

## Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

# EARLY



# BIRD

July 21, 2005

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**Panel Adds Bases For Closure, Realignment Consideration**  
American Forces Press Service

Gerry J. Gilmore  
July 20, 2005

WASHINGTON— The 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission voted to add several military installations to a list for closure consideration during July 19 hearings at the Dirksen Senate Building here.

The previous day, senior Defense Department officials provided testimony before the commission regarding the merits of keeping open various military organizations.

At the start of the July 19 hearing, BRAC Commission Chairman Anthony Principi noted his commission might tab more installations for consideration for closure or realignment.

However, "we are not here today to produce a final list of closures and realignments," Principi said, noting the commission wouldn't submit a complete list of bases affected by this round of BRAC until late August.

Bases the BRAC commission added during the July 19 hearing to the list for consideration to close or realign include:

Naval Air Station Brunswick, Maine  
Navy Broadway Complex, San Diego  
Naval Master Jet Base, Naval Air Station Oceana, Va.  
Pope Air Force Base, N.C.  
Galena Airport Forward Operating Location, Alaska  
Defense Finance and Accounting Service facilities located at Buckley Annex, Colo.; Columbus, Ohio; and Indianapolis  
Naval Postgraduate School and Defense Language Institute, Monterey, Calif.  
Air Force Institute of Technology, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio  
Bureau of Navy Medicine, Potomac Annex, Washington, D.C.  
Air Force Medical Command, Bolling Air Force Base, Washington, D.C.  
Tricare Management Activity, Office of the Surgeons General Military Departments, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, all in Virginia.

During the hearing, the commission also voted not to place several installations on the list for possible closure or realignment. For example, commission members voted to exclude the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, the Naval Shipyard in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and Moody Air Force Base, Ga., from consideration for closure or realignment under the 2005 BRAC Act.

All bases identified for possible realignment or closure will be reviewed before a final commission vote on all BRAC-identified installations is taken in late August.

On May 13, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld submitted his BRAC recommendations that 33 military installations be closed and 29 realigned out of a total of 318 bases. The additional bases identified by the commission for consideration for closure or realignment, Principi noted, will be added to the secretary's list.

The BRAC commission's additions weren't made to second-guess Rumsfeld's picks, Principi emphasized, but instead demonstrate the commission's efforts to take a broader view of what other bases may be closed or realigned.

"Our deliberations today may add more bases for further consideration -- and consideration only -- not because we have determined that we need to realign or close more bases than the secretary of defense has recommended, but because we want to make sure the best possible closure or realignment choices are made consistent with the criteria established in law," Principi said.

On April 1, President Bush appointed the independent BRAC commission. The commission is obligated to "consider all options" for base closures or realignments, Principi said at the July 19 hearing.

Under the 2005 BRAC Act the principle criteria for keeping bases open, or closing or realigning them, is military value.

The nine-member BRAC commission panel is obligated to send its recommendations to the president by Sept. 8.

The president has until Sept. 23 to accept all recommendations or reject all of them. Congress will have 45 days to accept the president's recommendations or reject them whole. The Defense Department will be obligated to act on all congressionally approved recommendations.

### National News Articles

#### **Panel questions Air Force on changes in Guard, Reserves**

Congress Daily  
Megan Scully  
July 20, 2005

Members of the House Armed Services Committee on Wednesday criticized Air Force officials' recommendation to ground 23 Air National Guard units around the country as part of the latest round of base closures and realignments.

Several members, many of whom represent states that are home to Guard units affected by the recommendations, questioned whether the Defense Department has the authority to alter the state-run units. Members also quizzed Air Force officials about why adjutants general were not included in two years of BRAC discussions, which might result in drastic changes to the makeup of and missions for the Air National Guard.

"I think the Air Force totally ignored the states," Armed Services Tactical Air and Land Subcommittee Chairman Curt Weldon, R-Pa., said during the hearing.

Weldon, one of the strongest BRAC proponents on the committee, added that he is "incensed at the lack of consideration of the Guard and Reserve." Weldon's district is just miles away from the Willow Grove Naval Air Station, where the Pentagon hopes to deactivate the 111th Fighter Wing of the state's Air National Guard.

Pennsylvania lawmakers have filed a lawsuit arguing that the recommendation to stand down the unit without Democratic Gov. Ed Rendell's consent violates the Constitution.

Others criticizing the Pentagon's recommendations included Armed Services ranking member Ike Skelton, D-Mo., who said the move presents a "real risk of damaging the historically good relationship [the Air Force] had with its reserve partners."

The hearing was scheduled to discuss the Air Force's Future Total Force initiative, a plan that will define the service's force structure and organization for the next two decades. But most of the questioning centered on the BRAC recommendations, which are indirectly tied to -- but not part of -- the total force plan. In particular, members said they were concerned that cutting the number of Air National Guard flying units would hinder recruitment and retention efforts, particularly in units whose new missions are neither defined nor funded. Lt. Gen. Stephen Wood, Air Force deputy chief of staff for plans and programs, countered that guardsmen still will be involved in every mission available to their active-duty counterparts. The Air Force currently is consulting with the Guard to determine what those missions would be. "I still think it's an open book," Wood said. "We are working this together."

During the hearing, Lt. Gen. Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau, raised several concerns about the BRAC recommendations, particularly what he considers a gap between moving the aircraft and setting up new missions. "What is that bridge, what is that mission?" he asked. Blum's comments today marked a departure from statements made several months ago supporting the Air Guard decisions. Blum, who was involved in base-closure recommendations, said the bureau was "not as effective as I'd like." Adjutants general around the country will meet Friday in Washington to attempt to devise a compromise plan.

## Senate Kicks Off Authorization Debate, BRAC In Background

Congress Daily  
Megan Scully  
July 21, 2005

The Senate started debate on the \$441.6 billion FY06 defense authorization bill Wednesday, with several senators poised to offer a slew of amendments that range from interrogation tactics at the Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, detention facility to halting the current base realignment and closure round.

Over the last several years, lawmakers have not succeeded in any legislative attempts to delay base closures, but that likely will not dissuade a coalition of senators from mounting one last campaign to stop the process.

Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., has been one of the most vocal critics of the BRAC, and said Wednesday that he expects to introduce an amendment to put the process on hold until after the Pentagon concludes a series of sweeping reviews of its organization, force structure and plans.

The amendment, which would be similar to legislation he introduced this spring, also would require the return of most of the troops from Iraq and Afghanistan before launching back into base closures, said Thune, whose state stands to lose the expansive Ellsworth Air Force Base.

House members failed to tack similar language onto its version of the defense authorization bill.

Nonetheless, Thune said he is still hopeful the Senate will pass the amendment because "there is a case to be made that the process is moving much faster than it should."

If Thune's or any other senators' language on BRAC succeeds in the Senate, it still must make its way through conference committee. Conferees might not wrap up their work until the fall, well after the independent Base Closure and Realignment Commission submits its list of closure recommendations to the White House.

Sen. Trent Lott, R-Miss., tried to thwart the BRAC round in last year's authorization bill but said he does not plan to offer any similar amendments this year because the process is "pretty far down the line now" and would face stiff opposition from Armed Services Chairman Warner.

However, Lott said he would support any language that would "undermine, stop, defray, defer or kill" BRAC.

Lott could face several small closures in Mississippi, which has a long history of persuading the commission to overturn Pentagon recommendations.

A trio of top Armed Services Committee Republicans also is expected to introduce language on the treatment of prisoners at the military's Guantanamo Bay detention facility.

Warner, Airland Subcommittee Chairman John McCain, R-Ariz., and Personnel Subcommittee Chairman Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., are drafting language that would address legal rights and interrogation tactics for the facility, McCain said Wednesday.

Armed Services ranking member Carl Levin, D-Mich., is writing his own amendment, which would establish an independent commission to review allegations of prisoner mistreatment at the detention center.

During opening floor remarks, Levin also said he would support funding increases for nuclear non-proliferation programs, as well as moves to improve benefits for members of the National Guard and Reserve.

Meanwhile, Warner introduced his own amendment Wednesday evening that would increase funding for armoring Army and Marine Corps tactical vehicles. The amendment would increase Army budgets by \$120 million, and the Marine Corps' budget by \$340 million.

Warner put consideration of the amendment on hold until more senators could review the language.

**Base panel adds option of closing Brunswick;**  
**It also keeps the Pearl Harbor shipyard off the closure list, which might diminish the Kittery shipyard's chances of survival.**  
 Portland Press Herald  
 Bart Jansen  
 July 20, 2005

Brunswick Naval Air Station could be closed outright rather than reduced in size under a decision by the base-closing commission Tuesday, one of several dramatic votes affecting military bases around the country. The nine-member Base Realignment and Closure Commission also took votes that could affect Maine's other military bases, the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery and Defense Finance and Accounting Center in Limestone, although the potential impact was unclear.

The decisions were significant, however. Maine stands to lose 7,000 military and civilian jobs - the second-highest number in the country - under the Pentagon's proposal to close or reduce dozens of military bases nationwide. The commission will vote on a final list by Sept. 8.

On Tuesday, the commission:

Agreed to consider closing the Brunswick base rather than move the aircraft and keep the base open, as the Pentagon recommended. Commissioners could also vote to keep the full base open.

Rejected a proposal to add Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard in Hawaii to the list of targeted bases, a move some advocates of the Kittery shipyard had hoped would improve their yard's chances of staying open.

Promised to scrutinize the Navy's assertion that it has too many shipyards and needs to close the Kittery yard to get rid of excess capacity.

Sent a ray of hope to supporters of the Limestone accounting center by agreeing to

consider closing some of the regional centers scheduled to absorb the Limestone work.

Tuesday's decisions are nowhere near final. Nor were they a clear signal about what will ultimately happen to Maine's bases. The commission could ultimately choose to close all three, leave all three untouched, or close some but leave others open.

"Simply put, seven commissioners who may vote in the affirmative today to add a base on the review list today, does not necessarily mean that base will be realigned or closed," said Anthony Principi, the commission chairman.

Supporters of the Maine bases said the comments surrounding the decisions showed that commissioners were studying questions posed by local advocates.

"Our message is having an impact," said Sen. Olympia Snowe, R-Maine. "They are raising the issues that we think are necessary."

The clearest decision involved Brunswick. The commission voted 8-1 to consider Brunswick for full closure in order to evaluate greater potential savings against the base's strategic location in the Northeast.

The Pentagon proposed reducing Brunswick's active-duty military staff of 2,420 by moving the Navy's P-3 Orion surveillance planes to Jacksonville Naval Air Station in Florida.

The commission will now consider closing Brunswick outright, which would cost about 3,500 jobs in Maine when accompanying civilian jobs are included. In exchange, the community would get the base, with its runways and hangars, for redevelopment.

Advocates for Brunswick are banking on the argument that the only operational air base in the Northeast is too strategically valuable to lose.

"We have to make the case that it's not all about saving money. It's about protecting the 22 million people who live in the northeast United States," said Richard H. Tetrev, chairman of a

local task force lobbying to keep the Brunswick base open. One commissioner, retired Adm. Harold Gehman, suggested the commission could add tenants to Brunswick as other regional bases close, such as Otis Air National Guard Base in Massachusetts.

Citing the potential losses in the Northeast, Principi said that "the military is virtually abandoning that section of the country. It's an observation and something for the commission to carefully consider."

Rep. Tom Allen, D-Maine, suggested the Brunswick vote reflected the commission's distaste for the realignment proposal more than a desire to close the base. He noted that Pentagon officials already had overruled a Navy proposal to close the base because of its strategic location.

"For once, we'll have an ally in the Pentagon," Allen said.

The commission refused to consider Pearl Harbor for closure or reduction because scaling the base back wouldn't save much money and closing it would abandon its strategic location in the Pacific. The commission voted 5-4 to consider closing Pearl Harbor, but seven votes were needed to add it to the list.

Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine and a member of the Armed Services Committee, said a majority of the commission was skeptical of the Pentagon's argument that it no longer needs Portsmouth and can send the submarine-repair work that it performs to one of the remaining shipyards.

"If you look at the comments of the commissioners . . . it seems clear to me that they are not accepting the Pentagon's arguments," Collins said.

Pearl Harbor advocates at the voting session gave "thumbs-up" signs and then celebrated in the hallway by exchanging high-fives.

Commissioners instead promised to look closer at the Navy's ship-repair needs. Portsmouth advocates have argued that the Navy has enough

repair work for all four yards, including those at Norfolk, Va., and Puget Sound in Washington state. But top Navy officials insist they have too much repair capacity.

Gehman said he could live with 15 percent overcapacity, but 40 percent would be too high. Phillip Coyle, a former assistant secretary of defense, noted that nobody would close a highway just because it isn't jammed with traffic 24 hours a day. "I'm not sure that Portsmouth should be closed either," said another commissioner, retired Gen. James Hill. "I'm not sure of the excess capacity."

Still, the decision not to add Pearl Harbor disappointed some Portsmouth workers who thought the Hawaii yard's placement on a review list might bode well for their job prospects.

"Yesterday I had a glimmer of hope," Paul Paradis of Kittery, who has installed insulation at the yard for 10 years, said outside the yard Tuesday. "That means our chances look worse now."

The commission's action for the Defense Finance Accounting Service, which has an office in Limestone targeted for closure, was less direct.

The Pentagon would like to consolidate 26 accounting offices at three locations in Columbus, Ohio, Denver and Indianapolis. But defenders contend rural offices have advantages, such as a dedicated work force and Limestone's rent-free offices.

The commission agreed unanimously to add the Columbus, Denver and Indianapolis offices to the list for consideration for closure. The option will allow the commission to designate the offices that should remain open.

**Base panel targets 3 big Navy sites;  
Great Lakes, Rock Island survive cut, but Air  
National Guard unit could lose jets, pilots**

Chicago Tribune  
Michael Kilian  
July 20, 2005

The government's military base closing panel added three major Navy facilities in Maine, California and Virginia to the chopping block Tuesday, while keeping Illinois' Great Lakes Naval Station and Rock Island Arsenal alive but shrunken in size.

But unless further action is taken by the cost-cutting Base Realignment and Closure Commission in its final deliberations next month, the Illinois Air National Guard's Springfield-based 183rd Fighter Wing still stands to lose all its aircraft and pilots. The facility would essentially become an aircraft engine repair operation under a major consolidation of Air National Guard operations called for by the Pentagon.

"All 15 of our F-16s are supposed to go to [an Air National Guard base at] Ft. Wayne, Ind.," said Capt. Sonja Gurski, public affairs officer for the 183rd Fighter Wing. "We'll lose 163 jobs, including the pilots, and about 400 part-time positions."

Commission Chairman Anthony Principi stressed that the panel's action Tuesday was not final but intended to provide its nine members with time for closer scrutiny of the base structure through public hearings and on-site visits before they make their final decisions in August.

"Our deliberations today may add more bases for further consideration, not because we have determined that we need to close more bases than the secretary of defense has recommended, but because we want to make sure the best possible closure or realignment choices are made," Principi said.

Illinois facilities face cutbacks

Illinois' Scott Air Force Base and Rock Island Arsenal have been mentioned repeatedly as probable targets of closings but survived nonetheless. Overall staffing at Scott actually would grow.

The Rock Island Arsenal, which makes armor plating and combat support equipment used in the Iraq war, will lose 1,417 civilian jobs but gain 154 uniformed military positions under the Pentagon plan.

Great Lakes is scheduled to lose 1,989 military jobs and 23 civilian positions, and some of its missions are to be transferred to other Navy facilities.

Scott is to lose 252 military positions but gain 131 new ones, plus 832 civilian jobs. Its fleet of KC-135 air refueling tankers would be augmented with planes from another base.

Principi was among several commission members who expressed reservations about Pentagon plans to remove aircraft from Illinois' 183rd Fighter Wing and 27 other of the Air National Guard's 88 operational flying units. It was suggested that the Pentagon might want to work with the Air Guard toward producing a more cooperative plan before the commission makes its final decision.

Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich and other governors complained that they had been insufficiently consulted on the proposed move, though Guard units are under the authority of state governments.

The three major Navy facilities added to the hit list by the commission are Naval Air Station Brunswick in Maine; Naval Master Jet Base, Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia; and the Navy Broadway supply and headquarters complex in San Diego.

The commission's actions followed testimony from the Government Accountability Office that, despite the record number of cuts and consolidations called for by the Defense Department, the \$5.5 billion in annual defense savings the Pentagon promised likely would not be realized.

The GAO noted that about \$2.5 billion of the promised annual savings are to come from eliminating base jobs held by military personnel

who are likely to remain on defense payrolls anyway to maintain overall troop strength.

Rumsfeld's sweeping list

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission was established in 1988 as a means of insulating the base closing and reconfiguring process from political pressures during a period of downsizing of the military and strains on the defense budget. The commission has been used four times to make substantial cutbacks, but none so sweeping as those recommended by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in this fifth round of base closings and changes.

The list of recommendations he released in May calls for closing 33 major bases, significantly realigning 30 others and making smaller alterations at 774 other facilities.

Rumsfeld estimated that would save \$5.5 billion annually starting in fiscal year 2012 and produce overall net savings of nearly \$50 billion over the next 20 years.

The commission let stand for now the Pentagon's decision to eliminate the Navy's submarine base at Groton, Conn., which is considered unnecessary by some in the military because of the end of the Cold War.

The commission is to complete its final decisions by the end of August and make its official recommendations to President Bush on Sept. 8. Bush will then have until Sept. 23 to accept the commission's decisions and forward them to Congress or return the proposal for further evaluation.

Congress then will have 45 days to enact the recommendations as law through passage of a joint resolution or reject them in their entirety. If Congress fails to meet that deadline, the recommendations become law automatically.

### **Local News Articles**

**The Fight Is On To Save Oceana**  
Norfolk Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk, VA)  
Louis Hansen

July 21, 2005

Virginia's elected representatives went to Code Orange on Wednesday to fight against the possible closure or downsizing of the Oceana Naval Air Station.

In Washington, D.C., they pressured a top Department of Defense official and hurriedly devised a strategy to protect the Navy's only master jet fighter base on the East Coast.

A bi-partisan coalition, including members of Congress and the governor, as well as Hampton Roads community leaders, pledged a unified and aggressive lobbying effort to preserve Oceana.

A federal commission on Tuesday voted to consider it for closure because the base is surrounded by suburban development and poses safety and jet noise issues.

"Oceana Naval Air Station performs a critical function in support of our military operations in wartime," according to a statement Wednesday from U.S. Sen. John Warner, R-Va. "I am confident that, together with the Department, we will deliver a compelling case for retaining the base in its present status."

Meanwhile, Acting Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England on Wednesday clarified his support for Oceana in response to a terse letter from Warner.

But critics of base operations said they will continue to encourage the federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission to look for ways to reduce fighter jet traffic above suburban neighborhoods in Virginian Beach and Chesapeake.

The commission is charged with investigating and recommending changes to the military's national infrastructure to make operations less expensive and more efficient.

Defense officials believe the proposed base closings will save \$50 billion over 20 years. The commission must forward its recommendations

to President Bush by Sept. 8 after deciding Oceana's fate next month.

Warner, chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, said this week he was stunned by the Navy's recent revelation that it ultimately wants a long-term replacement for Oceana.

The Navy said it favors a new installation at another, undetermined location, but would keep the Virginia Beach base operating for now.

In a one-page letter to England, Warner wrote that it was hard to believe the Navy would be asking for a new base, costing more than \$1.4 billion, in the middle of a process designed to close bases and save money.

"How can the Navy now continue to ask in good faith for assistance from local community leaders if the Department is stating its intent of building a new master jet base at another location?" Warner wrote. "This is simply not the way I would expect a significant basing decision to be made."

England responded that the Virginia Beach installation "is the most suitable option of all East Coast tactical aviation bases for the present and is manageable for the foreseeable future."

He said building a new base would be preferable in "the ideal world" but, he added, building a new base would be extraordinarily difficult.

"The Department stands firmly behind its recommendation to keep NAS Oceana open," England concluded.

Warner hosted a closed-door strategy session Wednesday afternoon for state and local officials. Many said that lobbying efforts must be quick and coordinated.

George W. Foresman, assistant to the governor for Commonwealth preparedness, said state and local officials have a wealth of data to make their case to the commission.

"There's a lot of factual information that's got to be put together, racked and stacked," Foresman

said. He questioned the defense department's assertion that Oceana is the most encroached upon base in the country.

"Part of this is not to allow urban myths and legends and not to allow rhetoric to drive discussions," he said.

Former U.S. Rep. Owen Pickett said federal, state and local efforts must be unified and consistent. The region should emphasize the bases' necessity and support from Navy leaders and the Department of Defense, he said.

"Whatever has to be done, has to be done quickly," said Pickett, who heads a state commission on military bases. "The quicker you get something into their hands, the better we are."

Virginia Beach Mayor Meyera E. Oberndorf said the fight was "far from over."

Oberndorf recalled the city's response to other rounds of base closures. When an earlier commission criticized the poor access to Oceana, Virginia Beach responded by rebuilding Oceana Boulevard, London Bridge Road and accelerated a planned widening of Birdneck Road.

When the Navy told Virginia Beach that Linkhorn Park Elementary and Birdneck Elementary schools were in potential crash zones, the city spent millions of dollars to relocate the new schools in safer areas, she said.

Other Beach officials want to show widespread public backing for keeping Oceana, while portraying opposition as coming from a vocal minority.

But they were disappointed at the lackluster response last week to a full-page newspaper ad urging residents to write letters of support to the base-closing commission's Web site.

The \$5,500 ad, paid for by the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce, generated only a few dozen letters, including some critical of Oceana,

said Ira Agricola, the senior officer for the chamber's Virginia Beach division.

"I think people didn't feel the urgency," Agricola said. Since Oceana has been added to the closure list, he added, "there is a keen sense of urgency. The whole community has a huge stake in this."

When the BRAC panelists travel to the Beach for a first-hand look at Oceana, he said, a delegation of local business leaders, retired admirals and other backers will be there to meet them.

"We can lobby, we can sell our community where the base commander cannot," Agricola said.

But a grassroots group critical of operations at Oceana said the facts are against the base.

Hal Levenson, a spokesman for Citizens Concerned About Jet Noise, said the commission needs to consider whether Marine Corps bases at Cherry Point and Beaufort, S.C., have enough space to take between four and six squadrons.

"There's not much of a case that can be made for Oceana," Levenson said. "It's been encroached beyond the point of redemption."

The base escaped realignment in 1993, and later gained fighter jet squadrons after Cecil Field in Jacksonville was closed.

It is the busiest master jet base in the military, with planes taking off and landing every two-and-half minutes on average.

Staff writers Jon W. Glass, Dale Eisman, Tom Holden and Christina Nuckols contributed to this report.

**Officials Have Doubts About Plan To Close Groton Base**  
**BRAC chairman 'concerned'; Simmons cites Navy objections**  
 New London Day (New London, CT)

Robert A. Hamilton  
 July 20, 2005

The chairman of the military base closing commission and a key member of Congress expressed doubts Tuesday about plans to shut down the Naval Submarine Base in Groton.

During a meeting in Washington, D.C., at which the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission voted to add bases to the list of facilities being considered for closure, Anthony Principi, the chairman of the panel, said New England is being hit hard by the proposals.

"I remain very concerned with the recommendations," he said.

Principi said the Pentagon's plans to close the Groton base, the Otis Air National Guard base on Cape Cod and Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Maine could result in the military "virtually abandoning that part of the country."

At the same time, House Armed Services Chairman Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., told The Associated Press Tuesday that he believes there is a good chance the commission will decide not to close Naval Submarine Base New London, the official name of the Groton base.

"I think what they see is an increasing importance of undersea warfare and there's a real partnership between the operators of these ships and the constructors of the ships," said Hunter, referring to submarine builder Electric Boat, which also is in Groton. "It's important to the country, and so I think they now have a better than 50 percent chance of surviving. I hope they do, and I'm going to weigh into that argument."

Also Tuesday, U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, who also is a member of the Armed Services Committee, wrote to Principi about Navy opposition to the proposed closure of the Groton base.

Simmons noted that as the Pentagon was preparing its list of recommended base closings, two top Navy admirals warned that the Groton

base should not be closed. They were overruled, however, making Groton the only base they could not save, according to Simmons.

Simmons said he was given detailed information about the reasons the two admirals responsible for staffing and equipping the fleet opposed closing Groton. In part, he said, they believed the move would result in overcrowding at other East Coast submarine bases and require a significant investment to replicate what already exists in Connecticut.

“I respectfully ask you to give these expert opinions your full consideration as you prepare your final decision on Naval Submarine Base New London,” Simmons wrote.

The comments by Adm. John B. Nathman, current head of Commander, Fleet Forces Command, or CFFC, in Norfolk, Va., and his predecessor, Adm. William J. Fallon, are expected to carry considerable weight because they have no vested interest in protecting the submarine base. Both are aviators.

“It's definitely good news for the base, and it's important to get these guys on the record,” said Simmons' spokesman, Jonathan Martin.

Simmons noted that the Groton base was the only base realignment and closure, or BRAC, recommendation opposed by CFFC that was ultimately approved by the Department of Defense.

Gov. M. Jodi Rell launched a broadside at the Pentagon for overruling the admirals.

“The landlocked Defense Department officials ... are making recommendations that are not supported by the Navy officials charged with carrying out the missions,” Rell said. “It shows the Defense Department recommendations are short-sighted, unfair and illogical. The admirals' comments send a loud and clear message that the BRAC commissioners cannot help but hear.”

Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn., said he was particularly concerned about the apparent disagreement at the top levels of the Navy over

the value of Groton to national security. And if there is any question about it, Dodd said, the Groton base should be kept open.

“U.S. Fleet Forces Command coordinates U.S. operations and training for our Atlantic and Pacific forces, and their opinion should be taken very seriously,” Dodd said. “Their opposition to closing Sub Base New London not only shows a lack of consensus within the Navy, it shows a deep concern that this decision will harm U.S. national security interests and deny the Navy important flexibility to maintain an adequately sized fleet.”

Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman, D-Conn., agreed.

“The objection by U.S. Fleet Forces Command to the Navy's decision to close U.S. Submarine Base New London simply reinforces our conclusion that closing this submarine center of excellence is wrong for the submarine force, wrong for the Navy, and wrong for our country,” he said. “I find it astounding that the Navy leadership would completely disregard the position of their commander responsible for the readiness, operations and training of this crucial asset. I am hopeful that the BRAC commissioners will now overturn this wrong-headed decision.”

Since minutes of the Navy BRAC process were released in June, it's been clear the CFFC opposed closing Groton. At a meeting of the Navy Infrastructure Evaluation Group in September 2004, members considered closing the base, but put it off pending a review by CFFC and the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations.

The only other mention came Jan. 27, when the minutes noted that Fallon opposed closing Groton, but the group continued to plan to move two squadrons of submarines from Groton to Norfolk, Va., and the remaining squadron and Naval Submarine School to Kings Bay, Ga.

There is no mention what Adm. Vern Clark, the Chief of Naval Operations, said, but Navy sources observed that he must have supported the plan or the matter would have been dropped.

Simmons talked to Vice Adm. Kevin Cosgriff, deputy CFFC, who told him that Fallon and Nathman opposed closing Groton for several reasons. In his letter to the commission, Simmons said the admirals believed closing Groton would:

- Limit the flexibility of the submarine force.
- Pose “significant readiness, training and operational risks.”
- Make it more difficult to do day-to-day submarine maintenance.
- Create problems associated with integrating attack submarine operations at the ballistic missile submarine base in Kings Bay, Ga.
- Abandon the “substantial” investment in Naval Submarine Base at Groton, and require “significant military construction investments” at Kings Bay.
- Exacerbate significant “waterfront congestion” at Naval Station Norfolk.

Other units at the Groton submarine base would be scattered to bases in Maryland, Florida and Texas, disrupting the synergy that exists from having all submarine operations in one location, Simmons said.

### **Command Can Adjust To Move, General Says**

#### **Army Materiel's Griffin comments prior to speech here**

Huntsville Times (Huntsville, AL)  
Keith Clines  
July 20, 2005

Moving the U.S. Army Materiel Command from Virginia to Redstone Arsenal during wartime shouldn't present any problems that can't be overcome, said the general in charge of the command.

The Pentagon has recommended that the Materiel Command - which oversees acquisition

of most battlefield equipment - be moved from Fort Belvoir to Redstone as part of the military downsizing.

Gen. Benjamin S. Griffin was asked Tuesday before a dinner saluting the Armed Forces if the war in Iraq would present challenges for moving the command.

Griffin, the keynote speaker for the dinner in the Von Braun Center North Hall, said the command would be ready to execute the move and maintain the same level of support to soldiers on the battlefield.

"The No. 1 priority is to support the war," Griffin said. "Moving always causes unique challenges, but I don't see moving as any kind of challenge we couldn't handle."

About 1,200 people - most of them civilians working for the Army - work at Fort Belvoir. Along with the Army Materiel Command, the Space and Missile Defense Command and major functions of the Missile Defense Agency would move to Redstone in the Pentagon's plan.

The Huntsville area could gain about 1,655 Department of Defense jobs if the Pentagon's proposal is accepted. All told, the area could gain 3,000 jobs counting related contractors who would move here.

Griffin said he wouldn't "speculate" on how many of the 1,200 Materiel Command workers would follow their jobs to Huntsville if the headquarters is moved here. He did say a top priority for him is looking out for the people who work for the command at Fort Belvoir. He said a transitional office was established at Fort Belvoir after the Pentagon's plan was released in May.

"I am most concerned about looking out for the individual," Griffin said.

Griffin said the Materiel Command could function as well at Redstone as it does at Fort Belvoir.

"I'm confident that those folks can do the job wherever the command is located, whether it be Fort Belvoir or Redstone," he said.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission is considering the Pentagon's proposed moves and can make changes to them before sending a final plan to President Bush by Sept. 8.

Bush has until Sept. 23 to accept or reject the plan in full. If the president signs it, Congress has 45 legislative days to accept or reject the BRAC report without changes. If the president vetoes it, the plan returns to the commission for review.

Griffin spent much of Tuesday at Redstone with military and business leaders at a conference about future requirements for military systems developed and managed at Redstone.

Asked if he knew of anything that might change the recommendation to move the Materiel Command to Redstone, Griffin said he would leave it to the commission to follow the process and make its assessments.

The Tuesday night dinner, which was held in a packed North Hall, and a U.S. Army Soldier Show were part of Huntsville's Armed Forces Week celebration.

Griffin said he was honored to be in Huntsville as the city celebrates its bicentennial.

"It's great to be back in Huntsville," he said. "It's a great community."

Griffin said he was here to recognize soldiers and to thank the community for its everyday support of the Army.

The Army Aviation and Missile Command, which was created in the last round of BRAC in 1995, was commended for its work by Griffin.

"I hold this command up to the other commands as an example," he said.

## **DLI, NPS On Closure List**

### **Local officials shocked to see bases back on BRAC chopping block**

Monterey County Herald (Monterey, CA)

Julia Reynolds

July 20, 2005

In a move that stunned Monterey-area officials, the Base Realignment and Closure Commission added both the Naval Postgraduate School and the Defense Language Institute to its closure and realignment list Tuesday.

Monterey City Manager Fred Meurer, who attended the base closure hearing in Washington, said he was "shocked."

"This has been a real roller coaster journey," he said.

In recent weeks, Central Coast officials said they had been assured by BRAC commissioners and staff that the commission was interested in realigning or merging the Monterey schools but not closing them.

"The journey started with the Navy deciding it didn't want to be in the grad school biz in January," Meurer said.

The postgraduate school originally was recommended for closure, but at the last minute before the Pentagon released its list of closure candidates in May, "the Defense Department said 'Wait a minute, there's too much military value there,' and NPS was taken off the list," Meurer said. "And now we're fighting closure again."

In a report to the commission on Tuesday, the BRAC staff expressed strong support for the merger idea and recommended combining the two schools and Ohio's Air Force Institute of Technology into a Monterey campus.

BRAC senior analyst Syd Carroll presented the commission with a vision of a "single center on a university model for postgraduate education." He said that moving the Air Force college's 271-member faculty and 1,097 students to Monterey would have a one-time cost of \$62.7 million, but

the savings over 20 years could be \$24 million -- "maybe much greater."

But then retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd "Fig" Newton asked fellow commissioners to consider the possibility of closing any of the three schools, saying it might not make sense to move the Ohio facility to California, and staff and commission members agreed to explore that option.

"Why move to a high-cost area?" Newton asked. "Instead of studying to go to Monterey, we should study where to go."

Retired Navy Adm. Harold Gehman agreed.

"We don't want to preclude any options here," he said.

The commission then voted 8-0 to add all three schools to the closure list. Commissioner Philip Coyle recused himself from the vote because he is a California resident.

"You knew it was going to be the Air Force guy who was going to raise the issue," said former Central Coast Congressman Leon Panetta, co-chairman of California's Council on Base Support and Retention.

The Air Force school "had a group of people there who were concerned that they were going to be closed. I think what they were doing is the best defense is a good offense," Panetta said. "We're in a dog-eat-dog kind of world right now."

Panetta added that the surprise switch in plans could be a violation of BRAC rules, which require the commission to give the Defense Department 15 days notice of changes in hearing topics.

"It certainly raises legal implications whether or not they've abided by the rules if they're going to change their approach," he said.

At least one BRAC-related lawsuit has already been filed, and communities and commissioners

have both challenged the Pentagon's math in its cost-saving studies.

"The risk in the vote today is in the recklessness with which they could dispose of the issue," said Rep. Sam Farr, D-Carmel. "They won't have time to study a move from Monterey." So far, the commission has only studied moving the Air Force facility to California, he said.

But in a news conference after the hearing, commission chairman Anthony Principi defended the thoroughness of the nine-member panel.

"This commission knows what it's talking about and is not a rubber stamp," he said. "We're independent."

Still, it was clear that the rest of the closure process is going to be harried. Principi said the staff already is working 14-hour days, seven days a week, and commissioners have been "living out of suitcases."

"We just added an enormous workload to what they already had," he said.

By the hearing's end, eight installations were added to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's list from May, all of which must be reviewed in about a month's time.

"Now we're going to have to hit the road again," Principi said.

The commission will make site visits, review data and hold regional hearings over the next few weeks before making its final closure and consolidation recommendations to the president by Sept. 8.

Farr, Panetta and Meurer, all veterans of previous closure rounds, said their efforts will now be focused on reinforcing the argument that the schools should stay in Monterey, as Rumsfeld originally recommended in May.

"Every community in the whole U.S. that is affected by closure will be lobbying the commission now," Farr said. "You try to

consolidate your message into something very short and understandable."

In coming weeks, two commissioners will visit Monterey to meet with officials from both schools.

Then a regional hearing will be held, possibly in San Francisco. After that, to make any changes in the schools' current status, at least seven commissioners must vote their approval.

"I think if they can get seven of nine votes, they can do a lot of interesting things," Panetta said.

"We are worried. I'm concerned because you never know what comes out," Meurer said. "It's going to be a busy summer."

## **Lobbying Helps Keep Pearl Shipyard Open**

### **Hannemann uses his Mormon connections**

Honolulu Star-Bulletin (Honolulu, HI)

Gregg K. Kakesako

July 20, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Four congressmen, a mayor, a governor, retired admirals, business and labor leaders, and a bunch of supportive players. That's what it took to keep Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard from being closed or downsized yesterday.

Their weapons: persuasion, logical arguments, relationships and maybe a bit of pleading.

Their strategy: assign key Hawaii leaders to different Base Realignment and Closure Commission members and congressional leaders.

The goal: keep Pearl Harbor off the Pentagon's list of recommended military base closures.

The intense lobbying effort paid off. BRAC members couldn't manage enough votes to include the 97-year-old shipyard in the Pentagon's list of recommended base closures yesterday. While the commission voted 5-4 to

include Pearl Harbor on the list, seven votes were needed for the recommendation to pass.

"It's like winning the lottery. It feels very, very good," said Robert Lillis, whose machinists union represents about 500 of the nearly 4,300 workers at the shipyard.

Gov. Linda Lingle, who lobbied commission members in Washington, said she was happy the shipyard is safe.

"For the workers and their families, it was so important that we get this resolved now and not leave it on a list for future consideration," the Republican governor said.

It was up to Sen. Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii, and the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii to find key people to take the fight to the nation's capital. While Inouye worked his political connections, the chamber found allies among a coalition of high-level retired military, business, labor, civic and government leaders in a hurry -- soon after BRAC on July 1 suggested shifting Pearl Harbor operations to the mainland.

After that announcement, the chamber drafted former Pacific-based admirals Thomas Fargo, Ron Hays and Ron Zlatoper to head their lobbying efforts, along with J. William Cassidy, who was involved in past BRAC actions as a civilian Pentagon head. Cassidy was hired to prepare a strategy to keep Pearl Harbor open.

Some of Hawaii's leaders said key conversations with congressional leaders and BRAC commissioners may have tipped the odds in favor of Pearl Harbor.

Mayor Mufi Hannemann and Inouye credited Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) for persuading at least one commissioner to oppose the recommendation.

Hannemann said that on Monday he paid Reid a courtesy call and during the conversation mentioned that at BRAC's Monday hearing commissioner James Bilbray raised the issue that Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, which straddles

the border of Maine and New Hampshire, was more efficient than Pearl Harbor.

Hannemann said he told Reid that he could be of help since Bilbray had represented Nevada.

"Talk to him," Hannemann suggested. "He's going the other way.' At that point in the conversation, the minority leader picked up the phone and called Bilbray, asking for his support."

Bilbray, a former Nevada congressman, was one of four commissioners who voted to keep Pearl Harbor off the list.

Hannemann also spoke to commissioner James Hansen, a former Utah congressman.

"It was because we belong to the same church. We are both members of the LDS (Church of the Latter Day Saints)," said Hannemann, who called Hansen on Friday before leaving for Washington. "He was very receptive. He wanted to hear my arguments. So, I just talked about national security. Everyone has talked about job loss, but I decided to focus on national security. He was very open and told me to send additional information."

Hansen also voted against adding Pearl Harbor to the list.

In the meantime, Hawaii's congressional leaders also had been assigned to different commissioners. Rep. Ed Case, D-rural Oahu-neighbor islands, said they were assigned to commissioners "based on our past experiences."

Case spoke to retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd "Fig" Newton and Bilbray. Newton is familiar with Hawaii, Asia and the Pacific. During his deliberations, he voted to include Pearl Harbor on the closure list because he "wanted to leave all options open."

Rep. Neil Abercrombie declined to say which commissioner he was assigned to contact, but he confirmed calling Hansen and Bilbray.

"The problem here was the terrible presence of politics," said Abercrombie, speaking about intense lobby efforts to keep Northeast bases open. What was important is that all of the commissioners understood the importance of Pearl Harbor, he said.

Testimony at the hearings also helped, Inouye said.

Monday's meeting was "very crucial ... It is one thing to say we are an important place, but when you point out all the facts involved -- not just strategic value, but things like who is going to do the repairs -- these BRAC members who have military experience realize that if you have to send submarines from Pearl Harbor to the East Coast (for) repairs, the whole crew has to go," Inouye said.

"That means they will leave their families at Pearl Harbor. That means they are gone for that, and then, they are back on the high seas for a regular deployment. That is not going to help Pearl Harbor," he said.

But there are some serious issues Pearl Harbor will have to address. One of them is the efficiency of the shipyard, which was called into question by some commission members.

Ben Toyama, a Pearl Harbor labor leader, said the past few weeks were "a stunning wake-up call for us. Dan Inouye met with us and quietly told us we have to work on the efficiency issue."

His message: Pearl Harbor isn't bulletproof.

### **Uncertainty, with a dash of hope**

The Times Record (Portland, ME)

Elizabeth Dorsey

July 20, 2005

Vote to add BNAS to the closure list offers another chance to make case for keeping base open.

BRUNSWICK — Local and state officials reacted with measured optimism to Tuesday's news that a federal commission is considering

closing, rather than downsizing, Brunswick Naval Air Station.

Although the 8-1 vote Tuesday by the Base Realignment and Closure commission would at first blush seem to be bad news for base advocates, state lawmakers and local officials said they are encouraged by the commissioners' comments about the strategic value of the base.

They also hold out hope that the commission ultimately will vote against closing the base. At the very least, they say, it would appear that the state could eventually redevelop the base property should BNAS close. That option would not have been available under the realignment scenario because the Department of Defense would have retained ownership of the airfield.

Brunswick Town Manager Donald Gerrish said he was pleased that the commission seemed to agree that the realignment option proposed by the Department of Defense in May was bad for the military and the town.

"I think we always knew realignment didn't make sense," he said.

Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld's May 13 recommended reconfiguration of the nation's military facilities included moving all aircraft based in Brunswick and 2,317 active duty military — or 85 percent of the active-duty personnel stationed in Brunswick — to Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Fla. The Pentagon justified retaining the property because of the strategic location of the base in New England and the ability of the base to accommodate any surge in military operations.

"My own inclination would be that if these are legitimate considerations — strategic presence and surge — that we may well add missions for Brunswick from other services, particularly since it will be the last remaining Department of Defense operating airfield in New England," said BRAC Commissioner Harold Gehman, a retired admiral, before Tuesday's vote.

The nine commissioners met Tuesday to add bases to the potential closure list. According to

the process, they cannot remove bases from the list at this stage. Those decisions are scheduled to be made in late August. Technically, the commission could still vote to recommend any scenario for Brunswick — closure, realignment or leaving the base open.

"My read is that clearly the commission has rejected the concept of realignment," said Forrest Lowe, chairman of the Brunswick Town Council.

Gov. John Baldacci said the decision Tuesday in Washington, D.C., could be good news because it forces a second look at the need to keep the base fully operational.

"They recognized the case we made that the realignment just doesn't work," Baldacci said. "This is a strong signal that they recognize that the plan has numerous flaws and additional consideration must be given."

He said the vote Tuesday to look at closing the base completely "does not mean that Brunswick is going to be closed. This is simply one more step in the process. What the commission made very clear at (Tuesday's) hearing was that adding a closure scenario for (BNAS) will allow them to conduct a more thorough investigation of all options."

Baldacci pointed out that seven out of nine votes are needed from the commission to close a base — a consensus he believes cannot be reached.

Other legislative leaders from the area agreed, putting the best possible spin on the BRAC's latest decision.

"Today's announcement by the BRAC commissioners has prolonged the uncertainty for people of the Brunswick area," said Senate President Beth Edmonds, D-Freeport, in a prepared statement. "On the other hand, it is important to consider that the commissioners' decision is adding a closure scenario so they may more thoroughly examine the material and strategic assets BNAS has to offer. This could be to our benefit."

House Speaker John Richardson, D-Brunswick, said he sees the potential for a good outcome.

The comments about the strategic value of the base "lead me to a more favorable conclusion that keeping the base open is the direction BRAC is heading," he said this morning in a telephone interview. "There are far more criteria to consider for closure than there are for realignment."

### **BRAC vote on Pope seen as good for 130th**

#### **North Carolina air base put on list for closure consideration**

The Charleston Gazette (Charleston, WV)  
Rick Steelhammer  
July 20, 2005

A 7-2 vote on Tuesday by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission to consider Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina for closure caused a wave of optimism to sweep over supporters of Charleston's 130th Airlift Wing.

Under Pentagon realignment plans for the 130th, all eight C-130 transport aircraft flown from the Charleston base were to have been transferred to Pope, eliminating the Air Guard unit's flying mission and many of its jobs.

Tuesday's vote in Washington, D.C., was "a move that may bode well for Charleston," said Sen. Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., who has opposed the 130th's realignment along with all other members of the state's congressional delegation.

"I think we're upbeat. We're hopeful," Byrd said. "But we have said all along that this is a tough fight. We must continue to do all that we can to ensure that the 130th Airlift Wing keeps flying."

Byrd said he was also happy to hear BRAC commissioners "express real reservations about many parts of Secretary [Donald] Rumsfeld's base closure plan, particularly his plans to take away aircraft from Air National Guard bases, including ours."

By adding bases to the list, the commission gave itself more flexibility to change what the Pentagon proposed as it considers shifting pieces of the mammoth domestic base network to better suit today's defense needs.

Earlier, BRAC Commission Chairman Anthony J. Principi cautioned that adding a base to the list "does not necessarily mean that the base will be realigned or closed" but will allow the panel to further analyze those bases' usefulness by visiting sites, collecting data and holding hearings.

Byrd said that while the BRAC commission's vote was welcome news, "until the commission votes to remove the 130th Airlift Wing from the realignment and closure list, we cannot rest for a minute."

During Tuesday's hearing, a BRAC analyst cited the 130th's realignment plan as an example of the Pentagon not following BRAC guidelines in seeking to transfer aircraft away from Air National Guard units.

"With all these huge bases on the line, some that hire 8,000 people or more, it's incredible that they were talking about our base and mentioning it by name," said Kanawha County Commission President Kent Carper. "You could tell that the commissioners were not pleased to be asked to do something that probably isn't their responsibility to do."

A vote of at least seven of the nine BRAC commissioners is required to add a base to the Pentagon's list of recommended closures or cutbacks.

The commissioners will hold public hearings and make site visits to Pope and the other bases added to the list on Tuesday before taking a final vote on what bases to recommend for closure in August.

Pentagon planners sought to create a new 16-aircraft wing of C-130s at Pope, located next to the huge Fort Bragg Army Base outside Fayetteville, N.C., using the 130th's eight

planes, and eight others from an Air Force Reserve wing at Pittsburgh.

Carper, who attended Monday's session of BRAC commission deliberations, said he would see to it that the 130th's support group, Keep 'Em Flying, "has all the support they need" until the realignment proposal is withdrawn or defeated.

Bases can be dropped from the Pentagon's list of proposed closures and cutbacks by a 5-4 vote. On Sept. 8, the commission is scheduled to release its final list of recommendations to the president and the public. By Sept. 23, the president must either forward the report to Congress, or send it back to the commission for further evaluation.

**Galena joins list of bases up for ax;  
COMMISSION: Fairbanks could benefit if  
installation closes.**

Anchorage Daily News (Anchorage, AK)  
Liz Ruskin  
July 20, 2005

The Base Closure and Realignment Commission decided Tuesday to add the Galena base in Western Alaska to the list of Air Force installations it will consider closing.

The Air Force no longer keeps planes or workers in Galena, a community of 700 on the Yukon River. But every year it spends millions -- how many was not clear Tuesday -- to maintain its buildings and keep the 7,250-foot runway in shape to land fighter jets there.

If the money stops flowing, Galena could lose 25 percent of its jobs, said city manager Marvin Yoder.

"Initially, the impact is going to be devastating," Yoder said.

But Galena's loss may be Fairbanks' gain.

The commission is still working on the base-closing list it must deliver to President Bush in early September. Among the proposals it is

considering is closing Kulis Air National Guard base in Anchorage and emptying Eielson Air Force Base near Fairbanks so it can serve as a training range.

The Air Force moved out of Galena after the Cold War. It keeps Galena as a "forward operating location," meaning that if U.S. air space is threatened, the Air Force could move fighter jets from Elmendorf to Galena to be closer to the action.

That function would move to Eielson if Galena is shut down.

The added service would make Eielson more important and might argue against the Pentagon's proposal to strip Eielson of its airplanes and people, one commissioner suggested Tuesday.

"These two are tied very closely together, and if we're going to close this one, we better give some really (good) second look at the proposal from Eielson," said commissioner James Hansen, a former Utah congressman.

In Galena, Yoder was absorbing the day's news and trying to figure out what it will mean for the community.

Forty-three people are employed to maintain the base, he said.

The Air Force also pays \$400,000 a year to the state Department of Transportation to maintain the large runway, according to Bill O'Halloran, the state's regional aviation manager in Fairbanks. The commercial airport would stay open, but most of the eight state workers would lose their jobs if the Air Force no longer pays to keep it up to fighter-jet standards.

The loss of the Air Force contracts also threatens two schools operating on the old base -- a boarding school and a vocational school, both run by the Galena City School District.

If the Air Force quits paying to keep the central steam heat, water and sewer systems operating,

the city would have a hard time filling the gap, Yoder said.

Craig Hall, who analyzed the Galena proposal for the commission, told commissioners that the Air Force could save \$30 million by canceling planned improvements at Galena through 2012. He also told them the Air Force pays \$11 million a year to maintain Galena, but that figure may actually include the costs of maintaining a second forward operating location in King Salmon.

Chugach Development Corp., a subsidiary of Chugach Alaska, a regional Native corporation, maintains both former bases under the same contract. The contract is valued at a little more than \$10 million a year, said Barney Uhart, president of the parent company, and costs are about evenly split between the two locations.

In addition to the 43 people Chugach employs in Galena, it also contracts with a subsidiary of the local tribe for food service and vehicle maintenance. That provides jobs for 10 more Galena residents, Uhart said.

Yoder was dismayed that the commission's decision to add Galena to the list was made unanimously and with little discussion.

"The report we're getting from the hearing is that it looks very, very dismal for Galena," he said.

The commission also voted Tuesday to add military facilities in seven other states and the District of Columbia.

The Navy Broadway Complex in San Diego and the Naval Air Station in Brunswick, Maine, now are on the list of installations to be closed. The Naval Master Jet Base at the Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia and Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina could see more force reductions than the Pentagon proposed or could be shut down.

Even small facilities were not immune. With an eye on possibly merging administrative, education and medical services, the commission voted to include several small installations in

Colorado, Ohio, Indiana, California, Virginia and Washington, D.C., for consideration.

"This commission knows what it is talking about and is not a rubber stamp. We are an independent check on the power of the secretary to close and realign military bases," commission Chairman Anthony Principi said after the vote.

Earlier, Principi cautioned that adding a base to the list "does not necessarily mean that the base will be realigned or closed" but will allow the panel to further analyze those bases' usefulness by visiting sites, collecting data and holding hearings.

In a reprieve for some communities, the commission decided against targeting four large bases for closure: the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego; the Naval Shipyard at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; Moody Air Force Base in Georgia; and Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota.

### **Addition To Closure List Keeps Cannon Hopes Up**

Albuquerque Journal (Albuquerque, NM)  
Miguel Navrot  
July 20, 2005

A naval air station in Virginia was added Tuesday to the list of potential bases to be closed, bringing new hope for backers of Cannon Air Force Base near Clovis.

On a 7-1 vote, the Base Realignment and Closure Commission added Naval Air Station Oceana to the list of military properties suggested for closure. Virginia Beach's largest employer, Oceana houses about 140 F/A Hornet and 50 F-14 Tomcat fighter jets.

The commission's vote Tuesday isn't a final decision on Oceana, which critics say faces population encroachment problems. But it is the first step of one scenario in which Cannon could remain open.

Much of the state delegation pushing for Cannon's long-term existence said the Air Force

has undervalued the base and its nearby flying space.

"I believe firmly that Cannon can stand on its own," Gov. Bill Richardson said Tuesday. "The merits of Cannon to our national security are clear."

The Pentagon estimates \$2.7 billion could be saved over 20 years by closing Cannon, which sits just west of Clovis. Current plans have Cannon closing in 2011.

Earlier this month, commission Chairman Anthony Principi asked whether the Pentagon had considered moving Oceana's aircraft to Moody Air Force Base in Georgia. Principi then asked whether aircraft at Moody could be relocated to Cannon.

The Defense Department has stood by its recommendation to close Cannon, arguing the New Mexico base is too remote and too limited in space and infrastructure. The Pentagon also estimated that moving Oceana's aircraft to Moody would cost nearly \$500 million, a price the military said is too steep.

The New Mexico delegation continued Tuesday to plead the case for Cannon to base closure commissioners. Sens. Pete Domenici and Jeff Bingaman, as well as Rep. Tom Udall, D-N.M., met with Philip Coyle, a former assistant defense secretary, and retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd "Fig" Newton immediately after Tuesday's commission hearing.

Richardson is scheduled to speak Thursday with Principi and Newton.

Domenici, the state's senior Republican, said Tuesday's vote on Oceana "creates some possibly interesting scenarios" for Cannon. He and other Cannon advocates are pushing for at least five commissioners to vote to keep the base operating.

President Bush will eventually review the closure list and approve any changes before submitting it later this year to Congress.

"Even if the Air Force does not see the full value of Cannon right now, we clearly believe the Air Force will need Cannon in the near future to accommodate new fighter aircraft and training demands," Domenici said in a statement.

Bingaman, a Democrat, echoed the message that Cannon should remain open "on its own merits."

Udall commended commissioners for the vote on Oceana and the "willingness to consider alternative scenarios."

Cannon has three F-16 Falcon fighter jet squadrons.

The base closure commission is expected to visit Oceana and other sites they recommended be closed Tuesday. A final commission decision is expected by Sept. 8.

Virginia Gov. Mark Warner said Tuesday he was "deeply troubled" by the commission's decision on Oceana. He added that the state government and city of Virginia Beach have worked to address encroachment issues.

### **BRAC: Safe at home base in Grand Forks, N.D.**

Grand Forks Herald (Grand Forks, ND)  
Stephen Lee  
July 20, 2005

The federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission voted Tuesday in Washington to keep Grand Forks Air Force Base off its closure list.

By a 6-3 vote, the nine-member panel effectively ended any practical possibility of the base being closed in the foreseeable future.

"It's a great day," said Sen. Kent Conrad, D-N.D. "It's over. It shows that facts matter, and the facts were on the side of Grand Forks."

His colleague, Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., was one of several North Dakota base supporters in the BRAC meeting in the Dirksen building on Capitol Hill.

"This was the big hurdle," Dorgan said. "The Grand Forks base now cannot and will not be put on the closure list. The sign outside the base now will say 'Welcome,' rather than 'Closed.'"

The BRAC panel now cannot add Grand Forks to the closure list as the commission completes its work by late August.

But other bases were added to the list for possible closure or "expanded realignment" today: the Naval Air Station in Brunswick, Maine; the Navy's Broadway Complex in San Diego; the Navy's Master Jet Base in Oceana, Va.; Pope Air Force Base, N.C.; and Galena Airport Forward Operating Location in Alaska.

Kept off the list with Grand Forks were Moody Air Force Base, near Valdosta, Ga.; the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego; and the Navy's repair shipyard at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

"This commission knows what it is talking about and is not a rubber stamp. We are an independent check on the power of the (defense) secretary to close and realign military bases," BRAC commission Chairman Anthony Principi said after the vote.

Adding a base to the list does not mean it will be closed, Principi emphasized. But it does allow the commission more flexibility and further analysis and study in arriving at its final recommendations for streamlining the military, due by late August.

This week, the BRAC panel was charged with considering the addition of eight major military bases to the list of 33 proposed for closing that the Pentagon released May 13. The Grand Forks base was -- and now remains -- one of 29 bases slated for realignment on the May 13 list.

The Pentagon's aim is to save \$ 49 billion over 20 years while refocusing the U.S. military for a new way of making war in the 21st century, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has said.

President Bush could send the commission's recommendations, which are due on his desk

Sept. 8, back for revisions -- which is considered unlikely -- and then must approve them in whole and send them to Congress, which will have 45 days to vote up or down on them.

After nearly 15 years of five base closing rounds, there are no future BRAC rounds contemplated.

Citing the testimony Monday before the BRAC Commission of Air Force Vice Chief of Staff Michael Moseley, BRAC panel members Tuesday said it was clear the military valued the base for its strategic location, the proximity of an Air Guard unit nearby in Fargo and the potential for adding the "emerging" mission of unmanned aerial vehicles, or UAVs.

"It seems to me there's a good argument not to close it," said commissioner Samuel Skinner, former Transportation Secretary.

That was music to the ears of North Dakota's sole member in the House, Rep. Earl Pomeroy, D-N.D., who, with Gov. John Hoeven, a Republican, also attended today's BRAC Commission hearing, too.

"We worked very hard to get the story out on Grand Forks Air Force Base," Pomeroy said. Before Tuesday's meeting, Pomeroy, Dorgan and Conrad said BRAC commissioners assured them the base was safe.

The motion to add Grand Forks to the closure list failed after receiving only three votes; it would have taken seven to add the base to the list.

While the vote was strong, the months leading up to it were intense, and it was a close call this spring, said Pomeroy and others.

Until May 4, nine days before releasing its closure list, the Pentagon planned to recommend closing the Grand Forks base.

But Conrad said that intensive lobbying done by the congressional delegation, Gov. Hoeven and base retention leader John Marshall and others had an impact.

Conrad cited two key points that swayed Pentagon and BRAC officials: the fact that the Grand Forks base is the only major Air Force base between Minot and the Atlantic Ocean and the stark emptiness of North Dakota's skies and land for use by the Air Force.

The lack of space and sky hurt other bases.

Commissioner James Hill, a retired Army general, noted that the Navy has wanted to close Oceana base because of encroaching development from surrounding Virginia Beach, Va., but doesn't have any feasible alternative.

Closing the Grand Forks base would have saved \$ 674 million over about 15 years, but would have meant losing more than 6,600 military and civilian positions -- more than 10 percent of jobs in the Grand Forks area, according to an Air Force analysis. Those figures were higher than previously released by the Pentagon.

However, one commission member, Admiral Harold Gehman, questioned the accounting of cost savings and said that with all factors considered, it appeared to save "zero."

Whatever the impact on the Pentagon's budget, the fact that the Grand Forks base will remain open is good news, fiscally speaking, for the entire region, Hoeven said.

The base's location on the Northern border makes it strategic for getting to the other side of the world fast, Hoeven said. Plus, it ranks high as a site for the new UAVs with lots of room and the nearby support of the Air Guard unit in Fargo, he said.

BRAC commissioners were impressed with the shape the base is in, Conrad said. Well more than \$ 300 million has been spent in recent years adding new housing and repairing and expanding the runway at the base.

The June visit from three BRAC commissioners -- Philip Coyle, Skinner and William Bilbray -- was successful, Conrad said.

"The three commissioners who came to Grand Forks all were strong advocates for the base," Conrad said.

However, questions were raised today by one BRAC commissioner about whether Grand Forks should be put on the closure list.

After a BRAC staff member outlined comparisons of Ellsworth Air Force Base near Rapid City, S.D., with Grand Forks, Commissioner Gehman argued Grand Forks should be added to the closure list to give the commission a better chance to compare it "apples to apples," with Ellsworth.

"It seems to me the only way we can compare is by treating both bases the same," he said. "Close them both and sort this out."

In the end, only Gehman, Gen. Sue Ellen Turner, a retired Air Force officer; and former Republican Rep. James Hansen of Utah voted to put Grand Forks on the closure list.

Today's vote means the Pentagon's proposal to realign the base, moving its contingent of 44 KC-135 air refueling tankers, cutting 2,300 of its 2,900 military personnel and adding an unspecified new UAV mission remains operative.

The congressional delegation and Hoeven hold out hope that the base will retain a tanker mission, especially once the Air Force is able to buy a new model of tanker to replace the aging KC-135 fleet.

In either case, the current contingent of tankers will not be transferred out until 2009 under the Pentagon's plan.

Mayor Michael Brown said Tuesday's decision shows that the \$ 750,000 in city sales tax revenues allocated to be spent since 2003 on the city's base retention effort was a good investment.

"That was money well spent," Brown said. "It will bring back dividends in the future. And we expect the mission (at the base) to expand."

More than \$ 600,000 of the money has been spent, the largest amount on lobbyists, consultants and expenses and a retainer for Marshall, the Grand Forks businessman who has led the base retention effort for years.

East Grand Forks Mayor Lynn Stauss said he was "very elated" about the BRAC vote. "This is great news for the whole region," he said. About 35 families with an active duty Air Force member live in East Grand Forks, and many of them have children in the city's schools, he said.

Stauss testified at the BRAC hearing last month in Grand Forks, as did Minnesota's Sens. Norm Coleman and Mark Dayton, joining the advocates from North Dakota. The next thing is to get the BRAC commission to remove the wording in the Pentagon plans that denies a new flying mission to the "Happy Hooligans," the 119th fighter wing Air Guard unit in Fargo, Dorgan said.

Meanwhile, Air Force officials told him Monday that they have put the UAV procurement process on a faster track, Dorgan said, which should mean the big drones will be landing at the Grand Forks base sooner than later.

Because Congress has been reluctant to allow the Air Force to retire any of its KC-135 fleet, once a new model tanker is chosen and begins to be manufactured and distributed, it's likely the Grand Forks base will be needed as a site for the larger tanker fleet, Dorgan said.

Hoeven agreed.

"I think the Air Force is going to need Grand Forks for the management of the tanker fleet," said Hoeven. "I think we have a good chance of continuing with tankers at Grand Forks and for an opportunity to get the new tankers."

He met in Des Moines, Iowa, on Monday with Michael Chertoff, head of Homeland Security.

"We talked about the need for an integrated system on the border that involves all those things, including UAVs, sensors, the law

enforcement end, the Border Patrol, the university system and the private sector," Hoeven said. "He made the point that we can't just do it with just added manpower but that we really need to develop systems of technology."

Supporters of the Grand Forks base in Washington were in a celebratory mood. Conrad said he had a North-Dakota-shaped cake on this desk Tuesday, waiting to be cut as Dorgan and Pomeroy joined him.

### **A BRAC voice defends the Northeast**

The Hartford Courant (Hartford, CT)

David Lightman

July 20, 2005

WASHINGTON -- The chairman of the base-closings commission said Tuesday that he's concerned the military is "virtually abandoning" the Northeast, particularly New England, by closing or scaling back several of its bases.

"Closing all the bases in the Northeast is just the wrong thing to do," said Anthony J. Principi, chairman of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, "and sometimes I get the feeling that's what we are doing."

Principi first made the point during a commission meeting Tuesday on whether to add bases to its list of possible closures.

"I remain concerned about closing any base in the Northeast. ... It's something that concerns me, and something we'll consider as we go forward," the former U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs secretary told colleagues.

None of the nine-member panel's votes Tuesday directly affected the Naval Submarine Base in Groton, the largest single closure on the Pentagon's original list of recommendations. But the session at a Senate office building offered some insights into the thinking of the members.

Asked if his concerns meant he would be more willing to keep the Groton base open, Principi said: "The commission would need to make that decision. But I'm concerned about it."

At the same time, other commission members showed keener interest in keeping two Western bases open, citing their strategic locations.

The commission Tuesday considered adding five Navy sites to its list of possible closings, and voted to include three: the Naval Air Station in Brunswick, Maine; the Broadway Complex in San Diego; and the Master Jet Base in Oceana, Va.

The commission plans more on-site hearings, and will return to Washington on Aug. 21 to begin its final deliberations. Its recommendations are due to the White House Sept. 8.

U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, whose district includes the Groton sub base, said he was "encouraged" by Principi's "very pointed comments." Simmons said "there is no clearer example" than the Groton base that the Northeast could be disproportionately hurt.

"Closing the sub base would eliminate a center of submarine excellence, removing the linchpin of our undersea warfare community, and leave New England with one less important defense installation," Simmons said.

Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman, D-Conn., called the argument for keeping a strong military presence in the Northeast "a critical aspect of our case to keep Submarine Base New London open, and I am pleased that Chairman Principi has a serious concern."

House Armed Services Chairman Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., told The Associated Press Tuesday that he believes there is a good chance the commission will decide not to close the Naval Submarine Base New London, the official name of the Groton base.

"I think what they see is an increasing importance of undersea warfare, and there's a real partnership between the operators of these ships and the constructors of the ships," said Hunter, referring to submarine builder Electric Boat, which is also in Groton.

"It's important to the country, and so I think they now have a better than 50 percent chance of surviving. I hope they do, and I'm going to weigh into that argument."

The Pentagon, in its May report, recommended closing 33 major bases and making major changes at 29 more. Seven major facilities slated for closing are in the Northeast.

The commission has been meeting in Washington this week to review those recommendations.

Principi explained why more bases were added to the closure list.

"Our job ... is to render a fair judgment on the secretary of defense's recommendations," he said. "In a limited number of cases, we cannot make that fair assessment without first being able to make direct comparisons" between what the Pentagon recommended and facilities not on its original list.

Principi said the commission just wants to be sure it is considering all possibilities.

"Our deliberations today may add more bases for further consideration, not because we have determined that we need to close more bases than the secretary of defense has recommended, but because we want to make sure the best possible closure or realignment choices are made," he said.

It was not clear that Principi's views about the Northeast were widely shared on the commission. He first spoke of his concern during a vote on the Maine facility, and when he was done, Gen. Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton echoed Principi's thoughts.

"Some of us feel strongly that way as well," said Newton, a West Hartford resident who is an executive vice president at Pratt & Whitney.

Even so, the commission voted to add the Brunswick air station to its list of possible closures. The facility is the last active-duty

military airfield in New England, employing 4,900 people. It has been a candidate for realignment, meaning sharp cutbacks in its mission.

The 8-1 commission vote Tuesday would move most of Brunswick's employees and all of its aircraft to a station in Jacksonville, Fla.

In another signal that the commission may favor other areas of the country over the Northeast, members decided against studying the closing of the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, a training facility in San Diego, and the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard in Hawaii.

Location matters, said Commissioner James T. Hill, a retired general. "The strategic location of Pearl Harbor is an overriding issue," he said. The Navy instead has recommended closing the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine.

Defense analysts have said many Northeastern bases are Cold War relics, situated to defend against former enemies in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Today, the threats are more diverse and diffuse.

"There's a comfort level to having bases near where you live, but in this terrorist age, I'm not sure how well you can make that argument," said Commissioner James V. Hansen, a former Utah congressman.

Members also argued that with the population shifting west and south, it makes more sense to keep facilities open in those rapidly growing areas.

The Marine recruit depot in San Diego, for instance, was spared after Hansen argued that "the largest state is California, and more recruits come out of California."

The Marine Corps' other recruiting depot is in Parris Island, S.C.

The Oceana jet base became a candidate for the list after the commission staff found that it was

in an urban area and that congestion could inhibit its growth and mission.

Airplanes land or take off there every two and a half minutes, 24 hours a day, the panel was told.

"The Navy has a problem, a serious problem," said Commissioner Samuel K. Skinner, former transportation secretary, referring to the jet base.

### **Virginia's loss could be Texas' gain**

San Antonio Express-News (San Antonio, TX)  
Sig Christenson  
July 20, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Base closure commissioners voted Tuesday to add a Navy flight training facility in Virginia to a list of installations to be considered for shutdown, a move that could bolster two South Texas installations.

The 2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission voted to put Master Jet Base Oceana and seven other facilities on a list of 33 installations pegged for shutdown. One of those, Ingleside Naval Station, could benefit from the decision, as well as Kingsville Naval Air Station, not on the list.

Commissioner Tom Hill, a Trinity University graduate, said at a hearing on Capitol Hill that Oceana's jets could find a home in Kingsville, and that Ingleside's deep-water port could handle an aircraft carrier.

But another commissioner with Texas ties said other bases could absorb Oceana's missions and that those on the Gulf Coast shouldn't get their hopes up.

"You really should not jump to any conclusions here," retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton told reporters after the hearing. "There's a lot of analysis that must be done by the staff and then there have got to be votes by myself and all my fellow commissioners. That could go in any direction."

As the hearing opened, BRAC Chairman Anthony J. Principi described it as one of the commission's "more important meetings."

The commission took no action on the Pentagon's proposed closure of Brooks City-Base, Naval Station Ingleside or Red River Army Depot in East Texas. A final vote on those recommendations will come late next month.

It also took no action on a huge shift in Air National Guard assets, one a Houston F-16A wing backers say is needed to protect the industrialized Gulf Coast. Hill called those recommendations "a mess" while the more conciliatory Principi told reporters they require a closer look.

"There are lots of issues, lots of questions," he said.

Bush must accept or reject the commission's findings by Sept. 8. Congress has 45 days to pass judgment on the list.

Installations in Maine, California and North Carolina and three Defense Finance and Accounting Service offices in the Midwest weren't as lucky. The decision to take a fresh look at Defense Department plans to consolidate 26 DFAS offices, one in San Antonio, into three mega centers drew little comment and no debate.

The panel doubts the ability of the mega centers to process checks for workers and businesses. Senior BRAC analyst Marilyn Wasleski told the commission the Pentagon didn't study the cost-effectiveness of each DFAS office and also noted that many of them were in towns hit hard in the 1993 closure round.

It isn't clear if the San Antonio office, where 318 people work, could reverse its fortunes as a result of the panel's action. Retired Air Force Brig. Gen. John G. Jernigan, head of a local BRAC task force, said the DFAS office could move to City-Base, which has buildings with room for up to 1,000 workers.

But the city faces competition from offices in South Carolina and Rome, N.Y., which are inexpensive and have capacity for growth.

The vote on Oceana drew some of the strongest debate of the day. Seven commissioners, including Hill, Newton and retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Sue Ellen Turner, voted in favor of adding Oceana to the list.

Neither the Navy nor the closure commission believes Oceana can be saved, but a suitable alternative to the base has so far proved elusive. Hill called the matter a "perplexing, complex issue" and said the commission had to study it in order to "avoid a disaster."

Citing Hill's comments, one expert close to the BRAC process left the hearing upbeat about Ingleside's chances of receiving a closer look from the commission. Another leader, Ingleside City Manager Mike Rhea, agreed there was hope.

"Hill did the site visit in Ingleside, and I think he came away suitably impressed by the facility and the information he was given," he said. "It's a crapshoot at this point."

### **BRAC May Open Doors To The Future**

Biloxi Sun Herald (Biloxi, MS)

Michael Newsom

July 20, 2005

BILOXI - Changes at Keesler Medical Center could cause a shift in the patient loads at other hospitals in South Mississippi and some hospital administrators are trying to decide how the "realignment" would affect them.

Some Coast hospital officials could see a stark change in their clientele in the next 10 years, if Keesler Medical Center were to close its in-patient care as part of the Base Realignment and Closure recommendations.

One of the original plans from the BRAC commission was to shift some of the patient load to the Veterans Affairs Hospital, but a spokesman for the VA said he does not expect

the closing of Keesler to affect the hospital that much.

"We only do about 75 admissions a year to Keesler. Not everybody that gets care at Keesler gets care here," said Christopher Alexander, public affairs officer for the VA.

Alexander said he doesn't feel his patronage will change noticeably, nor does he feel the amount of service to those at Keesler will be changed.

"Most of the people that go there will still be able to be seen there. It is their in-patient care they could lose," Alexander said. "We certainly could not absorb the retirees. But I don't think a lot of them will come here."

Alexander said the VA can bill Tricare, but that they don't treat dependents of Tricare enrollees and the patients they see don't have to be covered by Tricare, many are enrolled in the VA medical system. The VA is not listed as a Tricare provider.

One health care provider that could see an increased patient load is the Singing River Hospital system, which includes the Singing River Hospital in Pascagoula. Singing River is one of only two area hospitals that performs heart surgery.

Singing River and Memorial Hospital at Gulfport would be charged with taking patients from Keesler if the BRAC recommendations stand.

The Singing River System, which includes Ocean Springs Hospital, takes Tricare.

Richard Lucas, director of communications for Singing River Hospital Systems, said the loss of the residency program at Keesler would hurt his hospitals.

"We do get some physicians from there. We have 13 active staff physicians (at Singing River) who were active duty at Keesler. They are a good recruiting source for physicians. I think it is nine from Keesler at Ocean Springs," Lucas said.

Memorial Hospital at Gulfport performs heart surgeries, too, but does not accept Tricare. A spokesperson for the hospital said they are taking a wait-and-see approach to the developing story.

"Since they have made no definitive plan at this time, we have made no definitive plan. either," said Diane Gallagher, director of community and corporate relations at Memorial.

Gallagher said even though the hospital doesn't take Tricare, they will still treat a Tricare patient in an emergency as is the case with most hospitals.

Gulf Coast Medical Center on DeBuys Road does take Tricare. CEO Mike Terry and Tom Fewell, COO, say the Keesler loss would have a measurable effect on their ability to recruit new physicians.

Another of the health care centers that could see an increased patient load would be Cedar Lake Surgical Center, which has a contract with Keesler for doctors and referrals, and also is a Tricare provider.

Cedar Lake Administrator Michael Gossman said there has been talk in his office about the possible fallout from the Keesler closing.

"We've even talked about some Keesler physicians coming here to work if they are closing the in-patient surgery," Gossman said.

**WHICH ONES TAKE TRICARE?** The following South Mississippi hospitals and surgical centers inside a 40-mile radius are listed as Tricare providers on the Humana Web site, <http://hmd.humana-military.com>.

--Singing River Hospital in Pascagoula

--Ocean Springs Hospital

--Biloxi Regional Medical Center

--Gulf Coast Medical Center

--Cedar Lake Surgery Center

### **Deep South states to make pitch for keeping military bases open**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (Baton Rouge, LA)  
Doug Simpson  
July 20, 2005

Louisiana and two other Deep South states get another try this week at saving military bases that the Pentagon wants to shut down or scale back.

The commission considering the Pentagon's plans was to hear arguments from officials from Louisiana, Mississippi and Florida at a meeting Friday in a downtown New Orleans auditorium. Louisiana officials hope to convince the commissioners to spike the Pentagon's plan to shut down a Naval base that has been in New Orleans, on the banks of the Mississippi River, for a century.

"I think we have a very strong argument to make," said Dell Dempsey, a retired Marine who is director of military affairs for Louisiana's economic development agency.

The members of the commission were to arrive Thursday for a reception at the National D-Day Museum. Officials from each state will get two hours Friday to give a presentation and try to persuade the commissioners to keep their bases open. Dinner at Antoine's, a famed French Quarter restaurant, will follow - though commissioners will pay their own way. They're barred from accepting gifts such as meals, Dempsey said.

The New Orleans base is one of 33 major bases nationwide that the Pentagon wants to shut down or scale back drastically. Hundreds of small installations are also on the closure list.

The Naval Support Activity, which straddles the Mississippi in New Orleans, was a predictable choice for closure because it fails to meet one of the Pentagon's top criteria: the installation has no military value, only office space. Defense

Department says it would save \$276 million over 20 years by closing the base.

The installation's closure would also cost New Orleans over 4,500 military and civilian jobs and \$142 million in payroll, according to the base. The state has spent \$750,000 on research studies and hiring retired military brass who now work as consultants; they have researched the Pentagon's findings and advised state and city officials on how best to argue that the base should remain open.

Dempsey, a retired Marine, said Pentagon brass made the closure decision based on research that's "full of glaring inaccuracies." She said the amount that the military expects to save with the closure is exaggerated by about \$100 million. One problem, she said, is that the military missed an important cost: closing the base would force the Pentagon to buy out 50-year contracts on 220 private housing units that are on the base.

"That would be a considerable cost," Dempsey said.

Louisiana's pitch to the commissioners on Friday will mainly be delivered via a presentation by David Mize, a retired Marine who is chief of New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin's military advisory committee.

To make it more appealing to the Pentagon, the state and the city of New Orleans have a plan to turn the Naval Support Activity into a center for military and homeland security operations - a so-called "federal city." Gov. Kathleen Blanco and Nagin have pledged at least \$166 million in state and city bonds to streamline the base.

The plan calls for moving Navy, Marine and Army units - now scattered around the city - onto the base. The Coast Guard would move there from its current office space, in downtown high rises. The base now has property on both sides of the Mississippi River; the transformed facility would be condensed on the west bank, eliminating a costly ferry service that now moves workers from one side of the river to another.