

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



BIRD

June 18, 2005

Department of Defense Releases

[Fort Leonard Wood Provides Blueprint for BRAC Realignments](#)

[Base closures, plane reductions threaten Northwest, panel told \(Portland, OR\)](#)

[BRAC admiral tours bases \(Biloxi, MS\)](#)

National News Articles

[Panel Receives More Data On Base Closings](#)

[Leaders lobby to maintain air base \(Duluth, MN\)](#)

[Officials To Speak Against Removing Fighter Jets](#)

[N.O. hopes to pull rank on BRAC plan \(New Orleans, LA\)](#)

[Pentagon Satisfies Senate on Base Closings](#)

Opinions/Editorials

[Eielson's future is still . . . a long shot \(Anchorage, AK\)](#)

[Pentagon Plan To Relocate Fighter Jets Runs Into Flak](#)

Additional Notes

N/A

[Florida Senators Say Energy Bill Would Ax JSF Training Site Plans](#)

Department of Defense Releases

Local News Articles

[BRAC Member To Visit 911th Santorum Says Report Error \(Pittsburgh, PA\)](#)

Fort Leonard Wood Provides Blueprint for BRAC Realignments

American Forces Press Service

Donna Miles

June 17, 2005

[Bases closers unlikely to visit Tobyhanna \(Wilkes Barre, PA\)](#)

[Alaskans fight doggedly for Eielson \(Anchorage, AK\)](#)

[Blanco, others, pitch plans for New Orleans base to BRAC \(New Orleans, LA\)](#)

Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.– For a look at what's ahead following the next round of base realignments, you'll find few better examples than the U.S. Army Maneuver Support Center here in the Ozarks.

[Nevada governor, others to testify against closing weapons depot \(Las Vegas, NV\)](#)

Formed after the 1995 round of base realignment and closures, MANSCEN, as it's called here, brings together three combat support centers and schools at one location. The Army's Military

Police and Chemical centers and schools, both previously based at the since-closed Fort McClellan, Ala., moved here in 1999 to join the U.S. Army Engineer Center and School.

The three schools now have their headquarters in wings fanning out of the sprawling William M. Hoge Hall.

It's the same concept the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure recommendations propose, moving the Army's Armor School from Fort Knox, Ky., to join the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Ga., as part of a new Army Maneuver Center there.

BRAC 2005 plans also call for moving the Army's Air Defense Artillery School to Fort Sill, Okla., to join the Field Artillery School as a new Army Fires Center.

The Defense Department also proposes creation of a Combat Service Support Center at Fort Lee, Va. That center would consolidate the Army Ordnance School, now at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.; the Army Transportation School at Fort Eustis, Va.; and the Army Quartermaster School at Fort Lee.

"The model for those centers was Fort Leonard Wood and the successes we've experienced here," said Army Col. J.C. Abney, the post's garrison commander.

Consolidating the schools at one post cut out redundancies in the separate garrisons and staffs that supported them, Abney said. It also freed up 687 military positions for other missions.

But there's an even more compelling argument than increased efficiency for consolidations like those proposed by BRAC 2005, Abney said. Collocating the schools and centers for functionally related branches enhances their training, and ultimately, their ability to work together in a wartime environment.

"It creates a synergy that's just not possible when they're at separate locations," Abney said.

Training exercises bring together students from the Engineer, Military Police and Chemical

schools, who work together as they would in combat. Combat developers, who focus on future strategy, force structure, doctrine and equipment for their specific branches, coordinate their efforts. Cadres from the three schools share the common elements in their curriculum.

"If you train in the same environment and do your combat development in the same environment, it translates to a much better, cohesive working environment between the different branches on the battlefield," Abney said.

"And ultimately, everything we do comes together on the battlefield," he said. "So if the different branches have an understanding of each other's mission and roles, it promotes better coordination for the future."

"Nothing we do is in a vacuum," agreed Army Col. Don Bailey, commander of the 3rd Chemical Brigade at the U.S. Army Chemical School here. "We have to collaborate because our missions are so intermingled, and being together at one location enhances that collaboration."

Army Lt. Col. Paul Grosskruger, chief of staff for the Army Engineer School, said sharing facilities and support minimizes bureaucracy so everyone can focus on their missions.

While emphasizing that each branch must continue to train its members in branch- and proponent-specific skills, he said doing so in a collaborative environment increases understanding of how each branch does and how it contributes to the overall mission.

"Modern warfare is combined-arms warfare, so when you have the ability to collaborate in training, it's a big plus," Grosskruger said.

"The bottom line is, here at MANSCEN, we're not interested in what (branch insignia) is on our collars," he said. "What we're interested in is the effect."

National News Articles

Panel Receives More Data On Base Closings

Hartford Courant

David Lightman

June 18, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Senate committee leaders Friday said they were satisfied that the Pentagon has largely complied with their subpoena for documents about the military base closing process, but that there's still information missing.

"You have produced information responsive to most of our targeted requests, though some, of course, remain outstanding," Sens. Joseph I. Lieberman, D-Conn., and Susan M. Collins, R-Maine, wrote to Acting Pentagon Deputy Secretary Gordon England on Friday.

The senators last week told the Defense Department to produce everything it had - every phone message, e-mail, data analysis and so on - showing how it wound up selecting the bases recommended for closure. Lieberman and Collins have a strong interest in two of the largest: the Naval Submarine Base in Groton and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine.

There are still meeting minutes, e-mails and other data not there, but Pentagon officials have pledged to work with the senators.

Collins, chairwoman of the Senate homeland security committee, and Lieberman, its top Democrat, found that adequate.

"Your assurances give us reason to hope that the process from here forward will in fact be accountable and open," they said in the letter. The Pentagon did not respond to requests for comment.

The base closure recommendations were announced May 13, and are now being considered by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission. The nine-member panel will hold a hearing in Boston on July 6.

Gov. M. Jodi Rell's office is hiring The Washington Group, a well-connected consulting firm, to help prepare the state's presentation in defense of the sub base.

The state's "keynote speaker" for the hearing is expected to be retired Vice Adm. Albert H. Konetzni Jr., who served as commander of the Navy's submarine forces in the Pacific Fleet.

Konetzni, who would work with The Washington Group, would be the kind of nonpolitical voice usually considered an asset at such hearings.

"The commission has heard from the politicians," said Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn.

Konetzni, who retired from the Navy last year, was known as "Big Al" in submarine circles and called "a credit to his shoulder boards" by submarinesailor.com.

When he retired, the website for submariners said that Konetzni "has become a household word and enlisted leadership standard on both coasts. ... Big Al was big, in more ways than physical stature." Before he retired, he was briefly the only senior submariner involved at any time in the Navy base closing process.

The effort to save the base needs more than Konetzni's personal skills; it also needs data to counter the facts and analyses that went into the Pentagon recommendation.

The subpoena was aimed at getting all that data. The Defense Department produced material last weekend and again throughout this week, and whether it will help Connecticut's cause is still being determined.

At least, said John Markowicz, chairman of the Subbase Realignment Coalition, "more data came out faster."

He and Connecticut congressional delegation officials said that the recently released material showed promise in five areas:

*Aerial photos of the installation. The photos were made available, meaning that state officials could now look at exactly what Pentagon officials saw as they surveyed the base.

*Safety evaluations of the Trident missiles. Data will show how defense officials considered the adequacy of missile storage, and perhaps whether submarines without Tridents can be repaired and maintained without restriction in the same harbor.

At the moment, workers cannot deal with such subs if they are within a Trident-loaded sub's "explosive arc."

*Environmental data. There is more information on the "radiological assessment" of the base. This is crucial because of the potential cost of environmental cleanup.

*Docking for the submarines. Markowicz said that the Pentagon listed the harbor as having only two graving docks, when it has three plus a floating dock. That would suggest that the Pentagon was not aware of the base's capacity for home porting additional submarines.

*A list of all the military personnel and contractors who worked on the base closing recommendation.

Officials To Speak Against Removing
Fighter Jets
Seattle Post-Intelligencer
Brad Cain
June 18, 2005

PORTLAND, Ore. -- Oregon's top elected officials urged members of a commission reviewing the Pentagon's plans to close some military bases to abandon plans to shift most of Oregon's F-15 fighter jets to bases in other states.

"The initial recommendations will leave the airspace over the Northwest virtually defenseless if the enemy chooses to attack this corner of the country from the air," Democratic Sen. Ron

Wyden said Friday during a regional hearing of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission.

Republican Sen. Gordon Smith told commission members that the plan would leave just a handful of planes to defend "a target-rich environment," citing the dams along the Columbia River, the Umatilla Chemical Weapons Depot and the Hanford nuclear site in Washington.

Top officials from Idaho, Montana and Washington state also were slated to testify on the effects of the Pentagon's plans to close or realign military installations around the Northwest.

The moves were announced by the Pentagon in mid-May as part of a nationwide plan to close 33 bases and downsize 29 others to save an estimated \$48 billion over 20 years.

Three of the four states invited to testify Friday are slated to lose reserve-unit planes under the Pentagon proposal.

Washington is the only state in the Northwest that gains under the plan, picking up 760 new jobs.

Oregon will lose 1,083 jobs to base closures and realignment - 564 of them from shuttering the Air Guard station at Portland.

Planned reductions at Montana's Air Guard station in Great Falls will mean a loss of 107 jobs out of a total of 124 statewide.

And realigning the Boise Air Guard Station with Wyoming's 153rd Airlift Wing will send all four of Idaho's C-130 cargo planes to Cheyenne, accounting for 83 of the 659 jobs Idaho is expected to lose under the Pentagon plan. Most of Idaho's job losses come from realigning Mountain Home Air Force Base to reduce the variety of jet fighters there.

The commission has until Sept. 8 to present its recommendations to President Bush. In past years, about 85 percent of base closures

recommended by the Pentagon have remained on the commission's list.

Pentagon Satisfies Senate on Base Closings

The Washington Post
Lolita C. Baldor
June 17, 2005

WASHINGTON -- The Defense Department, under subpoena from a Senate committee, has provided enough information on the military base closing process to satisfy Senate leaders, so no further legal action will be taken, senators said Friday.

Sens. Susan Collins, R-Maine, and Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., in a letter to acting Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England, said that while they haven't gotten all the data requested, the thousands of pages they received helped them better understand how the department made its decisions to close or realign military bases.

The letter comes just weeks before a July 6 public hearing in Boston of the independent base closing commission to review decisions to close bases in the senators' home states, Maine and Connecticut.

In recent weeks the Pentagon has released a massive amount of information on the proposed shutdown of about 180 military installations across the country, including 33 major bases. Federal and state officials demanded more information backing up the decisions, but some of it was initially classified.

Under pressure from the subpoena issued by the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, the Pentagon worked to declassify much of the information and release additional data.

Lawmakers hope to use the information to fight the proposed closing of the bases. The submarine base in Groton, Conn., and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine, were targeted for closure.

Under the agreement disclosed in the senators' letter to England, the Pentagon agreed to continue releasing information and to make Defense Department analysts available for meetings with congressional staff.

Pentagon Plan To Relocate Fighter Jets Runs Into Flak

The Seattle Times
Alex Fryer
June 18, 2005

If Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has his way, the state's homeland security chief said there will be a simple reply to the question: Is Washington safer than before Sept. 11, 2001?

"Unequivocally, the answer would be 'no,'" said Maj. Gen. Timothy Lowenberg, who commands the Army and Air National Guard and the state Emergency Management Division.

Lowenberg and other state officials are protesting a Pentagon plan to move 15 Portland-based F-15 fighter aircraft to other bases across the country. The aircraft are the closest fighter jets available to guard Washington skies in the event of a threat, such as a terrorist attack.

The proposed fighter transfer is part of the Base Relocation And Closure (BRAC) process, which attempts to lower military costs by closing and merging facilities.

Today, a panel of four BRAC commissioners will hold a hearing in Portland attended by representatives from Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana.

The hearings are intended to provide communities an outlet to "educate the Commissioners and their staff on their disagreements with the DoD (Department of Defense) base recommendations," according to a commission news release.

On May 13, Rumsfeld unveiled a preliminary list of closings and realignments, which included moving the F-15s out of Portland and relocating

eight Washington Air National Guard refueling tankers from Fairchild Air Force Base near Spokane.

By Sept. 8, the nine-member BRAC Commission must turn over a revised list to President Bush, who cannot change it but may ask the commission to reconsider some items.

The president must certify the list by Nov. 7, and Congress has 45 days to reject it or it will become law.

Washington officials are worried about the state's air defenses if the Oregon Air National Guard fighters are moved to Atlantic City, N.J., and New Orleans. The Pentagon plan calls for one or two F-15s to remain at Portland on rotation.

Without the Portland Air Guard Station, the closest fighter wing would be in Fresno, Calif., more than 900 miles away. The Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho specializes in warplanes that drop bombs and would be inappropriate for aerial defense, state officials said.

The Portland F-15s were scrambled within minutes of the World Trade Center attacks and patrolled over Washington state to protect against additional terrorist attacks.

In BRAC documents, the Air Force indicated that it wanted to "realign Portland's F-15 fighter aircraft to an installation of higher military value."

State officials said that would be a mistake.

In a June 15 letter to BRAC Commission Chairman Anthony Principi, Democratic Sen. Maria Cantwell wrote: "In the midst of another attack on our homeland, fighters would have to be quickly scrambled from more distant bases, possibly compromising the security of major population centers."

Cantwell and others also are concerned about the plans to move eight refueling tankers from Fairchild.

"In addition to compromising our Homeland Security, the proposed realignments would reduce the important connectivity of the Air National Guard to the citizens and communities of each state," Cantwell wrote.

Florida Senators Say Energy Bill Would Ax JSF Training Site Plans

Inside the Air Force
John T. Bennett
June 17, 2005

Two Florida lawmakers are seeking to nix portions of a broad energy bill under consideration in the Senate, arguing the measure could compel the Air Force to find another site to train pilots on the new Joint Strike Fighter.

Florida Sens. Bill Nelson (D) and Mel Martinez (R) claim passage of the legislation, which would lift a moratorium on off-shore drilling, would be a significant loss for their state on a number of fronts. Among their reservations about the bill is a section that could allow oil rigs to start popping up in the Gulf of Mexico, a move that might force the Pentagon to ax a plan to base a new Joint Strike Fighter training center at Eglin Air Force Base, FL, and fly the new aircraft over the eastern Gulf.

The Defense Department's 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission's report, released May 13, includes a proposal to make Eglin "an Initial Joint Training Site that [would teach] entry-level aviators and maintenance technicians how to safely operate and maintain the new Joint Strike Fighter."

However, in its current form, the energy bill threatens that plan as well as other military training functions, the Florida duo said this week.

"We cannot ignore the fact that lifting Florida's protections will put our military at a training disadvantage," Martinez said in a June 14 floor speech. "If we allow drilling there now, the military will be set back in their training, their preparedness and moved back to square one in

trying to find an area suitable for . . . massive" training and training sites, he added.

Nelson, who has threatened to filibuster the legislation if certain provisions are not stripped or revised, echoed that sentiment.

"It is an incompatible activity to have oil and gas rigs on the surface of the Gulf of Mexico underneath where all of this military training is occurring," Nelson said the same day on the Senate floor. A large portion of the eastern Gulf of Mexico, where the bill would allow companies to begin oil drilling efforts, is included in a swath of air space deemed restricted to commercial flights. The military uses this air space to conduct testing and training operations, Nelson noted.

Those functions would be expanded if the BRAC report's recommendation to establish the JSF training center at Eglin is adopted. But the energy bill would "pull the rug from under" the military's plan to base a large part of its JSF training at Eglin, Martinez said this week.

Lockheed Martin is slated to deliver the first operational JSF to the Air Force in fiscal year 2008. The company also is developing variants of the fighter for the Navy and Marine Corps. Under the BRAC proposal, the Navy and Marine Corps also would base personnel and equipment at the Eglin facility to train pilots on the new jets.

Members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, including panel Ranking Member Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), support the legislation's provisions that would expand off-shore drilling in the Gulf. The measure also has bipartisan support in the full chamber. A vote on the wide-ranging bill could come later this month, a committee aide said June 16.

The Florida senators' concerns about how the legislation might affect the proposed JSF training facility is just one item among a list of reasons they are staunchly opposed to the bill in its current form, according to comments both have made recently on the Senate floor. In addition to the JSF-related worries, the two

senators claim the measure would bring economic strife to the state, harm its ecosystem and slow a tourism industry that annually pumps millions of dollars into Florida coffers.

Nelson -- who in one published report called the energy measure a "must-pass bill" -- criticized the Bush administration and its Senate allies, saying they "are hell-bent on drilling off our coast."

In a move that could break that stalemate, Nelson and Martinez "are close" to finalizing a compromise with Senate leaders on the measure's drilling provisions, a Senate aide told Inside the Air Force June 16. The tentative compromise would keep the eastern Gulf oil-drilling ban in place through 2012, the aides said. At press time (June 16), an amendment to the energy legislation preserving the ban had not yet been introduced.

The Eglin training center plan included in the BRAC report would shift a number of Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps training pilots, maintenance technicians and logistical support personnel from bases around the continental U.S. to the new Florida facility.

The Pentagon estimates standing up the new center and moving the related personnel and equipment to Eglin would cost \$199.1 million, according to the report. DOD expects it would need about \$3.3 million annually to operate the training center, the report states.

If adopted, the BRAC proposal would mean job losses -- as many as 888 and as few as 69 -- for metropolitan areas around military bases throughout Florida, and in Virginia, North Carolina, Arizona and California that would have positions moved to Eglin.

In addition to putting the JSF training proposal in jeopardy, Nelson this week said unless a compromise is reached to keep the drilling moratorium in place, a DOD plan to train pilots on the new F/A-22 fighter aircraft at Florida's Tyndall Air Force Base also could be threatened.

"Any weakening of the protections currently in place off Florida's coasts is unacceptable," Martinez said this week.

Meanwhile, the Florida duo has not limited its efforts to extend the ban to negotiating with Senate colleagues, taking their case to the White House.

"Many of our nation's fighter pilots perform training in the eastern Gulf of Mexico. These important training missions involve live fire including airborne missiles," Martinez wrote in a June 9 letter to President Bush. "If the eastern Gulf were to be opened to drilling, the clear danger would place a number of personnel, including those of our military, at great risk."

Local News Articles

BRAC Member To Visit 911th Santorum Says Report Error;

May Be Key To Keeping Base
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pittsburgh, PA)
Jack Kelly
June 18, 2005

A member of the Base Realignment and Closure commission will make a site visit Tuesday to the bases of the 911th Military Airlift Wing, Air Force Reserve, and the 171st Air Refueling Wing, Pennsylvania Air National Guard, at Pittsburgh International Airport.

Lloyd "Fig" Newton, a retired Air Force general, will tour and receive briefings at the two bases. Then he will meet with community leaders fighting to keep area military bases open.

The Pentagon recommended in May that the 911th and the Charles E. Kelly Support Facility in Collier be shut down, and that the number of people assigned to the headquarters of the Army's 99th Regional Readiness Command in Moon be slashed.

The 911th has been based in Moon since 1942 and has flown the C-130 airlifter since 1980. The Air Force estimates closing the base would eliminate 44 military and 278 civilian jobs, at a

cost to the local economy of about \$93.6 million a year.

The nine-member commission, of which Newton is a part, has until September to review the Pentagon's recommendations, and then make recommendations of its own to the president. The president can approve or reject the recommendations, but he cannot amend them.

If the president approves, Congress will have 45 days in which to veto the recommendations, but not change them. If Congress takes no action, the commission recommendations automatically become law.

U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa., told reporters in Harrisburg yesterday that probably only one of the 13 facilities in Pennsylvania the Defense Department has recommended for closing can be kept open. But he added that the 911th has the best chance of being saved.

This is because the Defense Department made an error when it determined the 911th had only enough ramp space to park 10 C-130 cargo planes, when actually there is space for 16 to 18, Santorum said.

"We will show clearly there is enough ramp space to do that," Santorum said. "There are acres of tarmac near the 911th."

In the four previous rounds of base closings, only 10 percent of the bases the Pentagon recommended be closed were saved from extinction, usually because a factual mistake had been made in the base-closing recommendation, he said.

Newton is not planning to visit the Charles E. Kelly Support Facility or the 99th Regional Readiness Command, which are Army installations.

The Pit-BRAC Task Force of the Military Affairs Council of Western Pennsylvania is planning a rally at 2 p.m. Tuesday to show the support of area residents for keeping the 911th open. The rally will be held in Cargo Area A at Pittsburgh International Airport.

U.S. Reps. Melissa Hart, R-Bradford Woods, and Tim Murphy, R-Upper St. Clair, wrote to Allegheny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato yesterday urging him to turn the land the 911th is leasing at Pittsburgh International Airport over to the Defense Department. The Air Force pays the county \$20,000 each year for use of the land.

Giving the land to the Defense Department could allay concerns expressed by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, about lease costs, Hart and Murphy said.

Bases closers unlikely to visit Tobyhanna; A federal commission will concentrate on facilities most heavily affected by realignment

Wilkes Barre Times Leader (Wilkes, Barre, PA)
Jerry Lynott
June 18, 2005

A member of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission most likely will not visit Tobyhanna Army Depot this summer. Instead, the commission will concentrate on more seriously impacted facilities, said the head of the local group formed to support the depot.

Last month when the Department of Defense announced Tobyhanna would be gaining jobs instead of closing, Cameron Moore, head of the Blue Ribbon Task Force for the depot, said one of the nine members of the BRAC would visit the Monroe County facility.

Moore, director of the regional economic development agency the Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance in Pittston Township, said Friday that because of the commission's tight schedule and the modest gain in jobs by the depot, a visit now is unlikely.

The BRAC has until Sept. 8 to conduct its own evaluation of the department's recommendations and submit a report to President Bush. He has until Sept. 23 to submit the report to Congress or back to the commission with suggested changes. The commission has no obligation to make

changes to its report. Once Congress receives the report legislators must give it an up or down vote. Congress cannot make changes and must act by the end of the year.

The depot is slated to take on jobs from two California facilities, the Naval Weapons Station at Seal Beach and the Marine Logistics Base in Barstow, and two Texas facilities, Red River Army Depot and Lackland Air Force Base.

Tobyhanna could add 275 jobs, according to the defense department's recommendations to reduce the number of installations and save up to \$50 billion in the long term. The depot, which repairs and maintains electronic equipment, is the largest employer in Northeastern Pennsylvania with more than 4,300 civilian workers.

Two staff members of the commission visited Tobyhanna on June 10, said Kevin Toolan, depot spokesman. He described the visit as a "fact-finding" mission to ensure that Tobyhanna can meet the defense department's recommendations.

Toolan added that commissioners are scheduling tours for facilities that would lose more than 300 civilian jobs or more than 400 combined military and civilian jobs.

The lack of an official visit, though a good sign, is no reason to rest, said Moore. The commission has scheduled a hearing for July 8 at Goucher College in Baltimore for facilities in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland and New Jersey.

"We will be there and giving some brief testimony," said Moore. He estimated that it will be no longer than 10 or 15 minutes. Most of the two hours allotted Pennsylvania will be taken up by representatives for the facilities targeted for closing. Gov. Ed Rendell and Sens. Rick Santorum and Arlen Specter are expected to testify, said Moore.

"We've heard nothing at this point that would lead us to believe that the defense department

recommendations are likely to change," said Moore.

By late July, the task force should be in a better position to know whether Tobyhanna will officially make the cut. The BRAC has to finalize its list with any additions by then, said Moore.

Alaskans fight doggedly for Eielson

Anchorage Daily News (Anchorage, AK)

Michael Carey

June 17, 2005

The Base Realignment and Closing Commission public hearing on the future of Eielson Air Force Base was an unprecedented event. It is difficult to predict the consequences. But here are some things that stood out during the two-hour hearing at the Carlson Center on Wednesday that drew about 3,500 people on a hot afternoon.

This was not poor little Fairbanks, log cabin town on the Chena River, against mighty Washington. The Alaskans' message was tight, focused and direct. The BRAC commissioners gave Alaskans two hours to make their case, and the Alaska delegation, led by Sen. Ted Stevens, gave it their best shot.

Stevens was on his A-game. In recent years, his performances at times have been ragged and disjointed, possibly the result of too much time on airplanes and not enough time to prepare. This time, Stevens came fully armed to argue Eielson's importance to American defense, mixing geopolitics, military strategy, economics and history.

As he often does, Stevens appealed to his own history -- as a veteran, a longtime Alaskan and a member of the Senate. Stevens' performance benefitted from brevity, 20 minutes or less.

Former Army major general and University of Alaska President Mark Hamilton, teaming with former Air Force general and Alaska Railroad President Patrick Gamble, did the heaviest lifting for the Alaskans, taking direct aim at

specifics of the Air Force findings and recommendations for Eielson.

Hamilton is bright, aggressive, confident and not short on ego. He does not suffer fools, as Alaska legislators know, and as a public speaker he apparently has never learned that sometimes less is more. His approach to public speaking is more is more -- thunderously delivered. In detail and with passion, Hamilton assaulted the Air Force planners' work, insisting the Air Force "got it very wrong."

The BRAC hearing was not a debate. The audience did not hear from Air Force representatives, so Alaskans have no way of measuring the argument Hamilton presented against the Air Force's evidence. But Alaskans can be sure of this: Mark Hamilton's assault will not go unanswered by Air Force planners who talk to BRAC commissioners.

Nevertheless, Hamilton's job was to force the BRAC commissioners to examine the Air Force's assertions about Eielson -- and no doubt he accomplished that, although his presentation, like the others, left a powerful question begging. What about Elmendorf? Why does the Air Force continue to need two major full-service air fields in Alaska? (In fairness, Patrick Gamble did address this question in passing, suggesting Elmendorf should not be expected to carry the load for two bases.)

Those who spoke on behalf of Fairbanks emphasized the community's longtime intimacy with the Air Force. The number of jobs, the dollars spent, the place of service members and their families in day-to-day life -- these were all repeated. But as the hearing proceeded, a kind of distance from Eielson became equally obvious.

Very few -- if any -- of the 3,500 people who turned out to support Eielson have the information and experience to know if Eielson, in its present configuration or reconfigured by the BRAC process, really is essential to the American mission. The questions are too technical and too specific to Air Force operations. Does Eielson really have enough fuel

storage capability? Who in the audience would know?

On a personal note, Eielson Air Force Base is almost the same age I am. We were both born in Fairbanks during World War II. Eielson has been part of my vocabulary since I began talking, although my Dad, stubbornly resisting change, called the base 26-Mile, its uninspired designation until 1948, derived from the airfield's distance from the Golden Heart City. When I was a boy, newcomers to Fairbanks were easy to spot: They could not pronounce Eielson, calling the base "Ill-ah-son" (or worse).

Pioneer Alaska aviator Carl Ben Eielson (1897-1929), whose accomplishments were internationally celebrated, became a legend after he died in a crash during a Siberian rescue mission. Eielson's body was returned to Fairbanks, his home, where he was saluted with pomp worthy of royalty before he was buried in his native North Dakota. The ceremony in Hatton, N.D., where Eielson was regarded as a Nordic folk hero, a Viking of the air, was "the most impressive funeral ever held in this state," a Dakotan said at the time.

Whether the BRAC hearing in Fairbanks was Eielson Air Force Base's funeral is yet unanswered.

Blanco, others, pitch plans for New Orleans base to BRAC

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (New Orleans, LA)
June 17, 2005

With a member of the commission reviewing proposed military base closures on hand, Gov. Kathleen Blanco insisted Friday that the Naval Support Activity base here can be saved, if not expanded.

Blanco said analysts employed by the state made a "powerful presentation" regarding the potential for the base. She and other top state and local officials, including New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin and U.S. Sen. David Vitter, R-Metairie, sought to emphasize that analysts have

questioned whether closing the New Orleans base would save the military as much money as projected by the Pentagon.

"We don't think we have to lose anything," Blanco said.

Retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Sue Turner, a member of the U.S. Department of Defense's Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission, visited the New Orleans base Friday morning and was presented with the initial findings by the state's team of analysts.

She said the state presented a "convincing" argument and that she was impressed by the "federal city" concept. Under that plan, the state proposes to convert the base in New Orleans' Algiers neighborhood into a campus for military and homeland security agencies - and at little or no cost to the U.S. Department of Defense.

Last month, the Pentagon recommended closing 33 major bases and about 150 other installations around the country - a realignment that could cost Louisiana more than 1,200 jobs and millions of dollars in payroll.

The base in New Orleans, which currently houses the national headquarters for the Naval Reserves and the Marine Reserves, employs more than 4,600 military and civilian workers, plus contractors whose numbers vary.

Retired Marine Corps Maj. Gen. David Mize, chairman of the Mayor's Military Advisory Committee of Greater New Orleans, said there are flaws in the Pentagon's accounting and that closing the base may not reduce as many jobs as the Pentagon believes.

Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson, a city councilwoman whose district includes Algiers, called the proposed federal city "the ultimate plan that Donald Rumsfeld is looking for."

The BRAC commissioners will return to New Orleans on July 12 for further assessment.

Mize said his team will continue analyzing data and have a much better idea of how to counter

the military's projections by the time BRAC returns.

Four smaller Louisiana facilities also have been recommended for closure. Three are reserve centers employing a total of about 200 people in Baton Rouge. The other is the Defense Information System Agency in Slidell, largely a backup for other computer centers that employs more than 100 people.

Those facilities were not discussed publicly on Friday when Turner and the other officials met with reporters at a downtown hotel.

Nevada governor, others to testify against closing weapons depot

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (Las Vegas, NV)
Christina Almeida
June 17, 2005

Some of Nevada's top officials will attend hearings in New Mexico next week to testify against the proposed closure of the Hawthorne Army Depot and the reduction of planes and personnel at the Nevada Air National Guard base in Reno.

Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid of Nevada has received assurances from Gov. Kenny Guinn, state Homeland Security Director Giles Vanderhoof, state Adjutant General Cindy Kirkland and others that they will appear at a June 24 hearing before the bipartisan Base Closure and Realignment Commission.

"This hearing will be an opportunity to present our case regarding Hawthorne and the Nevada Air National Guard," Reid said in a statement.

The commission, charged with providing an independent review of recommendations issued by the Defense Department last month, is holding a series of regional hearings. The senior senator from each state can call a hearing, and Reid said he did so because of flaws in the base-closure process.

"I think that the evidence will show that Hawthorne is a state-of-the-art facility," Reid said. "The military has spent millions and millions of dollars there to do things that can't be done any place else in the country."

Choosing from preselected locations, Reid picked the hearing in Clovis, N.M., to air Nevada's case. With Congress in session, the senator will not attend.

In its recommendations, the Defense Department proposed shuttering the depot in Hawthorne - a northern Nevada town of 3,300 that has manufactured, stored and shipped bombs and munitions for more than six decades.

In a letter Friday, Nevada's three congressional representatives urged the commission to visit Hawthorne and meet with depot personnel and business leaders to understand the economic effect of the planned closure.

In Reno, the Nevada Air National Guard would lose 147 jobs and see its C-130s transferred to Little Rock, Ark., under the Defense Department recommendation.

"The Nevada Air National Guard plays a critical homeland security role, and, of course, the unit is indispensable here in Nevada to assist when national disasters occur," Reid said.

The governor's spokesman said Guinn is looking forward to discussing the importance of the two military installations to the state.

"The governor will definitely be there," John Trent said. "He wants to make a very strong case not only for Hawthorne but the Air National Guard in Reno as well."

The Defense Department also recommended an increased presence at Nellis Air Force Base of 1,412 military and civilian personnel and a reduction of seven military positions at Fallon Naval Air Station.

Other Nevada witnesses expected to testify are state Sen. Randolph Townsend, R-Reno; Assemblyman Bernie Anderson, D-Sparks; state

Sen. Mike McGinness, R-Fallon; and Shelley Hartmann, Mineral County executive director.

Base closures, plane reductions threaten Northwest, panel told

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Portland, OR)
Brad Cain
June 17, 2005

The Pentagon's plans to cut back some military bases and shift many of the Northwest's fighter jets, cargo planes and air refueling planes to other states will make the region vulnerable to attack, governors and others warned a federal commission Friday.

One of those testifying, Republican Sen. Gordon Smith of Oregon, said the Pentagon's plans will leave just a handful of planes to defend "a target-rich environment," citing the dams along the Columbia River, the Umatilla Chemical Weapons Depot and the Hanford nuclear site.

Drawing most of the national security concerns was Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's plan, announced last month, to significantly reduce the Air National Guard base in Portland.

Under the plan, 15 F-15 fighter jets operated by the 142nd Fighter Wing would be transferred to New Jersey and Louisiana, and eight KC-135 tankers flown by the 939th Air Refueling Wing would go to Oklahoma and Kansas.

"Our enemies will look for the weakest link, and the weakest link will be in the Northwest," Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski said during a regional hearing of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission.

The commission is scheduled to hold a hearing in Grand Forks, N.D., on Thursday.

Under the Pentagon's plan, Grand Forks Air Force Base would lose its air refueling tanker mission and more than 80 percent of its military personnel. The Air National Guard base in Fargo would not get a new flying mission after its F-16 fighter jets are retired in a few years. The

Pentagon is considering both bases for a new project involving unmanned aerial vehicles.

Aside from relinquishing planes, Oregon also will lose up 1,000 jobs to base closures and realignment - 564 of them from shuttering the Air Guard station at Portland.

Top officials from Idaho, Montana and Washington state also raised concerns about the effects of the Pentagon's plans to close or realign military installations around the Northwest.

In testimony Friday, Idaho Gov. Dirk Kempthorne took aim at a recommendation to realign the Boise Air Guard Station with Wyoming's 153rd Airlift Wing by sending all four of Idaho's C-130 cargo planes to Cheyenne.

Those planes would be crucial in moving emergency supplies or troops to the site of a terrorist attack, Kempthorne said.

"By removing the C-130s from Idaho, our ability to rapidly respond to a weapon of mass destruction in the Northwest is virtually eliminated," the governor said.

Idaho is expected to lose more than 650 jobs as a result of the Pentagon's proposals, mostly from realigning Mountain Home Air Force Base to reduce the variety of jet fighters there.

Washington is the only state in the Northwest that gains under the plan, picking up 760 new jobs.

Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire, who is on a trade mission in Europe this week, submitted testimony to the commission saying while she generally agrees with the recommendations, she, too, is worried about Northwest planes being moved elsewhere.

Aside from moving the fighter jets away from Portland, the Pentagon also wants to reassign eight KC-135 air refueling aircraft from Fairchild Air Force Base, near Spokane, Wash.

If those recommendations become final, Gregoire said, "our protection from air assault

would be less than half of what it was when we were attacked on Sept. 11."

The Pentagon also proposes reducing the Montana Air National Guard unit at Great Falls. The plan calls for removing the Air Guard's 15 F-16 fighters and transferring six of those to bases in Iowa and Alabama, a move that could eliminate up to 450 jobs.

"The unprecedented drawdown of fighter and airlift assets without a formulated replacement strategy endangers the national security of our country," said Montana Sen. Max Baucus, a Democrat.

The proposed base closings and realignments were announced by the Pentagon in mid-May as part of a nationwide plan to close 33 bases and downsize 29 others to save an estimated \$48 billion over 20 years.

The commission has until Sept. 8 to present its recommendations to President Bush. In past years, about 85 percent of base closures recommended by the Pentagon have remained on the commission's list.

Commission chairman Anthony Principi said after Friday's hearing that the panel will not be a "rubber stamp" for the Pentagon's proposals and that commissions will carefully consider the national security concerns raised by Northwest leaders.

One of them, Sen. Ron Wyden, said that without a change, the Pentagon proposals put the entire region at risk.

"The initial recommendations will leave the airspace over the Northwest virtually defenseless if the enemy chooses to attack this corner of the country from the air," the Oregon Democrat said.

BRAC admiral tours bases

Biloxi Sun Herald (Biloxi, MS)

Michael Newsom

June 17, 2005

Gehman is a member of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) commission charged by the federal government to decide if the Defense Department's recommendation to close the two facilities is correct and legal.

The BRAC commission will hold public hearings regarding both installations in New Orleans on July 12, and elected officials from South Mississippi will argue both should remain open.

The admiral is a member of the commission, which has members visiting about 75 of the most affected installations to get an orientation of each before the nine-member panel makes its decisions after the regional hearings.

"We wanted to make sure that at least one commissioner had visited each of the bases," he said.

Gehman brings extensive military experience to the commission, serving as the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic for NATO, and commander-in-chief of the former U.S. Atlantic Command.

He said Naval Station Pascagoula was practically a new base. He also said he was very impressed with the work done at Keesler.

"It would have to be a very serious and sober decision to change what it (Keesler Medical Center) does," Gehman said.

"I had not been to Keesler before," he said. "I did not know it has such a large student base and was such a large training facility. I didn't know the facts and the numbers."

Gehman said Keesler Medical Center faces scaling back and the loss of its residency program, which trains doctors, because the DoD has moved to a consolidation policy for military training hospitals.

"If they (DoD) can demonstrate that is a better to have a smaller number of bigger hospitals where they can produce doctors, then they will have met their criteria," Gehman said.

Others have said Keesler Medical Center faces the loss of its inpatient facilities and possibly being turned into a clinic with an ambulance service, because the facility is nearly 50 years old and the medical equipment is expensive to maintain.

Officials gave the Pascagoula station the lowest worthiness score of all of its facilities in an evaluation done by the Navy, according to Gannett News Services.

Leaders lobby to maintain air base

Duluth News-Tribune (Duluth, MN)

Chuck Frederick

June 17, 2005

Duluth's air base is too critical to the U.S. military to be run with a reduced staff or without a vital mission.

That's the message city representatives honed Thursday at a meeting with congressional delegates in Washington, D.C.

It's the message they'll deliver next week in Grand Forks, N.D., when Pentagon officials host a community meeting about proposed base closures and military realignments. The proposals were announced last month.

"We do have a great game plan for next week," Steve Greenfield, chairman of the board for the Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce, said via telephone after Thursday's meeting in the nation's capital.

"We talked a great deal about a new mission in Duluth," Mayor Herb Bergson said. "If we can get a stay of execution here, it'll give us a little time to find that new mission."

The Pentagon's recommendations called for fighter jets in Duluth to be retired by 2007 and not replaced. The future role of the city's Air National Guard 148th Fighter Wing was left unclear.

In addition to the loss of jets, Air Force recommendations acquired by the News Tribune last week said 583 full-time and traditional Air Guard positions should be eliminated by 2011. That would be a 53 percent reduction in staff for the 148th, the Duluth area's ninth-largest employer. The wing estimates its economic impact on the Northland at \$85.1 million.

But the recommendations weren't based on several key factors, said Gen. Ray Klosowski, former 148th wing commander, former executive director of the Duluth airport and the retired commander of the Minnesota Air National Guard. Klosowski was part of Duluth's eight-member delegation Thursday.

"We got a lot of good points across they weren't aware of," Klosowski said. "I think Duluth has a very strong argument."

Those points, Klosowski said, included:

Duluth's abundance of unobstructed airspace for flight training.

The base's ongoing \$26 million renovation project, including the military's newest aircraft maintenance hangar.

A new, \$3.5 million Naval Reserve Center that could soon be empty. The Pentagon recommended closing the Duluth Naval Reserve Center, a loss of nine full-time jobs.

Strong recruitment and retention. The Duluth wing is staffed at 103 percent of its recommended levels, Klosowski said.

On Wednesday, a day before the community meeting in Grand Forks, a different sort of delegation will join the crusade for Duluth's air base. Members of the 148th will meet with Air National Guard officials at the Pentagon. They're expected to be joined by Gov. Tim Pawlenty, Maj. Gen. Larry W. Shellito, the adjutant general of the Minnesota National Guard, and others.

"It's going to be a little bit of a one-two punch," Greenfield said.

In addition, U.S. Rep. Jim Oberstar, D-Minn., is arranging a follow-up breakfast meeting next week with the Northland's congressional representatives, his office said.

Thursday's meeting was attended by U.S. Sen. Mark Dayton, D-Minn.; and representatives of Oberstar; U.S. Sen. Norm Coleman, R-Minn.; U.S. Sen. Herb Kohl, D-Wis.; and U.S. Sen. Russ Feingold, D-Wis. The Duluthians later met with a representative of U.S. Rep. Dave Obey, D-Wis.

"The meeting was very productive," said Mary Kerr, communications director for Oberstar, whose office hosted the gathering. "The participants were all on the same page. There were some good ideas discussed. I think everybody was pleased with the outcome."

Ultimately, decisions about base closures and military changes will be made by Congress. Even if its jets are retired and not replaced and its membership is reduced, the Duluth Air Base will remain open, according to the Air Force recommendations. Aircraft from other bases would rotate through Duluth and operate from Duluth as assigned by U.S. Northern Command.

"We're extremely thankful. We're pleased our community is fighting for us," the 148th's Capt. Chris Cloutier said Thursday. "It sounds like the group did a fantastic job of solidifying the information and informing the senators at a more detailed level than they were privy to before."

N.O. hopes to pull rank on BRAC plan; Defense Department data shows local base's value, officials say

Times-Picayune (New Orleans, LA)
Paul Purpura
June 17, 2005

Armed with a Defense Department ranking that places the Naval Support Activity in the top 15 percent of the nation's administrative bases for its military value, New Orleans officials say they will fight an attempt to close the base and ship

its personnel to lower-rated Navy facilities in Tennessee and Virginia.

Representatives of a federal panel reviewing the Defense Department's base realignment and closure, or BRAC, recommendations will visit the base's Algiers and Bywater sites today. At stake are 1,192 military and civilian jobs, according to Defense Department data, and the clout of having the Naval Reserve's national headquarters in Louisiana.

When retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Sue Turner, a member of the BRAC Commission, tours the base this morning, she will face a rally of business and civic groups trying to keep the base open. She also will learn details of the "federal city" concept that would convert the Algiers site into a modern campus for military and homeland security agencies at no cost to the Defense Department.

But local officials also plan to challenge Defense Department data that Secretary Donald Rumsfeld contends are based on in-depth analysis that weighs heavily a base's military value, or its role in war-fighting and training. Defense officials have said military value was the central criterion in drawing up its recommendations about which bases should be closed or realigned.

Naval Support Activity ranked 41st among 334 major administrative and headquarters activities, according to the Defense Department. That compares with 68th for Naval Support Activity Mid-South in Millington, Tenn., and 77th for the Naval Support Activity in Norfolk, Va.

The Naval Air Station-Joint Reserve Base in Belle Chasse ranked 24th on the list.

"Essentially, the Navy wanted to leave and the Marine Corps wanted to stay," said retired Marine Corps Maj. Gen. David Mize, chairman of the Mayor's Military Advisory Committee of Greater New Orleans.

The Defense Department's recommendations also confirm what some military observers say the Navy wanted before the BRAC process

began: To move Naval Reserve operations in New Orleans closer to their active-duty counterparts in Tennessee and Virginia.

"This is something we predicted in the Naval Reserve," said retired Navy Capt. Ike Puzon, director of legislation for the Naval Reserve Association, an advocacy group based in Virginia that lobbies for reserve issues.

"I would say the BRAC did exactly what the active duty (Navy) wanted," Puzon said.

Longtime concerns

Concerns about the Navy's move to Millington have been around for several years, said U.S. Sen. David Vitter, R-La., adding that military observers have feared that the Navy was quietly transferring personnel out of New Orleans.

Calling it "more than frustrating," Vitter said he received assurances from senior Navy officials that Naval personnel would remain.

"It's not just a coincidence that that is proposed to happen" through BRAC, Vitter said.

The Navy is following a military-wide trend to move away from forces structured to fight the Cold War, said Cmdr. Dan Bates, a Naval Reserve Force spokesman.

Naval Reserve headquarters would go to Norfolk, one of the largest Navy concentrations in the nation. The Naval Reserve Recruiting Command, Naval Reserve Personnel Command and the Enlisted Placement Management Center, all in Bywater, would to Millington, the hub of Navy personnel administrative functions.

"It makes sense that we consolidate where we can consolidate," Bates said.

Consolidating New Orleans operations in Millington is a concept the Navy has considered for years, said retired Navy Rear Adm. Jim Hinkle, a consultant with The Spectrum Group, based in Virginia, that is working with local and state officials on BRAC.

"BRAC gave them that vehicle to do that, to consolidate those functions under one hat," said Hinkle, whose career included a stint as commander of the Naval Personnel Command in Millington. "It makes a lot of sense."

If the Naval Support Activity remains on the list and Congress approves it, the base would be shuttered in 2011. Personnel would begin leaving New Orleans next year. The bulk would move in 2010, most to the Belle Chasse air station, Defense Department documents show.

The Marine Corps Reserve commands would be among those moving to Belle Chasse, which stands to gain at least 1,516 positions, including 335 civilian jobs, and \$89.8 million in military construction if Naval Support Activity closes.

The cost factor

By moving the base's major tenants, the need for Naval Support Activity is eliminated, according to Defense Department documents.

But BRAC analysts overstate the savings and understate the costs of closing the base, said retired Navy Vice Adm. Stephen Loftus, another consultant with The Spectrum Group.

"It appears that the data is flawed," Loftus said. "If the data is flawed, the commission cannot rely on the data to make a decision."

The Defense Department estimates it would cost almost \$90 million to move the Marines to Belle Chasse for functions that would be no different than those in Algiers, Hinkle said.

"The rationale for doing that is very weak," he said. "It's almost like they were looking for a reason and they made one up."

City and state officials will ask the BRAC Commission to consider keeping Naval Support Activity open and to retain the local Naval Reserve presence. They also hope to keep Marines in Algiers, perhaps making it a Marine Corps base if the Navy leaves, and still pursue the federal city concept, said Dell Dempsey, a retired Marine colonel who directs military and

defense affairs for the Louisiana Department of Economic Development.

The 8th Marine Corps District headquarters in Algiers, which administers recruiting, had been expected to move after a 2002 reorganization excluded Louisiana from the district, a spokesman said. Yet the headquarters remained far from the recruiting stations it now oversees.

Under BRAC, 73 personnel would move to Fort Worth, Texas, in 2008, to be closer to the district's recruiting stations.

The proposal to close Naval Support Activity also follows plans by some of the base's tenants to leave the base, plans done independently of BRAC and not mentioned in BRAC reports.

For instance, three years ago the Navy said it would close the commissary in Algiers once its larger replacement at the Belle Chasse air station was completed, initially expected this year. Though delayed, the groundbreaking is planned for late this year, an air station spokesman said.

Opinions/ Editorials

Eielson's future is still . . . a long shot

Anchorage Daily News (Anchorage, AK)

Paul Jenkins

June 17, 2005

Despite the very effective presentation made Wednesday at Fairbanks, it's still a long shot that Eielson Air Force Base can be saved as an active part of the military forces in Alaska.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission had Eielson on the hit list, big time. Its preliminary report, prepared by the Pentagon and now before the nine commissioner members for final review, calls for Eielson to be put on what it termed as "warm-base" status. That would, in the Pentagon view, keep the heat on in the wintertime but all of the resident personnel and aircraft would be shipped off to sunnier climes.

It is a preposterous proposal, evidently made by some mid-level staff officers who have no

concept of what it means to keep the furnaces running at a base where the temperatures in the long winter months routinely drop to the minus 50-degree range.

"There is no such thing as a 'warm' facility in midwinter Alaska," Sen. Ted Stevens told the four commission members who were on hand for the rousing public hearing in Fairbanks' Carlson Center.

Stevens was among top state officials pleading the Eielson case. Others defending the importance of Eielson included Sen. Lisa Murkowski, Gov. Frank Murkowski, and two retired general officers: Pat Gamble, a retired Air Force four-star general who now is president of the Alaska Railroad, and retired Army Maj. Gen. Mark Hamilton, now the president of the statewide University of Alaska system..

The four commissioners are in Alaska to review not only the Eielson recommendation but also the BRAC proposal to close Kulis Air National Guard Base at Ted Stevens International Airport and to realign some major functions at Fort Richardson and Elmendorf Air Force Base. The proposals altering military operations here are minor compared with the drastic action contemplated at Fairbanks.

There is no way to know whether the public support of Eielson will win the hearts and minds of the four commissioners who were here, including the BRAC chairman, Anthony Principi. Even if all four came away convinced that the proposal to close Eielson should be reversed, they still would have to convince a majority of the commission to go along with their judgment.

It could happen. But weeks of hearings across the country still are to come as the BRAC members consider the full Pentagon recommendations to close and realign more than 180 military facilities nationwide.

One theory is that the commissioners will not want to appear to a rubber stamp for the Pentagon recommendations. If that's the case, Eielson may be the perfect base to say the initial

report erred and that Eielson should be preserved.

A long shot -- but Alaska's best hope.

Wanting the job disqualifies you

Additional Notes