calif.; Rockford, Ill.; Dallas; Louisville, Ky.; Columbia, S.C.; Philadelphia and Hartford, Conn. All are within driving distance of large population centers.

The Pentagon released its recommendations on May 13. The Base Closure and Realignment Commission is now reviewing the list, and may make changes. The list then goes to President Bush before it is sent to Congress for approval.

Members of BRAC are scheduled to visit Rapid City and Ellsworth on June 21.

If save-the-base effort fails, the first step in the Pentagon's recovery process is to offer the facility to other federal agencies, DeMersseman said.

Commission says it needs consultant to aid in efforts to protect state's military facilities.

The Associated Press (Jefferson City, MO)
David A. Lieb
June 1, 2005

Jefferson City — A new commission created to protect the state's military facilities decided to seek some expert advice for what it acknowledged Tuesday was a late-starting, long-shot effort to keep 15 fighter planes and thousands of jobs in Missouri.

The state commission was created under a law enacted the same week the Pentagon released base realignment recommendations that would eliminate nearly 3,700 jobs in Missouri and close the Missouri Air National Guard's 131st Fighter Wing in St. Louis, among other things.

Meeting for the first time Tuesday, the state Military Preparedness and Enhancement Commission decided to search for a consultant who could help the panel, the governor and the state's congressional delegation make their case to reverse some of the recommendations.

A good portion of the efforts are focused on saving the 15 planes permanently assigned to the St. Louis fighter unit. Under the Pentagon's recommendation, the planes would be transferred to bases in Nevada and New Jersey.

Missouri's congressional delegation has suggested the move could jeopardize homeland security, because it would leave the Midwest without any F-15 Air National Guard units.

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Missouri Adj. Gen. King Sidwell suggested the move could also have other negative effects.

The Air Force could lose experienced pilots because Missouri's Guard members would be unlikely to follow the planes to other states, he said, and closing Guard units would lessen community ties to wars in Iraq or elsewhere.

But it is not easy to reverse the recommendations.

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In past years, about 85 percent of installations have remained on the list.

"History would tell us that the odds are pretty slim right now," acknowledged state commission member Kent Thomas.

The retired Army operations officer is chancellor of Southwest Missouri State University-West Plains.

It was unclear Tuesday how much money the sought-after consultant would be paid, or from where that money would come.

Gov. Matt Blunt's policy adviser, Jared Craighead, said it would have made more sense for the state to hire a consultant several years ago, instead of after the Pentagon's recommendations were released.

But "we could use all the help we could get in formulating these arguments," Craighead told the commission.

"It's an uphill battle. Right now, the feeling is let's do everything we can."

ACT pleased with BRAC Commission staff visit

New Bern Sun Journal (New Bern, NC)
Sue Book
June 01,2005

The 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission staff visited MCAS and NAVAIR Cherry Point last week and those with whom they have talked are encouraged.

"They left feeling very good about the Depot," Hugh Overholt, counsel to Allies for Cherry Point's Tomorrow, told the group's executive board Tuesday.

No date has been set for a 2005 BRAC Commission member visit to the base and depot, but it must come prior to the 1 p.m. June 28 BRAC hearing for North and South Carolina at Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte.

Pope Air Force Base, which is listed to lose 4,145 military and civilian jobs in the U.S. Department of Defense recommendations, "was hit before they knew what was happening," Overholt said. BRAC Commissioner Adm. Harold W. Gehman Jr. (Ret.) visited Pope AFB May 24 in the first site visit and did not meet with civilian community leaders or state elected officials.

"I think that was his personal preference," he said, and might not reflect the sentiments of other commissioners, including Gen. James T. Hill (Ret.), who formerly headed the Army's U.S. Southern Command, and former Utah Congressman James V. Hansen, who served on the House Depot Caucus. Both Hill and Hansen are expected to visit Cherry Point.

ACT members hope for broad community participation at the June 28 hearing and plan to charter buses to fill with NAVAIR employees, families and community supporters - many of whom already have indicated they will participate. An estimated 1,800 private citizens participated in 1995 BRAC hearings, and members said they thought that helped the base and depot's cause.

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A net total of 656 civilian jobs at Cherry Point are targeted for realignment in the DoD BRAC list made public May 13, but much of the data used to support those conclusions has not been made public.

About 632 NAVAIR jobs, 38 base hospital jobs, and 10 Defense Distribution Depot jobs are among those affected in closings and realignments at North Carolina military installations that expect a 422-position net loss. Many of the Cherry Point jobs affected are expected to be moved or eliminated by attrition and retirement.

"We know pretty well where we stand at the Depot, and MCAS Cherry Point appears to be left untouched," Overholt said.

"The good news is the core work of the Depot is good to go as business as usual," he said, because the helicopter repairs done there are in high demand.

ACT has someone ready to represent NAVAIR and MCAS Cherry Point at each of the hearings across the country to defend against additional changes here and to lobby for positive realignment from elsewhere.

ACT President Jimmy Sanders stressed that the board's work has just begun with the announced list.

So have the politics, warned member Troy Smith, a principal in the law firm representing ACT. Smith encouraged members to continue pushing elected leaders for their best efforts toward a positive outcome for the state.

Politicians encouraged by BRAC Commission reaction

The Norwich Bulletin (Norwich, CT)
May 31, 2005

GROTON — State leaders were encouraged Tuesday by the reactions of members of the Base Realignment and Closure commission who toured the submarine base Tuesday afternoon.

Four commissioners spent more than three hours visiting the base Tuesday afternoon, getting information from Navy personnel about the functions and innerworkings of the site, which was placed on the preliminary list for closure earlier this month.

“They knew the right questions to ask,” said U.S. Sen. Christopher Dodd, in a news conference this evening with Gov. M. Jodi Rell and U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District. “They focused on quality of life issues.”

Rell called the commissioners questions during the tour “very insightful” and “right on target.”

The most notable reaction, the leaders noted, was the commissioners’ surprise at hearing an estimated cost of $700 million to $750 million to replace Groton’s submarine school elsewhere in the country.

“How are you going to save money by closing the sub school and shipping it off somewhere else?” Simmons asked. “To put that in Kings Bay (Ga.) or somewhere else in the country, where you’re going to have to rebuild it almost from scratch, does not make any sense and will not result in any savings.”

A Town Prepares (Again) to Lose its Air Force Base

Voice of America News (Rapid City, SD)
Jim Kent
May 31, 2005

The Defense Department's list of 62 major military bases to be closed or scaled back includes South Dakota's Ellsworth Air Force base. Located just outside Rapid City, it's one of 2 bases housing the country's B-1 bombers. South Dakota's Congressional delegation has vowed to fight Ellsworth's closure, from both a national security standpoint and because of the impact it would have on the state's economy.

The state's senior senator, Tim Johnson, is determined to do everything in his power to ensure that it is taken off the Base Realignment and Closure Commission's list of recommended

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base closures. "While we've got to be realistic about the difficulty of the challenge we have to get it off the list," he admits, "our fight to save Ellsworth isn't over by a long shot."

He and South Dakota's other senator, John Thune, have demanded to see the criteria that placed Ellsworth on the Defense Department's defunct list. And they are supporting legislation that calls for a delay in this round of base closures. Senator Johnson insists, "We shouldn't be closing bases at home during a time of war and while thousands of soldiers will be returning from overseas deployments."

He also has concerns about consolidating the nation's B-1 bomber fleet into one place, Dyess Air Force Base, in Texas. "Given the security ramifications that that has, it seems to me to be much wiser to keep our fleet divided in at least 2 places...as we currently have it."

While the military rationale for closing Ellsworth escapes him, Rapid City area Chamber of Commerce president Jim McKeon is most disturbed by the impact losing the base will have on his city. "The troops that are stationed at Ellsworth are involved in our community," he says. "Soccer coaches, bible school teachers, referees...they're just incorporated in the Rapid City / Black Hills community. Fifty-three percent of them live off base in our community. The economic impact in Rapid City and, again, throughout South Dakota, is about $278 million per year."

In a state with a population of just over 700,000, that's a huge amount of money. Surprisingly, though, local business owners are not overly concerned about the possibility that Ellsworth will close. As local realtor Dave Mortimer points out, "this is something that's been going on since the late '60s. Ellsworth is gonna be closing, gonna be closing, gonna be closing. And of course they (the Air Force) shifted out their Minuteman Missile thing and changed over there. They also changed over the B-52 program to the B-1 program and have over, you know, a 30-plus year period taken and gone from being an extremely huge financial resource and economic resource to this region, to being one of just another bunch of things."

That 'bunch' includes the city's medical and retail community, as well as the area's housing industry. It also includes restaurants like the Firehouse Brewing Company, a mainstay in downtown Rapid City for 14 years.

Owner Bob Fuchs says he expects the economic impact of Ellsworth's closure - if and when it happens - will be substantial. But he's confident that the Firehouse, and other area businesses, will survive - particularly if the federal government offers financial assistance to the community. "If we can C bring in new, attractive businesses, then we're going to be far better off in the long run and we can quit worrying about whether we're going to lose our Air Force base or whatever military installation it might be."

Even business owners new to the community are confident in their ability to survive without their Air Force base. Tracey Scott opened Gizzi's Coffee Shop last July, just down the road from Ellsworth's main gate, to give her friends in the military someplace nice to meet.

She says it seemed like a no-brainer that the business would succeed with 95% of her clientele either military personnel or their families. Now, she's not so sure. "I guess I'll know in October," she laughs ruefully. But she has no regrets. "I made awesome friendships and that can't be replaced. As far as the business side of it...well, I'm looking to see for another spot in Rapid City. I have to move. I mean, if they close, I'm gonna have to relocate."

Relocate but, like restaurateur Bob Fuchs, not give up. After all, as Senator John Thune points out, South Dakotans are known for their tenacity. "We will deal with whatever is dealt us. But, right now, we are going to do whatever we can to get this decision reversed and to get Ellsworth off the list."

No matter what the outcome, the general consensus seems to be that the Rapid City community is much better prepared to absorb the

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impact of Ellsworth's closure than it was 20 years ago.

Commission postpones base closure hearing in St. Louis

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (St. Louis, MO)
Sam Hananel
May 31, 2005

The independent commission reviewing the Pentagon's base closure proposals has agreed to delay a regional hearing in St. Louis after dozens of senators complained they needed more time to review new data justifying the plans.

Officials from a number of states, including Wisconsin, had been expected to speak at the St. Louis hearing.

Missouri Sen. Kit Bond said Tuesday that Anthony Principi, chairman of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission, had indefinitely postponed the hearing, originally set for June 7.

"This will give our community the time it needs to effectively prepare the case against the Pentagon's flawed recommendations," Bond said in a statement.

The hearing is the main forum for community leaders and lawmakers to outline concerns about any of the Defense Department's recommended cuts. No new date for the hearing has been set.

More than a dozen senators - including Bond and Sen. Jim Talent, both Missouri Republicans - sent a letter to Principi last week, saying they needed at least two weeks to study any newly released data before public hearings or site visits take place.

Under fire from Congress, the Defense Department last week had promised to give lawmakers access by Tuesday to detailed material backing its recommendations to shut down about 180 military installations across the country.

Parts of the report are classified, so the Pentagon said lawmakers and staff with security clearances who want to see the classified information must review that data at a secure location in northern Virginia.

Missouri stands to lose nearly 3,700 jobs from plans to close or consolidate military offices and installations, and elected officials have said they will mount a strong case to remove certain installations from the hit list.

The cutbacks, projected to save about $48 billion over 20 years, are part of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's plan to save money and make the military leaner to meet post-Cold War needs.

Besides Missouri, officials from Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan are also slated to present arguments at the regional hearing in St. Louis, one of 16 throughout the country.

It was not immediately known whether other regional hearings also would be delayed.

Opinions/ Editorials

Feds should clean up closed military facilities completely, quickly

The Morning Sentinel (ME)
June 1, 2005

As Maine and other states continue to fight against proposed base closures, they should also be pressuring the federal government to accept full financial responsibility for cleaning up military facilities that are shut down.

That means Congress should pass legislation guaranteeing complete and prompt environmental cleanups of military installations that are taken out of service.

The U.S. military, one of the nation's bigger polluters, has a long history of closing bases and leaving behind badly contaminated land and groundwater.

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Such environmental ruin can be devastating as states try to bounce back from base closures.

By abandoning contaminated sites after only minimal cleanup, the federal government strikes yet another blow to communities and states that lose military facilities -- especially large bases that would have great potential for redevelopment if they were not environmentally dangerous.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission is now reviewing -- and scheduled to visit -- dozens of facilities that are on the Defense Department's latest closure list.

The list includes Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, a sprawling facility that takes up all of Seavey Island at the mouth of the Piscataqua River.

Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld has also recommended that almost half the jobs at Brunswick Naval Air Station be relocated and the airplanes now based there be moved to Florida.

Shrinking Brunswick would be a severe blow to the state, but closing Portsmouth, which employs about 4,300 civilians, could be devastating.

If the president and Congress decide to close Portsmouth and other military installations without providing federal money to pay for their cleanups, many states -- Maine included -- could be ravaged.

If history is our best teacher, the government is probably not planning to pay the full cost to clean up or remove all hazardous materials from bases and other military facilities that are closed.

Today, 34 military bases that have been shut down over the past 17 years are on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund list of worst toxic waste sites -- most of them for at least 15 years. None has been completely cleaned up.

The EPA expects that many more military facilities will be added to the Superfund list after the newest round of base closings is completed.

The government's unwillingness to fully clean up former military bases has forced some communities or states to attempt the jobs themselves.

This has created a double whammy: Not only are many local jobs lost but communities or states take on enormous projects for which they do not have the money.

Maine cannot afford the cost of cleaning up Portsmouth Naval Shipyard so the site can be converted for other uses.

Members of the BRAC Commission are scheduled to visit Maine this week to tour military installations targeted for closure or reduction.

Our congressional delegation, the governor and other officials will continue their efforts to convince the commission that these facilities are too important, too efficient and in many other ways too good to lose.

Their arguments might not work, of course, and Portsmouth Naval Shipyard could be closed.

If so, Maine will have a mess on its hands that the military has created and should be required to clean up.

Additional Notes

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