

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



BIRD

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National News Articles

Another BRAC commissioner to visit Fort Monmouth

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
June 21, 2005

Another member of a federal commission considering whether Fort Monmouth should be closed will visit the Army post, U.S. Rep. Rush Holt's office said Tuesday.

Holt, D-Pennington, whose district includes Fort Monmouth, arranged for Philip Coyle, a member of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, to visit the post on June 29. Details of the visit were still being finalized, said Patrick Eddington, Holt's spokesman. Coyle served as the assistant defense secretary in the Clinton administration.

Two other BRAC commissioners visited Fort Monmouth on June 3. The Pentagon has recommended that Fort Monmouth be closed, and the majority of its mission and jobs transferred to Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland. The post was the only New Jersey military installation targeted for closure.

Fort Monmouth's advocates hope to convince a majority of the BRAC commissioners to take the post off the closure list it will send to President Bush in September.

Bush can only accept or deny the entire package submitted by the commission. If Bush accepts the recommendations, the list becomes final within 45 legislative days, unless Congress passes a joint resolution to block the entire package.

If the president rejects the recommendations, the commission has until Oct. 20 to submit a revised list. In November, Bush would have to approve or disapprove the revised recommendations.

Lawmakers hold strategy session on Groton submarine base

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
Lolita C. Baldor
June 21, 2005

Connecticut's congressional delegation met for the first time Tuesday with the Washington, D.C., consultants hired to help the state overturn the Defense Department's recommendation to shut down the submarine base in Groton.

Included in the Capitol Hill meeting, also for the first time, was Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, signaling efforts to take a broader, more coordinated approach as officials prepare for a hearing next month of the independent base closing commission.

The low-key meeting included Sens. Christopher Dodd and Joe Lieberman, both D-Conn., and Reps. Rob Simmons, R-Conn., and John Larson, D-Conn. Connecticut Gov. M. Jodi Rell and Attorney General Richard Blumenthal participated by phone. It was another in a series of strategy sessions that officials plan to hold to prepare for the hearing.

The consultants James Noone and S. Steven Karalekas used to run their own lobbying and public relations firm but merged with The Washington Group last October. Rell hired the group to help coordinate the state's presentation before the base closing commission.

Reed spokesman Greg McCarthy said the Rhode Island Democrat attended the meeting to talk about how best to present the argument that Naval Submarine Base New London, which is located in Groton, is an important military facility and should remain open.

The Pentagon included the Groton base on its list of recommended closures, as part of the fifth and final round of military base closings. The independent Base Closure and Realignment Commission will hold a hearing in Boston on July 6, to review the New England recommendations.

Each state will have up to two hours to make a presentation. The congressional delegation is formulating an agenda for the hearing, and developing the presentation that the consultants and state officials will make on behalf of the base.

Local News Articles**Quad Cities: 'No Better Place'**

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

Harry Levins and Tim O'Neil

June 22, 2005

Illinois leaders told a base closing panel here Monday that keeping F-16 fighters in Springfield and office jobs at the Rock Island Armory makes strong military sense, not just winning local politics.

Because the commission says it wants arguments about military necessity, not local pork, all the speakers at St. Louis University's Busch Center 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 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."

Missourians used their turn to argue that consolidating Army Reserve jobs at an installation in Overland is a smarter idea than moving them to Fort Knox in Kentucky.

Elected officials from Illinois and Missouri were among those from seven states who 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.

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.

Missourians made their case 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 almost 300 jobs. The Kansas City operation has more than 600.

The Illinois delegation gave its issues a full run. 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 mike 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.

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.

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 had cleared the way.

Two university professors weren't so well-connected. Christine Stevens and Thomas Moisan made it to the door just outside the hearing room with protest signs before security officers escorted them outside 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."

Plenty of room in Overland

The day began with testimony from U.S. Sen. Christopher "Kit" Bond, R-Mo., who 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.

Such a move would cost the 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.

The 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 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.

Craig Borchett of the Missouri Military Preparedness and Enhancement Commission said that 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.

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 realignment and closure 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.

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.

Fort Sill Scenario Ominous

Daily Oklahoman (OK)
Chris Casteel
June 20, 2005

WASHINGTON - Last month, the Lawton area celebrated the Defense Department's recommendation to give Fort Sill a major training mission from another fort, along with more than 3,600 jobs.

But just a few months before, key Pentagon officials meeting in the Army secretary's office were looking at a scenario that likely wouldn't have been celebrated in southwest Oklahoma.

That plan would have moved the field artillery school at Fort Sill to Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas, and relocated more than 2,000 jobs and about 7,700 students. One possibility discussed under that scenario was closing Fort Sill.

However, after a few weeks of looking at the costs and other issues involving Fort Bliss and Fort Sill, Pentagon officials began working the scenario that would ultimately be adopted by them and others at the Defense Department: moving the Air Defense Artillery school at Fort Bliss to Fort Sill.

Deliberations by Defense Department officials involved in the base realignment and closure process -- commonly referred to as BRAC -- were documented in various ways as the process unfolded.

Minutes were taken at meetings, computer printouts were generated and colorful charts and graphs were drawn up to illustrate proposals under consideration.

All those documents are being made public as the law authorizing a round of base closures requires. The Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission can use the data in the documents and the description of discussions as it reviews the Pentagon's recommendations.

After base closure rounds in the 1990s, community leaders where military installations survived took note. They used the data made public in the process to work on improvements - things that would raise the "military value" of their installation.

From Sill to Bliss

Two main Pentagon groups examined the proposal to combine field artillery training and air defense artillery training at one base.

The primary group was the U.S. Army's Senior Review Group, made up of senior military and civilian leaders. The other was the Education and Training Joint Cross-Service Group.

Pentagon officials began meeting and developing BRAC strategy two years ago, but proposals involving specific bases were scrubbed up until the final weeks before the list of closures and realignments was released on May 13.

It was at a meeting of the Army Senior Review Group on Nov. 18 that the scenario was discussed to move the field artillery school at Fort Sill to Fort Bliss.

The idea was to consolidate artillery training at one base to promote "training effectiveness and functional efficiencies."

Fort Bliss had the available training ranges and space and it was the top-ranked Army base in terms of military value. Fort Sill was the 20th-ranked base in military value, out of nearly 100 major Army installations.

The top Army officials looked at two ways of moving the school out of Fort Sill -- one would leave the post open and the other would close it.

The documents from that Nov. 18 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.

The other potential conflict in moving the school from Fort Sill to Fort Bliss reflected in the documents was that the Army had other scenarios that involved Fort Bliss, primarily the movement of thousands of troops from overseas bases to the El Paso post.

At a meeting on Nov. 30, the Army's Senior Review Group suggested that a separate group, the Army Basing Study Group, examine whether an aviation brigade should be stationed at Fort Sill.

Also at that meeting, the Army senior officials discussed the idea of moving brigades from Germany to Fort Bliss. The scenario offered the chance to close several installations in Germany and maximize the use of excess training land capacity at Fort Bliss. One of the potential conflicts, though, was their other proposal to move the field artillery school from Fort Sill.

The question was whether Fort Bliss could absorb that much new activity and influx of people.

From Bliss to Sill

At the Dec. 14 meeting, senior Army officials had a list of discussion issues. Among the questions: "Could the Army move the Air Defense Artillery school to Fort Sill to relieve space at Fort Bliss?"

The positive points presented were:

It would still promote training effectiveness and functional efficiencies.

It had the lowest one-time cost among all the other alternatives.

It would create space at Fort Bliss for additional activities.

There was a recommendation, accepted by the group, that the primary proposal should then become moving the artillery school at Fort Bliss to Fort Sill and combining all the artillery training in Oklahoma rather than Texas.

At a meeting on Jan. 5, the Army senior officials discussed details about moving the artillery school to Fort Sill. It would involve about 1,421 military personnel, 223 civilians and 1,345 students. The 32nd Army Air and Missile Defense Command, it was determined, did not need to move from Fort Bliss with the school. It could stay in El Paso.

The Army Basing Study Group recommended approval of creating the Net Fires Center at Fort Sill, and the proposal went on to the Joint Cross Service Group for Education and Training,

which took a detailed look in early March, according to Pentagon documents.

Though Fort Bliss had the highest military value ranking out of 99 major Army bases, and Fort Sill had the 20th, it was the military's judgment that overall military value wouldn't be adversely affected because the proposal involved two bases in the top quarter of the Army's portfolio, one document states.

In March, the Education and Training group approved the Net Fires Center at Fort Sill as one of the recommendations it would forward up the chain of command, which ultimately ended with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

And on May 13, the secretary made the recommendation to consolidate the Air Defense Artillery school with the Field Artillery school at Fort Sill, to form a Net Fires Center.

At a hearing before the base closure commission May 18, Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker, the Army Chief of Staff, testified that combining the activities at Fort Sill "just makes sense" because it is representative of what the Army is doing to transform itself for the future.

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

Army Secretary Francis J. Harvey, responding to a question about some of the moves among the military installations, including Fort Bliss and Fort Sill, said, "So it looks a little bit like we're doing this, and we're doing that. But behind that, we've given it a lot of thought."

Citizens, community leaders rally to save military bases

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Imperial, PA)
Allison Schlesinger
June 22, 2005

The Defense Department should not only rethink its decision to close or realign three military bases in southwestern Pennsylvania, it should also consider expanding its presence here,

community leaders told a member of the federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

Retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd W. Newton, one of nine commission members, toured the 911th Airlift Wing on Tuesday as a group of civic leaders, business owners and retired military members made its case as to why the Army's Charles E. Kelly Support Facility in Oakdale and the Army's 99th Regional Readiness Command in Coraopolis should remain open.

In May, a Pentagon panel trying to streamline the nation's military recommended closing the 911th and the Kelly Support Facility 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.

Although the Pittsburgh-Base Realignment and Closure Task Force, known as Pit-BRAC, defended all three bases, discussion at a news conference and a rally held after Newton's tour seemed focused on the 911th.

The Defense Department justified the closing of the base by saying land constraints prevent it from housing more than 10 C-130 aircraft.

But Pit-BRAC and leaders such as Gov. Ed Rendell and U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa., argue the base owns and leases enough land to house 13 aircraft and has a land agreement with the Pittsburgh International Airport that would allow it to house another seven C-130s.

Newton acknowledged that seeing the available land around the 911th will have an impact as the commission considers revising the Pentagon's closing recommendations.

"That's why it's important for us to come and visit a facility. Clearly, I saw there is land available here," Newton said.

But Newton stressed that no decision has been made regarding the 911th or any other base.

The commission will make recommendations to President Bush by September. Before then, Pit-

BRAC will have another opportunity to defend the bases with a presentation before the commission on July 8 in Baltimore.

When Newton arrived at the 911th, he was greeted by roadside signs that said "Save Our Bases" and "We Have Land." After the tour, he was met by about 150 concerned citizens, veterans and other supporters who had organized a rally on behalf of the bases.

For retired Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Will McMurray, discussion of the 911th closure was unpleasantly familiar.

He was a member of a coalition that successfully saved the 911th when the Defense Department considered closing it in 1995.

As the rally wrapped up, Rendell remained cautiously optimistic that at least one base would be saved.

"Remember, they've only been able to reverse about 10 percent of these (base closings). But let's hope," Rendell said.

Group fighting to stop base cuts gets \$25,000

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette (Little Rock, AK)
Andy Davis
June 21, 2005

Gov. Mike Huckabee on Monday announced that he will give \$25,000 to a group that is building a case against proposed cuts at the 188th Air National Guard Wing in Fort Smith.

The money from Huckabee's emergency fund will go to the Fort Smith Base Realignment and Closure Task Force, comprised of the city of Fort Smith, the Fort Smith Regional Airport and the Fort Smith Regional Chamber of Commerce.

The task force is fighting a recommendation by the Department of Defense that the 188th be stripped of its 17 F-16C fighters and that its fire department and regional fire training center be transferred to other bases.

The recommended cuts would cost the unit 670 of its 1,000 jobs.

The Chamber of Commerce will likely use the money to help pay for promotional materials on the importance of the base and to help supporters travel to a July 11 meeting of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission in San Antonio, said Fort Smith City Administrator Bill Harding.

Chamber President Tom Manskey was on vacation Monday and couldn't be reached for comment on how the grant would be spent.

The task force has hired a consultant and marketing firm to help prepare its case, and chamber officials have discussed leasing buses to ferry supporters to San Antonio, Harding said.

Harding and other supporters of the guard unit spent part of Monday in St. Louis, taking notes on a Base Realignment and Closure Commission hearing on bases in Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan and Wisconsin.

Harding said the task force is hoping to spend less than \$50,000 on the campaign.

"It's a very important issue for the city of Fort Smith and the 188th obviously," Harding said. "The 188th has been part of the community for years and years, and we think we've got a great story to tell."

Earlier this month, Huckabee announced a similar \$25,000 grant to a group fighting the proposed closure of Red River Army Depot in Texarkana, Texas, and nearby Lone Star Arsenal.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission is conducting an independent analysis of a Defense Department proposal released in May. The commission will issue a report on its findings in September.

Members of the commission will visit Red River Army Depot for a tour and briefing today.

Eielson supporters to send rep to New Mexico hearing

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Fairbanks, AK)
June 21, 2005

The Save Eielson Task Force plans to send representatives to a Base Realignment and Closure Committee hearing in New Mexico that is scheduled for Friday.

The goal is to gauge support for the Pentagon's plan to transfer 18 F-16 fighter jets from Eielson Air Force Base to Nevada's Nellis Air Force Base. The hearing will cover military installations in New Mexico, Arizona and Nevada.

"We're interested to know if that's what Nevada residents want," said Jim Dodson, chair of the Save Eielson Task Force.

Dodson said the task force representatives likely would come from the Washington, D.C., lobbying firm Lundquist, Nethercutt and Griles, which was hired to help create a defense of Eielson shortly after the Defense Department released its list May 13.

The Defense Department also has recommended transferring nearly 3,000 airmen and their dependents from Eielson to bases in the Lower 48.

At a regional BRAC hearing in Fairbanks last week, Eielson supporters said the base was in compliance with national air-quality regulations while Nellis, located eight miles northeast of downtown Las Vegas, is not.

Compliance with federal environmental laws is one of the eight criteria the commission must follow when reviewing the Defense Department's recommendations.

Nellis Air Force Base would gain 1,412 military and civilian personnel under the Pentagon's plan. Clark County, which includes both Las Vegas and Nellis, is growing at nearly 8 percent a year and has struggled to meet federal air-quality standards because of vehicle emissions.

The addition of airmen and their dependents from Eielson likely would increase pressure on pollution levels, Dodson said.

"We're curious if that's going to be an issue for Nevada," he said.

Task force members also are considering sending representatives to other regional hearings.

Dakotas base supporters are temporary rivals; longtime friends

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Grand Forks, ND)
Elisa L. Rinehart
June 21, 2005

After 20 years of friendship and a marriage between their children, John Marshall and Bruce Rampelberg, the men leading base retention efforts in the Dakotas, have become temporary rivals.

Rampelberg said he took good notes from Marshall on how to handle base closing and realignment issues when he worked with him in the 1991 campaign to save the Grand Forks base. More than a decade later, Rampelberg is leading the fight to get Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., off the federal closure list.

"I wish I was as good here as he is up there," Rampelberg said.

The two men met in 1985, when the Rampelbergs moved next door to the Marshalls in Grand Forks. Both of them worked in the U.S. Bank building downtown, Rampelberg said.

"I worked at the bank, and John's law firm leased an office on the second floor of the building," he said.

Rampelberg's son, Shawn, was 20 years old when he moved to Grand Forks and met Marshall's daughter, Cathy, who was attending Red River High School at the time, said his mother, Sandee Rampelberg.

Shawn and Cathy, both 1990 University of North Dakota graduates, married in December that same year, and they now have an 8-year old daughter, Haley.

Rampelberg had been bank president and chairman of the Grand Forks Chamber of Commerce when he left for Rapid City, S.D.

He said his base-retention strategy concentrates on proving that it doesn't make sense to close Ellsworth "and put all eggs in one basket."

The Pentagon has slated Ellsworth, home of 29 B-1B bombers and about 4,100 active-duty personnel, for closure. Five years ago, it named Ellsworth one possible bedding site for unmanned aerial vehicles, a mission the Pentagon now wants to hand to Grand Forks.

Grand Forks was not one of the five bases selected five years ago for Global Hawks, an advanced drone equipped with a long-range aerial reconnaissance system that relays high-resolution battlefield images.

The new mission would have brought 1,123 jobs and \$171 million a year to the Rapid City area, but the Pentagon decided to base the drones instead at Beale Air Force Base, Calif. Efforts to revive the issue at Ellsworth died with the Department of Defense decision to put the UAVs in California, Rampelberg said.

But Sen. Kent Conrad, D-N.D., worked hard to revive the issue and bring an emerging branch of the UAV operation to Grand Forks, Rampelberg said.

"I know those guys in North Dakota have done a great job, and I have been watching them over the years," he said.

Marshall said Rampelberg is a quick learner and he might use the drone card to boost Ellsworth's case for remaining open.

"They have consultants working on it," Marshall said. "They have to prove that the Department of

Defense deviated from the criteria. and that's the one thing that shows it."

Marshall said that over the years he and Rampelberg have exchanged tips on how to deal with base closing issues and, though they represent different interests, they still are good friends. He suggested that if he ever considered retiring from the Grand Forks Base Retention Committee, Rampelberg would be a good candidate to replace him.

"He's an honorable gentleman and his word is good," Marshall said.

Marshall's daughter, Cathy Rampelberg, said she respects and supports both her father and her father-in-law.

As for air base loyalties: "We don't talk about it," she said.

Thousands rally to save Texarkana military sites

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Texarkana, TX)

Angela K. Brown
June 21, 2005

Holding signs that read "SOS" and "Red River Defense Complex: Our Best, Nothing Less," about 10,000 people rallied Tuesday as some Base Realignment and Closure Commission members toured a military facility that could be shuttered.

The Red River Army Depot, one of the Texarkana area's largest employers, is among four major Texas military installations that the U.S. Department of Defense has recommended for closure. The nearby Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant also is slated for closure, but officials did not tour there Tuesday because its employment figures are too low to warrant a visit.

As two of BRAC's nine members arrived at the Texarkana, Ark., airport and rode in a convoy to the depot just west of Texarkana, Texas, thousands stood along the route waving U.S.

flags. Many wore yellow T-shirts that read "It still ain't over." The depot survived after being on the closure list in 1995.

"I just cannot believe this is happening again," said Brenda Rochelle, a real estate agent. "Keeping the Red River depot and Lone Star plant open is good for America, not just Texarkana."

The BRAC members, retired Army Gen. James T. Hill and retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Sue Ellen Turner, toured the depot Tuesday afternoon looking for unique aspects of the work that cannot be replicated, they said. The commission is to meet in July in San Antonio.

After the tour, Turner called the community's support "really amazing." Hill said the commission would take an unbiased, fair and independent look at the DOD's recommendations before submitting its own list of base closures to the president in September.

"Someone said have I seen enough yellow shirts, and the answer is, 'It's incredible.' The outpouring of support from this community has been phenomenal," Hill said. "... We understand people in yellow shirts. This is about jobs. This is about human beings."

The depot, which provides kits to reinforce armor for Humvees in Iraq and repairs Bradley Fighting Vehicles, would lose at least 2,500 jobs, mostly civilians, plus about 1,500 indirect jobs. The work would be spread to military bases in five states.

The ammunition plant would lose about 150 jobs plus another 80 indirect jobs, the Pentagon estimated.

But local officials say the DOD miscalculated and that closing both facilities would cost 4,500 jobs and another 7,000 indirect jobs.

"We're there because we know the soldiers are fighting the terrorists that threaten to come into America," said Sharon Wilson, a 23-year depot employee who wore a green frog suit Tuesday to boost morale as residents rallied. "We put out

the best product of any depots, and there's really no down time for us."

Texarkana, Ark., Mayor Horace Shipp said the closure would devastate the community, forcing many people to move. He said three generations of folks have worked at the Red River complex, which opened in 1941, and that training a work force in other towns would take 20 years.

"The purpose of an Army depot is to support war, and look at the contributions this depot makes," Shipp said. "That's an invaluable service."

In the report released last month, the DOD also recommended closing Naval Station Ingleside in South Texas and Brooks City Base in San Antonio, as well as several smaller installations.

But the department recommended adding thousands military and civilian jobs to Texas, many reassigned from Europe. The biggest gains would be Fort Bliss in El Paso and Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio.

Several members of the congressional delegations from Texas, Arkansas and Oklahoma met in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday to discuss their concerns about the possible closures in Texarkana. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, said the plan's impact on Texas "is enormous."

Sen. Blanche Lincoln, D-Arkansas, said the depot has doubled its capacity and is vital for the Iraq war. She said the Army's evaluation that put the depot on the closure list is based on 2003 activity that includes months before the war started.

South Dakota leaders urge commission to save Ellsworth

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

Chet Brokaw

June 21, 2005

The United States would be inviting a disaster like Pearl Harbor if Ellsworth Air Force Base is

closed and all the nation's B-1B bombers are stationed in one place, South Dakota officials told a federal commission Tuesday.

The 67 planes should be divided between two bases so a single military or terrorist attack or a bad storm would not disable the entire fleet, officials argued at hearing held by three members of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

"For the defense of our people, America needs the B-1 on more than one base so the B-1 is not vulnerable to a single attack or a natural disaster," Gov. Mike Rounds told the commission.

"Our B-1s should not be put in a vulnerable position that might allow all of them to be destroyed or delayed in their mission to protect our soldiers on the ground," Rounds said.

At least 7,000 people attended the hearing at a sports arena in Rapid City only a few miles from the 63-year-old air base.

The Department of Defense last month recommended that Ellsworth, home to half the nation's B-1 fleet, be closed along with 32 other bases scattered around the country. The Pentagon also wants to reduce the size of 29 other bases as part of an effort to reduce costs and increase efficiency.

State and community leaders are seeking to get the Base Realignment and Closure Commission to remove Ellsworth from the list before it submits its recommendations to President Bush in early September.

The Pentagon wants to consolidate the B-1 fleet at Dyess Air Force Base in Texas, where the other half of the bombers are currently located.

During the Cold War, Ellsworth played a key role in the all-out effort to defeat the Soviet Union by maintaining underground missiles and the B-1. Since the missiles were removed in the early 1990s, Ellsworth's only mission has been to fly the B-1 bombers.

The crowd at Tuesday's hearing waved small U.S. flags and sang patriotic songs before the meeting opened.

At the closely scripted hearing, the governor, South Dakota's congressional delegation and local leaders repeatedly emphasized the danger of placing all the B-1s at a single base.

They also said Ellsworth should be saved because its buildings and other facilities are in top-notch shape after \$140 million was spent to upgrade them in recent years.

The base has the advantage of uncluttered air space, is located only 7 minutes from a training range where South Dakota, Montana and Wyoming meet, and could be used to operate unmanned planes and other new weapons under development, they said.

The main criteria for deciding which bases to close involve military value and efficiency, but the economic impact on a region also can be considered.

Ellsworth has an annual economic impact of \$278 million in the region, and its closure would eliminate 4,500 military personnel, 5,600 dependents and another 1,000 civilian jobs, said South Dakota School of Mines and Technology professor Sid Goss. Another 1,700 jobs that depend on Ellsworth also could be lost, he said.

If the base closes, about 10,000 people, or 9 percent of the two-county area around Rapid City, might leave the area, Goss said. The base is South Dakota's second largest employer, he said.

"Commissioners, the impact of the closure of Ellsworth Air Force Base on this community, state and region will be significant and long-lasting," the professor said.

Members of the local task force working to save Ellsworth said they were hampered by the delay in information used by the Pentagon in developing its recommendations. Detailed information was only received last weekend.

But Pat McElgunn of the Rapid City Chamber of Commerce, a retired Air Force colonel who previously served at Ellsworth, said officials believe the Defense Department based its recommendations on some inaccurate information. The base would be valuable for many military uses in the years to come, he said.

Jim McKeon, also a retired colonel and former Ellsworth commander, said the Pentagon deviated from some of its criteria in recommending that the base be shut down.

He and others noted that Ellsworth has a good rating in terms of how many of its planes are ready for missions.

Retired Gen. Mike Loh, who once headed the Air Combat Command, testified by video, urging the commission to save Ellsworth. He said he believes having more than 36 bombers at one base leads to inefficiencies.

And placing all the B-1s at Dyess could be more costly than leaving them split between two bases, Loh said.

The congressional delegation stressed the dangers of having all the bombers at one base, where they could be disabled by a terrorist strike or tornado.

"We fully understand that one of purposes of this BRAC round is to save money. But we should not do so at the expense of our nation's security," said Sen. John Thune, R-S.D.

Sen. Tim Johnson, D-S.D., said the B-1 bombers have done a good job in recent wars, including the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. The money allocated by Congress in recent years has left the base in good physical shape, he said.

Rep. Stephanie Herseth, D-S.D., said Ellsworth should be saved because it has facilities that would allow it to accept new missions operating newly developed planes and other weapons.

Commission member Samuel Skinner, a former chief of staff to President George H.W. Bush and former transportation secretary, said the

commission will keep politics out of its decisions. The panel's recommendations will be based on military values, he said.

Skinner said he wants to learn more about the Air Force readiness reports, an area where Ellsworth has scored high. And he said the commission will consider whether placing all the B-1s at one base would create a security risk.

Commissioners have held earlier hearings at other bases recommended for closure, but Skinner said the Rapid City hearing featured testimony that most precisely challenged the information used by the Pentagon in making its recommendations.

Commissioner James Bilbray, a former congressman from Nevada, noted that commissions in previous rounds of base closures only removed 10-15 percent of the recommended bases from closure lists. But he said this year's commission may make more changes than that because panel members are independent-minded.

After the commission makes its recommendations to President Bush in early September, he has until Sept. 23 to accept or reject the commission report in its entirety.

If Bush rejects the report, the commission has until Oct. 20 to submit new recommendations. Bush then must accept or reject the complete report. If he accepts it, the recommendations become final within 45 legislative days unless entirely rejected by Congress.

Missouri, Illinois may be left unprotected
Belleville News-Democrat (Belleville, IL)
Jennifer A. Bowen
June 21, 2005

They protect nuclear power plants, transportation by road and river, military installations including Scott Air Force Base, the St. Louis Arch and Busch Stadium.

They also guard at least six major metropolitan areas, including St. Louis, Chicago and Kansas City.

All could become vulnerable targets if the Base Realignment and Closure commission agrees with the Pentagon's recommendations and moves the 131st Air National Guard Fighter Wing at Lambert out of Missouri and to New Jersey. Without the wing, the entire region would lose the protection of a wing of F-16 fighters.

At least that's what Missouri politicians testified to Monday morning at a regional BRAC hearing in St. Louis.

"If the 131st is moved to New Jersey, it would leave the heartland of the country vulnerable to terrorist attacks," said U.S. Sen. Jim Talent, R-Mo. "The wing's mission is to secure the skies over our major metropolitan areas, our national monuments and our critical infrastructure. This is a BRAC process that has had no thought for homeland defense."

Col. Mike Brandt of the 131st Air National Guard Fighter Wing said Missouri and most of Illinois could be left unprotected without a nearby fighter wing. The wing provides air protection for Scott Air Force Base, Fort Leonard Wood, Whiteman Air Force Base, the Boeing manufacturing plant in St. Louis, 13 nuclear power sites in both states, four defense arsenals, six hydroelectric plants, a series of critical locks and dams along the Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio rivers, and a major network of transportation, including bridges, highways and railroads often used to transport nuclear waste.

The wing would lose 250 military and civilian jobs with an economic impact of \$135 million to the St. Louis region. Twenty-six combat-experienced pilots with an average of more than 3,000 flight hours each fly the wing's 15 F-15 Eagle fighter jets.

Unlike many Air National Guard wings, the 131st is on constant alert, meaning members don't have to be called up to duty, rather, they

are always on duty and ready to respond immediately when needed.

"The 131st Fighter Wing is tasked to defend a major portion of America's Heartland," Brandt said. "If they leave, who will defend these assets? Who will fill the gap in America's Heartland tomorrow?"

For two-and-a-half hours Monday, Illinois politicians argued the merits of three of the state's military installations slated for realignment through the BRAC recommendations. Also included in the probable closure is the 183rd Fighter Wing, from Springfield. The Pentagon looks to transfer its fighter jets to Indiana. 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. Commissioners heard a total of 10 hours of testimony from leaders of seven states.

The phrase "substantial deviation from the BRAC criteria" was a common argument by politicians, implying the Department of Defense did not follow the rules when making the BRAC list and keeping parts of the process a secret when the rules call for "open and transparent." Politicians with military installations at stake presented evidence of possible shortcomings in the recommendation process and provided some new information for bases on the Pentagon's list. All asked members of the commission to reconsider the fate of hometown bases before making their final decision.

Historically, commissions have sided with about 85 percent of the Pentagon's recommendations. The official BRAC list, compiled by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, was made public May 13.

Scott Air Force Base is slated to gain missions, about 797 jobs, new refueling tankers and a second four-star general. However the Rock Island Arsenal in Rock Island, the 183rd Wing of the Air National Guard in Springfield and the Great Lakes Training Center in Chicago are all on the list to be closed, cut or moved.

If the BRAC commission does not alter the Department of Defense recommendations, Illinois could lose nearly 3,500 military and civilian jobs at those installations, according to Gov. Rod Blagojevich, and the military will lose unique facilities as well as the homeland security provided by missions at those installations.

"We live in very uncertain times, and any actions that would threaten our homeland security would be a grave mistake," Blagojevich said. "Illinois' military bases... have tremendous military value and they play critical roles in ensuring the safety and security of our country. This isn't about protecting jobs, this is about protecting the people of Illinois and our country. The Pentagon certainly isn't perfect, which is why we are fighting its flawed reasoning."

The BRAC commission will publicly release its BRAC report by Sept. 8 and will send it to President Bush. The President has until Sept. 23 to approve or disapprove the list. The BRAC list will then be sent to Congress by Nov. 7. Congress must either approve, or disapprove, the entire list and is not permitted to make any changes.

Retired Gen. Mike Loh, who once headed the Air Combat Command, testified by video, urging the commission to save Ellsworth. He said he believes having more than 36 bombers at one base leads to inefficiencies.

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**Va. Defense Staffers Say They Won't Go;
Base Realignment Plan Will Constitute a
'Brain Drain,' Workers Say**

The Washington Post (Washington DC)

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."

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."

'Incredible error' could save 911th, senator says

Pittsburgh Tribune Review (Pittsburgh, PA)
Brian Bowling
June 21, 2005

The Pentagon made "an incredible error" in its assessment of the 911th Airlift Wing in Moon, giving the base the best chance of survival among three Western Pennsylvania military installations targeted to close, U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum said Monday.

For that reason, a task force working to save the local bases will make the Air Force Reserve base its top priority, the Penn Hills Republican said.

"When you have a strong case, you make the strong case," Santorum said at a news conference Downtown.

Santorum said the group, known as Pit-BRAC, believes the Pentagon's analysis of the 911th wrongly concluded the base can handle only 10 C-130 cargo planes and that instead it could expand to accommodate 16 planes -- the number the Pentagon considers cost-effective for an airlift wing.

"That's the obvious error," Santorum said. "It's almost an incredible error, to be honest with you."

Pit-BRAC has found no comparable errors in analyses of the Army's Charles E. Kelly Support Center in Collier or the Army Reserve's 99th Regional Readiness Command in Moon, he said.

The three bases are on a list of bases the Defense Department wants to close or move as part of a nationwide plan to save money.

The proposal would close the 911th and send its assets to bases in North Carolina, Ohio and Nebraska. The 99th would move to Fort Dix, N.J., where it would be combined with other reserve headquarters to streamline the Army Reserve's command structure. The Kelly facility would close.

The Defense Department has estimated the changes would cost the region 845 jobs at the military bases and 571 related private-sector jobs.

Retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton is scheduled to tour the 911th today. Newton is one of nine people President Bush appointed to the national Base Realignment and Closure Commission to review the Pentagon's plan.

Bush has said he'll accept the BRAC Commission's revisions, due Sept. 8, Santorum said. Because Congress can approve or reject the list only in its entirety, local officials believe their best chance to save any of the bases is to persuade the commission that the military erred in its assessment of their value.

Santorum said the group also will try to save the Kelly facility, but that's a harder argument because it questions the Army's judgment and doesn't pinpoint an actual error.

Retired Superior Court Judge John Brosky, an Air National Guard retiree and co-chairman of the Military Affairs Council of Western Pennsylvania, said making a case for the 99th is even harder because the plan to move the unit is

based on streamlining the Army Reserve's command structure and not on any perceived problem with the Moon facility.

"It's pretty much a foregone conclusion," Brosky said of the proposed transfer.

Pit-BRAC hopes the nearby Pittsburgh International Airport and the availability of about 1,200 acres of county-owned, developable land will encourage the commission and the Pentagon to reconsider cutting the military's presence here and, instead, expand it.

"We're not just going to play defense; we're going to play offense," said Michael Langley, co-chairman of the task force.

The group also will argue that the Defense Department is overconsolidating its reserve bases and will have trouble staffing them. Langley said the task force is surveying 911th members to determine how many people the Air Force Reserve will lose if it closes the base.

In deciding to close the 911th, the Air Force used a scoring process that graded the base on dozens of criteria and concluded the Moon facility was in the lower third of bases able to support future airlift operations. If Pit-BRAC can persuade the commission that the Air Force used the wrong data in some of its calculations, the base's score would increase.

Langley said the task force's own calculations show the 911th's revised score would be higher than some of the bases the Pentagon intends to keep open, but he declined to give that score or name other bases. He said releasing that data or the results of the personnel survey could jeopardize Pit-BRAC's efforts.

"This is the second inning of what's probably an extra-innings game," Langley said. "We have relief pitchers and closers that we don't want to bring out in the early innings."

**State ideal for 440th, leaders say;
Base closure panel hears last pleas for not
moving unit**

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (Milwaukee, WI)
Katherine M. Skiba
June 21, 2005

St. Louis, Mo. - Gov. Jim Doyle on Monday blasted a plan to move the 440th Airlift Wing from Milwaukee as a "mistake" and, firing from both barrels, said the unit should not only stay put, but also gain aircraft.

The governor, standing with the state's U.S. senators, took the lead in testifying at a regional hearing of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

The wing, at Mitchell International Airport, would move to North Carolina and lose its eight C-130 transport planes to other states under a Pentagon proposal.

The governor said it could handle 12 transport planes now and with more money, 16. He lauded the open, uncrowded sky over Wisconsin as optimal for training, saying he'd heard pilots call it "an air playground."

And he charged that Pentagon staffers used incomplete, inconsistent data in their analysis of military bases, promising that Wisconsin officials would continue to scrutinize information as it emerges.

The governor, narrating a PowerPoint presentation, displayed a slide deriding the bid to take aircraft from the 440th as an "airplane grab." He said the proposal to take aircraft from the unit was not the right way for the Air Force to recapitalize its C-130 fleet within its active-duty ranks.

Sen. Herb Kohl criticized the proposal to move the 440th as "shortsighted." The senator, who owns the Milwaukee Bucks basketball team, cautioned the panel against making what he said was a mistake too many American businesses have made - focusing on easy-to-quantify cost savings while ignoring intangible assets.

Kohl said the 440th has an abundance of human capital, draws from a trained labor pool and enjoys the community's support.

He extolled the unit's well-trained, experienced reservists and said many had civilian jobs giving them knowledge of hydraulics, tool-and-die work and engine repair.

Kohl said 12 million people live in an area from Green Bay to Chicago, a region home to three international airports, all with pilots and maintenance crews who are excellent candidates for the reserves.

The senator, citing an Air Force estimate that 80% of the 440th's personnel would end their association with the unit if it left for North Carolina, added: "Though they can be replaced, we do not believe the cost of retraining and rebuilding the unit - or the time that will take - has been adequately considered."

Other lawmakers weigh in

If Doyle and Kohl went on the offensive - mildly, that is, echoing officials from other states trying to hold fast to their installations - it fell to Sen. Russ Feingold to play defense.

Feingold lauded the Pentagon's decision to add aircraft or missions to other installations in Wisconsin, including the 128th Air Refueling Wing at Mitchell, which is an Air National Guard unit; the 115th Fighter Wing at Truax Field in Madison; and Fort McCoy in Monroe County.

Feingold, in an interview before testifying, noted that that he'd flown with the 440th on a trip to Iraq in February. He called the people he met a "classic group of exceptionally enthusiastic, impressive" Wisconsinites.

Still, he declined to predict the unit's fortunes, saying it was never easy to change a Pentagon recommendation.

Other Wisconsin lawmakers - House Democrat Gwen Moore of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker, who wants to unseat Doyle - appeared but did not testify. Altogether, state officials had only 30 minutes to speak.

On hand, too, were 10 friends of the 440th who wore T-shirts heralding the unit's Flying Badgers. A retired pilot, Heinz Poellet, 62, of Oak Creek, who was vice commander of the 440th before his retirement 10 years ago, was among them.

Remembering that the 440th faced the ax in 1995, during the Pentagon's last round of base closures, but was spared, Poellet said: "We felt a little safer last time than this time."

Moore, in an interview, pronounced herself an optimist and said the Pentagon overlooked efficiencies and economies of scale already in place at the 440th.

Doyle's bid to enlarge the Air Reserve Station at Mitchell meshes with the Air Force's stated aim of having fewer, larger squadrons. The service wants most of its mobility squadrons - such as the 440th, which moves troops and supplies - to grow from eight aircraft to 12 or 16.

He bluntly warned that if the 440th relocated, it would not survive the move intact and would lose its combat-readiness status.

Doyle, a lawyer, said after the hearing that he thought the presentation went "very well - but I've been in a lot of courtrooms and I don't want to read judges and juries."

The 440th, which had its baptism by fire during the D-Day invasion, has been in Milwaukee since 1957. Its rosters include 1,409 military personnel, mostly reservists, and 379 civilians. The wing's recent deployments have included Afghanistan, Iraq and Guantanamo Bay.

Under the Pentagon plan, its C-130H Hercules planes would be split between Dobbins Air Reserve Base near Atlanta and Little Rock Air Force Base in Arkansas.

Several states' leaders testify

The Wisconsin officials were last on a daylong agenda after lawmakers from Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Indiana and Michigan testified.

Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois summed up what was an assembly line of arguments when he told commissioners: "There's nobody in any state that wants to see any base closed."

Illinois, for example, would see major job losses at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center and the Rock Island Arsenal.

Three of the nine BRAC commissioners heard testimony at the hearing, which was held at St. Louis University. It is one of 15 such sessions being held nationwide. The three commissioners on hand:

* Harold W. "Hal" Gehman Jr., a retired Navy four-star admiral who before leaving active duty in 2000 was NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic.

* James V. Hansen, a Navy veteran (1951-'55) who represented Utah as a Republican in the House of Representatives for 11 terms (1981-2003).

* Sue Ellen Turner, who retired from the Air Force in 1995 as brigadier general after 30 years in active duty.

The commission, which may modify the Pentagon recommendations, must deliver a report to the president by Sept. 8.

A minor flap arose Monday when U.S. Rep. Mark Green of Green Bay, who like Walker wants to replace Doyle, wrote Kohl complaining that only Democrats gave oral testimony. Green was not at the hearing.

Kohl, in response, told a reporter that the party affiliations were a coincidence and praised the bipartisan effort to retain the 440th.

Walker, a Republican, nodding in agreement as Kohl spoke, said he "completely supported" the lineup of speakers.

**Souder defends local base;
Illinois politicians fight their own base losses**
Fort Wayne News Sentinel (Fort Wayne, IN)

Ryan Lengerich
June 21, 2005

Supporters of the Battle Creek, Mich., 110th Fighter Wing of the Michigan National Air Guard Wing are shown in attendance at the Base Realignment and Closure commission hearing in St. Louis on Monday.

Rep. Mark Souder, R-3rd District, addresses the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission hearing in St. Louis on Monday.

Illinois lawmakers made their case Monday to save an Air National Guard unit based in Springfield, Ill., citing their base's superiority to the Fort Wayne unit set to benefit from Springfield's losses.

U.S. Rep. Mark Souder, R-3rd District, countered the arguments, calling them "considerably weak."

Indiana and Illinois politicians were among those from six states that testified before three members of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission at Saint Louis University. It was one of 16 regional hearings held nationwide.

If approved by a nine-person commission, President Bush and Congress, the restructuring would save the government \$50 billion over 20 years and better align the military to protect the United States against modern enemies, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has said.

The realignment would send Springfield's 15 F-16 jets to Fort Wayne, where the 122nd Fighter Wing's outdated F-16s would be retired.

Fort Wayne also would gain nine F-16s from the 181st, a Terre Haute-based fighter wing.

Springfield's 183rd Fighter Wing would remain open but lose 163 jobs. Fort Wayne would gain more than 300 jobs.

Defense Department officials ranked the 122nd Fighter Wing lower than its Terre Haute and Springfield counterparts, evaluating all three on

a number of criteria, including location, proximity to defense activities, terrain, weather and military readiness, to shape their recommendations.

Illinois lawmakers said moving planes from a higher-rated base weakens homeland security and contradicts the government's intended plan to strengthen the military.

"The facility in Fort Wayne is simply not equipped to meet the future requirements of our military as our base in Springfield," the city's mayor, Timothy J. Davlin, told the commission. "It makes no sense to spend money and move planes and retrain crews when you don't have to, especially with a base of lower military value."

Souder told the commission Fort Wayne ranks lower due to its outdated F-16s, a problem that would be fixed when the fighter planes are transferred.

Illinois Sens. Barack Obama and Richard Durbin, both Democrats, joined Davlin and Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich, also a Democrat, in defending Springfield.

Only Souder spoke on Fort Wayne's behalf during a 15-minute rebuttal.

Other Indiana representatives focused their arguments against job cuts recommended for Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center south of Bloomington.

Blagojevich hoped to woo BRAC commissioners by revealing the state's intentions to build a \$10 million munitions storage facility if Springfield is spared.

Souder said he was not impressed because Fort Wayne already has munitions storage capability.

Souder said the hearing went "very well," and that he was able to dissect what were predictable arguments.

"It isn't that Springfield is a bad unit," Souder said. "It is that Fort Wayne is a stronger unit."

What is BRAC?

It stands for Base Realignment and Closure, a process the Defense Department has used to reorganize the military to more efficiently and effectively support its forces, increase operational readiness and create new ways of doing business.

What the Defense Department recommends:

15 F-16 fighter jets maintained by the 122nd will be retired and replaced by 15 jets from Capital Airport Air Guard Station in Springfield, Ill.

The Fort Wayne-based unit will also pick up nine F-16s from Terre Haute's 181st Fighter Wing.

The Fort Wayne unit would have 24 F-16s at the ready and 26 total under the recommendations.

A timeline

On May 13, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld forwarded the department's recommendations to the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission.

The commission will forward its report on the recommendations to President Bush by Sept. 8.

The president has until Sept. 23 to accept or reject the recommendations in their entirety.

If accepted, Congress has 45 legislative days to reject the recommendations in their entirety or they become binding for the department.

Security cited in fight over closings

Kansas City Star (Kansas City, MO)
June 21, 2005

ST. LOUIS -- Midwestern political leaders 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 met with leaders from seven states -- Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Indiana, Wisconsin and Michigan -- at the hearing at St. Louis University.

The commission will make recommendations to President Bush.

Officials from Missouri told the commission that homeland and economic security would be threatened if the 131st Fighter Wing at Lambert-St. Louis International 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.

U.S. Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, a Missouri Democrat, told the commission that closing the Defense Financial and Accounting Service offices in Kansas City and St. Louis would be a mistake because of the specialized services the offices provide.

"Closing either the Kansas City or St. Louis DFAS would cause customer service to the Marines or the Army Materiel Command, respectively, to suffer," Cleaver said. "As we are presently at war with our troops depending on our support here at home to complete their missions, this would be incredibly irresponsible."

The proposed closings would cost 613 jobs in Kansas City and 293 in St. Louis, plus hundreds of indirect job losses .

The Pentagon proposed shutting the service's 21 offices around the country and consolidating their operations in Denver, Indianapolis and Columbus, Ohio. The Pentagon estimates the savings at \$1.3 billion over 20 years.

Cleaver said the Pentagon was overstating the savings because it was ignoring the near-term costs associated with closing them.

Commissioner in St. Louis doubts munitions depot promise matters

The State Journal Register (Springfield, IL)
Chris wetterich
June 21, 2005

ST. LOUIS - 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 depot 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 been listed by the Pentagon as ranking higher in military value than Fort Wayne and has a similar, if not better, recruiting record.

And they said it makes 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, Ky.

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 had 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 the 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 says the Pentagon fudged the small savings it would realize by combining the operations: \$2 million annually beginning 13 years after implementation.

Meanwhile, to make the changes, the Pentagon would have to spend \$13.3 million, the city argues.

"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 moved 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 stand out 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 that 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 to meet with staffers from the BRAC commission and present additional data and details.

Opinions/ Editorials

Defending Our Bases; The Base Closure And Realignment Commission Will See Firsthand The Value Of Pittsburgh-Area Sites

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pittsburgh, PA)

June 21, 2005

As many of you may know, the Department of Defense has recommended three Western Pennsylvania military installations for closure or realignment. Today one of the members of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission,

retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd W. Newton, will be visiting the Pittsburgh International Airport Reserve Station. It is my hope that, following his visit, Gen. Newton will leave Pittsburgh equipped with new information that will help him better understand the central role this base plays in the cultural and economic identity of the region.

The primary justification the Defense Department has used for closing the Pittsburgh Air Reserve Station and relocating the 911th Airlift Wing is the supposed land constraints that prevent the base hosting more than 10 C-130 aircraft. This, however, is simply not true. Land currently owned and leased by the 911th enables the installation to host 13 C-130 aircraft. In addition, the Air Force currently has an agreement with the Pittsburgh International Airport for supplementary land that could host a further seven aircraft, bringing the total to twice the Defense Department's estimated capability.

Based on these new inputs, the military value of this base is significantly higher than the assessment offered by Defense Department, and to close the installation without an accurate picture of the base does a great disservice to the brave men and women from the 911th who have made significant contributions to our nation's defense.

In addition to miscalculating the capacity of this base, the Defense Department clearly does not understand the full repercussions of moving this unit.

This is an Air Force Reserve facility, and each of the reservists has established a civilian life in the Pittsburgh area. Asking these dedicated men and women to leave their friends, homes and civilian jobs will have a severe impact on the overall mission of the U.S. Air Force. The service will lose valuable experience and expertise, as many reservists will choose to retire or separate instead of uprooting their families or commuting thousands of miles away. Replacing these service members will not be easy, particularly considering the Air Force's reliance on the skills of these individuals.

Critical to the Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) process is the commission's analysis of the impact, economic and otherwise, that closing a base will have on the community it currently occupies. In looking at the Defense Department's recommendation to close two bases and realign one base in Western Pennsylvania -- the C. E. Kelly Support Activity, the U.S. Army Reserve 99th Regional Readiness Command and the Pittsburgh Air Reserve Station -- it becomes obvious that department did not sufficiently study these effects. In addition to the over 850 jobs leaving the region, each of these bases is a community and economic development force. With the closing or relocation of each one, local businesses surrounding the bases stand to lose millions of dollars.

Military bases also serve as support centers for local veterans. These men and women, who sacrificed to protect our lives and preserve our freedom, deserve the best that we can offer them.

Surely, this includes convenient access to the benefits they have earned. In closing two bases and realigning a third, the Defense Department is removing retired veterans' services such as ID cards, Tricare, base exchange, commissary and casualty assistance. It is the responsibility of elected officials to work to better the lives of our veterans, and providing them with an accessible venue to obtain these types of benefits is a critical aspect of this obligation.

The BRAC process is still unfolding, but as Gen. Newton visits the 911th Airlift Wing and other Pennsylvania bases, I trust he will grasp their incredible significance and understand why we are fighting so hard to keep them open.

I am looking forward to the BRAC Regional Hearing in Baltimore on July 8, where I will have the opportunity to present the case for maintaining these installations that are so vital to the welfare of our state and the security of our nation.

As the process moves forward, I urge the citizens of the commonwealth, civilians and

service members alike, to continue the extraordinary outpouring of support for the bases I have already witnessed. Hopefully, together, we can make a substantial impression on the commission and keep our bases open.

Additional Notes