

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



BIRD

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National News Articles

States set to challenge base closure recommendations

The Associated Press

June 19, 2005

ST. LOUIS (AP) - Three of the nine members of the Base Realignment and Closing Commission will hear arguments Monday from Wisconsin and six other states at a hearing at which state leaders are expected to challenge Pentagon recommendations to close bases down.

Gov. Jim Doyle will appear in an attempt to save the 440th Airlift Wing at Milwaukee's General Mitchell International Airport from closure. It was one of 33 major bases the Pentagon recommended closing in a plan to save an estimated \$48 billion over 20 years.

Doyle, who met with Commissioner Samuel Skinner on a base tour last week, has said the wing has played a key role in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and has had great success recruiting.

"This facility has had tremendous success in achieving its recruitment goals, and because it shares facilities and resources with Mitchell Airport, it is an extremely cost-effective facility compared to many others around the country," Doyle said in a statement last week.

The Pentagon has said the unit would move to Pope Air Force Base, near Fayetteville, N.C. and would result in the net loss of 266 military and civilian jobs.

Along with Doyle, leaders from Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Indiana and Michigan will also make their cases Monday before the commission, which must turn in its recommendations to President Bush by September.

Missouri's political, congressional and military leaders say the Pentagon's planned military cuts and consolidations pose risks to the state's security - both homeland and economic.

One of the presenters, Democratic Rep. William Lacy Clay, said Friday the St. Louis area is still reeling from the last round of cuts a decade ago, when 4,700 jobs were eliminated at an Army personnel office in St. Louis.

This round would see the loss of almost 4,000 military and civilian jobs in the area.

Missouri Sen. Kit Bond, who has taken the lead in questioning the closure decisions, said the state has a compelling case backed by thousands of pages of classified and unclassified documents.

"We continue to crunch the numbers and to examine the Commission's rationale," said Sen. Jim Talent, R-Mo.

Jeremiah Gertler, senior fellow with the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington and senior staffer for the 1995 base closure commission, said the hearing process is "not an exercise in futility."

"Over time, about 15 percent of Department of Defense recommendations are rejected or modified by the commission. The data will be analyzed in a thoroughgoing manner," Gertler said.

The stakes are high for some states in the Pentagon's proposal.

Missouri stands to lose a net 3,679 jobs. Kentucky could lose 3,658, and Illinois could lose 2,698.

Indiana, by contrast, would gain nearly 2,200 mostly civilian jobs.

"There is life after base closure," said Tim Ford, executive director of the Association of Defense Communities in Washington.

He cited nearly 100 communities that survived past base closures after creating a mechanism for economic development - but said progress is measured in decades, not years.

"We tell people to fight the decision, participate in the process, but at the same time, they have to look at what happens next," he said. "That needs to start right now. They can't wait until October."

The Pentagon announced the proposed closures May 13.

Among the states also making their cases:

-Kentucky, which would lose its Fort Knox Armor School but gain an Infantry Brigade Combat Team, under the proposal. The shift away from armor would mean a loss of more than 3,100 military and civilian jobs at the base.

-Illinois, which could lose 1,263 jobs moved from the Rock Island Arsenal, 163 from Springfield's Air National Guard base and 2,022 from the Great Lakes Naval Recruit Training Command in North Chicago.

-Indiana is sending a delegation in hopes of preserving about 670 jobs at Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center.

States pick their battles to address military base plans

Kentucky, Indiana try to protect jobs
The Courier Journal (Louisville, KY)
Michael A. Lindenberger
June 20, 2005

Kentucky wants to save Fort Knox's Ireland Army Community Hospital from closing and keep the Navy from moving 200 jobs out of Louisville.

Indiana wants to save nearly 700 Navy jobs the Pentagon has proposed taking from the Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center in the southern part of the state.

But today they will share a goal when state officials testify before the panel making those decisions: Protect parts of the Pentagon recommendations that would bring thousands of jobs to Kentucky and Indiana.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission is scheduled to meet today in St. Louis to take testimony on recommendations for changes at the region's military installations.

For Fort Knox, the proposals would bring a new infantry combat brigade and two major commands overseeing the Army's human resources, recruiting, advertising and basic training. But its hospital would be downgraded to a clinic, and it would lose its armor school -- not to mention 80 years of tradition -- and the 7,500 soldiers who train there annually.

For Indiana, the recommendation's for the nation's military installations would mean a net increase of more than 2,100 jobs, including about 3,500 at the Defense Finance and Accounting Service. But although the Crane naval facility will remain open, nearly 700 of those jobs would be sent to New Jersey.

"We understand about playing defense," said John Clark, a senior aide to Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels, who will lead a 14-person delegation to the hearing with Indiana's lieutenant governor. "We have the high ground with these new jobs now, and we want it to stay that way."

Kentucky's case will be made by U.S. Rep. Ron Lewis, R-2nd District, and retired Brig. Gen. Jim Shane, executive director of the Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs.

Jack Spencer, a senior defense policy analyst at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, said he believes that states have a better chance of protecting gains than of reversing cuts.

Over the past four rounds of base closures and changes, only 10 to 15 percent of the Pentagon's proposals were changed by the commission, Spencer said. This will be the fifth downsizing since 1988.

The commission has until Sept. 8 to send a final proposal to President Bush, who can reject or accept the list but cannot change it. He has until Nov. 7 to send it to Congress, where it will become law unless Congress votes within 45 days to reject the entire list.

States' strategies

Shane said there will be no effort to reverse the proposal to move the U.S. Army Armor Center and School from Fort Knox to Fort Benning, Ga.

He said he believes the shift is too critical to the Pentagon's overall defense strategy to realistically challenge, so Kentucky won't try.

Spencer said that is wise.

"It's tough to argue with the Pentagon over what's best for national security," he said.

Shane said the changes proposed for Fort Knox will more than compensate Kentucky, and Fort Knox, for the loss of the Armor Center.

He said they will bring at least \$110 million in new construction to the post, plus another \$50 million in housing improvements.

The Pentagon says the changes will cost more than \$500 million in 2006 and 2007 but will begin saving the Army \$123 million a year in 2009.

Fort Knox garrison commander Col. Keith Armstrong has said the changes will mean an increase of 5,100 permanent civilian and military jobs to offset the loss of the trainees, who are typically stationed at Fort Knox for six to nine months.

In addition, replacing the two-star commander of the Armor School will be a three-star general in charge of the U.S. Army Accessions Command, which directs all of the recruiting, advertising and basic training, he said.

He also said thousands of good-paying civilian and Army jobs will be relocated from just outside Washington, D.C., when Fort Knox welcomes the Army's human resources command.

Saving the hospital

The Pentagon wants to downgrade Ireland Army Community Hospital to a clinic, a move that the hospital commander accepted as reasonable,

given the low demand for the in-patient facilities.

The change is part of the downsizing proposed at nine military medical centers. The Pentagon estimates that together the changes will save \$818 million over 20 years.

But Shane said the state will argue that it's a mistake to change Ireland.

"This recommendation was made using current numbers, and that doesn't make sense," he said, noting that about 85 jobs are at stake.

Other changes proposed for Fort Knox would mean that soldiers living there would be older, with higher ranks, and therefore more likely to have families, he said. Plus, they would be stationed at Fort Knox for longer periods of time, making it more likely that they would need a hospital.

Monthly births, for instance, are projected to increase from 38 to 60, Shane said.

Retired Army Sgt. 1st Class Ruben Gosa, 41, of Vine Grove, said having the hospital at Fort Knox was a big help for him and his wife, who gave birth to son Isaiah late last week.

"It is convenient to have that hospital right there," Gosa said, adding that he and his wife went in once or twice a month for checkups. "I am not going to say it is a mistake if they close it, but there is a lot of families who would not benefit if they do."

Elizabethtown "is not a big enough city where it could accommodate everyone from Radcliff, Vine Grove and Fort Knox," he said.

Saving Louisville jobs

Shane said Kentucky also will argue that the Pentagon erred when it recommended moving more than 200 Navy civilian jobs in Louisville to a combined research facility out of state.

Terry Carmack, chief of staff for U.S. Rep. Anne Northup, R-3rd District, said those jobs

"are good-paying jobs" and they belong in Louisville.

But Spencer said the commission is rarely swayed by economic development arguments. "The Pentagon is not a jobs program," he said.

Carmack also said the Pentagon's proposal was based on a mistaken classification of the jobs as research-oriented when almost all of their engineering work is related to manufacturing weapons for the Navy.

"They have misanalyzed what this group of engineers do, what their mission is," Carmack said.

For Indiana, a rare win

This round of base closures might be the first to benefit Indiana, Clark said.

Still, Indiana will try to save 672 Navy jobs the Pentagon wants to move from Crane in Southern Indiana.

The strategy is to convince the commission that Crane should become a hub for weapons technology related to special operations and electronic warfare, he said.

Spencer said it could be hard to persuade the commission to make big changes to the Pentagon's plans.

"The bottom line is that nine times out of 10, if your base is on the list, it's going to be closed," he said.

Local News Articles

Base-Closing Panel Wants Facts, Not Emotional Pleas, At Hearing

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (St. Louis, MO)
Philip Dine
June 20, 2005

WASHINGTON - The Base Realignment and Closure Commission has some simple advice for everyone from Missouri, Illinois and the other

states who will make the case for their area's military bases today in St. Louis:

Just the facts, please.

Leave the rhetorical flourishes, the passionate appeals, the political oratory at home.

"We understand the emotional impact to the community and how important these bases are to the states, but at the end of the day we have to make the decisions based on the criteria," commission spokesman Robert McCreary said.

"The most important thing is that people provide factual information so when the commission goes into the deliberations they can make the best decision, the best recommendations to the president."

Missouri and Illinois officials say they intend to deliver some strong statements, hoping to show that the Pentagon violated its own criteria in some instances in recommending which bases be closed or realigned - thereby threatening thousands of local jobs.

At stake for Missouri are the historic 131st F-15 Fighter Wing at Lambert Field, as well as jobs at the Army Human Resources Command in Overland and defense finance jobs in St. Louis and Kansas City. Illinois is fighting to preserve its 183rd F-16 Fighter Wing in Springfield, along with jobs at the Rock Island Arsenal and jobs at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center.

"Missouri has a compelling case to make and is preparing to make it," said Sen. Christopher "Kit" Bond, R-Mo. "Thousands of pages of documents, both classified and unclassified, have been reviewed, and information in those documents has only served to strengthen our case.

"As long as the commission is focused on the facts, we are confident they will agree that some of the Pentagon recommendations are flawed and others should be changed because of new information we will provide," Bond said.

Sen. Jim Talent, R-Mo., said state officials "are preparing for this hearing like an attorney prepares for a court case. We continue to crunch the numbers. ... We are prepared to make the case that, based on the facts, the Pentagon's recommendations failed to consider critical information in making the decision to relocate these important facilities."

Jack Lavin, director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, said it would be hard to keep emotion out of the picture.

"I can only imagine when you're talking about jobs and people's lives, there's going to be a little bit of emotion to it. But when you boil it down, it's going to be about facts, about Department of Defense criteria and how the DOD deviated from that criteria," he said.

Lavin said the facilities in Springfield and Rock Island were rated at a higher military value than other installations staying open.

Missouri will lead things off when today's session begins at 8:30 a.m., with political and military officials spending two hours presenting arguments on behalf of defense jobs and facilities that Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has proposed eliminating or moving to another state. Illinois will follow.

The hearing, in the multipurpose room at St. Louis University's Busch Student Center, 20 North Grand Boulevard, ends at 6 p.m. Doors open to the public at 7:15 a.m.

Also testifying will be representatives from Iowa, Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky and Wisconsin.

It will be the role of the three commission members at today's hearing to transmit the information to the other six members, including Chairman Anthony Principi. "They're the ones who are going to report back to the other commissioners," McCreary said, "so people are going to look to them, 'What'd you hear, what'd you see?'"

The commission asked the senior senator from each state involved in regional hearings to allocate time and choose speakers for that state's presentation. That gave Bond the task for Missouri. Bond and Talent will open up, followed by three panels of witnesses for the 131st, the human resources jobs and the defense finance jobs. Scheduled speakers include Rep. William Lacy Clay Jr., D-Mo.; St. Louis County Executive Charlie Dooley; Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, D-Mo.; and several military and union officials. Gov. Matt Blunt will close the process.

Among Illinois officials scheduled to speak are the two Democratic senators, Dick Durbin and Barack Obama, Gov. Rod Blagojevich and Lavin.

BRAC Threat Gets Personal For Two New England Towns

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk, VA)

Dale Eisman

June 19, 2005

Kittery, Maine — Barry Fletcher was born into shipbuilding, the son and grandson of men who constructed and repaired submarines at the historic Portsmouth Naval Shipyard here. He's 55 now and eyeing retirement, but on warm days Fletcher still pedals his bike through this seaside village to the shops where he's worked as a nuclear machinist for 31 years.

"There's a lot of generations here," he said "It's like a family, I guess."

Cheryl Pagano serves up sandwiches at Moe's, a shop in downtown Portsmouth, N.H., just across the Piscataqua River from the yard and patronized daily by dozens of its workers. Several times a year, the yard commander orders up enough of her subs to feed all 4,000 of his employees for a "Moe's on the Mall" lunch at the yard's central plaza to celebrate jobs completed under budget or ahead of schedule.

Pagano's grandfather opened Moe's nearly 50 years ago, she said, and the yard has always been its lifeblood.

From the 205-year-old Portsmouth yard on an island at Maine's southern tip to the New London Submarine Base in Groton, Conn., a three-hour drive down the coast, New Englanders are coming to grips this summer with the potential loss of an old friend and for many a livelihood: the U.S. Navy.

"We've been in the submarine business for 100 years here and everybody that's been in the submarine service has been through here," said Groton Mayor Dennis Popp. Officers and enlisted are introduced to subs in the base school and return for two or three tours of duty if they make the Navy a career, he added.

"They stay here. They become a part of our community," Popp said. "Their kids go to school with our kids. They go to church with us. ... Losing friends and neighbors, folks who've been involved with this community, will take its toll."

Within weeks, a bipartisan Base Realignment and Closure Commission created by Congress is to decide the fate of the Portsmouth yard and the New London base.

The Pentagon wants both facilities closed, their ships, employees and missions divided among bases and shipyards in Hampton Roads, southeast Georgia, Washington state and Hawaii as part of a nationwide effort to save money and streamline the military.

In Hampton Roads, jobs and workers transferred from the New England sites would help offset the loss of thousands of soldiers and Army civilians to be displaced by the closure of Fort Monroe in Hampton and downsizing at Fort Eustis in Newport News.

Pentagon planners estimate the moves would save taxpayers \$1.6 billion – spread over 20 years – at New London and \$1.2 billion at Portsmouth, sums dismissed by base and shipyard advocates as minuscule in the context of \$400 billion-plus annual defense budgets.

For the communities involved, the price of those savings would be almost 13,000 lost jobs, 8,461 at the submarine base and 4,510 at the shipyard,

as well as billions of dollars in homes and goods unpurchased and donations to churches and charities unmade.

Twin closures also could be the last major milestone in the long transition of each community from a manufacturing-based economy to a future built around the service industry, particularly tourism. Each area already is in the throes of gentrification, their tired downtowns being transformed as renovators turn abandoned factories and warehouses into apartments, boutiques and restaurants.

But the potential economic upheaval, and a sense among many that a treasured way of life is slipping away, has enraged and energized state and local political and business leaders across the region as well as civilians working in and around the shipyard and the sub base.

If both facilities disappear, they note, the Navy's presence in the Northeast – a region rich with nautical history – essentially will be reduced to an air station in Brunswick, Maine, with no planes and a base-turned-war-college in Newport, R.I., with no ships.

"I think it would be a disaster," said Nancy Roy, a retired budget analyst at the Portsmouth yard who now volunteers as a greeter for a small naval history museum in Kittery.

Down in Groton, base closure "would have a big, devastating effect on this community," said John Carcioppolo, a retired submariner now commanding the city's chapter of Subvets, a submarine veterans group.

Roy and Carcioppolo are among the legions of residents in both communities who suspect partisan politics figured in the closure recommendations. President Bush won re-election last year despite a weak showing in New England and many locals argue that he and the Republican Congress are bent on punishing the area for voting Democratic.

"We're a blue state here. I believe it's all politics," snapped Joe Quaratella Jr., who has

cut sailors' hair for decades at his one-chair Nautilus Barber Shop on Connecticut Route 12, about a mile from the sub base.

Pentagon leaders and the Bush administration emphatically deny such allegations. And local leaders in both areas say they believe "Navy politics" – a struggle between surface ship and submarine admirals over the service's future course – is more likely than presidential politics to have figured in the closure recommendations.

On Capitol Hill, meanwhile, lawmakers from throughout New England have crossed party lines to pressure the Pentagon – through subpoenas issued by a Senate committee – to turn over data and minutes of internal meetings that could justify or undercut the closure plan.

The protest is also playing out on the pavement.

In Kittery, population 3,500, some 7,000 people wearing bright yellow "Save Our Shipyard" T-shirts jammed the narrow streets leading to the Portsmouth yard early this month to demonstrate their support. To the south, a slightly smaller crowd lined the highway leading to the New London sub base for a similar display as members of the BRAC Commission arrived for an inspection tour.

And in each area, battalions of volunteer activists, government officials and consultants hired by the states and localities are poring over data in search of evidence that the Pentagon has underestimated the value of the local facilities or the cost of closing them.

Some argue Hampton Roads should take the hit.

"What we'd like is for the attack submarines in Norfolk to come this way," to New London, Popp said. That would establish the Northeast base as the Atlantic Fleet's attack sub headquarters, leaving Norfolk as its surface-ship hub and Kings Bay, Ga., as the home of its ballistic missile submarines, he said.

Others around Groton suggest the Kings Bay base should be the closure target, arguing that New London has enough room to accommodate

most or all of its nine subs, gives them a quicker outlet to the open sea and provides better schools and public services for base employees and their families.

Such arguments are unlikely to persuade the BRAC Commission, said Art Collins, who as director of the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission has a more than passing interest in the New England efforts.

A failure to pick up the thousands of jobs from New England would be disappointing but not catastrophic, he said, because Hampton Roads already is home to 114,000 military members and their families.

But Collins added that he expects the BRAC commissioners won't find a reason to toss out the Pentagon plan and retain the New London base or the Portsmouth yard.

Even less likely, he and other authorities argued, is any move by the commission to transfer Norfolk-or Kings Bay-based subs to New London or shut the Norfolk Naval Shipyard and shift its work to New Hampshire.

Collins noted that the law governing base closings has been rewritten to make it more difficult for the commission to override Defense Department recommendations. Seven of the nine commissioners must agree to add facilities to the closure list, a step required for any movement of subs away from Norfolk.

John Markowicz, the former Navy captain essentially directing the save-the-sub-base effort in New London, agreed that the facility there must rise or fall on its own military value.

Markowicz, who heads a regional economic development panel in the Groton-New London area, has been developing and implementing strategies to preserve the base since the early 1990s, when it was threatened by an earlier BRAC commission. He's had just one day off since early May, he said, and has no plans for another.

Markowicz acknowledged that his determination to prevail is driven in part by concern that the base's fate may also determine the future of Electric Boat, the privately owned sub-building shipyard just down the Thames River.

"The Boat Company," as a few old-timers in the area still call it, is as much a part of Groton's identity as is the sub base. Its work force has shrunk dramatically from Cold War highs of around 20,000, but it remains one of only two sub-building yards in the U.S., and about 1,000 of its employees ride buses to the sub base every weekday to work on ships there.

The combination of a closed sub base and a shuttered Electric Boat would pull a staggering \$3.3 billion per year out of southeast Connecticut, Markowicz said. And while new, lighter industries – a Pfizer Inc. drug research center and a pair of gambling casinos – have moved into the area in recent years to offset job losses from Electric Boat, there are no immediate prospects for economic rescue if the yard closes altogether.

Electric Boat executives insist the yard will stay in business and in Groton, whatever happens to the sub base. But if the base is shut, the Navy probably would look to the Norfolk Naval Shipyard and Northrop Grumman's yard in Newport News to handle that work as well as other sub repairs now entrusted to Portsmouth, Markowicz said.

To stave off that possibility, he and other closure opponents in Groton and around Portsmouth are asking pointed questions about the way the recommendations were developed and rechecking the Pentagon's computations of each base's military value.

Throughout 2004, data on each base's facilities and the cost of expanding, maintaining, renovating or eliminating them were gathered and fed into a complex formula to produce a military value score. The New London sub base ranked well behind Norfolk and Kings Bay in those rankings but Markowicz argues that some of the Pentagon's data are flat wrong. Though New London already is homeport for 18

submarines, for example, the base received a "0" score on an accounting of its "adequate linear feet" of pier space.

Similar fact-checking exercises are under way in Kittery and officials there say they're upbeat about the case for the Portsmouth yard.

Sub work done at Portsmouth consistently comes in under budget and ahead of schedule, said Roy, the former Portsmouth budget analyst, and workers from the yard are dispatched regularly to other Navy yards to tackle special projects.

"People who've been to different yards will tell you that the work ethic here is very high," Roy said.

Kittery Town Manager Jonathan Carter insisted local attention is focused on preserving the yard but conceded that officials also have begun quiet preparations for a future without it.

"Plan B is being kept under the radar," Carter said last week, even as he acknowledged attending a recent conference in Denver that focused on steps military communities can take to recover from a major closure.

Carter and Kittery Council chairwoman Ann Grinnell said the Portsmouth-Kittery economy already has moved away from its manufacturing roots – the shipyard is really the only heavy industry left in the area – and is now built largely around tourism.

Since the 1980s, a bustling strip of retail outlet stores has sprung up on the U.S. Route 1 bypass at the edge of Kittery, luring bargain hunters from across New England who combine shopping with sightseeing along the coast. And real estate prices have skyrocketed, pushed by a migration of new residents from Boston – just an hour's drive south.

"I left Boston and came up here expecting cheaper rents, but it's roughly the same," said 22-year-old John Arnold, who manages a branch of his family's dry cleaning business near the shipyard.

Closing the base would depress traffic in the store by perhaps 20 percent, Arnold said, but his family is already looking to open a new outlet farther up Interstate 95 in York, Maine, another growing tourist center. He figures shipyard workers, who after all are smart and skilled enough to repair nuclear-powered submarines, would make similar adjustments and find other ways to earn a good living.

“They’re so talented down there. ... They’ll do just fine,” he said.

With the shipyard occupying an island near the mouth of the Piscataqua, closure also could provide choice new sites for waterfront homes, said Sandy Domina, a real estate agent who recently moved to offices just outside the yard’s main gate.

“It’s a beautiful piece of real estate, but it’s provided jobs,” said Domina, who quickly cut off questions suggesting the yard’s demise might be a boon to her business. “If it does close, our hearts are going to be with the people.”

The real loss if the yard disappears, said local restaurateur Mark Miller, would be the end of the blue-collar working way of life that is part of the seacoast heritage.

The old yard, with ramshackle buildings and unassuming workers, cares for some of the most complex machines on earth. “There are a lot of hard-working Yankees here and they feel if they do a good job it’ll be rewarded,” Miller said.

“It’s a tradition that remains progressive, something you would hate to see go away.”

Said Fletcher, “We’re not quitters, we’re not rolling over playing dead, that’s for sure. Everyone I talk to is working harder.”

Kentucky officials to lobby at regional base closing hearing

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (KY)
Hilary Roxe
June 20, 2005

More than a month after the Defense Department laid out recommendations for what to do with military installations across the country, Kentuckians will get their chance to respond.

Kentucky officials on Monday will address members of the Base Closure and Realignment Committee at a daylong regional hearing in St. Louis. The meeting will cover seven states, but the Kentucky delegation will have two hours to present thoughts on the military's recommendations.

Under the Pentagon's plan, the state could lose more than 3,800 on-post military and civilian jobs.

Fort Knox would lose its Armor School and its historic focus on heavy armor, but gain a war-fighting unit. Other recommendations include shifting a unit out of Fort Campbell, moving part of a Louisville naval center and shutting down two small Lexington facilities.

Retired Brig. Gen. James E. Shane Jr., executive director of the Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs, said the state is satisfied with most of the suggestions.

But he said Kentucky officials will take issue with at least two recommendations - downsizing the hospital at Fort Knox and shifting one part of Louisville's Naval Surface Warfare Center to New Jersey.

Fort Knox will need a full hospital if a war-fighting brigade moves in, Shane said, and the Louisville facility was considered a research center, though its focus is engineering and design.

The commissioners won't make any decisions at the public hearing. Rather, they'll gather information that will feed into the final recommendations, which must be sent to President Bush by Sept. 8.

Rep. Ron Lewis, a Republican whose district includes Fort Knox, will be the state's lead

speaker. In a statement, he said he plans to talk about "why Fort Knox is such a great place to live and work," and mention his concerns about reducing hospital services.

Kentucky's delegation will include federal, state and local officials, Shane said.

Inouye argues against shrinking Alaska air base

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Fairbanks, AK)
June 20, 2005

Democratic Sen. Daniel Inouye contends the Department of Defense made a mistake by recommending the gutting of Alaska's Eielson Air Force Base.

Inouye told Pentagon staff at a banquet in his honor last week that it would be a tragic mistake to shift fighter jets and more than 2,800 airmen away from Eielson.

Inouye spoke Tuesday, the night before the Base Realignment and Closure Commission conducted its first regional hearing in Fairbanks. Inouye was receiving the Arleigh Burke Award from the Center for Strategic and International Studies and some of the Department of Defense's top officials attended.

"I concur with the idea of realigning our forces in Alaska, but they should have been realigned in the other direction," Inouye said. "We should be moving more aircraft to Eielson, and to Elmendorf as well."

A spokeswoman for the think tank, Gina Maffei, said no media attended the ceremony.

However, Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, who attended the awards dinner, was so pleased with Inouye's speech, he offered copies to the BRAC Commission the next day in Fairbanks.

"I urge you to read it," Stevens told the commission. "I assure you I did not write it, collaborate with him on it or ask him to write it."

Congress, when it established the base review process in 2002, set out to insulate it from political influence. The Pentagon was given criteria to develop a base plan. The commission was told to analyze whether the Pentagon recommendations followed the criteria, emphasizing military value and cost.

The commission's final edit of the plan, after delivery in September, can only be accepted or rejected in its entirety by the president and then Congress.

Military officials still have an important role in shaping the final product, said Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska.

"What happens next is from the questions that were presented at the hearing, the commission will now draft their letter to the Department of Defense asking for a response to these certain questions," Murkowski said.

Acting Deputy Secretary Gordon England attended the banquet for Inouye, as did Michael W. Wynne, acting under secretary of defense for acquisition, technology and logistics.

Chris Hellman, a base review specialist at the Center for Arms Control and Non-proliferation in Washington, D.C., said Inouye's focus on Eielson was interesting, given the venue.

"I think it speaks volumes to the level of importance that members of Congress attach to this issue," he said.

Stevens is chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee's defense subcommittee. Inouye is the top Democrat on the subcommittee.

Inouye's speech focused on what he sees as the strategic value of the bases in Alaska.

"For years, my friend and colleague Sen. Stevens has informed numerous senior officials in the Pentagon of the realities of geography," Inouye said. "While it is counterintuitive to those of us who are used to looking at a standard flat map, the strategic importance of Alaska

becomes immediately apparent when one looks at a map from the polar perspective. Alaska is simply closer to Asia and eastern Europe. Inside the Beltway, people tend to be either unaware of this fact or simply choose to ignore it."

In the foreseeable future, Inouye said, Asia is the only region that "could require the nation's awesome power to be brought to bear."

Korea's "belligerent dictator," Kim Jong Il, has nuclear weapons, thousands of artillery weapons and more than a million men in his army, Inouye said.

"But of most concern is the potential adversary we could face in China, the only nation that is likely to develop into superpower status in the coming years," he said.

Inouye quoted Robert Kaplan, who said in a recent Atlantic Monthly article that military conflict with China - "a more formidable adversary than Russia ever was" - will define the 21st century.

"The counterweight that the author describes rests on our bases in the Pacific," Inouye said. "That is why the Eielson decision is so puzzling."

Eielson's A-10s and F-16s are needed to "rapidly deploy to Korea in the event of a crisis, and the North Koreans know this," Inouye said. "The F-15s that are moving south (from Elmendorf) should be replaced by an equal number of F-22s," Inouye said.

"Instead, we are trading three squadrons of F-15s for one or maybe two squadrons of F-22s."

Hellman and other military analysts at Washington think tanks contacted last week mostly supported the Defense Department's pullback in Alaska. They said the few hours shorter flying time offered by Alaska's bases was not of great strategic significance. Conflicts usually develop slowly and forces can be rearranged as the risk increases, they said.

Inouye said that approach sends the wrong message.

"It is clear that the nations of the region, both allies and adversaries, keep an eye on the location of U.S. forces, our bases, to measure our resolve," he said.

Task force gets chance to save military bases

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Coraopolis, PA)
June 20, 2005

A group of politicians and other leaders on Tuesday will get the first of two chances to defend the existence of three military bases in the Pittsburgh area.

Retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton, a member of the federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission, is scheduled to tour the 911th Airlift Wing in Moon Township this week. That's when the Pittsburgh-Base Realignment and Closure Task Force, known as Pit-BRAC, will first present its argument on why the 911th, the Army's Charles E. Kelly Support Facility in Collier Township and the Army Reserve's 99th Regional Readiness Command, also in Moon Township, should remain open.

Pit-BRAC, a group of civic leaders, business owners and retired military members, was formed after the Pentagon on May 13 recommended that a total of 13 bases in Pennsylvania be closed. Nationally, the Pentagon plans to close or reduce forces at 62 major bases and reconfigure hundreds of other bases.

The plan calls for closing the 911th and the Kelly Support Facility outright and moving the 99th Regional to Fort Dix, N.J. If that happens, more than 1,400 jobs - 845 at the bases and 571 private-sector jobs will be lost, according to western Pennsylvania officials.

Pit-BRAC must convince the commission that the bases have current and future military value

during Newton's visit as well as a commission hearing July 8 in Baltimore.

Members of the task force and Bob Tritt, an Atlanta attorney representing communities that are trying to save their military bases, acknowledge that it will be tough to change the commission's mind.

"It's going to be hard for every base. I think there's going to have to be some good reason to get it off the list," Tritt said.

The Pentagon said the 911th should close because it has the space to handle just 10 C-130 cargo planes, while the Air Force believes a 16-plane airlift wing is more cost effective.

Defense officials did not consider that there are 53 acres of tarmac next to the 911th that could be used to handle additional aircraft, Pit-BRAC executive director Charles Holsworth said.

Allegheny County owns the tarmac and in the past has offered it to the Air Force for an expansion, but the military has turned down the offer, Holsworth said.

The county also owns another 1,200 unused acres near the Pittsburgh International Airport that could be developed, according to county Chief Executive Dan Onorato, one of the leaders of the task force.

The Pentagon has not said how moving the 99th would save money and improve the Army's ability to mobilize forces, Holsworth said.

The Army also has not said how it would handle the vehicle maintenance and other functions the Kelly Support Facility now provides to parts of New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia, he said.

Michigan officials to make case before BRAC commission

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (MI)
Ken Thomas
June 20, 2005

A delegation of Michigan officials, led by Sen. Carl Levin, heads to St. Louis on Monday to make the case for the state's military installations caught up in the nation's latest round of base closings.

The high-stakes lobbying effort will have two goals: protect Michigan's gains in the Pentagon blueprint, notably a proposal to expand the Detroit Arsenal in Warren by nearly 650 jobs, while defending an Air National Guard base in Battle Creek slated to close.

"We came in strong and I think we'll stay strong," Levin said. "But I can't predict the outcome on the individual pieces."

The Pentagon plan calls for Michigan to gain 125 jobs, but it would shutter the W.K. Kellogg Airport Air Guard Station in Battle Creek and the U.S. Army Garrison at Selfridge Air National Guard Base in Macomb County, outside Detroit.

Levin will defend the plan for the Arsenal, which would become the military's pre-eminent center for automotive and ground vehicle research and development, plucking jobs from military facilities in Alabama and Illinois.

Levin, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said he hopes to reinforce the military's decision to expand the Tank-Army Automotive and Armaments Command (TACOM), which is near General Motors' technical center.

But Battle Creek will be the focus of much of the 30-minute presentation, which is expected to be bolstered at the hearing by about 75 people, including a busload of supporters making the 7-hour drive from Kalamazoo and Calhoun counties.

Rep. Joe Schwarz, R-Battle Creek, and others oppose the plan to shift the 110th Fighter Wing at Battle Creek to Selfridge, arguing that it would require a lengthy retraining process on different aircraft while adding hours of driving time for more than 700 Guard members on drill weekends.

They also say the plan would cost the state about 1,000 jobs by 2011 and mistakenly close a modern facility with the state's only 10,000-foot runway suitable for any military aircraft, including Air Force One.

"We believe that the numbers that were used by the Air Force and the Army, the numbers used by DOD, were flawed numbers," Schwarz said. "There is really no savings to speak of by moving the Guard."

State Sen. Mark Schauer, D-Battle Creek, who also will address Base Closure and Realignment Commission members, said the shifting of the Guard unit sends the wrong message at a critical time.

"I think especially during this time of war we want to help BRAC commissioners understand that this is going to decrease our military preparedness in a very serious way," Schauer said.

Levin is expected to present the commission members with letters from supporters of the Army garrison. But there will be less of an emphasis on the Selfridge facility, where supporters hope to salvage the base exchange and commissary.

Rep. Candice Miller, a Republican from Macomb County's Harrison Township, has said the state would be wise to accept the plan because she worries another proposal might threaten Selfridge's future.

"She would hope that what the Department of Defense has recommended is what remains and this meeting doesn't change" the Pentagon's recommendation, Miller spokesman Scott MacFarlane said.

Six other states also are expected to address three members of the BRAC commission at St. Louis University. The panel will include commission members Harold Gehman, a retired Navy admiral, James Hansen, a former Utah congressman, and Sue Ellen Turner, a retired Air Force brigadier general.

John Burchett, who heads Gov. Jennifer Granholm's Washington office, said the group will try to "show the military value of the facilities and to protect jobs in Michigan, protect the new ones that are coming into the Detroit Arsenal and to protect the ones that we have in Selfridge and Battle Creek."

Base supporters open office, collect more than 5,700 petition signatures

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Charleston, WV)
June 19, 2005

A coalition of retired National Guard members, their families and private citizens who support keeping military aircraft at the West Virginia Air National Guard's 130th Airlift Wing has gathered more than 5,700 names on a petition.

Keep 'Em Flying has also opened an office in the Federal Aviation Administration Building at Yeager Airport.

"I am amazed at the support we have already received in the Valley," said Col. Bill Peters Jr., retired wing commander of the 130th Airlift Wing. Peters is coordinating efforts to keep the eight C-130 Hercules cargo planes in Charleston.

Keep 'Em Flying hopes to persuade members of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission to reject the Department of Defense's recommendation to strip the 130th of the eight turboprops and transfer them to Pope Air Force Base near Fayetteville, N.C. The recommendation said the Charleston unit based at Yeager Airport did not have enough space to accommodate 16 planes.

The recommendation is part of a national plan to close 33 major bases and downsize 29 others to save \$48.8 billion over 20 years.

Yeager can accommodate six additional C-130s, and can add two more with ramp improvements costing between \$1.5 million and \$3 million,

Peters said. He said the base's rental fee to Yeager is only \$1 a year for the next 49 years.

BRAC will hold a public hearing on the recommendations for West Virginia and other states in Charlotte, N.C., on June 28.

"This unit has been here 58 years," Peters said. "It has always been a part of Yeager."

The 130th now has 1,036 members. That includes 350 people who are on active duty, some in Uzbekistan.

Quad City officials to question arsenal realignment plan

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (Rock Island, IL)
June 19, 2005

Quad City officials think the Defense Department's plan to realign the Rock Island Arsenal will cost money and doesn't make military sense.

Local officials plan to meet with the Base Realignment and Closure Commission Monday in St. Louis.

The hearing is one of 15 to be held across the country as part of the nine-member commission's deliberations over the Pentagon's plan to realign and trim its infrastructure.

The plan would close 33 bases and realign 29 others, including the Rock Island Arsenal, which employs 6,400 people, the second largest in the Quad Cities.

"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 would mean a loss of about 1,600 jobs in the Quad-Cities.

Nearly all of the area's top political representatives, including U.S. senators, two

governors and two congressmen plan to attend the meeting to show their 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.

Despite the support of state and federal politicians, the bulk of the communities case will be led by local officials, such as Jim Morgan, a retired executive at the Tank-automotive and Armaments Command.

Morgan has led a team of nearly a dozen, mostly retired arsenal retirees, who have sorted through thousands of documents to try to make a case against the Pentagon's recommendations.

Quad City officials believe moving the TACOM organization, which employs 1,000 people, to the Detroit Arsenal, in Warren, Mich., would cost money, not save it.

They say the cost of new buildings and the area's higher wages could cost the military up to \$5 million per year.

"There's a huge cost to move," Hart said.

Local officials also say the proposal to move TACOM, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service and the Civilian Human Resource Agency doesn't make military sense since the operations receive higher military value ratings than their counterparts elsewhere.

They point out that the Rock Island Arsenal ranks higher than the Detroit Arsenal overall, ranking the middle of the pack at 53rd, compared to the Detroit Arsenal, which ranks 74th.

"By all measures, Rock Island is ahead of Warren on the list," Hart said.

Patriotic water to be part of Grand Forks base rally

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (Grand Forks, ND)
June 19, 2005

Firefighters from Emerado caught the attention of federal base closing commission members in 1995 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 plans bring out the three fire hoses shooting dyed water again, on Wednesday morning, for a rally along U.S. Highway 2.

Members of the federal base closing and realignment commissioner are coming to Grand Forks to hear about the impact of Pentagon proposals to take away the base's air refueling tankers and most of its personnel. Thursday's hearing also will consider the future of the Air National Guard base in Fargo, and a Pentagon proposal to remove its fighter planes.

The Fargo Guard unit and the Grand Forks base would be in line for a new mission involving unmanned aerial vehicles, under the Pentagon plans.

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

Renfrow, who owns a landscaping business that does business on the Grand Forks Air Force Base, is organizing the Wednesday rally. Many employers, including those from Grand Forks city and county, have given permission to employees to miss work to attend.

"We're expecting a large group because a lot of people are very, very concerned. The commissioners will get a very large welcome," said Diane Blair, an executive with the area chamber of commerce.

Renfrow has enlisted the help of 100 businesses, many of them contractors, doing commerce with the base. Some from as far away as Fargo are to 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 realignment.

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.

People remember when the Grand Forks base lost its missile unit in an earlier base closing round, she said.

"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."

Two Ohio Cities Rally The Troops To Keep Bases Open;

Air National Guard bases in Mansfield, Springfield on list for possible closure

Columbus Dispatch (Columbus, OH)

Mary Beth Lane

June 19, 2005

Can an Ohio Air National Guard base near this community be saved?

Residents don't know. But they do know that they are not giving up their base and its nearly 300 jobs without a fight. After all, the 179th Airlift Wing in Mansfield has been a presence in Richland County from the Cold War to today's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"Save the 179th" was the message yesterday as about 200 residents, including active and retired military aviators, rallied at the bandstand in this town south of Mansfield, wearing buttons, holding signs and filling out petitions and letters to mail to their congressman.

Another rally is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. Wednesday at Central Park in Mansfield, where Gov. Bob Taft is scheduled to participate.

The unit's facilities, located on 140 acres adjacent to Mansfield Lahm Airport, are on a list of bases that the Pentagon has recommended be closed. So are an Army Reserve unit and an Army National Guard unit located at the armory in downtown Mansfield.

A Base Realignment and Closure commission will study the Pentagon's recommendations and advise President Bush in September.

Some stand to gain under the Pentagon plan issued last month. The Defense Supply Center, Columbus, would add more than 1,700 jobs.

But it's never easy to close bases. Springfield's Air National Guard base is also on the closure list, and residents there aren't happy at the potential loss of several hundred jobs.

Mansfield and Springfield plan to send local elected officials to Buffalo, N.Y., for a commission hearing June 27 to make the case to keep their bases.

Rally participants said yesterday that there's still hope to keep their base and its fleet of C-130 cargo planes.

"I'm optimistic," said 53-year-old Greg Eyster, a chief master sergeant with the 179th. The C-130 flight engineer just returned with his crew from Afghanistan.

Some of the military aviators who preceded him in other wars sat on wooden benches close to the bandstand listening to rally speakers praise the 179th. They were with the unit from the start.

"I'm very upset. It's the best Guard unit in the United States," said 83-year-old retired Lt. Col. Eugene Yarger.

He piloted B-17 Flying Fortresses in the Army Air Corps during World War II and joined the Guard unit in Mansfield when it began in 1948.

He and others said the regular Air Force simply wants to raid the Guard unit of its C-130s.

But not without a fight, rally organizers said.

"We want to be as loud as we can. We can't just sit and watch this happen," said Jolie McCue, who is married to the commander of the 164th Airlift Squadron housed within the 179th Airlift Wing.

McCue organized the rally with Amvets Post 43 of Bellville.

"It's all meant to get our voice out there. Our voice and our letters," she said.

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."

Land is strong argument for base

Pittsburgh Tribune (Pittsburgh. PA)

Brian Bowling

June 19, 2005

The argument for saving Pittsburgh's three military bases and the more than 1,400 jobs they supply likely will hang on 53 acres of bare tarmac and swaths of unused land.

Local officials on Tuesday will get the first of two chances to present their case directly to someone who has a say in keeping the bases open. That's when retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton, one of nine members of the federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission, tours the 911th Airlift Wing in Moon. The other chance will be at a July 8 commission hearing in Baltimore.

Pit-BRAC, a task force of civic and business leaders, retired military members and politicians, is leading the fight to save the local facilities targeted by the Pentagon. The group will argue

for keeping all three facilities, but admits that goal is a long shot.

"We understand that it can't be the way it's always been," said Allegheny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato, the group's co-chairman.

A Pentagon reorganization plan would close the 911th and the Army's Charles E. Kelly Support Facility in Collier and move the Army Reserve's 99th Regional Readiness Command from Moon to Fort Dix, N.J. Nationally, the cost-cutting plan would close or reduce operations at 62 major bases and 775 smaller ones. The local bases provide 845 jobs directly and support an estimated 571 private-sector jobs.

The 911th survived a Pentagon attempt to close it 10 years ago, and Pit-BRAC said it believes it has found an argument that will save the facility again.

The main reason the Pentagon gives for closing the 911th is that it has space to handle only 10 C-130 cargo planes. The Air Force says a 16-plane airlift wing is more cost-effective.

But the task force says defense officials failed to account for 53 acres of unused tarmac adjacent to the 911th that could handle additional aircraft. The county, which owns the land, has offered it several times for base expansion and, since 1998, has reserved it exclusively for that use.

The Air Force repeatedly has rejected that offer on the grounds that a reserve airlift wing needs to handle only eight C-130s, said Pit-BRAC Executive Director Charles Holsworth. Now that the military has changed the criteria to 16 planes, the Air Force has no reason to refuse the land, he said.

Another plus for the 911th, Onorato said, is that the county owns 1,200 developable acres at Pittsburgh International Airport. That space and Pittsburgh International's reputation for staying open even in blizzards that shut other facilities make a case not only for preserving the 911th but also for consolidating the three local military facilities at the airport, he said.

"It makes it very attractive for the military," Onorato said.

To save bases, local officials must convince the commission that the Defense Department substantially erred in its assessment of each base's current and future military value.

Fifty to 70 local volunteers are poring through reams of Pentagon data seeking to do just that. So far, they've found nothing to dispute the Defense Department's evaluation of the 99th or Kelly facility, Holsworth said.

However, the Pentagon hasn't released data showing how moving the 99th to Fort Dix would save money and improve the Army's ability to mobilize forces, Holsworth said. Similarly, the Army hasn't explained how it would handle the vehicle maintenance and troop transport functions the Kelly Support Facility now provides for parts of Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia and New York.

"There's some critical, critical data that's still stowed away in Washington, D.C.," Holsworth said.

This is the fifth round of base closings since 1988, and it figures to be less political than the previous four, said Bob Tritt, a lawyer with Atlanta-based McKenna Long & Associates, which represents communities trying to save military bases. For local officials, the next three weeks are critical because it is unlikely they'll win a last-minute reprieve from Bush or lawmakers, Tritt said.

"If the commission doesn't do it, it isn't going to happen," he said. "It isn't going to be that someone's senator or congressman pulls it out in the end."

The commission can change the status of individual bases, such as removing the 911th from the list of those set to close. The panel has until Sept. 8 to forward its recommendations to the president.

While Bush can send the list back to the commission for revisions, U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Penn Hills, said Friday that Bush will not do that. Instead, the president will send the commission's recommendations to Congress, which can only accept or reject the list in its entirety.

The Pentagon is seeking to close about 10 percent of its bases, instead of the 25 percent originally planned, so the odds against saving a base escalate, Tritt said.

"It's going to be hard for every base. I think there's going to have to be some good reason to get it off the list," Tritt said.

Commissioners don't even plan to visit many smaller bases, a clear signal that efforts to save those installations are doomed, said national defense analyst John Pike, operator of GlobalSecurity.org. For example, Newton is scheduled to visit only the 911th, not the 99th or the Kelly Support Facility.

And a visit doesn't guarantee much, Pike said. However cordial the tour may be, commissioners, in many cases, are going through the motions, he said.

"I don't think the commissioners are going to be openly contemptuous of anybody. They're not going to sit there and read a book while people are testifying," Pike said.

The Newton file

Retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton, a member of the nine-member Base Realignment and Closure Commission, is scheduled to tour the Air Force Reserve's 911th Airlift Wing in Moon on Tuesday. A look at his background:

Military service: Flew 269 combat missions in the F-4D Phantom during the Vietnam War; has more than 4,000 flying hours in six types of aircraft, including the F-117 stealth fighter; first black member of the elite Thunderbirds flight team; commander of the Air Force's Air

Education and Training command; retired as four-star general in 2003.

Current position: Executive vice president of Pratt & Whitney, an aircraft engine, space propulsion system and industrial gas turbine manufacturer.

Education: Bachelor's degree in aviation education from Tennessee State University and master's in public administration from George Washington University.

Youth: Born in Ridgeland, S.C., in 1942; attended segregated schools.

Nickname: Based on the Nabisco cookie; from joke by college classmate and fellow Air Force pilot.

Plan B Officials Quietly Consider What To Do If Base Closes

New London Day (New London, CT)

Anthony Cronin

June 19, 2005

There is a Plan B brewing for the Naval Submarine Base. Just don't ask what it is — at least right now.

As politicians, policy makers and business types across the state continue to battle against the Pentagon's proposal to close the base in Groton, there is little public talk about alternative uses for the property in the event the Pentagon's desires prevail.

And that's understandable, according to experts who have lived through or advised local communities facing their own base closings as the Pentagon downsizes its once-massive military footprint across the nation.

“The first thing right now for the political and appointed officials, I can assure you, is that they're scrambling to try and save the base,” said Robert Richardson, a base-closing expert who has led local redevelopment efforts at former military bases in Alabama and Michigan.

“But in the back of their minds, they're probably

beginning to think about community efforts for a possible re-use” of the base, said Richardson, who is finishing up work at the Sparrows Point Shipyard refurbishment in Baltimore.

He says that he understands why officials don't want to risk a public discussion of possible re-use this early in the process and that some may fear it could unduly influence the base-closing decision.

“I assure you that in no way does it influence the (Base Realignment and Closure) decision. They won't know, and they won't care,” Richardson said.

Saving the Groton submarine base, which has been home to submarines since 1915 and houses the nation's premier sub-training school, is the primary focus of a battalion of officials, from the local grass-roots Subbase Realignment Coalition to the executive suites of Gov. M. Jodi Rell.

These officials stress that now is not the time to publicly weigh options for the base in the event the Defense Department's recommendations to close 33 major bases around the country — including the 687-acre Groton base — are upheld by the independent review panel looking at this year's BRAC recommendations.

But they also admit that, as part of any sound decision-making process, business or otherwise, it's prudent to consider options. And the sooner, the better.

“Of course there's a ‘Plan B,’ ” said Rich Harris, a spokesman for the governor. “Like any prudent state leader, we've been thinking about (alternatives) all along. But it almost goes without saying that the vast majority of our efforts are in making sure that we don't need a Plan B.”

He declined to disclose specifics about possible re-uses of the Groton base or which agencies might be charged with redevelopment considerations.

John Markowicz, chairman of the Subbase Realignment Coalition that is leading efforts to overturn the Pentagon's recommendation, declined to comment as well, saying his efforts are focused on convincing the federal review panel that the Pentagon's decision is flawed and the base should remain open.

The Groton base has numerous assets: a large waterfront exposure, an upper campus that includes academic buildings and dormitories, a golf course, open areas, a retail department store and supermarket, and a medical facility that had housed the Navy's former on-site hospital.

The Navy has said that any pollution cleanup at the base would cost about \$24 million. Since that disclosure on May 13, when the Pentagon unveiled its base-closings list, skepticism has been growing that pollution problems at the base, especially along the lower base where subs have been berthed for decades, is far greater and will cost far more than the Navy is estimating. State officials who have toured the base estimate the cost will far exceed the initial estimate, although Department of Environmental Protection officials haven't determined an exact cost and are still gathering information about the extent of the cleanup.

Harris says Rell is using all the state's resources to fight the base closing and has received ample support from the business community, which sees the shutdown affecting the statewide economy. "This is not to say that there isn't work being done on (alternatives for the base)," Harris said. "But we feel quite confident that we have a superior case" in opposing the closure list.

"And we beat this thing in 1993, and it's already clear that there are some grievous problems with the Defense Department's recommendations in 2005," Harris said.

In 1993, the Pentagon recommended closing the lower Groton base, which houses its fleet of fast-attack submarines, but local efforts to overturn the decision prevailed.

In 1995, another round of base closings was successful in shutting down the former Naval Undersea Warfare Center in New London.

Rell and others say that closing the Groton sub base, which employs more than 7,500 sailors and several thousand civilians and contractors, would have profound impacts on the regional and statewide economies for years to come. They also contend that closing base makes no sense, because it would leave New England and much of the Eastern Seaboard without a military base. The Pentagon's recommendations to move the fleet of Groton attack submarines to either Norfolk, Va., or King's Bay, Ga., also would cluster the high-tech war machines in a tight geographic area, making them vulnerable to attack, they say.

James Butler, executive director of the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments, says it's imperative for the region to remain steadfast in its fight against closure. Butler says he would rather not publicly speculate on alternate uses for the base, because he and his staff are helping prepare for a July 6 public hearing in Boston on the closing recommendation.

Richardson, who served as the director of the Local Redevelopment Authorities (LRAs) coordinating the transformation of the former Fort McClellan Army base in Alabama and the Wurstsmith Air Force Base in Michigan, says a few communities earmarked for base closure in this current and fifth round of closings have already formed "shadow LRAs" that are looking into redevelopment of bases for possible residential, commercial or industrial use.

He suggests that local communities consider having someone discreetly look into making contacts with federal agencies, such as the Defense Department's Office of Economic Adjustment, which offers assistance to communities affected by the loss of a military base. A total of 22 federal agencies, from Defense to Labor to Commerce, offer assistance — financial, planning, career-related — to affected communities.

Linnea Lindstrom, who heads the Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce and has been active in save-the-base efforts, agrees there is a sensitive balance between fighting the closure and considering alternatives.

“Any good business plan always has a Plan B,” she said. “This region is filled with very smart creative people who would figure something out . . .

“Most of the people I’ve talked to that are involved are following the governor’s lead (in actively fighting the closure). But of course people are thinking in the back of their minds what could happen if it closes.”

Edward Hershfield, an attorney with the Boston law firm of Brown Rudnick Berlack Israels who works with communities redeveloping former bases, understands the need to fight closings. “But if you’re unsuccessful, then you need to be able to coalesce and have an LRA in place and have everybody speaking from the same book as to what will happen.”

Hershfield says he understands the reluctance of officials to talk about possible redevelopment. “It’s hard,” he said, “to say we’re doing everything we can to get off the base list while at the same time you’re developing a contingency.

“By all means, people should fight. But if you lose, you want to do everything you can do to develop (the site) as quickly as possible, but you also want to develop a good (re-use) plan.”

BRAC commissioner here to check out SAFB

Times Record News (TX)
Tara Copp
June 20, 2005

WASHINGTON - By the time BRAC commissioner James T. Hill lands in Wichita Falls today, his analysts will have already spent hours on base, comparing what’s on paper about Sheppard to what’s actually there.

This visit, which may be Sheppard’s one chance to have a commissioner’s ear all to themselves, is primarily a data collecting mission. The two BRAC staff members who arrived before Hill met privately with Sheppard Air Force Base staff to dig into data details before Hill gets a more general presentation. The staff members will use their access to compare the BRAC reports the Pentagon assembled on Sheppard with presentations, data and a visual tour.

“What they’re doing is going in there and seeing if the recommendations deviated from what the actual data is, and when the Defense department collected their data, seeing if anything has changed since then,” said Megan Riffle, a spokeswoman for the commissioners.

The meeting is one of two opportunities for the base to counter, or to confirm, whether the Pentagon’s plans to move about 2,600 of its medical training personnel to San Antonio and its flight training personnel to Florida would indeed be in the best interests of BRAC’s stated goals. Those goals are military value, jointness, economic impact, homeland protection and four other base-closing criteria the Pentagon used to judge each base.

Today’s visit is supposed to be more analytical and data-driven in context.

The second meeting, on July 11 in San Antonio, will be the opportunity for local leaders to press their own conclusions and their more heartfelt arguments.

When Hill arrives about noon, his time will include a lunch on base, a driving tour of the facilities, briefings with both the 80th and 82nd training wing commanders and a media briefing outside Sheppard’s main gate about 3:30 p.m. Then he’s gone.

The quickness of Hill’s visit doesn’t mean locals won’t have an opportunity to make an impression. At several previous site visits, community members have lined the streets of the commissioner’s drive to the base, bearing signs and coordinated colors to show the community’s close ties to the base. A handful of

Wichita Falls leaders, although originally excluded from coming along on the site visit, will now get to either sit in or meet with Hill privately after the site tour, Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Clarendon, said.

The BRAC commission has an overall policy of "no public, no media" allowed to accompany a commissioner and the analysts on a site tour, primarily because of the intense analysis that needs to take place unencumbered by a lobbying effort, said Chris Hellman, with the Washington, D.C., think-tank, the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation.

"What you don't want to have is basically community representatives badgering the officials on how bad closure would be," Hellman said. "What they (the commissioners) want to do is talk to the people who run the base."

Understanding what Hill and his staff need to accomplish, Thornberry said it was still vital that the commissioner take time to talk to Wichita Falls leaders about what they gathered on the trip and any differences in the data that they might have noticed.

"For BRAC to be credible it has to be transparent," Thornberry said.

Who is retired Gen. James T. Hill?

36-year Army veteran, retired in 2004

From: From El Paso, Texas

Education: Graduate of Trinity University in San Antonio, 1968

master's degree, Central Michigan University

Service: After completing Ranger and Airborne schools, assigned to Fort Hood.

Served as part of the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam as a rifle platoon leader and company commander. Commanded the "Always First" Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division, Air Assault, from 1989 to 1991.

Numerous Military honors including: Distinguished Service Medal, Silver Star with two Oak Leaf Clusters, Bronze Star with Valor and two Oak Leaf Clusters, Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster.

Opinions/ Editorials

It's all out there, finally

Norwich Bulletin (Norwich, CT)

June 20, 2005

U.S. Sens. Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., and Susan Collins, R-Maine, are satisfied with data they've received from the Department of Defense. That's nice, but there's no reason they should have had to take the steps they did to get it.

On Friday, Lieberman and Collins said they had gotten enough information to better understand how the Pentagon had decided which military bases should be targeted for shutdown in the Base Realignment and Closure process.

That information was obtained by subpoena -- fully a month after the date by which the Pentagon was legally bound to release it.

The senators say that no further legal action will be taken, and for that, the Pentagon should breathe easier.

But by narrowing the window available for analyzing that information, the Pentagon may well have damaged efforts by the Subbase Realignment Coalition, and other such groups, to cull data vital to their counterarguments.

The coalition got the data 20 days before the BRAC hearing in Boston. That means it lost a month of study time.

Before this BRAC round is rolled up and put to bed, the Pentagon owes the public a thorough explanation of just how it managed to botch its understanding of what should have been classified -- when it had more than two years to figure that out.

Additional Notes