

## Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

# EARLY



# BIRD

July 29, 2005

### Department of Defense Releases

N/A

### National News Articles

U.S. Bases Are Focus On Rumsfeld's Trip To Central Asia

Rumsfeld Stop In Kyrgyzstan Aims To Keep Access To Base

Rumsfeld: US Could Handle Base's Loss

Kyrgyzstan Links Fate Of U.S. Base To Afghanistan

Pentagon Faulted on Building Security

Citing Sprawl, BRAC Panel Eyes Closure Of Oceana Over DoD Opposition

### Local News Articles

Guard Chiefs Condemn Closure Of Otis, Others (Boston, MA)

Former admirals criticize plan to close Groton submarine base (Boston, MA)

Navy's Top Admiral Will Testify To Save Oceana (Norfolk, VA)

Hunter Says China Bolsters Case To Keep Sub Base Open (New London, CT)

Maryland Decides Not To Fight Air National Guard Switch (Baltimore, MD)

Senate Bill Makes N.C. 'Military Friendly' (Fayetteville, NC)

BRAC Members Laud Shipyard, But Don't Tip Their Hand (Portsmouth, NH)

Navy Affirms 'Enormous Strategic Value' (Portland, ME)

N.C. delegation asks BRAC to reject Pope plan (Raleigh, NC)

Air Force reviewers say Eielson will require 1,000 more personnel (Fairbanks, AK)

Base closing commissioner to visit Michigan (Washington DC)

Guard units staying busy Every West Virginia unit but one has seen overseas duty (Charleston, WV)

BRAC Member Tours Groton Sub Base (Hartford, CT)

### Opinions/Editorials

N/A

### Additional Notes

N/A

Department of Defense Releases

N/A

National News Articles**U.S. Bases Are Focus On Rumsfeld's Trip To Central Asia**

Washington Post  
Ann Scott Tyson  
July 26, 2005

BISHKEK, Kyrgyzstan, July 25 -- Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld urged countries in Central Asia to "make up their own minds" about allowing U.S. military bases to remain in the region, despite recent pressure from Russia and China for a withdrawal deadline.

"We have a good arrangement in this part of the world -- arrangements plural," Rumsfeld told reporters on the flight to Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. "The arrangements work well for us. They've been a great help to Afghanistan. They've been a great help with respect to the global war on terror."

Rumsfeld's trip comes as the Pentagon faces the biggest challenge to keeping bases in Central Asia since the fall of 2001, when it hastily negotiated access here to support the war in Afghanistan. The U.S. regional presence includes two key air bases that have handled tens of thousands of U.S. flights -- Ganci air base north of Bishkek, where 1,000 troops are stationed, and the Karshi-Khanabad air base in Uzbekistan -- as well as overflight rights, "gas and go" refueling agreements and emergency landing agreements.

On July 5, a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, made up of Russia, China and four Central Asian states -- Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan -- called for setting a timetable for pulling out U.S. and other foreign forces, given what it described as the end of the "active military phase" of counterterrorist operations in Afghanistan.

But in meetings with Central Asian leaders this week, U.S. officials intend to dispute the view that the war in Afghanistan is winding down, according to a senior defense official traveling with Rumsfeld. "The basic premise that combat or anti-terrorist operations are complete in Afghanistan is flawed. It's not true," he said. Instead, continued U.S. military presence in the region will remain "vital" to combating the Taliban and terrorist groups such as al Qaeda, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and affiliated splinter groups, he said.

In Kyrgyzstan, top government officials in recent days have softened their stance on the base at Ganci, playing down the timetable issue and privately indicating support for a continued presence, Western diplomats and officials in Bishkek said. Kyrgyzstan's newly elected president, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, came under pressure from Russia and Uzbekistan to sign the summit declaration, they said. Either country can cancel the basing agreement with 180 days' notice.

The U.S. military uses the airfield primarily for KC-135 refueling jets, as well as for C-130s that haul cargo and rotate troops, and pays commercial rates for jet fuel, parking space and landing slots, said a Western diplomat who spoke on condition of anonymity in anticipation of Rumsfeld's meetings with Bakiyev and the defense minister. The U.S. base employs 200 Kyrgyz citizens and generates income estimated at 3 percent of Kyrgyzstan's gross domestic product, the diplomat said.

Uzbekistan, in contrast, has moved closer to curtailing U.S. military access. "It's a growing concern," said the senior defense official. Uzbekistan has limited U.S. cargo flights and canceled night flights from Karshi-Khanabad since the spring, when relations with the Bush administration soured over the killing of hundreds of civilians by Uzbek soldiers during unrest in the city of Andijan in May.

Still, Rumsfeld and other Pentagon officials indicated they were looking for solutions to keep the U.S. military in Uzbekistan.

"We're not at that point" of seeking alternatives elsewhere, Rumsfeld said. But he indicated that the United States did have other options. "We always think ahead. We'll be fine," he said.

Russia and China have lobbied for a U.S. withdrawal from the strategic region on their peripheries, leading a top U.S. general last week to accuse them of trying to "bully" Central Asian nations. "That's their opinion," Rumsfeld said, referring to statements by Russia and China at the summit. "I think each country in the region, however, will make up their own minds as to what their relationships with others will be."

Russia has long-term bases in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, where it signed a 15-year renewable contract in 2003 to station an air wing at a former Soviet base at Kant. A Russian delegation last spring also discussed with local officials establishing a second base in the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh.

### **Rumsfeld Stop In Kyrgyzstan Aims To Keep Access To Base**

New York Times  
Eric Schmitt  
July 26, 2005

BISHKEK, Kyrgyzstan, July 25 - Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld arrived in this Central Asian nation on Monday to shore up an unsettled military basing arrangement that has been critical to operations in Afghanistan.

The refueling and cargo mission operated by the American military from Manas Air Base, just outside Bishkek, the capital, has been an essential link in the supply chain for moving aid to civilians, troops and equipment into and out of Afghanistan. About 1,000 American troops operate from the airfield, which is the base for nine KC-135 refueling jets and C-130 cargo planes.

But the arrangement appeared to be in jeopardy early this month when Kyrgyzstan and three other Central Asian states joined Russia and China in calling for the United States to set a

deadline for withdrawing from the base here and one in neighboring Uzbekistan.

Mr. Rumsfeld told reporters traveling with him here from Washington that the status of the bases was a matter for negotiations with the host countries, not the regional alliance, which is known as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and is dominated by Russia and China.

"We have good arrangements in this part of the world with respect to basing and overflight rights," Mr. Rumsfeld said, referring to other regional states, like Tajikistan. "They have been a great help to Afghanistan and a great help to the global war on terror."

Ten days ago, Gen. Richard B. Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was even blunter in his assessment of the alliance's demand, "It looks to me like two very large countries were trying to bully some smaller countries."

The fate of the Manas base is especially important given the growing tensions between the United States and Uzbekistan since late May, when Uzbek security forces used gunfire to put down an uprising and antigovernment demonstration in Andijon in the northeast. Many Western governments and organizations have urged Uzbekistan to allow a credible international inquiry into the uprising and crackdown, but President Islam A. Karimov has refused.

Speaking at the start of a three-day trip to Central Asia and other countries, Mr. Rumsfeld said the United States and Uzbekistan had had a good basing arrangement and that he was not using the visit to shop for alternatives. "We're not at that point," he said.

But a senior Air Force officer familiar with operations in the region, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because planning is still in its preliminary stages, said that the military's Central Command was already examining "work-arounds," military parlance for alternatives, in case the Pentagon was forced to leave the Uzbek base.

On Tuesday, Mr. Rumsfeld will meet here with President-elect Kurmanbek S. Bakiyev, a former opposition leader who won a landslide victory in elections on July 10 that international observers generally praised for their openness and democratic integrity.

A Defense Department official, speaking on condition of anonymity to avoid upstaging his boss before the meetings, said Mr. Rumsfeld would brief Mr. Bakiyev and other top Kyrgyz officials on American operations in Afghanistan, the security outlook there and what that would mean for American requirements for access into and out of the region.

During his campaign, Mr. Bakiyev repeated the Shanghai alliance's demand for a deadline for the Americans' departure. But since the election, some of Mr. Bakiyev's aides and other Kyrgyz officials have softened that position, in what some regional analysts say could be a canny effort to balance the government's foreign policy with Russia, China and the United States.

"We have to ensure that our security and economic interests are protected," Kyrgyzstan's Security Council secretary, Miroslav Niyazov, said this month, citing the government's intention to "do its best to avoid spoiling relations with Washington."

The Pentagon is providing about \$10 million this year alone in military aid to Kyrgyzstan, a mountainous, landlocked country of five million people.

Regional security analysts say that Mr. Rumsfeld's visit will succeed if the two countries can come up with a rationale that gives the Kyrgyz public political cover for continuing operations at the base.

Mr. Rumsfeld visited Kyrgyzstan in April, just weeks after the so-called Tulip Revolution ousted President Askar Akayev, who fled the country.

### **Rumsfeld: US Could Handle Base's Loss**

Boston Globe  
Robert Burns  
July 26, 2005

BISHKEK, Kyrgyzstan -- The US military could sustain its operations in Afghanistan even if it lost access to a key air base in neighboring Uzbekistan, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said yesterday at the outset of a three-day tour of the region.

"We're always thinking ahead. We'll be fine," Rumsfeld told reporters traveling with him from Washington.

A frequent visitor to Central Asia since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Rumsfeld arrived amid growing questions about the US government's intentions.

The Uzbek government has raised doubt about continued US access to Karshi-Khanabad air base, which has been used as a staging point for operations in Afghanistan since the start of the war in October 2001. The United States also has about 1,000 troops stationed at Manas International Airport, near the Kyrgyz capital, to support the reception of tons of air cargo for shipment to US forces in Afghanistan.

In Bishkek, Rumsfeld was scheduled to meet today with newly elected President Kurmanbek Bakiyev and his acting minister of defense, General Ismail Isakov. It is Rumsfeld's second visit in four months to this former Soviet republic of 5 million people, which also hosts a Russian base.

In an April visit, Bakiyev, then the acting president, assured Rumsfeld that his country would abide by all its international agreements, including the arrangement for US use of the Manas airfield. But the day after his election July 10, Bakiyev signaled a possible change in his view.

"Afghanistan has had presidential and parliamentary elections," he said. "The situation there has stabilized. So now we may begin discussing the necessity of US military forces. When and how it will happen, time will show."

Also, a regional organization led by Russia and China issued a statement calling for the United States to set a timetable for withdrawing its forces from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. General Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said last week he thought that sounded like Russian and Chinese bullying tactics. Rumsfeld indicated that he agreed with Myers's assessment. "I think each country in the region, however, will make up their own minds as to what their relationships with others will be," Rumsfeld said.

Asked about Iraq, Rumsfeld predicted that the drafters of a constitution would complete their work on time, by Aug. 15. "They're going to get the job done. They will have a constitution, in my view. They will have a referendum on the constitution, and then they'll have an election" of a permanent government, he said.

Asked whether that will all be accomplished by Dec. 15, as scheduled, he replied: "I would certainly think so. I don't see any reason why they can't. They're making very good progress" despite the assassination of two Sunni Arab constitution drafters and a walkout by other Sunni Arabs.

Tensions in Washington's relations with Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian nations stem partly from an eruption of violence in May in the Uzbek city of Andijan. The Uzbek government blamed terrorists and said about 175 people were killed, some by government forces. Others claimed up to 1,500 people had been killed by troops, including a large number of innocent bystanders.

### **Kyrgyzstan Links Fate Of U.S. Base To Afghanistan**

New York Times  
July 26, 2005

BISHKEK (Reuters) - The United States won assurances from Kyrgyzstan on Tuesday that Washington could keep its military base in the ex-Soviet Central Asian state as long as the situation in Afghanistan required it.

Earlier this month, members of a group uniting Russia, China and ex-Soviet Central Asian states questioned the need for Washington's bases in Kyrgyzstan and neighboring Uzbekistan, set up in 2001 to support U.S.-led operations in Afghanistan.

"The presence of the (U.S.) base fully depends on the situation in Afghanistan," acting Kyrgyz Defense Minister Ismail Isakov told a joint news conference with visiting Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

"Today the minister (Rumsfeld) rightly noted that the situation in Afghanistan has not finally got back to normal," Isakov said.

Kyrgyzstan's new government, which came to power after a coup in March, is under strong pressure from its ally Russia, which is uneasy about the U.S. military presence in a region that Moscow considers its zone of influence.

Rumsfeld, who appeared confident after talks with Kyrgyz President-elect Kurmanbek Bakiyev and Isakov, later told troops at the Manas base: "I wouldn't pack your bags."

House members from Virginia, Ohio and California yesterday assailed new Defense Department security requirements that they said would effectively bar military employees from working in leased commercial buildings in major U.S. cities from New York to San Diego.

At a hearing of the House Government Reform Committee, lawmakers criticized Pentagon representatives and a pending national military streamlining plan that would reduce forces at 800 installations to save \$49 billion over 20 years.

### **Pentagon Faulted on Building Security**

Lawmakers Call Rules Excessive  
Washington Post  
Spencer S. Hsu  
July 28, 2005

"You are not going to get this funded. You are not going to get it funded in the House. You are not going to get it funded in the Senate," committee Chairman Thomas M. Davis III (R-Va.) told Defense officials led by Get W. Moy, a director with the undersecretary responsible for installations and environment. Congress will never vote to construct office buildings at the expense of military pay, housing and battlefield technology, he said: "It's a zero-sum game."

The base closing plan cites security needs for leased space -- such as a rule that such buildings be set back up to 148 feet from traffic to protect them from truck bombs -- as a reason to shift 23,000 Defense workers from the Northern Virginia suburbs onto secure bases by 2011. Members called the standards arbitrary and excessive compared with those developed jointly by other U.S. agencies.

"Why do you think you're so special compared with the intelligence and other federal agencies?" Davis asked, citing a 1995 presidential directive for federal agencies to develop uniform security rules after the Oklahoma City federal building bombing killed 168 people.

"Why are you so different than everybody else that you could walk away instead of working with an executive order that asks for coordination?" he asked.

Moy said the Pentagon acted faster than other agencies to defend itself, especially from truck bombs, after the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia killed 19 U.S. service members.

The Pentagon's anti-terrorism force-protection standards, or Unified Facilities Criteria, were revised to address leased space in 2002 and are "specifically focused on protecting military personnel and missions from terrorist threats," Moy said. "The department feels that vehicle-borne threats are very much a serious threat . . . that must be considered in any security plan."

By comparison, the Department of Homeland Security and General Services Administration issued guidelines for leased space for most other

U.S. agencies in February, said Dwight M. Williams, chief security officer for Homeland Security.

Unlike the military criteria, the Interagency Security Committee guidelines generally do not prescribe mandatory standoff distances from streets, specify blast resistance for walls and windows or bar all public access to underground parking. Instead, civilian agencies generally can negotiate with building owners and developers to meet varying security performance levels, Williams said.

Rep. James P. Moran Jr. (D-Va.) said it will be nearly impossible for military leases to satisfy standoff distance requirements in dense, downtown areas. "What kind of a message are we sending to our citizens with these kinds of security measures? That it is less safe to live in urban areas?" he asked.

Members criticized the secrecy of Pentagon deliberations to disperse facilities from the national capital area, and Davis threatened several times to subpoena records justifying Defense decisions.

The exchanges come as members of Congress lobby against proposed Defense Department cuts affecting their districts.

An independent nine-member federal Base Closure and Realignment Commission is expected to propose a final version of the plan Sept. 8 to the president, who with Congress must approve or reject the plan without making changes.

Sen. John W. Warner (R-Va.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, testified to the commission this month that Defense officials violated the law governing the base closing process by targeting military workers in leased office space near the capital for security reasons, instead of cost savings or military value.

**Citing Sprawl, BRAC Panel Eyes Closure Of Oceana Over DoD Opposition**  
Inside the Pentagon

Suzanne Yohannan  
July 28, 2005

Severe encroachment from urban sprawl has prompted the Base Realignment and Closure Commission to consider shutting down a major Navy air base in Virginia and moving its assets to another location, despite Defense Department opposition to the proposed closure.

The proposal, if adopted by the commission, could also have repercussions for the Navy's controversial plans to build an outlying landing field (OLF) in North Carolina to support the Virginia-based F/A-18E/F Super Hornet aircraft, some of which are currently based at Naval Air Station Oceana, Virginia Beach, VA.

The BRAC Commission voted 7-1 July 19 to consider either closing or significantly realigning the major jet base located at Oceana. The commission will evaluate this option over the next several weeks and make a final decision before Sept. 8, when its final list of base closures and realignments is due to be submitted to the president, according to a commission spokeswoman.

The commission earlier this month also asked Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld what consideration DOD had given in the 2005 BRAC round to moving the master jet base from Oceana to Moody Air Force Base in Georgia, due to the severe encroachment problems at Oceana.

An analyst with the commission noted in July 19 testimony that the Navy has been unable to halt increasing development surrounding Oceana -- the country's busiest master jet base -- which is constraining the Navy's operational and training capability at both Oceana and the nearby Naval Auxiliary Landing Field Fentress.

"Despite significant efforts by the Navy and local community leaders over the last 30 years to limit the encroachment, developers' demands and property rights issues have trumped the Navy's objections to new building in the high noise and accident potential zones, also known

as APZs," BRAC Commission analyst Bill Fetzer testified.

For instance, flight patterns at Fentress must comply with noise-abatement procedures "demanded by neighborhood developments" near the field, Fetzer said. Fetzer proposed relocation of all the squadrons, personnel, equipment and support from Oceana to an alternative site.

The Navy is also facing lawsuits by numerous property owners over noise caused by operations at Oceana.

One observer says the dispute over Oceana underscores the growing incidence of closure due to encroachment. Retired Army Judge Advocate General Maj. Gen. Hugh Overholt says encroachment has played an "enormous" role in all of the BRAC rounds, with many of the bases closed in earlier rounds located in dense metropolitan areas.

Overholt, who now advises a private sector group that is advocating for keeping two military facilities in eastern North Carolina open, said that at last week's BRAC Commission deliberations one commissioner alluded to the view of many that the question of closure for Oceana is not "if" but "when."

DOD and the Navy are defending their decision not to propose closure of Oceana due to encroachment. Vice Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Robert Willard, speaking before the commission July 18, asserted that "from the Navy's vantage point, we believe that Oceana continues to serve the fleet well, that the challenges that you mention regarding encroachment and Oceana have been and are manageable, that as we look forward to recapitalizing our fighter fleet and the advent of the Joint Strike Fighter in the 2012 to 2015 time frame, there may very well need to be considerations and adjustments made, but that yet remains to be seen."

The Navy dismissed Moody as an alternative site, due to the significant cost and the Air Force's needs for Moody, which would prevent

the Navy from bringing the entire Oceana wing to the base. Some encroachment problems would likely also arise at Moody with such a transfer, according to testimony from another BRAC commission analyst. Other relocations were also dismissed due to a lack of over-water training areas, according to the commission's staff.

While the Navy considers Oceana to be the most suitable option for the master jet base, it concedes that development around the base "presents significant challenges to long-term operational requirements," Fetzer said. To deal with these issues, the service is now pushing a proposal to eventually build a new master jet base on the East Coast, outside of the BRAC time frame, which ends in 2011.

"Selecting a location and building from the ground up is by far the preferred choice as it gives us the most flexibility to ensure we accommodate future capabilities, while allowing for sufficient 'buffers' to preclude potential encroachment issues," acting Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England said in a July 14 written response to the BRAC Commission. "This approach, if pursued, would allow for a truly modern air station, with commensurate energy, environmental and community consideration designed into the facility from the very beginning."

The commission's consideration of whether to shutter or realign the major jet base at Oceana comes as the Navy is fighting an environmental lawsuit over its plans to build an outlying landing field in eastern North Carolina to be used by several squadrons of Super Hornet aircraft to be based at Oceana. The Navy wants to build an additional OLF in Washington and Beaufort counties, NC, to practice aircraft carrier landings, but environmentalists have charged the Navy failed to follow the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in considering the environmental impacts of such a project.

Closure of Oceana would quash any need for the OLF at the eastern North Carolina site, says one environmentalist involved in the case. The source explained the Navy had looked to the

OLF "to export noise" from Oceana, but without planes at Oceana, the OLF becomes unnecessary. Under the Navy's proposal, the location of the OLF is midway between Oceana, where most of the Super Hornets would be based, and Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, in Havelock, NC, where two of the squadrons would be based.

But a Navy spokesman calls it "inappropriate" to speculate on any future potential impacts from a BRAC Commission decision on Oceana. He says the commission's July 19 vote has "no immediate impact" on the eastern North Carolina OLF.

And Overholt, the former judge advocate general, says the OLF's future is dependent on where Oceana's assets are directed to go, if the BRAC Commission decides to realign them. A move to Moody would make the OLF in North Carolina less critical in the long term, but he speculated that the Navy may look to consider building a new master jet base at the several sites it studied for siting the OLF, including at the controversial Washington/Beaufort location.

The Navy looked to these other locations for an OLF due to the encroachment problems, particularly jet noise, at Fentress, according to the service.

### Local News Articles

#### **Guard Chiefs Condemn Closure Of Otis, Others**

Boston Globe (Boston, MA)  
July 26, 2005

The Adjutants General Association of the United States, which represents the commanders of each state's National Guard, urged the base closure commission yesterday to overrule Pentagon plans to close or relocate many of their flying units, including the 102d Fighter Wing of the Massachusetts National Guard at Otis Air National Guard Base. The group says the Pentagon's recommendations are "beyond the scope" of the closure legislation.

## **Former admirals criticize plan to close Groton submarine base**

Boston Globe (Boston, MA)  
July 29, 2005

NEW LONDON, Conn. --The Pentagon's plan to close the Groton submarine base is drawing heavy fire from eight former high-ranking naval officers.

"Closing (the sub base) would critically injure the capabilities and readiness of the United States' submarine force, the Navy and the armed forces at large," the retired admirals wrote in the letter to Anthony Principi, chairman of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission.

The admirals were once some of the most powerful military officials in Washington. Among those who signed the letter were Adm. James D. Watkins, chief of naval operations under President Reagan; Adm. Carlisle A.H. Trost, chief of naval operations under President George H.W. Bush, and Adm. Frank B. Kelso II, who served as President Clinton's chief of naval operations.

The letter writers also included Vice Adms. Kenneth M. Carr, former Atlantic fleet sub commander; George R. Sterner, former Naval Sea Systems commander; Al Konetzni, former Pacific fleet sub commander; and N. Ronald Thunman, a former deputy chief of naval operations.

Principi has also received letters recently from other military experts and politicians opposed to closing the base in Groton -- the first submarine base in the country and home to the nation's premier submarine school.

Gov. M. Jodi Rell and other leading politicians said the admirals' letter should be influential in efforts to keep the base open.

"Having this formidable group of admirals support our submarine base speaks volumes about the drastic error the Department of

Defense made in recommending (Groton) for closure," Rell said.

U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-Conn., added, "These are big-picture leaders who understand the strategic, industrial, operational and readiness value (of the base). All eight retired admirals understand what works and what doesn't."

Connecticut Sens. Christopher Dodd and Joseph Lieberman also praised the admirals' letter, which says the Pentagon made a serious error in determining the military value of the Groton base.

"These aren't abstract figures or numbers on some chart," Dodd said. "They are people who know our naval forces better than anyone."

The admirals said the Pentagon's projected size of the country's submarine fleet over the next 20 years would not meet national security needs.

The Groton base "is a proven strategic asset," the admirals wrote to Principi. "It would take the Navy generations to reconstitute its unique military value elsewhere. That is years the armed forces cannot afford to lose."

## **Navy's Top Admiral Will Testify To Save Oceana**

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk, VA)  
Dale Eisman  
July 29, 2005

WASHINGTON — Pressed to speak out by Virginia Sen. John W. Warner, the Navy's top admiral will testify on the value of Oceana Naval Air Station when a federal base closing commission convenes a new hearing next week on the Virginia Beach base's future.

Adm. Michael G. Mullen, who took over as chief of naval operations last Friday, has agreed to appear at an Aug. 4 hearing of the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission, his office confirmed. A spokesman would not discuss the substance of Mullen's planned testimony but acknowledged that the Navy

leader was responding to an invitation from Warner, who is spearheading efforts to save the base.

A five-term Republican and chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Warner is perhaps Congress' most influential member on defense issues.

He warned Navy and Pentagon officials last week that the money needed to close Oceana and move its planes and 12,000 uniformed and civilian workers – more than \$1 billion by Warner's estimate – could be drained from already tight shipbuilding budgets.

Warner followed that warning with a letter sent Tuesday to Mullen and obtained by The Virginian-Pilot. The four-paragraph message reminded the Navy leader that the service already is on record in support of retaining Oceana, and added that if the commission decides to close the base, Mullen "would face a difficult and expensive task to replicate this important installation."

"I believe that on such a critical matter of national security and military readiness, commissioners must be provided the Department's best military judgment and professional advice available on the military value of Naval Station Oceana," the letter added. "You are the most qualified to provide this testimony."

Opened during the 1940s, Oceana is the Navy's east coast "Master Jet Base" and home to more than 240 F/A-18 Hornets and Super Hornets, F-14 Tomcats and other aircraft. Once surrounded by farmland, the base today is ringed by subdivisions, schools and shopping centers, many erected despite the Navy's objections.

Growing concern over noise and safety hazards, along with a chorus of complaints from some nearby residents, moved service leaders to search last year for an alternative to Oceana.

But Mullen's predecessor, Adm. Vern Clark, testified in May that the Navy couldn't find a suitable base to replace Oceana, and the Defense

Department said earlier this month that its long-term objective is to build a new facility "from the ground up" at a site to be selected.

Though the Pentagon asserted that Oceana can't be shut down and a new base readied in the six-year "window" for BRAC Commission action, the panel decided last week to add the base to a list of about three-dozen facilities being considered for closure.

The commission has set aside one hour for next week's hearing, which is required by law. But the commission delegated control of the time and selection of the speakers to Warner, the state's senior senator.

That decision, which matches the commission's action in arranging hearings on bases in other states, has triggered complaints from a local group that wants Oceana downsized or its mission changed.

Hal Levenson, a spokesman for Citizens Concerned About Jet Noise, said the group has asked both the BRAC Commission and Warner for a chance to speak. If the request is denied, the group expects to make itself heard anyway, perhaps by speaking to reporters outside the hearing room, Levenson said.

### **Hunter Says China Bolsters Case To Keep Sub Base Open** **Key lawmaker sees Beijing's growing sub fleet as a red flag**

New London Day (New London, CT)

Anthony Cronin

July 28, 2005

The chairman of the House Armed Services Committee on Wednesday again took issue with the Pentagon's plan to close the Naval Submarine Base in Groton during congressional hearings on the growing strength of the Chinese military.

During hearings chaired by U.S. Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., members were told that China has more fast-attack submarines than the United States, based on Pentagon analyses, and current

trends would give China a disproportionate advantage by 2025, which is the same year that some naval force-structure plans call for a downsized U.S. fleet of between 37 and 41 of the stealthy submarines.

“The best anti-submarine weapon is another submarine,” Hunter said. He said the United States can't afford to slim down its fast-attack force levels to the 30s or 40s, “and we cannot afford to close” the base in Groton.

Hunter called the Groton base “a center of excellence for undersea warfare” and said the Pentagon's plans to shut it down as part of this year's base closings and consolidations would shed the Navy of a strategic base that “can't be reproduced.”

U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, a member of the House Armed Services Committee, echoed Hunter's criticism, saying that Wednesday's testimony on the Chinese military buildup shows the Chinese are investing heavily to build up their sub-surface force “while our force structure plan (for submarines) goes in the opposite direction.”

Hunter has repeatedly voiced his opposition to the closing of the Groton base, saying it serves the nation's strategic military needs and also offers a unique synergy with the nearby Electric Boat submarine shipyard, also in Groton.

In addition, several other congressmen on influential committees have questioned the Pentagon's proposed closing of the base. Appropriations Committee Chairman Jerry Lewis, a California Republican; Projection Forces Subcommittee Chairman Roscoe Bartlett, a Maryland Republican; and Appropriations Defense Subcommittee Chairman Bill Young, a Florida Republican, have told Anthony Principi, the chairman of the federal Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, that closing the Groton base would destroy the “world's best submarine base” while creating little or no savings.

The armed services committee met Wednesday morning to hear testimony on the People's

Republic of China military following the release last week of a Department of Defense report on the subject, which concluded that the Chinese were developing sufficient military resources to keep U.S. forces out of certain areas.

During the hearing, John Tkacik, an analyst with the conservative Heritage Foundation, told committee members that the Chinese could see a net gain of 35 submarines over the next 15 years. Tkacik said the ongoing buildup will give the Chinese a home-field advantage in a possible East Asian conflict against the U.S. Navy, in part because the American subs are more globally dispersed.

“Today's testimony reveals what we have thought was the case for some time: There is a developing disconnect between the ambitious plans of the Chinese Navy and the Pentagon's shipbuilding plan used to justify closing (the Groton base),” Simmons said.

The Pentagon announced on May 13 that the Groton base would be closed as part of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure, or BRAC, process. It would be the largest in the current cluster of base closings, which is the fifth round of BRAC closings and consolidations since 1988.

The Pentagon has proposed moving the Groton sub fleet to a fast-attack base in Norfolk, Va., along with some of its commands, and moving some fast-attack submarines and the Groton submarine school onto the sub base at Kings Bay, Ga., currently the homeport for the larger Trident nuclear-missile subs.

Simmons said critics who have claimed the Navy's West Coast submarine bases would provide quicker access to potential hot spots in the Middle East don't consider the fact that Groton submarines can travel under the polar ice caps to reach the Middle East and Pacific Ocean. He also said the Groton base is closer to Middle East and Pacific hot spots by traveling under the ice caps than “any other base on the East Coast” — a reference to the sub bases in Georgia and Virginia.

## **Maryland Decides Not To Fight Air National Guard Switch**

Baltimore Sun (Baltimore, MD)

Melissa Harris

July 29, 2005

Maryland will not be joining two states in lawsuits against the Defense Department over a proposal to remove all aircraft from nearly two dozen Air National Guard bases, including eight cargo planes from the Martin State Airport in Baltimore County, a state official said this week.

The lawsuits filed by Pennsylvania and Illinois challenge whether the Pentagon has the authority to reconfigure state-run Guard units without the approval of the state's governor, whose right to form militias is guaranteed in the Constitution. The suits contend that base-closing statutes can't supersede the Constitution.

In a memo obtained by CongressDaily, a lawyer for the Base Realignment and Closure Commission sided with the states, saying that such moves made without a governor's consent may be unconstitutional.

A spokeswoman for BRAC said this week that the commission is seeking additional opinions from a Pentagon attorney and the attorney general's office.

Meanwhile, Air National Guard leaders and Air Force officials are trying to broker a compromise. State adjutant generals have said that the Air Force shut them out of BRAC discussions.

Maryland's eight C-130J cargo planes and more than 100 reserve jobs would be shipped to Rhode Island and California under the proposal.

Maj. Gen. Bruce F. Tuxill told The Sun this month that the removal of the planes would create a loss of interest among his reservists, given that they'd no longer have aircraft to fly or repair. He also told members of the BRAC commission that after the move, the nearest airlift planes would be in Youngstown, Ohio.

Aris Melissaratos, Maryland's economic development secretary, said that he isn't going to complain about this issue because the overall picture for high-tech and job growth in the state is bright under the BRAC plan.

"Our position is that we support the BRAC recommendations," he said. "I have to be very careful because I'm playing around with 10,000 potential jobs, and those airplanes would only cost 150."

The nine-member commission has until Sept. 8 to send its recommendations to the White House. President Bush must say yea or nay by Sept. 23, and then the list goes to Congress, which will also accept or reject the list in its entirety.

Some members of Congress have threatened to delay the process or cut off money for the closures and relocations because of the large economic toll some states face under the plan.

Regionally, the greatest concern is the abandonment of millions of square feet of leased office space in Northern Virginia because it doesn't meet security standards. Maryland stands to gain some of those jobs, but it's unclear what the changes will mean for the entire Baltimore-Washington corridor.

## **Senate Bill Makes N.C. 'Military Friendly'**

Fayetteville Observer (Fayetteville, NC)

July 29, 2005

RALEIGH - The state Senate passed a bill Thursday designed to make the state appear more "military friendly."

The bill's passage comes as the Pentagon evaluates which bases to close or realign.

The 2005 Military Support Act would return a portion of the gasoline taxes collected on military bases to those bases. The money would help pay for morale-building programs and land-acquisition efforts around military installations.

The bill would also require the state's professional licensing boards to look for ways to more quickly process professional licenses for military spouses who hold licenses from outside the state.

It also would provide greater access for members of the military and their families to attend community college training programs at in-state tuition rates.

A bill passed last year allows soldiers and their families to pay in-state rates at state colleges and universities already.

Sen. Tony Rand, the Fayetteville Democrat who sponsored the bill, said the bill will "go a long way to show the rest of the nation how North Carolina feels about its military."

Sen. Andrew Brock, a Mocksville Republican, said the legislation was particularly important now as the Base Realignment and Closure commission prepares to visit Pope Air Force Base next week.

He said that plans to close the Oceana Naval Air Station in Norfolk, Va., could mean that fighter squadrons might move to North Carolina if the state can sell itself.

"North Carolina has a good chance of getting that," he said. "We need to do as much as possible to make Washington know that we are the most military friendly state."

Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue, who has spent the past year as the state's top promoter in the BRAC process, applauded the legislation.

"This is an important step as we defend the proposed gains in the BRAC process," she said in a statement.

### **BRAC Members Laud Shipyard, But Don't Tip Their Hand**

Portsmouth Herald (Portsmouth, NH)  
Shir Haberman  
July 27, 2005

KITTERY, Maine - Portsmouth Naval Shipyard received rave reviews from the two base-closure commissioners who visited Tuesday.

"Currently, it's a very, very, very impressive facility and a very impressive, what I call, public-private partnership here, and that does make a difference," said Samuel Skinner, a member of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission. It really does live up to its expectations. It is a first-rate shipyard."

Skinner, a former White House chief of staff, and retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Sue Turner, who joined him Tuesday, were the fifth and sixth BRAC commission members to visit the local yard since it was recommended for closure by the Pentagon in May.

As the Aug. 23 deadline for the commission to prepare its own base closure and realignment recommendations for President Bush draws closer, the commissioners are becoming more vocal about their opinions.

Turner said that a letter she received from a Kittery family prompted her to visit the local yard, even though she was not originally scheduled to do so.

"It was a letter that talked about the potential of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard being on the list and, of course, why it shouldn't be, but it went into the history (of the yard) and it talked about the people," she said. "It was a really cool letter, and I knew then that if I wasn't on the official visiting list, I still wanted to come here."

Turner had asked the community not to make a big deal over her visit to the local yard, but still about 3,200 people dressed in their yellow "Save Our Shipyard" T-shirts lined Walker Street and cheered as the commissioners arrived.

Skinner mentioned those who turned out in his remarks.

"To all those people who stood out in the hot, thank you," he said. "It does make a difference."

The commissioner said displays such as the one put on Tuesday show the kind of support a community has for its Navy yard.

"That's very important because that's not true in all the places we go," Skinner said.

While complimentary about what they had seen inside the yard's gates, neither commissioner was prepared to say whether he or she would vote to keep the yard open.

"I've not formed any judgment about any place that I've visited or heard about or read about," Turner said. "It's not time for that yet."

Skinner echoed those sentiments.

"No decisions have been made, but the channels of communication have been open, will be open and will continue to be open until such time as our report is made to the president," he said.

Turner, along with New Hampshire Gov. John Lynch and Maine Gov. John Baldacci, confirmed the final decision about whether to keep the Portsmouth yard open will be based on whether the commission believes the Navy currently has more capacity for refueling, overhauling and repairing submarines than it needs.

"I don't know yet," was Turner's response to a question about whether this excess capacity exists. "That's a real key point."

Both Baldacci and Lynch also felt the capacity issue was key to the yard's survival.

"I do believe that, in part, this decision will come down to the issue of capacity," Lynch said. "Those were questions that were asked (by the commissioners) and issues that will be probed by the commission."

"In terms of capacity, I think they recognize they have a resource here and they're trying to figure out how it fits in overall in terms of the submarine force and military force structure and all the other issues," Baldacci said.

Lynch said he hoped the two commissioners who had not yet visited the yard - former Utah Rep. James Hansen and retired Army Gen. James Hill - could eventually make the trip. Adm. Harold Gehman Jr. had also not been to the local yard since his appointment to the BRAC Commission, but had been here in his former capacity as NATO Supreme Allied Commander in the Atlantic.

However, Skinner made it clear that whether those commissioners actually visit Portsmouth will not be an issue when the commission begins its deliberations.

"If you're concerned they do not appreciate what you have here, you can be assured that with the six or seven commissioners who've seen it, they will carry the message back," he said. "Everybody will recognize, and they do now, that this is a first-rate facility doing first-rate work."

### **Navy Affirms 'Enormous Strategic Value'**

Portland Press Herald (Portland, ME)

David Sharp

July 28, 2005

The Navy made it clear in a letter to U.S. Sen. Susan Collins that it does not want to see the Brunswick Naval Air Station closed and envisions a continued role in NATO exercises, refueling aircraft and hosting a Navy survival school.

The Brunswick base has "enormous strategic value as the last remaining active duty airfield in the Northeast," wrote Ann Rathmell Davis, an assistant to the Navy secretary on base realignment and closure issues, in a letter Tuesday.

In fact, the Navy continues to view Brunswick as "the optimal site in New England for P-3 detachment missions," she wrote.

Collins, R-Maine, said the letter will be used as Brunswick supporters press their case for keeping the base at full strength during a public

hearing of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission on Aug. 10 in Washington, D.C.

"It is the strongest statement that I have seen from the Navy about the value of the Brunswick Naval Air Station," Collins said Wednesday. "It's ironic because it makes the case for having Brunswick as a fully operational base."

The Pentagon has proposed moving P-3 Orion patrol aircraft to Jacksonville, Fla., and reassigning 2,300 military personnel. But the base closing commission voted 8-1 to also add Brunswick to the list of bases being considered for closure.

Base supporters have contended that the base's strategic value makes it too important to close. And they say it doesn't make sense to scale it back, either, because doing so would eliminate any possibility that it could be redeveloped for non-military uses.

In her letter, Davis acknowledged that scaling back Brunswick would lengthen the response time to maritime threats in the Northeast.

The Navy supports keeping Brunswick Naval Air Station open in a limited role because it would support future requirements for homeland defense, as well as providing "surge capacity" for the Navy, she wrote.

The base has a fully functional weapons facility, an ability to service all aircraft in the Defense Department arsenal and a geographic location that allows maritime patrol aircraft to avoid passing over inhabited areas, she wrote.

In addition, the Pentagon envisions Navy and Marine Reserve units continuing to operate in Brunswick, and the Brunswick base continuing to serve as the home for the Navy's Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape School in western Maine.

### **N.C. delegation asks BRAC to reject Pope plan**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire  
(Raleigh, NC)

July 28, 2005

Members of the state's congressional delegation have asked the commission charged with closing military bases to reject a plan to shut down Pope Air Force Base because it erodes the military readiness of the adjacent Army post.

Pentagon planners asked the Base Closure and Realignment Commission to move a wing of C-130 cargo and troop carriers and a wing of A-10 fighter jets out of Pope and give the base to the Army's Fort Bragg. The plan also called for moving two major Army commands from Georgia to Fort Bragg.

The letter, sent Thursday to BRAC Chairman Anthony Principi, said moving the C-130 fleet of 25 planes out of Pope would "be a serious mistake."

"When the president directs, the 82nd Airborne brigade combat teams and Special Forces units at Fort Bragg are required to be ready to deploy within 18 hours of notification and be airborne within 24 hours," the letter said.

"To meet these timelines, the 43rd Airlift Wing provides C-130s and execution planning ... and also performs critical functions to support strategic airlift for surge and contingency deployments worldwide."

The letter said Pope and Bragg should be considered a joint base. It was signed by Sens. Richard Burr and Elizabeth Dole, R-N.C., and Reps. Bob Etheridge and Mike McIntyre, both Democrats, and GOP Rep. Robin Hayes.

Dole also reiterated her points in phone conversations Thursday with Principi and another commissioner, Harold Gehman, said her spokeswoman, Lindsey Taylor.

The air base is separated from Fort Bragg by a fence and paratroopers regularly train for jumps at Pope's Green Ramp, the terminal for large deployments of soldiers. Fort Bragg also has an Army air base that is primarily for helicopters.

Pope has about 6,000 personnel and Bragg has a population of nearly 50,000, including the 82nd, the 18th Airborne Corps headquarters and the Army Special Operations Command.

Besides the BRAC changes, the Army plans to create a new brigade of 3,500 to 3,900 paratroopers in the 82nd Airborne Division, giving the division four brigades.

The delegation said an Air Force reserve unit that would be sent to Pope with 16 planes couldn't handle the airlift needs of Fort Bragg.

The letter also said cost analysis for the proposal was flawed.

"In reality, while these actions will save the Air Force money, the Army and (Department of Defense) will pay dearly for those savings," the letter said, adding that a Government Accounting Office study called the savings "imaginary."

The letter displayed bipartisan cooperation.

"The North Carolina congressional delegation is united in our efforts to promote Pope Air Force Base," Etheridge said.

"We will continue to work together as the process moves forward to ensure that the BRAC commission is aware of Pope's strong record with unique capabilities teamed with Fort Bragg as America's premier power projection force."

### **Air Force reviewers say Eielson will require 1,000 more personnel**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire  
(Fairbanks, AK)  
July 28, 2005

Air Force reviewers have concluded that keeping Eielson Air Force Base open will require 1,000 more personnel than the military estimated when it proposed in May to put the installation in "warm" status, according to Alaska Sen. Ted Stevens.

Stevens made the claim this month in a letter to members of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission July 21. Stevens spokeswoman Courtney Schikora Boone said the Air Force would brief the senator's staff on the new numbers this week.

Jim Dodson, chairman of the Save Eielson task force in Fairbanks, said he had heard about the Air Force's new report but hadn't seen it yet.

"They wouldn't give it to us," Dodson said.

He said if the Air Force needs 1,000 more people than previously expected to keep Eielson in warm status, it will certainly reduce the potential savings from the military's plans for the base.

The department announced in May that it wanted to remove all jets and almost all of the Air Force's 3,000 personnel from the base. Top defense officials said the plan was to host more aerial warfare training exercises for visiting military units.

The department estimated it could save \$2.78 billion over 20 years by putting Eielson in warm status.

Stevens said in his letter to BRAC commissioners that, based on the new figures, that estimate overstates the potential by \$1.1 billion.

Dodson said the new figures were developed by a team of civil engineers the Air Force sent to Eielson after local, state and federal elected officials questioned the military's projected savings.

Dodson said the new report apparently estimates Eielson would need 1,600 personnel to maintain the base year-round.

"Even if you misapply the personnel like they did, their savings is severely impacted," he said.

Stevens, in his letter to the BRAC commissioners, said the originally projected cost

savings from reducing Eielson's personnel were inaccurate.

"There is no such thing as a 'warm' facility in midwinter Alaska - a facility is either operational or not," Stevens said in his letter. "The Air Force analysis did not include a realistic cost of maintaining Eielson in a 'warm' status as compared to fully utilizing the base for the key missions of air defense, close air support, and joint training and operations with the Army."

### **Base closing commissioner to visit Michigan**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire  
(Washington DC)  
Ken Thomas  
July 28, 2005

A key member of the federal base closing commission will take a firsthand look at military facilities in Battle Creek and the Detroit area, a move that state officials hope will strengthen their position in an ongoing review of installations.

Samuel Skinner, a former U.S. Transportation secretary, planned to visit the Detroit Arsenal in Warren and the W.K. Kellogg Airport Air Guard Station in Battle Creek on Friday.

A Pentagon blueprint on base closings and realignments would enhance the Detroit Arsenal with nearly 650 more jobs, making it the military's top center for automotive and ground vehicle research and development. But the plan would close the Battle Creek Air National Guard base and the U.S. Army Garrison at Selfridge Air National Guard Base in Macomb County.

Skinner will inspect the arsenal in the morning and then travel to Battle Creek, where he is expected to be greeted by about 1,000 supporters during a rally at Western Michigan University College of Aviation. He will be briefed by military officers and elected officials at the base.

Some Michigan officials have criticized the proposal to shift the 110th Fighter Wing at

Battle Creek to Selfridge, arguing it would not be cost-effective and would splinter the Guard. The visit is the culmination of months of lobbying.

Jan Burland, who has helped lead the Battle Creek effort, said Skinner's trip was of "immense importance" to the community and the 110th Fighter Wing. She said it would allow Skinner to see the base's value to the military and the importance of the A-10 aircraft at the base.

The Pentagon proposal would transfer A-10 aircraft stationed in Battle Creek to Selfridge. Selfridge would add refueling tankers from California but would lose aging C130 and F16 aircraft.

Rep. Joe Schwarz, R-Battle Creek, has stressed that the base is modern and has benefited from \$50 million in upgrades during the past decade. He also contends the shifting of the aircraft would require three years of retraining of pilots and have a harmful effect on the state's Air National Guard.

"We think we have a great case to make and we're going to make it," Schwarz said.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm wrote Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld last week, saying she would not consent to the proposed changes to the Air National Guard. She said the recommendations were based on a "seriously flawed process."

Granholm, who is on a trade mission to Japan, will be represented in Battle Creek by her husband, Dan Mulhern.

Skinner, who served as White House chief of staff under former President George H.W. Bush, is one of nine commissioners reviewing the Pentagon plan. The commission will make recommendations to President Bush by September.

## **Guard units staying busy Every West Virginia unit but one has seen overseas duty**

Charleston Gazette (Charleston, WV)  
Rick Steelhammer  
July 28, 2005

Every National Guard unit in West Virginia, with the exception of the tiny, Morgantown-based 249th Army Band, has been called to active duty at least once since the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

"Most of our people have done one tour already. Very few of our soldiers have not gone overseas," Lt. Col. Mike Cadle, head of public affairs for the state adjutant general's office, said Wednesday.

Cadle, speaking to reporters during a media day event on the eve of the Charleston-based 130th Airlift Wing's 12th consecutive 60-day deployment to Southwest Asia, said National Guard officials in Washington are establishing new goals to make future deployments more manageable.

"The goal is to get the National Guard on a deployment rotation of one year out of every six," he said.

The idea is to have at least 50 percent of each state's National Guard force serving in their home states at any given time, insuring an adequate force to respond to state emergencies like floods and hurricanes, Cadle said.

Another 25 percent of each state's National Guard force would be training for upcoming deployment missions, while no more than 25 percent would be placed on active duty and deployed.

At the time of the Iraq invasion, more than 2,000 of the state's 6,200 Army and Air National Guard personnel were called to active duty.

As of Wednesday, that number had dropped to 287, due in part because there are few fresh units left to tap.

About 30 members of the 130th Airlift Wing were scheduled to depart Yeager Airport aboard one of the unit's C-130 transport planes at dawn today for a 60-day rotation to Southwest Asia.

Around the time of the Iraq invasion, about 350 members of the 130th, along with six of the unit's C-130 aircraft, were on active duty in Southwest Asia for nine months, where they flew missions to Iraq and Afghanistan from a base in Saudi Arabia.

"We had the highest-trained crews, so we drew the most dangerous missions flying into northern Iraq," Col. Tim Frye, wing commander of the 130th, told reporters attending Wednesday's media day at the Air National Guard base.

While two non-flying members of the unit were injured in the line of duty while serving as gunners on truck convoys in Iraq, "To date, everyone's come back home alive," a fact with which Frye said he is "incredibly pleased."

In addition to flying missions in Southwest Asia, the 130th makes flights to Bosnia, Kosovo, and undertakes activities as diverse as supporting anti-drug efforts in Colombia, scientific research in Antarctica and medical missions in Peru.

While the 130th has been flying C-130s for 30 years, the aircraft now in use by the unit were built in the mid-1990s and carry state-of-the-art avionics and radar, as well as missile-evading systems making use of flares and aluminum chaff.

Maj. Gen. Allen Tackett said in his 10 years as the state's adjutant general, National Guard units, including the 130th, have been called to active duty 57 times to respond to state emergencies like floods and fires.

He said Pentagon planners overlooked the state mission of the National Guard when they recommended closing or downsizing Air National Guard units - including the 130th - in 29 states. Current recommendations call for transferring all eight of the 130th's aircraft to Pope Air Force Base at Fayetteville, N.C.

Tackett said adjutants general in all states and territories have signed a letter that was sent to the Pentagon on Friday, complaining that Base Realignment and Closure legislation does not allow the Air Force to deactivate units or relocate equipment from one state to another.

The state National Guard commanders also argued that under law, bases could not be closed or realigned without the advice and consent of governors in the affected states.

Tackett said five of the 130th's C-130s, along with a National Guard civil support group, were placed on standby alert following the recent bombings in London. Aircraft from the Charleston Air Guard base have been given the task of bringing civil support teams to respond to possible biochemical incidents across the East and Midwest, and have several classified emergency response roles in Washington, D.C., as well.

"The Air Force didn't consider the 130th's homeland security role when they made their BRAC recommendations," Tackett said.

Capt. Patrick Berry, a pilot aboard one of two C-130s who flew training missions with reporters aboard on Wednesday, said he doubts many pilots will transfer to the nearest remaining Air National Guard C-130 base in Louisville, Ky., to continue their military flying careers, if the BRAC recommendations become law.

"We just bought a house in Charleston, so I won't move," Berry said. "I think whatever the BRAC Commission decides will decide things for a lot of people here."

Berry, one of the younger pilots in the unit, finished flight training in 2001 - just in time to get in lots of flying time over Iraq.

"I got to see the whole sandbox," he said with a smile.

Berry said there are two main reasons why he belongs to the 130th: "It's a way to serve and it's

a way to fly. And flying with the 130th, the missions are so diverse."

### **BRAC Member Tours Groton Sub Base** Hartford Courant (Hartford, CT)

Jesse Hamilton

July 28, 2005

A fifth member of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission toured Groton's submarine base Wednesday in preparation for next month's deliberations on whether to accept a Pentagon recommendation to close it.

The visit from retired Brig. Gen. Sue E. Turner, one of nine independently appointed commissioners reviewing the Pentagon's base-closing process, lasted about three hours.

"She got a basic tour of the base and sub school," said Chief Petty Officer Jack O'Neill, a base spokesman. "She also wanted to see the child development center and youth center."

Turner's tour marked the second from the commission, the first having included four commissioners, led by Chairman Anthony Principi. Now a majority of the group has seen the sub base firsthand. It takes five commissioners to vote a base off the list.

The commission's mailbox has been filled daily with letters from area residents and politicians supporting the sub base. U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, is among the most frequent letter writers. His latest was to Turner, thanking her for the visit.

"The military value of [the Groton base] is extraordinary and must be seen to be fully understood," Simmons wrote. "That is why we are grateful to you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to see it for yourself."

Simmons, whose district includes Groton, and other base proponents from the state are still crafting arguments as the final weeks pass.

On Wednesday, Simmons, as a member of the House Armed Services Committee, heard

testimony on the military status of China. The testimony included a report on major growth in the Chinese submarine fleet, which has steadily improved technologically.

The U.S. Navy's future sub force, according to the most recent projections that helped put Groton's base on the list for closure, will see a decline in submarines in coming years. The Chinese fleet will dwarf that of the U.S. by a 3-to-1 ratio by 2025, Simmons said.

As part of the closure plan, the Pentagon wants to move Groton's three fast-attack submarine squadrons to bases in Georgia and Virginia. In a statement, Simmons argued that Groton "is closer to the Middle East and the Pacific Ocean, via the polar icecaps, than any other base on the East Coast."

Other members of the armed services committee, including Chairman Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., have written to the commission with claims that the Navy used bad information on future sub needs to make up its mind about Groton. "This failure constitutes a substantial deviation from the BRAC criteria," Hunter and others wrote in a Monday letter to the commission chairman.

**Opinions/ Editorials**

N/A

**Additional Notes**

N/A