

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



BIRD

June 13, 2005

Department of Defense Releases

N/A

National News Articles

Prairie Towns Brace for Base Closing's Blow

BRAC to Work

Bases narrowly escape closure

Local News Articles

Rock Island Arsenal changes in military realignment plan (Rock Island, IL)

Some military experts say downsizing Eielson makes perfect sense (Fairbanks, AK)

Base's supporters ready to rally (Anchorage, AK)

Military facility applies spit and polish (Picayune, LA)

Officials prepared for closures, look to boost recruiting (Fort Worth, TX)

New jobs at Fort Meade may bring a building boom (Annapolis, MD)

Millions go into keeping bases (Bucks County, PA)

Opinions/Editorials

Additional Notes

N/A

Department of Defense Releases

N/A

National News Articles

Prairie Towns Brace for Base Closing's Blow

The reprieve given to a South Dakota Air Force facility in 1995 is not likely this time around.

Los Angeles Times

David Kelly

June 13, 2005

BOX ELDER, S.D. — Tracey Scott was discussing the benefits of gourmet coffee in this small prairie town when the cups began to rattle and a deafening roar shook her small cafe.

A sleek B-1 bomber rose from a nearby runway, its engines echoing like thunder as it knifed just overhead.

Scott barely noticed. She just talked louder.

"I always wanted to own my own coffee shop, and I thought this place would bring a little class to Box Elder," she said. "There really wasn't anything nice here before."

So in July, 41-year-old Scott opened Gizzi's Coffee just yards from Ellsworth Air Force Base. In no time, she was serving as many as

200 people a day, most of them military personnel.

But the good times didn't last long. Just a few weeks ago, Scott and the rest of South Dakota got the bad news: Ellsworth is slated for closure.

The state's second-largest employer probably will close within six years, its 29 bombers sent to join the rest of the nation's B-1 fleet at Dyess Air Force Base in Texas.

Box Elder, nearby Rapid City and other communities spread west across the rolling Black Hills are now bracing for the loss of nearly 4,000 jobs, hundreds of houses going on the market and the exodus of more than 10,000 people in a state already struggling to retain population.

"In retrospect, we should have seen it coming," said Rapid City Mayor Jim Shaw.

But people here had long convinced themselves that the base's modern infrastructure, its unimpeded airspace, its role in the war on terrorism and its outsized effect on the economy would allow it to slip past Pentagon budget cutters as it had a decade ago.

And this time, they thought they had a secret weapon in newly elected Sen. John Thune, the Republican who defeated longtime Democratic Senate leader Tom Daschle last year.

During the campaign both men claimed they could keep Ellsworth open. Daschle emphasized his long experience in Congress and his successful intervention in 1995 to keep the base off the closure list. Thune said he "had the ear of the president" and believed that defeating Bush's chief antagonist would put him in line for a favor or two.

Daschle lost, Thune won and the base was still tagged for closing.

"Thune came by two weeks ago and met with six of us," said Scott, the cafe owner. "He didn't say anything that made me feel very good. I didn't come away feeling all warm and fuzzy. I

left thinking I would have to move if I wanted to stay in business."

Not only would Box Elder, a town of about 3,000, lose a coffee shop, its school system would lose half its students, many from military families. Local businesses that depend on the Air Force probably would shut down.

"I believe they will try their hardest to keep the base open," said Angelique Mills, who owns a sewing shop that makes alterations on uniforms. "About 98% of our business is military."

Her husband, Ruben, believes there is a 50-50 chance Ellsworth will remain open.

"A lot of people think Bush owed Thune for getting rid of Daschle," he said. "I thought Daschle was a strong senator and now Thune is low man on the totem pole."

Rapid City, with 60,000 residents, is the second largest city in the state and home to numerous Ellsworth employees. Many stationed at the base over the years ended up settling in the area when they left the military.

"Losing 4,000 jobs in South Dakota is a big hit when you have just 750,000 people in the state," said Shaw. "The impact will be fairly dramatic in Rapid City but not as much as it would have 10 to 15 years ago. Our economy has become more diversified."

Home to Mount Rushmore and former stomping grounds of Crazy Horse, the Black Hills region is isolated even by South Dakota standards. With just 155,000 residents, it borders rural Wyoming and Nebraska with the nearest big cities — Denver and Minneapolis — hundreds of miles away. For years, the major industry was gold mining, then ranching and timber. Now, tourism and service jobs make up the bulk of the employment; plans are afoot to open a high-tech corridor in the Black Hills that officials hope will generate 7,500 jobs over the next five years.

But since 1942, Ellsworth has been a fixture and economic anchor of western South Dakota. It began as a bomber base in World War II then

added Titan and Minuteman intercontinental ballistic missiles during the Cold War.

After the demise of the Soviet Union, Ellsworth lost its B-52 bombers, its missiles and gradually some of its strategic importance. The B-1s, built to fly low with nuclear payloads, arrived in 1987 and took part in the Persian Gulf War and the war in Iraq. It was an Ellsworth B-1 that struck a palace where ousted President Saddam Hussein was thought to be hiding at the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Ellsworth has a \$278-million economic impact on the Black Hills every year, an Air Force study reported. It has 4,491 employees who have 5,640 dependents. The base is the state's second largest employer after Sioux Valley Hospitals and Health System, based in Sioux Falls.

Economics aside, the political implications of the base closing could be enormous for Thune, and his opponents are already on the attack.

"You obviously can't predict what would have happened if Daschle had remained senator but we can say for certain that as a member of the leadership he could have appointed a commissioner from South Dakota to sit on the base closing commission," said Steve Hildebrand, Daschle's former campaign manager. "There is clearly disappointment that Thune said he had the ear of the president then failed to deliver on his promise. We are going to make sure this comes back to haunt him."

But Daschle declined to pounce on his onetime opponent and instead offered his help to save Ellsworth. He said he came to know many of those involved in the base closing network in 1995.

"Ten years ago I sat down with President Clinton and told him the base was vital and important to the Air Force and to me personally and it was not put on the list," said Daschle, a special policy advisor in the Washington law firm of Alston & Bird. "I have talked to the people involved in this effort now and have made myself available to them. The effort isn't over."

He said the base closings were a combination of military need and politics. Had he won reelection, Daschle isn't sure how Ellsworth would have fared.

"I think that's impossible to know," he said.

In a recent interview at his Rapid City office, Thune said if Daschle had won the outcome would have been the same.

"If Daschle was senator there would have been very little incentive for the president to help him," he said. "I would contend that Daschle would have needed John Kerry to win the presidency to save Ellsworth."

But Thune was clearly angry at being blindsided by the base decision, going so far as to say he wouldn't support John R. Bolton, President Bush's nominee for ambassador to the United Nations. Bolton, he said, was not "the right man for the job."

"This is not a retaliatory thing; I will display a voting record in the best interests of South Dakota and the nation," he said. "My loyalty is to the people of South Dakota; you are elected by these people."

Thune said he was upset by the entire base closing process and worried that the Pentagon was more interested in saving money than national security. He is pinning his hopes on a June 21 meeting in Rapid City between members of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission and state political leaders. The goal is to persuade the panel to spare Ellsworth. A final decision is expected this fall.

"This makes no sense," Thune said. "If they were closing half the bases in the country, maybe, but not with this small number. We think three or four will come off the list and we will make a compelling case."

The outcome may dictate his political future.

"Certainly the visible pain of this base closing will be here for some time," said William

Richardson, political science professor at the University of South Dakota. "But there is always the possibility that Thune could pull it off and if he does he'll be the hero of South Dakota. He won't have to worry about reelection again."

Residents are quietly hoping for a miracle but reserving a healthy dose of Midwestern skepticism.

"Unless he has a cape and tights I don't know how he will pull it off," said 37-year-old Dori Kamm of Box Elder.

At an American Legion post near the base, Fred Stern believes it could go either way.

"I'm not surprised they want to shut it," said Stern, 73. "They want to save money and [Defense Secretary Donald H.] Rumsfeld wants consolidation."

Bob Powers, a 51-year-old Air Force veteran who worked at the base, said he voted for Daschle last time because he helped save Ellsworth.

"It's not a done deal but I do think Mr. Thune is on a one-term senatorship because of this," he said.

Back at Gizzi's Coffee, Tracey Scott was discussing her options when another B-1 rumbled overhead. This time she listened.

"The B-1s are so pretty," she said. "When we were kids, my grandfather would bring us out here to watch the planes take off."

Scott is waiting until fall to see if the base really will close.

"If it does, then I guess I'll move," she said. "There won't be anything left here."

BRAC to Work

Congress Daily
Megan Scully
June 13, 2005

Jennifer Meyer decided this spring to give up her job as an aide to Sen. Barbara Mikulski, D-Md., for a job that often takes up 14 hours a day. But when she's lucky, she gets Sundays off.

Such is life at the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission. Meyer is one of dozens of people who left jobs on Capitol Hill and elsewhere around Washington to work for the nine-member commission, which has only four months to evaluate the base-closing recommendations made last month by Defense Secretary Rumsfeld.

It is a frenzied schedule, with site visits and regional hearings planned throughout the summer, as the commission rushes toward a Sept. 8 deadline for submitting its recommendations to the White House.

Meyer works as the Senate liaison, fielding questions on BRAC from lawmakers and congressional staffers as they prepare for visits from the commission. Most are concerned about the process, and whether they will have time to meet with commissioners when they tour local bases.

"It's a constant game of on-the-phones right now," Meyer said. "Lots of states are feeling a lot of urgency."

The job allows ample opportunity for travel. Meyer plans to accompany commissioners to eight base visits and regional hearings.

The job is "a challenge but it's the best decision I've made," Meyer said. "I'm very happy for the opportunity to be here."

A stint with the commission can often push a career forward. Several former BRAC staffers have gone on to higher-level government jobs, while others have tried their hand at lobbying.

"I'm trying to survive the next few months and keeping all my opportunities and doors open," Meyer said. Before the next job, though, she plans one more stop: a vacation. "Somewhere warm," she says. "White sand and see-through blue oceans."

Bases narrowly escape closure

The Forum

Jeff Zent

June 13, 2005

Early in the base realignment and closure process and until the eleventh hour, the Defense Department considered closing North Dakota's three military bases, according to Air Force records and interviews.

On April 26, less than three weeks before the Pentagon released its Base Realignment and Closure plan, Air Force officials recommended closing the Grand Forks base, minutes taken during Air Force Base Closure Executive Group meetings state.

In a series of about 40 meetings since January, the 22-member committee charged with forwarding the Air Force's recommendations also discussed closing the Fargo and Minot bases.

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

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

The committee considered keeping support personnel in place despite plans to retire Fargo's aging F-16s in 2007.

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

Air Force officials talked about keeping bombers in Minot but eliminating the base's missile wing. They continued to backpedal until April 7, when they recommended no changes for Minot, meeting minutes show.

Although the BRAC process is supposed to be secret and free of influence peddling, some local base supporters said they learned that the Grand Forks and Fargo bases were in jeopardy.

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

The heads-up gave base supporters time to lobby for changes before the Pentagon's BRAC plan was released.

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

Base backers and the state's congressional delegation blitzed the Pentagon, holding several meetings with Air Force officials before and since the BRAC plan was released May 13.

They pitched the state's uncongested airspace, its logistics for homeland security missions and possible cooperation with the University of North Dakota's Department of Aerospace Science, Conrad said.

In the end, the Pentagon recommended that the Grand Forks and Fargo bases be realigned to take on a joint mission involving unmanned aerial vehicles.

After the BRAC plans were released, Air Force officials proposed sending two types of UAVs to Grand Forks.

Within a few years, the Grand Forks base is expected to be home to a squadron of 12 Predator UAVs and between 500 and 600 support staff.

Eventually, Grand Forks also will become one of two major bases to operate high-altitude Global Hawk UAVs.

Pilots will fly Predator drones from ground stations at Fargo's Air National Guard base.

The UAV mission offers a promising future for the Grand Forks and Fargo bases, said Maj. Gen. Michael Haugen, commander of the North Dakota National Guard.

Still, base backers in Fargo and Grand Forks are also trying to persuade military officials to give them a manned flying mission.

Haugen and other base supporters said they can't rest knowing the Pentagon has slated North Dakota for a promising UAV mission.

"It's not in stone," Haugen said. "We still have to get by the final BRAC Commission report."

The nine-member BRAC Commission could strip the local bases of the proposed UAV mission quicker than the Pentagon drafted the plan, Marshall said.

The commission also can add bases to the closure list that were spared by the Pentagon, he said.

Three members of the BRAC Commission will tour the Grand Forks base on June 22. A hearing on the Fargo and Grand Forks bases has been scheduled at the Chester Fritz Auditorium the following day.

The commission will forward its recommendations to the president by Sept. 23.

Local News Articles

Rock Island Arsenal changes in military realignment plan

The Associated Press State & Local (Rock Island, IL)
June 12, 2005

The Pentagon has recommended moving five tenants and a total of 1,263 jobs from the Rock Island Arsenal to other bases nationwide as part of the Base Realignment and Closure plan:

-Defense Finance and Accounting: To move to Indianapolis, Denver and Columbus, Ohio. Provides professional finance and accounting

services to the military, processes more than \$4 billion in vendor invoices annually. A loss of 235 civilian jobs.

-North Central Civilian Human Resources Agency: Slated to move to Fort Riley, Kan., and Aberdeen, Md. One of five human resource divisions nationwide, it oversees all civilian personnel services. A loss of 251 civilian jobs.

-Tank-automotive and Armaments Command: Selected to move to Columbus, Ohio, and Warren, Mich. TACOM oversees a variety of functions, including oversight of weapons, security assistance in foreign military sales and manufacturing support services. A loss of 740 civilian jobs.

-Joint Manufacturing Technology Center: Slated to move to Anniston, Ala., and Letterkenny, Pa. Manages the production, storage, issue and demilitarization of conventional munitions for all U.S. military services, and operates a nationwide network of government-owned ammunition production facilities. A loss of 181 civilian jobs.

-Installation Management Agency: Recommended to transfer to Sam Houston Base in Texas. A loss of 133 civilian jobs.

-1st Army Headquarters: Picked to move from Georgia to Rock Island. The three-star command unit oversees Army Guard and Reserves east of the Mississippi and Minnesota. A gain of 157 military jobs and 120 civilian positions.

Some military experts say downsizing Eielson makes perfect sense

The Associated Press State & Local (Fairbanks, AK)
June 12, 2005

Alaskans may be outraged at the very thought of stripping Eielson Air Force Base of most of its personnel and planes, but for some outside analysts, the Pentagon's proposal is based on sound logic.

"One of the things that you clearly see, as you look at the decisions that the Pentagon has made, is a drawing back from our Cold War posture, and I view the Alaska decisions as part of that," said Chris Hellman with the Center for Arms Control and Non-proliferation, a Washington, D.C.-based think-tank. "A lot of our basing strategy was based for half a century on Russians coming, and they're not coming anymore."

The Fairbanks-area base is among those targeted by the U.S. Department of Defense for cost-cutting changes or shutdowns and will be the first examined at a public hearing by an independent panel appointed to assess the recommendations. Four members of the nine-member Base Realignment and Closure Commission are scheduled to be Fairbanks Wednesday for the hearing.

On Tuesday, the commissioners will be in Anchorage to tour Kulis Air Guard Station and Elmendorf Air Force Base. Under the DOD proposal, Elmendorf would be realigned to become a joint base with nearby Fort Richardson and would have aircraft and personnel from Kulis Air Guard Station, which would be closed.

Eielson's future, according to top Pentagon officials and a number of military analysts, is in training, not guarding against Russian bombers or waiting for a call to some hot spot in Asia. Alaska's big land and sky, they say, ought to be available not only to the military personnel stationed at Eielson but also to others in units from across the country and globe. Traditional air security can be handled by the F-15s, and soon F/A-22s, at Elmendorf Air Force base near Anchorage, they say.

But others, including Alaska's business and elected leaders, bring up the oft-repeated argument that the state's location is closer to Asia and northern Europe than any other major domestic base. They also question the idea of relocating Eielson's fleet of fighter planes just as cross-training opportunities open with the new Stryker Brigade at nearby Fort Wainwright.

The Pentagon's proposal would send Eielson's 18 F-16s to Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada. Twelve A-10s would go to Moody Air Force Base in Georgia, three would go to Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana and the remaining three would have no specified location.

With the jets would go more than 2,800 military personnel by 2008. An Air National Guard unit with about 580 part- and full-time employees and eight KC-135 refueling tankers would remain. The Pentagon's plan also recommends removing 42 F-15s from Elmendorf, leaving 18. The initial job losses there would come close to 1,000 but would soon be offset by the arrival of F/A-22s starting in 2007. Also, a group of large Air Force C-17 transport planes would go to Elmendorf in 2008.

It is unnecessary to have two major fighter bases in Alaska, said Michael O'Hanlon, a senior fellow with the Brookings Institution, a Washington, D.C.-based think-tank.

"Regrettably, I think I have to agree with the Pentagon on this one," O'Hanlon said. "It is important to have some air capability in Alaska, because it is the perimeter of the country, but the F-15s at Elmendorf are sufficient."

U.S. Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, has said the A-10s are in Alaska as backup for U.S. ground forces on the Korean Peninsula, for example. The A-10s are designed specifically to support ground troops. In Alaska, the aircraft are closer to Korea than they would be at other U.S. domestic bases, Stevens points out.

Hellman and O'Hanlan don't give much merit to that argument.

"Having strike aircraft like the A-10 based in Alaska makes no sense whatsoever," Hellman said. "Part of the reason those aircraft are where they are is the power of the congressional delegation, who have drawn resources in there. What the Pentagon is saying is this is not a rational distribution of our resources. And it's going to be really hard for communities around the country to argue with that."

O'Hanlon said the few hours of flying time that Alaska's location might save don't make much difference.

"It's a marginal argument that works in favor of Alaska, but very marginally," he said. It's really a better argument to put the planes in South Korea or Japan, he said.

Stevens has said Alaska's fighters also protect Alaska's security-sensitive spots, such as the trans-Alaska oil pipeline and the anti-missile interceptor site at Fort Greely.

Hellman said fighters aren't relevant.

"I suspect that if terrorists were going after the pipeline, they wouldn't be using a bomber," he said.

A price tag may be the biggest deciding factor in the end. The Air Force projected that changes related primarily to Eielson would save about \$229 million - a figure questioned by Eielson supporters.

The Air Force calculates its savings using a computer model called COBRA, for the Cost of Base Realignment Action. The model was used in previous BRAC rounds. The Government Accountability Office, the watchdog agency for Congress, "has consistently cited the use of the COBRA model as effective for estimating costs and savings," according to the Department of Defense's "Results and Processes" report on the 2005 BRAC process.

Still, challenging the Pentagon's numbers is a worthwhile endeavor for local communities, said Jeremiah Gertler, senior fellow with the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C., and a former analyst for the 1995 BRAC Commission.

"In about 15 percent of the cases, they determine that the military got the numbers wrong," Gertler said. "The commission is not just a rubber stamp for the Pentagon."

Base's supporters ready to rally

Anchorage Daily News (Anchorage, AK)
Tataboline Brant
June 13, 2005

Thousands of people dressed in red "America Needs Eielson" T-shirts are expected to pack a Fairbanks sports arena Wednesday to show support for their local military base in what may be the biggest public hearing Fairbanks has ever seen.

Eielson Air Force Base, an economic engine in the Fairbanks area, is on the chopping block. The Pentagon in May proposed cutting almost all of the base's roughly 3,000 military personnel -- an announcement that stunned the surrounding communities and then galvanized them into action.

Four of the nine members of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, who are charged with reviewing the Pentagon's proposal, are slated to attend the hearing at the Carlson Center.

They are in for quite a show, according to members of the Save Eielson task force, who have been working around the clock for the last month to prepare for the visit.

Strong community support is an element common to the few military installations that have successfully made it off the Pentagon's hit list in the past, said Save Eielson task force member Marilyn Romano, who is spearheading the community outreach in Fairbanks.

Romano said scores of volunteers in "America Needs Eielson" T-shirts plan to line the street outside the Carlson Center as the commissioners roll in. Others will string banners on buildings and overpasses around the city before commissioners arrive. An "Eielson After Burn" party for young people, featuring live bands, is planned for Tuesday night, Romano said, and dozens of businesses plan to shut down Wednesday or go to a skeleton crew to allow their workers to attend the three-hour hearing. The first 3,000 people to show up get free T-shirts, said Romano, publisher of the Fairbanks

Daily News-Miner. Everyone else has been asked to wear red.

The city of Fairbanks says about 60 of its workers are going to attend, on the clock. MAC Federal Credit Union said it plans to send 11 of its 39 workers, despite Wednesday being a military payday and extremely busy.

"The staff would probably all go if they could," said the credit union president, Billie Blanchard.

The goal is turn out 5,000 people, said Romano, who is volunteering her services on the task force. It's not a long shot, she said: The community support so far has been outstanding.

"At first there was the shock that Eielson was on the list. And then there was the lull, and then it was like, What do we need to do?" Romano explained in a telephone interview Saturday. "Yesterday my phone rang all day long. Businesses have been running ads in the paper saying 'We're going to be closed, and you should be too.' It's become one of those things that you would feel bad if you weren't involved."

The scene in Fairbanks is one that is likely to play out in communities across America this summer as the BRAC Commission makes its way through the Pentagon's list of suggested base cuts.

The presentation to the commissioners Wednesday is scheduled to include statements by U.S. Sen. Ted Stevens and Gov. Frank Murkowski and then a formal argument on why Eielson should be spared by University of Alaska President Mark Hamilton and Alaska Railroad president Pat Gamble, both retired generals. A full dress rehearsal is planned for Tuesday night, Save Eielson chairman Jim Dodson said.

In an interview late last week, Hamilton said there is no doubt that "when you're on the BRAC list, you're in trouble."

"Historically, something like 93 percent of things on (the list) are ultimately approved by the BRAC Commission," he said. But, Hamilton

added: "I believe very strongly in the argument we've put together. I'd much rather be defending Eielson than any other base on the list."

Hamilton said he and Gamble's presentation will address four main points: Eielson's strategic location, its expansive training range, the opportunity for joint Air Force-Army operations in Alaska and the local economic impact of downsizing the base.

Scott Goldsmith, one of several economists supplying the task force with information, said it appears the BRAC Commission has underestimated the economic impact on Fairbanks of downsizing Eielson. Among other things, its analysis doesn't take into account that the associated population decline would "severely" affect the local housing market, causing a loss of jobs in the real estate and construction industry.

"It would sort of shut down the residential construction industry for an unknown period of time," said Goldsmith, who works at the UAA Institute of Social and Economic Research. "The Fairbanks economy is pretty fragile."

Local officials can continue to submit data to the BRAC Commission after Wednesday's hearing, but Hamilton said the live presentation "has enormous significance."

"What you are trying to do here is place significant doubt that the Air Force or the Department of Defense made the right assessment," he said. It's also a chance for the commissioners to see how much the base means to the community.

"I think we're going to show ourselves very well in that area," Hamilton said.

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

The Times- Picayune (Picayune, LA)

Paul Purpura

June 13, 2005

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

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

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

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

"We're going to try to make the case that Naval Support Activity is a critical federal government asset" whose costs to operate would be reduced under the federal city concept, Mize said. "The federal city is a key part of the argument for keeping it open."

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

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

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

The proposal calls for closing the Bywater site and consolidating the commands and units at an Algiers campus built at no cost to the Defense

Department. Gov. Kathleen Blanco has pledged state financial support for the project, which could cost as much as \$200 million.

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

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

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

In addition to banners at the airport terminal, four billboards from the Airport Access Road to the east bank approach to the Crescent City Connection will bear the message that New Orleans supports the military, Mize said.

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

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

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

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

The campaign's intent, Arnold said, is to show military personnel and their families "that we appreciate them" and to show the BRAC

Commission that "this is a community that appreciates what it has."

Officials prepared for closures, look to boost recruiting

Fort Worth Star-Telegram (Fort Worth, TX)
Chris Vaughn
June 12, 2005

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Additionally, National Guard armories in Corsicana, Athens, Kaufman, Terrell and Abilene would be closed, along with dozens more in the Houston, Austin, Amarillo, Brownsville and Texarkana areas.

Even though the Arlington facility is undergoing renovation, the authorization was cut at least two years ago, Stanford said, when no one knew it might appear on the closure list.

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

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

The Defense Department pegs its costs at \$220 million to implement the plan, but will achieve \$36 million a year in savings after the realignment. Not included, the report said, is \$231 million that the government would not have to spend on renovation for all the existing armories.

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

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

But since the federal government pays for 75 percent of the cost of each armory, it would seem to give the Defense Department the authority to close an armory just by cutting off funding.

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

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

But the Texas Guard, like most others around the nation, is switching to more light infantry and critical support such as military police and medical jobs, which are open to women.

Just as important, Stanford said, is the suggested placement of new centers in heavily populated areas where it is easier to recruit and retain soldiers.

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

Among the Army's recommendations

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

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

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

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

New jobs at Fort Meade may bring a building boom

The Capitol (Annapolis, MD)

Katie Arcieri

June 12, 2005

The county's top commercial developers are positioning themselves to supply office space for thousands of government contractors whose jobs could move here as part of consolidation of federal jobs to Fort George G. Meade.

Company officials say their plans to build office space have been fueled by the announcement of the Base Realignment Closure plan that would bring nearly 5,400 new jobs to the area. In addition, tens of thousands of more federal jobs could land at Fort Meade as military leases expire throughout the Washington area.

"We are positioning our properties, and we're pushing for zoning in the county for more Class A office space," said Ray Whalen senior vice president for Heffner & Weber, a Linthicum-based real estate firm planning an 85,000-square-foot corporate center on International Drive.

The BRAC recommendations, if approved, would have a "multiplier effect" on job growth in the county, sparking thousands of new government contracting jobs and providing lots of work for local development companies, said Bill Badger, chief executive officer for the county Economic Development Corp.

"For the office developers, it's a tremendous opportunity in a very dynamic market," he said. "It's a very exciting time."

If approved by President Bush and Congress later this year, the BRAC recommendations will add 2,915 civilian employees, 1,764 new contractors and 682 military personnel. Local officials said those jobs will further spur the commercial and residential real estate markets in Anne Arundel and nearby counties.

State officials are discussing an extension of Washington's Metro subway system to Fort Meade to help deal with growth expected from the job shifts. If approved, an extension is expected to take two decades to complete and cost at least \$1 billion.

The plan includes the 10-mile extension of Metro's Green Line from Greenbelt to Fort Meade, and potentially on to Baltimore. A link to Baltimore-Washington International Airport is also being considered.

Fort Meade is already one of the state's largest employers with about 40,000 jobs. The National

Security Agency, located at the post, also generates thousands more in nearby high-technology complexes housing some of the nation's largest defense contractors.

Several businesses are already "poised and ready" to put up new buildings today, said Gregory Masi, senior vice president for Transwestern Commercial Services.

In the BWI area alone, 660,000 square feet of office space is under construction and 46.6 percent of it already is under lease, according to a report by real estate research firm Delta Associates.

Meanwhile, the National Business Park, a 175-acre business community under construction at the intersection of Route 32 and Baltimore-Washington Parkway, is set to absorb a large chunk of the growth from Fort Meade, said Rand Griffin, president and chief executive officer for Corporate Office Properties Trust, the largest owner of office space in Anne Arundel County.

"We have four buildings of the 10 under construction right now," he said.

When the park is completed in the next three to five years, it will have the capacity to hold 18,000 jobs. COPT is also developing 13 office buildings at Arundel Preserve, a 270-acre mixed-used project in Hanover.

The Buccini/Pollin Group Inc. is planning to build a 300,000- or 400,000-square-foot "Class A" office complex called the BWI Hilton Park, located near the intersection of Elkridge Landing and West Nursery roads, said Tom Greene, an associate with NAI KLNB, the listing agent for the property.

The BWI Hilton Park is a project that will be marketed to government "contractors or just typical corporate clients who want a very upscale office environment," near BWI, he said.

Washington, D.C.-based developer and broker Capitol CREAG LLC, developer of the Odenton Town Center, is moving forward with a 200,000-square-foot building on Town Center

Boulevard that will be aimed toward government contractors, said Peter Marcin, the company's managing director.

"We've really kicked into high gear the development efforts there," he said. "As brokers, we've done a lot of (Department of Defense) deals and we know the power of the contractor that follows behind."

Millions go into keeping bases

Bucks County Courier Times (Bucks County, PA)

Alison Hawkes

June 12, 2005

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

Much of the state's \$4.5 million pot has gone toward administrative and lobbying costs to support statewide efforts, as well as a slew of studies on Pennsylvania's most vulnerable military facilities in advance of the U.S. Department of Defense closure announcement a month ago.

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

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

The U.S. Army War College in Carlisle is slated to receive \$500,000 for architectural and engineering work on its visitor and education center, while \$230,000 is expected to go toward moving power lines at the Harrisburg International Airport to increase taxi space for the 193rd Special Operations Wing.

Willow Grove Naval Air Center in Montgomery County was to receive \$530,000 for three pieces of snow removal equipment, replacing equipment the defense department hasn't updated in 30 to 40 years. But because the defense department seems unlikely to accept this donation, considering a planned shutdown, state officials have decided to fold that money back into an unallocated \$1.2 million to be spent as needed this summer on fighting Pennsylvania base closures.

The state funding is being disbursed through the Department of Community and Economic Development, upon approval of the Pennsylvania Base Development Committee. The committee consists of 15 retired and active military officials representing bases across the state, appointed by the governor.

In mid-May, the Pentagon announced the list of 33 major base closures around the country, and 29 realignments as a way to save \$50 billion over the next two decades. Pennsylvania was largely spared, but still hit hard with the placement of Willow Grove on the closure list, along with the 911th Air Reserve Station at the Pittsburgh International Airport and the Kelly Support Center in Oakdale. A nearby Army reserve center in Moon Township would be realigned, under the plan. The combined statewide job loss would be 1,878, still a far cry from the 16,000 jobs lost in the 1995 round of base closures.

In preparation for a fight this year, the state began readying itself in 2003. Communities launched studies on the military value of their facilities, the economic impact of closures, and put together strategic plans. King, also the director of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, said such advanced work

was crucial in giving military facilities a head start should they had been listed.

The time to respond to the announced closures before the federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission is less than two months.

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

King also noted that some of the studies are interrelated. A \$10,000 economic impact study on the Port of Philadelphia could be useful in making the point that supply and repair depots across Pennsylvania are well served by a seamless transportation system, he said. In some cases, too, the studies can later be used to make a pitch for more defense department work, he said.

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

Edward Strouse, executive director of the Suburban Horsham Willow Grove Chamber of Commerce, the group leading the fight for Willow Grove, said the money has also been used as a kind campaign war chest to gather petitions, launch a Web site and print signs.

"That's a huge role to do right now because it's all about politics. We need to let them know we want this base," Strouse said.

An economic impact study proved that 10,000 jobs would be at stake with the closure - including civilians and vendors - instead of the defense department's narrower estimate of 1,200 military jobs, Strouse said.

"We want to make the argument of how important this base is to our area. And going forward, if you're going to try to redevelop it

you want something as meaningful as now," Strouse said.

In Allegheny County, studies have been used to show, among other things, the value of linking a medical air squadron to Pittsburgh's well-developed medical industry. But officials said that the main argument there will be that there's room for the 911th Air Reserve Station to expand. The defense department recommended the station's closure because it doesn't have room for a full squadron of C130 planes, though the community group Pit-BRAC says it has letters going back to 1993 proving the airport authority has offered extra land to the military.

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

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

A couple months ago, lawmakers raised concern about how all the money was being spent. But after receiving an update, Rep. Jerry Stern, R-80 (Blair), who sits on the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, said he is satisfied.

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

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

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

David Urban, the governor's lobbyist in Washington who picked out the firm, said the company is considered highly skilled in base

closing issues, and a relative bargain at \$15,000 per month (some states are spending as much as \$60,000, he said). Just like law firms and consulting groups, this company knows how to build a fire wall between different clients, Urban said.

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

Opinions/ Editorials

Additional Notes