

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



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Department of Defense Releases

Lawmakers To Principi: Reject DoD Proposal To Close New London Base

Inside the Pentagon

Keith J. Costa

July 14, 2005

Two high-profile House Armed Services Committee Republicans sent a letter earlier this month to the head of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission claiming a Pentagon proposal to shut down Naval Submarine Base New London, CT, would undermine the nation's security.

In May, the Defense Department unveiled a list of military facilities it recommends closing as part of this year's BRAC round -- a list that includes the New London facility.

The recommendations are under consideration by commissioners, who can vote to add or remove installations from the list.

In their July 5 letter to BRAC Chairman Anthony Principi, Armed Services Committee Chairman Duncan Hunter (CA) and Rep. Roscoe Bartlett (MD), the panel's projection forces subcommittee chairman, express concern that the Navy analysis behind the decision to close New London "used unacceptable assumptions about the future nuclear attack submarine force."

Without the facility, the Navy would be locked "into an artificially low force level and damage the national security of the United States," the lawmakers write. For that reason, Principi and fellow commissioners should reject the Pentagon's recommendation for the submarine base, the duo argues.

"The BRAC recommendation to close SUBASE New London does not conform to the Navy's true force needs," the letter states. "Closing New London will tie the SSN [nuclear attack submarine] force to an insufficient force level and destroy the world's best submarine base in exchange for little or no savings."

Hunter and Bartlett take issue with May 17 testimony before Congress by Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Vern Clark on the number of SSNs the Navy will require in the future. Clark said the future force level will be in the low 40s, while the lawmakers maintain that number would not "safely address the growing undersea warfare threats facing the United States."

"Future defense requirements demand higher attack submarine numbers than those assumed by the Navy during the 2005 BRAC process -- a gross departure from earlier plans," the lawmakers write. "The last Quadrennial Defense Review [in 2001] specified a minimum force level of 55 SSNs necessary to fill the combatant commanders' high-priority needs, with earlier and subsequent studies consistently placing acceptable SSN numbers well above 50."

The lawmakers also note recent testimony from other top Navy officials who call for maintaining

the current SSN force level of 54, while addressing concerns about a deficient number of subs to handle all the combatant commanders' needs. Further, a lower number of SSNs could spell trouble for the service because industry would not be able to produce new vessels at affordable costs, according to the letter.

Hunter and Bartlett express optimism about new technology programs, like the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency's "Tango Bravo," that could allow the Navy to build smaller, less expensive submarines.

"These advances would allow the Navy to buy more SSNs with less funding, but closing SUBASE New London would prevent the Navy from exploiting potential gains, because the service would lack the surge capacity to berth and maintain additional vessels," the letter states.

In weighing the proposal to shut down New London, the BRAC panel should consider whether the move means a deviation from recognized criteria for making such a decision, the lawmakers tell Principi.

"As you know, the first criterion of the BRAC process addresses the base's current and future mission capabilities and the impact on operational readiness of the total force of the Department of Defense," the letter states. "Another criterion focuses on the base's ability to accommodate contingency, mobilization, surge, and future total force requirements at both existing and potential receiving locations to support operations and training."

BRAC Commission members have until September to mull the Pentagon's proposals for realigning or closing military installations.

The Defense Department says its recommendations could save almost \$50 billion over 20 years. However, the Government Accountability Office, in a report released earlier this month, questioned the assumptions defense officials used to come up with that figure (Inside the Pentagon, July 7, p6).

For instance, GAO says some of the Pentagon's projections are based on plans for more efficient business processes. However, the report says these proposals are not sufficiently "validated" -- and predicting the savings that could result is difficult.

Key Officials Charge DoD Has Ignored BRAC Environmental Effects

Inside the Pentagon
Suzanne Yohannan
July 14, 2005

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John Warner (R-VA) and other public officials are alleging the Defense Department failed to sufficiently consider the environmental impacts of closing or realigning bases as one of several arguments aimed at convincing base closure commissioners to reverse recommendations by the Defense Department to shutter bases in their communities.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission has begun hearing testimony on a nearly daily basis, considering arguments from a multitude of public officials and others across the country on whether the commission should reverse DOD proposals to close or realign bases in their communities.

The commission, delegated by Congress to independently review DOD's 2005 BRAC recommendations, is assessing whether DOD adhered to congressionally prescribed criteria. While the commission must give priority to the criteria related to the military value of a base, the environmental impact of a closure or realignment -- including the costs of cleanup, waste management and compliance -- is another criterion that must be considered in BRAC decisions. Following its review of DOD's BRAC list, the commission must make its recommendations to the president on whether to make any changes by Sept. 8.

But some senators, governors and other public officials say DOD failed to fully weigh the environmental impacts of certain BRAC proposals. In particular, some officials say DOD

neglected to fully consider cleanup costs if a base closes. DOD's policy has long been not to include cleanup costs in its calculation of costs and savings because it is liable for cleanup costs regardless of whether a base closes.

A DOD spokesman says the department adhered to all of the BRAC criteria, including the environment criterion, and stands by its recommendations.

Nonetheless, public officials say DOD did not consider the magnitude of the cleanup costs in some cases. For instance, Warner and Sen. George Allen (R-VA) are each raising concerns over cleanup costs at the Army's Ft. Monroe in Hampton, VA. As the oldest major installation in the United States, the base has an extensive amount of unexploded ordnance.

In written testimony submitted to the commission last week, Allen points to a 1993 BRAC Commission analysis that found cleanup of a portion of Ft. Monroe in 1980 would cost about \$635 million. "Factoring for inflation from 1980 to the present, it is clear that a comprehensive remediation for the entire facility would easily exceed 1 billion dollars," the 1993 report said.

Allen testified that the environmental criterion during the 2005 round was "quickly glanced over or even completely ignored," noting the department's early estimates for cleanup are about \$300 million.

"Considering these costs," Allen said, referring to the potential \$1 billion price tag, "one can confidently assert that any potential saving from closing Ft. Monroe will be so far into the future that they cannot be accurately determined.

"The bottom line is that the possible closure of Ft. Monroe will lead to arguably one of the most convoluted, complicated, costly, and controversial closings in our nation's history with reuse by the private sector being made impossible," Allen continued.

In his testimony, Warner, a longtime supporter of the BRAC process, also warned against DOD's decision to exclude high cleanup costs related to Ft. Monroe and ignore the "legal confusion" related to ownership of the property. This closure could cost much more than it will save, he said.

Similarly, Connecticut officials have been questioning the military's calculation of cleanup costs when DOD recommended that the submarine base in Groton, CT, be closed.

In July 6 testimony to the commission, Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Gina McCarthy reiterated arguments put forward by Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal (D), who has questioned whether the Navy considered the cost of a radiological cleanup for the base in making the Groton sub base closure decision.

The Navy has contended in response to Blumenthal's criticisms that cleanup-related costs were included in the analysis used to support inclusion on the BRAC 2005 list.

In her testimony, McCarthy said DOD underestimated both closure and restoration costs. While the Navy estimated \$23 million in cleanup costs, the state believes the cost would be \$125 million, excluding any radiological cleanup. Further, cleanup would need to be on an accelerated schedule because of restrictions on the transfer of property prior to cleanup.

"In addition, deed restrictions raise serious doubts about the neighbors' assertion that proceeds from the sale or lease go to the Navy, adding further uncertainty to the DOD cost benefit assessment," she testified. The Navy has in recent years sought to rely on BRAC land sales to help pay for its BRAC cleanup program.

Meanwhile, officials in Nevada are trying to convince the commission to reverse DOD's recommendation to close the Army's Hawthorne Depot because of its environmental benefits.

In June 24 testimony to the commission, Nevada Gov. Kenny Guinn (R) cites the Army's failure

to fully weigh the lack of encroachment as one of several flaws in its analysis to close Hawthorne Army Depot. The depot, which is surrounded by other federal lands, "has the largest, most diverse environmentally compliant state-of-the-art military munitions dismantling facility in the depot system of the entire DOD," he testified.

"Meanwhile, other depots that will have to absorb Hawthorne's mission do not enjoy such relief from encroachment. In fact it will take five to seven years at least to complete environmental permitting necessary to build similar capabilities at other facilities that are already suffering encroachment issues."

Nevada officials also noted the high cost of creating a munitions recycling facility like that at Hawthorne, including the years it would take to obtain air quality permits from the state of Utah, where the depot activities would likely be transferred. Target scrap from bombing ranges is also supposed to go to Hawthorne, solving critical state and federal environmental issues, according to testimony by Shelley Hartman, executive director for economic development in Mineral County. And the facility is one of just a handful being considered as a national repository for DOD's mercury stockpile.

The testimony comes as the Congressional Research Service has issued a report finding that it would be difficult for critics to obtain judicial review of BRAC decisions. Due to various aspects of the Administrative Procedure Act and BRAC law, "courts would likely allow the BRAC process to proceed even if the Department of Defense, the commission, or the president did not comply with the Base Closure Act's requirements," CRS says in a June 24 report.

Tour From BRAC Commissioner May Help Michigan Base's Situation

Inside the Pentagon

Chris Johnson

July 14, 2005

A Michigan congressman has convinced a member of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission to tour the W.K. Kellogg Airport Air Guard Station in Battle Creek, MI, in an effort to reverse the Defense Department's recommendation to close the base.

The commission did not schedule the visit before Rep. Joe Schwarz (R-MI) presented his case during a June 15 BRAC hearing in St. Louis. Commissioner Samuel Skinner and the panel's senior Air Force analyst, Kenneth Small, agreed to visit the Michigan Air National Guard base on July 29 at Schwartz's request.

"We will continue to press our case that the DOD recommendations made with respect to Battle Creek were made without respect to the true military value of the base, that they do not promote military transformation and that they are not cost effective," Schwarz said in a June 30 statement.

When Schwarz attended the St. Louis hearing, he presented several facts that questioned DOD's expected cost savings. DOD contends that shutting down the Battle Creek station and transferring some of its equipment to another air base in Selfridge, MI, would lead to recurring savings of \$13 million each year and a net present value of savings of \$167 million over 20 years.

Schwarz rebutted those numbers by arguing that DOD's plan to move Battle Creek's A-10 ground-attack aircraft to Selfridge would result in a greater expense than the Pentagon thought. Schwarz spokesman Matt Marsden said relocating the aircraft to Selfridge would lead to the cost of training new pilots and a one- or two-year wait before the aircraft were capable of being deployed.

"The Defense Department is weakening military value by moving the National Guard and retraining pilots," Marsden said. "We believe that the BRAC Commission will see the wisdom of keeping the A-10s in Battle Creek."

The Pentagon is already taking some heat for its base closing analysis from the Government

Accountability Office, which recently released a report suggesting that DOD used questionable assumptions when projecting the cost savings of closing bases (Inside the Pentagon, July 7, p6). The report does not analyze the savings that DOD anticipates specifically for the Battle Creek base shutdown, but it does note that DOD may have erred if it believed that it could cut costs by trimming personnel numbers with base closures.

"Claiming such personnel as BRAC savings without reducing end strength does not provide dollar savings that can be reapplied outside personnel accounts and could result in the Air Force having to find other sources of funding for up-front investment costs to implement its BRAC recommendations," reads the GAO report.

In addition to financial considerations, Marsden said the Pentagon erred in determining the local economic results of shutting down the base. Marsden said that while BRAC predicted initial job growth as a result of implementing the shutdown, those jobs would disappear as soon as the closure was complete.

"In 2006, you may have that gain, but if you look at it from 2006 to 2011, that original number may seem deceiving," Marsden said.

While other lawmakers are making similar claims about DOD's numbers to preserve the bases in their districts, Schwarz has already had success in defeating an earlier move to close the base. Marsden claimed credit for Schwarz in preventing the Battle Creek base's planned shutdown in 1993. At the time, when Schwarz was a Michigan state senator, DOD made a similar recommendation to close the base, but the BRAC Commission rejected the effort.

National News Articles

BRAC Lawyer: States Must OK Guard Plans

Congress Daily
Megan Scully
July 13, 2005

A lawyer for the base closure and realignment commission says the Defense Department's plans to strip all planes from 23 Air Guard units around the country might be unconstitutional.

The argument, outlined in a document dated Thursday and obtained by CongressDaily, comes as the legal debate is heating up over whether the Pentagon has the authority to stand down or alter National Guard units without the consent of the a state's governor, who has the right to maintain militias as spelled out in the Constitution.

Any move to withdraw, disband or change the organization of Air National Guard units would require the commission to "alter core defense policies," including the National Defense Act of 1916 and Title 32 of the U.S. Code, according to the 37-page paper authored by BRAC deputy counsel Dan Cowhig.

"Any argument that would propose to sidestep these statutes should be evaluated with the knowledge that the statutes are an expression of core constitutional law and national policy," the paper states.

As such, the independent commission does not have the right to approve the Pentagon's extensive Air National Guard recommendations if individual governors do not consent to the aircraft moves.

Cowhig's conclusions still must be considered by the nine BRAC commissioners, who have until Sept. 8 to evaluate Defense Secretary Rumsfeld's base-closure recommendations and submit their own list to the White House.

While not officially adopted by the commission, the paper might spell victory for nearly two dozen states fighting to keep their Guard aircraft and have presented essentially the same argument to the BRAC commission during public hearings and closed-door meetings over the last two months.

Indeed, the paper seems to back what Pennsylvania's top lawmakers contend in a court

case filed Monday to shield the 111th Fighter Wing of the state's Air Guard from deactivation. The unit is based at the Willow Grove Naval Air Station, slated for closure in this BRAC round.

"If the courts agree with us, the Pentagon does not have the unilateral ability to shut down a Guard unit," said Adrian King, Pennsylvania Democratic Gov. Ed Rendell's deputy chief of staff and the director of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency.

Pennsylvania has a history of challenging BRAC recommendations, with another suit filed by Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., against the Pentagon more than a decade ago to save the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard.

In the suit, Specter alleged in federal court that the Pentagon's decision-making process was flawed and officials concealed information from Congress, necessitating another review. Specter ultimately argued his case before the Supreme Court in 1994, but the court unanimously rejected his plea.

This time around, the state is not presenting an argument over process, but rather arguing that the Constitution and other states supercede BRAC law, proponents said.

"We're not challenging the BRAC process whatsoever because we think that if the BRAC Commission revisits its look or DoD's look at Willow Grove, they will keep it open," said Peter Murphy, one of a team of attorneys representing the state. "We're not arguing that. We're arguing that the secretary of Defense needed to consult and get the consent of the governor."

No hearing date has been set for the Pennsylvania suit, Murphy said.

The nine BRAC commissioners will meet with Pentagon leaders Monday to receive more detail on recommendations requested by the commission in a July 1 memorandum to Rumsfeld.

In the memo, BRAC Chairman Anthony Principi pressed Rumsfeld on whether the Pentagon consulted state adjutants general and governors before making the Air Guard decisions, as well as the impact relocating aircraft would have on homeland security and defense missions.

National Guard leaders across the country have criticized the Air Force for shutting them out of base-closure discussions affecting the Air Guard. In contrast, the Army National Guard took part in several of the service's BRAC deliberations, sources have said.

Base Closing Authority Questioned Relocation of Otis could be ruled illegal

Boston Globe

Bryan Bender

July 15, 2005

WASHINGTON -- A top lawyer for the base closure commission is questioning whether the Pentagon has the legal authority to close Air National Guard bases around the country, including Otis Air Guard Base on Cape Cod, concluding that shuttering or relocating certain units "presents a significant policy concern or outright legal bar."

At issue is a series of recommendations made by the Pentagon in May that would result in the largest reorganization in the history of the Air National Guard, the flying units that during peacetime are under the command of state governors.

The internal memo from Dan Cowhig, deputy general counsel for the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, indicates that the independent panel reviewing the Pentagon's list of proposed closures may have no choice but to overturn Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld's recommendation to close Otis.

Under the Pentagon plan, the 102d Fighter Wing's 12 F-15 fighter jets would be relocated from Cape Cod to bases in Florida and New Jersey. But the memo questions whether the

commission has the legal authority to order the shifting of forces from one place to another.

"Where the commission finds substantial deviation or a legal bar, it must act to amend the [Pentagon's] recommendation, where possible, to correct the substantial deviation or overcome the legal bar," Cowhig wrote in a memo dated yesterday, a copy of which was obtained by the Globe.

The Pentagon recommended grounding 29, or about one-third, of the Air National Guard units across the country and relocating hundreds of aircraft as part of a nationwide overhaul of all active-duty and National Guard facilities.

But the Defense Department and the BRAC commission may not have the power to make such changes, according to Cowhig's memo, which was approved by his boss, BRAC general counsel David Hague. Relocating aircraft may be particularly problematic, according to the memo. It said that Congress must decide to change the size or structure of the Air National Guard. The Base Closure Act does not permit such changes.

"Where Congress has authorized the purchase of certain aircraft with the express purpose of equipping the Air Guard of a particular state or territory, the commission may not approve any recommendation action that would contravene the intent of Congress," the memo said.

It added, "Congress alone is granted the authority by the Constitution to equip the Armed Forces of the United States. Congress did not delegate this power to the Commission through the language of the Base Closure Act."

Earlier this month, at a public hearing in Boston, Massachusetts officials told commission members that the closure of Otis would seriously undermine state emergency preparedness plans and leave New England vulnerable in the event of a terrorist attack or disaster. The move would leave the region with only two fighter planes on alert within a 175-mile radius of Boston, what Governor Mitt Romney called "impractical" and "potentially dangerous."

James Bilbray, one of nine BRAC commissioners, said last night that they are considering reversing at least some of the Pentagon's recommendations on the Air National Guard. The panel will issue its recommendations to the president and Congress in September.

"We're going to make some changes," he said in a telephone interview, citing conversations he has had with commissioners. "It's just how many and to what extent." He said some planes would probably be transferred, but not nearly as many as the Pentagon has proposed.

"The Pentagon has managed to make about 30 governors really mad," he said. "That's pretty hard to do. But they've done it." He added: "It's a big fight right now," but predicted that "after the BRAC finishes, most of them will be happy."

Many governors, including Romney, have complained that they were not consulted before the Pentagon made its recommendations. On Monday, Governor Ed Rendell of Pennsylvania filed a lawsuit against Rumsfeld for seeking to move the 111th Fighter Wing of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard without seeking approval of the "Commander-in-chief of the Pennsylvania National Guard" -- the governor.

"I am very concerned that neither I nor my adjunct general was consulted in the Air Force process," Romney said last week. "Because the wing and the base are part of the Massachusetts Air National Guard, and because they form a critical component of my state's homeland security plan, our involvement should clearly have been sought and considered."

Memo Cites Legal Hitches in Base Closures

New York Times
July 14, 2005

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The Pentagon's broad proposal to shut down or shift Air National Guard units across the country may not be

allowed under the ongoing round of military base closings, according to an internal memo obtained by The Associated Press.

The memo, prepared by the general counsel's office of the independent commission reviewing the base closings, could stymie the Defense Department's efforts to streamline or eliminate as many as 30 Air Guard flying units from Maine to Texas.

Dated Thursday, the legal opinion said the use of the base closure law to relocate, disband or move Air Guard units from one state to another could be outside the scope of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission. And it said that in some cases the proposals could present legal problems and deviate from the criteria in the base closure law.

Officials reading the memo declared it good news for states that are trying to keep their guard units in place. BRAC officials could not be reached for immediate comment.

"Report of this memo is certainly welcome news to the state of Connecticut," said Rep. Rob Simmons, R-Conn. "The BRAC Commission is asking the right questions about whether the Pentagon has the legal right to take away planes and equipment from National Guard facilities without the consent of the states."

The memo backs up complaints made by state officials in several of the BRAC hearings, and could bolster a lawsuit filed by the state of Pennsylvania.

"In our conversations with the BRAC Commission, we've raised the same concerns about the Air Force's failure to consult with both the Massachusetts National Guard and the Coast Guard," said Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass. "We're confident that the BRAC Commission will correct the errors made in this process to follow the true intent of the BRAC law."

The memo also notes that the Pentagon already has the authority to reposition aircraft within the Air Force, but any changes in location of Air

National Guard aircraft must have the consent of the state's governor.

Massachusetts officials, who have been fighting the proposal to close Otis Air National Guard Base on Cape Cod, said the memo echoed their own arguments.

"This raises very serious questions about the whole rationale for the Otis closure recommendation," said Steve Schwarznron, chief of staff for Rep. William Delahunt, D-Mass.

State officials have blasted the proposed Air Guard restructuring, saying the Pentagon trod on state's rights. And they have warned that the shifts could erode homeland security.

Pennsylvania officials filed a lawsuit against the Pentagon over the planned closure of the Willow Grove Naval Air Station, arguing that only the governor has the authority to deactivate the Air National Guard unit.

Local News Articles

Gov. Praises Light Impact of Proposed Base Closures

Noting that no state wants to suffer cuts, Schwarzenegger says it's 'good news' that panel has targeted one base and 10 smaller facilities.

Los Angeles Times (Los Angeles, CA)
Ann M. Simmons

Citing the strategic and economic importance of the state's military bases, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger told a presidential commission Thursday that the Pentagon's proposed base closure list was "good news" because it would have minimal effect on California.

"Even though we don't want to lose a single job — no state does — we are pleased that the impact of the current plan on our economy is far less than it has been in the past," Schwarzenegger told the nine-member federal Base Closure and Realignment Commission at a special meeting in Los Angeles.

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Of the 30 major military bases in California, only the all-civilian Naval Surface Warfare Center in Corona is targeted for closure, and its 892 employees would be offered transfers.

Ten smaller installations would be closed, while other facilities would be downsized or have some personnel moved.

If the current plan is approved, about 2,000 of California's 200,000 military and civilian defense personnel would lose their jobs.

This compares with four previous rounds of military cuts that resulted in 29 base closures and the loss of 93,000 jobs.

But the nine-member commission — made up of military contractors, former members of Congress and ex-officers — is considering adding the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego to the closure list that must be forwarded to President Bush by Sept. 8.

The facility trains 16,000 recruits a year and has 2,600 Marines, sailors and civilian personnel assigned to it. It is being considered for closure because a similar facility operates at Parris Island, S.C.

During Thursday's hearing at Westchester High School, representatives from the targeted bases throughout California and others urged the panel to spare their facilities.

Ed Schwier, a retired captain and former commanding officer at the Corona base, warned that the closure would result in the loss of personnel with highly specialized expertise at the facility, where civilians analyze modern weapons systems and other technology for the military.

Schwier said that although some of the base's personnel — including engineers, scientists and technical employees — would be transferred, experience showed that only 15% to 20% of them would actually relocate.

Other installations facing closure or downsizing are the Riverbank Army Ammunition Depot near Modesto and the Marine Corps Logistics Base in Barstow, whose representatives also appealed to the commission for reconsideration.

Also targeted are military facilities in Concord and Santa Clara County, along with the armed service reserve center in Bell; finance and accounting offices in Oakland, San Bernardino, San Diego and Seaside; Navy-Marine Reserve centers in Encino and Los Angeles; and the Onizuka Air Force Station in Santa Clara County.

**Making a case for base
Proposal to transfer repairs may result in loss
of hundreds of jobs**

San Bernardino County Sun (San Bernardino, CA)

Sue Doyle

July 14, 2005

LOS ANGELES - When the 11th Guard of the Army was deployed to Iraq and needed a hand restoring machine guns, it didn't contract with another Army base; instead it went straight to Barstow's Marine Corps Logistic Base, said supporters of the desert facility.

The eight-member panel presented its case to base realignment and closure commissioners to keep the base facing realignment intact on Thursday during regional hearings at Westchester High School.

Under the Pentagon's base realignment and closure strategy that was unveiled May 13, the base where vehicles, weapons and radar systems are repaired could lose about 420 jobs.

The proposal, if approved, would transfer repairs of engines and transmissions to Army bases in Alabama, Pennsylvania and Georgia.

But supporters argued that the 63-year-old Marine base already handles the overload from some of those bases, so transferring the work to other facilities would be pointless.

In addition, they said the base always gets the job done faster and that any change could affect national security.

"We believe that readiness was lost in the shuffle," said Patricia Morris, assistant to Barstow's city manager and a member of the Military Affairs Committee of the Barstow Area Chamber of Commerce. "We think the harm will be significant."

Morris said that in 1988, the Army began rebuilding all of its night-vision apparatus. But when it got behind, the Barstow base was asked to help out and began rebuilding the equipment in 1989.

She asked officials why they thought realigning some of the operations from the base to the Army would make sense if the Army can't handle the load it has.

Following the presentation, commissioners told the Barstow panel that officials from Quantico, Va., had reservations about changing operations at the base and that they would take that into consideration.

The Pentagon's plan could shut down 33 major domestic military installations and realign 29 more if approved in entirety by the nine-member Base Realignment and Closure Commission. It's expected to save about \$50 billion over the next 20 years and includes closing unused military property that the Pentagon is paying for, such as hangars, classrooms and buildings.

Representatives of five other bases, stretching from San Diego to Modesto and China Lake, also took the stage Thursday afternoon, each pleading their cases against realigning their facilities.

Arguments took on a familiar sound.

Many said the Department of Defense had erred in its math about cost savings and that any changes to their bases would weaken U.S. wartime capabilities. They said the changes especially should not happen when there are troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

So far there have been 14 regional hearings across the country, with the next one to take place in New Orleans. The regional hearings allow communities to voice their concerns about the Department of Defense's recommendations.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and the co-chairmen of the California Council of Base Support and Retention, Leon Panetta and Donna Tuttle, also addressed the commissioners.

They said California has shouldered 30 percent of all base closings nationwide, and it has been a blow to the state's economy.

Plus, the state's environment the land, sea and weather creates a training ground for military personnel that can't be replicated anywhere else.

"For the good of our national security, bases that are here should stay here," Schwarzenegger said.

This is the fifth round of base consolidations and closings since 1988. They were expected to be a one-time event but continued in 1991, 1993 and 1995 under the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990. After the act expired in 1995, it was amended to include closings for 2005.

Standing outside the school after the panel spoke, Barstow Mayor Lawrence Dale and others said they were pleased with the presentation and with the commissioners' response.

"I think we told a story that opened everybody's eyes," Dale said.

The commission has until Sept. 8 to file its final report to President Bush. He has until Sept. 23 to approve or reject recommendations.

Georgia, Connecticut battle over base closing plans

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Washington, DC)

Lolita C. Baldor
July 15, 2005

When Connecticut officials argued against shuttering the Groton submarine base, they talked a lot about perceived shortcomings of Navy bases in Georgia and Virginia.

But when the debate in front of the independent commission reviewing the base closings moved south, Virginians and Georgians spent little time talking about the Pentagon's proposed shift of submarines and personnel from Groton to their states, and barely mentioned the Connecticut base.

This week, however, Georgia Rep. Jack Kingston sent a letter to the chairman of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission endorsing plans to shift vessels from Connecticut to Georgia. And he objected to Connecticut's suggestions that submarines be moved from Virginia to Groton.

"While it appears such a late realignment has no merit under the BRAC proceedings as I understand them, I am strongly against any plan which would put all our eggs in the same basket," said Kingston, R-Ga., in a letter sent Wednesday to commission chairman Anthony Principi. He said it was disconcerting to hear the proposal from the New London community to move nine SSN submarines from Norfolk to Groton.

It's a high stakes struggle among the states, and Connecticut has the most to lose.

The Defense Department's base closing plan would close Naval Submarine Base New London, which is in Groton, and slash nearly 8,500 jobs - the biggest hit nationwide.

But did Connecticut officials cross the line when they criticized facilities at Kings Bay?

"I think we're OK," said Sen. Joe Lieberman, D-Conn. "We were just saying all these remarkable facilities that the taxpayers have invested billions of dollars in - why spend money to recreate them at King's Bay."

Kingston said he bears no ill will toward his congressional colleagues for spending a large part of their recent two-hour BRAC hearing outlining the drawbacks of his Kings Bay base.

"Nobody takes anything personally," said Kingston. "They understand they have a job to do representing an area, and so do I. Being a gainer, it's for me not to pile on. They should have the opportunity to represent their case fairly."

At the same time, he said he believes that Kings Bay has made its case to both the commission and its staff, preemptively answering questions raised by Connecticut officials during their BRAC hearing.

During the Connecticut presentation, lawmakers, retired military brass and other experts argued that the Pentagon overstated the savings and understated the costs of moving vessels, personnel and facilities - including the submarine school - from Groton to Kings Bay.

In slides and in commentary, speaker after speaker talked about shortfalls at Kings Bay, including lack of space and facilities for additional vessels and personnel and the need for costly construction there. They said submarines would have to be double-parked at the Georgia base, making it more time-consuming and difficult to do routine maintenance.

During the Georgia hearing in Atlanta, Kings Bay's former commanding officer, retired Capt. Walt Yourstone, said the base and the surrounding community could handle the growth, including expanded school population and the need for additional housing.

Virginia lawmakers, who testified before the BRAC last week, spent their time arguing against other Pentagon proposals that would shift jobs and facilities out of northern Virginia. They made only passing references to the proposed gains at Norfolk Naval Base.

It was more important, in both Georgia and Virginia, to build arguments to save bases they were losing, said Kingston.

No one knows yet whether the base closing commission will do, as it moves toward a September vote on the Pentagon's proposals.

"I think there's a possibility it could get overturned," said Kingston. "I feel we gave as good a presentation as we could. And I'd rather be in our dugout than theirs."

Push to create college for national security;

BRAC: Proposal asks Pentagon to merge NPS and DLI

Monterey County Herald (Monterey, CA)
Julia Reynolds
July 15, 2005

Monterey has sent a proposal to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission that urges combining the Naval Postgraduate School and the Defense Language Institute into a single university, a plan the city has kept behind the scenes since December.

The proposed facility has been given the working title of National Security Research University, according to the proposal, which was originally sent to the Pentagon on Dec. 1, 2004.

The city has long favored placing the Navy and Army installations under a single branch of the military, but the recent proposal, sent Wednesday, goes further, suggesting that merging the two institutions' missions "has significant potential."

"Our desire was for the commission to be aware of the community's posture on these matters," said Deputy City Manager Fred Cohn.

This week's letter to commissioners includes a copy of the December proposal to "create, under a single umbrella, an integrated and robust national security research, education, and training enterprise that builds upon extraordinary work already being done."

The letter was sent in response to a request two weeks ago from BRAC commissioners to

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, asking him to consider consolidating the two Monterey schools. The commission suggested the possibility of bringing Ohio's Air Force Institute of Technology to the area to merge with the others.

The BRAC Commission is charged with reviewing a list of closure recommendations made by Rumsfeld in May, a list the Naval Postgraduate School narrowly escaped. Though neither of Monterey's schools was on Rumsfeld's list, it can be modified by the commission in coming months before being sent to the president.

Cohn said commission members had seen a copy of the university plan before raising the question with Rumsfeld.

While the December proposal did not require council approval, City Manager Fred Meurer said the council was aware of and supportive of it at the time.

Asked why it was not made public earlier, Cohn said the December letter to the Pentagon was public record, but added, "we consciously do not telegraph a lot of our base retention efforts."

"It's not something we advertised," he said. "It's not a secret either."

Meurer was in Los Angeles on Thursday to observe commission hearings about other California installations that are in more imminent danger of closure or realignment.

Meurer, who has attended BRAC hearings in past rounds, said elected officials who testified were much more savvy this time, "from the governor on down. I was impressed."

Leon Panetta, the former Central Coast congressman who is co-chairman of the state's Council on Base Support and Retention, also testified at Thursday's hearing.

Meurer will fly to Washington, D.C., next week to attend two more BRAC commission hearings,

when the Monterey bases and possible changes to the BRAC list may be discussed.

"On Tuesday, they'll be discussing what to add," he said. "Hopefully, I'd like them to vote that day, so we can stop running this marathon."

If the merger suggestion is added to the list, commission members will have to come to Monterey to conduct interviews on the matter before making a final decision.

A vote of seven of the nine BRAC commissioners is required to change the list.

In the end, Meurer said, even if the commission leaves DLI and NPS alone, the merger could still happen. But it would be easier and less costly under BRAC, which already has funds set aside for base consolidations.

"It's been a good idea for a long time," Meurer said.

Other local representatives have added their support.

The County Board of Supervisors approved a letter Tuesday that was almost identical to Monterey's cover letter. It said the community has supported the consolidation concept since the 1993 BRAC round.

Jessica Schafer, spokeswoman for Rep. Sam Farr, said Farr held a conference call with the governor's office and other officials almost immediately after the BRAC commission raised the issue two weeks ago.

Farr and Sens. Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein plan to sign a letter to be delivered to the BRAC commission in time for the start of its next hearing Monday morning.

Neither Farr nor the county supervisors has recommended plans as detailed as Monterey's, however.

"Sam's not really endorsing one specific plan," Schafer said.

Farr, who was flying home from Washington on Thursday, will head right back to the Capitol for Monday's hearings, joined by Meurer and Panetta.

"No, it's still not over," Cohn said.

Schafer said it's one thing for the commission to support Monterey's proposal. "Now we have to see if seven of the nine will vote for it."

Choices needed if bases close

The Advocate (Baton Rouge, LA)
July 14, 2005

Louisiana stands to get \$1 million from the federal government to help communities cope with possible closures of military facilities here as part of a national base-closing effort by the Pentagon.

This is good news, and we commend the state agencies that worked together to secure the money. But no one is suggesting - nor should anyone believe - that \$1 million is going to resolve all of the economic displacement that will result if Louisiana loses some of its military installations.

Part of the grant, from the U.S. Department of Labor, is supposed to help civilian workers and spouses who could be affected by the closures. Another part of the money will be used for planning how the economic transitions brought about by the possible closures could work.

The grant application was a collaborative effort among the Louisiana Department of Labor, the state Office of Homeland Security and the state Department of Economic Development. Representatives from all three agencies will plan how the money will be spent. Government is known for turf battles, so we're heartened by the cooperation these agencies showed in trying to help those affected by the possible closures.

The Pentagon has recommended closing 33 major bases and about 150 other installations around the country, a move that could cost

Louisiana more than 1,200 jobs and millions of dollars in payroll.

Most significantly, the Pentagon recommended closing the Naval Support Activity Center in New Orleans, which employs more than 4,600 military and civilian workers. The Pentagon also recommended closing three reserve centers employing about 200 people in Baton Rouge. Historically, the Pentagon's recommendations on facility closures have been implemented, despite protests from residents and politicians representing affected communities. A final decision on the proposed closings is expected later this year.

Baton Rouge also could end up a winner in the realignment, since the Pentagon is suggesting the city as home to an Armed Forces Reserve Center proposed for construction near Metro Airport. The center would consolidate operations of Army, Navy and Marine reserve centers, along with a Louisiana Army National Guard unit.

The likely closure of Louisiana facilities on the Pentagon's hit list is yet another reminder of the importance of a diversified state economy. Diverse economies have more flexibility in adjusting to the economic shocks that come when a major employer leaves town.

It's all about increasing economic choice for displaced workers. And here in Louisiana, these workers definitely need more choices than they're getting today.

Clerical error could help Keesler Medical Center, officials say

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Biloxi, MS)
July 14, 2005

An error in the calculation of the infrastructure and programs at Keesler Medical Center has U.S. Rep. Gene Taylor, D-Miss., optimistic about the fight to keep the facility as a full-service hospital.

The Base Realignment and Closure commission assigned zero points to Keesler Medical Center out of a possible 12.5 in a component of the formula that measures a military facility's value.

Brian Martin, Taylor's policy director, said Wednesday the calculation is a mistake.

Martin said he recently uncovered the mistake and plugged in the numbers a cross-service group had collected for BRAC in its research to give Keesler a score of 11.25 instead of zero. With the 11.25-point boost, Keesler would move up 44 spots in the health care services ranking.

"Keesler got zero points for the Facility Condition Index. It just didn't make sense," Martin said. "They are doing open heart surgery. It (the building) can't be in that bad shape."

Martin and Harrison County officials have been meeting regularly to plan their case against scaling back Keesler, which they'll present at the July 22 regional hearing in New Orleans.

After the discovery of the miscalculations, Taylor was optimistic about keeping the hospital's inpatient care unit open.

"If the BRAC commission is doing their job, they'll take Keesler off the (closure recommendation) list," he said.

In another key component of the overall score - health care education and training - Keesler Medical Center, which has an extensive residency program to train doctors, received a Top 10 ranking.

Martin said the mistake by the Medical Joint Cross-Service Group likely happened when an incorrect number on a Microsoft Excel document was used to calculate the facilities-condition index, which is part of the health care services score.

Martin said the health care services score is the most critical for the case to save Keesler's inpatient care mission.

"The low score for health care services has been pointed to as the justification," Martin said.

He said the Medical Joint Cross-Service Group, which determined the formula for the scores BRAC uses, verbally acknowledged the mistake Monday and will send written acknowledgment of the mistake.

The group did not say it agreed with Martin's score, but acknowledged there definitely was a mistake in its finding for the facilities-condition index, Martin said.

Internal memo challenges recommendations for Niagara Falls base

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Washington DC)

Devlin Barrett

July 14, 2005

The Pentagon's decision to close Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station may open up a legal can of worms that could cripple the entire national base-closing process, according to a new internal memo prepared by a lawyer for the base closure commission.

A Thursday legal memorandum obtained by The Associated Press argues the Pentagon may have so fine-tuned some of the suggested changes within the military that the moves fall outside the authority of the process known as Base Closure and Realignment.

A nine-member BRAC commission is reviewing the Pentagon's plans, which include closing the base in Niagara Falls, to present their recommendations to President Bush in September.

As part of the review, BRAC commission lawyer Dan Cowhig wrote a 20-page memo outlining potential pitfalls in the recommendations related to the Air Force - using the Niagara Falls base as a case study.

Cowhig alerted commissioners to "less obvious constraints on commission action," such as a specific recommendation that directs eight

tankers currently based in Niagara Falls to move to Bangor, Maine.

"Recommendations like those ... will place significant constraints on the future operations of the Air Force," the lawyer wrote.

Cowhig also argued that such specific, detailed realignment instructions are not provided for in the law that created BRAC and that could lead to bigger problems down the road if they are implemented.

"The inclusions of actions that conflict with existing legal authority will endanger the entirety of the base closure and realignment recommendations by exposing the recommendations to rejection by the President or Congress or to a successful legal challenge in the courts," he wrote.

The shifting of planes from Niagara Falls to Bangor was offered by the Pentagon for the purpose of fixing a "documented imbalance" in the mix of active and reserve personnel flying such planes - but the lawyer argues that BRAC was never designed to address those sort of policy concerns.

The BRAC process, Cowhig wrote, is designed to shift installations, not individual units or relatively small groups of equipment.

That analysis is similar to arguments Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton has made against the recommendation to close the base in western New York.

Asked for comment, Clinton issued a statement that said: "It's all too clear that the Pentagon and the Air Force are circumventing the legislative process and improperly using BRAC to rebalance the force between the active duty and the Reserves. I am hopeful that the BRAC commissioners will consider this analysis closely when they deliberate over the recommendation to close Niagara Falls."

But Air Force officials have maintained that consolidating military bases is a more cost-effective way to maintain an aging aircraft fleet.

Even if the commission accepted all of the lawyer's arguments, members could still recommend closing Niagara Falls and leave the decision of where to send particular planes to the Defense Department, as Cowhig suggests.

In a footnote, Cowhig also said the Air Force has overestimated the amount of savings created by moving the 107th Air Refueling Wing out of Niagara Falls, because officials failed to realize that the manpower costs would just be transferred to another location.

Officials defend base in Bangor; Guard facility spared from BRAC list

Bangor Daily News (Bangor, ME)

Doug Kesseli

July 14, 2005

Shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, two KC-135 refueling planes from Bangor were among the first in the air to support east coast fighters defending against additional aggression.

Since then, the 101st Air Refueling Wing stationed at the Bangor Air National Guard Base has figured prominently in refueling missions in support of military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Bangor facility processes more jet fuel than any other base in the country, according to a Maine Air National Guard official.

Officials believe the base's strong performance likely played a major part in keeping it off the Base Realignment and Closure list, even though it scored lower on a military rating scale than bases included on the list proposed to be closed or scaled back.

Bangor's low assessment score, which measures such areas as proximity to airspace where missions take place to pavement quality on the installation, has provided fuel for supporters of Niagara Falls Air Reserve Base in New York and other facilities that would be closed under the BRAC recommendations to question not only their inclusion on the list but the Maine facility's being spared.

Officials at the Bangor base are reluctant to enter a war of words with the other bases. Instead, they choose to defend their exclusion from the BRAC list.

"Our people work above and beyond every single day," Maj. Debbie Kelley, community manager for the 101st ARW, said Wednesday.

Col. Don McCormack, chief of the joint staff for the Maine National Guard, and others have said the Bangor base has many strategic strengths. They are also taking exception to the base's low rating, saying the figures just don't compute.

"We think that there were flaws in that and we think we can point those out and correct some of that," McCormack said Wednesday.

Among the contentions are that some of the routes considered as part of the evaluation are outdated while newer routes, more frequently in use in light of Iraq and Afghanistan, were not part of the computations.

"They are using outdated charts that haven't been updated or improved in the last 40 years," Gov. John Baldacci said, noting that state officials are crunching the numbers to present to the BRAC commission to make sure the Bangor base remains off the list.

Officials in Maine find themselves playing dual roles, opposing the inclusion of three Maine military sites on the BRAC list - the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, the Brunswick Naval Air Station and the Defense Finance and Accounting Services center in Limestone - while defending Bangor's exclusion.

Figuring strongly in the case for Bangor is its location, supporters say. The 101st ARW, along with Pease Air Force Base in New Hampshire, is the closest refueling base to air tracks that provide the quickest routes overseas. Reaching such routes would require a 25- to 30-minute flight from Bangor, compared to two or more hours from Niagara Falls, according to data from McCormack.

In recent years, the 101st ARW has scheduled flights as part of the transatlantic air bridge support for military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan from six northeast bases and coordinated as many as 3,500 flights in a year with a minimal crew of a dozen people, Kelley said. The base is operational 24 hours a day. It's also been instrumental in a longer running Northeast Tanker Task Force providing refueling services.

The base has also handled a dramatic increase in transient planes - those not assigned to the base - that require fuel, McCormack said. Before Sept. 11, the base might have seen 300 of them a year. Last year, 1,848 transient planes refueled at the base.

With the increased activity, officials say it's not surprising that the 101st ARW receives and processes more jet fuel than any of its counterparts.

The Bangor base "has historically processed more jet fuel than any other base in the country, active, guard or reserves," McCormack said.

There are other benefits to Bangor. Kelley said that not only does the Bangor guard base have access to a long runway, about 11,440 feet and considered an alternative for the space shuttle, but also there isn't as much air traffic as might be found in larger municipalities.

"Bangor air space is pretty open," she said.

The base has been an economic boon to the region. It employs about 900 people, two-thirds of them part time and the rest full time, Kelley said. Of the 650 part-timers, 250 have been placed on mobilized status since Sept. 11, 2001.

Under the BRAC proposal, Bangor would gain as many as 240 military and civilian jobs. Eight KC-135 planes from Niagara Falls would be transferred to Bangor where they would replace older model planes. Additionally, the 101st Air Refueling Wing would receive four other KC-135s from two other bases, one in Alabama and one in Mississippi.

The Bangor base has strong ties with the region. The people on the base live here and shop here. The base joined forces with the Penobscot County Sheriff's Department to purchase a bomb-sniffing dog, something county officials said they couldn't have done on their own.

The ties are even stronger with Bangor International Airport, which depends on the air guard for fire services and for snow removal equipment, necessary to keep the airport running in the winter months.

"They're an important partner for us," BIA Director Rebecca Hupp said. "Certainly, we think they're an important asset to the community and to the region as a whole."

The guard base has an annual economic impact of about \$78 million from salaries at the base to the snow removal at Bangor International Airport to the construction work that has been done at the guard base, according to McCormack, whose figures date to 2003. Another \$2 million is generated through the tanker task force operations.

Baldacci said the state has a strong case for the Bangor Air National Guard Base and, along with the Maine congressional delegation, intends to present new information to the BRAC committee in the weeks to come, reaffirming the justification for keeping Bangor off the list.

"We're going to make a very forceful reinforcement of the case to support the Pentagon's case to keep Bangor open," Baldacci said Wednesday afternoon.

Opinions/ Editorials

Additional Notes