# Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

# EARLY BIRD

June 21, 2005


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### Fort Leonard Wood Communities Prepare for Growth

American Forces Press Service
Donna Miles
June 20, 2005

Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., June 20, 2005 – The communities surrounding Fort Leonard Wood are preparing for the growth anticipated due to upcoming base realignments and the return of forces from Europe and Korea to stateside bases -- and applying important lessons they learned from the past.

Technically speaking, Fort Leonard Wood is not among the big "gaining installations" in the base realignment and closure recommendations for 2005. But, as Sue Halter, deputy garrison commander here, explained to community leaders during a June 15 session, the post stands


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to gain at least 2,000 soldiers by fiscal 2011 if President Bush signs off on the recommendations in November.

Factoring in married soldiers with families, that's expected to mean an additional 5,360 people at Fort Leonard Wood, and the number could end up higher, Halter explained.

Some more-populated areas might easily absorb this growth without a ripple. But here, in rural south-central Missouri, the effect could set off a virtual tidal wave without proper planning.

Members of the surrounding communities of St. Robert and Waynesville, with only about 7,000 residents between them, are excited about the growth, but say they know firsthand how important it is to prepare for it.

In 1989, when the U.S. Army Engineer School moved to Fort Leonard Wood from Fort Belvoir, Va., "the community wasn't ready," acknowledged Larry Sexton, a local businessman and board member of Missouri's Fort Leonard Wood Region, a regional economic-development association.

The area didn't have enough quality homes for the influx of about 1,800 soldiers, enough classroom space for their children or enough roads to handle their cars. "From a community perspective, we had poor infrastructure and sub-standard housing," Sexton said. "It was a disaster."

So when the post's next big growth spurt came in 1999, the community made sure it was ready. As soon as the community learned that the U.S. Army Military Police and Chemical schools were to move to Fort Leonard Wood as part of BRAC 1995, they started to prepare.

They formed the Fort Leonard Wood Regional Commerce and Growth Association, and with funding from the Defense Department's Office of Economic Adjustment, developed a growth-management plan to identify areas in the community that could absorb the growth, Sexton explained.

Estimates showed that up to 1,800 of the incoming families would need off-post housing, and the local housing supply couldn't meet the demand. Already, many Fort Leonard Wood families had to commute as far as 30 miles from post to find adequate housing.

The association set its sights on encouraging developers to build housing closer to the post, and to build to nationally recognized codes in areas already serviced by utilities, water and sewer services. Similarly, they evaluated local schools and road systems to determine where they were lacking.

"We did a growth-management plan and made it a living document," Sexton said. "The idea was for us to have planned versus hodge-podge development."

And the construction began. More than 1,200 houses and apartments went up, as well as a warehouse store, two strip malls and 12 hotels. Roads went in or got widened. The community built a new high school -- now almost at capacity -- and has a new elementary school under construction.

Now, with Fort Leonard Wood expected to grow again during the next six years, community leaders are at it again, applying their lessons learned so they can prepare for the influx.

Missouri's Fort Leonard Wood Region met last week to discuss the anticipated growth and begin preparing for what's ahead.

"The challenge is, we need to plan for quality growth in our area," said Bruce Harrill, city administrator for Waynesville. "We've seen the impact of past moves (of soldiers to Fort Leonard Wood), and we're applying the lessons we learned from those moves."

As the community ensures planned growth to meet the needs of a growing Fort Leonard Wood, its residents -- military and civilian alike -- gain through more jobs, more services and more opportunity, community leaders agree.


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"The quality of life here is going up," Sexton said. "And we're working to ensure that continues."

***National News Articles***

## Defense Workers Tell Legislators They Won't Move

**Residents Urged To Voice Objections**

Washington Post
Spencer S. Hsu
June 21, 2005

Defense workers and contractors said yesterday that a Pentagon plan to shift 23,000 military jobs from inside the Capital Beltway would prompt skilled workers to abandon government employment before disrupting their families' lives.

At a town meeting attended by about 300 people at George Mason University's law school in Arlington, every person who queued up to speak opposed the provision within the Defense Department's national streamlining plan, with several saying it would hamper the military's mission and raise costs by triggering a "brain drain" of employees now working in leased office space in Arlington County and Alexandria near the department's Pentagon headquarters.

The Pentagon's plan was announced last month and cited economic and security reasons for consolidating jobs away from Washington and its close-in suburbs.

Rep. James P. Moran Jr. (D), the Virginia congressman who represents the areas most affected, Rep. Thomas M. Davis III (R-Va.) and U.S. Sen. John W. Warner (R-Va.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, called yesterday's meeting to collect information from those opposed to the changes before testifying July 7 before a nine-member Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

The commission will act on the Pentagon proposal and is the final arbiter of base cuts and moves. It will present its list to President Bush by Sept. 8. The president and Congress must accept or reject the list without changes.

Yesterday, federal lawmakers and Virginia and Arlington County officials urged workers and others affected by the changes to telephone, send letters or e-mail their member of Congress or the federal commission.

Arlington economic development agency workers handed out blue and white bumper stickers and buttons that said "Save the Brains -- Keep DoD Jobs in Arlington," while Moran aides distributed a survey asking, "Are you likely to move where your agency has been recommended to relocate to?"

From comments by more than a dozen public speakers over the hour-long hearing, the answer was clearly no. The business-attired crowd was targeted by congressional aides, who timed the event for defense workers' lunch hour and set it in a Ballston-Clarendon-Rosslyn corridor where 30 defense agencies within four Metro stops of the Pentagon are slated for relocation.

The Pentagon says its plan will save $49 billion nationwide over 20 years. The District, Arlington and Alexandria are set to lose about 30,000 jobs, one of the biggest cuts in the country. However, secure, suburban military bases such as Fort Belvoir in southeast Fairfax County and Fort Meade in Anne Arundel County would gain more than 20,000 workers. Most area jobs appear to be set to move nearby, but some would be relocated as far away as Texas, Alabama and Kentucky.

According to Moran's office, 32 of 36 military workers who responded to yesterday's survey, or 89 percent, said they would not move with their agencies.

"My point of view is, hell no, I won't go," said Thomas F. Hafer, senior program manager of Science and Technology Associates Inc., whose work defending troops from rocket-propelled grenades is in use in Iraq. "I'll flip hamburgers in Arlington before I have to commute or relocate over to Bethesda."


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Hillary Morgan, who works for the Defense Information Systems Agency, said the ability of staff members to work with defense and civilian agencies in Washington from a proposed new home at Fort Meade "will decline, because they are going to be out of the office for hours commuting back and forth. The loss of productivity will be tremendous."

Area lawmakers expressed optimism at making limited changes.

Davis said he saw "a reasonable chance" to reverse some changes because the Pentagon cited three goals from Northern Virginia relocations not explicitly included among eight criteria that govern the base-closing process -- eliminating leased defense space, increasing building security and dispersing facilities from the national capital area.

Warner said he agreed with the Pentagon that the law covered its interpretation of security requirements for facilities, but he added that, "clearly, in one or two cases . . . it's a legitimate question to raise."

## State officials defend military jobs to base closure commission

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
Jim Suhr
June 20, 2005

Top politicians from Illinois pressed amid long odds Monday to prevent Defense Department-proposed changes to the state's military bases that would send about 2,700 jobs elsewhere.

"There's no doubt we all face a challenge here," given that other states are making similar pitches - and that the commission reviewing the proposed changes historically has modified only about 15 percent of the Pentagon's recommendations, Sen. Barack Obama said after testifying before three members of the panel.

"There's nobody in any state that wants to see bases closed," Obama said. Still, "we think we've got a real strong case on the facts."

Addressing the Base Realignment and Closure Commission trio, Obama, fellow Sen. Dick Durbin and Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich - all Democrats - argued that the Pentagon's plan would wrongly send 163 positions out of Springfield's Air National Guard base and 1,263 jobs from the Rock Island Arsenal to sites lower on the Pentagon's own ranking of "military value."

Such moves would cost taxpayers millions in unnecessary costs, undermine Midwest security and crimp local communities facing the potential job losses, the Illinois delegation argued while sharing their allotted testimony time with Iowa's two U.S. senators and governor.

The Great Lakes Naval Recruit Training Command near Chicago also would lose more than 2,000 positions, mostly military.

Illinois' only significant gain in the Pentagon list would be 800 positions that would be added at Scott Air Force Base, east of St. Louis.

Blagojevich questioned the proposal to move fighter jets from Springfield to Indiana, saying it could be more difficult to quickly mobilize those planes to protect strategic sites - such as Illinois' 11 operating nuclear power plants and large Midwestern cities such as Chicago, Kansas City and St. Louis - during a time of crisis.

Obama and Durbin complained that the Pentagon hasn't been forthcoming in releasing its data behind its recommendations, hampering the state's bid to challenge the proposed moves. That obstacle may be easing - under subpoena from a Senate committee, the Pentagon has worked to release information that had initially been classified.

The Pentagon also has agreed to continue releasing information and to make Defense Department analysts available for meetings with congressional staff, but Obama said more work is needed.

"Transparency is critical to this process. So far we haven't seen the transparency we would have liked," Obama told reporters.


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During a lunch break Monday at the hearing at Saint Louis University, BRAC member Sue Turner - a former Chicagoan now living in San Antonio - said the panel's analysts "are plowing through everything," reviewing the Pentagon's recommendations and state challenges of them.

"I think historically it's been tough to get off the list - not impossible, but tough," she said.

While the three BRAC members heard testimony here, another toured the Springfield, Ill., home of the 183rd Fighter Wing, from which the Pentagon looks to transfer its fighter jets to Indiana. Illinois native Sam Skinner made no promises but complimented the unit's work and the community backing, evidenced by the dozens who gathered at the city's public airport in support of the 183rd.

"I think that we can be assured ... they will get an 'A' for the mission that they're performing and how they're doing it," Skinner told reporters. "The other facilities are very good, but it's hard to beat this facility as an airport."

About 15 supporters of the Springfield base traveled to the St. Louis hearing by bus. They wore red "Save the 183rd" T-shirts and sat in the front row as the Illinois delegation testified.

Durbin credited the Rock Island arsenal as being vital to U.S. security for generations, lately having added armor to Iraq-bound Humvees: "I am certain that saved the lives of many of our soldiers."

And Rock Island can't be any more safe, Democratic Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa said, noting, "It's on an island. You can't get more secure than that."

"The Department of Defense recommendations cannot stand, and we have to reverse them," he told reporters.

In lobbying to spare the Great Lakes Naval Training Center, Illinois state Rep. Eddie Washington, D-Waukegan, told the panel that consolidating those jobs at Texas' Fort Sam Houston would be risky, "putting all the eggs in one basket, or in this case, base." He pushed for the Great Lakes center to be operated along with the Texas site for "healthy redundancy."

## ***Local News Articles***

### Officials: Security Review Needed On Air Base Plan

Philadelphia Inquirer (Philadelphia, PA)
Marc Schogol
June 21, 2005

With the Willow Grove air base on the chopping block, two congressional representatives have introduced legislation requiring a Department of Homeland Security assessment of recommended base closings.

The bill, backed by Rep. Michael G. Fitzpatrick (R., Bucks) and Rep. Allyson Y. Schwartz (D., Montgomery), would require that the commission reviewing the Pentagon's base-closure list include a Homeland Security evaluation.

Fitzpatrick and Rep. Curt Weldon (R., Delaware), vice chair of the House Armed Services Committee, toured the Willow Grove Naval Air Station and Joint Reserve Base in Montgomery County yesterday. They said afterward that its military and East Coast corridor security roles are too vital to eliminate.

The commission will make its recommendations to President Bush by early September.

### Missourians Make Play To Save Unit At Overland

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (St. Louis, MO)
Harry Levins and Tim O'Neil
June 21, 2005

Missourians told a military base closing panel here Monday that consolidating an Army Reserve command made sense - as long as the unit was consolidated in Overland instead of in Kentucky.


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Sen. Christopher "Kit" Bond, R-Mo., zeroed in on the Pentagon's call to consolidate the operations of the Army Reserve's Human Resource Command in Overland and in two other cities at Fort Knox, Ky.

Such a move would cost this area about 2,000 jobs. Bond said it made more sense to do the combining in Overland, where a million square feet of space is due to open up before the decade's end.

"There's nothing like that at Fort Knox," Bond said. He said replicating the center at Fort Knox would cost at least $60 million and probably more.

During the hearing at St. Louis University's Busch Center, the Missourians also made their cases for:

Keeping Missouri Air National Guard F-15 Eagle fighters and about 250 jobs at Lambert Field.

Maintaining operations of the Defense Finance and Accounting Services in St. Louis and Kansas City. The St. Louis operation involves nearly 300 jobs. The Kansas City operation has more than 600.

After the Missouri presentation, Illinois leaders spoke for:

Keeping Illinois Air Guard F-16s and 163 jobs at Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport in Springfield.

Preserving 1,263 administrative support jobs at the Rock Island Arsenal in the Quad Cities area of Illinois and Iowa. That's one-fourth the payroll at Rock Island, which makes armor for military vehicles.

Elected officials from seven states made their cases during the hearing. Three of the nine members of the national Base Realignment and Closure Commission took their sworn testimony.

Also appearing were leaders from Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan and Wisconsin. The hearing was the third of 12 the commission is holding around the country.

Its members are studying a wish-list of closings and transfers put out last month by the Pentagon. By Sept. 8, the BRAC Commission will send its own recommendations to President George W. Bush.

The three commissioners present Monday were retired Adm. Harold W. Gehman Jr., retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Sue A. Turner and former U.S. Rep. James V. Hansen of Utah, a Republican.

After taking more than eight hours of testimony, the commissioners said they would return to Washington to study the issue further.

Missouri's arguments for keeping the Air National Guard fighters at Lambert Field have been heard often since the Pentagon issued its closing list on May 13.

But the call to consolidate the Army Reserve's Human Resources Command in Overland was a new twist.

The Overland operation is in a 377,000-square-foot building that went up off Page Avenue in 1989. Next door sits the million-square-foot National Personnel Records Center, where the National Archives houses old military files.

By 2009, the National Archives hopes to build a new building in the same general area. Under the Missourians' proposal, that building would open up the current one for the Army Reserve.

The landlord now is the government's General Services Agency. With the Army moving in, the agency could then hand title over to the Army. Such a transfer would erase one of the Pentagon's objections to Overland - that it's leased, not military-owned.

Mike Brincks of the General Services Agency said the enhanced Overland site could handle what it now has, plus Human Resources


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Command operations in Indianapolis and Alexandria, Va. - an additional 2,000 jobs.

The Missourians hammered home their contention that although space would open up at Fort Knox, that space was unsuitable for the Human Resources Command.

Fort Knox is losing its Armor Center to Fort Benning, Ga. Craig Borchett of the Missouri Military Preparedness and Enhancement Commission said that the empty space at Fort Knox would consist of barracks, orderly rooms and mess halls - hardly the type needed by the high-tech Human Resources Command.

"It appears that Fort Knox was decided upon, with the numbers then generated to justify the Fort Knox recommendation," said Borchett, who also serves at the Overland office as an Army Reserve major.

Sen. Jim Talent was among the speakers urging the panel to keep the F-15 Eagles of the 131st Fighter wing at Lambert Field. He said that the 131st "can fly more sorties at less cost with more experienced pilots than any other F-15 unit." He charged that moving the planes "would leave the heartland vulnerable to terrorist attack."

Rep. Todd Akin, R-Town and Country, said that the Air Force had failed to discuss its closure and realignment plans with either the Air National Guard or the nation's adjutants general, who run the Guard in each state.

And at a brief news conference afterward, Bond spoke darkly of "a basic Air Force bias against the Guard. They took a hatchet to the Air National Guard," in Missouri and many other states, he said.

Quad Cities: "No better place"

The Illinois delegation gave its issues a full run as well. Sen Richard Durbin, D-Ill., drew one of the few laughs during the long day when he said the Illinois and Iowa governors "will be extremely brief so that the senators will have more time."

The Illinois and Iowa delegations shared the microphone to defend the Rock Island jobs, which are slated to move to the Detroit suburb of Warren, Mich. The payroll is almost evenly divided between Illinois and Iowa residents. Rock Island, which has had a military installation of some kind since 1816, is in the Mississippi River between Rock Island and Moline in Illinois, and Davenport and Bettendorf in Iowa - the Quad Cities.

Because the commission says it wants arguments about military necessity, not local pork, all the speakers began by claiming the Pentagon's plans flunk the military test. But they sprinkled their arguments with pleas for the hometown crowds.

"We want to make sure that guidelines are being followed, but bases are not just line items," said U.S. Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill. "These are parts of communities, with hard-working Americans who want nothing more than to serve their country and raise their families."

Iowa Gov. Thomas J. Vilsack, who argued that moving the office jobs to higher-priced Michigan will increase payroll costs, added this: "There is no better place in the U.S. of A. to train and educate workers than the Quad Cities."

As for Springfield, the Defense Department wants to move the 17 F-16s to the Indiana Air National Guard Unit at Fort Wayne, which also would get the Falcon jets now at Terre Haute, Ind. Illinois leaders charged that the Fort Wayne base gets a lower military rating than does the 183rd at Springfield.

"Fort Wayne is not as well equipped, and the economic impact has been drastically miscalculated," said Springfield Mayor Tim Davlin.

Davlin said the 183rd now provides firefighting and snow removal for the general-use airport. He said it would cost at least $500,000 annually to replace those services.


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Sitting in the front row of audience seating were seven supporters who wore bright red T-shirts emblazoned with, "Save the 183rd." University security officers at first denied them admission with the shirts, but let them in shortly before the Illinois testimony began.

Al Pieper, president of the Springfield Area Trades and Labor Council - and one of those in bright red - said Durbin's office cleared the way.

Two university professors weren't so well-connected. Christine Stevens and Thomas Moisan made it to the door outside the hearing room with protest signs before security officers escorted them out of the building. Their signs urged the government to close the detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

"Maybe we should make some T-shirts," said Stevens, a mathematics professor. "If they're looking to close bases, we've got one for them."

Among other speakers were Missouri Gov. Matt Blunt; Rep. William Lacy Clay Jr., D-St. Louis; St. Louis County Executive Charlie A. Dooley; Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich; and Rep. John Shimkus, R-Collinsville.

## AZ Gov to appear in NM before base realignment commission

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (Phoenix, AZ)
June 21, 2005

Gov. Janet Napolitano is scheduled to testify Friday in New Mexico before a commission considering whether to approve a Pentagon proposal to relocate the Air Force Research Laboratory in Mesa to Ohio.

The hearing is being held primarily so members of the independent Base Realignment and Closure Commission can hear local comment on the Defense Department's recommended closing of Cannon Air Force Base in Clovis, N.M.

But Napolitano spokeswoman Jeanine L'Ecuyer said the hearing also represents what may be the lone regional opportunity for Arizonans to directly ask the commission to reconsider the Pentagon's proposed relocation of the lab since no such commission visit is set for Arizona.

U.S. Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., also plans to attend the hearing if his schedule permits.

In her 30-minute presentation to the commission, Napolitano reportedly will ask that the decision to relocate the Air Force Lab to Dayton, Ohio, as part of an Air Force consolidation of its labs be reconsidered.

That relocation could result in the loss of 465 jobs - 237 belonging to the lab and 228 that are tied to the lab indirectly - and could mean the loss of $74 million a year to the local economy.

Defense Department officials insist their decisions to shut down 33 major installations in 22 states including Cannon, and reorganize 775 smaller installations, like the lab in Mesa, were based largely on military value and better ways for the military services to pool resources.

Retired Air Force Brig. Gen. R. Thomas Browning, a member of the Arizona Governor's Military Affairs Commission, and Lisa Atkins, the commission co-chairwoman, will accompany Napolitano to Clovis.

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

## Indiana urges base commission to save jobs Crane

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (St. Louis, MO)
June 21, 2005

Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman spent much of her life in southern Indiana and is trying to draw on that experience to convince federal officials of the historical and economic impact Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center has on the area.


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She and other state officials on Monday tried to show a panel of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission how cutting 700 jobs at the base would adversely affect the people and economy of southern Indiana.

They said the Department of Defense was looking at the bottom line instead of seeing how changes proposed for Crane might be detrimental to the nation's defense.

Skillman said the installation in southwestern Indiana employed more than 5,000 Indiana residents, many of whom were highly skilled. The base performs numerous tasks in the fields ordnance and electronic warfare products and systems, with employees modifying weapons for Navy Seals and testing laser-guided bombs, she said.

"We want to leave them with the impression that there is this incredible resource here in Indiana, and they can use it even more than it has been put to use in the past," said state Rep. Peggy Welch, D-Bloomington, who spoke at the hearing.

Skillman told three members of the base commission that Crane was "much more than a vital economic engine for the state."

"It is a critical, national defense resource," she said during a hearing on recommendations for Indiana and six other Midwestern states - Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Wisconsin and Michigan. The hearing was one of 16 around the country to be held through early next month.

According to Skillman's office, Crane's work force includes about 4,000 military employees and another 1,000 contractors. But the installation could lose 672 jobs as part of Pentagon's realignment of domestic military bases.

Overall, Indiana would gain nearly 2,200 mostly civilian jobs under the recommendations. Almost 3,500 jobs would be added at the Army's Defense Finance center in Indianapolis.

Welch said people who had been hearing presentations from other states told her Indiana came off well.

"They said the panel seemed to be more actively engaged than with the presentations made by other states," she said. "They asked positive and friendly questions instead of challenging questions. They seemed to be really listening to what we said."

The commission will make recommendations to President Bush by September.

## Midwestern lawmakers make case to keep military bases open

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (St. Louis, MO)
Cheryl Wittenauer
June 21, 2005

Political leaders from Midwestern states cited security concerns Monday in making their pitch to keep open military bases and units on the Pentagon's closure list.

Three members of the nine-member Base Realignment and Closing Commission were meeting with leaders from seven states - Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Indiana, Wisconsin and Michigan - at the hearing at Saint Louis University, one of 16 around the country through early next month.

The commission will make recommendations to President Bush by September. Chairman Harold Gehman Jr., a retired Navy admiral and former NATO supreme allied commander, called the process a "reality check ... devoid of politics."

Officials from Missouri, perhaps the hardest hit of the seven states, told the commission that homeland and economic security would be threatened if the 131st Fighter Wing at Lambert Airport is removed. Without the 131st, the state and region would be more vulnerable to attack on bridges, locks and dams, nuclear power plants, monuments, weapons facilities, and other possible terrorist targets, officials said.


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Sen. Kit Bond, R-Mo., noted that even Gov. Matt Blunt wasn't told of the Pentagon's decision to eliminate the 131st, a deal that "shows the Pentagon's bias against the National Guard," Bond said.

Blunt added: "As governor of the state, I need to know who will meet the need when these fighters are gone."

Illinois 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. Gov. Rod Blagojevich also cited security concerns.

Blagojevich told the panel he worried that the changes would make less safe the state's 11 nuclear power plants, the 28 locks and dams on various rivers, and several large Midwestern cities, including Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City and Des Moines.

Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, defended the Rock Island base for what he called its impenetrable security.

"It's on an island. You can't get more secure than that," he told reporters.

Consolidation of the Army's Human Resource Command drew criticism from Missouri's contingent, but support from Kentucky's. That's not surprising - the plan calls for taking 2,000 jobs from Overland in St. Louis County and moving them to Fort Knox, Ky. Facilities in Alexandria, Va., and Indianapolis would also move to Fort Knox.

U.S. Rep. William "Lacy" Clay, a Democrat from St. Louis, urged the BRAC commission to consolidate the function in Overland instead. He cited the experienced work force and a secure building that is less than 15 years old.

Sen. Jim Talent, R-Mo., noted the move to Fort Knox would cost at least $150 million in extra expenses, including money for housing. "Where are they going to put (employees), in tents?" Talent asked.

But retired Brig. Gen. James Shane, representing Kentucky, lauded the consolidation at Fort Knox, saying there would be an immediate payoff to the $150 million expense.

Kentucky 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.

Kentucky representatives asked the commission to reconsider the downgrading of the Fort Knox Ireland Army Hospital. They also objected to moving one part of Louisville's Naval Surface Warfare Center to New Jersey.

All told, Missouri stands to lose 3,679 jobs. Kentucky could lose 3,658, and Illinois could lose 2,698 in the cuts announced in May.

Indiana, by contrast, would gain nearly 2,200 mostly civilian jobs. A delegation from Indiana argued for retention of nearly 700 jobs at the Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center in southern Indiana.

Crane, about 30 miles southwest of Bloomington, does electronic warfare research and designs and surfaces naval fleets. The Pentagon proposal would move three of Crane's functions to other states.

The Michigan delegation led by Democratic Sen. Carl Levin supports Pentagon plans to expand the Detroit Arsenal in Warren by 650 jobs and make it a pre-eminent center for automotive and ground vehicle research and development.

But the group strenuously objected to closing the W.K. Kellogg Airport Air Guard Station in Battle Creek and the U.S. Army Garrison at Selfridge Air National Guard Base outside Detroit.

Wisconsin, too, challenged the Pentagon's plan to shutter the 440th Airlift Wing at Milwaukee's airport. Democratic Gov. Jim Doyle said closing the 440th would be a mistake.


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Besides Gehman, commissioners at the St. Louis hearing were James Hansen, a Navy veteran and former Republican congressman from Utah; and Sue Ellen Turner, a retired Air Force brigadier general.

The next regional hearing is Tuesday in Rapid City, S.D., and concerns plans for South Dakota and Wyoming. Hearings are also scheduled this week for Thursday in Grand Forks, N.D. (North Dakota and Minnesota) and Friday in Clovis, N.M. (New Mexico, Arizona and Nevada).

## Army groups considered closing Fort Sill

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Oklahoma City, OK)
June 20, 2005

Pentagon officials considered moving the artillery school from Fort Sill to Texas along with more than 2,000 jobs and about 7,700 students, according to records from the Base Closure and Realignment Commission.

Under the scenario, the artillery school would have been moved to Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas, The Oklahoman reported in Monday editions. Another scenario included the closure of the southwest Oklahoma post.

Instead, BRAC officials in May recommended Fort Sill receive a major training mission from another facility, along with more than 3,600 additional jobs. The commission will review the Pentagon's list and send its recommendations to President Bush, who must give Congress a list by Sept. 23. Congress then has 45 days to reject it before it becomes official.

Despite losing the artillery training to Oklahoma, Fort Bliss still stood to gain about 11,500 military and civilian jobs from other areas from the commission's recommendations.

According to records, two main Pentagon groups - the Army's Senior Review Group and the Education and Joint Cross-Service Group - examined the proposal to combine field artillery training and air defense artillery training at one post.

The Senior Review Group at a Nov. 18 meeting discussed moving the field artillery school at Fort Sill to Fort Bliss to consolidate artillery training at one post to promote "training effectiveness and functional efficiencies." Officials considered options that would keep Fort Sill open or close it.

Documents from the meeting indicate that closing Fort Sill would have been far more expensive than leaving it open, and there was the added negative factor of closing a post with high military value. Fort Sill ranked 20th out of 99 major Army installations in terms of military value, while Fort Bliss was No. 1.

The plan also created potential conflict with scenarios in which thousands of troops would be moved from overseas posts to Fort Bliss and created the question of whether Fort Bliss could absorb that much new activity and influx of people.

Instead, at a Dec. 14 meeting, senior Army officials discussed combining all artillery training at Fort Sill. Officials decided such a move would still promote training effectiveness and functional efficiencies and create space at Fort Bliss for additional activities while incurring the lowest one-time cost among all the other alternatives.

At the meeting, the group accepted a recommendation to propose relocating the artillery school to Fort Sill. It then passed the recommendation on to the education and training group, which also gave its approval.

Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker, the Army Chief of Staff, testified at a base closure commission hearing May 18 - five days after the Defense Department released its recommendations - that combining the training activities at Fort Sill "just makes sense" because it is representative of what the Army is doing to transform itself for the future.


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"What we're really doing is organizing the function," he said.

## Retiree says seniors are 'forgotten factor' in Ellsworth debate

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (Rapid City, SD)
June 20, 2005

When Jean and Wayne Beckler were looking for a place to retire, Ellsworth Air Force Base drove Rapid City to the top of their list.

"It was either here or Malmstrom (Air Force Base) in Montana, where Jean is from," said Wayne Beckler, who retired after 26 years of military service.

The Becklers are two of the many military retirees who rely on Ellsworth for medical care, the commissary and other benefits.

Some 2,700 retirees and dependents use Ellsworth's medical clinic, said 1st Lt. Elizabeth DeJesus, with Ellsworth's public affairs office.

Jean Beckler calls them the "forgotten factor," and she hopes they'll turn out in force for Tuesday's Base Realignment and Closure Commission hearing in Rapid City.

"We just want the retirement factor in their decision," she said.

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.

Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., said Ellsworth's closure would force South Dakota veterans to turn elsewhere for their medications, increasing costs for the Defense Department.

"Closing Ellsworth is a mistake not only from a national security point of view, but also from the Pentagon's obligation to provide quality and cost-effective health care to South Dakota's 6,000 military retirees," Thune said.

Jim Bakken, who retired in 1984 after 20 years in the military, said if Ellsworth closes, an exodus of retirees would hurt the local economy particularly the housing market.

"What is going to happen when we dump our houses?" asked Bakken, who was stationed at Ellsworth in 1967.

Wayne Beckler said that family members of people stationed at Ellsworth get a look at the area while visiting and decide to retire here.

The Beckler's 35-year-old son, who also is in the military, eventually wanted to settle in Rapid City, he said.

"If Ellsworth closes, we won't get those people coming in," Wayne Beckler said. "That's a big loss."

## Easley, Dole to lead N.C. delgation at base closings hearing

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (Charlotte, NC)
June 20, 2005

Gov. Mike Easley and U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Dole will lead North Carolina's delegation at a June 28 hearing on military base closings here and in two other states, Dole said Monday.

The regional Base Realignment and Closure Commission hearing - at which states will make their best cases to avoid cuts proposed last month by the Pentagon - is scheduled for a community college campus near Charlotte's airport. Also participating are representatives from South Carolina and West Virginia.

Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue - the lead state official on the base closings issue and another speaker at the June 28 hearing - has said North Carolina fared well in the initial round of recommendations. But she said the state must make a strong case to protect military assets


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from being eroded as other states try to regain personnel or bases targeted for closure.

Also slated to speak during North Carolina's portion of the hearing are representatives from key military communities, including Fayetteville, Goldsboro, Jacksonville, Havelock and Durham, where the Pentagon has proposed closing an Army research office.

The Charlotte hearing is one of a dozen the BRAC commission is holding around the country to hear comments from communities affected by the Defense Department's realignment and closure recommendations.

The commission is to make final recommendations to President Bush on Sept. 8, with a final decision on closures expected by the end of the year.

## Governor's proposal gets cold shoulder from BRAC commissioner

Copley News Service (St. Louis, MO)
Chris Wetterich
June 20, 2005

A member of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission said Monday the panel is unlikely to consider Illinois' proposal to build a munitions depot at Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport when it decides whether to transfer the 183rd Fighter Wing's F-16s to a base in Indiana.

BRAC commissioner Harold Gehman, a retired Navy admiral, said other states have offered similar incentives to save their bases but that the commission is required to look at the base as it was at the end of 2004 when making decisions.

"I would guess IOUs and promises aren't going to be viewed very well," Gehman told reporters at the end of an eight-hour day of testimony at St. Louis University.

Gov. Rod Blagojevich proposed building the multimillion-dollar munitions facility when he testified before the commission Monday morning.

Federal, state and local officials also argued that the proposed transfer of the 183rd's 15 F-16s to Fort Wayne International Airport in Indiana would actually cost the Pentagon money.

They noted that Springfield has a higher military-value ranking than Fort Wayne and a similar, if not better, recruiting record. And they said it made more sense to leave the fighters in Springfield when homeland defense is considered because of its proximity to major cities such as St. Louis, Chicago and Louisville.

The new munitions facility would cost $5.3 million, according to Jack Lavin, director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and would store air-to-air missiles and highly explosive 20mm ammunition. An $18,000 feasibility study has already been conducted.

Retired National Guard Col. Gene Blade, who testified on behalf of the 183rd, said the cost of the facility could actually run as high as $10 million when infrastructure needs are considered.

The munitions depot was been under consideration for years before the Pentagon decided to realign the 183rd, Blade said. The Springfield Airport Authority would provide the needed land and some funding for construction. The state would pay for the rest of the facility, which would be built to match the munitions-storage capability of Fort Wayne and negate that base's advantage in that area, said Mayor Tim Davlin.

"Is it worth it to save (the community) millions of dollars in the future? We think so," Davlin said.

In addition to the 183rd's planes, the Pentagon wants to send identical F-16s from Hulman Regional Airport Air Guard Station in Terre Haute, Ind., to Fort Wayne. Fort Wayne's planes, which are older than Springfield's, would be retired.

Springfield claims the Pentagon fudged the small savings it would realize by combining the


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operations: $2 million annually in 13 years. Meanwhile, to implement the changes, the Pentagon would have to spend $13.3 million, the city argued.

"There is no payback - ever - associated with realigning the fighter mission out of Springfield," a written summary of the city's arguments against the realignment said. "Without grouping Terre Haute and Fort Wayne into the Capital Airport realignment there would be no savings at all and the Air Force would have no justification in its recommendation."

Davlin suggested that the Hulman planes be relocated to Springfield and noted that the 183rd has plenty of room for expansion.

Speaking generally, Gehman said in limited circumstances, commissioners would consider shifting other bases around. He also reiterated that a base's "military value trumps the cost savings and impact on the community. They (the Pentagon) have to demonstrate the gain is worth the pain."

"We have demanded that (the Pentagon) run another scenario," Gehman said. "But it's not likely we'd go around generating more and more scenarios."

The 183rd is ranked third in military value out of 10 Air National Guard units with F-16s, Davlin told the commissioners.

"Seven other units have lower military value, yet the 183rd is one of five units recommended for realignment," he said.

While Illinois officials have hammered away at that point, the 183rd is not the only unit being realigned to a lower-ranked base. The Pentagon wants to realign and relocate aircraft at 26 Air National Guard bases across the country. Of those 26, 12, including the 183rd, would have at least part of their aircraft inventory transferred to a base with a lower military value.

But the Springfield and Terre Haute bases are unique in one way. They are two of three Air National Guard units that are seeing all of their aircraft transferred to a lower-ranked unit.

The commissioners noted that in its recommendations, the Pentagon acknowledged the 183rd had a higher military value than Fort Wayne, but cited what it said was the Indiana base's superior recruiting record as the reason for the realignment.

"They didn't try to hide it," Gehman said, asking Blade whether Springfield can prove that its recruiting record is the same or better than Fort Wayne's. Blade said recruitment was near 100 percent and that Springfield will provide detailed statistics to the commissioners at a later date refuting this point.

"Recruiting just has never been a real problem," Blade said.

Illinois officials have taken particular umbrage at the Pentagon's contention that the Fort Wayne base has a better recruiting record.

"There are six other units on the BRAC list that score far below the 183rd in recruiting and retention but are gaining airplanes," said U.S. Rep. John Shimkus, R-Collinsville.

Commissioner James Hansen, a former U.S. House member, asked Blade whether the 183rd had enough approved airspace for training, saying that a lack of space at higher elevations was an increasing problem among Air National Guard units.

"North or south, we have more ranges closer to our (base) than any other Air National Guard unit," Blade replied.

Hansen also pointed out that the military plans to phase out the F-16. The Springfield base has the space and ability to take on any other fighter the Air Force could put there, Blade said.

Davlin said he will make at least one more trip to Washington, D.C., to meet with staffers from the BRAC commission and present additional data and details.


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## Air Base Neighbors Fear A Hard Landing

Hartford Courant (Hartford, CT)
Jesse Hamilton
June 20, 2005

South Dakota is a state crazy for roadside attractions and the low-slung billboards that shout oncoming possibilities: Beautiful Rushmore Cave with Stalagmites Galore, Get a Milkshake at Wall Drug, Come to the Quilt Corral.

But on the roads through Rapid City, the straight tracks across an ocean of grassy swells, you won't see a sign predicting oncoming disaster. They don't have a sign for the trouble brewing off the interstate's Exit 57 -- causing desperation that, in these months, makes Rapid City the odd-couple twin to distant Groton, Conn.

Nobody has put up a billboard to say: See a Military Town in Peril.

There is one sign on I-90 that hints at the danger: ``The Black Hills Salutes Ellsworth Air Force Base." Members of the federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission will pass that sign Tuesday on their way to see the sprawling base, home to 29 of the most lethal aircraft in the Air Force.

It used to be home to much more, to intercontinental missiles that could level nations, to a host of bomber operations and support functions under the old Strategic Air Command -- forces that waited for a war that didn't come. But those days are gone, and Ellsworth has been carved down to a single purpose: Get B-1B ``Lancers" to war.

The BRAC members, in their hectic tour around the country to bases on the brink of closure, will listen to people try to explain why Ellsworth is crucial to America's ability to fight. Then, by September, they will decide whether the Department of Defense is right in wanting to silence 63 years of bombers' roar over Rapid City.

Rapid City's bombers are Groton's submarines. Ellsworth and the Naval Submarine Base in Groton are two of the largest and best-known bases atop Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's recommendations for closures. The Cold War giants may pay the cost of a long peace among the world's most powerful nations.

In South Dakota, in this spot where the prairie meets the Black Hills, most people aren't sure what to expect. Rapid City, unlike Groton, hasn't been filled with placards and banners pleading for somebody to rescue Ellsworth. A lot of people here prefer to wait and see, falling back on the independent streak and self-reliance that built this town 400 miles from anywhere.

But Ellsworth is the state's second-largest employer. It has a $162 million payroll. It operates 2,000 housing units. Its population is almost a fifth the size of Rapid City's 60,000.

Its passing would not go unnoticed.

The Powerless

A simple box church sits a short stretch from Ellsworth's main entrance. The old building used to be on base, but past its prime it was put out to the pastures of Box Elder, the meager collection of trailers and businesses near the base entrance.

Emmanuel Baptist Church stands as a chipped-paint hope to some of those who live here. Janet Hof lives next to it with her caretaker husband and their children -- a big segment of the small church's congregation, which also includes an ever-changing handful of Air Force nomads.

Times are tough here already, the Sunday school teacher said, looking over the empty gravel parking lot. ``I think it's going to get worse somehow."

On Wednesdays and Sundays, the little white church opens its doors to its faithful. The preacher pauses in his sermons to let the rolling scream of B-1Bs pass by. He and his congregation know that if those planes stop passing, things will get harder.


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But Hof tries to be positive. ``If it's best for the country, I guess they should close it," she says. Anyway, she adds, ``I think I could see good coming from it."

Hof envisions the casino next door failing, along with the bars and strip clubs that she says outnumber places to buy food. ``That would be nice."

Several miles away in the city, Dan Runyan hopes the swath of economic misfortune steers clear of his Rapid Feed & Seed. Runyan, in overalls and Chevy truck hat behind his store counter, figures he'll take a hit if all the horse owners out at the base leave. There are lots of them, he said.

``It'll hurt for a while, anyway," he said.

But then again, his rancher customers -- griping for generations about airplanes startling their livestock -- probably won't be broken up about the base closing.

``If anything, they'd probably say, `Yeah, we'd like to see them go.' It won't hurt them any," Runyan said.

Like a lot of people around here, Runyan served a stint at Ellsworth. But he hung his sergeant stripes up a long time ago to become a businessman, now threatened by his old base.

``Nothing much I can do about it," he said. ``If it goes, it goes. Life goes on."

Jim Boyd is another former Air Force member who stuck around. The retired chief master sergeant works downtown at First Stop Guns. The gun shop expects a quarter drop-off in business if Ellsworth shuts, Boyd said. So the well-stocked shop, adorned with animal heads and ammo ads, has started a website, hoping to make up the difference.

Boyd himself will take a hit that will be hard to make up. Like many Air Force veterans, he retired here ``because there was a base here." He buys his medications at the base at steep discounts from the prices at the local pharmacy.

It's just one of the little impacts, the things hardly foreseen, that may strike the Rapid City area.

Not everybody in town, though, sees how closing Ellsworth will make any difference to them.

``Some people don't think they will, but it'll be missed," he said.

Barber Mark Andersen will certainly miss it. His shop near the base is festooned with military patches and pictures -- an uncanny look-alike to the Nautilus Barber Shop near the sub base in Groton. Andersen figures he's cut more than 130,000 heads of hair since opening in 1988, and many of those have been the short cuts of military heads.

He has photos on his walls of airmen in Kosovo and Afghanistan, posing next to bombs on which they scrawled messages on Andersen's behalf. ``Love from Mark's," said the one in Kosovo. The Afghanistan bomb was addressed to Osama Bin Laden, reading, ``You need a haircut! -- Mark's Barber Shop."

Andersen has three chairs in his place. He used to have other barbers working there, but previous reductions at the base have cost him.

``This ain't my first rodeo," he said as a bomber howled past his shop -- a noise he has learned to tune out.

Andersen said he doesn't want to see the base close and people lose their jobs, maybe even forcing him to move into town. But, he said, ``Rapid will go on."

From Cold War To Terror

In 1942, the air base opened 9 miles east of Rapid City, the year after the final features had been chiseled into the faces on nearby Mount Rushmore. The city became a gateway to one of the country's great landmarks and to the base that would become one of the country's greatest arsenals.


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``Since the first pieces of wood were nailed together out here, there's been a strong relationship between Rapid City and the base," said Ron Alley, director of the South Dakota Air & Space Museum next to the base's main gate. ``The base means a lot."

In the endlessly looped documentary playing inside the museum, its tin-voiced narrator rehashes the glory days of Ellsworth and the 28th Bomb Wing, announcing: `` ... and with the B-1Bs, the flying Black Hills Bandits have a bright future ahead ... "

The 29 bombers at Ellsworth were part of the long arms race that, through economic collapse, would help fold up the Soviet military.

With some pride, retired Maj. David Bucknall, who crewed B-52s at Ellsworth in the height of that phantom war, said, ``We kind of bankrupted the Soviet Union." But at today's Ellsworth, he said, ``You don't have the people and hardware you used to have."

Bucknall spent his childhood around here, looking up to see the massive war machines tearing across South Dakota's immense sky. Then came his own service until 2003, in which he helped oversee the reduction of Ellsworth's Cold War powers.

At the base, as brand-new 28th Bomb Wing Cmdr. Col. Jeffry Smith said, ``We're down to a single mission, single focus."

His bombers can deliver massive blasts with supreme accuracy, which is mandatory in the fight against insurgents and terrorists. The B-1Bs have been reworked from haulers of nuclear weapons to versatile weapons platforms that have seen action in most recent U.S. conflicts -- including in Iraq and Afghanistan. His wing, at this ``crown jewel" base, represents half of the U.S. B-1B fleet. The Department of Defense wants the whole fleet combined at Dyess Air Force Base in Texas.

``We'll see how the commission comes out," said Smith, who isn't allowed to express his opinion on the move.

He's not the first Ellsworth commander to wonder whether the base is vulnerable to closure. BRAC has been a specter here for years through its several previous rounds, Boyd recalls. And former Sen. Tom Daschle claimed while campaigning that he saved the base from being listed in 1995.

Cold warriors such as Boyd and Phil Lynch, who retired as a chief master sergeant the year the last of the massive B-52s left the base in 1986, recall a different Ellsworth. Lynch, who ran the security force, tells a hundred stories in his big chief's voice, chuckling over his favorite lighter moments under the shadow of nuclear war.

``I was here so long, I saw airmen come and go five times," Lynch said, referring to the constant travels of military personnel. Now, he said, ``I'm selfish. I'd like to see Ellsworth stay open."

``They're trying to save money, and that's the name of the game," Lynch said. So to save itself, he knows the base would have to diversify with more missions and capabilities -- get more efficient. ``Bring in something else," he said, unsure what that might be. ``There's gotta be a selling point."

In the end, he doesn't have a good taste in his mouth about Ellsworth escaping BRAC, Lynch said, and he knows it will hurt his Rapid City neighbors.

``It's a fact, a fact of life," he said. ``I don't like it, but I think we'll survive."

Rallying

Jim McKeon, who runs the area chamber of commerce, has heard some people saying the region should just let Ellsworth go. But he doesn't think they understand how things would change.

``A lot of people probably won't realize the impact until their soccer coach is gone and their Bible teacher is not here or their teacher's aide is


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gone," McKeon said. Airmen and their spouses fill a lot of roles, he said.

In Rapid City, as in Groton, there is a group dedicated to saving the base. Connecticut's Subase Realignment Coalition is the Ellsworth Task Force here. This one is run by Chairman Bruce Rampelberg. He's been running a war room in office 209 of the civic center, planning for Tuesday's visit from three BRAC commissioners. He wants to leave the commissioners dazzled by a patriotic crowd of 10,000, a massive motorcycle escort, a series of billboards and a forest of flags.

The second hit from the one-two punch will be a numbers argument, Rampelberg said.

``The information that we've got and we're going to present is going to be irrefutable that to close it is a bad decision," he said.

Rampelberg admitted scant progress has been made in planning for the possibility of failure. And so far, developers haven't yet lined up to claim Ellsworth's 8,000 acres.

``The best use of Ellsworth is Ellsworth," said McKeon, who is a former wing commander at the base.

The Ellsworth Task Force's arguments are a basic repeat of those heard in Groton and in towns across the country facing base closures. They even preach the same adage here as in Groton, warning against the military putting all of its eggs into one basket. In Connecticut, they caution against making Norfolk, Va., a Pearl Harbor-like target with a combined sub fleet. Here, it's about all the B-1Bs being at one base in Texas.

The states also share the same grim-faced vows from their congressional delegations, promising a fight to the finish to protect their bases. Is it possible in South Dakota?

``Oh, yeah," McKeon said. ``I think so. I think there have been some basic assumptions, basic errors that were made."

The Ellsworth Task Force is suffering from the deadline crunch to research information released by the Pentagon -- the same struggle faced in Connecticut as base advocates prepare for a July 6 commission hearing in Boston.

Before the list was released, McKeon said, Rapid City was preparing for Ellsworth to be one of the bases to which other units would be moved. ``It took us by surprise -- by complete surprise," he said, although the early buzz in the military community had named Ellsworth as a closure possibility.

Others were less surprised. Retired businessman Don Perdue, who started furniture-maker Perdue Inc., is less sentimental about the base. ``They are not built here for our economic benefit," he said. ``They are built to protect our nation."

Perdue said Rapid City could weather the closure, rebounding in three to five years. The land could even be an asset, he said.

``If it's a military decision, then I think it should be closed," Perdue said. If it comes down to an argument for benefits to Rapid City, he said, ``then it's nothing but a welfare check."

The Same Boat

Beyond barber shops and shared arguments, Rapid City is a reflection of Groton in a BRAC mirror.

Groton's base operates high-priced boats, sleek and deadly machines whose original function -- tracking and destroying other vessels -- has been dormant for some time. Same for the graceful gray bombers at Ellsworth, born for nuclear bombs or large-scale industrial war, whose mission may arguably be handled now by smaller means.

Rapid City and Groton also share a loyal crowd of veterans who have made their homes there after serving. They sit in their clubs, 1,800 miles apart, sipping beers and telling corresponding stories taking place high above the Earth or deep beneath its oceans.


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Both bases have museums outside their main gates, cathedrals to bigger days. In Groton, the original nuclear sub Nautilus lives now as the museum's main attraction. At Ellsworth, it's a field of aircraft and the husks of missiles. If the BRAC commissioners can't be swayed, both the U.S. Submarine Force Museum and the South Dakota Air and Space Museum face the possibility of keeping the memory of bases that no longer exist.

Both states' bases have fought a long decline -- in use, not ability -- but Groton's empty piers are no match for the things that have gone from Ellsworth.

In a fenced-in lot on base, tourists descend behind a guide into a nondescript stairwell. They go down past musty green walls and through a door. The chamber inside is lined with 1960s electronics, clunky dials and switches that might seem quaint if not for their original use.

The guide gathers everybody to tell them about the machines, built ``before our GPSs and fancy guidance systems we have today."

Hundreds of people used to work in similar places scattered across this part of the state, she says. ``It was a good source of employment around South Dakota."

Retired couples. Parents and their children. The curious. They round the bend and look through an opening at a Minuteman II missile. It's a dummy, standing in as a historical relic.

If there's one thing the people in and around this base have had to get used to, it's letting go of the past.

***Opinions/ Editorials***

## BRAC, From Outside

Fairbanks News Miner (Fairbanks, AK)
June 20, 2005

For Fairbanks, hosting the first regional hearing of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission last week brought the disadvantage of having no other community to measure up against, no example to follow, no one to outdo. It meant, too, that leaders in other communities that are trying to have their military installations removed from the Defense Department's list of closures and reductions would be looking to see how well Fairbanks performed.
And they did notice the fine showing here.

To give an idea of how others are thinking, the Daily News-Miner has on occasion run excerpts of editorials from other parts of the country where the BRAC process is unfolding. Today's comes again from South Dakota, where the Rapid City Journal makes reference to the number of Fairbanks-area residents who showed up at for the BRAC Commission hearing at the Carlson Center.

From the Rapid City (S.D.) Journal:

Last week the Journal featured a story about how more than 3,000 people showed up for a regional hearing in Fairbanks, Alaska, by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission. Rapid City hopes to get an even greater turnout of local citizens for Tuesday's BRAC hearing at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center. We can be certain that at regional BRAC hearings in other areas of the country thousands of people will attend to show their support for their local military bases. We join city and state leaders in calling on people in the Rapid City area to show their support for Ellsworth Air Force Base on Tuesday.

Rapid City is in the same boat as Fairbanks. Closing Ellsworth will cost the Rapid City area 8.5 percent of its employment base, about the same as what realigning Eielson Air Force Base will cost the Fairbanks economy, and placing both cities near the top of the list of highest economic losses from the base closing process in the country.

Ellsworth Air Force Base is the largest employer in the Rapid City area and the second-largest employer in South Dakota. Losing Ellsworth's 4,130 military personnel and quite probably 2,916 base-related jobs will cost the city's economy about $278 million a year in economic impact.


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Rapid City is not going to dry up and blow away if Ellsworth closes, and our economy will recover.

But there is no question that losing that many personnel and their families will hurt the area's economy.

And let's not kid ourselves: No one is knocking on our door to replace the U.S. Air Force as an occupant of the Ellsworth property. The best use of Ellsworth Air Force Base is as an Air Force base.

Secondary to military value, local economic impact is one of the criteria used to decide which bases to close or realign. We can emphasize the base's economic impact on the Rapid City area economy and demonstrate our support for Ellsworth by attending the BRAC hearing.

City and county employees are being given the opportunity to take the afternoon off to attend the BRAC hearing. Local businesses could make the same gesture. Other Black Hills communities are sending delegations to the hearing. This is an issue that affects all of us.

We need to make an impression on the BRAC commissioners when they arrive Tuesday and at the civic center hearing. We can do that by turning out in force on Tuesday to show that Rapid City, the state of South Dakota and its citizens fully support Ellsworth and keeping it a part of our community for decades to come.

***Additional Notes***


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