

## Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

# EARLY



# BIRD

June 29, 2005

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**Labor Provides \$28M to Ease Base Closings**

New York Times  
June 28, 2005

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The WASHINGTON (AP) -- The Labor Department is providing more than \$28 million to 35 states, the District of Columbia and Guam to help civilian workers affected by a massive restructuring of military bases.

[Report: Closing 130th would cripple Charleston airport \(Charleston, WV\)](#)

[Landing field opponents complain at being shut out of hearing \(Charlotte, NC\)](#)

Illinois, which stands to lose 737 civilian jobs, and Indiana, which could gain more than 2,600 civilian jobs, each get \$1.5 million, topping the list of grant recipients announced Tuesday.

They are followed by California, with \$1.37 million. It could lose 1,200 civilian jobs through closing and restructuring recommended by the Defense Department.

Maine comes next with a grant of \$1.27 million, followed by Maryland, with \$1.24 million. Maine faces a potential loss of 4,139 civilian jobs, while Maryland is looking at a gain of 9,012 civilian jobs.

The Pentagon has proposed shutting 33 large bases and scores of smaller ones to save \$48 billion over 20 years. An independent commission, which is reviewing the proposal and can make changes, is expected to send a final report to the president and Congress this fall.

Labor Secretary Elaine Chao, in an interview with The Associated Press, said the grant money is aimed at helping workers and communities deal with job losses as well as job gains.

"We want to help those workers and communities in transition with worker-training opportunities and help communities plan ahead ... to find and create new economic opportunities," she said. "The most important thing -- we want to give people hope."

South Dakota, which may lose 411 civilian jobs, is among the recipients receiving \$1 million a piece.

The recommended closing of Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota was a blow to freshman Republican Sen. John Thune. He argued during the 2004 campaign that he was in a better position to save the base than Democrat Tom Daschle, who served as Senate minority leader.

Connecticut, which faces the possible loss of 1,041 civilian jobs, also will receive a \$1 million grant, as will Virginia, which could see the loss

of 8,843 civilian jobs. Massachusetts, Alabama and Arkansas, which each may see civilian jobs go up, will receive \$1 million a piece. Florida, which could lose slightly more than 1,000 civilian jobs, also gets a \$1 million grant.

Chao said that each state and territory that asked for a grant received some money.

Hawaii, which might gain one civilian job, received the smallest grant, \$45,000. Nebraska, which could lose 165 civilian jobs, and Wisconsin, which might lose 154 civilian jobs, each received \$75,000.

### **Delegation Lobbies BRAC Panel W.Va. representatives lay out case to keep 130th Airlift Wing at Yeager**

Charleston Gazette  
June 29, 2005

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — With a flood of acronyms and scores of graph-stuffed PowerPoint slides, officials from North Carolina, South Carolina and West Virginia lobbied Tuesday to hold on to facilities the Defense Department has recommended for cuts in this year's round of base closings.

Speakers who addressed members of President Bush's base-closings commission during the five-hour hearing at a community college relied on a wide range of tactics and strategies.

West Virginia Gov. Joe Manchin, trying to save the state's Air National Guard 130th Airlift Wing, told commissioners that West Virginia lost more soldiers per capita during Vietnam than any other state in the nation.

The mayor of North Charleston, S.C., hoping to fend off the loss of more than 1,100 Navy jobs, noted that Charleston lost 20,000 personnel in the last military realignment of the early 1990s, when its naval base and shipyard were closed.

"I dare say the Charleston community probably understands the BRAC process as well as any in the United States," R. Keith Summey said. "In 1993, we were 'BRAC-ed.'"

And North Carolina's leaders continued to market their state as the nation's most military-friendly.

"Our bases, together, are the military's power projection platform on the East Coast," Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue said. "We welcome additional missions and the expansion of the military presence on our state."

The hearing was one of 16 being held around the country by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission to allow communities to respond to the Pentagon's recommended cuts.

Those proposals were released last month; the commission is to make its recommendations to President Bush in September.

Retired Adm. Harold W. Gehman Jr. of Virginia, one of the four commissioners who attended the hearing, said commissioners listened with special attention to claims that the Pentagon's recommendations violate the criteria set up by Congress for closing and shifting bases.

"We know a good issue when we hear one. ... All this, 'I love my base, my base loves me,' it's interesting, but it can't be checked," he said.

West Virginia focused on the effort to save eight C-130 cargo planes that the Pentagon has recommended be moved from Yeager Airport in Charleston, W.Va., to Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina.

Sen. Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., said he is concerned that aircraft are being taken from 28 Air National Guard bases around the country, including Yeager's 130th Airlift Wing.

"If the Pentagon's BRAC recommendations were implemented, the loss of eight C-130 aircraft from Charleston would have a dramatic impact on the ability of our governor and the West Virginia National Guard to respond to local emergencies," Byrd said.

Air Force Maj. Kevin Ray told the commissioners that statistics the Air National

Guard provided to the Pentagon before its recommendations inaccurately stated there is room for only eight C-130s at Yeager. In fact, he said, 12 C-130s can be housed at the airport.

About 150 West Virginians, many of them wearing light blue "Keep 'Em Flying" T-shirts, rode buses and flew a C-130 to Charlotte to support keeping the 130th at Yeager. They stood as a group as Byrd spoke of National Guard soldiers serving overseas in Kosovo and battling floods in places like Wheeling, Parkersburg and Clendenin.

"All of West Virginia is part of the West Virginia National Guard, because the West Virginia National Guard has been a part of all of us," Byrd said.

### **Leaders Defend N.C. Bases**

Raleigh News & Observer

Kristin Collins

June 29, 2005

CHARLOTTE -- North Carolina leaders were happy in May, when the Department of Defense left the state virtually unscathed while recommending closing military bases in 22 other states.

But Tuesday, when a federal commission that can revise those recommendations came to town, they put away their smiles and fought to keep every military job -- and add new ones.

More than 400 people, including Gov. Mike Easley and Sen. Elizabeth Dole, gathered at a Charlotte conference center to show support for North Carolina bases in front of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission. Easley said the state's six military installations add \$18 billion a year to the economy.

The nine-member commission is holding several regional hearings around the country before it submits a revised recommendation to Congress and President Bush for approval. It's all part of a process in which the government periodically reassesses its military bases, closing some and

expanding or changing others. The plan will be complete by the end of the year.

Tuesday's two-hour hearing was North Carolina's one chance to speak. Dole, a Salisbury Republican, chose the speakers.

"We're the most military-friendly state in the country," Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue told the commission. "We will do whatever it takes to keep that title."

The crowd gave her a standing ovation.

The Department of Defense recommendations would cut fewer than 600 of the state's approximately 115,000 military jobs. And they would add about 300 civilian jobs at military installations.

However, a few big changes are proposed for the state.

What's ahead

The recommendations would all but eliminate the Air Force presence in Fayetteville by turning over Pope Air Force Base, in operation for more than 85 years, to the Army. It would cut as many as 600 civilian jobs at a depot that rebuilds aircraft at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point in Havelock. And it would close an Army Research Office in Research Triangle Park, sending the jobs to the Washington area. State and local leaders took the stage to oppose all those changes.

Two retired generals, hired as consultants by the Cumberland County Business Council, argued that Pope Air Force Base and Fort Bragg sit next to each other in Fayetteville for good reason. They said Pope is vital to supporting the operations at Bragg, the nation's largest Army base.

The generals said the close relationship between Army and Air Force is the reason the United States can get troops quickly into combat all over the world. Without Pope, "success will now be far more difficult," said retired Army Gen. William F. Kernan.

At the same time, Kernan said the community supports recommended changes that would add more than 4,000 jobs at Fort Bragg -- including the addition of a major Army command center and a large infantry brigade.

Rally for Cherry Point

Leaders from the Havelock area sang the praises of the airplane repair depot at Cherry Point, which is among the biggest employers in Eastern North Carolina with more than 3,800 civilian jobs.

More than 100 residents from the area, all wearing T-shirts in support of Cherry Point, made a seven-hour journey to the hearing in three buses.

Russell Dudley of Maysville and Leslie Raynor of Newport, both aircraft painters at the depot, boarded the bus at 6 a.m. Tuesday.

"When it's about your job, you've got to do what you've got to do," Dudley said.

Before the recommendations became public in May, many in Havelock feared the air station would be closed. But at the hearing, area residents expressed no relief. Instead, they said they were upset that the depot was on the chopping block and that no jobs were added at the air station.

"We're very disappointed," said Danny Walsh, a Havelock commissioner and car salesman who attended the hearing. "We really were looking for a big new workload to come our way."

U.S. Rep. David Price, a Chapel Hill Democrat, argued against the closing of the Army office in Research Triangle Park. He said the office works closely with the three major research universities in the Triangle and that its success cannot be replicated.

"Research is the lifeblood of the modern military," Price said. "Don't mess with a good thing."

Complaints kept quiet

A few people who wanted to have their say didn't get a chance.

Three officials from Beaufort and Washington counties, who oppose a proposed Navy landing field in their area, came to the hearing complaining that they were denied the opportunity to speak. They instead submitted a written list of complaints, saying the landing field would be an inefficient use of military resources.

The Department of Defense made no recommendations regarding the landing field as part of this process.

Representatives from Dole's office said they wanted to save speaking opportunities during North Carolina's two-hour hearing for those who would be directly affected by the plan.

"They were not the only group that wanted to speak that wasn't included," said Dole spokeswoman Lindsay Taylor. "We were working under a very tight timeline."

Dole and the speakers she chose sent one strong message: North Carolina loves the military.

In recent years, Easley said the state has committed millions to protect land around military bases and offered in-state tuition to all military families. He said the state is working to find a good site for a Navy landing field.

"Our military bases are truly the backbone and lifeblood of North Carolina's communities," Easley said.

**Local News Articles**

**Base Backers Ready For Action  
Upcoming local session is last chance for campaigning**

Atlanta Journal-Constitution (Atlanta, GA)  
Add Seymour Jr.  
June 29, 2005

Tina Marie Coria wants to see a loud pep rally at Georgia Tech on Thursday.

But the cheering won't be for any Yellow Jackets teams.

Coria and other supporters of four Georgia military bases recommended for closure are calling for as many metro Atlanta residents as possible to show up for the Base Realignment and Closure Commission's regional hearing at the Georgia Tech Conference Center and Hotel.

It's their final face-to-face chance to sway commissioners who, in a few months, will decide on accepting or changing a Defense Department recommendation that the four bases be closed.

Supporters of bases in Alabama and Tennessee also will be on hand for the 8:30 a.m. hearing to make pleas for their installations.

Plus, the first 500 folks who show up at Georgia Tech on Thursday will get a T-shirt.

"I will refer to it as a pep rally before the most important game," said Coria, who is with the Save Forts McPherson/Gillem Foundation. "We need to be out to appeal to the commissioners, who are literally the jury."

The Pentagon's plan to streamline the nation's network of military bases is expected to save millions in taxpayer dollars. Georgia had dodged the BRAC bullet in each of the four previous rounds since 1988, in which 97 bases were shuttered.

But this year, four Georgia bases -- Fort McPherson near East Point; Fort Gillem in Clayton County; the Naval Air Station Atlanta in Marietta; and the Naval Supply Corps School in Athens -- are on the list.

Closing them would save a combined \$2.25 billion during the next 20 years, according to Pentagon estimates.

Nearly 6,600 military and civilian jobs would be lost in metro Atlanta, though the state actually

will gain nearly 7,500 new military and civilian jobs overall. Fort Benning near Columbus will gain 9,800 employees, while the Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base in St. Marys will get more than 3,300 new jobs.

On Thursday, officials from Forest Park, East Point, Marietta and Athens will be on hand to submit written presentations to the BRAC commissioners detailing how the four base closings will affect their cities.

Gov. Sonny Perdue, U.S. Sens. Saxby Chambliss and Johnny Isakson, along with congressmen John Lewis, Phil Gingrey and David Scott, will make up the majority of the team giving Georgia's pitch.

There also will be some pictorial displays, but the majority of Georgia's two-hour time before the commissioners will consist of a scripted, oral presentation.

The four BRAC commissioners in town for the hearing (there are a total of nine) will have copies of the scripted presentations so they'll be better prepared to ask questions afterward, said retired U.S. Army Col. Fred Bryant, deputy executive director of the Georgia Military Affairs Coordinating Committee.

"We're not overly confident, but we're very confident we've done the homework, done the presentation, and we're prepared to make compelling arguments," he said.

Commissioners James Bilbray, Samuel Skinner, Phillip Coyle and retired U.S. Navy Adm. Harold Gehman will be evaluating the bases' military value and whether Defense Department officials substantially deviated from BRAC criteria in making their recommendations.

Scott has been vocal about the four bases' military value in terms of homeland security and national defense.

Local supporters believe the Defense Department has low-balled estimates of how much it would cost to close Fort McPherson and

Fort Gillem and move the units there now to other bases.

Bilbray said the same during his June 10 visit to Fort Gillem.

State officials believe there is only a 10 percent chance of getting a base off the closure list. But Bilbray gave Fort Gillem a glimmer of hope during his visit.

"Fort Gillem has an excellent chance of getting off this list," Bilbray said that day. "I can't guarantee anything, but I was very, very impressed." Gillem was the only Georgia base to hear such encouraging news during the visits.

After the entire commission wraps up regional hearings across the country on July 14, it will begin deliberations.

By Sept. 8, it will forward its conclusions -- which will be to either accept or make changes to the Pentagon's list -- to President Bush.

The president will forward the list to Congress and it will become final in early November.

Though chances are slim that all four of Georgia's bases can stave off closure, Coria is hopeful.

"They have roots here," she said. "They're a part of our community, and we love them. We don't want to lose them."

### **Charleston Advocates Make Case To BRAC**

Officials push to keep Navy facility  
Columbia State (Columbia, SC)

Chuck Crumbo

June 29, 2005

CHARLOTTE — The Pentagon used “flawed” data and failed to follow its own guidelines when it recommended closing a Navy engineering facility in Charleston and moving its 500 jobs, advocates for the Holy City’s military bases charged Tuesday.

“This ... proposal would have never made it out of a corporate boardroom,” William Lewis, a former commander of the engineering facility, said at a regional hearing of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

The Lowcountry contingent also made a surprise pitch to move 250 jobs earmarked for San Diego to a Navy research and development agency in Charleston.

Leaving the engineering command open and adding the 250 R&D jobs could save the Defense Department nearly \$90 million, Charleston base supporters said.

That got the attention of the panel, which is charged with taking the Pentagon’s base-closing proposals and making a recommendation to the president.

BRAC commissioner Philip Coyle asked Lewis why he did not propose consolidating more Navy engineering facilities in Charleston.

“I thought it would be unseemly,” Lewis responded as the Charleston contingent smiled.

Charleston Mayor Joe Riley said he was encouraged by Tuesday’s hearing. “We’re not asking for sympathy or anything like that. We told them how we can save the Department of Defense money. ...”

Charleston was the only S.C. military community to take a hit when Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld issued the Pentagon’s base-closing recommendations May 13.

Rumsfeld called for closing the South Naval Facilities Engineering Facility, and the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, and trimming the Naval Weapons Station staff. The proposals would cost 1,100 jobs.

Overall, the state stands to gain 700 jobs as 1,800 new jobs are added to Midlands bases — at Fort Jackson, McEntire Joint National Guard Base and Shaw Air Force Base.

The Pentagon plans to send Charleston’s Navy engineering jobs to Jacksonville, Fla., Great Lakes, Ill., and Norfolk, Va.

The Charleston officials said they could not find any errors in the plan to close the finance facility. But they raised questions about the rationale for closing the Navy engineering facility.

One problem, Lewis said, was the Pentagon lumped savings from closing the Charleston facility with a Philadelphia engineering command. If the cost of closing the Charleston facility was separated from shuttering the Philadelphia command, there would be no savings, officials said.

Also, the Pentagon did not consider how much money could be saved by moving the Charleston engineering command into the payroll building once it is vacated, Lewis said. That building can be rented for \$1 a year and converted for use by engineers for about \$1 million. Instead, the Navy plans to spend \$14 million on a new building in Jacksonville.

Overall, the breakup of the engineering command would cost the Navy \$49 million more than keeping it in Charleston, Lowcountry officials said.

Charleston officials also suggested the BRAC panel review a Pentagon proposal to close two detachments of SPAWAR Systems Center, located in Dahlgren, Va., and Newport, R.I. The Pentagon plans to move about 250 jobs from those communities to San Diego. SPAWAR is a Navy research and development command that employs more than 2,500 in Charleston.

The Defense Department could save about \$40 million by moving the jobs to Charleston because of the area’s lower housing costs, said retired Navy Capt. Jim Hoffman, a former SPAWAR commander.

Charleston faces a tough road in winning its case to keep the engineering facility open. Historically, 85 percent of base-closing recommendations are approved.

## **Maryland's Work Force Is Staunchly Defended**

### **Officials respond to New Jersey's criticism of plan to shift military jobs**

Baltimore Sun (Baltimore, MD)

Josh Mitchell

June 28, 2005

Responding to New Jersey officials' pointed criticism of a plan to transfer thousands of military jobs to Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland leaders staunchly defended the proposal yesterday and praised their state's work force.

The leaders attempted to dismiss questions about whether Maryland could provide the scientific talent needed to fill the more than 5,000 civilian jobs that would be reassigned from Fort Monmouth to Aberdeen, officials said. A federal commission is reviewing the Defense Department plan.

"We're going to assure them that in every capability this region has the work force better than any place in the country," said Aris Melissaratos, state secretary of business and economic development. "We have the skill set that it takes to take the Army to a new level of performance."

He was among a coterie of Maryland officials, including the congressional delegation and a coalition of area business interests, who addressed reporters in a science classroom at Aberdeen High School, near the outskirts of Aberdeen Proving Ground.

But their message was directed at the nine members of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, who are reviewing a Pentagon plan to close or consolidate dozens of major bases. The commission is visiting bases and holding a series of regional hearings, and will submit its closure recommendations to President Bush in September.

Some bases, such as Aberdeen Proving Ground and Fort Meade in Maryland, stand to gain jobs

from the closed bases. But the states that have such bases are being put on the defensive by states that are vociferously making the case for keeping their bases.

Fort Monmouth has survived previous base-closure and consolidation plans.

When members of the base-closure commission visited Fort Monmouth this month, officials there said many employees, including engineers engaged in research and development projects, likely would quit their jobs rather than move to Maryland.

Yesterday, members of Maryland's congressional delegation accused New Jersey officials of maligning Maryland's work force by saying it lacked the talent to fill those jobs.

"It's going to be a fight," said Rep. C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger, a Maryland Democrat, referring to political volleying by Maryland and New Jersey over Fort Monmouth. "There are those that are going to make this strictly political. We're coming back, and we're going to show everybody we have a great work force."

He said that nearly one in four workers in Maryland is a professional or technical worker, more than any other state. Maryland also ranks second in the percentage of people who hold graduate and professional degrees, according to lawmakers.

## **Moving's No Pleasure To BRAC-Hit Workers**

Defense employees in Virginia may not follow their jobs to Huntsville

Huntsville Times (Huntsville, AL)

Patricia C. McCarter

June 26, 2005

ARLINGTON, Va. – Nothing against Huntsville, but defense workers in Virginia don't want to move here.

They don't want to move anywhere.

At least that's the contention of two Virginia congressmen dead set on fighting the Base Realignment and Closure Commission's recommendation that would take 30,000 jobs outside the Beltway of Washington, D.C. Several thousand contractors would also be disrupted.

At a Monday town meeting in Arlington called by Democratic Rep. James Moran Jr. and Republican Rep. Thomas M. Davis III, hundreds of Department of Defense workers protested their jobs moving to Alabama, Texas, Kentucky and beyond. One man was quoted in The Washington Post as saying he'd flip burgers before he moved or commuted even to Bethesda, Md., just 10 miles from Arlington, where BRAC has suggested his office move.

Critics of the plan are passing out bumper stickers and buttons declaring, "Save the Brains! Keep DoD Staff in Arlington!"

"We've created a successful brain trust around the Pentagon that includes the best and brightest from the high-tech and defense contracting communities," Moran said about the BRAC report released in May.

"I'm afraid that the kinds of intelligent minds critical to making our national defense the best in the world will not want to follow their agency, resulting in a brain drain of defense experts in the military. ... There is virtually no support for the move."

If BRAC recommendations are approved by Congress and President Bush later this year, Redstone Arsenal could see a net gain of 3,000 or more mostly civilian jobs. Included in Huntsville's gain and the D.C. area's loss via BRAC suggestions would be the Missile Defense Agency, the Army Materiel Command Headquarters and the Army Space and Missile Defense Command Headquarters.

The Pentagon said the realignment will save \$49 billion over the next 20 years. Moran said it wouldn't save nearly that much, and that by moving agencies out of leased office space in northern Virginia and to more remote locations

will disrupt secured communication lines that will take years to re-establish "at substantial cost to the taxpayer."

Northern Virginia is a pricey place to do business. A one-bedroom condo inside the Beltway can cost more than a spacious four-bedroom Huntsville house, and commercial real estate is just as costly.

The Missile Defense Agency has 2,200 people working in 788,000 square feet of leased office space in Arlington and Alexandria, Va., for \$41 million.

In Arlington, the Department of Defense leases a total of 4 million square feet.

It's not just that the government wants to stop paying the rent on leased properties. Another of BRAC's goals is to put defense workers on secured military bases and out of easily accessible private buildings built on busy streets.

Crystal City - that part of Arlington that's densely populated with tall beige office complexes near Reagan National Airport - houses much of the Pentagon's commands, and only sidewalks separate those structures from passing automobiles. A massive mall is located underground, and anyone can come and go without showing ID.

But the Army Materiel Command (AMC) headquarters isn't in leased space. The 1,300 AMC employees work in two huge buildings on Fort Belvoir, a secure Army base about a 45-minute drive from Washington. A nine-hole golf course and a screened-in gazebo for smokers are behind the AMC's offices, and the cafeteria overlooks the Potomac.

As the saying goes, if a soldier shoots it, drives it, flies it, wears it or eats it, the Army Materiel Command provides it, "from beans to bullets, helmets to helicopters, spare parts to spare ribs."

The actual "stuff" isn't warehoused on Fort Belvoir. What's housed there is management.

Even though the 8,600-acre Belvoir could lose its AMC headquarters to Redstone, it stands to gain much more. BRAC has recommended about 18,000 jobs leave the Arlington area and come to Belvoir. That could lengthen an already long commute for many of these employees.

Rick Lehner, a spokesman for the Missile Defense Agency headquartered across the street from the picturesque Arlington National Cemetery, said most workers aren't all that concerned with BRAC just yet. As government employees, he said many of them have been through BRAC before.

They know nothing is final. It's not even close to final.

"Huntsville is a logical place for the (missile defense) work to go," said Lehner, whose spokesman job would remain in Arlington. "A lot of this work is already being done in Huntsville.

"But I really don't hear many people talking about the possible move. That's years away. There's still a lot of the process to go through before we know what's going to happen.

"I know that Huntsville is excited about the possibility, but everyone here is just going with the flow."

Lehner said historically in BRAC, agencies have lost 60 to 70 percent of their work force because employees don't want to move.

While Huntsville's weather and housing market are appealing, he said there's no reason to believe this round of BRAC would see less loss than previous rounds have.

"In Washington, married couples work," he said. "Will one want to leave a good job to follow their spouse? That's an answer we won't know for years yet."

Huntsville area officials hope to make the move enticing enough to reverse that trend, as they did when 60 percent of the 2,300 Army aviation

employees in St. Louis chose to move here with their jobs after the 1995 BRAC.

Realtors, bankers, school representatives and city officials attended fairs in St. Louis to help the workers feel connected to their future home. When they got here in 1997, billboards welcomed them to Huntsville and a special mall storefront gave them one-stop shopping for driver's licenses, utility hook-ups and the like.

Mayor Loretta Spencer said that once the BRAC decisions are finalized in the fall, the community will repeat that effort in northern Virginia.

"I think we've learned to welcome people that are new to the community in an open-armed way," Spencer said.

### **North Carolina officials address federal base closure commission**

The Daily News (Jacksonville, NC)

Barry Smith

June 29, 2005

CHARLOTTE -- State officials on Tuesday told members of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission that the state's military bases have been protected from encroachment and stand ready to accept new missions.

"Cherry Point and Seymour Johnson can accommodate additional aircraft," Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue, who is leading North Carolina's efforts to protect the state's military bases during the BRAC process, said. "Camp Lejeune is poised to accept more troops."

Perdue and others, including a representative from Onslow County, spoke during a public hearing conducted by the commission, which will recommend to President Bush consolidation proposals for a more efficient military. Perdue also said that Fort Bragg is "the logical place" for more Army commands.

Retired Maj. Gen. Hugh Overholt, representing Allies for Cherry Point's Tomorrow, urged commissioners to consider the quality of work done at NAVAIR Cherry Point before deciding

to transfer the equivalent of 656 jobs to other bases. That figure was announced in a preliminary report last month.

"We fix and rebuild airplanes," Overholt said. "We do a lot of work on what we would call aging airplanes. We have the most efficient aviation depot in the business."

Overholt said he was concerned that if jobs are transferred to other places, the military could consider contracting those services out to private businesses. That move could violate what he called "the 50-50 rule."

The 50-50 rule, Overholt said, requires that 50 percent of such military maintenance be done in-house. It allows the military to contract out up to 50 percent of the work to private companies.

"It's always a constant battle to keep that balance," he said.

Having a number of in-house, government employees doing the maintenance work is important, he said.

"For the security of the nation, we need a strong industrial base in-house," he said.

"We need to study very closely what we're doing here," Overholt said. "If this indeed is better support to the war fighter, then OK." Retired Maj. Gen. Tom Braaten, former commanding general at Cherry Point Air Station, said the base was "the best installation in the Marine Corps and possibly DoD."

He said the base had the ability to do numerous tasks simultaneously and had room to expand.

Officials boasted that Cherry Point and Camp Lejeune have been protected from development.

"Currently no encroachment threatens Camp Lejeune," said retired Marine colonel Bruce Gombar, who now is director of economic development for Jacksonville and Onslow County. Gombar was touting the Onslow and Lejeune community's ability to take on more troops.

"We are one of the best buffered air bases in the country," Braaten said.

Officials from other North Carolina military communities in North Carolina -- Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base --also spoke to the BRAC Commission.

Both U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Dole, R-N.C., and Gov. Mike Easley briefly addressed the commission.

"Our installations are a model for joint operability and readiness," Dole said.

Easley pointed out the \$ 18 billion annual economic impact that the military has on North Carolina. He talked about the support that North Carolina's people and elected officials had for the military.

"Each of our base communities has the full support of the state of North Carolina," Easley said.

Easley noted that elected officials have worked hard on key issues, such as compatible land use programs for military bases. Last year, the General Assembly approved \$ 20 million in bonds to protect against encroachment and provided in-state tuition for children of members of the military.

"North Carolina is ready to meet its pledge to continue to be the most military friendly state in America," Easley said. "Welcome to North Carolina and if you need anything, let me know."

Busloads of people representing Allies for Cherry Point's Tomorrow showed up at the hearing white T-shirts, which read "We Support MCAS Cherry Point & NAVAIR Depot Cherry Point."

Noting that busloads from Cherry Point and Fort Bragg-Pope Air Force Base communities traveled to Charlotte, Easley said, "The people

want the commission to know how much they appreciate their bases."

**Limestone argues for expansion of DFAS; Officials will defend their position today to a BRAC commissioner, hoping to keep the accounting center open and save 353 jobs.**

Portland Press Herald (Portland, ME)

Tom Bell

June 28, 2005

The Pentagon should enlarge its accounting office in Limestone rather than shut it down, Aroostook County officials argue. They'll defend that position today as Lloyd Newton, a retired Air Force general, tours the Defense Finance and Accounting Service center in Limestone.

Housed in a former military hospital on what used to be Loring Air Force Base, the center employs 353 people. Newton sits on the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, which is reviewing the Pentagon's plan to close the center.

Hundreds of workers and residents are expected to greet Newton when he arrives this morning. A local radio station ran a public service announcement all day Monday, urging residents to attend the rally and fight to protect the region's quality of life.

"Our DFAS (pronounced DEE-fass) center does not need to be closed or realigned," the announcer says in the radio spot, "unless it is to be bigger and better."

The "make it bigger" argument is more than just chutzpah. It's smart politics.

The Pentagon runs the world's largest finance and accounting service, with 15,000 employees dispersed in 26 locations around the country as well as overseas. To save money, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld wants to consolidate those services into three huge centers, in Columbus, Ohio, Denver, Colo., and Indianapolis.

Aroostook County officials can't argue for the status quo, said Carl Flora, president and CEO of the Loring Development Authority. He said they must show the Pentagon how the Limestone center can help the military consolidate and fit into Rumsfeld's "new world order."

Flora said the building housing the accounting center was built in 1988 for \$22 million and renovated four years ago for \$6 million. He said it has room for hundreds of additional workers.

But most important, he said, is that Aroostook County can deliver a high-quality work force.

When it came up with its base-closure list, the Pentagon gave the Limestone center low marks as a potential site for consolidation because it's not in a metropolitan area. Pentagon officials believe an urban location would give a facility access to a much bigger pool of workers.

But Flora noted that at the Limestone center, the average salary is about \$33,000, which is \$12,000 above the Aroostook County average. In expensive urban areas where there are better opportunities in the private sector, the Pentagon jobs aren't that attractive, he said. But in Aroostook they are considered premium jobs and attract high-quality workers.

Although the unemployment rate here is about the same as the state average, he said, the work force is underemployed. Many people work several jobs or 60 or more hours at one job to make ends meet, according to an authority study.

That's why it takes only 9.2 days on average for the DFAS center in Limestone to fill a job vacancy, the fastest time in the entire defense accounting system. The center in Alexandria, Va., takes 44 days to fill a job, and the center in Kansas City takes 133 days.

The cost of housing in Aroostook County is also much cheaper, Flora said. The average house here costs \$60,200, about half the national average.

If the Limestone center would expand, he said, it also could tap into a "shadow work force," the

people who have left the county and who would love to come home if they only had a good job.

If the DFAS center should close, most workers will not transfer out-of-state because the cost of living in the cities is too high, said Mark Durinski, president of Local 294 of the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents workers at the Limestone facility.

Durinski said the low housing prices in Aroostook County mean workers don't have much equity in their homes to help them buy houses in urban areas.

On Monday night at the VFW hall in Caribou, Durinski and other workers were busy making signs, such as: "We're the best of the best" and "Grow DFAS."

The accounting center was established in May 1995, less than a year after Loring Air Force Base closed.

Loring's closure was devastating. The region lost 4,500 military jobs and 1,100 civilian jobs. Within two years, six car dealers went out of business.

Flora said the DFAS center has been a cornerstone of the effort to redevelop the former base. It accounts for nearly a third of the jobs that have been created since the base closed.

Peter Weatherhead, who five years ago bought a nine-hole golf course and a 158-unit apartment complex in Limestone, said closing the center would hurt many businesses in the region.

He said people in the area fought so hard to recover after the shutdown of Loring that it's hard to believe they are faced with another closure. Weatherhead said he was fixing up an apartment when he heard on the radio that the accounting center made the Pentagon's closure list.

"I thought, 'You got to be kidding me. They're doing this twice to us in the last 10 years,'" he said.

Weatherhead said local residents were not prepared for the news because they didn't consider the accounting center a military base. He's preparing for the worst, he said, because he believes the Pentagon won't buy the argument that it should be expanded into a major center.

"It won't be feasible for the government to put one of those centers in northern Maine," he said. "I hope (Maine officials) can pull some strings somewhere, but once you get on the list, it's hard to get off."

Ernest Murphy, who owns the Flightline Cafe in Limestone, remains optimistic about the region's ability to bounce back.

His cafe is located near the Maine Military Authority, which has a \$23 million contract to prepare Army Humvees to replace vehicles overseas. He said the facility will be expanding, and many of the new workers will be eating lunch at his cafe.

"I'm at the right place at the right time," he said.

### **Report: Closing 130th would cripple Charleston airport**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire  
(Charleston, WV)  
June 28, 2005

Passengers using Kanawha County's Yeager Airport could pay higher ticket prices and have fewer travel choices if West Virginia's Air National Guard is forced to give up eight cargo planes stationed at the airport, says a report prepared by Marshall University.

The Department of Defense's plan to ship the 130th Airlift Wing's aircraft to Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina would also result in the loss of 814 jobs and \$22 million in annual payroll. Since the Charleston-area economy is not growing, it would be difficult for the area to absorb the layoffs, said the 21-page report by Marshall's Center for Business and Economic Research.

The finding challenges early studies by the DoD, General Accounting Office and U.S. Census Bureau that suggested base closings and realignments did not have a long-term negative impact on local communities. According to the Marshall report, those studies did not look at joint-use airports located in rural, lightly populated areas.

The report, conducted for Yeager Airport officials, represents a worst-case scenario, said Christine Risch, the center's director of research.

Information contained in the report was expected to be used Tuesday when West Virginia officials appeared before a hearing on the DoD's proposal conducted by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission in Charlotte, N.C., the State Journal reported. The commission has until Sept. 8 to send its recommendations to President Bush. The president has until Sept. 23 to submit his recommendations to Congress.

The 130th Airlift Wing shares the mountaintop airfield with Yeager Airport. The unit provides fire protection and other services to the commercial airport. It would cost the airport more than \$7 million the first year and \$1.7 million annually after that to replace those services, the report said.

The Pentagon "never really looked at the impact realignment would have on a joint-use facility," airport director Rick Atkinson told the newspaper. "Right now, there is a benefit that goes to both the military and the airport."

The report noted that operations at Yeager's control tower could be curtailed if the cargo planes are transferred. The tower could close from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. The Federal Aviation Administration also has proposed closing the tower between midnight and 5 a.m. to save money as part of its fiscal 2006 budget request.

About 26 percent of Yeager's commercial passengers fly into or out of the airport between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m., the report said. If tower operations are curtailed, some flights could be canceled.

"The tower would have the biggest potential impact," Risch said.

Fewer flights could result in increased landing fees charged to airlines using the airport. Fees are charged per 1,000 pounds of aircraft weight.

"A typical regional jet weighs 48,500 pounds," the report said. "The landing fee for that aircraft would increase from \$58.20 and \$233.61, more than quadrupling the expense to the air carrier. Adding the fire service startup costs could increase fees by as much as \$4.88 per thousand pounds, to \$295 for a typical aircraft, a fivefold increase in landing fees."

Atkinson said those increases could hurt attempts to attract new air carriers to Yeager.

"We are close to having one of the lowest landing fees (among peer airports)," he said. "After this, we would be one of the highest."

### **Landing field opponents complain at being shut out of hearing**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire  
(Charlotte, NC)  
Tim Whitmire  
June 28, 2005

Opponents of a Navy proposal to build a landing field in an environmentally sensitive area of eastern North Carolina complained Tuesday that they were kept from testifying at a hearing on proposed military base closings.

Though unable to speak before members of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission Beaufort County Commissioner Hood Richardson and manager Paul Spruill distributed talking points against the field and entered them into the formal record of the hearing. They were joined by Washington County Manager David Peoples.

None of the Pentagon recommendations for base closures that the BRAC commission is reviewing has anything to do with the Navy's landing field, as was noted by a spokeswoman

for U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Dole, R-N.C., who set the agenda for North Carolina's portion of the hearing.

But Richardson and the others argued that plans to build the outlying landing field on 33,000 acres in Washington and Beaufort counties contradict the commission's charge to efficiently spend money on the military.

"Constructing an OLF at this site flies in the face of the unequivocal priorities emphasized in the BRAC process," the group said in a statement, arguing that the facility is unneeded and inappropriately located.

The project is now on hold under a permanent injunction by U.S. District Judge Terrence Boyle. Boyle has ruled that the Navy hasn't fully complied with the National Environmental Policy Act; the Navy is appealing.

The proposed site of the \$186 million project is near Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, the winter home to tens of thousands of migratory swans, geese and ducks. The Navy would have to buy about 75 farms to clear land for the landing field. The military wants the field to help train pilots of jets stationed in Virginia Beach, Va., and Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station to make nighttime aircraft carrier landings.

"I'm not happy," Richardson said of the decision by Dole not to allow landing field opponents to speak. "And I'm a Republican."

North Carolina officials were given two hours to make their case to the commission and Dole wanted to focus on response from communities that could be hurt by the Pentagon's proposed plan, said Dole spokeswoman Lindsay Taylor. Other groups were also turned away, she said.

Dole has closely followed the landing field controversy and hopes to see it resolved in the federal courts, Taylor said.

Gov. Mike Easley addressed the controversy during his remarks to the commissioners, saying the state is "conducting research and working

hard to find the appropriate OLF site in the state."

Later, Easley said he continues working with the Navy and citizen groups to find the right site for the landing field.

"There are some other sites that we think would be easier for me to sell to the state than Washington County," Easley said, including one in Carteret County near an existing Marine Corps bombing range.

"I think it's better to be at the table with the Navy, trying to bring a reasonable end to this proposal, than to be on the outside," he said.

While it appeals the injunction against the Washington-Beaufort site, the Navy has said it is studying four additional potential sites for the field.

### **Loring group aims to sway BRAC rep**

Bangor Daily News (Bangor, ME)

Beurmond Banville

June 28, 2005

The Grow DFAS Committee is looking to create a show of support today for the arrival of a member of the Base Realignment and Closure commission.

Retired U.S. Air Force Gen. Lloyd Newton is expected to arrive at the Loring Commerce Centre at about 10 a.m. The Grow DFAS Committee is asking supporters of DFAS to line Arkansas Road, the main road leading to the Defense Finance and Accounting Center at Loring, by 9:45 a.m. The Department of Defense has listed the Limestone facility for closure.

Newton and Marilyn Wasleski, a member of the BRAC staff, will receive an official briefing at DFAS, tour the facility and meet with employees at the DFAS building. Newton then will meet with Gov. John Baldacci, U.S. Rep. Michael Michaud, the Grow DFAS Committee and the media in the conference room at the Loring Applied Technology Center.

"We are trying to stage a show of support rally," Carl Flora, president of the Loring Development Authority and co-chairman of the Grow DFAS Committee, said Monday. "We are looking to employees of DFAS, other employees on the base, retired federal employees and the public in general to help with the effort.

"We think we have a pretty strong case against the closure and for the expansion of the facility," Flora said. "We will make our case to show the military erred in its assessment of the military value of the facility, the cost assessment of closing the center and the military's failure to consider the economic impact on Aroostook County, which has already been through a military closure."

Newton, an accomplished individual who flew fighter aircraft in Vietnam and the Air Force's Thunderbirds, has been to Loring with the Thunderbirds. His last assignment with the U.S. Air Force was commander of the Air Education and Training Command, one of Limestone DFAS' customers.

Flora said his committee believes it is in the best financial interest of the Defense Department to keep Limestone DFAS open, even expanding it. The panel has done cost calculations using three scenarios.

One scenario is to keep the Limestone DFAS as it is now; another is to expand to 480 employees at minimal cost and no renovations; and the third is to expand to 600 employees, which would require some additional renovations.

"That cost would be small compared to construction costs they would have to go through to expand the three proposed supercenters at Indianapolis, Indiana, Denver, Colorado, and Columbus, Ohio," Flora said.

On May 13, employees of DFAS at Limestone, the LDA and state and federal officials found out that Limestone DFAS was to close as part of the Defense Department's military realignment. The DFAS realignment involves closing 21 centers, centralizing capabilities at three sites.

Limestone DFAS has 362 employees and 225 indirect jobs the center generates in the local economy, for a total of 587 affected workers.

For Loring, the announced closure of DFAS is the second hit in 11 years by the Department of Defense. In 1994 the former Loring Air Force Base was closed. It took the LDA all that time to bring some 1,300 civilian jobs to the LCC.

In one swipe of the pen, the Defense Department proposed to dispose of one-quarter of the jobs developed in 11 years.

Tuesday's visit by Newton and Wasleski is part of a full-court press by state officials and the Washington delegation to save Limestone DFAS, which has won Defense Department awards and on which the government saves money.

The Grow DFAS Committee - whose aim is not only to save Limestone DFAS, but to make it grow, to increase responsibilities and to send more work to the northern Maine center - includes 14 Aroostook County people from the Aroostook Partnership for Progress, economic developers in northern Maine, members of the LDA board of directors, municipal officials of Limestone and Caribou, a union official, representatives of U.S. Sens. Olympia Snowe's and Susan Collins' offices, and a member of Baldacci's staff.

BRAC is holding hearings and making visits to a large number of sites involved in the closure or realignment plans of the Defense Department between now and Sept. 8, when a list must be given to Congress for its action.

It was estimated by the Loring Development Authority that the annual payroll of the facility, where jobs average \$32,000 to \$35,000 per year, amounts to between \$11 million and \$12 million.

Limestone DFAS is considered the corner piece of the Loring redevelopment process of the last 11 years.

The Limestone DFAS facility, at 145,000 square feet, is located in the former Air Force base hospital. The \$28 million facility was built in 1988, just six years before the base closed. In the last three years, \$6 million in renovations have been done to the facility.

**Towns see dire results from realignment; Unemployment would double, and the area would lose \$136 million in earnings without BNAS.**

Portland Press Herald (Portland, ME)  
Dennis Hoey  
June 28, 2005

Unemployment will more than double, hundreds of homes will become vacant, and millions of dollars in earnings will be lost in the Brunswick-Topsham region if the Brunswick Naval Air Station is downsized. Even worse, officials told residents Monday, realignment means the base would remain federal property, prohibiting the town from redeveloping the land and collecting tax revenue.

"(Realignment) is the worst-case scenario," said Brunswick's assistant town manager, Patricia Harrington. "Eighty-five percent of the active-duty military personnel will be reassigned. The people who live in homes and who eat at our restaurants are the people who will be leaving."

On May 13, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld released his list of proposed military base closings and realignments. BNAS made the list. But in a bit of a shocker for local officials, Rumsfeld recommended that a skeleton crew operate the base.

He proposed that 2,317 full-time, active-duty military personnel be reassigned and that all of Brunswick's aircraft be moved to a Navy base in Jacksonville, Fla.

Brunswick had commissioned a study that examined the impact of closing the base; it did not look at realignment.

The secretary's proposal left local officials scrambling for information about the impact that

downsizing would have on their communities. On Monday night they released those findings.

Harrington and Topsham Town Manager Gary Brown made the following findings:

n Realignment will result in a loss of 85 percent of the active-duty military personnel at the base, essentially leaving a skeleton crew to operate the installation, which includes a full-service airport.

n Private businesses on the base such as restaurants, the golf course and gas stations might be forced to close.

n The Navy would retain all of the property and land at BNAS, preventing local redevelopment efforts. Marine and Army buildings in Topsham would be moved onto BNAS.

n Brunswick's budget stands to lose \$1.3 million, much of it federal aid that subsidizes the education of children of military families.

n Unemployment in the Bath, Brunswick and Topsham region would more than double, from 4.7 percent to 11 percent.

n The region would see an annual loss of \$136 million in direct and indirect earnings.

n About 2,000 military personnel live off base, and 500 own homes. Those homes will become vacant if the personnel are reassigned.

Art Boulay, a local businessman and entrepreneur, urged the public and local governments to take a more active role in planning for the future.

He said that could mean developing a regional business park to generate new jobs and attract home buyers.

"Empty houses don't buy groceries, cars, or pay the taxes. They don't make the economy work," Boulay said. "We can control the economic development in our communities. No one wants to face 11 percent unemployment and 500 empty houses."

## Ohio Makes Its Pitch For Military Facilities

Columbus Dispatch (Columbus, OH)  
Jonathan Riskind  
June 28, 2005

Fourteen minutes.

That was all Rep. David L. Hobson had yesterday to fight for the future of the Air National Guard station in Springfield.

The Springfield Republican joined several other Ohio public officials here trying to save military installations. The Defense Department has recommended closing dozens of bases to save nearly \$50 billion in 20 years; yesterday's hearing was to help an independent commission evaluate those suggestions.

The commission has until Sept. 8 to forward its report to President Bush, who then has until Sept. 23 to accept or reject the final Base Realignment and Closure list in its entirety. If he accepts it, Congress will have 45 days to reject the entire list or allow it to become binding.

The four members of the nine-person commission at the hearing didn't give any hints as to what they would do. But retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd Newton, who ran the hearing, pledged in opening comments that the panel would make a "clear-eyed reality check." The two-hour Ohio hearing followed a similar one for New York installations.

The Columbus area already had emerged as a major victor on the Pentagon list, which came out May 13. The Defense Supply Center, Columbus would enjoy a net gain of more than 1,700 jobs at the sprawling complex off E. Broad Street, which lies mostly in Whitehall.

Ty Marsh, president and chief executive officer of the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce, traveled here mainly to offer thanks and reiterate why central Ohio officials think the Pentagon is right about that facility.

But installations in Springfield, Mansfield and Cleveland didn't fare as well.

The recommendation to cut the 178th Fighter Wing at the Air Guard station at Springfield-Beckley Municipal Airport would shut down an F-16 training center and cost nearly 300 jobs, most of them civilian.

Hobson told commission members that the Pentagon's logic is flawed. F-16 pilots are to be trained at the station through 2008 even as the Pentagon base-closing plan would move out mechanics in 2007. Pilot-training capability will be needed there for years to come, he said.

More than \$70 million has been spent in recent years to turn the air station in Springfield into a state-of-the-art training center, Hobson said in an interview. He said abandoning it now would be a mistake.

"It's very frustrating. You do what they (the Pentagon) ask you to do and then you get whacked by the BRAC."

Ohio officials, including Republican Sens. Mike DeWine and George V. Voinovich and Rep. Michael G. Oxley, also heaped criticism on the recommendation to shutter an Air National Guard base in Mansfield.

Oxley, a Findlay Republican, said Guard members from a unit long successful at recruiting and retention would resign if the airlift wing were to be moved.

Ohio Adjutant General Gregory L. Wayt told a rally in Mansfield last week that the Pentagon didn't consult him before making its recommendations.

Wayt said he would have pointed out the advantages of keeping the 179th Airlift Wing open -- including that it would cost more to relocate its C-130 aircraft than expand the base.

Gov. Bob Taft, who also spoke at the hearing yesterday, told the Mansfield rally, "My message is very clear: I believe the Air Force has made a serious mistake in recommending the

closure of the Mansfield Lahm Air National Guard Station."

Most of the Ohioans in attendance yesterday were associated with the Defense Finance and Accounting Center in Cleveland, which would be closed under the Pentagon's plan at a cost of more than 1,000 jobs.

Cleveland officials said the Pentagon used inaccurate data to draw a faulty conclusion.

The commission members who attended the hearing didn't ask questions or comment during the hearing.

The commission's job, Newton said, is to ensure that the military is using its limited resources and proposing its savings in a way that best houses, prepares and equips soldiers in places such as Iraq.

Voinovich said it is because the nation is at war that base-closing recommendations must be scrutinized.

"The fact that we are at war casts a shadow over what you're doing here," he said.

### **130th's supporters head to BRAC hearing in N.C.**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (NC)  
Allison Barker  
June 28, 2005

West Virginia Air National Guard supporters were upbeat after West Virginia's presentation Tuesday to members of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

"If that presentation doesn't work, I don't know what it will take to save this unit. I feel even better about the chances of getting off the BRAC list totally now. I feel the commissioners were paying close attention," said Joe Neenan, who retired from the West Virginia Air National Guard's 130th Airlift Wing last year after 28 years in the military.

Tuesday's hearing in Charlotte, N.C., focused on recommendations to close or realign military bases in West Virginia and the Carolinas. The hearing was one of 16 being held around the country by the Base Closure and Realignment Commission to allow communities to respond to the Pentagon's recommended cuts.

Those proposals were released last month; the commission is to make its recommendations to President Bush in September.

West Virginia's delegation was given 45 minutes to present the case for keeping the unit's C-130s in the state, rather than transferring them to Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina. The move would kill the unit, they have said.

U.S. Sen. Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., closed the West Virginia presentation.

"The face of the 130th is more than the faces of the men and women who don the uniform proudly. It is the faces of their husbands and wives and their sons and daughters. The face of the 130th is the face of its neighbors and friends and co-workers and employers," Byrd said. As he spoke, West Virginians in the audience stood one by one in a spontaneous show of support.

"All of West Virginia is part of the West Virginia National Guard because the West Virginia National Guard has been a part of all of us," Byrd concluded as all West Virginians stood.

Gov. Joe Manchin said that moment gave him chills. "A picture is worth a thousand words. I think this picture was worth a million. In that instant it showed who we are as a people. I was proud to be governor at that moment."

Adj. Gen. Allen Tackett said the fact that West Virginians nearly filled the meeting room, outnumbering representatives from North Carolina and South Carolina, "shows you that everybody in West Virginia really is behind the 130th Airlift Wing."

More than 100 people rode three buses for the five-hour, one-way trip to Charlotte.

"This is more than a congressional delegation and politicians, it's the community," said Carolyn Frye, wife of the 130th's commander.

Frye's husband, Col. Timothy L. Frye, wasn't on a bus. He was flying one of the unit's eight C-130s bearing guard officials and others to the hearing.

The DoD's recommendation is part of a national plan to close 33 major bases and downsize 29 others. It aims to save \$48.8 billion over 20 years by eliminating redundant and inefficient facilities and promoting cooperation among the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps.

The fight to save the 130th will not end in Charlotte. The nine-member commission can change the closure and realignment list before it is submitted to the White House and Congress this fall. The final decision lies with President Bush.

Most of the people on bus No. 3 were retired guard members, their wives and spouses of current members. They were chatty on the way to Charlotte until they stopped for lunch at a truck stop and someone bought a video. "The Mexican," with Julia Roberts and Brad Pitt was the focus of attention from then until the bus arrived in Charlotte.

"I can't do a lot of things, but this is a way I can do something," Sharon Peters said of her decision to go to Charlotte with her husband, Col. Bill Peters Jr., the unit's retired wing commander. He organized the bus trip for the group Keep 'em Flying.

"I feel relieved and I feel proud. I believe we made our point," she said on the way home. "I feel as much a part of this unit as those who wear the uniform."

### **Opinions/ Editorials**

#### **BRAC can hurt rural communities**

Grand Forks Herald (Grand Forks, ND)

Tom Dennis

June 28, 2005

"For some communities, BRAC closures can have positives," read the headline on Monday's Page 1A.

And that's true. The trouble is, it's also true that for other communities, BRAC closures can have negatives.

The question is, which camp would Grand Forks fall into if our base is downsized or closed?

That question can't be answered with certainty. But it can be answered with probability - and given the experiences of other closed bases around the country, the probability is that the Grand Forks area would struggle to recover from the loss of nearly 5,000 jobs.

That's reason enough to work hard to keep the tanker mission at the base - or, failing that, to draw the new mission of flying unmanned aerial vehicles, which are widely recognized as an exciting growth area in the Air Force.

The Cox News Service story painted a generally sunny picture of the civic impact of closing a nearby base. For example, the former Lowry Air Force Base in Denver, Colo., now boasts "3,200 new houses, \$39 million in new local taxes and 800 acres of parks and green space."

And at the former Fitzsimons Army Medical Center in nearby Aurora, Colo., "8,000 workers have replace the 4,000 lost when the Base Realignment and Closure Commission shuttered it in 1998," the story reported.

There's just one problem: Both of these bases were closed in or near a bustling metropolitan area - namely, Denver. And Denver, like most of America's major metropolitan areas (especially in the West and South), is an engine of growth no matter what.

The story gets around to acknowledging this, but not until the 25th paragraph: "Like Forts Gillem and McPherson and the Naval Air Station in metro Atlanta, the (Denver) bases were surrounded by a large, vibrant metropolitan area,

something development experts say improves chances of successful redevelopment," it reports.

Put another way, not being "surrounded by a large, vibrant metropolitan area" reduces the chances of successful redevelopment. Which description better applies to Grand Forks Air Force Base?

Eric Pages, policy director of EntreWorks or the National Commission on Entrepreneurship, reaches a similar conclusion in his 2004 report, "The Return of BRAC." Studies have shown that most base-closure communities have fared reasonably well over the years, the report concludes. But "most" is not "all": In previous BRAC rounds, "many Strategic Air Command bases located in the northern tier of the United States have been closed," Pages notes.

"These bases, located in isolated regions like northern Maine and Michigan's Upper Peninsula, hosted bomber squadrons targeting the former Soviet Union. Because they are hundreds of miles from major population centers, redevelopment of the bases has been challenging."

In other words, it helps if a closed base sits in or near a city, because planners then can "capitalize on already positive local market activity."

Don't misunderstand. This doesn't mean all is lost if the Grand Forks base is downsized (or, less likely, closed). It means recreating the lost jobs will be a tremendous challenge. As mentioned before in this space, we go a long time in this region between announcements of 800 new jobs. That's why the Air Force's UAV mission is so important, because in the northern Red River Valley, 800 jobs today is better than several times that many in the uncertain future.

### **Additional Notes**