Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY BIRD

July 14, 2005

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London Attacks Used To Fight Base Closings
DeLay, senators join in criticism
Washington Times
Lisa Hoffman
July 14, 2005

No sooner had the smoke cleared from the London bombings than assorted U.S. lawmakers seized on the terror attack as a reason to save

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their military installations from the base-closing ax.

Within a day of the July 7 attacks, House Republican leader Tom DeLay of Texas said they demonstrated the necessity of keeping a small fleet of Air National Guard F-16 fighter jets at Ellington Field to protect Houston.

In North Dakota, Democratic Sen. Kent Conrad came to the same conclusion about his state's Grand Forks Air Force Base, which the Pentagon wants to shut. Conrad said the London attacks make the closing of his base "indefensible."

And in Pennsylvania, where the Base Realignment and Closure Commission was holding a public hearing on the day of the London bombings, GOP Sen. Arlen Specter said the same about the Naval Air Station Willow Grove, about 20 miles north of Philadelphia.

"We are at war, and we saw evidence of that in London today," Mr. Specter said at the hearing. "It is a little hard for me to understand, given the nature and quality of these operations, that they would consider shutting them down."

In communities across the country, officials are grabbing what they can as ammunition for their battle to convince the commission to spare their military installations.

The panel has until Sept. 8 to decide whether to embrace, pan or alter the Pentagon list of 33 major bases it wants to close and the 29 it wants to substantially realign. Members of the nine-person commission are visiting the targeted installations, where they are being bombarded by emotional pleas from residents and sober analytical presentations by base officials and lawmakers who contend the calculations and assumptions behind the Pentagon's list are flawed.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld has said the list was predicated on how well each installation fits into the nation's military of the future, which he wants to transform from a Cold War-era force to one designed to fight terrorism and other modern threats.

Mr. Rumsfeld has said it is precisely because the national security threats have changed that it is imperative to stop spending money on obsolete bases.

So, base-closing experts said, it was only natural for base partisans to try to turn the London bombings into grist for their arguments about the merit of their hometown installations, even absent any parallels to the overseas attack or any direct role in fighting the war on terrorism.

"It's not surprising that people are reaching for justifications," said Powell Moore, the assistant secretary of defense for legislative affairs during President Bush's first term.

To Charles Pena, director of defense policy studies at the Washington-based Cato Institute think tank, the lawmakers are overreaching. "The elected officials are desperate to keep their military facilities," he said.

Local Base Closures Causing Economy Fears

The Associated Press
Matt Apuzzo
July 14, 2005

STRATFORD, Conn. -- There was a time when the shelves at the South Main Package Store were filled with spirits for the Army machinists to take home after work.

These days, the family business doesn't stock much: six liters of vodka, a few scattered bottles and boxes of table wine, a half-full cooler of beer. It's been that way since 1997, when the Base Closure and Realignment Commission closed the Stratford Army Engine Plant across the street, wiping out 1,400 jobs.

"We're not going to be sold a bill of goods by people who want to tell a happy story," said U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., who was among a team of representatives that traveled to Boston last week trying to save Groton's submarine base

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and its more than 8,000 jobs. "There hasn't been a job yet created in Stratford as a result of that shutdown."

The Pentagon's base closure plans would result in a net loss of about 29,000 military and civilian jobs nationwide. And while defense officials stand ready with economic aid and assistance, local leaders in towns hit hardest by the recommendations are concerned.

"It doesn't take much to understand what $350 million in payroll means," said Portsmouth, N.H., City Manager John Bohenko, whose city lies just over the border from Kittery, Maine, where the Naval shipyard stands to be closed. "And it could affect the local hardware store, the local diner, the hospitality industry. It's one of those things that has a macro impact."

But BRAC spokesman C. James Schaefer said officials who are counting on a gloomy economic outlook to win over the commission shouldn't be too optimistic.

"They have to realize the commission is going to put a priority on military value first and foremost," Schaefer said.

Paige doesn't think that's fair. Her Stratford neighborhood built itself around the factory where tank engines were built for years. She said it's been 10 years since its closure and the Army still hasn't turned over the property to the town.

About 28 percent of abandoned military property nationwide has not been turned over to local officials for redevelopment, leaving 49,000 acres unused, according to a Government Accountability Office report this year.

Fort Ritchie at one time was the biggest employer in Washington County, Md. But the base closed in 1998, eliminating about 1,750 military and civilian jobs, officials said. The land has yet to be transferred to the state.

"It has made our area go stagnant," local grocer Greg DeLauter said. "We're in a county that's getting all these metropolitan people coming up out of (Washington) D.C. In a county that's exploding with growth, our area is just stagnant."

The biggest obstacle to transferring property is environmental cleanup, according to the GAO. The military is obligated to clean the property, though squabbling about how much cleanup to expect is common. Thirty-four bases closed since 1988 are on the Superfund list of the worst toxic waste sites, and none has been completely cleaned.

The Pentagon estimates it will cost about $700 million to clean at least seven polluted facilities proposed for closure this time around, including Groton's submarine base.

Even after facilities are cleaned and turned over to localities, though, there's no guarantee for success. The Pentagon's Office of Economic Assistance publishes a guide to recovering from base closure, but Stratford residents are dubious.

"You know what you can do with those brochures?" said Janice Paige, a convenience store owner in Stratford. "Rip 'em up and throw 'em away."

Senator: Base closure criteria flawed

United Press International
July 13, 2005

Military employees in Cleveland are pinning their hopes on a Virginia senator's claim some of the Pentagon's military base closures are illegal.

Some 1,200 people in Cleveland work for the military pay office, or Defense Finance and Accounting Service, and are among some of the sites tagged for closure.

But Sen. John Warner, R-Va., says the Pentagon incorrectly docked points from operations that lease their office space, the Cleveland Plain Dealer reported.

"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," Warner

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testified before the Base Realignment and Closure Commission. "This is not permitted by law."

Meanwhile, DFAS Cleveland's supporters were to plead their case Wednesday with the base closure commission's chief staff analyst, Marilyn Wasleski, with a key argument being the Pentagon grossly overstated rent paid for the Cleveland office. They claim the rate the Defense Department used is 50 percent higher than the rent actually charged, according to information from the General Services Administration, DFAS' landlord.

Local News Articles

Analysis Finds Base Plan Could Add Traffic

Upticks in Pollution, Demand for Housing Expected After Proposed Relocation

Washington Post (Washington DC)
Christian Davenport
July 14, 2005

The Defense Department's plan to consolidate the country's military bases would lead to slight increases in the Washington region's traffic and pollution and a minor decrease in mass transit ridership, according to a new analysis.

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and researchers at George Mason University also found that the influx of workers that would be generated by the plan would require an additional 8,500 housing units, mostly in the fast-growing suburbs.

The council's board of directors yesterday approved a resolution urging the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, the nine-member panel reviewing the Pentagon's blueprint for closures, to consider the effect it could have on the area's traffic, housing and economy.

The board joined the growing number of critics of the Defense Department's plan to vacate 4 million square feet of office space in the close-in Northern Virginia suburbs that don't meet security standards imposed after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. That could mean the relocation of 23,000 defense workers.

The Pentagon also wants to close the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in the District.

The region's suburbs would fare much better under the plan, which will need approval from President Bush and Congress. Anne Arundel County's Fort Meade would gain 5,300 jobs, Fort Belvoir in Fairfax could grow by as many as 18,000 and the Marine Corps base in Quantico would add 3,000 workers.

By 2020, when the full effects of the changes would be felt, mass transit trips in the region would drop 0.52 percent, while vehicle trips would grow 0.34 percent, according to the 33-page report. The region's poor air quality would worsen with the increased traffic, the report said.

"That is clearly going in the wrong direction," said David Robertson, executive director of the council of governments. "We want to see more transit use, not less. . . . We want to see air pollution declining, not going up."

While the percentages are low, the increases in traffic would be concentrated at specific points, such as the highways leading to Fort Belvoir and Fort Meade, said Ron Kirby, the council's director of transportation.

Prince William County would need to add 3,000 of the 8,500 new housing units projected under the plan in the next 15 years, the most of any jurisdiction in the region, according to the report. Fairfax County would need an additional 2,000, and Montgomery County would require 1,000.

The region would initially lose 11,000 jobs, but it would add almost 19,000 workers by 2020, the report said.

Norco Base Cheered By Visit

Two closure-commission members extol the virtues of the facility during a fact-finding stop.

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Riverside Press-Enterprise (Riverside, CA)
Joe Vargo and Darrell R. Santschi
July 13, 2005

NORCO - Two commissioners who play a key role in deciding whether a Navy base in Norco will close emerged after a tour of the facility Tuesday afternoon heaping praise upon it.

Weapons testing and calibration work at the Naval Surface Warfare Center is "desperately needed" by Marines fighting on the front lines in Iraq, said Base Closure and Realignment Commissioner James H. Bilbray.

"It's something that can't be duplicated anywhere else in the country," he said.

How that weighs against a Pentagon recommendation to shut down the Norco base and move its work to a Navy base at Point Mugu in Ventura County will be decided by Bilbray and eight other commissioners, who will send their recommendations to President Bush and Congress by Sept. 8.

Five BRAC commissioners will conduct a public hearing in Los Angeles on Thursday, the only one scheduled in California. Many military supporters throughout the state view the hearing as the last chance to impress the panel.

The Pentagon expects to save $48 billion over the next 20 years by closing 33 of the nation's 318 major military bases and scaling back dozens of others. In California, 11 sites are set to close, 12 more will be downsized and 12 others will expand.

Previous BRAC rounds resulted in the closure of Norton Air Force Base in San Bernardino and George Air Force Base in Victorville and the downsizing of March Air Reserve Base. That resulted in an economic hit to the Inland area of $3.1 billion annually.

About 85 percent of bases on previous BRAC lists have closed and Pentagon planners say they expect a higher percentage for this round.

The Cost in Jobs

Bilbray and fellow BRAC commissioner Philip Coyle spent 4½ hours Tuesday at the Naval Surface Warfare Center, Corona Division, as the Norco base is officially known. The 63-year-old center has been recommended for closure in the 2005 BRAC round, a move that would cost Norco nearly 1,000 high-tech and highly paid jobs.

On Monday, Bilbray toured the Marine Corps Logistics Base in Barstow, which the Pentagon wants to scale back. The Barstow base would remain open, but much of its maintenance function would be farmed out to the Corps' only other depot, in Albany, Ga., and to Army depots in Alabama and Pennsylvania.

Trimming the depot work force is a big hit for the Barstow community, Bilbray said.

"It's about 700 jobs in a community of 22,000," he said.

The commissioners devoted much of a nine-minute news conference to their tour of the Norco base. They inspected the center's measurement laboratory, used to calibrate weapons to very precise tolerances, and the Imax-like theater, where scientists and engineers monitor in real time tests conducted half a world away.

The commissioners stressed that no final decisions have been made about any bases recommended for closure or downsizing. And they stopped short of saying they will recommend removing the Norco base or the Barstow depot from the hit list.

Visit 'Very Important'

Coyle said the visit provided more insight than reams of Pentagon reports.

"These visits are very important," Coyle said. "They let you see things you could never see otherwise. You can't get an appreciation for what they do out here without visiting here."

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Norco's fate hinges on whether the proposed move to Ventura County makes military and economic sense, Bilbray and Coyle said. Bilbray said recreating the laboratories and assessment centers at Norco could cost $40 million to $50 million.

A Defense Department analysis released when the base was recommended for closure in May estimates that it could cost more than $80 million to close Norco, which would take at least 15 years to recoup.

Base spokeswoman Roberta Spieler said employees were pleased to talk to those who will determine their fate.

"They asked a lot of questions," Speiler said of the commissioners. "It was a good visit."

The BRAC commissioners arrived about noon, driving past 89 employees and supporters who lined a horse trail across from the main gate off Fifth Street. The demonstrators held small American flags and signs reading "Save Our Base," "Keep Us Here in Norco" and "We Support NSWC in Corona!"

Tanya Prillwitz, 41, a production controller who helps calibrate weapons systems at the base, said she thought the demonstration would help. "The commissioners will see the support in the community," she said.

Hearing Called Crucial

Rod Ballance of Riverside, chairman of the 50-member Inland Empire Installation Support Committee that helped organize Tuesday's demonstration, said he wasn't sure if it would make a difference.

"Thursday is the important day for Norco," he said.

Bilbray and Coyle said they will take the demonstration into account.

Prillwitz waved a flag during the demonstration, for which she painted her toenails red, white and blue. She said she won't move to Point Mugu.

"At the moment, I don't know what I would do for a living if the base closes," she said. "I am going to have to search for a job somewhere else."

How the Center Began

Troy Lyman, 35, of Riverside, said the independent assessment center owes its roots to malfunctioning torpedoes in World War II.

Tests traced the problem to defective fuses, which eventually were replaced. By the 1950s, the Norco base was testing and evaluating guided missiles used aboard Navy ships. Today it evaluates a wide variety of bombs, missiles, radars and other systems. During fleet maneuvers, Norco engineers and scientists monitor the performance of those weapons and can provide feedback in two to 24 hours, Lyman said.

Carmella Nichols, 48, of Riverside, said she couldn't afford to move to Ventura County. She has worked at the base 28 years and is an Internet technology specialist, she said.

Nichols said she carried a picket sign when the base was on the BRAC hit list in 1995. Community support and political lobbying helped keep it open. She's more worried this time.

"I'm hoping and praying that we can help save it," Nichols said.

Cannon supporters working on new wrinkle in effort to save base

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Cannon AFB)
Matt Mygatt
July 14, 2005

Cannon Air Force Base supporters are trying to figure out how their efforts to save the base will be affected by the decisions of two members of a federal commission not to vote on the base's fate.

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The nine-member Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission is reviewing the Pentagon's list of recommended base closings, which includes Cannon.

Two members, James Bilbray of Nevada and James Hansen of Utah, recused themselves in May from participating in any substantial commission work involving their states to avoid conflicts of interest. The Pentagon has recommended that Cannon's active duty F-16 fighters be moved to Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada and Hill Air Force Base in Utah.

Votes from five of the nine commission members are needed to remove a base from the Pentagon's closure list.

The decision by Bilbray and Hansen "means there will be only seven BRAC commissioners voting on the Cannon situation," Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., said Monday.

"I don't know whether that's bad or good," he said.

Jude McCartin, a spokeswoman for Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., said Wednesday that Bingaman is working to make sure the process is fair and is encouraging the commission to change the rules on how many votes it takes to remove a base from the list.

"We have made the BRAC aware that this is an unfair way to treat Cannon," said McCartin, speaking of the required five votes needed to remove Cannon from the list.

Chad Lydick, a Clovis businessman and a member of a committee supporting Cannon, said Wednesday the committee is working on political and legal fronts to answer questions about the recusals.

The Clovis Committee of Fifty wants to know if Bilbray and Hansen are specifically prohibited from voting on Cannon issues, Lydick said.

The committee believes the commission's legal counsel is "a little too strict" on interpreting conflict-of-interest issues, Lydick said.

"It should be if they (commissioners) have a personal gain. But they are appointed to represent the United States as a whole," he said.

The Clovis committee also is unsure whether five votes are still needed to save Cannon, or whether a simple majority - four of seven - would suffice, Lydick said.

"We're not too sure it shouldn't be a majority of commission members," he said.

If five of seven votes are required, "it lessens your percentages" of saving Cannon, Lydick said.

Chris Gallegos, a spokesman for Domenici, said Wednesday "it's a big question" whether a simple majority is needed.

"We're still going on the premise that five of nine votes are required to take Cannon off" the list, Gallegos said.

The commission must send its recommendations to President Bush by Sept. 8. He must approve the list in its entirety or send it back to the commission for more work.

Once Bush signs off on it, the list goes to Congress, which must accept it or reject it as a whole.

The Pentagon has estimated it would save $2.7 billion over 20 years by closing Cannon, costing the base's 2,385 military employees and 384 civilian jobs and about 2,000 more indirect jobs.

The economic impact of the base has been estimated at $200 million a year - about a third of the Clovis economy in a community of about 36,000.

The Pentagon has said it would save $49 billion over 20 years by streamlining services across the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps and by closing bases deemed insufficient.

However, on June 24, the Government Accountability Office released a report that

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found upfront costs would total $24 billion, and questioned the Pentagon's projected savings.

Base closings could add cars to area roads
The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Washington DC)
Heather Greenfield
July 13, 2005

A new study released Wednesday projected a 2 percent reduction in public transportation trips if the Pentagon decides to move jobs away from the core of the national capital area as part of its recommendations to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

The George Mason University study presented at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments meeting projects more traffic along I-95 and a slight increase in vehicle traffic across the region if the Defense Department goes forward with the plan.

The extra traffic would increase pollutants in a region that is struggling to reduce emissions to comply with the federal Clean Air Act.

"A 2 percent decrease in transit trips regionwide is not minor," said District of Columbia Council member Phil Mendelson, a member of the regional panel.

The study also examined the employment impact from both the military and contractors who would relocate to the outer suburbs. It estimates central jurisdictions like Arlington, Alexandria and the District would lose more than 30,000 jobs.

Fairfax, Anne Arundel, Prince William and Prince George's counties would add more than 15,000 thousand jobs.

Despite the gain for some, the jurisdictions mostly banded together on a resolution that asks the Pentagon to reconsider its plan. Prince William County, which stands to gain 2,500 jobs, abstained from the vote.

The resolution asked the Defense Department to consider alternatives that would "increase military value and lower taxpayer cost."

Board members considered but rejected adding language to the resolution that would ask the Defense Department to pick up the tab for infrastructure costs, such as road improvements or a new Metro station at Fort Belvoir, where 18,000 jobs may be relocated.

"They should put up the infrastructure costs," Mendelson said. "I suggest we should not water it down."

But the regional panel was cautious not to inflame an already tense situation.

"They (the Congressional delegation) are very sensitive that if we raise our voices too much, everything could go to Kentucky," said Fairfax County board member Penny Gross.

Arlington stands to lose the most jobs at 19,000. The report's author John McClain, a senior fellow at George Mason's Center for Regional Analysis, told board members the leased office buildings would find new tenants. But he said they would ultimately house fewer workers.

"We hope the owners will reconsider redeveloping as housing instead of offices if the recommendations go forward," McClain said.

Arlington officials are bracing for major changes if the plan goes through.

"We know Arlington will survive this," said Arlington Board member Jay Fisette. "The Pentagon isn't moving, neither is the transit, the airport or anything else." He said his arguments against the job reshuffling don't center on the economic impact.

Fisette said he is optimistic the feds may reconsider after Sen. John Warner, R-Va., who helped write the BRAC law, testified at last week's hearing that the way it was being applied in this case was not legal.

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Warner and other political leaders have vowed to make sure the commission abides by the criteria it was given, which they said does not include some of the reasons the Pentagon offered for closures. The military has suggested moving the bases because of Defense Department directives, like one calling for military facilities to move out of leased spaces, that may be beyond the commission's mandate, lawmakers have said.

Congressional delegation defends Pearl Harbor shipyard

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Honolulu, HI)
Jaymes Song
July 13, 2005

Hawaii's congressional delegation sent a letter to a base closure panel urging it to keep the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard open, officials said Wednesday.

The letter sent to Anthony Principi, chairman of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, said the "overwhelming strategic value" of the shipyard is clear and that closing the 97-year-old base could "severely impact the Navy's readiness and homeland defense capabilities."

"We are committed to our efforts to ensure that the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard is not closed or realigned and we believe our letter provides compelling reasons why the Pearl Harbor shipyard should be excluded from closure or realignment," Sen. Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii, said Wednesday.

The four-page letter, dated Tuesday, came 11 days after Principi asked Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld to explain why the Pentagon left the Pearl Harbor shipyard off a list of potential bases to be closed or scaled back, and instead recommended Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine.

Commissioners will hold a hearing next week in Washington to decide whether bases 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.

The panel has until Sept. 8 to prepare a final list of base closings for President Bush to review.

Rep. Neil Abercrombie said closing or reducing Pearl Harbor amounts "to shifting the Navy's maintenance capacity eastward while we send the fleet westward," as the United States puts more military priority in the Asia-Pacific region.

"It doesn't make sense strategically or financially," said Abercrombie, D-Hawaii.

Hawaii's delegation raised the issue of quality of life for sailors and their families if the shipyard were closed, because the more than 30 ships and submarines based at Pearl Harbor would be forced to travel to the mainland for repairs or overhauls.

"Families would have to be uprooted and relocated to the mainland for long-term maintenance, a costly and unnecessary upheaval," the letter said.

The letter also emphasized that Pearl Harbor is a full-service shipyard, with the ability to maintain and repair all Navy ships, including aircraft carriers, while Portsmouth specializes in submarines.

"These factors make numerical comparisons of capabilities, cost efficiencies and value challenging," the letter said.

Maine officials have cited examples of Portsmouth having greater efficiency compared to Pearl Harbor.

Meanwhile, commission members on Thursday will hear arguments at the western regional meeting in Los Angeles. But Hawaii won't be sending a delegation to testify, as it had hoped to, but will send representatives to Washington next week.

Pearl Harbor shipyard is Hawaii's largest industrial employer, with 4,355 civilians and a

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payroll last year of $385 million. The shipyard has an estimated economic impact of $1 billion.

Geospatial agency may come to Meade; Officials make pitch to bring 3,000 Bethesda-based jobs here

The Baltimore Sun (Baltimore, MD)
Phillip McGowan
July 13, 2005

The case has been made and remade. Now Maryland must sit back this summer and wait to discover whether the state will receive thousands of relocated military jobs, and whether Fort Meade will get its hands on most of them.

But if a delegation of Maryland's top leaders proved persuasive last week, the Army post that's home to the National Security Agency could undergo an even larger expansion of its intelligence operations than previously anticipated.

Before the commission that is overseeing the Pentagon's Base Realignment and Closure process in Towson, Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski made the pitch to bring about 3,000 workers at National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency in Bethesda to the extra-secure confines of Fort Meade, a move that she said would bring together "the technical eyes and ears of U.S. intelligence."

The Democrat said that by bringing NSA and NGA together on one site, Fort Meade would become "the national home for signals and technical intelligence."

Maryland officials have been working behind the scenes to secure the state's intelligence work force since the Pentagon announced its base realignment plans two months ago. Those plans included moving the geospatial agency to Fort Belvoir, part of an anticipated shift of more than 18,000 jobs to the Northern Virginia installation.

Many see Fort Meade, which is likely to undergo a decades-long expansion of its intelligence operations, as the answer to preventing the Bethesda agency from leaving Maryland. Under the Pentagon's recommendations, Meade is set to gain more than 5,300 jobs - many of them related to surveillance efforts at NSA - within seven years.

Saying the mission of the geospatial agency "is closely tied to that of National Security Agency," Mikulski added that "NGA can establish itself faster, more securely and with less disruption to its mission at Fort Meade. ... Upgraded infrastructure would allow NGA to `plug in' quickly."

Officials at Fort Meade recently revealed details of a three-decade master plan to accommodate growth in and around the Army post in western Anne Arundel County, as local and state leaders estimate that tens of thousands of jobs will come to the Fort Meade area because of NSA. One proposal involves eliminating the 400-acre golf course in the center of the 5,400-acre installation to create space for federal agencies seeking the extra security that Meade could provide.

Col. John W. Ives, who stepped down last month as Meade's commander, has said that the golf course site could accommodate about 20,000 more workers. Independent of the base realignment process, NSA announced last year that it would hire 7,500 employees by 2009. Many of the nation's defense contractors that work with the agency have already clustered their operations at a business park that shadows Fort Meade.

With the Army post emerging as a national center for defense and information technology, state leaders anticipate that thousands of more high-tech contracting jobs will find their way there.

Maryland officials emphasized at the Towson forum Friday that Meade could handle the responsibility of two critical intelligence agencies, and the county's chief planner reaffirmed that Anne Arundel will have the transportation and high-end office space to accommodate such fast-paced growth, and the homes, schools and "quality-of-life" aspects that will lure workers to live nearby.

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"We believe we are ready for the proposed growth and additional private-sector activity that will be driven by the BRAC process," said county Planning Director Joseph W. Rutter Jr.

Rutter said the county has about 4,000 housing units ready to be built around the fort from Arundel Mills to Odenton, and that more housing is "in the development pipeline that will provide a supply over the next decade."

In addition, 5 million square feet of office space "is ready to move forward" along the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, much of it to accommodate NSA contractors.

That doesn't include plans for the $40 million Odenton Town Center, a mixed-use development near a MARC train line.

State officials are working on a conceptual plan to extend the Green Line of the Washington-area Metro up through Fort Meade and on to Baltimore-Washington International Airport.

State leaders expressed confidence that the commission would sign off on most of the Pentagon's recommendations for Maryland, and appeared to revel in the moment in a news conference just after their presentation. The commission, which can alter the Pentagon recommendations, will send the revised plan to President Bush and the Congress in the fall.

Aris Melissaratos, secretary of the state's Department of Business and Economic Development, said after the hearing that Maryland officials spent four years making the case for BRAC.

"Those years yielded those results," he said. "This was the cherry on top."

Leaders to Fight for Jobs at Base

The Daily News of Los Angeles (Los Angeles, CA)
Eric Leach
July 13, 2005

Two members of Congress will join retired Navy officers Thursday in making the case for retaining thousands of jobs at Naval Base Ventura County as the federal Base Realignment and Closure Committee meets in Southern California.

The Pentagon recommended in May shifting jobs from the base's Point Mugu installation to the Naval Air Weapons Station at China Lake, which local officials say would undermine the nation's defensive capabilities.

``We are going to assure that the BRAC Commission understands that the current Department of Defense recommendations would decrease military value to our war fighters, would cost the taxpayers millions of dollars of unnecessary expenses and simply don't make sense," said Jack Dodd, the former vice commander of the Naval Air Warfare Center at Point Mugu.

``All these functions provide direct support to our men and women in uniform. Disrupting that work by moving it to China Lake would decrease the operational readiness of our armed forces."

Ventura County officials estimate the coastal community could lose more than 6,000 high-paying military and related civilian jobs, largely from the potential shift from Point Mugu to China Lake.

``The (Ventura County) base oversees an airfield, activities in a 36,000- square-mile instrumented sea test range, and the only military-controlled deep-water harbor and port facility (at the Port Hueneme installation) between San Diego and Seattle," said Rep. Lois Capps, D-Santa Barbara, who plans to speak at Thursday's meeting.

Rep. Elton Gallegly, R-Thousand Oaks, is also expected to speak, along with retired Rear Adms. George Strohshl and Dana McKinney.

There will be speakers in support of a number of Southern California military installations, including Naval Base Ventura County, the Naval

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Weapons Station China Lake, the Marine Corps Logistics Base - Barstow, and the Naval Surface Warfare Center, Corona Division.

The commission is holding hearings throughout the nation this summer and will make recommendations to President George W. Bush by Sept. 8.

A Pentagon spokesman said military officials stand by their recommendations, but it is up to the BRAC commission to consider all the information and arrive at a conclusion.

Naval Base Ventura County is the county's largest employment center, providing about 17,000 jobs and contributing about $1.2 billion a year to the local economy.

Riverbank Base At Risk Officials Taking Trip In Attempt To Save Ammunition Plant

Modesto Bee (Modesto, CA)
Inga Miller
July 13, 2005

City representatives left for Los Angeles Tuesday on a lobbying trip they hope will save the Riverbank Army Ammunition Plant.

The 173-acre site on Claus Road, one of 12 military installations proposed for closure in the state, has the "synergy" of more than 50 years of history in the community, Mayor Chris Crifasi said.

The plant employs 89 people.

"The ammunition plant has been such a big part of Riverbank for so long," Crifasi said, whose father worked as draftsman there. "I think we owe it to the plant to do whatever we can to save it."

He said success will depend on convincing federal officials the plant is cost effective.

He is scheduled to speak Thursday afternoon before five members of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission. They are holding a hearing at Westchester High School in Los Angeles for representatives from installations throughout California.

The nine-member panel, charged with choosing which bases to close nationwide, must make a final recommendation to President Bush by Sept. 8. Bush has until Sept. 23 to accept or reject the plan. If he accepts it, Congress has 45 days to reject the base-closure plan, or it takes effect automatically.

Crifasi said closing the plant would end a part of the city's history. The plant started manufacturing cartridge casings in 1952 under a contract with Norris Industries, now NI Industries.

Today, employees in the 813,000-square foot manufacturing facility -- a dimly lit maze

of corridors -- operate giant presses that form projectiles and shell casings.

Last year, the plant put out about 33,000 5-inch shells, 15,000 76mm shells and a mix of other casings and grenades used with the Army's new Stryker combat vehicle.

Pentagon: Move to save money

"It's a very unusual operation out there," Crifasi said. "I feel if they close down this operation, and move it, they aren't going to have the synergy created through decades of work."

In May, the Pentagon recommended closing the plant and moving output to the Rock Island Arsenal in Illinois.

Defense officials stationed there already oversee Riverbank operations. The Pentagon concluded the move would save $6.5 million annually, which would cover the $25.4 million cost of closing the plant within a few years.

But city officials and NI Industries maintain the Pentagon failed to properly assess other costs involved in moving the plant. The moving cost

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did not include $10 million for environmental cleanup, supporters say.

The land is on a federal list of the most heavily polluted sites.

"We probably could get the base for a small amount of

money, but the problem is the environmental cleanup, which could go on for years," said City Manager Rick Holmer. "I'm thinking it would take 15 to 20years before we could use it."

Other than Riverbank, those expected to speak include representatives from at least four

other installations proposed for closure or cutbacks: the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Corona, the Naval Base in Ventura County, the Marine Corps Logistics Base in Barstow and the

Naval Air Weapons Station in China Lake.

Military jobs in danger

San Bernardino Sun (San Bernardino, CA)
Chuck Mueller
July 13, 2005

The lead-up to Thursday's hearing in Los Angeles on the possible closure of military bases in Southern California got off on the wrong foot for Barstow earlier this week with a private briefing at the Barstow Marine Corps Logistics Base.

The briefing about the base's mission had been announced for Tuesday but went on unheralded the day before.

Military officials at the base briefed James Bilbray, a member of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, about the maintenance and supply base.

City officials and the public were excluded.

Four area military installations face the loss of more than 1,500 jobs if a Pentagon recommendation to close or realign the bases is accepted by the commission. Barstow alone would lose 419 positions among the 870 employees.

Barstow Mayor Lawrence Dale, who will lead a six-member delegation to the Thursday hearing arranged by U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, said the proposal to cut jobs at the does not make sense.

"The secretary of defense apparently does not fully understand the importance of the base to our national security and defense,' Dale said.

City strategist Patricia Morris said Tuesday that the Department of Defense "deviated substantially from its final selection criteria in making its recommendation for the Marine base,' which she said is a fatal flaw in the Pentagon's plan for a base that repairs everything from tanks to Humvees to howitzers, once again making them battle ready.

Morris gave no details of the deviation.

Concerning Thursday's presentation, Morris said, "Our focus will be on the military value of the Marine base. We believe the ... recommendation will harm the combat readiness and effectiveness of the Marine Corps.'

They will have 25 minutes to make their case.

In San Bernardino and Riverside counties, the Pentagon has called for closing the Defense Finance and Accounting Service in San Bernardino, at a cost of 120 jobs, and closing the Naval Support Activity in Corona, where 892 jobs would be lost.

The Pentagon also has recommended realigning March Air Reserve Base near Riverside, trimming 111 jobs.

The Naval Air Weapons Station, China Lake, would gain 2,469 jobs under the proposal.

San Bernardino County's two major bases, the Army's National Training Center at Fort Irwin and the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center at Twentynine Palms, were left

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untouched under the Pentagon's recommendations.

Gov. Lingle goes to Washington

Gov. Linda Lingle will fly to Washington, D.C., next week to lobby for keeping Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard open.
Pacific Business News (Honolulu, HI)
July 13, 2005

The Base Closure and Realignment Commission has agreed to meet Monday with Lingle, Sen. Daniel Inouye and Hawaii Adjutant General Robert Lee to discuss Pearl Harbor, one day before the commission decides whether to add the base to its list of base closures.

"While the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard is vital to our state's job market and overall economy, our meeting in Washington will focus on the shipyard's strategic, long-term value in keeping our nation and the Asia-Pacific region secure," Lingle said Wednesday.

The commission did not originally target Pearl Harbor, initially accepting a Pentagon judgment that it would make more sense to close the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Me., because there are more world trouble spots in the Pacific than in the Atlantic.

But New England officials, trying to save the Portsmouth yard and its thousands of jobs, have defended that base mainly by attacking Pearl Harbor, which they say is less efficient according to a study done by the Navy. The commission had to hold one hearing on the issue at the Boston convention center when 75 charter buses brought more than 3,000 Portsmouth supporters to attend it.

Since closing Portsmouth would wreak as much economic havoc on New England as closing Pearl Harbor would on Hawaii -- the governor of Maine said it would give his state a "federally induced recession" -- the commission members are likely to be more interested in strategic issues, as Lingle indicated, and might also ask about Hawaii's ability to support the base if it stays open.

While in Washington, Lingle will also meet with senators as the U.S. Senate prepares to begin debating the Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization Act, better known as the Akaka Bill. "I will be meeting with co-sponsors of the Akaka Bill, other key senators who support it, and those still undecided to answer questions and provide additional information about this important legislation," Lingle said.

Sens. Bayh, Lugar promote Crane

Linton Daily Citizen (Linton, IN)
July 13, 2005

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Sen. Evan Bayh, along with Sen. Richard Lugar, on Tuesday met with the Chairman of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission to urge him to re-evaluate the decision to move jobs from Crane and to praise the decision to move 3,500 new jobs to the Defense Financial and Accounting Service (DFAS) center in Indianapolis.

The face-to-face meeting gave Bayh a powerful opportunity to make the case for the state's bases and military jobs. It was the latest in a series of efforts taken by Sen. Bayh in support of the important military work performed in Indiana, including testimony he submitted during the regional hearing in St. Louis last month.

"Nothing beats the opportunity to make your case person-to-person, and today Sen. Lugar and I made the most of our meeting with Chairman Principi to outline the strengths offered by Indiana's bases," Sen. Bayh, a member of the Armed Services Committee, said. "This meeting was important in our efforts to keep the new jobs coming to Indiana and hopefully regain the jobs currently slated to leave Crane. I will continue working with all members of the Indiana delegation to fully support our bases during the BRAC process."

During their meeting, Sen. Bayh emphasized to Chairman Principi that Crane meets or exceeds all of the requirements that were used for the 2005 BRAC round. Crane possesses exceptional technical and industrial capabilities, which has

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allowed it to reduce costs and support rapid deployment to meet the military's constantly changing needs. Its location is also ideal, in close proximity to necessary transportation infrastructure and utilities, but removed from any potential terrorist threat and without any environmental issues. Additionally, they pointed out that the facility enjoys tremendous state and community support.

Bayh's meeting with Principi is the latest in a long line of meetings with key military leaders connected to the BRAC process. During his time in the Senate, Bayh has been a committed supporter of Crane, securing more than $90 million for various military construction and research and development work at the Indiana base. Crane is the military's leading source for the production and development of pyrotechnic devices, such as infrared decoy flares and "candles," which are used for mortar and artillery illumination rounds. The base has played a critical role in producing life-saving equipment for our soldiers during Operation Iraqi Freedom and providing needed equipment to troops currently serving at home and abroad.

Opinions/ Editorials

Norfolk part of argument to keep Groton

Norwich Bulletin (Norwich, CT)
July 14, 2005

U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons' reluctance to "poach" submarines from Virginia is understandable. Team Connecticut's first order of business is saving the U.S. Navy Submarine Base at Groton.

But the Virginia submarines are already are in play.

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Chairman Anthony Principi, member Samuel Skinner and Navy Rear Adm. Robin Watters -- commander, Navy Region Northeast -- all have addressed the question of transferring submarines from the U.S. Navy Base at Norfolk, Va., to Groton.

During the May 31 base visit, Principi asked Watters if Groton could accommodate the transfer of Norfolk's attack subs. Watters said it could.

In DCN letter 2204, available on the BRAC Web site, Watters explains to Principi that "support infrastructure" would need to be built (with no cost given).

In DCN letter 4050, the Base Visit Report mentions concerns raised by BRAC Commissioners James Bilbray and Lloyd Newton:

The "strategic vulnerability of Norfolk/Kings Bay if all eggs (are) in one basket," and the cost of relocating from Connecticut.

The "total loss of military in the Northeast region of the nation."
At the July 6 BRAC hearing in Boston, Commissioner Samuel Skinner asked Subase Realignment Coalition Chairman John Markowicz if the relocation of subs from Norfolk to Groton had been explored.

Markowicz said it had; coalition member Gabe Stern then explained how the Navy had relied on faulty data in arriving at the cost of relocating the Groton submarines, sub school and personnel away from Electric Boat to Norfolk and Kings Bay.

Stern's findings were too numerous to list here, but one error stands out: The Navy believed Groton has just two drydocks, and a third would have to be built at a cost of $93 million to accommodate additional subs.

A third drydock at EB is undergoing a $40 million overhaul and will be back in service in February. That's just one $93 million mistake, and Stern's research identified several others.

In the end, Stern's analysis shows the Navy can save $200 million keeping Groton open.

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BRAC Commission members Principi, Newton, Bilbray and Skinner have asked about relocating fast-attack subs from Norfolk to Groton.

The interest on the part of BRAC commissioners hardly suggests "poaching."

The Navy's analysis of the cost of closing Groton is off by hundreds of millions of dollars. Electric Boat is a presence that cannot be duplicated elsewhere. Those factors militate against closing Groton.

The possibility of relocating Norfolk subs here should be part of the argument.

Additional Notes

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