

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY BIRD

July 26, 2005

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States, Feds Clash Over Guard

Christian Science Monitor
July 26, 2005

Governors sue over closure and transfer plans that would affect one-third of Air National Guard units.

By Mark Sappenfield, Staff Writer of The Christian Science Monitor

WASHINGTON – When the Pentagon released its list of bases to be realigned this year, it contained a message - unwritten but obvious - to Gov. Kenny Guinn: Nevada doesn't need the eight planes of its National Guard anymore. According to the plan, the C-130 transports now sitting on the tarmac in Reno should be sent to Arkansas, leaving the Nevada Air National Guard with no airplanes.

As commander in chief of the Nevada militia, however, Governor Guinn sees things a little differently. To him, the C-130s are a lifeline to the far-flung towns of the Nevada desert in times of flooding and fire. And when Las Vegas was tabbed as a New Year's Eve terror target, they were a central element of emergency planning.

Yet now, the Pentagon's desire to consolidate more aircraft at fewer locations points to a historic reorganization of the Air National Guard. Like Nevada, several other states face the

prospect of losing all their National Guard planes, and some governors have gone so far as to sue the Pentagon - insisting that National Guard aircraft have a unique state function.

The Pentagon's aims are not without merit, many analysts say, and it owns the aircraft. Yet as the base-closing process grinds toward its late-summer deadline, National Guard officials - as well as committee members themselves - are raising questions about the plan, concerned that the scope of the changes could undermine the Air National Guard and homeland security.

The course of the Iraq war has helped shape "a well-articulated public debate" about the needs of the Army National Guard, says John Pike of GlobalSecurity.org. "But there has not been a similar discussion about the Air National Guard until now. This is the first time it has come into play."

Ever since the Pentagon released its list in May, such a discussion has seemed inevitable. Of all the branches of the United States military, the Air National Guard is by many measures the most affected by the recommendations. Thirty units are slated to lose all their aircraft - some one-third of the entire Air Guard.

To the Air Force itself, this is an unavoidable consequence of the changing nature of modern warfare. Today, the war on terror calls more for satellite photos and pilotless drones than for supersonic jets bristling with missiles. This means consolidating both the Air Force and Air Guard at fewer bases - both to save money and to bring the Guard more in line with the Air Force's new mission.

"We have had too many bases," says Michael O'Hanlon, a defense analyst at the Brookings Institution here. "We need to be more efficient."

Yet there is growing concern about whether the Air Force has gone about it in the right way. One member of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) commission suggested, only half-jokingly, that it might be easier simply to throw out the Pentagon's suggestions and start afresh.

For one, the Air Force wants to take away planes from 30 units, but it is closing only five bases. The question is: What will the people in the other bases do? The Air Force has called these units "enclaves" and promises them new missions. But the allure of the Air National Guard has always been flying, and without planes, recruiting and retention could suffer.

"The Air Force is going to lose some of its most experienced people," says Stephen Koper, president of the National Guard Association here.

More broadly, critics worry that the changes could tear holes in the nation's security net. If the 104th Fighter Wing moves from Cape Cod to New Jersey and Florida as planned, for example, Boston could be vulnerable to a Sept. 11-style attack. "I am concerned that ... locating two fighters in a neighboring state is impractical and would not provide ample cover for this region," said Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney in testimony to the BRAC commission earlier this month.

At the heart of the governors' concerns is the fundamental question of states' rights. Though the Guard is a federal force under the Constitution, the Founding Fathers passed much of its authority to the states, leading to the Guard's unique federal-state role.

As commanders in chief of their state National Guards, governors believe that federal law guarantees them a role in this base-closure process and that the Pentagon's proposal impairs their ability to act in times of crisis.

"Our problem with it is the loss of one-quarter of [Pennsylvania's] Air National Guard component with no consultation beforehand," says Adrian King, deputy chief of staff for Pennsylvania Gov. Edward Rendell, who is among the governors suing the Pentagon.

Indeed, beneath many of the complaints is exasperation that the states were all but ignored. While the Army reached out to Adjutants General - the top National Guard officers in each

state - for its realignment plan, "unfortunately the Air Force side was a little more exclusive," says Roger Lempke, president of the Adjutants General Association.

The BRAC commission has until September to consider the Pentagon's plan before forwarding the final draft to the president and Congress. Though the governors' lawsuits could delay the entire process, recent weeks have suggested that the commission is already dealing with the governors' concerns. Says Mr. O'Hanlon of Brookings: "The process is working."

Local News Articles

Base closing commissioners to tour bases in Brunswick, Kittery

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Brunswick, ME)
July 26, 2005

Members of the base closing commission who didn't make an earlier trip to Maine traveled to the state to tour the Brunswick Naval Air Station and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard on Tuesday.

Retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Sue Turner and former Transportation Secretary Samuel Skinner were to tour the Brunswick base following an 8-1 vote by the commission to add it to the list of those under consideration for closure.

Later Tuesday, Turner was to travel alone to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, the nation's oldest shipyard, which also is considered for closure. Supporters were expected to line the streets outside the yard wearing their signature yellow T-shirts.

Supporters say it is important to get as many commissioners as possible to visit the facilities to bolster their case for keeping them open. Base Realignment and Closure Commission Chairman Anthony Principi and three other panel members already visited the Kittery and Brunswick facilities on June 1-2. They also met with base advocates.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld released his sweeping proposal in May to close or shrink 62 major domestic bases and hundreds of smaller installations.

In Maine, the Pentagon proposed closing the shipyard in Kittery and the Defense Finance Accounting Service center in Limestone.

The Pentagon also proposed eliminating all P-3 Orion patrol aircraft and half of the military personnel from the Brunswick station. The base closing commission, however, decided to consider the possibility of closing it entirely.

About 7,000 Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts jobs would be eliminated under the Pentagon's original proposal. The number would grow by about 2,000 if Brunswick was eliminated.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission must send its own list of recommendations to the president by September for his approval. It then goes to Congress, which must accept it or reject it in its entirety.

Welcome awaiting sub base visitor

Norwich Bulletin (Norwich, CT)
Greg Smith
July 26, 2005

NEW LONDON-- Welcome letters from local legislators will not be the only things waiting for the latest member of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission to visit the Groton sub base Wednesday.

Groton store owner Bud Fay, a member of the Subbase Realignment Coalition, is again rallying the troops.

Fay said he hopes to line Route 12 with supporters for the visit of Retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Sue Ellen Turner. She will visit the base from 8-10 a.m. and Fay said people are gathering at his shop on 591 Route 12.

"Essentially we want to wave the flag of support," Fay said.

Like other members of the coalition, Fay said he is encouraged by recent developments.

Four congressmen last week sent a letter to the BRAC Commission chairman urging the base be kept open.

House Appropriations Commission Chairman Jerry Lewis, R-Calif.; House Defense Subcommittee Chairman Bill Young, R-Fla.; House Armed Services Committee Chairman Duncan Hunter, R-Calif.; and Projection Forces Subcommittee Chairman Roscoe Bartlett, R-Md., all signed the letter voicing concern over the decision to close the base, considering its overall effect on the country's submarine force level.

With an aerial view of the base propped on an easel in the corner of the room, coalition members continued to develop strategies Monday during their weekly meeting in New London.

They do not plan to sit idle in the remaining days before an August deadline for submissions to the commission.

The commission plans to vote by September on whether to accept the Pentagon's plan to close bases across the country. It takes five votes from the nine-member group to remove a base from the closure list.

John Markowicz, head of the coalition, said it plans to provide additional analysis disputing the Navy's recommendation to close the base.

Official challenges move of Portland F-15s

Bothell Herald (Bothell, WA)

Jim Haley

July 26, 2005

The proposed removal of a Northwest air-defense unit from Portland, Ore., is beyond the scope of an independent panel studying closure of military bases, a top National Guard official said Monday.

The head of a U.S. National Guard commander association said the majority of the recommendations made by the U.S. Air Force for closure or realignment are "outside the charter" of the federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

The commission is the independent panel studying Pentagon recommendations to close 33 major bases and make hundreds of other adjustments.

Among those adjustments are changes to National Guard units, which have riled public officials across the nation.

All of Washington's congressional delegation joined Oregon's officials last month speaking out against yanking the 142nd Fighter Wing based at Portland International Airport.

The air wing, and a support air-refueling squadron also based at the airport, is the only combat-ready air defense for the entire Northwest.

The 15 Portland F-15 fighters would be dispatched to Louisiana and New Jersey to augment squadrons there, under the Pentagon plan. Their departure leaves the Northwest without ready air defense in case of an emergency, such as the Sept. 11, 2001, airliner hijackings by terrorists.

In Pennsylvania, the governor this month filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court alleging that the Constitution and federal law prevent removing National Guard units without the governor's permission.

A similar lawsuit was being contemplated in Illinois.

U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., who led the state's delegation push to keep the F-15s in Portland, said the Air Force didn't consult with the states before making its Guard recommendations.

"It seems clear to me that the Pentagon put forth a plan without doing the necessary fact checking," Cantwell said.

"The Pentagon's top priority should be our nation's defense, and even the top generals of the Air National Guard seem to be saying that the Pentagon overlooked some things when it proposed the plan," Cantwell added.

On Monday, Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, president of the U.S. Adjutants General Association, sent a letter to the chairman of the base-closing panel, Anthony Principi. The letter followed a meeting Friday in Washington, D.C., where all of the adjutants general of the states and two territories gathered to discuss the proposed base closures and other changes.

Lempke, of Nebraska, quoted a closure panel's own lawyer, who questioned the legality of forcing National Guard closures or realignments through the base-closing process.

It would be "improper" for the commission to act on the proposed closing of 14 Air Force, Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard units and realignment of 47 others around the country, Lempke said.

He suggested that state military officials, governors and the Air Force can work out "these operational decisions" short of base-closing commission action. He said that work already has begun.

He called for maintaining Air National Guard flying units in every state, and air refueling and tactical airlift mission available to the governors for homeland defense and other emergencies.

Lempke also wants to make sure all regions of the country are protected.

The base-closing panel is scheduled to make its recommendation to President Bush in September.

Lobbyist leads drive to save fighter wing
St. Louis Post-Dispatch (St. Louis, MO)

Philip Dine
July, 25 2005

WASHINGTON - There isn't much that Marlin L. "Buzz" Hefti hasn't done when it comes to military and government affairs - but now he faces what might be one of his toughest tasks.

Hefti has been hired by Gov. Matt Blunt to help in Missouri's bid to preserve the Air National Guard 131st F-15 Fighter Wing at Lambert Field and defense jobs in finance, accounting and human resources targeted by Pentagon base closure recommendations. In all, Missouri stands to lose 3,700 jobs.

For \$125,000, Hefti is helping formulate the arguments Missouri officials will make to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, which has until Sept. 8 to present its list to President George W. Bush and Congress.

A Marine Corps veteran of Vietnam, Hefti served as a senior Pentagon official responsible for legislative affairs early in Bush's administration. In 2002 he joined a Washington consulting firm, Van Scoyoc Associates, as vice president.

Earlier, he spent 14 years as vice president for government relations of Honeywell International and was a Boeing Co. defense lobbyist. He also was national security adviser to Sen. John Warner, R-Va., was the Navy secretary's liaison to the House of Representatives and directed national news media for the Marines.

Blunt's press secretary, Jessica Robinson, said Hefti began work under an oral agreement June 10, even though minutes of the Missouri Development Finance Board show that as recently as June 24, state officials were seeking funds to hire a consultant. In the few days before he began and the Base Realignment and

Closure Commission meeting on June 20 in St. Louis, Hefti was able to help Missouri put together its case, she said.

"You've seen his resume," Robinson said. "Someone of that experience and that caliber can do it in (10) days, absolutely."

In May, Robinson told the Post-Dispatch that Blunt wouldn't hire a lobbyist, because the process was meant to be free from politics and because it would not be a "prudent" use of taxpayer money without any guarantee of success.

On Monday, Robinson said Blunt's decision not to hire a lobbyist referred to seeking to influence the Pentagon's recommendations, but that once Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld released a list that included the 131st wing and the defense jobs, hiring a consultant to seek changes became important.

Asked why that wasn't done as soon as Rumsfeld's list came out on May 13, given the short time frame involved in the BRAC process, Robinson said that Hefti's expertise means he didn't have to do any preparatory work. She also said Blunt didn't want to hire someone until he saw the Pentagon's proposal.

Other states, including Illinois, have had consultants in place for years to work on base-closing issues and to build a case in the event their state was affected.

Blunt had to step in, Robinson said, because of the "failure" of the previous governor, Bob Holden, a Democrat, to get involved in the base-closing process by hiring consultants.

But Democratic strategist Roy Temple said that under Holden, Missouri's office in Washington was working on BRAC issues - until Blunt closed it after winning office in November.

"This is a case study in incompetence," Temple said. "This once again proves how utterly flat-footed and clueless these folks were on the BRAC process."

Hiring Hefti late in the game is a meaningless gesture, Temple said. "This is no longer about being effective," he said. "This is about looking like they're doing something."

Base closure chairman says DLI is safe
Monterey Herald (Monterey, CA)
Julia Reynolds
July 25, 2005

Monterey's Defense Language Institute "certainly" won't be closed, the nation's base closure chairman told a C-Span television audience Sunday.

Anthony Principi, chairman of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, or BRAC, discussed the Army language school's fate while he was interviewed on the program Washington Journal.

"We certainly would not close the Defense Language Institute, which is located out in Monterey. That would stay open," Principi said. "It's very, very important to have that capability, the language capability. That would not be closed."

After reeling from last week's news that DLI had been suddenly added to the base closure list, Principi's remarks brought cautious relief to officials lobbying to keep the school open.

"It's always nice to hear the chairman saying something you want to hear," said Monterey City Manager Fred Meurer, who has worked for years to keep the language school off closure lists.

Both DLI and the Naval Postgraduate School were added to the closure/consolidation list at a Washington hearing last week, along with the Air Force Institute of Technology, or AFIT, in Ohio.

Principi said the commission might choose to close NPS and other graduate schools in favor of sending officers to civilian universities.

"We want to look at the possibility of consolidating postgraduate education," Principi said, "where one of the options would be to close the facilities and have students seeking their master's degree or doctorate degree in the private sector university, whether it be Stanford or Harvard or Columbia."

DLI only offers associate degrees and is not a graduate school.

Monterey's deputy city manager, Fred Cohn, said he doesn't believe privatization makes sense. For one thing, he said, the Navy's cost analysis is obviously flawed since it claims that closing NPS would save the government more money than it costs to run the school.

Principi stressed that the commission is still considering merging both schools with AFIT -- and doing it in Monterey.

The commission, he said, will "look at the feasibility of consolidating all the postgraduate schools of the Army, the Air Force and the Navy at Monterey, California, to be more efficient and to reduce base operating support."

But other BRAC commissioners would like to explore different locations.

At the Washington hearing last week, BRAC Commissioner and retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton suggested moving the two Monterey schools to Ohio to save money.

Newton is one of two BRAC Commissioners who will visit AFIT on Aug. 2.

Leon Panetta, co-chair of California's Council on Base Retention and Support, noted that Newton has ties to AFIT. He was commander of the Air Education and Training Command, which oversees the Air Force school. In April, the Dayton Development Commission reported

that Newton had met several times with business leaders to "discuss AFIT issues."

Monterey officials, meanwhile, are preparing for a visit by three BRAC commissioners: Principi, retired Navy Adm. Harold Gehman Jr. and former Republican Congressman James V. Hansen of Utah.

In Hansen's home state, a group called the Utah Defense Alliance is promoting the idea of bringing DLI to Utah -- an idea seriously championed in a 1995 closure round -- but Hansen doesn't seem interested. He recently told the Standard-Examiner newspaper in Ogden, "You've got a better chance of winning the Publisher's Clearing House, the Reader's Digest Grand Prize and a plane falling on your head than you do of getting DLI."

Local officials, including Meurer and Cohn, are cancelling vacations and preparing arguments for the commission's visit and a regional hearing in San Francisco, both scheduled for Aug. 8.

As the workload intensifies, Monterey County's Washington-based lobbying firm, Freshman and Kast Associates, has taken on the cause. Meurer said the firm will look into recruiting members of Congress to support the effort.

Kast's job will be to make Monterey's voice heard above the din of lobbyists from around the country.

Principi said that because of so many proposed consolidations, the current BRAC round is one of the most complex since the process started in 1988. The list now includes "190 major actions that touch over 900 bases," he said.

Though encouraging, Principi's words about DLI are only the voice of one of nine BRAC commission members, Meurer said.

"He said DLI won't close but he didn't say for sure they wouldn't move it," he said. "The real issue is to make sure there's a total of seven commissioners who don't want to move DLI. "

In late August, when the commission prepares its final list for the president, it will take the approval of seven BRAC commissioners to remove DLI and NPS from the list.

Opinions/ Editorials

Misrepresenting Base's Worth Would Be A Crime

New London Day (New London, CT)
Robert L. Siegel
July 26, 2005

Over the past few weeks I have closely followed the releases of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) report and the efforts of our committed team to save the Naval Submarine Base. Each day as I read their assessments of the initial recommendations submitted by the BRAC Commission, I wonder how valid the initial findings are. The cogent arguments made by our coalition seem to make me and others, more skeptical as to how the report was developed based upon the numerous data calls required by the commission.

My feeling is that the numbers contained in the BRAC report are not defensible by the commission that authored, approved and released the report. In other words, were the books "cooked?" I know that a good accountant or statistician can make the numbers dance, but these estimates are laughable.

If we determine that indeed the books were cooked, the data call numbers misrepresented and obvious omissions were purposely overlooked, I urge Gov. M. Jodi Rell and the residents of Connecticut to file a class-action suit against the commission. We have recently seen how aggressive the government has been to prosecute corporate cheaters such as Enron and WorldCom, which have misrepresented their financial reports, and how the government quickly enacted the Sarbanes-Oxley Act. Why shouldn't this government-appointed commission be held to the same laws and corporate standards they enforce?

To deliberately misrepresent the Naval Submarine Base's worth, whether it is fiscal or for political reasons, should be viewed as criminal. We in southeastern Connecticut understand the economic impact we may be facing, but I believe that the American people understand the national-security implications of this unfounded, indefensible decision.

BRAC process dance is under way

Jackson Clarion Ledger (Jackson, MS)
July 26, 2005

State leaders are defending the importance of Mississippi bases targeted for closer or realignment.

BRAC officials should not hesitate to question and reverse Pentagon proposals here and elsewhere.

The Pentagon's plans to close or realign military bases once again have state political leaders and military communities on the defensive as they seek to head off the loss of jobs and economic impact from losing a base.

Last week, Lt. Gov. Amy Tuck, 4th District U.S. Rep. Gene Taylor and 3rd District U.S. Rep. Chip Pickering testified along with community leaders before a Base Realignment and Closure Commission committee about proposals to realign and close bases in the state that would mean a loss of 1,688 jobs.

Taylor pointed out Pentagon mistakes in assessing Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, which is targeted for realignment and closure of the hospital there. State leaders also pointed out that closing the U.S. Navy port at Pascagoula would endanger defense of the Gulf, which is strategically and economically vital to the nation.

Mississippi actually fared better than many states in the massive BRAC proposal that affects closure of more than 33 bases in 22 states and realignment of other missions. The reorganization is touted to save \$50 billion over 20 years. Still, the bases affected — in Biloxi, Pascagoula, Meridian and Hancock County —

are important parts of the communities and have major economic impacts.

The folly of a base closure and realignment initiative while the nation is at war and while foreign bases need assessment is apparent. As Sen. Trent Lott and Rep. Taylor have pointed out, the process is ill-timed and flawed.

The Mississippi bases should be able to stand on their worth to the nation's defense. It is just too bad they are having to do that at this time when the Pentagon should have other priorities.

Additional Notes