

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



BIRD

July 10, 2005

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Lawmakers Protest Plan to Cut Military Jobs in Capital Area

New York Times (New York, NY)

John Files

July 10, 2005

WASHINGTON, July 9 - The Pentagon's plan to eliminate more than 30,000 jobs in Washington and nearby Arlington, Va., part of its proposal to close dozens of military installations and bases around the country, would have a severe impact

on the economy and intellectual resources of the region, lawmakers told military officials this week.

About 23,000 jobs would be lost in Arlington as part of a Department of Defense effort to move thousands of military and civilian workers out of leased commercial high-rise buildings near the Pentagon in northern Virginia - abandoning more than four million square feet of office space - to more-secure locations. Thousands of the jobs would shift to military bases farther away from Washington, in Virginia and Maryland.

Washington is scheduled to lose more than 6,000 jobs, about 5,600 of them if the 96-year-old Walter Reed Army Medical Center, where hundreds of thousands of American soldiers and several presidents have been treated, is closed.

As a result, Bethesda, Md., another Washington suburb, is expected to gain nearly 2,000 jobs, many of them coming from Walter Reed. The Pentagon's plan calls for closing the hospital and building a national military medical center on the campus of the naval medical center there at a cost of \$1 billion.

Local officials and lawmakers from Virginia and Washington challenged the plan on Thursday at a hearing on Capitol Hill before the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, the independent panel that is assessing the Pentagon's proposed list of domestic base closings.

Senator John W. Warner, Republican of Virginia and the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, said the Pentagon's proposal for moving jobs out of Northern Virginia might not be legal.

"The goal to vacate leased office space was the guiding principle for many of these recommendations - not military value, cost savings or any other legislated criteria," Mr. Warner said. "This is not permitted by law."

When the commission announced its schedule of public hearings in May, it did not plan one for

Washington. But pressure from lawmakers here and in Virginia persuaded the panel's chairman, Anthony J. Principi, a former secretary of veterans affairs, to allow them to present their reasons for altering the base-closing plan.

After the hearing, Mr. Principi said the panel would review the arguments made by the officials and a 36-page report prepared by Mr. Warner's staff.

The Pentagon's proposal calls for closing nearly 180 installations and offices, including 33 big bases, in the first major restructuring of the nation's military network in a decade. It is part of a broad effort to revamp the armed services into a leaner, more agile force.

For the Washington area, the plan would mean a net loss of about 10,000 jobs in a region that employs nearly three million workers. But the changes reflect the precarious give-and-take that will occur around Washington if the commission approves the Pentagon's proposal.

"There are unique and critical military research capabilities in Northern Virginia that will be impaired by the proposal," Gov. Mark Warner of Virginia said, citing intelligence and research entities like the Missile Defense Agency, the Defense Information Systems Agency, the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency as examples.

Representative James P. Moran, Democrat of Virginia, whose district includes Arlington, said the plan would cause a "brain drain" in the region, with a loss of scientists, engineers and computer specialists that would be counterproductive for the military.

"These decisions are supposed to be based on an effort to improve the mission, effectiveness and overall efficiency of the military," Mr. Moran said. "The Pentagon's proposal does not do this. In particular, it makes communication and collaboration more difficult."

Eleanor Holmes Norton, Washington's nonvoting delegate to the House, said the

Pentagon's proposal would "rejuggle the region and turn it upside down." The effects on the city, she said, would be particularly harsh.

"A city without a state cannot simply absorb the loss of military, civilian and contractor jobs," Ms. Norton said. "States can assist its jurisdictions when they suffer losses, but the District of Columbia is an orphan here.

"We have two industries here - government and its military partners and tourism," she added. "We are losing a big chunk of the government and our economy if Walter Reed closes. We must do all we can to turn this proposal back."

As hearing nears, Fort Smith prepares to preserve 188th Wing

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (Little Rock, AR)

Caryn Rousseau

July 9, 2005

Anger and frustration temper Lori Greer's voice when she talks about her family's situation.

She's expecting her first child in September and her husband, Tech Sgt. Jay Greer, is deployed to Iraq. But the Lavaca couple's future in Arkansas is uncertain.

Greer is one of 670 of 980 workers who may lose their jobs at Fort Smith's 188th Fighter Wing under proposed Department of Defense cuts.

"You're asking someone to risk their life in a very dangerous situation," Lori Greer said. "And at the same, you're saying your service really might not mean that much to us because we're considering closing your base and doing away with your position. It's horrible timing."

The 188th flies F-16 fighter jets and stands to lose them all. Seven would go to a base in Fresno, Calif., and eight would be retired. The 188th is scheduled to fight the cuts at a hearing Monday in San Antonio before the Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

Commission Chairman Anthony Principi is to visit the 188th in Fort Smith that afternoon.

Lori Greer says she's frustrated and confused. Before her husband left three weeks ago he was trying to decide if he should job hunt. He's not due back for another six to eight weeks.

"It was very hard to see someone who has given so much of himself to the military and yet he's thinking, 'I'm about to have a son. I have all these responsibilities. How will I take care of my family?'" she said. "We were very secure in his job situation. He's been in the military for 15 years. He has made this his career."

When word of the proposed cuts came down in May, Fort Smith officials jumped to action. They hired a marketing firm and formed a local task force. Now they're prepared with a 30-minute presentation that they will give Monday.

Fort Smith City Manager Bill Harding said they've run through it dozens of times.

"My gut feeling right now is 50-50, which is better than I had before," he said. "In reality, we're probably looking at a job loss higher than 650."

Bus loads of residents were scheduled to caravan to San Antonio and members of Arkansas' congressional delegation will testify. The statistic that spurs worry: The base has a \$52 million economic impact on Fort Smith each year.

Rep. John Boozman, R-Ark., whose district includes Northwest Arkansas, plans to testify in San Antonio about growth in the Fort Smith area. Boozman said he will argue to keep the 188th jets rather than move the aircraft to larger bases in San Diego or San Francisco, where affordable housing is unavailable and the cost of living is higher.

"The good thing with this thing is that we truly have a great story to tell," Boozman said.

The congressman, who has been on NATO visits to bases in Europe, said the Fort Smith base can

compete worldwide and the Arkansas group has a good chance of convincing the commission. If not, the next step would be to find another mission for the base, he said, since the military does not plan to close it.

"I think what we're trying to do is fight one battle at a time. We feel like the best place for those planes is in Fort Smith, Arkansas, versus someplace else," Boozman said.

Maj. John Weisenfels, spokesman for the 188th, said Principi's visit was a good sign. He said the local taskforce is sorting through the data that BRAC provided outlining why the 188th should be cut. If loopholes or inaccuracies can be found that's good, he said.

"We're crunching the numbers and seeing how we stand," he said. "Did we get a fair shake?"

All this effort is a ray of hope for Greer, who says she always envisioned life in Arkansas near her family.

"We're just hoping the 188th will be given some mission, whether we keep the F-16s or given another aircraft," she said. "We just want to stay here."

Texarkana fights to keep two military installations open

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Texarkana, TX)
Angela K. Brown
July 9, 2005

Every day, the war in Iraq comes home to the Red River Defense Complex.

Truckloads of charred Bradley Fighting Vehicles or bullet-ridden Humvees with shattered windshields arrive for repairs. Tank tracks damaged by the scorching desert sand get new rubber parts. Idle Hawk and Patriot missiles are refurbished.

Workers at this 18,000-acre site along the Texas-Arkansas border - many of them third-generation employees - are reminded of their

crucial mission through signs dotting the complex: "Build it as if your life depends on it. Theirs do!"

"We have always had a sense of pride because we're helping our troops," said Sharon Wilson, who has worked at the Red River Army Depot about 23 years and worked at the Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant next door for 17 years before that.

But the community may lose both the depot and plant under a Defense Department plan to close 180 military installations nationwide to save billions and make the military more mobile. Base Realignment and Closure Commission members, appointed to do their own research and make their own recommendations to President Bush by Sept. 8, will meet Monday in San Antonio to discuss Texas bases on the list.

More than 2,600 civilians and 600 contractors work at the depot, part of the complex that has 1,200 additional workers, making it the largest employer in the Texarkana area. About 440 people work at the ammunition plant, where employees make thousands of hand grenades and fuses for artillery shells.

When two BRAC members visited Texarkana last month, about 10,000 people showed up to support both facilities. They lined some of the 20-mile route from the airport to the depot entrance, cheering as the members' convoy passed.

Many wore yellow T-shirts that said "It Still Ain't Over." One man held a sign that read "Texarkana will be reduced to a ghost town."

Local officials say the closures would devastate the twin cities of Texarkana - which has about 35,000 residents in Texas and about 26,000 residents in Arkansas. Defense employees would be forced to take lower-paying jobs or retire early, and some might not be able to find work at all.

"These folks are here and they've been here for generations, so they're not going to pick up and move," said Jerry Sparks, a business retention

specialist with the Texarkana Chamber of Commerce, which serves the Texas and Arkansas cities.

Local officials also say the Defense Department miscalculated the job losses by listing employment as 2,500 at the depot and only 150 at the ammunition plant. They say several other defense-related companies in the Red River Defense Complex are also on the closure list, resulting in 4,500 lost jobs - plus another 7,000 in support jobs.

"That's part of their plan: to wipe the slate clean of everyone out there," said Horace G. Shipp, mayor of Texarkana, Ark., who worked at the depot for about 35 years. "We've got to convince the nine members of BRAC that there was a mistake made when we were put on the list."

The depot opened in 1941 as a place to store ammunition, but the workload expanded to include vehicle repair and supply storage as World War II intensified.

The depot was targeted for closure in 1995 but survived, although it lost about 600 jobs. It also gave up 765 acres of land and more than 100 buildings to Bowie County, which leased some back to the complex as part of redevelopment efforts.

The closure scare prompted the depot to become more efficient, and in the past 10 years it has made changes such as working in assembly lines instead of bays, employees said.

In a recent report, the Government Accountability Office questioned the Defense Department's plan to move the depot's work to other bases in five states. The investigative arm of Congress said BRAC should consider whether the depot's work could be duplicated elsewhere.

Locals have been saying the same thing, citing the depot's unique capabilities - including the storage of about 174,000 tons of ammunition worth more than \$5 billion. Also, the rubber plant is the only Defense Department facility

that makes tracks and wheels for military tanks, depot officials said.

Since the war with Iraq started more than two years ago, more employees have been hired to work additional shifts. Besides rebuilding and repairing vehicles, workers make reinforced doors and bulletproof windshields, which are put in kits sent to Iraq for outfitting Humvees.

"We will continue to put out the best product of any depots," said Wilson, the longtime depot employee whose father and grandfather worked there. "We're alive and well, and we will prevail."

Patton Museum's future at Fort Knox remains uncertain

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (Fort Knox, KY)
July 9, 2005

Army and local officials say the future of the Patton Museum of Calvary and Armor remains undecided, despite reports that suggest the facility is moving to an Army base in Georgia.

The Army announced in May that it was moving the Armor Center from Fort Knox to Fort Benning, Ga., as part of the military's Base Realignment and Closure recommendations. Col. Keith Armstrong, Fort Knox's garrison commander, said at the time that he did not know if the Patton Museum would also be moved.

A report in the Opelika-Auburn News of Opelika, Ala., earlier this week said officials estimate the Patton Museum would attract 300,000 visitors a year to the Fort Benning area. But the article did not confirm that a move was apparent.

Frank Jardim, the Patton Museum's director, said no decision on a move would be made until the base realignment recommendations are put into law in November. But, he said, the museum is preparing for a possible relocation.

"One way or the other, we've got to prepare for what's going on," Jardim said.

He said the museum has hired a consultant to look at possible locations in Georgia.

But officials are also moving forward with plans for the museum's \$35 million expansion, said Don Williams, vice chairman of the Patton Museum Foundation.

Local officials agreed that it was too early to know if the museum would move, since it was not mentioned in base realignment recommendations.

"The suggestion is very premature and it's unfounded," said Radcliff Mayor Sheila Enyart.

Retired Maj. Gen. Bill Barron, executive director of the Fort Knox chapter of the Association of the United States Army CORE Committee, said comments about the move are speculative.

"There are many, many people here who are very interested in keeping the museum here," Barron said.

The museum is Hardin County's top tourist attraction, and one of the top 20 attractions in the state, said Kelly Barron, executive director of the Radcliff-Fort Knox Tourism Commission.

About 120,000 to 200,000 people visit the museum each year, officials said.

"It makes sense to keep it here on Fort Knox and in Kentucky," Barron said.

Jardim said relocating the museum to Fort Benning would require a new building. About 250 tanks and armored vehicles would have to go as part of the exhibits.

Along with the Armor Center, its 1st Armor Training Brigade and the 16th Cavalry Regiment are also moving to Fort Benning under the base recommendations.

Hawaii gears up for hearing before base closing commission

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Honolulu, HI)

James Song

July 9, 2005

In a late flurry of activity, Hawaii's military, government and business leaders have joined together to work for a common goal: To convince an independent panel that the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard should not be added to a list of military bases slated for closure.

A Hawaii delegation plans to appear before the Base Realignment and Closure commission's western regional meetings in Los Angeles on Thursday to make its first arguments to keep the 97-year-old installation open.

The Hawaii Chamber of Commerce's military affairs council last week formed a high-powered subcommittee and hired a lobbyist to put together Pearl Harbor's presentation. The members include Maj. Gen. Robert Lee, the state's adjutant general; retired Adm. Thomas Fargo, a former head of both the U.S. Pacific Command and the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor; retired Adm. Ron Hays, also a former commander of the Pacific Command; and retired Adm. R.J. Zlatoper, a former commander of the Pacific Fleet.

"Anytime you're called upon the field of play, you have to be prepared for the challenge," said Jim Tollefson, the chamber's president and chief executive. "We're prepared to go the whole nine yards to be successful."

Tollefson said the presentation to the panel will focus on Pearl Harbor's military importance.

"We feel that Pearl Harbor, being located in the middle of the Pacific and being homeport of the Navy in the Pacific, it makes great tactical and strategic sense to maintain a shipyard here," he said.

Hawaii's group was formed just days after the head of the commission asked Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld in a July 1 letter to explain

why the Pentagon left the Pearl Harbor shipyard off the list released in May, instead recommending the closure of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine.

Maine and New Hampshire officials last week delivered a strong presentation to the commission during a hearing in Boston using charts, graphs and expert testimony. They also went on the offensive and cited examples of Portsmouth having greater efficiency compared to Pearl Harbor.

Officials in Hawaii said the two shipyards can't be compared.

"When you talk about efficiency, you're talking about apples and pineapples. We do different work," said Matt Hamilton, president of the Hawaii Federal Employees Metal Trades Council, the umbrella organization representing 15 labor unions. "We do a myriad of things they just don't do there. I don't know how you can compare."

Lee said Pearl Harbor does everything from emergency jobs to long-term overhauls and services everything from submarines to aircraft carriers, while Portsmouth focuses on submarines.

"I kind of use the term, 'one-trick pony,'" he said.

The base closure commission will hold a hearing on July 19 in Washington to decide whether bases including Pearl Harbor should be added to the hit list. Seven of the nine commissioners would have to vote to add a base, and public hearings and base visits would follow.

Gov. Linda Lingle said she is confident that Pearl Harbor would be kept off the list.

"It's important to Hawaii's economy, obviously, but equally important to the nation's defense," she said. "As long as the decision is made on the basis of the country's security, I think we'll be fine."

The United States has been beefing up its forces in Hawaii, a key military location for the Asia-Pacific region. More than 30 vessels are homeported at Pearl Harbor, and the Navy is considering basing an aircraft carrier here.

The shipyard, which has a historical role in rebuilding the U.S. fleet after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, is Hawaii's largest industrial employer with 4,355 civilians and a payroll last year of \$385 million. The shipyard has an estimated economic impact of \$1 billion.

"During this challenging time, we have not lost sight of our mission to deliver the products and services the Navy has tasked," Jason Holm, spokesman for the Pearl Harbor shipyard, said in a statement. "We realize there is no greater testament to our proud legacy than in how we will rise to excel at our mission in the coming days."

Hamilton, the labor leader, said he has emphasized to concerned shipyard workers that they should not panic because there are no indications that Pearl Harbor will be on put on the base closure list, unlike Portsmouth, which has been there before.

"We could end up saying, 'Oh, we never were on the list,'" he said. "I'm not one to cross bridges before I get to them."

He also downplays any talk of the showdown between Pearl Harbor and Portsmouth.

"On my level, there's no war. We completely support Portsmouth," he said.

BRAC: Ellsworth vs. Grand Forks?; Ellsworth retention leader says S.D. base's survival might depend on a BRAC Commission move to close Grand Forks base
Grand Forks Herald (Grand Forks, ND)
July 9, 2005

The future of Ellsworth Air Force Base could hinge on whether Grand Forks Air Force Base is added to the Pentagon's recommended closure

list later this month, according to the leader of a task force working to save Ellsworth.

"I don't enjoy the fact that we have to take a look at it as us versus them," said Pat McElgunn, director of the Ellsworth base retention task force.

In recommendations issued May 13, the Pentagon slated the Grand Forks base for realignment, while calling for Ellsworth's closing and moving its B-1B bombers to Dyess AFB in Texas.

But questions from the Base Realignment and Closure Commission to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld suggest commissioners could add Grand Forks to the closure list, McElgunn said.

The Air Force has been asked by BRAC Chairman Anthony Principi to provide specific reasons why the Grand Forks base is recommended for realignment, rather than closure.

The information is due by July 18, when the Pentagon also has been asked to clarify that decision and others in an open session set by the BRAC Commission in Washington.

Why Grand Forks?

The Pentagon's final recommendations call for removing KC-135 air refueling tankers from Grand Forks and preparing the base for the potential future missions, notably involving "unmanned aerial vehicles."

In a letter last Friday to Rumsfeld, BRAC Chairman Anthony Principi asked the Defense Department to elaborate.

Principi also asked how many UAVs would be based at Grand Forks and when they might arrive.

In letters to North Dakota political leaders, Principi stressed that the questions are meant to clarify Grand Forks Air Force Base's place in the Pentagon's recommendation. The North

Dakotans say those recommendations were vague.

Grand Forks base retention leaders have expressed increasing confidence in Air Force leaders' more recently stated intentions for the base, including a base for drone aircraft known as Global Hawk and Predator. Now the BRAC Commissioners need to hear them, they stress.

Recent Air Force comments suggest the Grand Forks base would have some air refueling tanker mission once new ones were available in several years, but local base proponents hope to retain at least some existing tankers in the BRAC process, too. The Pentagon's May recommendation divides Grand Forks' tankers among four other bases.

Better footing

North Dakota's congressional delegation and Gov. John Hoeven say more clarity about the Air Force's Grand Forks plans could put the base on more solid footing.

McElgunn said an earlier Air Force "force structure" plan did not slate UAVs for Grand Forks. He also said that, in 2001, the Air Force considered Ellsworth a top choice for the Global Hawk UAV. It went to a base in California instead.

UAV suitability

But the Pentagon's own BRAC analysis ranked Grand Forks high for its potential UAV suitability.

July 19, one day after questioning the Pentagon, the BRAC Commission is set to meet to decide whether to provisionally add bases to the Pentagon's closure list. If seven of the nine commissioners vote to add a base, the BRAC Commission will conduct site visits and hold public hearings on those proposals.

McElgunn and Grand Forks base proponents have said the North Dakota base was on a tentative Defense Department closure list until early May.

If Grand Forks is moved back to the closure list, McElgunn said, "I think that Ellsworth could sit very well."

BRAC work continues behind the scenes

Enid News and Eagle (Enid, OK)

Jeff Mullin

July 10, 2005

Enid breathed a great big sigh of relief May 13 when the Pentagon released its list of military bases to be closed or realigned, and Vance Air Force Base was not on it.

Mike Cooper, chairman of Vance Development Authority and Oklahoma Strategic Military Planning Commission, likewise breathed a sigh, then took a deep breath and went right back to work.

Cooper has been working behind the scenes since the initial Base Realignment and Closure list was released to make sure nothing changes as it relates to Vance, or any of the state's other major military facilities.

Not only is Vance slated to remain open but it will pick up 99 new jobs — at least 93 military and six civilian. Three missions are supposed to move from Moody Air Force Base in Valdosta, Ga. Vance, Columbus AFB in Mississippi and Laughlin AFB near Del Rio, Texas, all are set to pick up elements of the primary phase of fixed wing pilot training, as well as introduction of fighter fundamentals for pilots and weapons systems officers.

Cooper will be on hand Monday when BRAC Commission holds a regional hearing in San Antonio. The meeting will be 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the ballroom of Henry B. Gonzales Convention Center.

Commissioners on hand will be Chairman Anthony Principi, retired Army Gen. James Hill, retired Air Force general and former Vance wing commander Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton and retired Air Force Gen. Sue Ellen Turner.

Cooper said there is no reason to think anything will change concerning Vance, or any other military facility in Oklahoma, but it's better to be safe than sorry.

"We want to see what the bases that are losing facilities to Oklahoma bases are saying," said Cooper. "We want to know what issues and concerns are coming up."

By being at the meeting, Cooper said, he can react more quickly if questions are raised about Vance or any other state base.

"If needed, after the hearing, we would have a chance to get back with the BRAC commission chairman, staff or others involved in these decisions and make sure we give our input as to why we think nothing should be changed."

Cooper said he doesn't anticipate any questions and concerns being raised about any Oklahoma base.

"But one never knows," said Cooper.

BRAC Commission will meet with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld July 18, then will vote July 19 on whether to add any other bases to the list of recommended closures or realignments.

"We hope there is not anything to worry about, but we have to go hear what they say," said Cooper. "It is a constant, never-ending thing. We have to follow what turns or changes. We have to stay up with it to make sure nothing goes awry."

"But we don't expect anything. As far as we no there are no changes."

The commission has until Sept. 8 to submit its list of recommendations for closure and realignment to President Bush. The president then has until Sept. 23 to approve the list or to send it back to the commission.

BRAC impact on naval hospital uncertain

New Bern Sun Journal (New Bern, NC)

Tom Bone
July 10, 2005

It's still business as usual at the Halyburton Naval Hospital aboard Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, despite a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) recommendation that the facility should reduce its current workload.

Navy Captain Stephen Mandia, the hospital's executive officer says it is too early to predict any changes in current service available at the hospital.

While the focus of BRAC-related attention has been the potential reduction of the Naval Air Depot workforce by over 600 positions, some retirees have taken note of the proposal to realign the hospital's status.

The recommendation was to realign the hospital into an outpatient clinic with ambulatory surgery capabilities says Mandia. The change would include a significant reduction of inpatient services he added, but none of the potential changes will come quickly.

"What I've told the staff here is that this is chapter one of a multi-chaptered book," said Mandia, who points out that the BRAC recommendation has yet to be decided on.

"If any action is taken on this BRAC recommendation it will still take two to three years down the road as we determine what services will be available," he said. "Until we know the final recommendations approved we won't know what if any effect it will have on our emergency room or outpatient services."

The Naval Hospital's primary mission of supporting active duty military and their dependents will not change regardless of a change in mission he said.

Mandia said inpatient care at the hospital is 90 percent related to obstetrics and the care of newborns and if the BRAC recommendation holds that inpatient care would be sent to local hospitals.

"I can pretty much guarantee that we will still have our primary care doctors taking care of our active duty and their dependents," he said.

Retirees who rely on the hospital pharmacy for medications will probably still have that service available he said.

"We expect no changes in our pharmaceutical services unless directed by higher authority," he said.

McGuire closing may affect overseas missions

Burlington County Times (Philadelphia, PA)
July 9, 2005

TOWSON, Md. - Federal representatives from New Jersey yesterday told members of the commission charged with closing military bases that removing National Guard refueling tankers from McGuire Air Force Base would compromise U.S. ability to perform overseas missions.

U.S. Rep. Jim Saxton told the Base Realignment and Closure Commission that adhering to the Pentagon's May 13 recommendation to retire all 16 KC-135 Stratotankers assigned to the 108th Air Refueling Wing at McGuire would set aerial-refueling capabilities back to 1991 levels.

The testimony took place during a four-hour commission hearing at Goucher College, just north of Baltimore.

"The retirement of 16 KC-135s rolls us back to that tanker-lean fix," said Saxton, R-3rd of Mount Holly.

If the commission follows the Pentagon's recommendation, the 108th would lose all its aircraft, leave the future of the unit and its members in limbo. Saxton suggested keeping 12 KC-135s at McGuire.

"We've invested \$75 million in the concrete in the ground ... the appropriate fuel lines to make this the only true tanker base in the Northeast part of the country," Saxton said.

Other officials agreed.

"It is that refueling wing that allowed us to win the war in Afghanistan," said U.S. Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen, R-11th of Harding. "A lot of people don't know that."

U.S. Rep. Chris Smith, R-4th of Robbinsville, said retiring the KC-135s was "patently absurd and flies in the face of good management."

Under the Pentagon's recommendations, McGuire and Fort Dix would receive from other bases four C-130 cargo aircraft, nine C-12, four C-9 personnel transports and 16 helicopters. The bases would gain 888 military and civilian positions.

Meanwhile, supporters of Fort Monmouth asked the panel to make that installation part of the Dix-McGuire-Lakehurst regional troop mobilization site rather than closing it and moving its mission to Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland.

Supporters of Fort Monmouth said making that base a "sub-installation" of Dix, McGuire and Lakehurst makes sense. Fort Monmouth in Eatontown has tested software and other equipment on the ranges of Fort Dix for 30 years, they said, and the bases are 20 miles apart.

If closed, Fort Monmouth would lose nearly 5,300 military and civilian jobs.

"We think now by combining organizationally this high-tech (facility) with a strong operational and training installation will set a new national standard," said retired Vice Adm. Paul Gaffney II, chairman of the Governor's Commission to Support and Enhance New Jersey's Military and Coast Guard Installations.

Commission Chairman Anthony Principi said after the hearing the proposal to save Fort Monmouth was intriguing.

"It's certainly an interesting concept. It's one we're going to look at carefully," Principi said.

"It's something the secretary is trying to accomplish, building more jointness into our capacity."

The commission could begin deciding the future of Fort Monmouth and the 108th during a hearing July 19 in Washington, D.C. Votes by five of nine members are needed to remove a base from the list. Seven of nine votes are needed to add a base or expand the scope of recommendations.

The commission must then submit a revised list by Sept. 8 to President Bush, who must approve or reject it in its entirety. If Bush accepts it, Congress would then have 45 days to act, or the list would become law.

Officials push to shift agency's 2,800 jobs to Fort Meade

Annapolis Capitol (Annapolis, MD)

Elizabeth Leis

July 9, 2005

Besides the more than 9,300 jobs already slated to come to Maryland military installations, U.S. Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski suggested yesterday that the 2,800 at a Bethesda intelligence agency should also be moved to Fort George G. Meade.

Ms. Mikulski, D-Md., said moving the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency near the National Security Agency would combine two top-secret agencies at an already secure site and help alleviate an expected crush of people at Fort Belvoir, Va.

Under the Pentagon's military consolidation proposal, the 2,800 workers at the agency that makes maps would join about 20,000 others slated for Fort Belvoir.

"I want this country to have the best technical agency we can produce and not the worst traffic jam we can produce," she told the Base Realignment and Closure Commission at a hearing at Goucher College in Baltimore.

She and other Maryland officials told the committee the state has the infrastructure to

absorb the people and the 9,293 military and civilian jobs it would get. More than 5,000 are slated for Fort Meade.

County Planning and Zoning Officer Joe Rutter said the relationship between the county and Fort Meade is a "model for the future."

"In the immediate area surrounding the fort, we have over 4,000 housing units ready to come on line over the next several years and more in the development pipeline that will provide a supply over the next decade," he said.

Maj. Gen. Bruce Tuxill, head of the Maryland National Guard, blasted the proposal to move the C-130Js, which are staffed by about 395 Guard members, away from Martin State Airport.

Since the nearest similar aircraft unit is in Youngstown, Ohio, the move could jeopardize homeland security, he said.

"C-130Js are really the tactical airlift of choice. Whatever happens, they are called on by the government at a moment's notice," he said.

Yesterday's hearing was one of several the independent BRAC commission has held across the country on the Pentagon proposals. In September, the commission will forward its own recommendations to President Bush, who will review the list and either approve it or reject it. Congress also will have a chance to vote on the list.

"Congress entrusted our armed forces with vast resources, but not unlimited resources," said Anthony Principi, head of the BRAC commission, before taking testimony from officials from Maryland, Delaware and New Jersey.

New Jersey lawmakers warned of a "brain drain" from the military if proposals to close bases such as Fort Monmouth are enacted. The current plan is for the vast majority of its 3,760 employees to move to Aberdeen Proving Grounds, with the base's Joint Network Management System Program Office going to Fort Meade.

The lawmakers argued the Department of Defense never considered the fort's proximity to the Fort Dix / Lakehurst Naval Station's / McGuire Air Force "megabase" and said only 20 percent of the Fort Monmouth employees are planning to move if the base closes.

Fine, responded the Maryland lawmakers.

"Whether it's 20 percent or 40 percent, it doesn't matter," said Aris Melissaratos, the state's Department of Business and Economic Development Secretary. "If they're lucky, they'll come here to live, work and play."

Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. said he didn't blame New Jersey for trying to keep its resources.

"As an elected official, part of your job is to protect your turf," he said. "In this case, we happen to have the facts to back it up. If you lose at the beginning of this game, it's very difficult to come up in the ninth inning."

San Antonio will gain more than it will lose under BRAC plan

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (San Antonio, TX)

T.A. Badger

July 10, 2005

Across Texas and the nation, cities with military bases on this year's closure list are getting ready for fierce fighting to save their valuable installations.

Not San Antonio.

It's not that this military-heavy town is volunteering to give up the former Brooks Air Force Base, which is among the proposed shutdowns by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

Rather, any lack of fevered effort to save Brooks City-Base - a city-owned technology park with the Air Force as its dominant tenant - is more a case of San Antonio getting a terrific deal in this BRAC round and not wanting to mess it up.

"We would be getting more than we're losing," said Howard Peak, a former San Antonio mayor and head of a city panel that oversees Brooks. "We are saluting as good patriots and moving on."

Under the BRAC plan, to be finalized in September, San Antonio would see a gain of about 3,500 jobs and as much as \$1 billion in new construction.

The bulk of the jobs increase and new building would be at Fort Sam Houston, envisioned by the BRAC commission as the military's medical training center for enlisted personnel in the Army, Navy and Air Force. The plan would concentrate medical training personnel from several bases, including Sheppard Air Force Base near Wichita Falls.

The BRAC plan also calls for converting the venerable Wilford Hall Medical Center at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio into an outpatient clinic, and shifting most hospital functions across town to Brooke Army Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston.

Nearly a third of the 3,200 military-related jobs now at Brooks would also go to Fort Sam Houston as part of the medical consolidation. But the local BRAC committee says it will also try to keep the Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine, worth about 600 jobs, that would move to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio.

Retired Brig. Gen. John Jernigan, a former base commander at Brooks, said he will argue to keep the school when the federal BRAC commission holds a hearing in San Antonio on Monday to discuss how the Pentagon's plan will impact the state. The hearing is the only one scheduled for Texas.

"Logically, you can argue that you can rebuild at Wright-Patterson, but my argument is, 'Why, when you already have it here?'" said Jernigan, who leads the San Antonio Military Missions Task Force.

Others are not ready to concede Brooks, a 1,300-acre expanse near downtown where, among other achievements, Tang was developed for the U.S. space program in the 1960s.

U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar, whose congressional district includes the base and the homes of its workers, recalled the impact on thousands of San Antonio families when Kelly Air Force Base, then the city's largest employer, was marked for closure in the last BRAC round a decade ago.

"I understand that, for the San Antonio area as a whole, this year's BRAC recommendations would result in a net gain in jobs," Cuellar, a freshman Democrat from Laredo, said in a statement last month.

But, he added, "Brooks has been a major economic engine ... for years, and the men and women from ... San Antonio have worked hard to make Brooks one of the most efficient and creative military installations in the country."

The city took ownership of Brooks in 2002 under an agreement with the Air Force, allowing it rent-free use of the base's buildings. The city also bears the cost of police, emergency services and utilities, but has the right to develop available land. So far, a hospital and a pharmaceutical maker have signed up to build there, and other would-be employers have expressed interest in locating on the base.

If the Pentagon remains intent on pulling out at Brooks, the city wants it to happen sooner rather than later so the base can move on.

Peak, pointing to the still-incomplete closure of Kelly, anticipates the closure at Brooks could go on for years.

"If this doesn't happen for 10 years, our redevelopment efforts will be somewhat hampered," he said. "We need to move on to the next stage of things as quick as possible."

Portsmouth Defense Sparks Push To Shield Hawaii Base

Portland Press Herald (Portland, ME)
Bart Jansen
July 9, 2005

WASHINGTON — Hawaii's congressional delegation has launched a campaign to preserve Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, which is drawing the attention of officials studying the Navy's recommendation to close Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Maine. Sen. Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii, met Thursday with Adm. Walter Doran, the Pacific Fleet commander, and Capt. Frank Camelio, head of the shipyard. Inouye also spoke by phone with Navy Secretary Gordon England, who is acting deputy defense secretary.

"I discussed this matter with the secretary himself, and I can assure you he is part of our team," Inouye said.

His actions came a day after Maine and New Hampshire officials told a regional hearing of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission in Boston that the Kittery shipyard is far more efficient than Pearl Harbor's shipyard.

Also, commission Chairman Anthony Principi asked the Pentagon last week for details about why Pearl Harbor wasn't chosen for closure, and asked related questions at the hearing. Pentagon replies are expected by July 18.

The actions suggest that the commission could be considering adding Pearl Harbor to the list of bases it will consider for closure or realignment. Such a move could set up a competition between advocates for the bases in their fight to preserve thousands of jobs in their states.

For now, however, the emphasis appears to be on convincing the commission to keep both shipyards open. Elected officials argue that the Navy has more than enough work for its four shipyards, including Norfolk in Virginia and Puget Sound in Washington state.

"There is work for all four shipyards," Sen. Olympia Snowe, R-Maine, said Friday. Closing a shipyard "will exacerbate the backlog in submarine maintenance and overhaul."

Sen. Judd Gregg, R-N.H., stressed at the Boston hearing that nobody advocating for Portsmouth was urging the closure of Pearl Harbor.

The key date is July 19, when the commission must decide whether to consider any more bases for closure.

On May 13, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld recommended closing Portsmouth and 32 other major bases. The commission will send President Bush a final list by Sept. 8, which Bush and Congress can either accept or reject in its entirety.

The nine-member commission could remove a base with a majority vote. But it would take seven of nine members to add a base to the list.

Hawaii lawmakers are working with the Defense Department and the Navy to protect Pearl Harbor, which was kept off the closure list because of its strategic location in the Pacific.

"The ships of the Pacific Fleet are dedicated to maintaining peace and stability in the region," Inouye said after Principi's inquiry, mentioning the belligerence of North Korea and the emerging threat of China.

But he also argued that Portsmouth's fate had nothing to do with Pearl Harbor's.

"It is my view that the Portsmouth decision is unrelated to the need for the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard," Inouye said. "If the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard were to remain open, the Navy would still need Pearl Harbor to provide the support of the Pacific Fleet."

At Wednesday's hearing, Portsmouth advocates focused on the base's efficiency at serving nuclear submarines faster and at lower cost than budgeted. Pearl Harbor has a "slightly lower military value score" than Portsmouth, according to the Government Accountability Office.

Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine and a member of the Armed Services Committee, cited the Pentagon's own cost estimates at the hearing. The refueling of submarines, for example, is \$82

million cheaper and six months faster at Portsmouth than at other yards.

In a financial review in January, the military found that it would lose \$1.8 million over 20 years by closing Portsmouth, but could save \$524 million from closing Pearl Harbor.

The figures changed in a review in April, when the Pentagon projected it could save \$521 million by closing Portsmouth and nearly \$1.3 billion by closing Pearl Harbor.

One argument for keeping all four bases deals with shipyard capacity. The Navy projected it would have 4.5 percent more capacity than needed at the three remaining shipyards if Portsmouth closed.

But Mainers argued that the Navy has historically underestimated its maintenance needs by 14 percent. Unforeseen repairs, such as when submarines crash into fishing vessels or undersea mountains, contribute to the need for four shipyards, they said.

"I thought we were very clear we need all four shipyards," said Rep. Tom Allen, D-Maine. "It was about workload and how you allocated it among these four different yards."

Gregg said "there is a definite stream of thought" that Pearl Harbor should be an operational base and Portsmouth should be a maintenance depot. "They're trying to get a feel for the strategic situation," Gregg said of the commission.

The Pearl Harbor shipyard is Hawaii's largest industrial employer with 4,200 civilian jobs. Robert Lillis, who heads the 500-member local of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, said workers are "apprehensive" and "upset" that the commission is investigating the base because the island has very few jobs of such high quality.

"The mood here is one of nervousness," Lillis said.

Brig. Gen. Robert Lee, Hawaii's adjutant general and head of civil defense, said the Navy wants to keep the base but that arguments from the Northeast provoked the commission inquiry.

"The Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard is a critical industrial complex not only for the state, but for our nation because it really supports the national military strategy," he said.

The debate has put Hawaii in a similar position to Maine a decade ago, when a base-closing commission considered putting Portsmouth on the list but was deterred when the chief of naval operations cited its importance.

"I don't blame Hawaii on becoming nervous and starting to defend themselves, but the Maine and New Hampshire delegations never suggested closing Pearl," Allen said.

Battle Of Atlanta

Fayetteville Observer (Fayetteville, NC)

Henry Cuningham

July 10, 2005

ATLANTA - When the original McPherson Barracks was set up in 1867 during Reconstruction, some resentful Atlantans called it "that Yankee garrison" and were glad to see troops go 14 years later.

Today, Fort McPherson sits 2.5 miles south of the old McPherson Barracks, and many Atlanta residents and Georgia elected officials are anything but eager to lose it.

The Pentagon on May 13 released the 2005 Base Closure and Realignment plan to close "Fort Mac" and nearby Fort Gillem. Under the plan, the headquarters of U.S. Army Forces Command and U.S. Army Reserve Command would be moved to the present Pope Air Force Base, which would be taken over by Fort Bragg. An independent commission is evaluating the proposals.

"The Army has proposed a good plan under the BRAC process," said Gen. Dan K. McNeill, the commanding general of Forces Command,

which oversees the training of most of the Army's combat-ready forces. "It's exactly what the Army needs."

Georgia officials oppose the move, citing what they call unnecessary costs, community disruption and Atlanta's advantages over Fayetteville. North Carolina wants to get the two headquarters, which would at least offset the proposed loss of a C-130 cargo airplane wing and an A-10 attack-jet group at Pope.

'Excellent fit'

McNeill, a North Carolina native, is a former commander of the 18th Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg as well as the 82nd Airborne Division.

"I think it's an excellent fit," McNeill said. "It's part of a much larger plan."

The Pentagon says the closing would consolidate functions at an Army post "that can accomplish more than administrative missions" and "provide a better level of service at a reduced cost."

With two states arguing for different decisions, it seems that the fate of Fort McPherson - which was named for a Union general killed nearby in fighting during the Civil War - is shaping up into a 21st century Battle of Atlanta.

"We don't want to be pitted against our fellow states and the fellow communities, but in reality, Fort McPherson and Fort Gillem are the heart of Atlanta," Tina Coria said. "They have been part of this community forever. As any vital organ, if you close it or take it away, our city, our community on the southside will die."

Coria, 46, who lives in the Atlanta area, wore a T-shirt in favor of keeping the forts in Atlanta at a public hearing at Georgia Tech on June 30.

"We are not talking about concrete and grass," Coria said after the hearing. "We are talking about people. We are talking about lives, and we are talking over 11,000 jobs and nearly \$700 million a year in economic impact."

Fort McPherson is on about 500 tree-shaded acres and has buildings ranging from 19th-century Queen Anne structures with red brick walls and white wood trim to mammoth 20th-century corporate-style headquarters.

The arguments

While Coria may not want to speak ill of other communities, retired Brig. Gen. Phil Browning is not bashful about bashing Fayetteville to make a case for keeping the Atlanta forts open. He is executive director of the Georgia Military Affairs Coordinating Committee.

"Fort McPherson benefits from the highly skilled civilian manpower pool required for mission accomplishment that we will show simply is not available if the Army's recommendation is adopted," Browning said at the June 30 hearing. He says the Pentagon underestimated the cost of relocation.

Browning touted Atlanta's airline connections and criticized Fayetteville for its lack of direct flights to places such as Washington. He did not mention the presence of Pope, where many military travelers arrive.

On June 28, retired Gen. Buck Kernan, speaking on behalf of North Carolina, said the presence of the 18th Airborne Corps headquarters and U.S. Army Special Operations Command headquarters would make Fort Bragg a good home for Forces Command.

"It does so by placing the Army headquarters responsible for providing trained and ready Army forces to the combatant commanders on the same installation with the headquarters that train and sustain both Army conventional and special operations units," Kernan said. The retired four-star general is a former commander of Fort Bragg and the 18th Airborne Corps.

Browning turns that argument around in favor of Atlanta. At Fort Bragg, he said, Forces Command and the Reserve Command would be competing with two other large commands for workers from a smaller demographic base. The

Fayetteville metropolitan area has about 337,000 people; the Atlanta area has 4.2 million.

But the Army is tapping the local work force only for civilian employees, and many of them are retired soldiers brought to the area by the military.

Still, the loss of Fort McPherson would pinch, even in a market as big as Atlanta.

"When you look at the latest labor statistics, the unemployment level is rising in the metro area," said U.S. Rep. David Scott, a Democrat whose district includes part of Atlanta. And he said that the military generates additional jobs beyond just the paid employees.

Kernan argues that the people making strategic decisions should be near soldiers who will do the fighting.

"A historical and institutional priority of the Army has always been to ensure that the highest level of leadership and decision-making have their roots with the soldiers on the ground," Kernan said.

Browning says that, in the past, Army officials have questioned the wisdom of spending military construction dollars to consolidate administrative headquarters.

The commands

Forces Command provides soldiers for everything from deployment overseas to homeland security missions.

"We're the Army's chief operator," McNeill said. "It's our job to see the people, equipment and resources come together at the right place and right time."

Forces Command - or FORSCOM - has a \$41 million, 19-year-old headquarters building with 365,559 square feet. That's more than the 308,488 of total office space at Pope, where the Pentagon plan would move the command.

The command trains, mobilizes and deploys most combat-ready Army forces in the continental United States.

Reserve Command - also slated to move to Pope - occupies a 218,500-square-foot building that was completed eight years ago at a cost of \$36 million. The command is responsible for the readiness of about 185,000 Army Reserve soldiers nationwide.

"Liken this to a civilian corporate headquarters," said Col. Mike Bosma, chief of operations for Forces Command. "This is where your senior executives would be located."

The military personnel and federal civilian employees who develop plans and strategy are usually higher in seniority.

"Most of us have all been in 20 or 30 years," Bosma said. "You don't see a lot of captains or lieutenants."

The command is higher headquarters for Fort Bragg's 18th Airborne Corps, which is based at Fort Bragg. When the president orders troops to war, FORSCOM has the job of bringing the equipment, soldiers and transportation together. The leaders at Fort McPherson decide which U.S.-based troops will go to Iraq or the Balkans or the Sinai.

"We plan those things out two years in advance," Bosma said.

The role of Forces Command will grow as the Army shifts more troops from overseas to the United States, McNeill said.

Fort McPherson may be one of Atlanta's best-kept secrets. The post has gates and guards and tightly controlled access.

A major said a common reaction is: "You've got to be kidding. An Army installation right outside of Atlanta?"

The post's 33-acre historic district has 40 buildings on the National Register of Historic

Places, according to the post public affairs office.

pledged to furnish the commission with numbers that can be certified.

A sleeping porch was added to the back of the present commanding general's house in 1935 for President Franklin D. Roosevelt during his travels back and forth to Warm Springs, Ga., post officials say.

"We are not done until the final buzzer sounds," Perdue said.

Opinions/ Editorials

Decision pending

Additional Notes

Georgia officials say the fight over the future of Fort McPherson is not over.

Under the Pentagon plan, the two McPherson commands would move to Pope after the Air Force base is turned over to the Army. But a letter to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld from the chairman of the independent base closure commission seemed to raise questions about whether the proposal is the best plan for coordinating the Air Force and Fort Bragg's airlift needs.

Rumsfeld will be asked to answer the commission's questions at a hearing July 18. The commission could vote on changes to the recommendations July 19, and final deliberations on the plan are set for the week of Aug. 22.

While North Carolina has largely been untouched by the base-closure process before this year, Georgia has been gearing up to fight losses for a decade.

In 1994, then-Gov. Zell Miller set up the Georgia Military Affairs Coordinating Committee to fend off feared cuts.

Retired Adm. Harold Gehman, a member of the base-closure commission, says what gets his attention in hearings on the Pentagon plan are claims that the Defense Department got its facts wrong.

Georgia officials are marshaling their arguments to show that.

"We are not done yet," Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue said after the June 30 hearing. He