

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



BIRD

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BRAC Positive for Affected Communities, Senior Official Says

American Forces Press Service

Gerry J. Gilmore

June 7, 2005

WASHINGTON— Many civilian communities emerge from military base closures or realignments often in better economic health than before, a senior DoD official noted at a defense community redevelopment association meeting here June 6.

For example, Lowry Air Force Base and Fitzsimons Army Medical Center -- two Denver-based military entities closed during previous base realignment and closure actions -- "are now national models" for installation redevelopment and economic revitalization, said Philip W. Grone, deputy undersecretary of defense for installations and environment.

The four previous BRAC actions implemented between 1988 and 1995 "produced significant results" in reducing excess DoD infrastructure, Grone said during his keynote address at the National Association of Installation Developers and Association of Defense Communities annual conference.

Those combined actions cut the military's infrastructure by about 21 percent-- including 97 major bases, Grone noted, and resulted in \$7.3 billion annual recurring savings for DoD.

Yet, DoD's current infrastructure "remains too reflective of arrangements designed for the Cold War," Grone said. And stateside and overseas military forces "are not positioned as effectively as they could be," he added, "to meet the demands of the war on extremism and future challenges the nation may face."

The U.S. military is also undergoing widespread transformation, Grone pointed out, noting that "our infrastructure and support systems must keep pace."

DoD recommendations to the 2005 BRAC commission "will, if approved, further the efforts of the department to transform the military, improve the joint utilization of our infrastructure and support assets, and convert unneeded infrastructure into combat capability by generating significant savings," Grone said.

If implemented, the department's 2005 BRAC recommendations would close just over 10 percent of today's existing military bases, Grone said. This would involve closing 33 major stateside bases, he said, as well as 29 major realignments and 775 minor closures and realignments.

Forty-nine installations "would see mission growth" if the 2005 BRAC is enacted, Grone said, with some bases gaining "significant" numbers of military and civilian personnel.

The 2005 BRAC, Grone noted, takes into account the movement of between 60,000 to 70,000 military personnel and their families from overseas postings to stateside installations.

If approved by the commission, by Congress, and the president in the fall, the 2005 BRAC will result in \$5.5 billion in annual recurring savings for DoD, Grone said.

Those projected savings "are real and they are significant," Grone said, noting the 2005 BRAC recommendations will "position the nation well for the mission needs of the 21st century."

DoD "is mindful of the effect these recommendations will have on a number of communities across the nation," Grone emphasized. The department stands ready, he said, to provide affected communities with redevelopment planning and transition assistance.

Grone said 22 federal agencies "will work together to coordinate federal programs to assist in local economic transition and to retrain the workforce" in BRAC-affected communities.

The Government Accountability Office has noted "that many of the communities that have dealt with military base closure are faring well," Grone noted. After reviewing more than 60 locations impacted by the four prior BRAC rounds, Grone said the GAO found that almost 70 percent had unemployment rates equal to or lower than the national average.

And almost 50 percent of those GAO-reviewed communities had income growth that exceeded the national average, he said.

The overall economic impact of BRAC actions on communities had been found to be "a positive one," Grone said.

National News Articles

Senate Panel Issues Subpoenas to Pentagon

The Washington Post
Lolita C. Baldor
June 7, 2005

WASHINGTON -- A Senate committee issued subpoenas to the Pentagon on Tuesday asking for more information on the decisions to shut down military installations.

Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, the chairwoman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and Sen. Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., the ranking Democrat, authorized the subpoenas for the panel.

The subpoenas were served by facsimile late Tuesday.

The legal move comes after weeks of complaints from members of Congress and state officials about the slow release of information from the Pentagon and the lack of backup material being provided. Officials have also objected that much information is classified and therefore cannot be discussed in public or at any of the upcoming hearings on the newest round of proposed base closures.

"The department knew this day was coming," Collins said. "There is absolutely no excuse for the department not to have completed the declassification process by now. That's just another example of foot dragging."

The committee also is seeking additional e-mails and internal Defense Department memos underlining the decisions.

The Pentagon will have until noon Monday to provide the information.

Pentagon officials have repeatedly said they are releasing the information as quickly as they can. They are in the process of declassifying much of the information so it can be released publicly.

The Pentagon announced its list of proposed base closings and realignments on May 13, and

hearings by the independent Base Closure and Realignment Commission are scheduled to begin in coming weeks.

2 Senators Subpoena Pentagon Over Bases

Los Angeles Times
June 8, 2005

WASHINGTON — Two U.S. senators, frustrated by Pentagon delays in releasing crucial data on military base closing decisions, issued a subpoena Tuesday to obtain additional documents.

Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, the Republican chairwoman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and Sen. Joe Lieberman of Connecticut, the committee's ranking Democrat, said the Pentagon was failing to meet its legal obligations to give communities information that could help them argue against the base closings.

The subpoena, issued under the authority of Collins' committee, gives the Pentagon until Monday to respond.

Lieberman is trying to reverse the proposed closure of the New London Submarine Base in Groton, Conn., where 8,460 jobs are at stake, while Collins is trying to save the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine, where 4,510 people work.

The two facilities are among 33 major military installations that Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld recommended for closure in May, along with cutbacks at hundreds of other bases at a cost of more than 26,000 jobs.

Lawmakers have been clamoring for nearly two weeks for detailed information on how the Pentagon evaluated each facility.

The Pentagon has said it is working to declassify documents for public consumption.

"There is no justification for a vast majority of the documents being classified," Collins told reporters.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission, which has the power to overrule the Pentagon's recommendations, already has canceled regional public hearings in St. Louis and Salt Lake City due to the lack of data.

The nine-member commission must submit changes to President Bush by Sept. 8. Bush and Congress then can accept or reject the changes in their entirety. Reversing a closure decision must be based on strategic military concerns, not possible economic damage to an area.

BRAC Commission to meeting Washington

The Associated Press
June 7, 2005

The Pentagon's Base Realignment and Closure Commission will hold a hearing in Washington next month to discuss the proposed closures of Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Bolling Air Force Base.

The Pentagon wants to merge Walter Reed with the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., and move other operations to a community hospital at Fort Belvoir, Va. Officials believe the moves would improve military medical care and save billions of dollars.

When the base closing commission announced its decisions last month, no hearing was scheduled in Washington. But the panel decided on the July 9 hearing at the urging of Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton, D-DC. Commission staff will also tour both installations on Friday and meet with neighborhood residents afterward.

"I intend to look for ways for the district to benefit, not lose, from the Walter Reed proposal, and I believe citizens can help with their testimony," Norton said. "The fight to retain Walter Reed here is the first order of business."

Mayor Anthony A. Williams also applauded the decision to hold hearings on the Washington base closings.

"The members of the commission need to hear from residents who work at Walter Reed and who live near the facility regarding how important the hospital is to them and to their neighborhood," said Williams.

BRAC changes to medicine focus on care, training, research

Air Force Print News
Staff Sgt. C. Todd Lopez
June 7, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Airmen bound for a career in the Air Force Medical Service will start off by training in a joint environment if all Base Realignment and Closure recommendations are approved.

The changes will not completely homogenize training for enlisted medical specialists, but they will allow all the services to share resources, said the chairman for the medical joint cross service group for BRAC 2005.

"The recommendation is to move all Air Force medical training out of Shepherd Air Force Base, Texas, to Fort Sam Houston, Texas," said Air Force Surgeon General Lt. Gen. (Dr.) George Peach Taylor Jr. "That's where the Army school house is."

Part of that recommendation is that Navy officials also move their enlisted medical training to San Antonio.

"Think of it as a university campus, with a Navy college, an Air Force college and an Army college for enlisted training," Dr. Taylor said. "They will be able to share resources, lab and class space, and teaching and administrative staff. They will work together, like we do in wartime."

The general also said each service, while working together to train its medics, would still maintain unique training tracks for its people.

Airmen will still train to the Air Force's unique mission.

"The challenge is to put the curriculums together, look for the common areas, and not lose the fact these are still Airmen in training," he said. "They will not be purple medics; they will be Airmen medics."

Besides its focus on military medical training facilities, the joint cross service group also looked for ways to optimize how the services provide medical care and conduct biomedical research.

All services conduct various forms of biomedical research. The general said the group felt it best to merge much of that research into joint activities.

"We recommended the creation of joint centers of excellence," the general said. "This means bringing together the best research and development, and acquisition professionals from the Army, Navy and Air Force and putting them in a location that makes the best possible sense."

The general said the group suggested the creation of six joint centers of excellence to conduct biomedical research. Those centers include an aerospace medicine center at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio; a chemical defense center at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.; a biological defense center at Fort Detrick, Md.; and center for battlefield health and trauma at Fort Sam Houston.

The group also recommended realigning the availability of medical care at facilities nationwide. This included recommendations to realign Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., and medical facilities in San Antonio.

"In the National Capitol Region, our group felt we didn't need four hospitals," the general said. "A wise investment would be to have two military hospitals in the nation's capital. Our recommendation is to have a 165-bed hospital at Fort Belvoir, Va., and create the new Walter Reed National Military Medical Center by

building up the Bethesda campus. We expect these to all be jointly staffed."

Currently, the four hospitals in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area are Walter Reed Army Medical Center, the National Naval Medical Center at Bethesda, Md., Malcolm Grow Medical Center at Andrews AFB, Md., and the DeWitt Army Community Hospital at Fort Belvoir.

The general said infrastructure already in place at the Bethesda Naval facility, and the age of infrastructure at Walter Reed make the Bethesda site an ideal location for development of a larger, more modern joint medical facility. Recommendations by other BRAC joint cross service groups will increase the size of Fort Belvoir, an already busy military community just south of Washington, D.C., making that location ideal for the region's second military hospital.

The group also recommended realignment of medical care facilities in the San Antonio region. Most notably, the group suggested inpatient care at Wilford Hall Medical Center at Lackland AFB, Texas, be moved to Brooke Army Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston.

"We suggested that instead of running another hospital at Lackland, we install a new, almost 500,000 square foot ambulatory surgery center and outpatient facility," he said. "Combined with new construction at Brooke Army Medical Center, this will rebuild the medical infrastructure in San Antonio and make it ready for the 21st century military."

Despite the suggested realignments to improve the DOD's medical infrastructure, Dr. Taylor said what matters most has not changed.

"Nothing in the basic recommendations that came out of our group changed the level of care we can provide," he said. "It is the same care, but maybe in a new location. In many places, we recommended closing inpatient care, but we wanted simply to move that care to a neighboring facility or a civilian facility."

Even in the communities outside Cannon AFB, N.M. and Ellsworth AFB, S.D., where there is a recommendation to close the entire base, plans are in the works to ensure military retirees in the area are taken care of.

"In those places where the BRAC commission recommends closing, we are working with Tricare contractors to ensure there is a good transition plan for retirees," he said.

Dr. Taylor also said that none of the recommendations of his joint cross service group are final until BRAC recommendations are approved by the president and Congress this fall.

BRAC focuses on environmental system

Air Force Print News
Master Sgt. Mitch Gettle
June 7, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Transformational Air Force environmental programs focus on an a system that identifies an installation's natural infrastructure, places value on the compatible use of shared assets, and prevents airfield encroachment through an informed planning and decision process.

The Operational Asset Management system will be applied to the Base Realignment and Closure decisions to be made later this year, with principles for BRAC implementation being developed by the secretary of defense.

"We see BRAC as another step forward in terms of maintaining our operational assets by realigning (missions) to maximize our operational efficiency," said Maureen T. Koetz, principal deputy assistant secretary of the Air Force installations, environment and logistics. "This puts us in a better position to ensure that economic, ecological and community values are taken into account when we engage in our disposition process."

Over the last 20 years, the Air Force environmental management has evolved from information gained from past BRACs.

For gaining installations, the Air Force will prepare the base infrastructure to receive the additional missions and people. For closing installations, the Air Force gives back to the community a set of assets that has been managed by the Air Force over the years, officials said.

From an environmental compliance perspective, this means the Air Force will carry on any restoration activities that are needed to maintain or continue to bring the Air Force in compliance with environmental codes, she said.

"We will use the full range of tools developed since the first BRAC rounds and balance the asset equity and cost of clean-ups," said Ms. Koetz, much like communities have been doing with Brownfield redevelopment.

Brownfields are real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. Cleaning up and reinvesting in these properties takes development pressures off of undeveloped, open land, and both improves and protects the environment.

The Air Force will satisfy environmental restoration responsibilities and balance restoration goals with economic reuse within the local communities, Ms. Koetz said.

Closed installations deemed by BRAC to no longer have a mission value for the Air Force still hold value for the local community.

"These (recommended closure installations) are in a position where, although the military value is going away, they still have an economic and environmental value to the local communities," Ms. Koetz said. "For example, both operating bases and (closure) bases have ecological value in critical habitat, open space, water resources, wet lands and community value for recreational activities.

Past BRAC rounds have led to success stories for local communities.

"Over the past decade, we've seen private sector entities become much more interested in going back and acquiring these properties for their use," Ms. Koetz said. "Overall, we have 93 percent of the past BRAC properties in reuse."

The Air Force mission needs are the focus for the environmental system and through this round of BRAC, she said.

"The key to understanding how we want to go forward in the future is that we will maintain the mission value at our enduring bases," she said. "For (any closure) bases, we will try to optimize those economic and ecological community values as we go through the disposition process."

Local News Articles

BRAC commissioner says panel sensitive to earlier losses

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Charleston, SC)
Bruce Smith
June 7, 2005

Retired Army Gen. James T. Hill of the federal base closing commission said Tuesday the panel understands the major hit Charleston suffered when its naval base and shipyard were closed a decade ago.

"We're sensitive to that," said Hill, here to tour facilities targeted in the latest round of base closings. "We recognize there is a human side to this. Everyone should understand that. We understand that and we take that role very seriously."

An estimated 20,000 jobs were lost when the base and shipyard were ordered closed in 1993. This time, the Pentagon wants to shutter the Defense Finance and Accounting Service and the South Naval Facilities Engineering Command and move those jobs elsewhere.

In all, the area stands to lose about 1,100 jobs although South Carolina as a whole should have a net gain of more than 700 jobs.

Hill met with local officials, mayors and U.S. Rep. Henry Brown, R-S.C., before touring the facilities. The commission will consider their arguments during a June 28th field hearing in Charlotte, N.C.

Hill said about 20 percent of facilities targeted by the Pentagon are taken off the closing list by the nine member commission. Asked what it would take to do that, he replied simply, "five votes."

"They're not going to listen to rhetoric. They're not going to listen to 'Poor me, we lost the navy base.' What they are going to listen to is facts and information," said North Charleston Mayor Keith Summey.

Local officials argue it would be more efficient to move jobs to Charleston than consolidate them elsewhere.

The Pentagon plans to distribute jobs from the engineering command to Jacksonville, Fla., Great Lakes, Ill., and Norfolk, Va.

Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr. called the realignment "a bad decision because it will cost the government more." Riley said the military will lose good people because many workers won't want to leave Charleston.

"The intellectual capital that will be wasted will be a huge loss to our country," he said.

The finance center is one of 13 the military wants to consolidate in three locations.

"If there is a consolidation, we feel like it could better serve the nation by consolidating here in Charleston, where the cost of living is not nearly as expensive as some of those other areas," Brown said.

He said officials didn't harp on the fact Charleston has taken a major hit.

"We didn't want to look like sour grapes," he said. "We wanted to defend our bases on the

merits ... so we didn't want to use sympathy as a way of getting our message across."

"As General Hill mentioned, there is sensitivity for those communities who have already lost jobs," Riley said. "That was something that was mentioned but it was not our major argument because we don't need that as our major argument."

HAFB's outlook is sunny — for now

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City, UT)
Leigh Dethman
June 7, 2005

LAYTON -- Utah's military installations aren't in the clear just yet.

At least not officially.

But all signs looked sunny Monday as Base Realignment and Closure commissioners toured Hill Air Force Base.

Members of Utah's congressional delegation were upbeat Monday as they spoke about the future of Hill as a major player in the nation's defense.

"And the reason I think we are in the situation we are in right now, in a very positive role as this BRAC round goes forward, is because the leadership and the work force, both civilian and military, have proven their excellence," Rep. Rob Bishop, R-Utah, said at a press conference with BRAC commissioners Monday.

Base closure commissioners, however, reminded the community that changes could still be in the works.

Under the Pentagon's realignment plan, Hill will lose missions related to 13 current military positions and 447 civilian positions. But it will pick up 291 military positions and 24 civilian positions from other bases being closed.

That leaves a net loss of 145 jobs at Hill, which has nearly 24,000 civilian and military employees.

"You can breathe easy when the president of the United States signs the legislation," said Jim Hansen, the former Utah congressman who now serves on the BRAC commission.

Whether the base will stay that way is up to the BRAC commissioners. Hansen said the state of Utah came out "very, very well" in the Pentagon's recommendations.

Hansen, Lloyd "Fig" Newton, a retired Air Force general who was at one point stationed at Hill, and Philip Coyle, the former assistant secretary of defense for test and evaluation, toured the Davis County base Monday.

Commissioners sat in briefings with top Hill staff followed by a walking tour of the base's F-16 and A-10 maintenance lines. Commissioners also visited Hill's landing gear facility and the Strategic Missile Integration Center and took short tours of the 388th and 419th Fighter Wings.

Afterward, commissioners, Bishop, Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. and Sens. Orrin Hatch and Bob Bennett retreated to lunch at a local steakhouse, courtesy of the Utah Defense Alliance. There, congressional leaders pleaded their case for Hill, Tooele Army Depot, Dugway Proving Ground and Deseret Chemical Depot, the only Utah installation targeted for closure by the Pentagon.

A planned flyover of the Utah Test and Training Range was canceled because all three BRAC commissioners already had considerable knowledge of the value of the range.

Commissioners were in Utah to decide if Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld "substantially deviated" from the BRAC criteria. If so, the commission may modify the Pentagon's list.

In an effort to consolidate the Defense Department's F-16 fleet, the Pentagon recommended 15 aging fighter jets from Hill's reserve 419th Fighter Wing be reassigned to other units in Florida and Texas.

Hill would then add at least six of the newer block 40 F-16s from Cannon Air Force Base under the Pentagon's recommendations.

The wild card in Hill's BRAC future is Cannon. If Cannon backers can manage to get the base yanked off the BRAC list, Hill's future is uncertain.

Cannon could quite possibly be removed from the list, then "come after" Hill's F-16s, said Vickie McCall, president of the Utah Defense Alliance. "We could be very vulnerable to Cannon," she said.

"We think that we need replacement aircraft at Hill," said Rick Mayfield, executive director of the Utah Defense Alliance. "We don't think they are going to take away aircraft without replacing them."

Cannon is touted as one of the nation's premier fighter bases, but ranked relatively low in the Pentagon's rankings.

The New Mexico base ranked 50th out of 154 Air Force facilities in the ability to host fighter missions. Other bases ranked considerably higher, including Hill at 14th, and another New Mexico installation, Holloman Air Force Base, at 10th. Another base slated for closure, South Dakota's Ellsworth Air Force Base, ranked 39th.

The New Mexico delegation, however, is disputing the rankings. New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson requested a meeting with Hansen to talk about keeping Cannon off the final BRAC list, the former Utah congressman said.

In response to the arguments of New Mexico and many other states, Rumsfeld recently released all data supporting his base closure and realignment recommendations to those with clearance.

Commissioners have until Sept. 8 to submit their base closure and realignment recommendations to President Bush.

McCall said she is confident Hill will not lose any more jobs in the BRAC process. The base only has room to grow.

City Attempts to Save Plant

Modesto Bee (Modesto, CA)

June 7, 2005

The city Monday sent a letter to legislators declaring that the proposed closure of the Riverbank Army Ammunition Plant "defies logic and common sense."

The plant, an 813,000-square-foot manufacturing facility for cartridge cases, mortars, projectile bodies and grenade bodies, is on a draft list for base realignment and closure. That list, developed by the Defense Department, is scheduled to be pared down in September, sparing some bases after defense officials visit the sites.

The letter, sent to state and federal lawmakers, points to the unique operation of the plant, run by a private firm, NI Industries.

The letter says the plant is a model of private-public cooperation, with 13 private-industry tenants leasing space. About 250 civilians are based there.

The plant is the only one in the world producing 155 mm "deep drawn" steel cartridge casings for the Navy's DD(X) Programs for the Advanced Gun System, according to the city. The city understands NI Industries also is working to engineer "the next generation" of cartridge cases for the Army and the Navy, the letter states.

The timing for closure seems wrong, according to the letter, while the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan continues.

BRAC commissioner to visit local facilities slated for closing

Post and Courier (Charleston, SC)

John P. McDermott

June 7, 2005

A member of the commission with the authority to change the Pentagon's proposed list of military closings is set to tour the two targeted North Charleston installations today, giving community leaders their first face-to-face opportunity to press their case about keeping the facilities open.

The one-day visit by retired Army Gen. James T. Hill to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service operation and the Naval Facilities Engineering Command's Southern Division headquarters was described by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission as "a fact-finding trip."

"While he's finding facts, we will be lobbying," said North Charleston Mayor Keith Summey.

Hill's visit, which will take him and a team of analysts first to the accounting center on the old Navy base, will include briefings and tours of each facility to help him and the eight other BRAC commissioners determine the military value of the installations.

Rep. Henry Brown is scheduled to join Hill at the finance center in the morning before flying back to Washington, D.C., said spokeswoman Sharon Axson. Brown and Hill also are scheduled to appear at a "media availability" at the Embassy Suites Convention Center at 12:15 p.m. It was unclear whether Hill would make any other public appearances.

Summey said he plans to have a "working lunch" with Hill at a North Charleston hotel before accompanying him to NavFac's headquarters on Eagle Drive about 1:30 p.m.

Representatives of the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce also will be "tagging along" on Hill's visit in hopes of bending his ear, spokeswoman Jonna Palmer said Monday. "We're hoping we're going to get some time with him, but we're not sure," she said. "The schedule is pretty much in flux." NavFac's commanding officer held "a dry run" Monday of his presentation with three military analysts who work for him to help prepare for any questions

the commissioner might have during his two-hour visit, said spokesman Jim Beltz.

Last month, the Pentagon proposed closing NavFac's Southern Division and transferring nearly all of the 543 jobs, most of them held by civilian workers, to Florida, Illinois and Virginia. The accounting service center, a federal payroll processor that employs 368 civilians, also was placed on the chopping block.

The only other South Carolina installation that is poised to lose military jobs in this round of closings is the Charleston Naval Weapons Station. The Pentagon is recommending the management of utilities, maintenance and other infrastructure on the 17,000-acre property be shifted to Charleston Air Force Base, a move that would eliminate 264 positions.

Hill won't tour the Weapons Station because the BRAC panel is limiting its visits to installations that stand to lose at least 300 civilian jobs or 400 military and civilian positions.

Ideally, Summey said, he would like to see NavFac and the finance center pried off the list. "I think you can make an argument for both," he said.

NavFac, an established headquarters unit that oversees military construction projects in 26 states, "may be (the) one where we have the best chance" of persuading the commissioners to remove it from the list, Summey said. The odds of keeping the finance jobs are slimmer because the 10-year-old payroll center is among 21 that the Pentagon is looking to close, he said.

Charleston Mayor Joe Riley said Monday he will not be meeting with Hill. He said he plans to make his case for saving local defense jobs June 28 in Charlotte, where the full BRAC Commission has scheduled a field hearing for affected military communities in the Carolinas and West Virginia.

The independent BRAC panel is expected to submit its list of recommendations to President Bush by September. Anthony J. Principi, chairman of the commission, said the group "is

not going to serve as a rubber stamp" for the Pentagon.

BRAC members take an up-close look at HAFB; Off the hook? The delegation, early in its tour of bases, says it's too soon to tell about final decisions

Salt Lake Tribune (Salt Lake City, UT)

Kristen Moulton

June 7, 2005

LAYTON -- Monday's tour of Hill Air Force Base gave three members of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) what they can't get from "cold pieces of paper," as one member put it.

But it's too soon to know whether the visit will keep the northern Utah base out of the crosshairs as the federal government reduces the size of the military.

Nor can one visit tell BRAC whether closures and realignments suggested by the Defense Department, which would mean a net loss of 145 jobs at Hill, should stick.

"We can't go to one installation and make that judgment," said Gen. Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton, who is retired from the Air Force. "It's too early to say."

Newton was joined by two other members of BRAC, Philip Coyle, former assistant secretary of Defense, and former Utah Congressman Jim Hansen.

In a news conference after a morning tour of Hill air base and lunch with Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr., the state's congressional delegation and members of the Utah Defense Alliance, Newton and Coyle said their conversations with Hill employees were valuable.

"It's those people who give life to our defense capabilities," said Coyle.

Sen. Orrin Hatch, who also spoke at the news conference, said Utah had been treated fairly in the recommendations.

BRAC's nine members are crisscrossing the country this month and next to tour military bases and hear from the public about the Defense Department's recommendations.

The commission's job is to ensure the Defense Department follows criteria set by Congress in recommending bases be closed or realigned.

At Hill on Monday, the three BRAC members were shown bays where large aircraft are repaired, the brake- and landing-gear facility, the F-16 line, the area where the C-130s are overhauled and the missile facility, Newton and Coyle said.

Both men were familiar with the base. Newton was once a fighter pilot stationed at Hill. Coyle had toured as a senior Defense official.

Maj. Gen. Kevin J. Sullivan, commander of the Ogden Air Logistics Center, led the tour of the base, but did not appear at the news conference later.

The Utah Defense Alliance, a group working to preserve the state's military installations, thought a tour would best highlight Hill's strengths.

The alliance has begun spending \$ 5 million allocated by the Utah Legislature to help win new jobs for Hill, president Vickie McCall said Monday.

The taxpayers' \$ 5 million will help buy equipment and train workers for four programs that would result in 688 new jobs. McCall said once those jobs are in place, the alliance likely will ask the Legislature for more money.

McCall said Hill's 388th Fighter Wing has the opportunity to become a premier unit that can attract jets and fliers transferred back to the United States as foreign U.S. bases are downsized.

"We want more aircraft and newer aircraft," she said.

BRAC, appointed in early May, has until Sept. 8 to report its findings and suggestions to President Bush. Any changes to the Defense Department's suggestions would require a vote of the full commission.

Delay releasing BRAC data causes little surprise locally

Norwich Bulletin (Norwich, CT)
Ray Hackett
June 8, 2005

The Pentagon's reluctance to release background data related to its recommendation to close the Groton submarine base hasn't dampened the hopes of many Eastern Connecticut residents local officials will overturn that decision.

"I have faith, mostly because it's so ridiculous in the first place to even think of closing it," said Paul St. Marie of Norwich, owner of Twilight Gems in the Norwichtown Mall.

Several people interviewed at the mall Tuesday said they were not surprised the Pentagon is not providing the information. They said it shows the base was targeted from the onset.

"It sounds like typical government to me," said Ruth Nash of Lisbon.

By law, the Department of Defense was required to turn over all the documents seven days after releasing its list of recommended base closings. The list was released May 13.

According to a Defense Department memo released Monday, acting Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England temporarily classified all the documents May 24 for national security reasons. Over the weekend, the Pentagon began releasing some background materials, promising more in the days to come after they are thoroughly reviewed and any sensitive information removed.

Frank Smith of Norwich, an Army veteran who once held a top secret security clearance, said he is of two minds on the subject.

"The first is, it's totally wrong," he said. "But if they're withholding it because there is a danger, then I can understand that. But I'm not in favor of them withholding it from our senators."

"I think it's just terrible," said Ted Schulz of Preston, an Army veteran of World War II. "I don't like what they're doing. This isn't why I served."

"I think it's wrong," said Irene Markalowich of Norwich. "How long have they had the base on their list? Now they're just getting serious about doing it."

The Pentagon claims closing the Groton base provides the best opportunity to reduce excess capacity at a significant savings. It has recommended transferring Groton's 18 submarines, support commands and submarine school to Kings Bay, Ga., and Norfolk, Va. Pentagon officials estimate it will cost \$670 million to completely shutter the base, resulting in a \$1.6 billion savings over 20 years. Local officials contend the Pentagon has underestimated the cost, and over-inflated the savings.

The missing supporting documents are a critical component of the state's efforts to try and convince the independent Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission the secretary of defense substantially deviated from the selection criteria. If a majority of the nine-member commission can be convinced, the commission can remove the base from the list.

"They're definitely into holding back," said Andrew Shaffer, manager of the GNC Nutrition Center at the mall. "I think what they should be doing is being honest and upfront. This is a huge blow to the economy around here, like a hydrogen bomb. They should at least give people a chance."

Connecticut will make its argument at a regional BRAC Commission hearing July 6 in Boston. Officials from Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island will also be arguing their respective cases.

"I think what we need to do is make our voices heard loud and clear that we're against closing this base," St. Marie said. "And we need to put out there all the things we don't know, like the real costs."

And most believe there is reason to hope.

"You got to have faith in something," Schulz said. "And if you don't have faith in this, what can you have faith in?"

Officials Invite Rest of BRAC to Groton Tight Schedules Make Visit Unlikely

New London Day (New London, CT)

Robert Hamilton

June 8, 2005

Gov. M. Jodi Rell and the Connecticut congressional delegation have invited the base closure commissioners who didn't visit the Naval Submarine Base in Groton last week to tour the facility, which the Pentagon has recommended be shut down.

Four of the members of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission — Chairman Anthony J. Principi and members Philip Coyle, James Bilbray and Lloyd Newton — toured the base May 31 and June 1.

"From what we observed, the visit was very constructive, providing valuable insight for Commissioners and staff into the base's profound military value," the letter states. "We therefore wish to extend an invitation to you as well, to see first-hand the extensive capabilities available at this installation."

A copy was sent to commissioners Harold W. Gehman Jr., James V. Hansen, James T. Hill, Samuel K. Skinner and Sue E. Turner.

Commission spokesman Robert J. McCreary said while he can't rule out a visit, it would be difficult because each of the commissioners have multiple base visits and regional base closure hearings on their calendar.

"The commissioners already have an extremely tight schedule," McCreary said. "If they find some room, and the opportunity presents itself, maybe ... but it would be extremely difficult to get the commissioners up there."

The governor and members of the delegation were encouraged by some of the comments from commissioners who visited — Coyle, in particular, raised questions about how the Pentagon could give Groton no credit for having piers, when he saw and walked on them.

But there's also the realization locally that it will take five of the nine commissioners to get the Groton base off the closure list, and the officials contend the quickest way to make converts is to get the commissioners here to see for themselves.

"That is the kind of information that we think it is important for all of the commissioners to have as they consider the future of this base," Rell said. "We know they have an extremely busy schedule. But given the gravity of the decision to close this base, we feel the visit is worth the time."

U.S. Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn., said the commissioners need to understand the unique setting of the base, because of its proximity to Electric Boat, which designs and builds submarines, and the Naval Undersea Warfare Center in Newport, R.I., which works on advanced submarine technology.

The region provides "one-stop shopping" for the nation's submarine needs, Dodd said, and he worries that the base realignment and closure or BRAC process could dismantle an efficient and effective system that has built up over a century.

"It's vital that we preserve its unparalleled value and synergy," he said. "Having all of the other BRAC commissioners come see it firsthand can only help us in that endeavor."

"It's imperative that the other five commissioners get the same tour and briefings" as their colleagues, said U.S. Rep. Rob

Simmons, R-2nd District. "Seeing the sub base is believing in the sub base."

The letter was also signed by U.S. Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman, D-Conn., and Reps. John B. Larson, D-1st District; Rosa DeLauro, D-3rd District; Christopher Shays, R-4th District; and Nancy Johnson, R-5th District.

**Base Closure: Mission in writing
Air Force explains Grand Forks' new mission
to BRAC commission**

Grand Forks Herald (Grand Forks, ND)
Elisa L. Rineheart
June 8, 2005

Air Force brass Tuesday sent a letter to Anthony Principi, head of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, explaining in detail Grand Forks Air Force Base's role in emerging drone missions.

The letter, signed by Gen. John Jumper, Air Force chief of staff, and Michael Dominguez, acting secretary of the Air Force, came five days after the Pentagon officially designated Grand Forks and Fargo's Air National Guard as the second unmanned aerial vehicle unit in the country.

Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., said the state's congressional delegation asked the Air Force to submit its intentions in writing to the commission, so commission members would have a point of reference to use in their analysis and recommendations for Fargo and Grand Forks.

"There can't be any confusion on the BRAC Commission as to why they (the Pentagon) kept Grand Forks open," said Dorgan, referring to a question raised by Principi to Pentagon officials during the first testimony after the BRAC list was released.

The three-page document talks about the role of Grand Forks, Fargo and Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, and their importance as future training facilities and their contribution to Air Force Future Total Force missions and initiatives.

Besides providing a "strategic presence in the north central United States," Grand Forks is an excellent training area for possible missions in places with harsh winter weather conditions such as the Korean peninsula, the letter said.

When the first 12 Predators were assigned to Grand Forks, local pilots said they were curious as to how the unmanned aircraft would perform when snow storms limit visibility, especially because those same winter weather conditions sometimes make experienced tanker pilots pray for dear life as they approach the base's landing strip.

The letter answers that question.

"Establishing a cold weather UAV center is necessary to advance training and system developments to ensure these vehicles can be operated worldwide," the document said.

Senators Kent Conrad, D-N.D., and Dorgan said Tuesday that the letter reaffirms Friday's announcement by Lt. Gen. Stephen Wood, deputy chief of staff for plans and programs.

Conrad said this is the first time the Air Force formally has addressed the "trained to fight" concept and acknowledges Grand Forks potential as a UAV center of excellence.

"It provides a snapshot of the air traffic in North Dakota showing how open our airspace is and how important it is for remotely piloted missions," Conrad said.

Gov. John Hoeven and Maj. Gen. Michael Haugen, the North Dakota National Guard Commander, will meet with Pentagon officials Thursday to talk about future flying missions for Fargo and other BRAC-related issues such as a retaining a possible role in the tanker mission in Grand Forks, Conrad said.

Pentagon stalls on release of Otis data

Boston Herald (Boston, MA)
Andrew Miga
June 8, 2005

WASHINGTON - Bay State officials yesterday warned their push to save Otis Air National Guard Base could be doomed unless the Pentagon responds to a Senate subpoena and divulges key data on why bases were targeted for closure.

"Until we see the data, we can't know how the Pentagon gave each base its evaluation," said Sen. Edward M. Kennedy in a statement.

"The data will be especially important for Otis," he said. "It provides air defense for a substantial part of the entire Northeast region every day."

The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, headed by Sen. Susan Collins (D-Maine), issued the subpoena for the Pentagon to release all its base closure materials. Defense officials have until Monday to respond.

The subpoena follows complaints about Pentagon foot-dragging from dozens of senators, including Kennedy (D-Mass.), who is leading the fight to save Otis.

Bay State officials are preparing for a July 6 public hearing in Boston where they hope to convince the Base Realignment and Closure Commission that the Pentagon has underestimated the military value of Otis and overestimated its operational costs.

The Pentagon has released some of the data it used to rate the military value of bases across the country - but much of the detailed information it used to justify its decisions has remained classified.

"So far the response has been woefully inadequate," said Steve Wolfe, a defense consultant and former Kennedy aide hired by Massachusetts officials to help save Otis.

Kennedy noted the Pentagon released all closure-related data during previous base closing rounds.

Skillman pleased following BRAC official's visit

Linton Daily Citizen (Linton, IN)
Halea Franklin
June 8, 2005

CRANE -- Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman was one of many elected Indiana officials at Crane on Monday showing support for the base as Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commissioner Sam Skinner visited the base.

"We're very pleased that Commissioner Skinner could come spend time with us on the base today," Skillman said during a press conference after she and Skinner were given a tour of the base.

BRAC commissioners are visiting all military installations that have been recommended -- by the Department of Defense -- to lose either 300 civilian jobs or 400 civilian and military jobs.

"We're here today (Monday) to discuss Crane in its role as a leader in our nation's defense. It's so much more than just a vital economic engine to this state and that's why we're here today (Monday) to show that Crane is indeed (the) best military value in a defense instillation," Skillman stressed.

Skillman said that when looking at BRAC considerations and BRAC goals, Crane seems to be a model instillation. Skillman explained that the instillation is joint forces, multidisciplinary, low cost, fast response and able to transform. She also noted that Crane has no encroachment and is able to grow.

"So our concern, of course, is that we fragment some of our existing joint capabilities with the proposed realignment which would essentially lower military value, might increase costs. So we were here today (Monday) to make the case that the BRAC commission did the right thing by maintaining the base and for the same reasons we should maintain all the operations so we can indeed grow and become a center of excellence."

Skillman said that throughout the tour of the base, Skinner was attentive and asked several questions.

"I think he was very impressed as we went through the morning's activities," she said. "It is so important for the commissioner to be here to understand what a treasure we have in southwest Indiana."

Skillman said it's also important for Skinner to see how much support Crane gets on the local level as well as on the state level.

"We know there's always been a tremendous amount of statewide support not only at a time when the Base Realignment and Closure is being considered," she said.

She explained that during her time in the Senate, every member of the General Assembly authored a resolution in support of the military installation, in support of its value to our nation's defense and in support of its value to the economy of Indiana.

"More recently during this past legislative session, we passed a military base protection act," she said. "We know we have 63,000 acres here and no encroachment. This base protection act sets up a three-mile perimeter around the base that it's protected. It also gets high priority status to the permitting process through the Indiana Department of Environmental Management."

Skillman explained that through the years, Crane has been highly regarded as one of the state's great research institutions.

Skillman explained that over 5,000 Hoosiers -- from 30 southern Indiana counties -- receive their wages from Crane. Crane is the 12th largest employer in the state and the second largest employer in southern Indiana, Skillman said. Sixty percent of Crane's employees are scientists, engineers or technicians.

Opinions/ Editorials

Port has key role in defense

Philadelphia Inquirer (Philadelphia, PA)
Brian Preski
June 7, 2005

The Port of Philadelphia's importance to Pennsylvania's large military and commercial markets was dramatically underscored last month. The Pentagon announced the closing of 180 military installations, but the four Army depots that work with the port were spared. They will continue playing critical roles in the war against terrorism. In fact, the commonwealth is expected to gain nearly 1,000 military and civilian support jobs.

The port is part of an ongoing effort to support the rapid movement of military personnel and equipment to theaters of war around the globe. Key players for the port are the Defense Supply Center Philadelphia, which processes food, fuel, medicine and spare parts for our troops; Letterkenny Army Depot, a 17,500-acre complex in Franklin County; Tobyhanna Army Depot, a full-service communications-electronics command in Monroe County; and the Defense Distribution Center Susquehanna, the Defense Department's largest warehouse.

The decision by federal officials in October 2002 to designate the Port of Philadelphia as one of 14 Strategic Military Seaports in the nation already is paying dividends. It not only has the ability to provide much-needed supplies for the men and women in combat, but it also is a viable partner for the four Pennsylvania defense facilities with which it works closely.

Pennsylvania is a state that historically has been hit hard by closings ordered by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission - most recently the threatened closing of the Naval Air Station in Willow Grove.

Since the early 1990s, the state has lost more than 3,000 military and 13,000 civilian jobs. Clearly, a new strategy was needed to stave off future base closings.

Initial success came three years ago when the port was selected by the Defense Department as a Strategic Military Seaport - the first so

designated following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The port now is on the cutting edge as a national model for military cargo deployments - thanks to the efforts of the Delaware River Maritime Enterprise Council, a nonprofit group funded by state and federal governments, the Philadelphia Regional Port Authority, and a dedicated contingent of elected officials.

Last year, the port was one of the five busiest in the nation in shipping military cargo, largely due to a new strategic system that dramatically reduces deployment time. Time and time again, the Port of Philadelphia has shown it can do the job efficiently.

A critical partner in this success story is Letterkenny Army Depot, which will not only keep its 2,500 civilian jobs, but also gain more than 400 positions as military missions relocate there from bases targeted for realignment or closure.

Four years ago, representatives from the Philadelphia port community visited the sprawling military complex southwest of Harrisburg. Their mission was to convince defense officials that by designating the port a Strategic Military Seaport, we would be able to create and foster a mutually beneficial relationship that would spur new business and investments. Thanks to many people, that mission was successful.

Also important is Tobyhanna Army Depot, which has an outstanding record of providing repair service for the electronics equipment used by our troops in battle. It has partnered with the Port of Philadelphia to ensure the readiness of our armed forces.

The development of a new strategy, and the fostering of new partnerships, has laid a strong foundation for both the Port of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania's military infrastructure. What we have accomplished together gives us a clear advantage as we compete for jobs and the investment that comes with defense spending.

The port is a hotbed for development, which makes it critical that we deepen our shipping

channel in the Delaware River from 40 feet to 45 feet. Channel deepening makes sense on every level: We will add cargo and jobs, and the local economy will benefit. Moreover, today's modern vessels require deeper drafts. Our 40-foot draft simply can't meet the need. If we continue to idly sit by, our business will move to competing ports both north and south of us.

The Port of Philadelphia is not only a viable economic engine for the city of Philadelphia, but for the commonwealth of Pennsylvania as well. The Defense Department's decision May 13 was a resounding affirmation of our continuing efforts to shape this region for future military and commercial investments.

Brian Preski, Esq., is chairman of the board of the Philadelphia Regional Port Authority.

Additional Notes