

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



BIRD

June 19, 2005

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In Defense of Arlington, a Heads-Up to Pentagon

Washington Post (Washington DC)

Stephen Barr

June 19, 2005

Arlington County leads the hit parade on the Defense Department's base-closing list.

The Pentagon's proposed base closings, announced last month, would eliminate almost all of the department's leased office space in Arlington, according to an analysis prepared by Moody's Investors Service.

About 23,000 Defense employees would be moved out of the leased space in Rosslyn, in Crystal City, along Columbia Pike and in other locations. Their jobs would be shifted to area forts, such as Belvoir and Meade, and to places out of state, such as Redstone Arsenal in Alabama, Buckley Air Force Base in Colorado, Scott Air Force Base in Illinois and Fort Knox in Kentucky. Several thousand contractors also would find their work lives disrupted.

Rep. James P. Moran Jr. (D-Va.), who represents Arlington, said the initial feedback from Defense officials indicates that half to three-quarters of employees caught up in the base closings might balk at moving.

Some of the employees would face longer commutes, and others would have to decide whether to ask a spouse to give up a job, pull kids out of schools and move away from friends, Moran said.

The Pentagon recommendations, if approved, probably would create "a serious brain drain" at Defense agencies leaving Arlington, Moran said. "It just doesn't make sense to break down the synergy we have achieved in Northern Virginia between DOD agencies, the contract personnel and the other parts of the federal government that they work so closely with," he said.

In an attempt to learn what federal employees think about the Pentagon recommendations and to discuss Pentagon criteria for the use of leased space, Moran, Rep. Thomas M. Davis III (R-Va.) and Sen. John W. Warner (R-Va.) have scheduled a town hall meeting at noon Monday in the law school atrium at George Mason University in Arlington. (For details, call 202-225-4376.)

Davis said he is concerned that when the time comes to make a decision, Defense employees might opt out of the government rather than ask their families to move. "Smart people who are working for the government can easily find jobs in the private sector," Davis said.

Employees who have security clearances, in particular, are in demand. "It's like being a left-handed relief pitcher," Davis quipped.

Defense agencies support the Pentagon recommendations but acknowledge that they probably will face staffing disruptions if the proposed moves are not changed by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, known as BRAC, or the president or Congress.

For example, the Defense Information Systems Agency and Joint Task Force-Global Network Operations would move out of buildings on Columbia Pike and in the Skyline complex and relocate to Fort Meade in Maryland. The two organizations have nearly 2,600 military and civilian personnel in the Washington area, and 75 percent of them live in Northern Virginia.

DISA officials estimate that they would lose at least 50 percent of their workforce because of the relocation. "This loss will have an impact on DISA's ability to meet mission requirements because of the time required to reconstitute the workforce," an agency spokesman said.

About 2,000 of the 3,600 Washington area employees and contractors for the Missile Defense Agency would move to Huntsville, Ala. Many work in 11 sites in Northern Virginia. David Altwegg, deputy director for business management at Missile Defense, said experiences with BRAC and other relocations indicate that 60 percent to 70 percent of the agency's staff "may decide they prefer to stay here in the Washington area or not go to Huntsville." But he said the agency believes it would be able to "manage through that," if necessary, and hire qualified replacements in the Huntsville region.

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency has about 240 employees and nearly 600 contractors in two buildings in Arlington's Virginia Square. They are supported by 900 contractors in the Ballston corridor. DARPA would move to Bethesda under the Pentagon plan.

The majority of DARPA employees come from industry, usually at some personal sacrifice, for three- to five-year projects. Program managers are critical to DARPA's success, and officials predict that recruitment will be difficult during the BRAC transition.

One agency official, in a BRAC presentation, said, "It may take years for DARPA to recover."

Fort Monroe Cleanup Seen At \$30

Million

Washington Times (Washington DC)
June 19, 2005

HAMPTON, Va. (AP) -- Nearly two centuries as a military outpost for Hampton Roads has left thousands of unexploded bombs and ordnance that could add up to a \$30 million cleanup if Fort Monroe is closed.

The Defense Department last month recommended closing Fort Monroe and moving its core responsibilities, including the Army's Training and Doctrine Command, to Fort Eustis.

The proposal, part of a national base realignment, must pass scrutiny by a federal panel and win approval from President Bush to become final.

The fort would then return to state ownership and serve new purposes.

Hampton city officials estimate that a full cleanup of ordnance and hazardous waste would cost about \$30 million. The Defense Department would be responsible for cleaning up after a closing.

Generations of soldiers learned how to protect Virginia shores from enemy ships and aircraft from the casemates to the firing ranges, which sent shells into the waters of the Chesapeake Bay and Hampton Roads. Regular artillery practice ended after World War II.

An environmental study before the last base-closure effort found more than 150,000 pieces of

scrap metal and other objects buried on 285 acres of the fort's property and in the moat.

Engineers estimated that at least 1,300 pieces of unexploded ordnance remain buried in the fort's grounds.

Robert Menke, an environmental engineer who led the study in 1994 and 1995, said the risk of finding and accidentally setting off an unexploded bomb is "very low."

Researchers excavated seven pieces of unexploded ordnance. Compared with other bases, Fort Monroe was relatively clean, Mr. Menke said.

The Army, however, has documented discoveries of unexploded ordnance since the late 1950s and has found it everywhere on the base, Fort Monroe's environmental officials said in an e-mail response to questions from the Virginian-Pilot of Norfolk.

The highest concentrations were in the moat below the casemates, former arsenal yard and in the seacoast batteries and ranges.

Most unexploded ordnance has been found during construction and excavation projects, officials said.

The 1995 study estimated there were more buried metal objects in the moat than on the rest of the base.

In 1978, naval ordnance specialists removed the top 2 feet of sediment in the moat and discovered 182 cannonballs, 25,000 rounds of small-arms ammunition and more than 2,000 fuses, according to base officials.

A few years ago at nearby Buckroe Beach, a beachcomber with a metal detector found a spent artillery shell. That find and others prompted an emergency review by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Project workers found about 20 rounds of 45 mm, 75 mm and 76 mm anti-aircraft ammunition. They may have come from a

beach-replenishment project in which sand was dredged from former artillery ranges near the Chesapeake Bay.

That project was completed in 2003, but beachgoers are still forbidden from digging in the sand and using metal detectors.

Hampton city leaders say developers already have approached them about projects for the site, but they have disclosed no further information. They hope the base will remain on active duty.

Base Vital To Region's Defenses, Panel Told

Oregon officials appear to score points, saying loss of Portland's Air Guard unit wouldn't save money and would leave the area too vulnerable

The Oregonian (Portland, OR)

Harry Esteve

June 18, 2005

The Pentagon's plan to move an Oregon Air National Guard fighter jet squadron out of Portland would tear a dangerous hole in the nation's antiterrorism network and put millions of Pacific Northwest residents at risk, Oregon's governor and congressional representatives warned a federal panel Friday.

Not only that, they said, the move wouldn't save taxpayers any money, which was one of the main reasons the Pentagon gave in proposing the move.

"It looks like we're tacking up a vacancy sign on our air base and putting out a welcome mat for our enemies," Sen. Gordon Smith, R-Ore., said during a four-hour hearing in Portland before the Base Closure and Realignment Commission.

The comments were part of a political full-court press to save the jet squadron and the hundreds of jobs attached to it.

After the hearing, commission Chairman Anthony Principi suggested the elected officials may have scored some points.

"We have real questions with regard to some of the recommendations as they apply to the Air National Guard," Principi said.

As part of a sweeping military streamlining proposal by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, the Portland-based 142nd Fighter Wing would lose its 18 F-15 fighter jets to bases in New Jersey and Louisiana. Eight KC-135 refueling jets, also based in Portland, would be split between bases in Oklahoma and Kansas.

The Portland base would lose 452 civilian and 112 military employees. It also stands to lose about 1,200 part-time Guard airmen and reservists, who would report to other units.

The idea is to reduce the number of smaller air bases scattered around the country while beefing up the capabilities at bigger bases. Rumsfeld also wants a more seamless tie between the Air Guard and the active duty Air Force.

His plan calls for stationing two Air Force jets in Portland on "alert" status, which means they could be scrambled in the event of an emergency. That's not enough to defend the Northwest's population centers, power dams, nuclear waste storage sites and other targets, Smith and others said at the hearing.

"Stripping the Pacific Northwest of this vital defense capability will leave Oregon and the rest of the Pacific Northwest dangerously vulnerable to air-based threats," Gov. Ted Kulongoski told the commission. "We simply won't have the tools we need to defend this region."

Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., added, "It would leave the Pacific Northwest with a Little League air defense capability."

Oregon also has a squadron of F-15 jets at an Air Guard base in Klamath Falls, but those are used for training.

The commission's role

The commission can add or subtract military bases from Rumsfeld's recommended list of

closures. It is holding a series of hearings and visiting military bases around the country before giving its final recommendations to President Bush by Sept. 8.

Bush then has until Sept. 23 to pass the list on to Congress, which must accept or reject it in its entirety.

The panel will take a hard look at plans to merge Air Guard units into larger Air Force bases, Principi said.

"We need to see what the impact of doing that is to the Air National Guard and their ability to respond in the event of an emergency," he said.

In past rounds of base closures, the commission has adopted 80 percent to 90 percent of the Pentagon's recommendations. "We're not a rubber stamp for the Defense Department," Principi said.

Nearly every state, along with nearly every congressional delegation, is making the same pitch: Don't close our military bases. But most make the argument on economic grounds, based on the number of job losses. The Oregon contingent hammered on the public safety and national security issues.

The issue of savings

The group also argued that the Pentagon wouldn't save money in Oregon considering the cost of moving the planes, training new pilots and keeping the two Air Force alert jets ready. Furthermore, the officials said, the military recently spent \$60 million renovating the Portland air base, an investment that would be wasted if the planes go elsewhere.

"I think there's a better than 50-50 chance this will be reversed," said Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore.

Col. Brad Applegate, commander of the Portland jet squadron, told the panel that the Pentagon erred when it proposed taking the planes out of Oregon. It based its decision primarily on cost savings and its desire to

reorganize the Air Force, without factoring in the Guard's role in preventing or responding to terrorist attacks.

"It's clear the Department of Defense recommendation completely disregarded homeland defense," Applegate said as a screen displayed a U.S. map that showed most areas protected by air bases but the Northwest conspicuously empty.

Fears for safety

Later, Applegate told reporters that he would have real fears for Oregon's safety if the jets are moved out of state. "My family's here," he said. "My kids are here. We know the risks are off the charts, and we can't stand it."

Delegations from Washington, Montana and Idaho, including Idaho Gov. Dirk Kempthorne, also made a case for keeping their military installations intact. The overall theme of the presentations, which included detailed maps and diagrams of jet response times, was one of leaving a corner of the country unprotected.

Under the current system, Air Guard jets from Portland can reach Seattle in 12 minutes, according to a presentation by Maj. Gen. Frank Scoggins, deputy commander of the Washington National Guard. The next closest fighter jets with homeland defense missions are more than an hour away in California, Scoggins said.

Scoggins also said the Pentagon may be causing an unintended public relations problem with its base closure plan, particularly as it affects the National Guard. By moving Air Guard units out of some states and centralizing them at bigger bases, "you disconnect citizens from the Air Force," he said.

Illinois Officials Gearing Up For Fight over Jobs Targeted By Pentagon

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (St. Louis, MO)

Jan Dennis

June 18, 2005

Springfield's mayor envisions thousands of people waving signs and flags in a show of support for the 183rd Fighter Wing on Monday when a member of the federal base closings commission tours the local Air National Guard base.

"This will be a very important day for the economic well-being of Springfield," Mayor Timothy Davlin said, well aware that appealing to the commission may be the base's best hope for keeping 163 positions that the Pentagon wants to move to Indiana.

Jobs are the bottom line as officials across Illinois dig in to save more than 2,700 positions that would be moved out of state under the Pentagon's latest plan to trim costs and tailor its military bases for the war on terrorism.

Yet, jobs will muster just a mention later Monday in St. Louis when state and local officials get their only face-to-face meeting with three other members of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, which will review the Pentagon's proposal and then send its own recommendations to President Bush.

"The job losses hurt every community, not just Illinois. You don't want to tell them things they already know," Davlin said.

Instead, the Illinois delegation, led by U.S. Sens. Richard Durbin and Barack Obama and Gov. Rod Blagojevich, will zero in on the military value of the state's bases. They also will argue that the Pentagon's logic was flawed when it included the bases among closings and realignments projected to save up to \$7 billion annually.

Military analysts say those security-based arguments are the only hope of swaying the commission, which historically has modified only about 15 percent of the Pentagon's recommendations.

"What they need to prove is there's not a good reason to hurt their community because there is no net savings and that the military would actually be losing net value instead of gaining

it," said Loren Thompson, a defense analyst and chief operating officer at the Lexington Institute, a Washington think tank.

Illinois officials say they won't lay down all their cards until Monday's hearing, one of more than a dozen planned around the country by the nine-member commission.

But they question the cost savings of proposals such as uprooting the Rock Island Arsenal's Tank-automotive and Armaments Command, or TACOM, to shift most of the jobs to the unit's division headquarters in Warren, Mich. The move accounts for about 1,100 of the 1,263 jobs targeted at the arsenal, an island in the Mississippi River with more than 6,500 employees.

Quad City officials contend that the cost of building new offices and parking for TACOM in suburban Detroit and training new staff would whittle away the savings envisioned by the Pentagon.

"The goal here is to save taxpayers' money. We'll be showing in some cases that not only are there no cost savings but actually costs associated with the moves," said Thom Hart, president of the Quad City Economic Development Group.

Obama said there are other signs that the Pentagon's recommendations are off base, such as moving fighter jets out of Springfield, which he contends is more centrally located than their proposed future home, Fort Wayne, Ind., and could better respond to terrorist attacks.

Blagojevich will point to "military friendly" initiatives enacted over the last few years in Illinois, including tuition benefits for all soldiers stationed in the state and increased death benefits for the families of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, said spokesman Andrew Ross.

"This is obviously an uphill battle, but this is a critical opportunity for us," Obama said.

Illinois officials will have just 2 1/2 hours to make their case, sharing part of that time with

neighboring Iowa as three BRAC commissioners gather input on closing and realignment proposals affecting seven Midwestern states.

They plan to highlight the reams of paperwork being turned over to the commission about the bases in Rock Island, Springfield and the Great Lakes Naval Recruit Training Command in North Chicago, which would lose more than 2,000 jobs, most of them military positions.

Springfield officials will start at the Air National Guard base early Monday with BRAC commissioner Sam Skinner, an Illinois native who earlier visited the state's other targeted facilities, then they will jet to St. Louis for the public hearing.

Davlin has been urging residents to greet Skinner with homemade signs and flags to show the community's support for the 183rd Fighter Wing, which has 355 full-time and 774 part-time employees. Economically, the base pumps an estimated \$44.7 million into the region each year.

Jack Spencer, senior policy analyst for defense and national security at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank in Washington, said communities would be better served spending their time and money on replacing lost base jobs "rather than fighting the inevitable."

"The hearings are letting politicians grandstand for a future that's not going to come. They should be facilitating meetings with communities that have successfully recovered from closings and realignments. That's how you serve not only your constituents but your country," Spencer said.

But the Lexington Institute's Thompson disagreed. He said the latest BRAC commission is loaded with military experts "who aren't much impressed with Pentagon bureaucrats" and will be more independent than earlier panels.

"If a community is really convinced that the Pentagon missed something about a base, they should put all of their energy into saving it because they very well could," Thompson said.

Q-C Builds Its Case For RI Arsenal

Quad City Times (Quad City, IL)

Ed Tibbetts

June 19, 2005

When Quad-City officials go before the Base Realignment and Closure Commission on Monday in St. Louis, they'll attack the Defense Department's proposal to realign the Rock Island Arsenal from two flanks.

They'll argue the Pentagon plan will cost money — not save it — and that it doesn't make military sense, either.

The hearing, one of 15 to be held nationwide, is a key milepost in the summer-long deliberations the nine-member commission will undertake to review a far-reaching Pentagon plan to realign and pare its infrastructure. That plan, which would close 33 bases and realign 29 others, includes the Arsenal, whose 6,400 employees make it the second largest employer in the Quad-Cities.

Monday's hearing is a high-stakes event.

"It's the one chance for the community to have input into the process, and we take that seriously," Thom Hart, president of the Quad-City Development Group, said last week.

The Pentagon plan, announced last month, would mean a net loss of about 1,600 jobs in the Quad-Cities, and Arsenal backers are fiercely opposing it. Nearly all of the area's top political representatives — four U.S. senators, two governors and two congressmen — will make personal presentations to the commission. Only U.S. Rep. Jim Nussle, R-Iowa, will not be there, though he will file written testimony.

It's an array of political power one says is aimed at showing support for the base.

"Hopefully the commission will see that it's a broad, bipartisan support," U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, said last week.

The bulk of the community's substantive case, though, will fall to local officials, led by Jim Morgan, a retired senior executive at the Tank-automotive and Armaments Command. Morgan has headed a team of nearly a dozen people, mostly Arsenal retirees, who have dug into thousands of pages of documents and spreadsheets to try to undercut the Pentagon's recommendations.

Focusing on TACOM

The Quad-Cities will have 50 minutes to present its case, and much of it will center on the TACOM organization, which buys and manages armaments systems, aircraft weapons and other equipment. It employs about 1,100 people on the island and would be the biggest loss, in terms of jobs, if the Pentagon recommendations hold.

Quad-City officials say the Pentagon's own data will show moving TACOM to the Detroit Arsenal in Warren, Mich., will cost money, not save it. They argue the cost of constructing new buildings in Michigan and the area's higher wage rates make it economically unwise to move. They say the cost to the military could be \$3 million to \$5 million per year, though that figure was still being refined last week.

"There's a huge cost to move — one-time cost to move — and you never, from the figures, show savings out of it," Hart said.

The TACOM recommendation was bundled with eight other proposed realignments, which altogether will save \$159 million annually once they're fully implemented, the Pentagon says.

To overturn a Pentagon proposal, though, the commission must find the Defense Department deviated "substantially" from the statutory criteria set out by Congress to guide the process.

And while financial savings is a consideration, at the top of the priority list is "military value," mostly comprised of such considerations as supporting the military's ability to operate jointly, mobilize and meet unexpected needs, or surge.

Local officials believe they have a defensible case there, too, both in the case of TACOM and the proposal to move the Defense Finance and Accounting Service and the Civilian Human Resource Agency off the island. The latter two organizations employ about 550 people on Arsenal Island between them. Both received the highest military value ratings when compared to their peers across the country.

In fact, the Arsenal installation as a whole, while ranked toward the middle of the spectrum, still has a higher overall military ranking, at 53rd, than Detroit Arsenal, which is 74th on the list.

"By all measures, Rock Island is ahead of Warren on this," Hart said. An internal memo released by the Pentagon among thousands of pages of data shows an Army group that reviewed the proposal to send TACOM-Rock Island to Michigan rejected the plan, saying it and similar moves wouldn't turn a profit for 59 years and would move organizations from higher rated installations to lower rated ones and urged the plan be rejected.

However, in justifying the TACOM proposal, a Defense Department panel wrote in a proposal released last month that the military value rankings were not "determinative" because the organizations on the installations would be dismantled. The overall proposal itself had the "highest military value," said the panel, called the Supply and Storage Joint Cross-Service Group.

In addition, the commander of the TACOM organization, which is headquartered at Detroit Arsenal, told the Quad-City Times last week the move does meet the military's needs.

"It's all about speed and agility now — rapidly changing your systems to meet the current needs in the field. There is a lot more communication when the acquisition guys and the logistics guys and the engineers can all sit face to face and discuss things and get back out and work on it," Maj. Gen. William Lenaers said in an interview about a week ago. "I think there will be a lot of improvements."

He counted among them the ability to significantly trim the work force, though the Pentagon data only forecasts small work force reductions, according to local officials.

The Pentagon has previously declined to discuss individual proposals, saying its recommendations speak for themselves. It did not respond to a request to comment on the Arsenal recommendations for this article.

The department has estimated the realignment of the finance and human resource agencies, which include collapsing more than two dozen such offices into a handful of more regional locations, will save \$145 million annually once the moves are fully implemented. And, in early hearings, the move to consolidate the finance and accounting offices has won praise from some commissioners.

Monday's hearing, which will be before three of the nine commissioners, will encompass several states, with Illinois and Iowa sharing 2½ hours between them. Michigan also will present its case.

From there, local officials will still seek to make their case to the commission before it must present a report to President Bush by Sept. 8. But people who are familiar with the base closing process say Monday is an important day.

Once the commission makes its report to the president, he can accept or reject it. If he does the latter, the commission has until Oct. 20 to present a new report. If the president rejects it — he can't amend it — the process ends. If he sends it to Congress, it has 45 legislative days to approve or reject the report as a whole. It cannot make amendments, either.

**Making a big impression;
Fire and water to greet BRAC commissioners**
Grand Forks Herald (Grand Forks, ND)
Ryan Bakken
June 19, 2005

Patriotic water should be twice as impressionable this time.

That's because red, white and blue water will cascade not once, but twice, over the BRAC cavalcade this week.

In 1995, the Emerado (N.D.) Fire Department caught the attention of Base Realignment and Closure commissioners by shooting an arch of multi-colored water over their motorcade.

"Our red, white and blue water has been the talk of BRAC people ever since," Jo Ann Renfrow said. "I've been in meetings at the Pentagon, and people have brought it up."

Renfrow will bring out the three fire hoses shooting dyed water again Wednesday morning for a rally along U.S. Highway 2.

The three commissioners will get another look at the H2O rainbow Thursday morning as they head to the BRAC hearing at UND's Chester Fritz Auditorium. Weather permitting, the Grand Forks Fire Department will duplicate the arch of colored water as the commissioners travel down University Avenue in the city's trolley.

Another aerial display for the commissioners on their way to the Chester Fritz is a burst of fire, called the "Eternal Flame of Friendship," according to Diane Blair. Organizers also are searching for a Perkins restaurant-sized American flag to drape over University Avenue using aerial trucks.

Plus, red, white and blue balloons will be rising - at the base - and falling - at the Fritz.

Renfrow, who owns a landscaping business that does business on the base, is organizing the Wednesday rally between the city and the base. Blair, an executive with The Chamber, is running the Thursday rally. Many employers, including those from Grand Forks city and county, have given permission to employees to miss work to attend a rally.

Wednesday's rally

"A lot of people ask me what they can do," Blair said. "I tell them to come to a rally." Blair is

looking for more than the 2,400 people needed to fill the Chester Fritz. "Our goal is to also line the streets and sidewalks along University Avenue from 42nd Street to the Fritz," she said. "We need everybody's help."

Blair encourages attendees to arrive early for the 8:30 a.m. hearing. The doors will open at 7 a.m., with musical entertainment until the hearing begins. Supporters are invited to wave signs, posters, flags or the rally fliers that will be inserted in Wednesday's Grand Forks Herald.

"Our theme, our mantra, is 'Every Day, Every Way, Team Grand Forks.' It means we support our military and our friends and neighbors," Blair said.

"We're expecting a large group because a lot of people are very, very concerned. The commissioners will get a very large welcome."

Large welcome

For Renfrow, the challenge is to make an impression covering the 10 miles of U.S. Highway 2 from the Grand Forks International Airport entrance to the base.

To do that, she has enlisted the help of 100 businesses, many of them contractors, doing commerce with the base. Contractors from as far away as Fargo will line the highway shoulders with their trucks and other construction equipment. Buses from 18 school districts also will be parked, showing how many schools would be hurt by a closure or downsizing.

In addition to the signs and posters, 100 flagpole-sized flags will be on display. The flags were purchased by Sundt Construction, which is building the new housing on the base.

The contractors are not only supplying the people and visual aids along the route, but also paying their employees to attend Thursday's hearing, Renfrow said.

"I hope people realize how seriously these contractors are about this," Renfrow said.

"They're wasting dry, sunny days during the construction season.

"So, don't just leave it up to these people. We still need the public, too."

Because of safety issues, Renfrow doesn't want the public to line the highway. Instead, she wants them to gather at the base's east gate.

"We're hoping to have at least 1,000 people out there," she said. "And we need them to stay for quite a lengthy time, from at least 8 a.m. until 3 p.m. We need to greet the commissioners and we need to be there to see them off. It's very important."

She is recruiting rally participants from 11 region communities outside of Grand Forks-East Grand Forks.

"The support has been greater this time than in 1993 and 1995," Renfrow said. "People realize it's not just the value of the dollar. They know that when the missiles left, they were impacted in other ways, like losing friends and members of their congregation. They don't want anything to happen like that again."

Rally can influence

The BRAC commissioners come to Grand Forks from a hearing in Rapid City, S.D., about the Pentagon's recommendation to close Ellsworth Air Force Base.

With 3,800 military and civilian jobs at stake, a public relations firm was hired in Rapid City to put together a save-the-base campaign, complete with a logo, billboards and advertisements.

But Blair doesn't think Ellsworth will be the proverbial tough act to follow. "We've taken the great ideas from 1993 and 1995 and tried to make them better and bigger," she said.

"We'll make these rallies something they'll remember."

Ellsworth proponents say they finally have needed data

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (Rapid City, SD)
June 18, 2005

Politicians and community leaders fighting to save Ellsworth Air Force Base said they've finally received crucial information from the Department of Defense on why the base was targeted for closure.

But getting the 1,200 pages of data on Thursday and Friday - just days before Tuesday's planned Base Realignment and Closure Commission hearing in Rapid City - doesn't leave the Ellsworth Task Force enough time to work the information into its rebuttal, said Pat McElgunn, the task force's director.

"We have been disadvantaged for over five weeks now," McElgunn said Friday. "At this late date, the value of information as it relates to our effort on Tuesday will really not alter what we are saying, unless we see something that jumps right out at us."

About 3,800 military and civilian jobs would be lost in the Pentagon recommendation to move the Ellsworth bombers to Dyess AFB in Texas.

The Pentagon's recommendations go to BRAC, which can make changes before the report goes to President Bush and Congress in September.

Ellsworth's proponents have said the Air Force has been slow to release information it used in making its recommendation, a complaint made in other states.

The last wave of Department of Defense data came in Thursday and Friday, after two U.S. senators issued a subpoena for everything that had not been released.

Alex Conant, a spokesman for Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., said those fighting to save Ellsworth finally have what was needed to interpret the previously released data.

"The Pentagon had years to prepare for this, but then waited until the last minute," Conant said. "That's irresponsible."

Sen. Tim Johnson, D-S.D., said while every bit of data helps, the delays in releasing information have been unnecessary.

"The Department of Defense had time to prepare for the timely declassification and release of critical information - for reasons beyond me, they simply didn't," Johnson said in a written statement.

Three BRAC members will hear two hours of testimony from military, political and expert witnesses at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Tuesday. There will be no comments from the public.

McElgunn said the hearing is only the beginning, and task force members will argue that the Pentagon erred in putting Ellsworth on the closure list.

"The 21st is our day in front of the BRAC commissioners, and we are going to preface our presentation by saying that we haven't had the time - and they haven't had the time - to digest the information," he said. "But we do think we are favorably positioned to make some compelling arguments."

Fort Smith leaders preparing to fight 188th Fighter Wing cuts

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (Fort Smith, AR)
June 18, 2005

Local leaders preparing to fight proposed cuts to Fort Smith's 188th Fighter Wing plan to travel to St. Louis on Monday to observe a federal hearing on cuts to the 131st Fighter Wing.

The leaders said that watching the Base Realignment and Closure Commission on Monday will help them better prepare for their time before the panel on July 11 in San Antonio.

More than two-thirds of the military personnel and civilians who work at the 188th Fighter Wing would lose their jobs under Department of Defense proposals. Seven of the 188th's F-16 fighter jets would be relocated to a Fresno, Calif., Air National Guard wing if the proposal is implemented. Eight more would be retired.

The BRAC hearings give local leaders a chance to fight the cuts.

After the St. Louis trip, the Fort Smith BRAC Task Force plans to travel to Washington to meet with Arkansas' congressional delegation for more preparations. The group also has written a letter to members of the federal BRAC commission, asking them to visit the Fort Smith fighter wing.

"We feel like our chances will be greatly enhanced if they can see what we have here," said Chamber of Commerce President Tom Manskey, who also is a member of the Fort Smith task force.

Arkansas' congressional delegation also has sent a similar letter to the commission.

The Fort Smith leaders have given themselves a June 27 deadline to have their 30-minute presentation prepared. After that date they will focus on fine-tuning their message that the fighter wing is too valuable to downsize, officials said.

Besides the trips, the commission has hired retired Air National Guard Col. Brock Strom as an adviser and a local marketing firm.

Fort Smith leaders also say they may invite the public to caravan to San Antonio to show support, but will announce details later.

Richardson to meet in Los Angeles with commissioner

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (Santa Fe, NM)
June 18, 2005

Gov. Bill Richardson planned to meet Sunday in Los Angeles with Base Realignment and Closure Commission member Philip Coyle.

Hanson Scott, director of the state Office of Military Base Closing and Support, will accompany Richardson.

The governor has been trying to meet with all nine members of BRAC, the independent commission charged with reviewing the Pentagon's May 13 recommendations for realigning the nation's military.

Among the Pentagon's recommendations: closing Cannon Air Force Base at Clovis. Residents of the Clovis and Portales areas, state leaders, New Mexico's congressional delegation and others have vowed to reverse that recommendation.

The commission plans a hearing Friday in Clovis on the recommendation and other base realignment proposals in the region.

"It is critical that every BRAC commissioner hear directly about the strategic importance of Cannon to our national security and the tremendous impact closing Cannon will have on eastern New Mexico," Richardson said Saturday. "We have a strong case and I have conveyed the facts to every commissioner I have met with."

He met earlier with Commissioners James Hansen in Salt Lake City; Sue Ellen Turner in Santa Fe; James Bilbray in Las Vegas, Nev.; Sam Skinner in Washington, D.C.; Harold Gehman in Pensacola, Fla.; and James Hill in Miami. He has talked by telephone with the commission's chairman, Anthony Principi.

Cannon supporters have argued that it has high military value and faces no encroachment problems. They contend the Air Force should take a planned expansion of the training range around the base into consideration.

The Air Force has been working to expand the range, and Cannon's supporters have expressed frustration that the Pentagon did not take that

into account in the analysis that led to the recommendation to close Cannon.

Gov. Ted Kulongoski has joined Northwest lawmakers to warn a federal panel the Pentagon's plan to move an Oregon Air National Guard fighter jet squadron out of Portland would pose a serious security risk.

"It looks like we're tacking up a vacancy sign on our air base and putting out a welcome mat for our enemies," Sen. Gordon Smith, R-Ore., said during a four-hour hearing in Portland before the Base Closure and Realignment Commission.

Not only that, Smith and others said, the move wouldn't save taxpayers any money - one of the main reasons cited by the Pentagon.

After the hearing, commission Chairman Anthony Principi suggested the Northwest lawmakers had made a strong case.

"We have real questions with regard to some of the recommendations as they apply to the Air National Guard," Principi said.

As part of the military cutbacks proposed by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, the Portland-based 142nd Fighter Wing would lose its 18 F-15 fighter jets - including three jets considered "spares" - to bases in New Jersey and Louisiana. Eight KC-135 refueling jets, also based in Portland, would be split between bases in Oklahoma and Kansas.

The Portland base would lose 452 civilian and 112 military employees. It also stands to lose about 1,200 part-time Guard airmen and reservists, who would report to other units.

Rumsfeld said the goal is to reduce the number of smaller air bases scattered around the country while beefing up the capabilities at bigger bases. Rumsfeld also wants to integrate more Air Guard and active duty Air Force operations.

His plan calls for stationing two Air Force jets in Portland on "alert" status, which means they

could be scrambled in the event of an emergency.

But officials at the Friday hearing said that's not enough to defend the Northwest's population centers, power dams, nuclear waste storage sites and other targets.

"Stripping the Pacific Northwest of this vital defense capability will leave Oregon and the rest of the Pacific Northwest dangerously vulnerable to air-based threats," Gov. Ted Kulongoski told the commission. "We simply won't have the tools we need to defend this region."

Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., added, "It would leave the Pacific Northwest with a Little League air defense capability."

Oregon also has a squadron of F-15 jets at an Air Guard base in Klamath Falls, but those are used for training.

The commission can add or subtract military bases from Rumsfeld's recommended list of closures. It is holding a series of hearings and visiting military bases around the country before giving its final recommendations to President Bush by Sept. 8.

Bush then has until Sept. 23 to pass the list on to Congress, which must accept or reject it.

Governor, lawmakers warn air base loss would pose serious risk

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Portland, OR)
June 18, 2005

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Courting Fort Monroe; Contractors Say The Hampton Base Is Prime For Redevelopment

Daily Press (Newport News, Virginia)

Terri Scanlon

June 18, 2005

The fort's waterfront property would make it popular among developers if the Army were to ship out.

The Army may no longer have an interest in the waterfront property at Old Point Comfort, but private developers from across the country certainly do.

At a recent convention in Denver of firms that specialize in converting former military bases into private developments, a number of potential contractors said Fort Monroe is one of the most attractive bases facing closure.

"Everyone here is interested in Monroe," said David Cooper, a senior project manager with URS Corp., a San Francisco-based company that has played a role in developing more than two dozen former military bases.

At least five other private firms openly expressed an interest in winning lucrative contracts for cleaning up and redeveloping the land at Fort Monroe should the Defense

Department's recommendations stand and the base close. Some companies have quietly researched the property deeds and the potential for environmental problems at the base.

John A. Walker, the manager for real estate development for a Pennsylvania-based firm, Weston Solutions, is familiar with a little-known provision in the deeds at Fort Monroe that says most of the property reverts to state ownership if the federal government stops using the land for military reasons. It's a provision that sets Fort Monroe apart from the other 32 bases that might close.

"We've done a bit of an investigation on many properties," Walker said.

The reasons are obvious, developers say. It's a swath of waterfront property in the heart of a metropolitan area.

Michael C. Bobrick knows all about Fort Monroe. He worked as an environmental lawyer for the Army for several years at an office inside the historic moat.

"Anybody should be interested in Fort Monroe because it's such a special piece of property," said Michael C. Bobrick, who recently joined the consulting team with McGuireWoods that is advising Hampton in its efforts to keep the base open.

None of the developers wanted to reveal their plans for the site, and it's not clear whether any of them are one of the five that have talked to Hampton Mayor Ross A. Kearney II about developing the base, but million-dollar homes and resort communities were mentioned as possibilities.

The Defense Department has recommended closing Fort Monroe as part of a large-scale effort to consolidate and transform the military through the Base Realignment and Closure process.

The most expensive part of the redevelopment on the Civil War-era base is expected to be the environmental cleanup.

The conference, sponsored by the National Association of Instillation Developers/An Association of Defense Communities, included local government officials from about half the cities facing prospect of losing one of their largest employers if the Defense Department's base closure recommendations are upheld.

Thirty-three bases are slated for closure and, with little likelihood of that list changing much, private firms are competing for a limited amount of work.

LaDonna Baertlein, the director of business development for EDAW, said Monroe is one of the top 10 bases her firm is targeting for possible redevelopment work.

"It's a prime real-estate market," she said. "That's going to get a lot of attention." *

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

What military bases would make the most lucrative private developments? The answer, according to developers, is those bases in large metropolitan areas or on the water. Of the 33 bases recommended for closure, five are commonly mentioned as being desirable real estate.

FORT MONROE HAMPTON

- * Acres: 570
- * Major mission: Headquarters of Army's Training and Doctrine Command
- * Jobs: 3,564 military and civilian

NEW LONDON | 40 miles southeast of Hartford, Conn.

- * Major mission: Base for attack submarines
- * Acres: 500
- * Jobs: 8,460 military and civilian

FORT MCPHERSON | Southwest Atlanta

- * Major mission: Headquarters for the 3rd Army, the Army Reserve Command and Army Forces Command
- * Acres: 487
- * Jobs: 4,141 military and civilian

FORT MONMOUTH | 40 miles south of Newark, N.J.

- * Major mission: Army Materiel Command's Communication and Electronics Command
- * Acres: 1,560
- * Jobs: 5,272 military and civilian

FORT GILLEM | Forest Park, Ga., just south of Atlanta

- * Major mission: Support hub for Fort McPherson
- * Acres: 1,452
- * Jobs: 1,081 military and civilian

Doing The Math On The Submarine Base

The New London Day (New London, CT)

Jasjit S. Bindra

June 19, 2005

The groups fighting to save the submarine base in Groton face a tough job at their presentation next month to the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC). Their biggest hurdle is fighting the billions-of-dollars savings figures that will be thrown at them. The Pentagon, prodded by the Bush administration and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, is under severe pressure to reduce costs and generate savings to fund the operations in Iraq. They are looking at \$48.8 billion in savings, and of that, \$1.6 billion is going to be from closing the submarine base.

We stand in awe of all those zeros. How can we question a saving of \$48.8 billion and still be called a patriot? Especially after President Bush finally showed his hand in favor of the nationwide base closings and consolidations when speaking at the Naval Academy commencement last month. Bush told the graduating class we are wasting “billions” of taxpayer dollars on these bases, money he desperately needs to fight terrorism. He used the “billion dollar” figure, which beats many of us cowering into agreement.

We have too many bases. He made it clear that any effort to keep them open would be futile. We have to concentrate our defense assets, so

that our enemies can cripple us with a few selected hits.

Yes, a savings of \$48.8 billion. Unfortunately, Bush neglected to clarify that the entire annual savings from closing the military bases across the country would be consumed in financing 13 days of the war in Iraq. At the end of the ceremonies the graduates flung their hats in the air. “Hip, hip, hooray!”

Thirteen days? Finally, I stopped scratching my head and did the math. The \$48 billion savings from the base closings is actually over 20 years. That comes out to a saving of \$2.4 billion per year. Meanwhile, the war is costing us about \$70 billion per year (the supplemental war spending estimates actually range from \$60 billion to \$105 billion), which comes to about \$5.8 billion a month or \$190 million per day. If you care to figure out the fine details, it all comes out that a whole year's savings of \$2.4 billion from nationwide base closings is going to be consumed by 13 days of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Pentagon's short-sighted base closings also will shut down the Naval Submarine Base in Groton. Closing the base, the birthplace of Nautilus, the “Submarine Capital of the World,” is estimated to save \$1.6 billion. It happens to be the biggest saving in the entire proposal. But again, that is over 20 years. It works out to a paltry \$80 million (\$0.08 billion) per year or \$220,000 per day. In other words, a whole year's savings of \$80 million from closing the sub base in Connecticut is going to be consumed in financing fewer than 10 hours of the war in Iraq. This does not factor in the unquantified costs of environmental cleanup, or the costs of relocating the base personnel.

Groton-New London faces the largest single loss of jobs in the entire proposal. The impact and disruption of local economies in Connecticut, is going to be devastating. Of course we have Bush's personal sympathy, but the economic loss remains our problem, at least for a decade, before we can even begin to recover.

The Pentagon is “confusing dollar savings with national security,” Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman has said. Both Sen. Christopher J. Dodd and Rep. Rob Simmons agree the base closing doesn't make sense.

John Markowicz, chairman of the Subbase Realignment Coalition, the local group fighting to save the base, is mystified how the Pentagon arrived at its decision to put Groton on the chopping block. The group is rightly frustrated. The Navy is dragging its feet and delivering the urgently needed data behind the base closure and the decision-making process only in “snippets.”

There is clearly something suspicious in how the Navy arrived at its conclusion to close the base. The decision to close the base evolved out of nowhere, labeled with a savings of \$1.6 billion, and appears to have been rubber stamped by the reviewing committee.

Norbert “Bud” Faye, member of the Coalition, contends the genesis of the Defense Department recommendations is really a “struggle between the submarines vs. surface ship advocates within the Navy.” A committee on which Lieberman sits finally subpoenaed the needed information from the Pentagon. As a result the needed information is now being concealed in data dumps being parceled out. Meanwhile, time is running out fast.

The regional hearing for New England closures before the BRAC commission is scheduled for July 6 in Boston. One thing is clear: “nostalgic” arguments or economic consequences of the base closings on local economies are going to carry very little weight, or evoke any sympathy at the hearings

We can only hope the BRAC commissioners can be persuaded that the sub base has real strategic value. Most important, we will need to tackle the billion-dollar syndrome in the commissioners' minds. There are no billion-dollar savings from closing the base. The slim savings, if any, will be used by the Bush administration to pour down its rat-hole in Iraq for an additional 10 hours or less.

Opinions/ Editorials

'Pros' will oversee July presentation before BRAC panel

Norwich Bulletin (Norwich, CT)

Ray Hackett

June 19, 2005

There were a few interesting, behind-the-scenes developments last week in the ongoing Base Realignment and Closure process.

The big news was the hiring of a Washington consulting group to assist the state in preparing its presentation to the BRAC Commission at next month's regional hearing in Boston. Steven "Spike" Karalekas and Jim Noone, both retired Naval Reserve captains, from The Washington Group -- the consulting firm's name -- will spearhead the effort in advising Connecticut's delegation on how best to make the argument in defense of the Groton submarine base.

It appears Connecticut's elected leaders, state and congressional delegation, will play a minor role, letting the "professionals" handle the actual presentation. Subbase Realignment Coalition Chairman John Markowicz will likely take the lead role. It's yet to be decided who else will be part of that team making the case.

Interesting addition

There is, however, one interesting addition to the team: retired Navy Vice Admiral Albert H. Konetzni, former deputy and chief of staff, commander of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet. A submariner who served on four nuclear-powered submarines during his career, and later commander of the Pacific Submarine Force, Konetzni will likely address one of the key issues in the fight -- the force structure issue.

A lot of attention is being directed these days to that issue, and in particular to the contradicting studies and statements related to the size of the Navy's submarine fleet of the future. It is the Navy's contention that the fleet will shrink slightly over the next 20 years, enough so that it

is no longer necessary to maintain three submarines bases on the East Coast.

The visit Friday by U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, to the Kings Bay, Ga., Submarine Base was a highly publicized event. Simmons, a member of the House Armed Services Committee, and whose district includes the Groton base, toured the Kings Bay facility to, in his words, "kick the tires."

The purpose of the official visit was to determine first hand if Pentagon estimates on costs associated with transferring submarines, support commands and the sub school from Groton to Kings Bay are realistic.

Additional tour

At the same time, Simmons was touring the base, Kings Bay officials were providing a second visit with a separate tour of the facility. A staff analyst with the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission was also visiting. The two tours were conducted independent of each other.

And neither Simmons nor the analyst were scheduled to spend any time visiting the community outside the gates. That's an interesting point since much has also been made about the community's ability to absorb the increase in Navy personnel and families that would descend upon Camden County if the Pentagon recommendations are approved.

Details of the July 6 regional BRAC hearing in Boston remain unclear. What is known is that the hearing will be held at the new Boston Convention Center, and will begin at 8:30 a.m. Beyond that, everything else is pretty much TBA (to be announced).

The BRAC Commission has yet to announce how many, and which ones, of the nine commissioners will attend the hearing. It is expected that at least three, possibly the four who visited Groton several weeks ago, will be on hand.

The order in which states will make their cases also appears to be "fluid." The latest line-up suggests that Rhode Island officials will go first with Connecticut following. Rhode Island will get one hour and Connecticut two hours to make their respective cases. That would mean that Connecticut would have the floor from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.

The hearing is open to the public, subject only to available space. And there appears to be ample space at the convention center despite five states being grouped together. It is unlikely, however, that members from the public will get an opportunity to actually speak.

Connecticut officials are planning a presentation that will consume the entire two hours allotted to the state.

Additional Notes