

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



BIRD

July 6, 2005

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Boston Globe
Rick Klein
July 6, 2005

KITTERY, Maine -- When the military base closing commission convenes its New England hearing in South Boston this morning, four Republican senators will be among those lined up, armed with a coordinated PowerPoint presentation and notebooks crammed with statistics, all in an attempt to reverse the Pentagon's recommendation to close the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard.

The senators, Judd Gregg and John E. Sununu of New Hampshire, and Susan M. Collins and Olympia J. Snowe of Maine, represent the two states that stand to lose the most from closing of the Portsmouth naval base in Kittery, the economic engine of the southern corners of both states and the source of more than 4,000 jobs.

But the senators won't just be pleading their case to the four members of the commission expected to be at the Boston Convention and Exposition Center. They have vast audiences back home who are watching their actions closely, in addition to busloads of angry Maine and New Hampshire residents who are heading down Interstate 95 in yellow T-shirts to cheer on their cause in person.

"This is a trial, and they're our defense attorneys," William D. McDonough, a retired Navy captain who now heads the pro-base Seacoast Shipyard Association, said of the senators who are making the case for Portsmouth.

Few issues are more dear to members of Congress than their military bases, particularly in New England, where bases such as Portsmouth -- with more than two centuries of tradition -- have come to define the communities that house them.

The base-closing issue by itself probably wouldn't be enough to defeat an established incumbent like Snowe, who is seeking reelection next year in a state carried by Democrat John F. Kerry in last year's presidential race, according

to many political observers. But the perception of influence -- or the lack thereof -- in keeping bases open has impacted numerous races around the country.

Snowe won her first Senate race in 1994 against a Democrat who was criticized for supporting a previous round of base closings. Last year, Senator John Thune beat then-minority leader Tom Daschle in South Dakota, in part because he was able to argue that a Republican would be in a better position to lobby President Bush to keep Ellsworth Air Force Base open. (The base, South Dakota's second-largest employer, wound up on the list of proposed closings anyway.)

Representative Robert R. Simmons of Connecticut has won three House terms in a historically Democratic district based in part on what he said would be his heightened ability, as a Republican, to keep Naval Submarine Base New London open. Late in his 2004 campaign, the Army veteran and former CIA agent boasted that he was the "only one" who could keep the base off the list of those recommended for downsizing.

Now that base joins Portsmouth on the list, and Simmons will join the GOP senators from Maine and New Hampshire today in the awkward position of railing against the Republican administration's choices for which bases should be closed.

Simmons, whom Democrats have pegged as potentially vulnerable in a reelection race, said yesterday that he still believes he is in a better position than any Democrat to keep the base open and save the 8,600 military and civilian jobs it brings. But with internal Navy politics coloring the process, he said, submarines and Connecticut got a raw deal in the initial Pentagon recommendations that he's still fighting to reverse.

"Being better-positioned doesn't necessarily mean you're in a good position," Simmons said. "We have a tremendous case here. But it doesn't mean you're going to win."

Regarding Portsmouth, the fact that all four senators who are lobbying on its behalf are Republicans has raised expectations among their constituents that they can use their clout with the Bush administration to keep the base open.

Some area residents say they feel targeted because they live in states that voted for Kerry, upping the pressure on their Republican members of Congress to wield their influence on Republicans.

"Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts all vote for John Kerry, and now the president wants to close down the base," said Centula Abrams, who has run the Corner Pub in Kittery since 1992 and regularly serves base employees at lunch hour. "We can all blame the president, but the Senate has something to do with this, too. They're all responsible."

Snowe, a veteran of four previous rounds of base closings, said this round appears to be divorced from politics. She said her constituents will judge her on her consistent and concerted efforts to keep the base open, not necessarily the outcome of the process, in what she called the toughest fight she's had in 27 years of public service.

"I wouldn't hesitate in this instance to criticize these decisions by the administration," said Snowe, whose state could lose 7,000 jobs between Portsmouth, Brunswick Naval Air Station, and two smaller facilities. "They are wrong. These are wrong decisions, wrong for Maine, wrong for the Navy, wrong for America. This is about our national security."

McDonough said he has confidence in the team that is working on Portsmouth's behalf. He said he hopes his 24-year-old grandson, Stephen Hendrickson, will soon become a sixth-generation worker at the base. "We have two governors and four senators working for us on this," McDonough said.

New England Advocates Push To Overturn Recommendations

Boston Globe

Matt Viser
July 6, 2005

Advocates and politicians from around New England will ask an independent base closure commission to save their home-state bases today, hoping to blunt Pentagon recommendations that could close two major naval shipyards and other bases in the region.

Busloads of supporters are coming from Maine and New Hampshire with bright yellow shirts that say "Save Our Shipyard." A group from Connecticut is caravanning, donning white shirts that say "SOS: Save Our Sub Base." Supporters of Otis Air National Guard Base on Cape Cod will sport blue shirts that say "Save Otis."

Four members of the nine member Base Realignment and Closure Commission are planning to attend the hearing at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center, which will be carried live on the New England Cable News Networks from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Much of the hearing's focus will likely be on two shipyards -- Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine, and the New London Submarine Base in Groton, Conn. -- that combined stand to lose nearly 13,000 jobs. In addition, Massachusetts faces the closure of Otis Air National Guard Base on Cape Cod.

Defense specialists have speculated that the military won't end up closing both naval shipyards because of the large toll it would take on New England's economy. Members of the closure commission last week publicly questioned the decision to close Portsmouth.

"One of the things we have to look at is economic impact," commissioner James H. Bilbray said in an interview. "And right now there is a big impact on New England."

Under the Pentagon recommendation, New England would lose nearly 14,500 workers -- more than any other region, and half of the 29,000 that would be eliminated nationwide.

But Massachusetts would fare well -- more than 1,100 jobs would be transferred to Hanscom Air Force Base in Bedford and the military would pay for a huge expansion of the 846-acre base under the current proposal. Westover Air Reserve Base in Chicopee would add 10 planes and 80 jobs, Barnes Municipal Airport Air Guard Station in Westfield would add 107 jobs, and the Army Soldier Systems Center in Natick would remain open.

The Massachusetts delegation this morning plans to argue that closing Otis could leave the Boston area with just two F-15's on alert stationed within a 175-mile radius. "I believe very strongly that Otis is too valuable to be closed and I look forward very much to making Otis' case," Senator Edward M. Kennedy said yesterday.

The Pentagon recommendations will be reviewed by the commission, which is to send the list to President Bush by September. In the past five closure rounds, the commission has kept about 85 percent of the Pentagon's recommendations intact. To add a base to the closure list takes seven votes, and to remove one takes five. Under federal law, Bush, and later Congress, can either approve or reject the entire list, but cannot make any changes to it.

The losers cry foul over military cuts

The Providence Journal
John E. Mulligan
July 5, 2005

In the background of the Pentagon's plan to close 33 major bases and save up to \$50 billion over the next 20 years lurks the question: has New England been unfairly singled out for disarmament?

If the answer is a resounding "Yes" to the laid-off welder at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, in Kittery, Maine, or to the brain trust of undersea warfare at Naval Submarine Base New London, in Groton, Conn., a survey of military experts and historians answers: "Not necessarily."

The Base Realignment And Closing Commission, BRAC, brings the debate to Boston Wednesday in a hearing on proposed reductions in New England's military structure to levels unseen since before World War II.

Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., is among those who will address the panel.

"We'll always have second thoughts about the actions we take with our military structure, even if we do it with careful deliberation," said Reed, a member of the Armed Services Committee, whose first career was as an Army officer, and who generally considers the base-closing machinery to be about as sound and as free from political mischief as it can get.

"Part of the difficulty is that the world changes in ways we can't predict," he said.

Thomas G. Mahnken, a professor at the Naval War College, in Newport, and at Johns Hopkins University's Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, in Washington, D.C., echoed Reed in a recent interview.

"Clearly New England has taken a big hit for a whole host of reasons, each of which in isolation made a fair amount of sense," Mahnken said. After the Cold War, "we certainly didn't need the SAC (Strategic Air Command) bases," he said, referring to the Air Force installations in Northern New England that once helped to deter the Soviet threat with long-range, nuclear-armed bombers.

The Navy's reconfiguration, with an increasing focus on the Pacific, "seems to be the correct response to military needs that are shifting to the Persian Gulf and perhaps Asia," he said.

"But my concern," Mahnken said, "is that all of this weakens the bond between the local area and the national defense. We are entering the early phases of a protracted war on terrorism that may go on for decades. It's important for people of every region to see the military, to be around the military, to have some exposure to the military."

According to Loren Thompson, a military analyst at the Lexington Institute, a Washington-area think tank that specializes in military issues, "New England has been disproportionately targeted" for base closings. But it hasn't been for political reasons, he said.

"The military has basically followed the private sector out of New England," he said, referring to the mills and factories that began to migrate decades ago.

It's no coincidence that the only region without an oil refinery or a major automobile assembly plant is also losing its purchase on the military, Thompson said, and for some of the same reasons: the high cost of labor, energy and other business necessities.

Local News Articles

After Tour, Official Says Pentagon Did Not Emphasize Air Base's Range

Philadelphia Inquirer (Philadelphia, PA)

Marc Schogol

July 6, 2005

After a tour of Willow Grove air base yesterday, the head of the commission reviewing proposed base closings said that the Pentagon had not emphasized the full range of activities that take place at the Montgomery County installation.

Base Realignment and Closure Commission chairman Anthony Principi said that he was surprised about how the decision to close the Naval Air Station and Joint Reserve Base was made, calling it "inconsistent."

It seemed to have been "done by the Navy, independent of the other services," he said.

Principi, whose commission is reviewing the Pentagon's nationwide base-closing recommendations and will make recommendations to President Bush, also indicated that the Pentagon information on Willow Grove didn't fully emphasize its "jointness" - the fact that it has units from each branch of the military.

Willow Grove is one of only three such military bases nationwide, Principi said, adding that one of the goals of the military base reorganization effort is to expand the number of bases housing multiple branches.

"If you're trying to achieve jointness," he said, "what value does it make to close a Willow Grove?"

Principi, whose questions about the Pentagon's base-closing rationales have raised hopes elsewhere around the country, said the commission had questioned the Pentagon about its decisions regarding the Air National Guard.

One of the key units at Willow Grove is the Air Guard's 111th Fighter Wing, whose members have been deployed for tours of duty in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait since 9/11.

While about 150 supporters of the base rallied outside the Manor House in Horsham, where the post-tour news conference was held, Gov. Rendell and Sens. Arlen Specter and Rick Santorum and other lawmakers who had accompanied Principi said they thought yesterday's tour had been a success.

"I don't want to raise false expectations," Specter told the crowd, "but we're putting on a hell of a fight and we're not conceding anything"

"I'm not suggesting this is a slam dunk," Santorum said, "but I'm confident the chairman got the message and got it clearly."

A state delegation that includes Rendell, Specter and Santorum will formally make its case against closing Willow Grove and other state military facilities to the full BRAC commission tomorrow in Washington.

More than 100 Willow Grove employees, family members of those serving at the base, veterans and area residents are expected to make the trip to Washington, too.

The commission has until Sept. 8 to send a final recommendation list to President Bush, based

upon the Pentagon's recommendations and its own review, conducted through tours and hearings. Bush and subsequently Congress will be asked in the fall to accept or reject the list in its entirety.

Rendell said closing the base would have a serious impact on military readiness, homeland security, the local economy and the state's ability to use the National Guard to aid victims of natural disasters.

State and local officials and community leaders have all questioned whether the Pentagon followed proper procedure in reaching its decision.

Specter said the various branches of the military seemed to have gotten their signals crossed.

"The Navy thought the Air Force was leaving, so they didn't put up a fight, and the Air Force thought the Navy was leaving and they didn't put up a strong case," he said.

"I'm not particularly happy with the analysis by the Pentagon," Santorum said. "Each service analyzed this base independent of that jointness."

State officials obviously were buoyed by Principi's comments and reactions. "I think there's reason for guarded optimism," Rendell said.

Denver And Other Cities Show Hope For A Comeback After Base Closings

Philadelphia Inquirer (Philadelphia, PA)
Robert Weller,
July 6, 2005

DENVER - Big SUVs packed with children and loaded with groceries cruise where bombers once touched down at the former Lowry Air Force Base, not far from an aviation museum showcasing the site's military history.

Elsewhere, dozens of Air Force buildings have been converted into civilian housing, and the old Lowry headquarters has been turned into loft

apartments. The former base liquor store? That's the new Lowry Community Christian Church.

More than a decade ago, the last round of base closings cost the Denver area both Lowry and the Fitzsimons Army Hospital - facilities that boasted 11,000 jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in military spending.

But don't cry for the Mile High City: Both former bases are booming.

About 20,000 people live, work or study at Lowry, the site of several thousand new homes since 1998. Fitzsimons, in the midst of a \$4.8 billion overhaul, has become a medical center that will employ 18,000 by 2010.

"There is life after closure," said Tom Markham, executive director of the Lowry Redevelopment Authority and president of the Association of Defense Communities.

As the Pentagon and White House weigh new base closures, Denver and other cities across the nation offer hope for communities about to lose military jobs, dollars and prestige.

"There are people who will tell you, maybe not on the record, that it might have been the best thing for a base to close," said Jack Sprott, executive director of the Charleston, S.C., Naval Complex Redevelopment Authority. That city lost 22,000 military and civilian jobs but has since added 6,000 jobs at the site.

Concord, Calif., successfully lobbied to get its naval base on the closure list this year. It hopes to build 13,500 homes and create 15,000 jobs over 30 years at the site of the Concord Naval Weapons Station.

A Government Accountability Office report in January found that "while some communities surrounding closed bases are faring better than others, most have recovered or are continuing to recover from the impact" of base closures. The report, citing Pentagon data, said nearly 72 percent of local civilian jobs lost because of base closings have been replaced.

"Don't spend all your money trying to prevent a base closure," said Harry Kelso, a Richmond, Va., consultant on closings. "You should be preparing for the closure and gaining the expertise how to best use the property."

Lowry is often cited as a textbook example of converting a military base, but the process has not been easy or cheap.

Some neighbors balked at development plans. The Air Force wanted \$38 million for land the city had donated for the base. At the time, Colorado was emerging from an early-1990s recession.

The extent of environmental contamination after 57 years of military operations was unknown. The base infrastructure fell short of civilian standards.

"We had a thousand empty buildings," Markham said. "We had three abandoned runways. We had utilities that were old, in the wrong place, or the wrong size, and usually all three. We inherited a utility map that looked like spaghetti."

The government has paid \$82 million to clean up Lowry, which was not the only base to require extensive decontamination. More than 30 military facilities shut down since 1988 are on the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund list of the nation's worst toxic-waste sites, including McClellan.

The redevelopment authority spent \$550 million preparing the site for housing and commercial development, financed by bonds and bank loans. The project poured an estimated \$4 billion into the local economy. The authority eventually allowed 4,500 new homes, with land set aside for a town center, schools, office buildings and parks.

The value of any one home was not expected to exceed \$350,000, but several have sold for \$1 million, and one under construction is valued at \$2 million. Developers sold one block at a time to prevent the cookie-cutter feel of suburban sprawl.

The base's steam plant now holds luxury lofts. One aircraft hangar is an ice rink.

"You feel the history," said Amy Ford, who lives at Lowry with her husband and 2-year-old daughter. "It really has the feel of a base. It is a different Denver."

Congressional delegation says R.I. in good shape on base closings

Newsday (Long Island, NY)

Richard C. Lewis

July 5, 2005

CRANSTON, R.I. -- Rhode Island has fared well so far in the military base realignment process, but the state's congressional delegation said on Wednesday nothing is final, and the commission charged with deciding the bases' future nationwide could change its mind.

The state is scheduled to present its case on Rhode Island's military value in Boston on Thursday to members from the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, the panel that calls the shots on which military bases will close.

The Pentagon in May announced a plan to close 33 major facilities nationwide and reconfigure hundreds of others to achieve savings and promote cooperation among the armed services. In New England, three bases are targeted to be closed, including the Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton, Conn., which is closely linked with some Navy operations in Rhode Island.

Rhode Island stands to gain 531 net jobs at Naval Station Newport and at the Quonset State Airport Air Guard Station in the proposed realignment. State leaders attribute the gain to the Ocean State's strengths in military research and development and as an educational hub for the Navy.

"We've been fortunate," said Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Reed and Democratic Reps. Patrick Kennedy and James Langevin cautioned at a news conference that no final decisions have been made. The commission could act against the Pentagon's wishes in Rhode Island, though that appears unlikely, they said.

The delegation has been given 30 minutes to address the commission. Scheduled to speak are the state's four congressional representatives, along with Gov. Don Carcieri and Keith Stokes, executive director of the Newport County Chamber of Commerce. They will stress the military's importance to Rhode Island, which employs about 20,000 military and civilians, according to John Riendeau, defense industry manager at the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation.

Military facilities have an annual payroll of \$900 million, and the industry generates at least \$53 million in yearly tax revenue to the state, according to the EDC.

"We go to BRAC ... to say that Rhode Island plays a huge role in our nation's defense," Langevin said.

Speakers also will ask the commission to reverse Pentagon recommendations to shift two Naval offices out of the state. The proposed move of the Navy Warfare Development Command, located within the Naval War College in Newport, and the Maritime Information Systems office at the Naval Undersea Warfare Center would result in about 310 jobs lost, Riendeau said. Those potential losses have been included in the state's total 531 jobs' gain, according to Riendeau.

The lawmakers said they will ask the commission to keep the submarine base in Groton open, though they're unsure what impact its closing would have on Rhode Island. Reed estimated about 100 Rhode Islanders work at the Connecticut base, but didn't know how many businesses support operations there.

Area, state and military leaders work to keep Pope

While President George W. Bush was using soldiers and airmen as backdrops for his speech last week, local leaders on that same day were in Charlotte working to keep Pope Air Force Base as part of our community.

Up & Coming Weekly (Fayetteville, NC)

Jason Brody

July 06, 2005

As Fayetteville Mayor Marshall B. Pitts, Jr. later that day at a news conference with Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue said, "Pope Air Force Base has been a staple of this community since 1919 and plays a key relationship role with Fort Bragg. Joint preparedness and execution makes strategic sense in today's complex military operations." Charlotte, specifically the Queen City's Central Piedmont Community College, hosted the Base Closure and Realignment hearings where communities from North and South Carolina appealed not to lose its military neighbors.

Our speaking group consisted of retired generals William F. "Buck" Kernan, and Paul Dordal who provided the military perspective. Tony Chavonne gave the community's perspective. Gen. Kernan previously commanded Fort Bragg and the 18th Airborne Corp, and Gen. Dordal formerly commanded the 43rd Airlift Wing at Pope. Chavonne chairs the Leveraging the Military Task Force for the Cumberland County Business Council. The trio testified before poker-faced members of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission. Our folks told a good story, but the four commissioners looked as though they had heard it all before. To bring home the point of how important our military neighbors are, Mayors Pitts, Ed Deaver of Hope Mills and Ethel Clark of Spring Lake sat in the front row, right in front of the BRAC representatives.

Congressman Bob Etheridge, whose Harnett and Cumberland districts are affected by the potential loss of Pope Air Force Base, as it exists today, joined the three mayors.

About 165 folks from the Fayetteville community including about a dozen city employees boarded three chartered buses earlier that morning to make the three-hour trek to Charlotte to occupy the remaining seats in the crowded auditorium. Some had to stand. Eight television cameras on a raised platform in the rear of the room jostled for position throughout the proceeding. Their presence punctuated the public's interest in the proceedings.

According to the testimony by Kernan, the position of the Fayetteville community is this: We're all in favor of moving the U.S. Forces Command and the U.S. Army Reserve Command from Atlanta to Fort Bragg. After all, it would allow the FORSCOM commander to reach out and literally touch the joint Army and Air Force community here at Bragg and Pope where things constantly happen both on a tactical and strategic level. And, moving the Army headquarters responsible for providing trained soldiers to Fort Bragg where there are units that also train and equip both conventional and special operations soldiers also makes sense. But folks in Atlanta, where the two four-star headquarters are now based, don't see it that way and are making their own appeals to a BRAC board. Our community's position on moving Pope AFB and making it an army airfield visited by C-130s from a Pittsburgh-based reserve unit is different. That's a bad move.

Gen. Dordal made a convincing argument and tried to make the BRAC board members understand the significance of the 43rd Airlift Wing headquartered at Pope. Co-location made joint operations between the Army and Air Force successful, he said. The Pentagon made a major effort to get the services to better work together after Desert One, the ill-fated effort to rescue American hostages in Iran. It was a complicated mission and the services had little time to train together. The result was a ground collision between an airplane and helicopter, the needless loss of lives and failing to reach the hostages in Tehran.

The second test came during the rescue operation in Grenada. There, our military rescued the American medical students and

succeeded in attaining most if not all of the objectives. However, there was a price. We lost some of our soldiers to friendly fire as a result of incompatible communications equipment among the services. Since that time, however, the military has shown its ability to overcome those obstacles. The loss of Pope Air Force Base and its airlift wing, according to Dordal, results in the loss of a large portion of jointness in planning and execution that had led to over two decades of strategic crisis response success.

He also suggested that taking Pope doesn't necessarily track with BRAC selection and realignment criteria. For example, while the proposal to close Pope may be an efficiency move on the part of the Air Force, it doesn't mesh with the Pentagon's goal of honing our "joint war fighting" capabilities among its services. Furthermore, if the Army and Fort Bragg is increasing in size and mission requirements, it doesn't make sense to reduce the Air Force part of that capability; what the pros call "power projection capability."

It's not over yet, BRAC board members asked some tough questions and our side is going back to crunch the numbers and give the answers. I'm sure they're doing the same in Atlanta and Pittsburgh, places that would lose some of its military neighbors to Fayetteville. Mayor Pitts is optimistic. "Based on the questions asked by the (BRAC) commissioners, it gave me hope that there is room for positive movement on the part of the Base Realignment Commission."

Colorado Bases Offer Hope to Communities

The New York Times (New York, NY)
July 5, 2005

DENVER (AP) -- Big SUVs packed with children and loaded with groceries cruise where bombers once touched down at the former Lowry Air Force Base, not far from an aviation museum showcasing the site's military history.

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The report, citing Defense Department data, said nearly 72 percent of local civilian jobs lost because of base closings have been replaced.

"Don't spend all your money trying to prevent a base closure," said Harry Kelso, a Richmond, Va., consultant on base closures. "You should be preparing for the closure and gaining the expertise how to best use the property."

At California's McClellan Air Force Base, there were already 3,000 commercial jobs at the site on the day the base closed.

"The initial reaction of a community is woe with us, but there are a few visionaries out there who can see past the immediate problem," said retired Air Force Col. Keith Caudle, the base's last commander who now works on the site as the regional director of AmeriCorps.

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Some neighbors balked at development plans. The Air Force wanted \$38 million for land the city had donated for the base. At the time, Colorado was emerging from an early 1990s recession.

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Superfund list of the nation's worst toxic waste sites, including McClellan.

The redevelopment authority, meanwhile, spent \$550 million preparing the site for housing and commercial development, financed by bonds and bank loans. It is estimated the project poured \$4 billion into the local economy -- a billion more than Lowry would have over the same period.

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Connecticut officials to urge BRAC panel to keep Groton base open

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (New Haven, CT)
Matt Apuzzo
July 6, 2005

Faced with increasing pressure to save the Groton submarine base, Connecticut officials were ready to unleash harsh criticism of the Pentagon and the numbers it used in deciding to put the 137-year-old facility on its closure list.

Gov. M. Jodi Rell, members of the state's congressional delegation and military experts were to face the Base Closure and Realignment Commission in Boston Wednesday morning during a hearing that represented their best opportunity to convince federal officials to keep the base open.

Officials were expected to argue that the Pentagon underestimated the Groton base's military value and overestimated the cost savings of closing the base.

The size of the Navy's submarine fleet was also expected to be a key point. The Pentagon expects today's fleet of 54 subs to drop to 30 to 40, one of its reasons for recommending the closure of the Groton base and the Naval shipyard in Kittery, Maine.

But the Navy's top submarine commander testified last month that he did not sign off on a fleet that size and warned that such a reduction would put the nation at risk.

U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, a Republican whose eastern Connecticut district includes Groton, said the uncertainty of the future size of the submarine fleet makes closing the base illogical.

The Pentagon's four-year review of the nation's military strategy, called the Quadrennial Defense Review, could be the final word on the subject and is expected to be released late this year.

And while Connecticut officials plan to argue a number of issues they hope will permanently bump Groton off the closure list, Simmons suggested they also will argue that Groton should at least be given a temporary reprieve until the QDR is released and the sub fleet size is resolved.

"Reasonable people might think that's a reasonable argument to make," Simmons said.

Rich Harris, a spokesman for Rell, said the first priority is persuading the nine commissioners on the base closure panel to permanently remove Groton from the list.

Rell was to deliver the opening remarks Wednesday followed by retired Vice Adm. Albert H. Konetzni Jr., former commander of the Pacific submarine force. George Sawyer, former Assistant Secretary of the Navy under President Reagan, also is scheduled to speak.

The state prepared a broad assault on the Pentagon's analysis. They were to argue that the environmental cleanup costs have been underestimated and that irreplaceable synergy exists between the Navy and Groton-based Electric Boat.

"Every way we look at the Defense Department proposals, they fail to stack up: from a military value standpoint, from an economic impact standpoint, and from a cost savings standpoint," Rell said.

The Base Closure and Realignment Commission must present its final base closure recommendations to President Bush by Sept. 8.

The Pentagon has proposed closing four military bases in the state, shedding about 8,600 jobs.

**Valley braces itself for additional soldiers;
Towns excited, concerned by growth demands**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (Smith Station, AL)
Jerry F. Rutledge
July 6, 2005

Smiths Station Mayor LaFaye Dellinger has attended six briefings on the impact on the local community of Fort Benning's gains in the Base Realignment and Closure process.

At the end of every one, her reaction has been the same -- excited about the prospect of Benning's growth but challenged by the work that needs to be done for her town and other communities in the valley to be ready for it.

Dellinger and a large group of Smiths Station and Lee County citizens and officials Tuesday night listened to Biff Hadden, vice president for economic development with the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce, make a presentation on how their community will benefit and be challenged by the projected gains.

"Every time it gets bigger and bigger," Dellinger said of the impact. "We've been growing. The growth had leveled off a little bit, but now its about to start again."

The Pentagon has recommended Fort Benning receive the Armor School from Fort Knox, Ky., and other missions when the BRAC process is complete. Hadden, a retired Army colonel, told the Smiths Station group that their community can expect to receive a significant number of the 7,500 single family households over four years such a change will bring to the area, requiring new houses and apartments.

"And that is a conservative requirement," Hadden said. "Muscookee County once told me they can handle all the growth we want to bring them. They have 3,900 single family lots zoned and ready to build -- only 2,500 of those match the price point. What the soldiers can afford and what we're building is not necessarily the same. Keeping that in mind is very important. Phenix City has 1,200 lots ready to build. You take 2,500 and three-fourths of those in Phenix City, you have something around 3,200 to 3,500. I need 7,500."

The rest of the housing will have to come from areas outside the region's two largest cities -- Lee, Russell, Chattahoochee and Barbour counties. Smiths Station, which already is host to a large number of military residents, can expect to get more, perhaps many more, Hadden said. "They are coming -- the challenge for us is to be ready for them," he said.

Schools, water and sewer and fire protection are the three areas that will be most challenged by the growth.

Smiths Station's schools from primary grades to high school -- already are crowded. Construction will begin soon on 12 classrooms, an activity room and a weight room for physical education and athletics at the high school. The projected residential growth will make expansion at the other schools necessary.

Hadden met with members of the Smiths Water and Sewer Authority recently to discuss the

authority's plans to expand its water and sewer capabilities in area of likely growth in the Smiths Station community. He said he will take the Smiths Station information with other data from Russell and Chattahoochee counties to Montgomery to seek grants to help fund expansion.

The residential growth also will make expansion of the Friendship Volunteer Fire Department important. "Your volunteer fire department may grow into a full-time fire department," Hadden said.

Pascagoula base supporters preparing for BRAC hearing

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Pascagoula, MS)
July 5, 2005

Jackson County officials are preparing Naval Station Pascagoula's presentation for the July 12 Base Realignment and Closure Commission regional hearing in New Orleans.

The Department of Defense proposes to close Naval Station Pascagoula and the Naval Support Facility, which houses crews of ships being built at Northrop Grumman Ship Systems.

The regional hearing is another part of the BRAC process that gives local and state officials the opportunity to present information to commissioners in support of keeping the Navy base.

Singing River Diversification Committee Chairman Den Knecht said Mississippi, which has four facilities scheduled for closing, may be the first state up on July 12.

"We are planning to have in the neighborhood of 20 to 25 minutes," Knecht said. The group will give a presentation similar to one made when BRAC officials toured the base, Knecht said.

The committee's program emphasizes the base's strategic importance to security because of its location near the Gulf of Mexico.

The commissioner panel for the New Orleans hearing includes BRAC Commissioner Harold W. Gehman Jr., a retired Navy admiral, who toured the naval station on June 16; retired U.S. Air Force Gen. Lloyd Newton, a Vietnam veteran and former commander of the Air Force Air Education and Training Command at Randolph Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas; and James Hansen, a former U.S. representative from Utah.

The regional hearing will cover Louisiana, Mississippi and Florida. Officials from each state will have two hours to present their case for keeping or realigning their threatened bases.

Knecht said local officials haven't decided who will make the presentation for the county.

"What we've been working on is an extension and a more thorough documentation of the information we put together earlier," Knecht said.

Bases, politicians face critical hearing Wednesday

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Concord, NH)
Tim McCahill
July 5, 2005

Months of preparation will be put to the test Wednesday as officials from Maine and New Hampshire make their case in Boston for three of the region's military installations that the Department of Defense has recommended closing or realigning.

"It's obviously going to be a huge day," Sen. Judd Gregg, R-N.H., said of the hearing before the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, the independent panel that is reviewing the Pentagon's hit list.

Gregg is scheduled to give opening and closing remarks in the portion of the hearing devoted to Portsmouth, the nation's oldest federal shipyard. The Defense Department has proposed closing the shipyard, which employs over 4,000 civilian

workers from Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

Maine's congressional delegation and governor are scheduled to speak during the day in support of the shipyard, the Brunswick Naval Air Station and the Defense Finance Accounting Service center in Limestone. New Hampshire's two U.S. senators and U.S. Rep. Jeb Bradley, along with retired admirals and a community representative, will speak on behalf of New Hampshire for the shipyard.

The presentation will highlight Portsmouth's military importance and how much money is saved by doing work at the shipyard, Gregg said.

"Without the Navy yard the Navy can't keep the submarines it needs in the water," he said. "It can't overhaul them, because there isn't enough dry dock capability. As a result, they simply can't maintain the fleet."

The Defense Finance Accounting Service center is one of 23 around the country the Pentagon wants to close, as part of a plan to consolidate its civilian payroll operations at three locations.

The Brunswick Naval Air Station would remain open, but all of its P-3 Orion patrol aircraft and C-130 Hercules transports, along with half of its military personnel, would be transferred to Florida.

Meanwhile, a shipyard lobbying group has rented a fleet of buses to take supporters to Boston from Portsmouth and Kittery, Maine. The Save Our Shipyard Association hopes to attract thousands of people to the hearing.

Other buses are scheduled to take supporters from Topsham, Maine, to the hearing in support of the Brunswick Naval Air Station.

Uncertain size of sub fleet contributes to fate of Groton base

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (New Haven, CT)
Matt Apuzzo
July 5, 2005

With the future size of the Navy's submarine fleet uncertain, Connecticut officials plan to argue Wednesday that closing Groton's submarine base makes no sense, U.S. Rep. Rob. Simmons said.

Simmons, who was among a team of Connecticut officials heading to Boston on Tuesday to prepare for a crucial hearing before the Base Closure and Realignment Commission, said the size of the nation's sub fleet will be key to determining how many submarine bases are needed.

There are 54 subs in today's fleet. The Pentagon expects that to drop to 30-40 submarines and has recommended closing the Groton base and the Naval shipyard in Kittery, Maine.

But the Navy's top submarine commander testified last month that he did not sign off on a fleet that size and warned that such a reduction would put the nation at risk.

The Pentagon's four-year review of the nation's military strategy, called the Quadrennial Defense Review, could be the final word on the subject and is expected to be released late this year. By then, however, Groton's fate likely will be sealed.

Simmons, a Republican whose district includes Groton, said closing the facility based on uncertain projections of the fleet's size would amount to the BRAC commission writing military policy.

And while Connecticut officials plan to argue a number of issues they hope will permanently bump Groton off the closure list, Simmons suggested they also will argue that Groton should at least be given a temporary reprieve until the QDR is released and the sub fleet size is resolved.

"Reasonable people might think that's a reasonable argument to make," Simmons said.

The size of the sub fleet will be a factor at Wednesday's hearing, said Rich Harris, a

spokesman for Gov. M. Jodi Rell. He said the first priority, however, is to persuade the nine commissioners to remove Groton from the list permanently.

To do so, Connecticut's delegation plans to argue Wednesday that the Pentagon underestimated Groton's military value and overestimated the amount of money saved by closing the base.

Rell will deliver the opening remarks Wednesday followed by retired Vice Adm. Albert H. Konetzni Jr., former commander of the Pacific submarine force. George Sawyer, former Assistant Secretary of the Navy under President Reagan, also is scheduled to speak.

The state is preparing a broad assault on the Pentagon's analysis. They'll argue that the environmental cleanup costs have been underestimated and that irreplaceable synergy exists between the Navy and Groton-based Electric Boat.

"Every way we look at the Defense Department proposals, they fail to stack up: from a military value standpoint, from an economic impact standpoint, and from a cost savings standpoint," Rell said.

Officials go on the offensive to save bases; State's senators, governor preparing to address panel in Washington

Centre Daily Times (State College, PA)
Kimberly Hefling
July 5, 2005

WASHINGTON -- An all-star lineup of Pennsylvania politicians will fight Thursday to retain the state's military bases before a commission charged with advising Congress and President Bush on which ones should close.

The Pentagon recommended in May that the Willow Grove Naval Air Station outside Philadelphia and the Pittsburgh International Airport Air Reserve Station close. About 1,600 jobs are at stake.

In the four previous base closure rounds, only 10 percent to 15 percent of bases on the closure lists were able to get off.

"It's not an easy thing to do. It's a very high bar. We've got a lot of work ahead of us," said Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa., who will speak along with fellow Republican Sen. Arlen Specter, Gov. Ed Rendell, a Democrat, and others.

The hearing in Washington is one of the state's last opportunities to defend the bases' "military value" before the nine-member Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

The commission must report its decisions to President Bush by Sept. 8. The decisions become law 45 days later unless Congress enacts a joint resolution rejecting them; it can reject them in whole but not in part.

The Pittsburgh base is home to the Air Force's 911th Tactical Airlift Group, which employs 322 people. Its mission is to recruit and train Air Force personnel and provide airlift of airborne forces and equipment.

The Pentagon justified the recommended closing of the base by saying land constraints prevent it from housing more than 10 C-130 aircraft. Rep. Tim Murphy, R-Upper St. Clair, said he will argue the county is willing to make 53 acres available that can store 16 C-130s.

"If they correct those errors in scoring, the 911th actually scores much higher than the ones remaining open," Murphy said. "It's a real snafu."

Willow Grove is home to the 913th Airlift Wing, which trains and equips reservists. Air logistic support for active and reserve Navy units is also provided there.

Santorum said for Willow Grove a case will be made that it is an unauthorized approach to decommission a Guard unit there without the approval of the governor.

On Friday, Anthony Principi, chairman of the base closure commission, asked in a letter to

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld if adjutant generals and governors of states had been consulted in the reallocation of Guard units.

Principi is scheduled to visit Willow Grove today.

Like in Pittsburgh, Santorum said an argument will also be made that a thorough assessment was not done on the base's ability to expand.

Reps. Curt Weldon, Bill Shuster, Paul Kanjorski, Don Sherwood and Allyson Schwartz are among the other Pennsylvania politicians also expected to speak, along with military leaders and community personnel.

Even though the Pentagon recommended that Tobyhanna and Letterkenny Army depots together receive a net of almost 700 new jobs, there will also be arguments presented at Thursday's hearing on behalf of the two depots.

That's because the Pentagon recommended jobs from the Red River Army Depot in Texas be moved to the two Pennsylvania depots, and Texas officials are fighting the move, Santorum said.

"We have to make the counter offer because no one else is going to," Santorum said.

This is the first base closure round in a decade. In the four previous, the state lost more than 3,000 military positions and more than 13,000 civilian jobs. The most damaging was the loss a decade ago of the Philadelphia Navy Yard, the closing of which Specter fought before the U.S. Supreme Court.

In all, the Pentagon recommended the closure of 13 bases in Pennsylvania and the downsizing of five.

For an installation to be added to the recommended closure list, seven out of the nine base closure commissioners must vote for the addition.

When you take one base off the list, "it has a whole range of impacts for other decisions

they've made," said Tim Ford, executive director of the Association of Defense Communities.

Ford said there is not one factor that has contributed to bases staying open after they are recommended for closure because each base round and each base is different.

Top BRAC official tours Willow Grove air base

Philadelphia Inquirer (Philadelphia, PA)
Marc Schogol
July 5, 2005

After a tour of Willow Grove air base this morning, the head of the commission reviewing proposed base closings said that the Pentagon had not emphasized the full range of activities that take place at the Montgomery County installation.

Base Realignment and Closure Commission chair Anthony Principi said that he "learned a great deal" from touring the Naval Air Station and Joint Reserve Base and considered what he had seen and heard from base commanders "very helpful."

Principi, whose commission is reviewing the Pentagon's nationwide base-closing recommendations, indicated that the Pentagon information on Willow Grove didn't fully emphasize its "jointness" - the fact that it has units from each branch of the military.

Willow Grove is one of only three such military bases nationwide. One of the goals of the military base reorganization effort is to achieve jointness, Principi said.

"If you're trying to achieve jointness, what value does it make to close a Willow Grove?" he said.

Principi also said the commission has questioned the Pentagon about its decisions regarding Air National Guard units. One of the key units at Willow Grove is the Air Guard's 111th Fighter Wing, whose members have been deployed for tours of duty in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait since 9/11.

While about 150 supporters of the base rallied outside the Manor House in Horsham, where the post-tour news conference was held, Gov. Rendell and Sens. Arlen Specter and Rick Santorum and other lawmakers who'd accompanied Principi said they thought yesterday's tour had been a success.

"I don't want to raise false expectations," Specter told the crowd, "but we're putting on a hell of a fight and we're not conceding anything"

Santorum said: "I'm not suggesting this is a slam dunk, but I'm confident the chairman got the message and got it clearly."

A state delegation including Rendell, Specter and Santorum will formally present its case against closing Willow Grove and other state military facilities before the full BRAC commission tomorrow in Washington.

"I think there's reason for guarded optimism," Rendell said.

Lawmakers insist they did their best

Norwich Bulletin (Norwich, CT)

Katherine Hutt Scott

July 6, 2005

WASHINGTON-- Congressional lawmakers representing southeastern Connecticut have pleaded the case for the Groton submarine base in dozens of meetings, letters and phone calls.

Despite their lobbying, the Pentagon recommended in May that the base be closed and its 18 fast-attack submarines and their sailors be sent to bases in Virginia and Georgia.

U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, and Democratic Sens. Christopher Dodd and Joseph Lieberman said they couldn't think of anything they didn't do.

"We worked our tails off," Simmons said.

Military experts agree the lawmakers have earned their pay.

The problem, the experts said, is the process of closing military bases is not simply political. By law, it's based on a Pentagon analysis of which bases are most important to ensure the country's continued national security.

"(The lawmakers) can't change the facts," said John Pike of GlobalSecurity.org, a defense analysis firm. "There is an underlying factual analysis that forms a significant component of the (base-closure) process."

John Markowicz, chairman of a southeastern Connecticut group that is trying to save the sub base, said national politics played a back-seat role to the cost of acquiring new ships and submarines and the cost-savings associated with closing bases.

An independent Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission will examine the Pentagon's list of recommended base closings and come up with a final list by Sept. 8.

Retired Air Force Gen. James B. Davis, who served on the BRAC Commission that participated in the 1995 round of base closings, said the Connecticut lawmakers' lobbying probably made Pentagon officials look closely at their submarine-base calculations to ensure they were correct.

The calls, letters and meetings will have the same effect on the BRAC commissioners who will examine the Pentagon's recommendations, Davis said.

"When you're on the commission, you feel the pressure, even though you're not beholden to (the lawmakers)," Davis said.

He and Pike say the only way to get a base removed from the list of recommended closures is to prove to the BRAC commissioners the Pentagon made a factual error.

Congressional efforts to save the Groton base date back to last year, Markowicz said. On Sept. 29, for example, Dodd hosted a meeting of Connecticut's congressional lawmakers and their

staffs to discuss how to spread the word about the synergy between the base and a nearby submarine manufacturer, the Groton shipyard of General Dynamics' Electric Boat Division.

Simmons, Dodd and Lieberman compiled detailed lists of the efforts they have made in the intervening months. Simmons said he attended at least 11 BRAC-related meetings and Dodd and Lieberman each attended at least nine meetings. Simmons wrote at least 11 letters, Dodd at least 12 and Lieberman at least nine.

The lawmakers also have assigned many of their staff members to work on the issue.

"Nearly the entire staff has been involved," Dodd spokeswoman Stacie Paxton said. "This is the top priority for the office."

Five BRAC Members To Hear Pitch For Sub Base

Commission receiving many comments on facility's value
New London Day (New London, CT)
Robert A. Hamilton
July 6, 2005

Five of the nine members of the U.S. Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission will participate in a hearing today in Boston at which a Connecticut delegation will try to persuade them to remove the Naval Submarine Base in Groton from the Pentagon's base closure list.

On the eve of the hearing, the commission was dealing with a growing list of comments submitted electronically. It received more than 15 on Tuesday alone, bringing the total mentioning the base to more than 100 from people who believe the Pentagon erred in proposing to shut down the base.

One man who identified himself as a Marine serving in Iraq, Eric Emerich, said the commission should not discount the effect the base's closure might have on the undersea service.

"We fight for many reasons, not the least of which is esprit de corps and those who come before us," Emerich wrote. "The Groton base is a big part of that to the submarine service. Do not take that away without very good reason; that very good reason has simply not been shown."

"I implore you to keep the Submarine Base New London open," wrote Lt. Cmdr. John A. Loiselle Jr., an active duty Navy officer serving overseas. "It represents the U.S. Navy and the entire Armed Forces in New England and serves as a beacon of hope and honor for veterans and citizens alike."

The hearing is to begin at 8:30 a.m. at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center Ballroom and is expected to last until late afternoon or early evening as the commissioners hear from delegations representing all six New England states.

Connecticut will have two hours to present its case in favor of the submarine base and the Air National Guard's 103rd Fighter Wing in East Granby, which the Pentagon also has recommended for closure.

Commission Chairman Anthony J. Principi will be joined by Lloyd Newton of Connecticut, James Bilbray of Nevada, Sue Ellen Turner of Texas and Samuel Skinner of Illinois.

Four commissioners were expected at the hearing, but Skinner has since been added to the lineup, which is considered good news for the officials making the presentation.

Gov. M. Jodi Rell, members of the state's congressional delegation and the Subbase Realignment Coalition have been working to reach as many members of the commission as possible with their arguments for keeping the Groton base open.

Most of the 18 hearings the commission has conducted or scheduled have been attended by just four commissioners, though three took part in hearings in North Dakota, South Dakota and

Missouri. Five attended a hearing in Georgia and six were at a hearing in New Mexico last month.

Skinner, in particular, is seen as key to the effort to get at least five members of the commission to vote against closing Groton.

One other member of the commission, Phillip Coyle, toured the submarine base May 31 and attended a June 1 presentation by save-the-base forces at the Submarine Force Library and Museum.

That means six of the eight members who will vote on the matter will have heard first-hand some of the arguments for maintaining the Groton base. One member, Harold Gehman Jr., has recused himself from the Groton issue because his home state of Virginia would benefit if the Groton base is closed.

The two members who will vote on the Groton recommendation without having visited the base or heard the arguments directly are James T. Hill of Florida and James Hansen of Utah.

The commission has received dozens of official missives protesting the closure of the base, and there is a growing number of people — from around Connecticut and the country — who have voiced disapproval via the electronic comment process on the commission's Web site, www.brac.gov.

Most of the submissions centered on the jobs that would be lost — the Pentagon estimates it would cost about 8,500 jobs directly, though the state predicts the toll could be as high as 30,000. Many also focused on the strategic value of the base, the synergy between the base and the Electric Boat shipyard and the fact that the closure would eliminate one of the few remaining military installations in the Northeast.

“There is a close relationship between (EB) and the submarine base and ... such a relationship between the private sector and the Navy is the exception rather than the rule for most of the military bases,” wrote one person who did not leave a name. “If the submarine base is closed, a unique relationship between the submarine

shipyard and the submarine base will be lost and is not going to be easily duplicated.”

Another railed about government waste: “There is absolutely something wrong with this picture, when the government spends my tax dollars on the base building a brand new dental clinic, new technical specialty school buildings, new barracks building, brand new off-base housing, two new front gates, and a brand new expensive security gate enclosure within the last few years, and NOW the Pentagon wants to close the facility down. That is absolute craziness.”

Brian R. Colfack of Austin, Texas, a retired Navy lieutenant commander, warned the commission that if it agrees with the Pentagon recommendation, “you will be erasing the cornerstone of all sub history in America.”

“And,” Colfack added, “the economics of such a closure have not yet been proven to save the Defense Department any real savings. Please reconsider this unwise decision.”

Opinions/ Editorials

**Base closings not always bad
Communities can thrive when they plan**
Philadelphia Daily News (Philadelphia, PA)
William Bunch
July 6, 2005

When Paul Tauer was the mayor of Aurora, Colo., a fast-growing suburb north of Denver, the Defense Department announced plans in 1991 to close the Lowry Air Force Base there — and Tauer and other local officials fought like hell to stop it.

They lost, but that didn't prevent Tauer from battling the military yet again just four years later, when it said it would shutter Aurora's Fitzsimons Army Medical Center as well.

And today? The Fitzsimons site, which once employed 4,000 people, is now home to the University of Colorado Medical Center and the anchor for a bio-tech park that are eventually expected to provide 30,000 direct jobs. The

Lowry location is a thriving oasis of shops, park space, and 3,200 new homes.

And Tauer is working as a consultant, helping other communities that are facing the closure of large military bases.

Suburban Willow Grove now finds itself in the same position that Aurora was more than a decade ago. Yesterday, Pennsylvania's three most powerful political figures - Gov. Rendell and Sens. Arlen Specter and Rick Santorum - spent the morning at the Willow Grove air base, seeking to keep it open.

While the chairman of the federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission toured the inside, some 150 residents rallied outside, urging the Base Closing and Realignment Commission to save some 1,200 military and civilian jobs there.

But experts say that if officials in the Montgomery County suburb can follow the example of similar bases that closed in the heart of thriving metropolitan areas, then Willow Grove may end up like Aurora has - with thousands more jobs than it had.

Many say the potential for the Willow Grove site - with 1,100 mostly open acres near the Pennsylvania Turnpike - outweighs the immediate short-term job pain. What's important, they add, is that local officials start planning for the future now, agree on the best use for the site and work to limit squabbling over political jurisdictions.

"In the short term, it is never a great thing to lose jobs and an economic engine," said Tim Ford, the executive director of NAID, an Association of Defense Communities. "But what communities have been able to show is that in the long term it's not so bad."

What's important, Ford said, is that communities start planning for new economic development even at the same time that political leaders are fighting the closure, as is happening now with Willow Grove. That's what Tauer said that

Aurora did with Fitzsimons, after it lost the earlier fight over Lowry.

The results can be dramatic, as New Hampshire learned when the former Pease Air Force Base in the state's booming southern corridor, closed in 1991, was converted to an office park that includes a Redhook brewery.

Experts note that more isolated communities in the Midwest or West have not always found it easy to attract industrial users and jobs. But urban bases have become a magnet for mixed-used developments with new homes, shops and offices.

In Tustin, Calif., an area of Orange County where land and affordable housing are at a premium, officials actually supported the closing of the Tustin Marine Air Force Base in the early 1990s.

Christine Shingleton, the assistant city manager of Tustin, said residents weren't sorry to lose the noisy helicopter overflights, either. While the base did contribute an estimated \$62 million to local payrolls, that number will be dwarfed as officials work toward their goal of 24,000 jobs.

Jill Farnham, the acting executive director of the Fitzsimons Redevelopment Authority in Aurora, noted that not only is the former Army hospital producing thousands of new jobs, but they are mostly highly paid medical and technical posts.

Those familiar with the base-closing process say the bigger question for Willow Grove is not whether it will close, but when. The military can take as long as 11 years to turn over a property, deferring any economic benefits.

Additional Notes