

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



BIRD

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Senators seek hearing on Air National Guard cuts

Copley News Service
Otto Kreisher
June 16, 2005

In an effort to ward off painful losses of military facilities in their states, a bipartisan group of 23 senators has written to the base realignment and closure commission chairman asking for a hearing into the Pentagon's plans to eliminate or

move nearly two dozen Air National Guard units.

Sens. Dick Durbin and Barack Obama, both D-Ill., and Sen. George Voinovich, R-Ohio, joined in that call and a similar request to Senate Armed Services Committee chairman John Warner, R-Va., to hold a separate hearing.

The senators expressed concern that the plans to take the flying units from 23 Air Guard stations in more than a dozen states would leave those states' National Guard without a rapid deployment capability and would hurt guard recruitment, which already is struggling to meet monthly goals.

They also complained that the plans to consolidate the Air Guard flying units have not been thoroughly examined and the adverse consequences considered, particularly the impact on homeland security.

The Air Force has said it needs to reduce the size of its Air Guard and Air Force Reserve and to consolidate flying units into fewer but larger organizations that would be more efficient and effective. Air Force leaders also have said they will find new missions for units that are losing their flying jobs.

In the letter to BRAC commission chairman Anthony Principi, the senators said they understood that the Air Force planned to turn the 23 Air Guard bases into "enclaves" with "expeditionary combat support units," instead of flying squadrons.

"It is not clear that an enclave base can sustain expeditionary combat units," because without flying units many enclaves "will no longer be able to support military or civilian aircraft operations."

At other locations, the loss of Guard firefighters could mean that the civilian airports the guard units now share would lose FAA ratings and no longer meet Air Force and civilian criteria for landings.

In addition, the senators said, "it is not at all clear that expeditionary combat support personnel will stay in units that do not have aircraft," making recruiting and retention more difficult.

The senators also alleged that the plan to remove flying units and leave enclaves "is an effort to get around the BRAC process" by producing Guard locations that could not be sustained and would vanish over a number of years.

"Last, we are concerned that enclaves simply will not meet the homeland security needs of governors," the senators told Principi, urging him to hold a full commission hearing on the Air Guard issue.

The letter to Warner was nearly identical and also requested a committee hearing.

Dated Wednesday, the letters had not been received by either Principi or Warner and their offices had no immediate comment.

(BEGIN OPTIONAL TRIM)

In Ohio, two Air National Guard facilities would lose their flying units and hundreds of guard and civilian positions while one facility would gain.

At the Mansfield airport, the 179th Airlift Wing would lose its C-130 transports and 234 military and civilian positions, while at the Springfield airport, the 178th Fighter Wing's F-16 fighters and 291 personnel would be transferred out.

But the 180th Fighter Wing at Toledo airport would gain 126 personnel.

(OPTIONAL TRIM)

In Illinois, the 183rd Fighter Wing's F-16 fighters and 163 Guard and civilian positions would be moved from the Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport to Fort Wayne, Ind.

The Peoria Airport Air Guard station would gain 34 personnel.

Local News Articles

BRAC Commission Early Bird

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**Commissioner Offers Hope On Tour
Whether 440th wing will close remains up in
the air**

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (Milwaukee, MN)
Chase Davis and Gina Duwe
June 17, 2005

One of the men who will decide the fate of the 440th Airlift Wing stirred some hope among unit employees and supporters on Thursday, but he stopped far short of saying whether he thought the unit would stay in Milwaukee or move elsewhere.

Samuel K. Skinner, who sits on the nine-member federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission, visited Mitchell International Airport to examine the 440th, which a Pentagon report has recommended should be moved to North Carolina. The commission has the authority to revise the Pentagon proposals.

According to various projections, moving the Air Force Reserve unit could cost Milwaukee more than 350 full-time jobs, 1,320 part-time reserve positions, and \$128 million yearly.

Skinner spent the morning touring the facility, and he met in private with local leaders before appearing to address the more than 100 people who had gathered in the main airport terminal to voice their support for keeping the unit in Milwaukee.

The visit was part of a months-long process to decide which of the bases on the Pentagon's cost-cutting hit list should be reconsidered or removed, Skinner said. The next step for the 440th is a regional hearing Monday in St. Louis.

"Clearly (the 440th is) something special," Skinner said. "We're just going to have to see how things play out."

Skinner, a former White House chief of staff and transportation secretary under President George H.W. Bush, said he thinks the commission could spare 15% or more of the 62 major bases designated to be downsized or closed, and he said it will be months before the bases' futures

are clear. The commission must make its final recommendations to President Bush by Sept. 8.

Still, Skinner's visit was encouraging to many of the 440th supporters who had gathered at the airport Thursday. Many said they thought Skinner seemed impressed with the unit, which has traditionally boasted high recruitment rates and is highly regarded for its work on military transport planes.

"I think things look pretty positive," said Dick Cook, who retired from the base in 1984. "I think he saw what we can do and was convinced by it."

Others, many of whom have worked for the unit for decades, feared the prospect of the base closing. Some said they would have to transfer; others said they would have to find new jobs, change specialties and potentially lose benefits.

"We're all about saving the civilian soldier here," said Heinz Poellat, a retired vice commander of the unit. "You need to have the bases where the people are, and this is where the people are."

Region Will Make Plea To Pentagon

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (St. Louis, MO)
Philip Dine
June 16, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Missouri and Illinois officials and residents who plan to argue for retention of the military jobs and facilities the Pentagon wants to close or move elsewhere will get two hours per state Monday to do so.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission regional hearing in St. Louis, set for 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday, will cover facilities in five other states as well.

Based on the number of jobs at risk, Indiana and Kentucky also will get two hours apiece, commission spokesman Robert McCreary said Wednesday.

Three states will get a half-hour each, because fewer jobs are in play: Michigan, Iowa and Wisconsin.

Under the Pentagon's recommended changes, Missouri would lose 3,679 jobs, and Kentucky 3,658, McCreary said. On the other end of the spectrum, Michigan would gain 125 jobs, Iowa would lose six and Wisconsin would lose 552.

The hearing, which is open to the public, will be at St. Louis University's Busch Student Center, 20 North Grand Boulevard. Doors open at 7:15 a.m.

Sen. Christopher "Kit" Bond, R-Mo., divided Missouri's time into three panels. The first will argue for retaining the 131st F-15 Fighter Wing at Lambert Field. The second will focus on keeping jobs at the Army Human Resources Command in Overland, and the other will make a case for jobs at St. Louis and Kansas City offices of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service.

Illinois will argue for the 183rd F-16 Fighter Wing in Springfield, the 1,900 jobs at the Rock Island Arsenal and 2,000 jobs at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center, while citing the military value of those installations, said Andrew Ross. He is spokesman for the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

The commission is conducting regional hearings in more than a dozen states to evaluate the recommendations for closings and realignments made by the Pentagon, before submitting a proposed list to President George W. Bush and Congress.

Deal Helps Keep Base From Closing

The Air Force's Space and Missile Systems Center is getting a new home in exchange for land for condominiums.

Los Angeles Times (Los Angeles, CA)

Roger Vincent, Times Staff Writer

June 17, 2005

An airbase with no runways may be the perfect takeoff spot for an unusual public-private real estate development.

One key reason that Los Angeles Air Force Base avoided being included on the Pentagon's proposed base closure list released last month was the complex deal that is bringing new offices for the military and homes for the South Bay.

In this unusual land swap, developers are putting the finishing touches on a \$115-million office complex and day-care center at the El Segundo military facility; in exchange, the developers get 59 acres of base land and other parcels on which more than 900 condominiums will eventually be built.

"This is the first and only deal of its kind," said El Segundo Mayor Kelly McDowell. "It really is unprecedented."

The 520,000-square-foot office complex will replace aging base facilities that are not considered sufficiently safe to withstand a major earthquake. When the offices are completed at the end of the year by partners Catellus Development Corp., Kearney Real Estate Co. and Morgan Stanley, the Air Force will move its Space and Missile Systems Center to the new facility.

The original base offices, built in the 1950s, will be razed to make way for condos that are expected to fetch \$400,000 to \$700,000 apiece.

The project is financially complex, but the land swap was simplified by the base's layout.

It has no runways or hangars — just office buildings for about 4,500 military and civilian workers who administer about \$60 billion in defense contracts annually. The Space and Missile Systems Center, the base's major unit, develops space-based radar and communication systems for national security and military use, as well as intercontinental ballistic missile systems.

Keeping the base open is also a plus for the condo project, providing a lure for buyers

looking for residences nearby. Catellus and Kearney have sold 13 acres from the land swap to Centex Homes, which is building the first of 280 condos scheduled to open later this year.

The airbase had long been considered one of the state's military sites most vulnerable to closure. Operations could have been shifted to Colorado Springs, Colo. Local supporters argued that such a move would probably strip the program of most of its experienced civilian scientists because they would be reluctant to leave Southern California.

The base narrowly avoided closure during a round of cuts in 1995, and the next year a survey found that it fell short of seismic safety standards. Keeping the buildings cool and operating properly was also a headache.

"They are supposed to be concentrating on rocket science, not fixing air conditioners," McDowell said.

The plan to trade surplus land for new offices was devised by former base commander Lt. Gen. Eugene Tattini and former Rep. Steven Kuykendall. Government regulations didn't allow such a swap, so Kuykendall, an ex-Marine and member of the Armed Services Committee, wrote special legislation that passed in 2001.

"You had an Air Force base with four pieces of property ... in three different sites, and what they needed was one property with a half a million square feet of office space that met today's [earthquake] standards," Kuykendall said.

Six developers submitted proposals to construct offices and a day-care center on 52 acres of government property along Aviation Boulevard. In exchange, the developers would get the existing 42-acre base, 13 acres a few blocks south in Hawthorne and a 3.7-acre site in Sun Valley that once was home to the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service's broadcast center.

The winning development team was a partnership led by Century City-based Kearny and Catellus, a San Francisco real estate

investment trust. Last week, Catellus agreed to be acquired by ProLogis in a \$3.6-billion deal.

Catellus rarely works with partners, but Jeff Dritley, Kearney's managing partner, suggested the two companies team up. Even though Catellus owns and operates 40.6 million square feet of commercial real estate, it wouldn't have done the project alone, said Charlie McPhee, executive vice president.

"This is so big and so complicated," Dritley said. "To have a partner to share the risk and divide the tasks with was critical to our success."

Both companies have built large projects. Among Kearny's developments are the \$56-million transformation of a former Xerox office facility in Pasadena into a corporate park and the \$150-million mixed-use Grand Avenue Corporate Center in El Segundo. Catellus' projects include a 588-acre former Kaiser steel mill in San Bernardino County and development around Union Station in downtown Los Angeles.

The land the development team receives in exchange for building the new facilities will be sold to condo developers for about \$80 million, Dritley said. In addition, the city of Hawthorne and Los Angeles County pledged to give the developers \$25 million collected from future property taxes on the new condos. And the Air Force will pay \$10 million in rent before taking ownership of the new office site, he said.

Dritley estimated that the partnership would realize a profit of about 10% on the deal.

"It is possible for the military to be a very good steward of its assets," Kuykendall said. "The rest of the government ought to look at doing something like it."

Connecticut hires Washington firm to lobby for submarine base

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Groton, CT)
Lolita C. Baldor
June 17, 2005

The state of Connecticut is hiring a Washington lobbying group to bolster its defense of the submarine base in Groton, which has been targeted for closure by the Defense Department.

At a meeting Thursday, members of the state's congressional delegation said Gov. M. Jodi Rell has tapped The Washington Group, a high-powered firm headed by former New York Republican Congresswoman Susan Molinari.

The lobbyists, said Rep. Rob Simmons, R-Conn., will help state officials develop their presentation to the base closing commission, which will review the New England recommendations at a hearing in Boston on July 6. The governor's office did not immediately know how much the state will pay for the firm's services, and said the final contract language is being negotiated.

The state is also considering offers for additional help from a number of military experts, including retired Vice Adm. Al Konetzni, who served as commander of the Navy's submarine forces in the Pacific Fleet, and would be a strong advocate for the Groton base.

Simmons also said he plans to travel Friday to Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay in Georgia, where the Pentagon has proposed moving the submarine school currently located at Naval Submarine Base New London, which is in Groton. Naval officials in Georgia will give him a tour of the facility so he can "get a feel for the base, look at the piers, kick the tires and check the surge capacity," said Simmons.

The members of Congress and state Attorney General Richard Blumenthal met for about an hour in the U.S. Capitol Thursday morning mapping out strategy to overturn the Pentagon's recommendation, while Rell participated by phone. Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn., said the politicians will probably play a limited role in the July hearing. The politicians will leave the major presentations up to experts who will be better able to address the base's military value and any problems with the data used by the

Pentagon to back up its decision to shut down the base, he said.

Each state will have two hours to make its presentation to the members of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission.

The recommended closure of the Groton base, which would take place between 2006 and 2011, and would shift much of the facilities, vessels and people from Connecticut to Kings Bay and Naval Station Norfolk on the Virginia coast.

Connecticut lawmakers have argued that the costs of shutting down the base and moving the submarine school have been largely underestimated, and that the military value of the Groton base has also been miscalculated.

The Pentagon said the estimated cost of the entire move - which also will include shifts to several other smaller facilities - is \$679 million.

Connecticut was hit the hardest by the Pentagon's base closing recommendations, absorbing about 8,600 proposed job losses - nearly 30 percent of the net national job cuts that would result from the closure plan announced May 13.

Clock ticks on BRAC decision for base in Clovis, N.M.

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Clovis, NM)
Greg Cunningham
June 16, 2005

CLOVIS, N.M. -- 10...9...8...

Every day, the calendar on the door of the Clovis/Curry County Chamber of Commerce gets thinner while the tension in the Clovis air gets thicker.

7...6...5...

Each day, a staff member from the chamber of commerce peels off another sheet from the calendar, advancing the countdown one step closer to the day that will determine the fate of

Cannon Air Force Base and, to some extent, Clovis itself. 4...3...2...

Meanwhile, staff members from the chamber, city, county, surrounding counties, surrounding states -- pretty much any organization with a stake in the financial future of the tri-state area -- are putting the finishing touches on their strategies for what could be the fight of their lives, until finally, a week from today, only one sheet will be left hanging from the calendar.

1...

One day remaining until the people of Clovis take to the streets with homemade signs while politicians from three states converge on the city and local officials pull out reams of documents, all in the hopes the Base Realignment and Closure Commission will reverse a Department of Defense recommendation to close Cannon Air Force Base. "The momentum is building each day as we get closer to June 24," said Ernie Kos, executive director of the chamber. "The number of letters of support we're getting and the phone calls, they just keep piling up. A lot of people are anxious for the big day."

Clovis officials said they are seeing a lot of positive signs that make them hopeful that Cannon may be spared the chopping block.

If public support were the measure on whether the BRAC Commission recommended closure, Cannon almost certainly would be safe.

Robert McCreary, deputy director of communications for the BRAC Commission, said supporters of Cannon have been making their voices heard.

"The letters are pouring in here," McCreary said. "I talked to a person in the documenting department the other day, and they said (Cannon has) the most letters received from any one facility in the country."

A lot of those letters are coming from places other than Clovis. Cannon has found numerous allies in its fight, including many governments and groups in neighboring Texas. The Amarillo

Chamber of Commerce has undertaken a widespread letter-writing campaign and will take a bus to Clovis to drop off letters prior to the BRAC meeting.

One of the latest additions to the list of supporters is Randall County, which joined the fight this week. Commissioner Gene Parker presented a resolution to the commissioners court expressing support for Cannon. Parker, who also handed out letters to be sent to the BRAC Commission, said the potential closure of Cannon is not a problem limited to New Mexico.

"If you go out to a mall or a restaurant or a movie theater and count the number of New Mexico tags in the parking lot, it won't take long to figure out how important Clovis is to our economy," Parker said. "The same's true for WT. Count the number of students over there from New Mexico. Our economy is linked to Clovis in a very real way."

All those letters must be making an impact on BRAC commissioners.

Judging by the schedule of visits on the BRAC Commission Web site, getting a couple of the nine commissioners to visit is doing pretty good. On June 24, Clovis will host six commissioners.

"The number changes daily, but today the count is six for sure," Kos said. "It's pretty encouraging. From what we can tell, it's the most that's been committed to any hearing so far."

Unfortunately, base closures don't come down to popularity contests, so Clovis will have to come up with a lot more than just letters and e-mails.

McCreary said the commission is tasked by law with making military value the chief criteria by which it judges the necessity of closing down a base, followed by economic impact. If the DOD said closing Cannon would increase military readiness, Clovis better come up with some new information to counter that contention.

"The emotional part of it, of writing letters in support of a facility are good, however, military

value and economic impact are the considerations," McCreary said. "I think what the commissioners and commission staff have said is bring new information, that's what's going to have the impact." Clovis has been putting in the work on that front, as well. Joe Thomas, city manager, said a massive effort to tear through the DOD's data has been under way by at least three firms.

"It's intimidating when you look at the volumes of information there," Thomas said. "But I assure you it's been gone through page by page and line by line. These guys are working day and night trying to get the presentation prepared."

The Committee of 50, a group of volunteers working under the auspices of the chamber, has hired a firm out of Washington with experience in fighting base closures. The firm is poring over the information and creating a presentation, Thomas said. The state also has hired a couple of firms that are working their own angles.

Nobody wants to give away the secrets before the big revelation at next week's presentation, but it looks as if the firms have been earning their money.

"It's really hard to tell, but most of the information we've been getting over the last week or so seems to be positive," Thomas said. "Since our consultants have been analyzing the data the DOD used, they've been finding several errors and issues with the information."

Kos, too, was hesitant to reveal specifics, but she said what she has heard so far tells her the consultants have come up with some important new information.

"I honestly feel like the outcome is going to be positive for us," Kos said. "Based on the in-depth research and analysis of the data, as it relates to military value and economic impact, it is clear there are some flaws in the information used to come to this decision."

Despite that new evidence and its importance, Kos said, no one should think the need for

public support has waned. Clovis officials have big plans for impressing the BRAC Commission next week, and the public will have to do its share. Officials are calling on anyone available the morning of June 24 to line Prince Street and Commerce Way from the La Quinta Inn, where the BRAC commissioners will stay, to Marshall Junior High, where the public meeting will be held. "We're encouraging everybody in the community to get out there no later than 7 a.m. and asking them to bring homemade signs to decorate the route," Kos said. "We want every foot of that route covered with Cannon supporters. We really want to make an impression."

The auditorium at the junior high won't hold nearly as many people as will want to attend, so a rally will be conducted on the football field for the overflow following the meeting, which starts at 8:30 a.m.

Once the rally is over and the commissioners have gone, all that will be left is for the folks in Clovis to take a step back, breathe a sigh of relief and take a lot of satisfaction that they have done all they can to keep their air base open, Kos said.

"It is amazing," she said. "The whole Operation Keep Cannon is a bigger process than I ever dreamt we would be involved in, and the response has been even bigger."

"Everyone from elected community leaders to the average Joe has been involved. It doesn't matter your political affiliation or economic situation; it crosses all barriers. The sense is the entire community is dedicated to keeping Cannon."

**Eielson backers mobilize;
Top state officials offer four-pronged defense
of the Air Force base**
Anchorage Daily News (Anchorage, AK)
Tatoboline Brant
June 16, 2005

Alaska's top elected officials teamed with two retired generals Wednesday to make the case to

the Base Realignment and Closure Commission that Eielson Air Force Base should not be gutted.

About 3,500 community members, most dressed in red "America Needs Eielson" T-shirts and carrying small flags and booster signs, packed the Carlson Center for the midafternoon hearing -- the first full-scale hearing in the country since the BRAC list was released in May.

Four of the nine commissioners charged with reviewing the Pentagon's recommendations for closing and downsizing military facilities across the country attended. They spent the morning touring Eielson and its neighbor, Fort Wainwright Army post, and then entered the Carlson Center in Fairbanks about 1 p.m. to a standing ovation and took their seats at a long table at one end of the arena.

For two hours the commissioners listened and took notes as a parade of public officials told them why the Pentagon's idea to "warm base" Eielson -- military jargon for turning it into a part-time training base and cutting nearly all of its roughly 3,000 personnel -- was a bad idea for America, Alaska and the Fairbanks area.

The tone among Alaska officials appearing before the panel was one of courteous outrage and disbelief.

"There is no such thing as a 'warm' facility in midwinter Alaska," U.S. Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, warned at one point, drawing applause and some laughter from the crowd. "A facility is either operational or it's not. The Department of Defense has tried this 'warm-basing' approach previously at Adak and (Fort) Greely. I urge you to review those. ... (They) led to rapid deterioration of the infrastructure at both bases."

Most of the points made to the commissioners had been raised publicly in the weeks leading up to the presentation, but Wednesday's gathering went into more vivid detail and transpired amid the emotions of the thousands who attended.

The main argument of those making appearances before the panel focused on four

points: Eielson's strategic location, its expansive training range, the opportunity here for joint Army-Air Force training and the economic impact locally of downsizing.

"Look at where you are," state Sen. Gary Wilken told the commissioners. "You're 160 miles south of the Arctic Circle. Flying into Eielson, you certainly noticed an absence of any urban settlements for a thousand miles," he said, explaining that the economies in the Interior are isolated. "As such, we are uniquely self-contained. And therein lays a major difference in our message that you will hear in no other community. ... We are not a community built around a base. We are a base who built a community."

Wilken and others made the point that if Eielson is downsized, the local economy will be too, and with it will go some services essential to base operations that can't come back overnight in the event of an emergency.

The Save Eielson task force had worked for weeks to plan Wednesday's presentation. They were shooting for 5,000 attendees but were clearly pleased with the number who showed up.

The air outside the Carlson Center as people arrived was county fair meets Independence Day. The Fairbanks community band played tunes on the front lawn as hundreds of people flocked from home and work to attend the meeting.

"This turnout, it's exactly what I thought Fairbanks would do," said task force member Marilyn Romano, publisher of the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner. "I'm thrilled. I heard traffic's backed up all the way to Airport Way. It's going to be a sea of red."

A line started forming about an hour before the arena opened and eventually snaked around the building. Bunches of red, white and blue balloons lined the sidewalk, and a balloon arch floated near the front door where a man played "Johnny Came Marching Home" on a tin whistle.

Volunteers handed out bottled water to those standing in the hot sun while a security woman near the entrance tried to keep things moving, shouting periodically: "I got two lines, please. Keep coming forward."

Don Ritter, a retired state health worker, said the turnout showed how much the base means to the community. "It's more than just the economics," he said, referring to times in the past when the military has helped in times of crisis, such as during fires and floods.

Inside, once the formal presentation started, University of Alaska President Mark Hamilton and Alaska Railroad President Pat Gamble tag-teamed the main pitch to the commission. They told the commission that some of the information from the Department of Defense just doesn't add up -- a point echoed by Stevens.

"The Air Force cannot have it both ways," Stevens said at one point. "It claims cost savings by mothballing much of this base, which notionally reduces the base operating costs. At the same time, its analysis does not account for the costs associated with shutting down the base -- such as environmental cleanup and community assistance."

The team also questioned how it could be in the nation's interest to all but shut down one of the few bases in Alaska -- which is enormous in size and has many things to protect.

"Our aircraft at Eielson have been the first line of defense against threats to Fort Greely, Alaska NORAD, our coastline and the trans-Alaska pipeline," Stevens said. "And that includes the Port of Valdez."

"The strategic importance of Alaska to our nation's defense and to our responsibilities in the world is the reason that we maintain an Alaskan Command," said U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska. "The Joint Chiefs of Staff does not maintain a Georgia Command, a Louisiana Command or a Nevada Command. It maintains the Alaskan Command because Alaska is America's frontier and Alaska basing is vital to

the protection of America's interests in the Pacific."

The commissioners, who will make their recommendations to President Bush at the end of summer, asked several questions after the presentation, which Hamilton took as a good sign. He said he was "very impressed" with the commissioner's attentiveness. "It was clear they listened," he said.

Commission chairman Anthony Principi said the members' 21/2-day Alaska visit, which included stops at Kulis Air National Guard Base and Elmendorf Air Force Base, was "very informative." He said he thought the presentation was well done but that it was too soon in the process to draw any conclusions. "We learned a great deal," he said.

Another commissioner, James Hansen, said that if community support is any kind of criteria for influencing the panel, "you've got a winner here."

Base supporters pleased by reaction of BRAC staff

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Clovis, NM)
June 16, 2005

A member of a group trying to remove Cannon Air Force Base from the Pentagon's hit list says he expects an objective look from the independent commission analyzing the Pentagon recommendation to close the base.

Supporters of the Clovis-area base and their consultants were in Washington, D.C., this week to present their case to spare the base. Wednesday's meeting with staff members of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission lasted more than two hours, although it had been slated for only an hour, said Committee of Fifty member Randy Harris.

"I was very pleased to see a commission staff that is focused on analyzing the Department of Defense recommendations objectively and independently," Harris said. "In no way have

they said, "We are just going to be a rubber stamp."

The group presented its 78-page document about the base and argued that the decision to shut down Cannon was based on faulty data.

The primary consideration for evaluating a base under the realignment process is its military value.

By that standard, Cannon scores in the top three Air Force installations, yet the Pentagon's evaluation puts Cannon behind 49 other installations, Harris said.

"There's so much data, so many formulas and crunching of numbers, that it's easy for these things to be wrong," he said. "So that's what our team has to do, is go through and show where there were inconsistencies or incorrect data."

Cannon's supporters also argued that encroachment was not weighted highly enough in the formulas and that the Air Force should take a planned expansion of the training range around Cannon into consideration.

The Air Force has been working to expand the training range around Cannon, and base supporters have expressed frustration that the Pentagon did not take the planned expansion into account in the analysis that led to the recommendation to close the southern New Mexico base. They've also noted nothing is encroaching on Cannon.

Members of New Mexico's congressional delegation and Gov. Bill Richardson also have been meeting with BRAC staffers or commissioners this week.

A BRAC hearing is set June 24 hearing in Clovis. It would take five of the nine commissioners to remove a base from the list.

The commission's recommendations are due by Sept. 8 to President Bush, who may accept or reject the entire list. If he accepts it, it goes to Congress for a yes or no vote, again on the entire list.

Ohio lawmakers argue against Pentagon plan

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (OH)
Devlin Barrett
June 16, 2005

Lawmakers trying to beat back military job cuts in their districts argued Thursday that the Pentagon has failed to count the full cost of removing financial work from Ohio, New York and other areas.

Three Ohio lawmakers, Republican Steve LaTourette and Democrats Dennis Kucinich and Stephanie Tubbs Jones, and Rep. Sherwood Boehlert, D-N.Y., are trying to fight a proposal to consolidate military accounting work by closing offices in their district.

The Base Realignment and Closure recommendations provided by the Pentagon last month are now being considered by a BRAC commission, which will offer its recommendations to President Bush in September.

The Pentagon wants to consolidate offices of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service. The current proposal is to close more than 20 facilities around the country, including the DFAS offices in Cleveland and Rome, N.Y.

The closures would mean the loss of more than 1,000 jobs in Cleveland and 290 in Rome, though Boehlert said Thursday the actual loss would be 392, because the facility has added positions in recent years.

The Department of Defense wants to combine all the DFAS payroll and accounting work in three cities, Indianapolis, Denver and Columbus, Ohio.

The lawmakers argued the Pentagon has underestimated the actual costs of such a shift.

Indianapolis could gain as much as 3,500 new jobs, but LaTourette said the building there only

has 99,000 additional square feet, not nearly enough space for the extra workers.

The lawmakers argued the government would have to buy more space, which would make the Indianapolis move far more pricey than the current \$2.8 million estimate.

"We've got the Pentagon playing musical chairs, not just with the jobs at DFAS, but with the lives of the people that work there," Kucinich said.

"It was an incomplete analysis," Boehlert said, adding that getting military officials to offer supporting data and information "is sometimes like pulling teeth."

While the lawmakers were quick to criticize the Pentagon, the battlefield over base closings has shifted to the nine-member commission as it holds hearings around the country before making recommendations to the White House.

Retired Gen. Lloyd Newton, a member of the commission, will visit Rome on June 22, and a regional BRAC hearing of the commission will be held five days later in Buffalo, near the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, which is scheduled for closure.

Indiana delegation to boost state's military facilities

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Indianapolis, IN)
June 16, 2005

A delegation of local, state and federal officials will testify before the Base Realignment and Closure Commission next week in hopes of preserving jobs at Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center.

The commission is holding a regional hearing Monday in St. Louis to review federal recommendations to downsize the center and make other defense installation changes in Indiana and five other states. The hearing is one of 16 being held throughout the country.

Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman will lead Indiana's 14-member delegation. Members also will testify about the Air National Guard Station at Fort Wayne's airport and the Army finance center in Indianapolis. The commission has recommended that jobs be added at those installations.

Overall, Indiana would gain nearly 2,200 mostly civilian jobs under the proposed changes, which would occur over six years starting in 2006 if approved. The majority would be at the finance center at the former Fort Benjamin Harrison.

But Crane, about 30 miles southwest of Bloomington, could lose about 670 jobs. It now has about 4,000 government workers and contractors doing work such as modifying weapons for Navy SEALs testing laser-guided bombs.

Gov. Mitch Daniels has said his administration would continue to lobby the federal base closing commission to preserve all of Crane's jobs.

According to Skillman's office, other members of the Indiana delegation will include U.S. Rep. Mark Souder, R-Ind.; state Reps. Dave Crooks, D-Washington; Eric Koch, R-Bedford; and Peggy Welch, D-Bloomington; and Loogootee Mayor Don Bowling.

Jackson Co. officials to have second chance to defend Naval base

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Pascagoula, MS)
June 16, 2005

Officials in Jackson County will have another chance to explain why Naval Station Pascagoula should be kept open when they meet with Base Realignment and Closure analysts in Washington, D.C.

That invitation was extended Thursday by BRAC Commissioner Harold Gehman Jr. during a 20-minute meeting with Pascagoula Mayor-elect Matthew Avara and Board of Supervisors President Manly Barton. The Mississippi Press of Pascagoula reported in Friday's editions.

The local officials will discuss the base's military value and claims of sizeable savings by the Pentagon during that meeting. A date has not been determined, officials said.

"We had some discrepancies that came out of the (Department of Defense) report and we also requested that we be allowed to come to Washington and meet with some of the other analysts, (and) he welcomed that with open arms," Avara said.

Gehman spent four hours visiting the naval station and three hours at the hospital at Keesler Air Force Base as part of a series of tours to learn about the bases on the department's BRAC list.

"This is step two of a big multi-step process," Gehman said. "It's not really a fact-finding visit. It's a chance for one of the commissioners to actually see, walk, talk to the people and understand what it is that is in the recommendation."

Nine BRAC commissioners are visiting about 75 of the most impacted bases, he said.

The Pentagon recommended restructuring the unit at Keesler, causing a decrease of 181 military, 31 civilian and 190 contractor positions, and wants to close Naval Station Pascagoula. The base could lose 844 military personnel, 112 civilian workers and seven contractors, if the plan is approved.

Some, including U.S. Rep. Gene Taylor, D-Miss., oppose the BRAC process and say closing Naval bases could be devastating for national security.

Concerns About Base Mount; Community Fears Losing More Than 6,000 Jobs

The Daily News of Los Angeles (Los Angeles, CA)

Eric Leach

June 16, 2005

Ventura County's coastal communities could lose more than 6,000 high-paying jobs under the Department of Defense restructuring proposed last month - nearly twice as many as initially projected, officials said Wednesday.

The plan would cut employment by more than one-third at Naval Base Ventura County, transferring jobs from the base's Naval Air Warfare Center at Point Mugu to the Naval Air Weapons Station at China Lake in the Kern County desert.

"It is the worst of scenarios," said Bill Simmons, manager of the BRAC 2005 Ventura County Task Force, which is reviewing recommendations the Pentagon made last month to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

"We stand to lose up to 6,300 direct and indirect high-paying jobs, but we won't have the opportunity to redevelop the land if the current recommendations are implemented," he said.

Officials initially estimated that Ventura County would lose 1,550 military and 1,900 civilian jobs.

Ventura County officials said the greater potential job loss became apparent after closer review of documents released by the Department of Defense last month.

In a task force meeting with community leaders at Camarillo City Hall on Wednesday evening, a standing-room-only crowd of several hundred people - most of them military employees - voiced their concerns over possible relocation to the China Lake area.

Simmons said the military recommendations could result in a potential loss of 2,856 military and civil service jobs and 3,517 contractor jobs in Ventura County.

Naval Base Ventura County represents the county's largest employer, with about 17,000 workers on the base and contributing about \$1.2 billion a year to the local economy.

County officials said they will attend the federal BRAC Commission hearing - expected to be held in Southern California on July 14 - to make the case that the Ventura County changes would be detrimental to the military.

"I think it is urgent that the community get engaged and understand the impact. We need help from the community to raise funds and make sure we have a strong position when we come in front of the BRAC Commission in July," Ventura County Supervisor Kathy Long said.

Jack Dodd, former vice commander of the Naval Air Warfare Center at Point Mugu, said there are important military arguments against some of the proposed changes.

"Realigning Point Mugu's sea range, targets, test squadron and electronic warfare personnel and facilities to China Lake would cost millions of dollars, would reduce operational efficiencies, would reduce safety of operations and, most importantly, would negatively impact the ability of our war fighters, our men and women in uniform, to perform their missions," he said.

"We simply cannot let these recommendations stand."

Simmons said another major drawback to employment under the proposed changes is that it prevents new development on the land.

"Normally what happens is that developers can turn (closed) bases into useful projects, business parks, universities, you name it. Now we're talking about losing jobs while the Navy is still holding onto the land," he said. "So the community cannot turn it into revenue-producing land and have opportunity for economic rebound."

Howard Gantman, a spokesman for Sen. Dianne Feinstein, said her office will be reviewing all reports very closely. "We're always very concerned about the impact of base closures on local communities," he said.

Rally to back Naval Support Activity

Times-Picayune (New Orleans, LA)

Paul Purpura

June 16, 2005

Hoping to show community support for the Naval Support Activity, Algiers groups are hosting a rally outside the base Friday during a visit by a federal official who will review the Defense Department's plans to close the installation.

"This is so important to us economically," said Kathy Lynn Honaker, executive director of the Algiers Economic Development Foundation, which is co-sponsoring the rally.

The AEDF and the Algiers Development District are seeking volunteers who will greet Harold Gehman, a retired Navy admiral and one of nine BRAC commissioners reviewing the closure list, when he arrives at the Naval Support Activity about 8:30 a.m., Honaker said.

Gehman will be in New Orleans on a fact-finding mission at the Algiers base, which is one of 33 facilities nationwide that the Defense Department wants to close through the base realignment and closure process, known as BRAC.

Volunteers are asked to be at the Naval Support Activity's main gate at Gen. Meyer Drive and Shirley Drive no later than 8 a.m., Honaker said. The rally will last about an hour, and hand-held signs will be provided, she said.

The neutral grounds from the Crescent City Connection to the base's main gate at Gen. Meyer Drive and Shirley Drive will be dotted with campaign-like signs showing support for the military, Honaker said.

The rally is part of a larger effort designed to show support for the military and Naval Support Activity.

This week, 36 banners are being hung at Louis Armstrong International Airport and other places, said Sam Polo, who heads public

relations for the Mayor's Military Advisory Committee of Greater New Orleans.

Additionally, at least 20,000 bumper stickers have been printed, along with 600 campaign-like signs, 250 hand-held signs and four billboards, Polo said.

At least \$125,000 has been donated to the effort by the ADD and the New Orleans Business Council, officials said.

A larger number of BRAC commissioners will be in New Orleans July 12 for a regional hearing, during which city officials will propose a plan to turn the base into a "federal city," said retired Marine Corps Maj. Gen. David Mize, chairman of the Mayor's Military Advisory Committee.

Under the proposed federal city plan, military and homeland security agencies would be consolidated at the Algiers portion of Naval Support Activity in a campus that could cost up to \$200 million, paid for largely with state bond money. The Bywater portion of the base would be closed.

Officials will ask the commission to vote to keep the base open so the federal city can be built, Mize said.

"We have a pretty good case to make," Mize said. "There are no guarantees."

Whale-protection Rules Pose Challenge For Kings Bay Sub Plan

New London Day (New London, CT)

Judy Benson

June 17, 2005

The Pentagon's proposal to close the Naval Submarine Base in Groton and move some of the 17 submarines berthed there to Kings Bay, Ga., could pose challenges as new rules are implemented to protect the precariously small population of North Atlantic right whales from fatal collisions with ships.

In documents distributed this week, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration outlines a proposal for speed limits for all ships over 65 feet in length in areas it deems critical to the survival of the remaining 300 whales. The only calving area for North Atlantic right whales is in coastal waters off northern Florida and southern Georgia, including the area around the Navy base at Kings Bay. NOAA officials have said that any increase in vessel traffic in that area could be a concern for calving-area protection efforts.

So-called ship strikes are a major cause of death for right whales. Consideration of the potential threat to the right whales, which are protected by the Endangered Species Act, could help local and state efforts to save the Groton base from closure, since impacts on marine mammals and endangered species must be weighed by government officials as part of assessments of a base's military value. Navy documents on impacts of the base closure and realignment recommendations acknowledge that the right whale calving grounds could be affected.

As part of its plan to protect the remaining whales, NOAA has proposed new rules, which could be implemented this fall, to impose speed limits of 10 to 14 knots and have vessels travel in established shipping lanes in the calving area from Dec. 1 through March 31. After that, the whales begin traveling north to feeding grounds off northern New England and Canada.

The speed limits and shipping lanes, if enacted, would help reduce the chances of ships colliding with whales, according to NOAA documents. Slower speeds would give ships more time to move out of the way if whales are spotted, and shipping lanes would be located away from routes frequented by whales, according to the agency. The Los Angeles-class submarines based in Groton travel at speeds of about 21 knots and are about 360 feet in length.

The Navy, however, would be exempt from the speed limits and lane restrictions under the NOAA proposal. Comments from conservation groups and others in response to the proposal have urged NOAA to remove the Navy

exemption before the rules become final. One group, The Ocean Conservancy, stated in a Nov. 15 letter to NOAA that Navy vessels account for 17 percent of all whale-ship collisions, the highest of any single source.

“The speed restrictions would provide a good level of protection, if the Navy would abide by them,” said Amy Knowlton, research scientist with the New England Aquarium in Boston, one of the conservation organizations supporting the new rules. “If the Navy's not on board, that would be a huge problem. Any increase in traffic in (the calving) area is a concern and should certainly be considered. We're losing right whales up and down the East Coast.”

Knowlton added that submarines based in Groton would be less of a threat to right whales because they can stay outside of the whales' most critical habitats more easily.

In a Nov. 3 letter to NOAA, Donald Schregardus, the Navy's deputy assistant secretary for environment, said the Navy must not be subjected to speed limits and lane restrictions and that an exemption for Navy vessels should be explicitly stated in the new NOAA rules.

Any routing and speed restrictions, he wrote, “are incompatible with (the Navy's) national security and homeland defense missions, and would seriously undermine military training, anti-terrorism/force protection requirements and open-water operations.”

He added that in the Southeast, the Navy has worked with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Coast Guard to track whales with aerial surveys and help with whale protection efforts by notifying other ships, including submarines, about whale locations during calving season.

Responding to specific questions about impacts on the whales and the possibility of increasing the number of submarines at Kings Bay, Navy spokeswoman Lt. Christine Ventresca said, “We are stewards of the environment and we will continue to work to protect the environment and

fulfill our obligations.” She provided no further comment.

In a Feb. 11 letter, a coalition of 11 conservation groups told the Navy that it must step up efforts to avoid whale collisions and abide by the Endangered Species Act. Signers of the letter included The Ocean Conservancy, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society and the National Environmental Trust. According to the letter, researchers attribute the death of one pregnant female whale in 2004 to a Navy ship. Another whale death in 1995 is attributed to a Navy submarine, according to the letter.

“The frequency and quantity of Department of Defense vessels in right whale habitat ... certainly indicate an additional level of risk to the species ...,” the letter states. “The loss of even a single right whale ... presents a serious threat to the species.”

Opinions/ Editorials

Chamber takes reasoned approach on . . . base closures

Anchorage Daily News (Anchorage, AK)
Tom Brennan
June 16, 2005

It Would Have Been easy to respond with a knee-jerk reaction to the recommendations that propose to realign operations at Fort Richardson, Elmendorf Air Force Base and Kulis Air National Guard Base.

The same applies to the much more drastic plan that effectively would shut down Eielson Air Force Base near Fairbanks. The Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, to its credit, did neither concerning the report last month by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

On the one hand, the chamber offered what it called "general support" of the BRAC recommendations about the military bases here. On the other, it came out four-square "in support of Fairbanks' efforts to keep Eielson an active U.S. Air Force Base."

The chairman of the BRAC group and three other members of the nine-man commission are in Alaska this week conducting on-site hearings about the potential impact of the recommendations, as they might affect both the military mission in the 49th State and the local civilian economy.

From the Anchorage standpoint, the impact will be minimal. Looking at the total military and civilian impact here, the chamber said in a resolution, the changes "appear to be prudent." As a result, the chamber said, it "supports the recommendations as presented."

Fairbanks is a whole different story, and the support by the Anchorage chamber for Eielson and the civilian community there is significant.

Here, Kulis will close, but its aircraft and personnel will transfer to Elmendorf and its facilities presumably will be transferred to the adjacent Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport. Administration and facility operations at Elmendorf and Fort Richardson will be combined, some units at both installations will be moved hither and yon, but the net result likely will be an increase in personnel and air and ground forces.

The potential shutdown of Eielson would be an economic disaster for Fairbanks, resulting in the relocation of 2,821 military positions, 319 Air Force civilian jobs, and the loss of an estimated 1,770 other jobs in the city and the base's surrounding community. From a military standpoint, it would represent a stunning loss in the Air Force's defense capability and training opportunities.

The potential closure of Eielson is not simply a local issue. It is one that could have a dramatic adverse affect on the whole state.

It was good that the Anchorage chamber added its weight to the battle to keep Eielson up and running.

It won't be easy to reverse a BRAC recommendation. But in this case, there is at least reason for hope.

Let's protect city's neighborhoods

Additional Notes