

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



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Army Plan To Speed Up BRAC Transfers Draws Skepticism From States

Inside the Pentagon

Alex Kuli

August 11, 2005

State regulators are raising questions about the Army's plan to quickly transfer properties under the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure round to private parties who will conduct the cleanup at these sites. They say the Army's plan to dispose of its properties in four years would increase the workload and put pressure on officials to cut corners when characterizing environmental contamination.

Under the plan, the Army would privatize its cleanup responsibilities by allowing redevelopers to include the price of environmental restoration in their bids and carry out the response actions themselves. But while regulators welcome the idea of getting BRAC properties back on the tax rolls as soon as possible, they question whether it will be possible to reach the necessary agreements to guarantee that developers will fully remediate the land -- especially if the initial characterization is incomplete. This is a particular concern for sites on the Environmental Protection Agency's National Priorities List

(NPL) of worst-contaminated sites, regulators said.

The Army's "vision is to pass along the cleanup to private developers," a CalEpa source said. "It's a gamble . . . a gamble for the developer and for the state."

Rick Newsome, who is in charge of cleanup policy in the office of the deputy secretary of the Army for environment, safety and occupational health, presented the four-year-disposal plan Aug. 3 at the Association of State and Territorial Solid Waste Managers' 2005 Federal Facilities Program Managers Symposium in San Francisco. Newsome told sister publication Defense Environment Alert the Army is moving to the four-year disposal plan to satisfy "pressures from above" to get BRAC properties off the books. BRAC law requires all closure activities to be completed within 6 years, but cleanup and property transfer are excluded from that mandate.

In February 2004, Raymond DuBois, then the Defense Department's top environment official, told Congress that in the upcoming round of base closures, DOD planned to seek to increase its use of early transfers of property and privatize the cleanups. DuBois is now a special assistant to the secretary of the Army.

"The legacy of previous BRACs is not a good one," Newsome said. According to a May 3 report by the Government Accountability Office, the Army still has approximately 101,000 acres of property on its books from previous BRAC rounds, mostly due to environmental problems. "The paradigm . . . needs to be changed," he said.

Newsome said the success of the Army's expedited disposal plan rests upon its ability to provide regulators and prospective developers with as clear a picture as possible of the contamination on the property. Therefore, the Army wants to characterize the contamination using a system known as environmental condition of property (ECP), which he describes as a more comprehensive alternative to the

environmental baseline survey (EBS) used previously.

“An ECP is an ‘EBS-plus,’” Newsome said, explaining the new method would incorporate industry quality-control standards. It would also survey contaminants such as polychlorinated biphenyls, asbestos and lead-based paint that are not regulated under the Superfund law, Newsome said. The ECP should make it easier for the Army to persuade regulators to give their blessing to the so-called “dirty transfer” of the property, he said.

Developers will have fewer concerns about discovering hidden contamination after the transfer because the ECP is more thorough than the EBS, Newsome said. And the Army will have to work out a consent agreement with states to offer guarantees of a response in case the developer defaults on its cleanup obligations, he said.

The Army is currently pursuing “conversations” with private firms to create plans to address regulators’ concerns about transferring contaminated properties from previous BRAC rounds, Newsome added. In addition, the Army plans to seek fair market value for its properties whenever possible, he said.

The Army’s early transfer approach does provide some distinct advantages for the states, some conference attendees said. It gives the states “substantial leverage to negotiate effective remediation, access and enforcement provisions in the controlling documents for the cleanup,” said Isabella Alasti, staff counsel to the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA).

However, some regulators at the conference voiced doubts on whether the time frame would put pressure on the Army to do an incomplete characterization. “If you don’t get the characterization right, you are going to be arguing with the regulator . . . forever,” said Robert Delaney of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. “I emphasize that the characterization needs to be well done.”

Early transfer of BRAC property will also significantly boost the workload for state and EPA employees and force them to conduct tough negotiations on a multitude of controlling documents on an expedited schedule, CalEPA official Rick Moss told the conference.

The situation is especially complex if the property in question is on the NPL, where EPA must approve the cleanup remedy before an early transfer can take place, regulators said. While the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act allows for early transfers of contaminated property, the statute does not contemplate cleanups conducted at NPL sites by an entity that is not a potentially liable party, said Kathleen Johnson, chief of EPA Region IX’s Federal Facilities and Site Cleanup Branch.

In order to complete such a transfer at an NPL site, EPA will need an administrative order of consent signed by both agency officials and the governor of the state in question, Johnson said. EPA has now completed a “first draft” of policy guidance for these types of early transfers, but has not yet finalized the language, she added.

States to Argue Cases Over Base Closings

Washington Post

Liz Sidoti

August 11, 2005

WASHINGTON -- States fearing the loss of Air National Guard units argue that Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld can't move them without each governor's consent. The Pentagon claims it has the authority to reshuffle the Air Guard as it sees fit.

Both sides were getting one last chance to argue their cases Thursday before the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission reviewing the Pentagon's sweeping plan to close, shrink or expand hundreds of military bases and other installations nationwide.

Later this month, the nine-member commission will decide which parts of the Pentagon's plan to

change before sending its final report to President Bush and Congress.

The shake-up of dozens of Air Guard units has emerged as the most contentious part of the plan. Two states, Pennsylvania and Illinois, have sued over the Air Guard proposal, and the commissioners have serious concerns about it.

"It is incumbent upon this commission to ensure that the Department of Defense's closure and realignment recommendations, especially those pertaining to the Air National Guard, do not undermine the unique mission responsibilities of the Department of Homeland Security," Anthony Principi, the commission chairman, said in a letter inviting federal and state officials to Thursday's hearing.

Rumsfeld's Air Guard plan calls for shifting people, equipment and aircraft around at least 54 sites where Air Guard units are stationed. Roughly two dozen sites would expand, while about 30 are slated for closure or downsizing. In many cases, units would continue to exist but no planes would be assigned to them.

The Pentagon says the Air Guard changes are part of an overall effort to reshape the Air Force _ which will have a smaller but smarter aircraft fleet in the future _ into a more effective and efficient force by putting active duty, Air Reserve and Air Guard units to work alongside one another.

Brig. Gen. Allison Hickey, who is directing the overall Air Force reorganization, said Air Guard units without planes would be assigned to missions as they develop.

From the comfort of their home bases, for example, such units would provide support services for troops in combat zones or electronically direct unmanned aerial vehicles that are flying thousands of miles away in the battlefield.

Those Air Guard units with planes would fly the Air Force's newest planes alongside active duty and Reserve units, Hickey said. Currently, Air

Guard units are given the active duty's hand-me-down aircraft.

Lawmakers, states and commissioners worry about the Pentagon proposal's potential impact on recruitment, retention and training, and question whether the Air Guard will be able to fulfill its homeland security mission.

The commission's legal counsel has said relocating, disbanding or moving Air Guard units from one state to another could be outside the commission's authority. The Pentagon has asked the commission to wait for a Justice Department opinion before changing Rumsfeld's plan.

States Opposing Plan to Shutter Air Guard Bases

New York Times
Eric Schmitt
August 11, 2005

WASHINGTON- A proposed overhaul of more than two dozen Air National Guard units has ignited a political firestorm in many states, drawing attention to the most contested part of the Pentagon's larger plan to shut, shrink or realign hundreds of military sites nationwide.

The Air Force wants to retire aging aircraft from many Guard units, close or consolidate some of their bases and give some units new missions, like flying remotely piloted Predator aircraft, that are better suited to today's national security environment, Air Force officials say.

But doing that would leave more than two dozen states without emergency aircraft to fight fires, recover from hurricanes and cope with other natural disasters, lawmakers say.

Officials from New England to the Pacific Northwest argue that the plan would leave them vulnerable to terrorist attacks. Illinois and Pennsylvania have gone so far as to file suit in federal court contending that the Defense Department cannot move Air Guard units without the consent of the state governors, who

share authority with the president over use of the units.

"These are the wrong recommendations, at the wrong time and for the wrong reasons, and, on top of all that, they are illegal," said Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich of Illinois, a Democrat, adding that the Pentagon's plan to relocate an F-16 fighter unit in Springfield could imperil the safety of the state's 11 nuclear power plants and 28 locks and dams.

Members of the independent commission who are preparing to begin their final assessment of the Pentagon plan have publicly expressed alarm at the Air National Guard recommendations. Lawyers on the commission have said the governors may indeed have a sound legal argument, and, as a result, the Justice Department has been called in to give its opinion.

"We have real questions with regard to some of the recommendations as they apply to the Air National Guard," said Anthony J. Principi, a former secretary of veterans affairs who heads the commission, which will hold a hearing on Thursday on Capitol Hill on the issue.

Senior military officials, lawmakers and civilian military experts say the Air Force has fumbled the politics in an obviously politically charged issue by not collaborating more closely with one of the most politically connected organizations in the country, the Air National Guard.

"I don't know why the Air Force chose to do it the way they did it," Lt. Gen. H Steven Blum, an Army officer who is chief of the National Guard Bureau, which oversees both the Army and Air National Guards, said last month. "This was not an unpredictable situation."

Like its larger Army cousin, the Air National Guard plays a prominent role in big cities and small towns alike, binding the nation's part-time military to operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as new domestic security missions.

The Air Guard, with about 106,000 members, has units stationed at 24 Air Force, Air Guard or

Air Reserve bases, as well as at 63 civilian airports across the country, said Jack Harrison, a National Guard Bureau spokesman. Air National Guard units are responsible for flying air patrol missions over the United States, but also have 3,110 personnel stationed in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere in Southwest Asia.

Under the Pentagon's plan, 29 of the Air Guard's 88 flying units would lose their aircraft, Guard officials say, ranging from F-15 fighters to KC-135 refueling planes to C-130 cargo aircraft. Bases slated for closing include Otis on Cape Cod, Willow Grove in Pennsylvania and Niagara Falls in New York. In Connecticut, Gov. M. Jodi Rell, a Republican, has expressed concern over the proposal to move an A-10 attack plane squadron at Bradley International Airport in Hartford to Massachusetts, but leave engine maintenance and repair specialists behind.

Gov. Edward G. Rendell of Pennsylvania, a Democrat, is seeking to stop the deactivation of the 111th Fighter Wing based in Willow Grove. More than 1,000 people are assigned to the wing, Mr. Rendell said.

"I don't think that we should close this base in any way, shape or form," he said. "There are important states' rights principles at stake here. There is a shared supervisory role over the Air National Guard between the states and the federal government. And I don't believe the government has the power to deactivate."

Mr. Rendell said closing the base would infringe on his authority to deploy Pennsylvania guard personnel and would strip the state's efforts to prevent a terrorist attack and respond to natural disasters.

Air Force officials say the recommendations were based on careful analysis of military value and are part of a broader effort to realign the Guard's units and bases "into a smaller number of fully equipped squadrons to increase operational effectiveness and efficiency," according to documents submitted to the base-closing commission.

State adjutant generals say, however, that they were not directly consulted in the deliberations about which units and bases would be realigned or closed. These state Guard officials, with support from the commission, have called for the Air Force and the Air Guard to negotiate some of the proposed changes.

But that would set a politically dangerous precedent, many Pentagon officials and independent military analysts say.

"Once you start cherry-picking bases, the integrity of the process comes into question," said Christopher Hellman, an analyst at the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation in Washington.

Gen. John P. Jumper, the Air Force chief of staff, said the service followed procedures properly, dealing with the National Guard Bureau. The Pentagon will not reopen its proposed recommendations, General Jumper said, but is willing to hasten discussions on new missions for bases that lose their aircraft.

"We knew from the very beginning that not everyone would be happy," General Jumper said in an interview. "But what we are attempting to do is bring the National Guard along and keep them current in missions that are relevant to the combatant commanders around the world. Those missions are increasingly about space, about command and control, about unmanned air vehicles, about information warfare, and about the things that are in demand out there, and less and less about aging fighters and aging aircraft in general."

But lawmakers in many of the communities that would lose aircraft say that could hurt domestic defense missions in those locales.

In Oregon, the plan calls for stripping the 142nd Fighter Wing of its 19 F-15 fighters and sending them to bases in New Jersey and Louisiana. Two jets from an as yet undetermined base would be sent to Portland to be on alert status. Otherwise, the nearest fighter base would be in Fresno, Calif., 750 miles away, Air Guard officials say.

"It would leave the Pacific Northwest with a Little League air defense capability," Senator Ron Wyden, Democrat of Oregon, said at a commission field hearing in June.

Consolidating Air Guard stations may be more efficient, but Air Guard officials warn that the plan will cut the military's ties to many communities and hurt the Guard's ability to retain high-caliber reservists.

Maj. Gen. Roger P. Lempke, an Air Force Academy graduate who is the Nebraska adjutant general and president of the Adjutants General Association of the United States, said in a telephone interview on Wednesday that the Pentagon's plan would "set us on a course that will result in a dramatic decline in the Guard."

States Argue They Control Guard Bases

Chicago Tribune
Stephen J. Hedges,
August 10, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Though made up of just a few aircraft and pilots nestled into Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport outside Springfield, the Illinois Air National Guard's 183rd Fighter Wing in recent years has flown combat missions over Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as airspace patrols over the Midwest.

Now the unit's 15 F-16 fighters, and the 163 full-time employees who keep them flying, are in a new fight--a political one--that threatens the wing's survival in Springfield.

The Pentagon wants to move the 183rd to Ft. Wayne, Ind., as part of a much larger effort by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to reduce and combine military installations nationwide. The plan must be finished and on President Bush's desk by Sept. 8.

Illinois isn't going quietly, and neither are other states that would lose a total of 30 Air Guard units. Several governors have cited a federal law saying that they, not the Pentagon, have authority over state Air Guard units. Illinois and

Pennsylvania have filed federal lawsuits to block the restructuring.

"These are the wrong recommendations at the wrong time for the wrong reasons," said Jack Lavin, director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs. "And . . . with the Springfield National Guard base, they're doing something that is illegal."

The nine-member presidential Base Realignment and Closure Commission, which is reviewing the Pentagon's list of potential base closures, has not ruled on the Air Guard issue. A commission hearing in Washington on Thursday could provide a decision.

Although the dogfight over the Air National Guard units is the most contentious issue before the commission, it's hardly the only one.

In Maine, Republican Sens. Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins are angry over Pentagon plans to close the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, where submarine repairs are made, as well as a plan to scale back the Brunswick Naval Air Station.

Snowe has put a hold on the nomination of Gordon England, Rumsfeld's choice to be his second-in-command, over what aides say are concerns about diminishing funding for the Navy in general and its facilities in Maine in particular.

Meanwhile, Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) blocked passage of the 2006 Defense Authorization Act this summer with a proposal to delay base-closing decisions until U.S. troops come home from Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as from Europe and Asia, and the Pentagon finishes a review due early next year.

Thune wants to keep open Ellsworth Air Force Base in Rapid City, S.D., home to 29 B-1 bombers. The Air Force wants to move those planes to Texas.

"We shouldn't be closing bases here in this country at a time of war," Thune said.

In Connecticut, Democratic Sens. Joseph Lieberman and Christopher Dodd are fighting to save the Navy's submarine works in Groton. The facility, which the Pentagon wants to close, employs 8,000 people.

62 major bases targeted

Those are just the big battles. Across the country, federal, state and local politicians are scrambling to save installations from Pentagon plans to close or consolidate 62 of its 318 major military bases and shift missions and resources at more than 700 smaller sites.

There have been four previous rounds of base closings since 1988, the last one in 1995. None has been easy. But the 2005 version has been hampered by incomplete data from the Pentagon, questions over the cost savings and the logic behind consolidating military units, and the sudden application of political pressure, particularly in the Senate.

The Pentagon announced its closing and realignment list in May, predicting it would save taxpayers \$49 billion over 20 years. (A GAO audit has suggested those savings may be overstated.)

After the base-closing commission makes changes, if any, and sends the list to Bush by Sept. 8, the president will forward it to Congress for an up-or-down vote on the entire list.

Illinois officials took quick exception to the Pentagon's proposal to reduce jobs at the Army's Rock Island Arsenal, the Navy's Great Lakes Training Center in North Chicago and to move the 183rd to Ft. Wayne.

The Air Force has recommended moving the 183rd and an Air Guard unit in Terre Haute, Ind., to Ft. Wayne. Its proposal noted that both sites "ranked low in military value."

And though Ft. Wayne ranked even lower than those two, the service argued that it should be kept "because of its record of recruiting and its proximity to Terre Haute-- allowing experienced airmen there to remain available." It estimated

that the moves would cost \$20 million and produce savings of about \$6.3 million over 20 years.

Lavin and other Illinois officials have argued that it makes no sense to move the Springfield unit to a site that ranks lower in military usefulness. And the cost of the move, he said, would erase any savings.

"The Pentagon set up the criteria and then didn't follow the criteria," he said.

Last month Gov. Rod Blagojevich drove that point home by filing a federal lawsuit against Rumsfeld and the base-closing commission. The suit cites a federal statute saying, "A unit of the Army National Guard of the United States or the Air National Guard of the United States may not be relocated or withdrawn under this chapter without the consent of the governor of the state."

In response to the Illinois and Pennsylvania lawsuits, the Pentagon said it thinks its recommendations meet legal requirements and are "consistent with actions taken in prior [base-closing] rounds."

Pentagon gets support

Chicago lawyer Sam Skinner, a former U.S. attorney and ex-Cabinet member who is a base-closing commissioner, agrees with the Pentagon lawyers.

"I don't believe those governors will win on that issue," Skinner said. "My opinion is that the [base-closing] statute gives the commission ample authority to deal with the secretary's recommendations."

Apart from the law, Skinner said, the commission has to consider Air Force plans to shrink the number of active and Air National Guard fighters in the coming years.

"The F-16, they're going to take out over 100 of these airplanes," he said. "The older models are going to be retired."

' Save My Base' Letters Swarm Agency Deadline Nears For Mail On Proposed Military Closures

Winston-Salem Journal

James W. Crawley

August 10, 2005

The pleas arrive by mail, overnight delivery and the Internet - a flood of words, charts, maps and petitions.

Nearly all beg: Save my base.

So far, the Base Realignment and Closure Commission staff has received, sorted, scanned and read more than 180,000 letters, petitions, banners, hand-drawn pictures and other correspondence.

Many carry the signatures of such influential legislators as Sen. John Warner, R-Va., chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

Warner has written several letters in favor of Virginia bases.

Others carry the scrawl of crayons, like the drawing and plea from 6-year-old Kyle Kruse of Berwick, Maine.

Many come from New England, New Mexico, Pennsylvania and New York, all with bases slated for closure, said BRAC spokesman James Schaefer.

In recent weeks, Virginia postmarks have proliferated as residents near Oceana Naval Air Station in Virginia Beach write their opinions about the base's possible closure.

The mail deadline is rapidly approaching.

In two weeks, the commission will begin several days of public deliberations on the fate of hundreds of bases, including 38 major installations recommended for closure and 29 others for realignment.

The commission will submit the final list to President Bush by Sept. 8.

He can forward the list to Congress or send it back to the commission for reconsideration. If Congress takes no action, the list goes into effect, and the Pentagon has six years to shut down bases and transfer units.

Kyle Kruse and his 9-year-old sister Samantha are worried that their father, Kent, will lose his job at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard if it closes.

After attending a shipyard rally, Kyle went home, pulled out his crayons and started drawing.

On one page, he drew a picture of a submarine. On the back, he wrote in inch-high letters, "President Bush, SAVE OUR SHIPYARD. I don't want to move and live in a cardboard box." As a postscript, he added, "Portsmouth #1."

His mother, Michelle Kruse, sent the drawing, along with Samantha's typed note, to the commission.

"I want to save the shipyard," Kyle said in a telephone interview. "The shipyard looks like a lot of fun."

If Portsmouth closes, Kyle has a plan. "I'm chopping down 200 trees in the forest to make a wooden house," he announced.

Scores of children's letters and drawings enliven the thousands of form letters and adults' pleas stacked in the commission mailroom.

"It's not just 'please save our base,'" said Schaefer. "There's a lot of good information coming in too."

Besides gigabytes of information from the Pentagon, the commission receives megabytes of data from local groups fighting to save nearby installations.

The commission also gets mail from people like Nancy Grden, a Virginia Beach resident who

keeps an informal log of noisy jets flying over her house from Oceana Naval Air Station.

She sent an 86-page excerpt from her handwritten log of jet comings and goings. Time, date and the kind of jet fighter are noted.

"I'm not whining. I'm just keeping a log," she said in a telephone interview. "I sent it as a third-party objective view."

Many letters come from former military officers, such as Donald Infante, a retired Army general in Clearwater, Fla.

He hopes that the panel will keep the Army's Air Defense School at Fort Bliss, Texas, rather than moving it to Oklahoma.

Infante wrote because the Pentagon plan "flunks the common-sense test. All I was hoping to accomplish was an in-depth review."

Except for letters with profanity, correspondence is posted on the commission Web site for anyone, including the commissioners, to read.

The Web site, www.brac.gov, has received more than 6 million hits since May. It offers every document, letter, briefing book, report and hearing transcript. The only thing missing is classified information.

Does all the writing, typing and stamp licking really matter?

Yes, to a point, Schaefer said.

"We value the correspondence, but it's only one element that's put into the mix," he added. Still paramount is whether the military benefits from closing a base or keeping it open, he said.

Noise logger Grden knows that her letter faces some stiff competition for attention.

"I knew it was going into that giant mailbag, so I don't have any expectation that it will have an impact," she said.

Local News Articles

'Bias' Against Leased Defense Facilities Denied

Washington Post (Washington DC)

Spencer S. Hsu

August 11, 2005

The chairman of a federal commission considering a plan to move 23,000 defense workers out of leased buildings in Northern Virginia for security reasons said yesterday that the panel had no "bias" against rented buildings, which he said could be safe workplaces.

The remarks by Anthony J. Principi, chairman of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, did not exclude the possibility of huge shifts of military personnel across the region under a Pentagon proposal.

But Sen. John W. Warner (R-Va.) and Reps. James P. Moran Jr. (D-Va.) and Thomas M. Davis III (R-Va.) described Principi's comments as the clearest sign that a months-long campaign by state and local officials over the legality and value of shifting thousands of skilled military workers into new buildings on closed military bases is having an impact.

Principi's statements came at the last of more than 20 hearings into a nationwide streamlining plan proposed May 13 by Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld. The plan calls for shuttering facilities to save \$49 billion over 20 years.

Arlington and Fairfax counties and the city of Alexandria would be among the hardest-hit areas in the country, losing jobs at dozens of leased sites.

In Washington, nearly 6,000 jobs would move from Walter Reed Army Medical Center to a renamed Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda and to Fort Belvoir in southeastern Fairfax.

Beyond the Capital Beltway, Maryland and Virginia would gain more than 20,000 jobs at such federally owned bases as Belvoir, Fort Meade and Aberdeen Proving Ground.

Yesterday, Principi raised the issue of leased space while defending the panel's proposal to create a Joint Medical Command Headquarters by bringing together 1,300 Navy, Air Force and Army personnel who are split between the District and Northern Virginia.

Virginia and District leaders opposed that idea, which they said would move District-based Navy and Air Force medical offices and Virginia-based Army offices to Bethesda, D.C. Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D) said Bolling Air Force Base in the District should be considered.

Principi said no site for a headquarters has been proposed. All commands might join Army personnel at the leased Skyline Towers complex in Falls Church, he said.

"We have not said . . . that we need to move people out of leased space," Principi said. "It may be most appropriate to move people into leased space in Northern Virginia, close to the Pentagon."

A few minutes later, Principi distanced himself more broadly from the Pentagon's position that operations be dispersed from Washington and that workers be moved from leased buildings that fail to meet new security standards -- including at least an 82-foot buffer from surrounding traffic to defend against truck bombs. Almost all leased buildings in metropolitan Washington and several major U.S. cities lack such setbacks.

"That bias is not on the part of the commission," Principi said. "That's the recommendation of the Defense Department, not the commission."

Speaking to reporters after the day-long hearing, Principi said commissioners strongly supported Pentagon moves to protect military and civilian defense workers from terrorist and other attacks, but he suggested that leased buildings could be secure.

"We saw what happened in Oklahoma City," Principi said, referring to the 1995 bombing of

the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building that killed 168 people. "We want to be sure when we house civilian employees in this day and age, in a war on terrorism, that they're in safe locations. That could be in a leased facility, and that could be behind a fence" on a base, he said.

Virginia officials welcomed Principi's remarks.

"It's very encouraging," said Davis, who testified yesterday along with Moran and Fairfax Board of Supervisors Chairman Gerald E. Connolly (D). "It's the first time we've heard that definitively from the commission."

Warner, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, was more cautious. He said officials would continue to argue that the commission would violate the law if it fast-tracked closures of rented facilities for security reasons, instead of leaving leasing decisions to the defense secretary, as is the norm.

"I sleep with one eye open until this thing is finished," said Warner, who helped write the law guiding five rounds of national base closings and whose office has submitted legal briefs outlining a potential challenge to the commission's actions.

The commission will begin drafting the final list of base closures Aug. 24 and present it to President Bush Sept. 8. The president and Congress must accept or reject the list in full.

Senators Hit US Figures On Otis Closing Savings estimate off by \$500m, they say

Boston Globe (Boston, MA)

Matt Viser

August 11, 2005

Massachusetts congressional officials said yesterday that the Defense Department has overestimated by almost \$500 million the savings that would come from closing Otis Air National Guard Base on Cape Cod, challenging the methods that the Pentagon used in calculating the financial impact of personnel shifts throughout the country.

The new estimate could have an impact at hearings today in Washington, when the base realignment commission is expected to discuss the Pentagon's plan to ground 29, or about one-third, of the Air National Guard units across the country and relocate hundreds of aircraft as part of a nationwide overhaul of all active-duty and National Guard facilities.

The Pentagon had estimated that by shutting the Guard base at Otis, the government would save \$336 million over the next 20 years. But according to revised estimates provided to the independent base-closing commission by the Massachusetts Air National Guard, closing the base would instead cost the government \$163 million during the same time period, a difference of \$499 million.

"We have known all along how valuable Otis is to homeland defense. These latest figures demonstrate how costly it would be in strictly monetary terms to close Otis," said Senator John F. Kerry, Democrat of Massachusetts. "Whether we're talking about cost, mission, or the courage and skill of the men and women who serve there, Otis should remain open."

A Pentagon spokesman declined yesterday to comment specifically on the revised figures, and said it is up to the independent nine-member commission to make changes in the recommendations submitted in May by Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld.

"It's not the first time someone has said things are not the way they should be. But I can't get into the details," said Glenn Flood, a spokesman for the Defense Department. "If the commission finds that we've deviated, it's their prerogative to make adjustments."

Lawmakers around the country have questioned the Pentagon's cost-saving estimates because they assume money would be saved when personnel positions are transferred but not eliminated.

David M. Walker, comptroller general of the Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress, testified last

month that the department had exaggerated savings from personnel changes that would be made under the Pentagon's base-closing plan. Since the personnel would be transferred to another defense facility, he said, the government would not save any money.

"If an increase in end strength is not planned, and you are simply redirecting the freed-up resources to another area of need, it should be viewed as enhancing capabilities and achieving more effective utilization of resources, but not as dollar savings," Walker said. "This is simple math."

Closing the 102d Fighter Wing at Otis would eliminate 542 jobs at the base in Bourne, a change the Pentagon estimates would save \$184 million. Echoing Walker, Massachusetts officials argued yesterday that no money would be saved, because the positions would not be eliminated.

Flood, the Pentagon spokesman, said the department's estimates took into account the fact that new positions would not have to be added to accomplish new missions.

"If you have a person who is guarding a gate and you put the person in another place doing another job, you've saved a position," Flood said. "You didn't have to hire a new person" for the newly created job.

The Pentagon also did not take into account a onetime cost of \$65 million that would go toward training a unit that currently flies F-16s how to use the F-15s from Otis, according to the figures released yesterday by the Massachusetts Air National Guard. In addition, other federal agencies would have to spend \$250 million over 20 years to maintain land that is currently shared with Otis.

Both Otis and the Coast Guard Air Station operate on the same 5,500 acres and share many resources, including an airstrip.

Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, has said that the Coast Guard would have to add 100 employees and spend

\$17 million more annually to keep up its operations at the base, extra costs that he said could prompt the Coast Guard to relocate.

"The cost savings were at the heart of the administration's rationale for closing Otis, in spite of the obvious disadvantage for national security," Kennedy said. "The new calculations make a strong case for measuring Otis, and I'm optimistic that both the Pentagon and the commission will agree."

The commission is to send final recommendations to President Bush by Sept. 8.

Base-Closing Panel Offers Positive Vibes

Indianapolis Star (Indianapolis, IN)

Maureen Groppe

August 11, 2005

WASHINGTON -- A member of the commission that will decide which military facilities gain or lose jobs today praised a Defense Department finance center located in Marion County.

"It is a first-rate facility in first-rate condition," Samuel K. Skinner, a member of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission, said after Indiana officials made the case for the center at a commission hearing.

Afterwards, Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels and other state officials said the commissioners appeared receptive to their arguments about the center's advantages.

"I don't think it could've gone much better," Daniels said of the hearing. "They seem to understand that facts are facts, and the facts are very friendly."

As part of a consolidation plan, the Pentagon wants to add about 3,500 jobs to the Marion County center, located at the former Fort Benjamin Harrison in Lawrence. Centers in Columbus, Ohio, and Denver, Colo., also would stay open while 23 centers around the country would close.

The nine-member BRAC commission must approve that plan and is evaluating whether it's the best scenario.

The panel also must decide by Sept. 8 whether to go along with the Pentagon's proposal to transfer about 700 of the 5,000 jobs at the Crane Division, Naval Surface Warfare Center in Martin County, to other states.

Daniels planned to meet in the afternoon with Pentagon officials to talk about how some of those jobs could be saved.

Panel Hears Final Pope Plea

Fayetteville Observer (Fayetteville, NC)
Henry Cuninghame
August 11, 2005

WASHINGTON - Cumberland County made its final public plea to the base-closing commission Wednesday to keep an airlift wing at Pope Air Force Base. It also made an extra request to upgrade the wing's planes.

Retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Paul Dordal, a former wing commander at Pope, talked about the numerous jobs that are done at Pope.

"The airlift wing is the glue that holds together all these operations," he said. "When something isn't going right out at Sicily Drop Zone, the corps commander turns to the wing commander, and it gets fixed ASAP. It's a very simple flow, with a direct chain of command."

The Pentagon's May 13 proposal to turn Pope over to the Army with a reduced Air Force presence would be similar to an ill-fated, short-lived reorganization during the early 1990s when Pope airmen "flunked their operational readiness inspection," Dordal said. Twenty-four C-141 cargo jets landed "as part of a Haiti scenario" and only 10 had been refueled when troops were supposed to be boarding, he said.

Seven of the nine members of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission attended the hearing. They heard comments from Dordal,

Reps. Mike McIntyre and Bob Etheridge, and retired Army Col. Terry Peck. The speakers said the airlift wing provides a level of support for Fort Bragg's training and rapid-deployment operations that would not be available through an active-Reserve "associate" squadron that the Pentagon has recommended for Pope.

The Army can take over heating and water and building maintenance on Pope, Peck said. "They cannot execute the air traffic control, logistics support and base operations responsibilities inherent to Pope while sustaining the airlift operational tempo ... as efficiently or as effectively as the Air Force," Peck said. "These missions are routine requirements for the Air Force and would be unique to the Army."

Dordal also included a pitch to replace Pope's Vietnam War-era C-130E airplanes with newly manufactured C-130Js, which was the plan before the BRAC recommendations. The Pentagon suggested giving Pope C-130Hs from other places.

"Our contention is that the military value of Pope Air Force Base would increase even more if the wing was re-equipped with a new aircraft, the C-130J," Dordal said. "This would provide an ideal solution to this problem and would better support the crisis-reaction force."

Retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd "Fig" Newton, a commissioner, had questions and comments during the discussion of keeping C-130s at Pope.

"There are two parts to this problem," Newton said. "One is about that infrastructure that needs to be there to support the Army on its day-to-day activities as well as this crisis-response team that needs to be there to plan for these very important missions, and the use of the C-130s is another part of the issue."

Pentagon proposal

The Pentagon on May 13 proposed that the Air Force turn over Pope to the Army and that a squadron of 16 C-130s remain in place. BRAC analysts have recommended that the commission

consider having no C-130s permanently based at Pope.

Newton said there is a "disconnect here about having the Army to run installations."

"That's foreign to our thinking, being airmen," Newton said. "Therefore, the staff is studying that very, very carefully."

Etheridge said after the hearing that he believed North Carolina's presentation was strong.

"Any time you finish and they ask a question, that's a good sign," he said. He thinks the Air Force made mistakes with its proposal. He also said that he trusts the commission "will make sure we follow the BRAC guidelines."

Defense Department guidelines specify that "current and future mission capabilities" be given top consideration.

McIntyre said he was pleased with the reception his group received from the commissioners.

"Many of us have already been working the phones privately," McIntyre said. "This was a dramatic day for the future of Bragg and Pope because this was the final public input and presentation. Now we will await their decision in the next couple of weeks."

Today the commission will hear discussions about the proposal to redistribute Air National Guard to other states and the role of the military in homeland security. The Pentagon proposal calls for Pope to get eight C-130s from the West Virginia National Guard and eight from the Air Force Reserve in Pittsburgh.

In past hearings, commissioners have cited uncertainty to what extent the Pentagon can transfer National Guard airplanes, which might have state roles in areas such as disaster relief. There also has been uncertainty about the amount of coordination between the Pentagon and the Department of Homeland Security in responding to domestic emergencies.

The BRAC commission will begin making decisions about Aug. 24 in the Washington area. Its report is due to President Bush on Sept. 8. The commission is the only body that can change the recommendations. The president and Congress can only approve or reject the entire report.

The commissioners also heard presentations Wednesday on behalf of Indiana, Ohio, Maine, Virginia and the District of Columbia.

The governors and congressmen held press conferences after their presentations with optimistic assessments of how good their presentations were and how well the commissioners received them.

But Commissioner Samuel Skinner had a word of advice when the commissioners held their own press conference at the end of the hearings.

"Don't count your chickens before they hatch," the former U.S. transportation secretary said. "That would be my advice."

Landing Oceana's Jets Won't Be Easy For Florida

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk, VA)

Louis Hansen

August 11, 2005

A proposal to shut Oceana Naval Air Station and move its jets to a former military base in Florida faces more obstacles than just winning favor with a federal base closure panel.

Military analysts say reopening Cecil Field, which the Department of Defense closed in 1999, would require a concerted effort by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, the Pentagon and Congress.

But the nine-member commission's consideration of reopening a major base "is new ground," said Chris Hellman, a defense analyst with the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation.

BRAC chairman Anthony J. Principi requested an informal meeting with Florida Gov. Jeb Bush last week to explore whether Cecil Field could replace Oceana. The meeting was scheduled to be held today.

After Principi opened the matter to discussion, Bush made a bold bid to reopen the base.

Oceana, the Navy's East Coast master jet base, is so surrounded by suburban development that training has been affected and safety concerns have been raised.

Cecil Field is about 15 miles outside of downtown Jacksonville. Some of the installation has been turned over to public entities, and city leaders are trying to redevelop the site for aircraft and other commercial uses.

Florida leaders have spent \$130 million to fix and enhance the former Navy master jet base, whose squadrons were relocated to Oceana.

If the notion of the Navy returning to Cecil Field gains ground, experts say, reopening the installation would be a long and complicated process.

Michael Bobrick, a lawyer at McGuireWoods in Richmond, said the normal process for transferring operations is for the military to request a change and for Congress to approve funding, he said.

Bobrick, a former Army lawyer who handled environmental and base-closure issues for the Training and Doctrine Command at Fort Monroe, said it's rare for an installation to be called back to active duty.

Fort Dix in New Jersey was slated for realignment, he noted, but plans were postponed because it was needed for the first Persian Gulf War.

Reopening becomes more difficult if a base is being already redeveloped for commercial uses, he said. The momentum against it, he said, "is just too significant."

Hellman said the BRAC Commission has the legal authority to investigate reopening a closed facility and can reverse earlier BRAC decisions. But, he said, other factors must be considered. For example, the fact of whether the military still owns the land must be taken into account.

The commission also has tight deadlines to consider which bases to close or realign and make recommendations to President Bush, something that works against the Cecil Field alternative.

The commission is expected to vote on base closures during the last week of August and deliver a complete list to the president by Sept. 8.

"In theory, they can do it. But practically, no," Hellman said. "I don't think it's something anybody will feel comfortable doing in so short a time period."

The Navy has emphatically stated that it wishes to remain at Oceana and that no other existing bases are suitable.

The Defense Department also received another proposal this week from Texas, offering \$365 million in grants and loans to support the transfer of Oceana's jets to the Gulf Coast.

Florida leaders have offered to help reopen Cecil Field, which has four runways, eight hangars, and nearly three million square feet of office space and warehouses.

"Cecil Field is now in far better condition than it was when the Navy left," Gov. Bush wrote in a July 29 letter to the commissioners. He estimates that it would cost another \$240 million to make the base ready for Navy jet fighters and their support.

George W. Foresman, assistant to Virginia Gov. Mark R. Warner, said the proposals by Texas and Florida are theoretical.

"We've never seen a BRAC Commission close a base without a clear alternative," Foresman said.

"For them to take that unprecedented action would raise a lot of questions."

BRAC representatives did not return phone calls for comment on the Cecil Field issue.

Connecticut officials make final pitch to keep sub base open

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Washington DC)
Lolita C. Baldor
August 11, 2005

Connecticut lawmakers making their final pitch to the military base closing commission are arguing that worldwide threats and high costs are key arguments against closing the Groton submarine base.

In documents they will send to the commission Thursday, Connecticut officials contend that shutting down Naval Submarine Base Groton will cost hundreds of millions of dollars rather than saving \$1.6 billion as the Navy claims.

The Connecticut officials also cite emerging national security threats from countries such as China, Russia, Iran and North Korea. They say fast attack submarines such as those based in Groton are America's most critical weapon against submarines from other countries.

"It makes absolutely no sense to put our nation's premier submarine facility on the chopping block," said U.S. Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn. "We're seeing new submarine-producing capabilities emerging from all corners of the globe, and it's vital that our nation keep our technological edge when it comes to these important stealthy weapons systems."

In a report sent to the independent Base Closure and Realignment Commission earlier this week, the lawmakers said that "maritime superiority must remain a cornerstone of U.S. defense policy to preserve peace and security not only within our nation but in all corners of the globe."

The nine-member commission has until September to recommend which bases to close.

Lawmakers in Connecticut said cost estimates will be key to their arguments for keeping the Groton base open.

"We've been working on the documentation and the numbers crunching all week," said Connecticut Gov. M. Jodi Rell. "The cost savings specifically is an area of concern to them ... and we think we've made a good point there."

She and other state officials have called commissioners to answer questions and emphasize certain issues.

Separately, John P. Casey, president of Electric Boat in Groton, sent a letter to BRAC Chairman Anthony Principi this week detailing the unique relationship between the company and the submarine base, which is located nearby.

He said synergy between the base and EB allows the Navy to save at least \$50 million a year on submarine construction.

Meanwhile, Rell toured the Connecticut Air National Guard's 103rd Fighter Wing facility at Bradley International Airport on Wednesday and said she thinks the state has made a good case for keeping the unit in place. She said she is prepared to file a lawsuit to keep it.

The U.S. Air Force has recommended moving nine of the 17 A-10 Thunderbolts based at Bradley to Barnes Municipal Airport in Westfield, Mass., about 30 miles away. The rest of the planes would be retired.

"The job they do is important to Connecticut and it's important to our nation," Rell said. "And more than anything else, we want the Defense Department to understand that we want these airplanes here."

D.C., Virginia leaders oppose Bethesda medical site

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Washington DC)
Brett Zongker
August 10, 2005

Military medical facilities should not be moved to suburban Maryland, congressional leaders from Virginia and the District of Columbia testified Wednesday, arguing the location is too far from the Pentagon.

The Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission is considering a proposal to create a joint medical command headquarters in Bethesda by consolidating medical offices for the Navy and Air Force as well as the military's TRICARE health system.

Some of the offices to be consolidated are located in leased space in Fairfax County, Va., that do not meet military anti-terrorism standards.

"Approximately 70 percent of the personnel at these facilities live in northern Virginia," said Rep. Jim Moran, D-Va. "It only takes them a few minutes to get to the Pentagon and up to two hours from Bethesda."

Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton, D-D.C., suggested Washington's Bolling Air Force Base as a suitable site for a consolidated medical command center, instead.

"We anticipate that colocation at Bolling would realize even greater savings" than a move to Bethesda and would be much closer to the Pentagon, Norton said.

But she agreed with Sen. John Warner, R-Va., that such a decision was not under the commission's authority. The commission is considering the consolidation plan, even though a Pentagon study already rejected the Bethesda site.

The commission is working to deliver a report to President Bush by Sept. 8. Officials have said northern Virginia could lose 50,000 jobs by the end of the decade.

State officials said the commission was showing its bias against leased office space and disregard for the heavy traffic congestion that already plagues the capital region.

Forcing thousands more employees to commute around the Capital Beltway could encourage them to seek work in the private sector instead, said Rep. Tom Davis, R-Va.

"What you don't want to do is gut the brain trust of the work force," Davis told the commission.

Fairfax County Chairman Gerald Connolly said security at leased offices could be upgraded to meet Pentagon requirements. He said Charles E. Smith Commercial Realty, a major property owner, had already committed to changes.

"Upgrading those leased facilities will cost far less than building new offices on military bases," Connolly said.

Commission chairman Anthony J. Principi denied that the commission was targeting leased office spaces for closure.

"We're looking at this openly and objectively," he said.

Also at the hearing, D.C. officials made their case that moving Walter Reed Army Medical Center from Northwest Washington to Bethesda would cripple the city's emergency response in a terrorist attack.

New war plans for guarding against terrorist attacks in the region would ultimately involve the personnel and facilities at Walter Reed and the city's other hospitals, Norton said.

Federal requirements that the city be prepared to handle a surge of medical patients in an emergency "cannot be achieved without Walter Reed's resources," including its helicopter port and decontamination rooms, Norton said.

Massachusetts lawmakers say closing Otis will cost money

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Washington DC)
Lolita C. Baldor
August 10, 2005

Shutting down Otis Air National Guard base on Cape Cod will cost the federal government \$163 million over the next 20 years, rather than saving more than \$300 million as initially projected by the Pentagon, Massachusetts officials said Wednesday.

In their final submission to the independent base closing commission before the panel begins making decisions, state lawmakers argued that military personnel savings were greatly overstated.

The Pentagon proposed shutting down the base as part of the broad military base closings plan. The proposal would eliminate 505 jobs at Otis, mostly civilian, and save \$336 million over the next 20 years, according to the Defense Department.

But federal officials have acknowledged that the military personnel will be shifted to other locations, negating part of those savings.

By subtracting the military personnel savings, then adding other training expenses and the close to \$20 million per year it will cost the remaining tenants on the Massachusetts Military Reservation for services currently covered by the Air Guard, the result is the \$163 million cost figure, lawmakers said.

The Air Guard shares space on the MMR with the Coast Guard and other emergency services, and taking over the airfield and other services would cost the Coast Guard and the Army National Guard more than \$20 million a year, officials have said.

The Massachusetts delegation - including Sens. Edward Kennedy and John Kerry, and Gov. Mitt Romney, argued that the new calculations make a strong case for keeping Otis open. And they sent the new financial report over to the Base Closure and Realignment Commission as part of their final arguments for the base.

Under the BRAC procedures, officials have until the end of the week to submit their final data to the commission. Later this month, the commission will meet to discuss and vote on whether to take bases off the list of recommended closings.

Thune: Texas lawsuit should hold more sway on Ellsworth

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Washington DC)
Mary Clare Jalonick
August 10, 2005

South Dakota Sen. John Thune said this week that the Air Force is ignoring and misrepresenting a lawsuit filed against Dyess Air Force Base in Texas over the flight patterns of B1-B bombers training there.

Under Pentagon recommendations released in May, Ellsworth Air Force Base in Rapid City, S.D., would transfer all of its B1-B bombers to Dyess and close permanently. Thune and other members of the South Dakota congressional delegation have argued that all of the nation's B1-B bombers should not be consolidated in one place.

They have used the Texas lawsuit, filed because of noise complaints, as further ammunition.

The lawsuit was filed by local residents and led to a temporary court-ordered restriction of B1-B flight patterns in the area. Thune took issue with a July 19 letter from Air Force Lt. Col. David L. Johansen that said the Air Force had "voluntarily" changed its flying altitude to accommodate local residents when the changes in fact stemmed from the lawsuit.

Thune also criticized the Air Force for not factoring the lawsuit into its recommendations to close Ellsworth. He said Wednesday that the complications in Texas are "at the core of our argument" that the bombers should not be placed in one place.

Johansen said in the July letter that "there is no viable method to consider ongoing litigation" in the scoring system used to rate individual bases.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission will make the final recommendations for base closings next month. The list then goes to the White House and Congress for up or down approval.

Thune said it is "impossible to say" what BRAC will do. "I would hesitate to handicap in any way," Thune said. "We are trying to beat the odds."

Base-closing board hears pitch for shifting jobs to Indiana

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Washington DC)
August 10, 2005

Gov. Mitch Daniels pledged Wednesday to help Pentagon officials add 3,500 jobs to a defense finance center in Indianapolis.

Daniels joined other Indiana officials in testifying before the panel considering the Pentagon's base-closing plan, which includes moving jobs to the Army's Defense Finance and Accounting Service center at the former Fort Benjamin Harrison. The shift is part of a proposal to consolidate 26 such centers to three in Indianapolis, Colorado and Ohio.

Daniels told commission members that about one-third of the 1.6 million-square-foot Indianapolis center, the largest U.S. military office building after the Pentagon, is now vacant. But he acknowledged that more than doubling its current 3,000 workers would cause a space crunch.

He held out the prospect of moving some workers to nearby buildings if more than 1,800 jobs are moved to Indianapolis.

"Should the experts decide that such a level is the right number for our facility, I am fully confident that we can accommodate it," Daniels said.

U.S. Rep. Steve LaTourette, R-Ohio, has said the Indianapolis center lacks enough room for the additional workers and that the Pentagon has underestimated the cost of moving the payroll and accounting work from centers such as one to be closed in Cleveland.

Samuel Skinner, a member of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission who toured the Indianapolis center last week, said a \$123 million renovation completed two years ago had left the center "a first-rate facility in first-rate condition."

He said the government would not be taking full advantage of the project if it did not move work to the site.

"This is truly vacant space that if unoccupied by a defense department tenant, that space will go unused," Skinner said. "It is really free space because it has already been paid for."

Daniels, a former Bush White House budget director, replied that "it would be tragic not to now capture the full benefit" of the renovation.

Sen. Richard Lugar, Reps. Dan Burton and Julia Carson and Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson also testified.

The mayor said the finance center was important to the city as its last major connection to the military. Fort Harrison closed in 1995 in a previous round of base realignments.

Peterson outlined plans to add 2,500 parking spaces near the center to accommodate the expanded workforce.

"We stand ready, willing and able to do whatever it takes to make this transition successful," Peterson said.

The base realignment plan announced in May also called for cutting more than 600 jobs at the Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center in southern Indiana. Daniels met Wednesday with Undersecretary of the Navy Daniel M. Aviles to discuss Crane's capabilities.

Daniels noted that cutting jobs could disrupt Crane's ability to supply the military for special missions. The facility's duties range from modifying weapons for Navy Seals to testing laser-guided bombs.

The commission's recommendations are due Sept. 8. They are subject to approval by Congress and President Bush.

Lawmakers urge commission to keep Ohio military facilities open

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Washington DC)
James Hannah
August 10, 2005

Ohio lawmakers and community leaders made their final, formal pitch to members of a base-closing commission Wednesday in hopes of keeping open and in place a defense finance center in Columbus and an Air Force graduate school near Dayton.

The facilities - the Defense Finance Accounting Services office and the Air Force Institute of Technology - employ more than 2,500 workers.

The institute, which has 500 employees and more than 900 students, is the Air Force's graduate school of engineering and management. It was added to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission's list last month, with commissioners trying to decide whether to merge the institute with two other schools in California.

Also added to the list was DFAS in Columbus. The office has 2,067 employees who make payments to military contractors and vendors, provide accounting services for defense agencies and process travel payments for Pentagon employees.

During Wednesday's hearing in Washington, Sen. Mike DeWine told the commission that the office performs accounting services for 29 defense agencies and is the single largest DFAS location that processes payments for defense

contractors. The Ohio Republican said the office's total payments in fiscal 2004 - many to contractors associated with weapons systems - totaled \$149 billion, one third of the Pentagon's budget.

DeWine told the commission that the office is a modern facility, has room to grow and that the Pentagon would not have to spend any construction money if it wanted to add workers.

"It was a strong presentation," DeWine said later.

Steve Tugend, vice president of government relations for the Columbus Chamber of Commerce, said that since a BRAC commissioner already has indicated that it was highly unlikely that DFAS would close, those who testified urged the commission to consider the facility as a place to add jobs if other sites are consolidated.

"We were able to get all of our points across," Tugend said.

DeWine also urged the commission to keep the Air Force Institute of Technology open and operating at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

He said the institute is next to base research labs, giving students access to lab equipment as well as experienced scientists and engineers.

He said the location offers students the ability to learn about classified technology. For example, the institute was able to teach stealth technology to Air Force officers who went on to develop and operate stealth airplanes, he said.

Afterward, DeWine said he is cautiously optimistic that the commissioners will recommend keeping AFIT at Wright-Patterson.

"I got the feeling they understand that AFIT cannot be duplicated anywhere else," he said. "I will be very surprised if the recommendation is to move AFIT. I think the case has been made."

The commission is expected to make a final decision later this month about which

installations to propose for closing, reducing or moving, with President Bush and Congress making a binding decision in the fall.

Advocates for Brunswick base make arguments to commission

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Washington DC)
David Sharp
August 10, 2005

Supporters of Maine's Brunswick Naval Air Station told the Base Realignment and Closure Commission on Wednesday the Navy and the nation are best served by keeping the base and its surveillance aircraft squadrons fully operational.

Addressing the commission for a second time, advocates told the commissioners the Brunswick base's strategic location and capabilities give it an important role in homeland security and closing the base would cause a regional recession.

The hearing in Washington, D.C., was called after commissioners voted to consider closing the base instead of simply scaling it back as the Pentagon originally proposed. Base proponents also addressed commissioners at a July public hearing in Boston.

Several commissioners tried - without success - to pin the delegation down on the preferred option if it came down to closing the base or scaling it back.

Critics of scaling back, or realigning, the base contend it would leave the base empty with no opportunity for redevelopment. But the delegation does not want to close the base either.

"The only option is that it be fully operational. It's the right answer for the country, the right answer for the state," Gov. John Baldacci said in an exchange with commissioner James Bilbray over closing versus scaling back.

In their testimony, retired Rear Adm. Harry Rich and retired Navy Capt. Ralph Dean laid out the

case for the base's importance to national defense.

The option of closing the base was rejected "no fewer than 10 times" by Defense Department and Navy officials during the base closing process because of its importance to homeland defense and ability to respond to future threats, said Rich, former commander of maritime patrol wings and squadrons in the Atlantic.

Dean, a former P-3 Orion pilot and flight instructor, said closing the base would lengthen the response time to a threat in North Atlantic shipping lanes from 30 minutes to three hours under the Pentagon's proposal, the delegation said.

And putting a P-3 detachment from Florida's Jacksonville Naval Air Station in Brunswick doesn't make economic sense either, he said.

Other factors in Brunswick's favor, as noted before, include unencumbered air space, dual runways and new facilities including the nation's only hangar capable of accommodating the nation's next-generation multi-mission maritime aircraft, the commission was told.

Also, the base provides support for the Navy survival school in western Maine and for Bath Iron Works, the Navy shipbuilder. And state officials want the Brunswick base to become home to a regional Armed Forces Reserve Training Center.

As for economic effects, Baldacci said the loss of \$211 million from the economy if the base closes "will cripple the region for many years to come."

Closing the base would eliminate 6,017 jobs, boosting the unemployment rate from 4.1 percent to 15 percent in the Bath-Brunswick region, Baldacci said. And those cuts would come at a time when BIW is reducing its work force, he said.

"Let me be clear: the closure of Naval Air Station Brunswick will have the direct effect of a federally induced, major economic recession

for this region, one from which our economists calculate it will be a full decade in recovery," Baldacci said.

The Pentagon originally proposed stripping away all P-3 Orion squadrons from Brunswick and half of the personnel, all of which would be consolidated in Jacksonville. The Pentagon also has proposed shutting down the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery and the Defense Finance and Accounting Service center in Limestone.

The Pentagon's original proposal for Maine bases would have eliminated nearly 7,000 military and civilian personnel, the second-greatest effect on any single state behind Connecticut, which would face a direct loss of 8,600 jobs.

If Brunswick were to be closed instead of scaled back, then Maine's effect in terms of direct job losses would rival Connecticut's.

The Maine delegation quickly corralled base closing commissioners after the hearing to make their personal pleas for the base. They said that they were heartened by the hard questions asked by the commissioners because it showed they haven't made up their minds and are seriously questioning the Pentagon's proposals.

Sen. Susan Collins said she plans to submit additional information this week. "The threat to our ports is one of our greatest vulnerabilities and our most likely threat," said Collins, chairwoman of the Senate's Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee.

Sen. Olympia Snowe summed up her arguments for the base by saying when it comes to "defending the U.S. homeland, geography matters."

N.C. officials carry case for Pope AFB to base closing commission

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Raleigh, NC)
Margaret Lillard
August 10, 2005

The Army and Air Force have a "unique and exquisite" working relationship at Pope Air Force Base and Fort Bragg and changing it would jeopardize military readiness, North Carolina officials told a panel considering Defense Department cutbacks Wednesday.

Quoting the words of its own members, U.S. Rep. Bob Etheridge joined a quartet of witnesses who urged the Base Closure and Realignment Commission to reconsider the Pentagon's recommendation to remove major Air Force units from Pope and put the Army in charge of running the base.

Etheridge, D-N.C., quoted retired Navy Adm. Harold Gehman, a commission member who cited the "unique and exquisite military capability" at the twin bases during a visit there last week.

He also quoted commission member James T. Hill, a retired Army general who accompanied Gehman, in saying that the commission wants to make sure none of its actions hurt the mission of the bases' resident units.

"I could not agree more," Etheridge said. "The work of this commission should strive to strengthen and enhance this unique asset. ... We must not attempt to fix what is not broken, and the unique and exquisite military capability of the Bragg-Pope team is most assuredly not broken."

The changes at Pope and Fort Bragg were part of the Pentagon's recommendations in May to close or reduce forces at 62 major bases and hundreds of smaller installations to save money and streamline the services. Dozens of other facilities would grow, absorbing troops from domestic and overseas bases slated for closure or downsizing.

The commission will send a revised list of recommendations to President Bush in September. He must approve it in its entirety or send it back to the commission for more work. Once the president signs off, the list goes to

Congress, which must accept it or reject it as a whole.

At Wednesday's hearing in Washington, Etheridge, fellow Democratic Rep. Mike McIntyre and two military consultants - retired Air Force Gen. Paul R. Dordal, a former Pope commander, and retired Army Col. Terry Peck, who served as director of operations at Fort Bragg - reiterated major arguments that have been made to the commission in hearings and letters.

They said removing the Air Force's 43rd Airlift Wing and its 25 C-130E aircraft from Pope would erode the ability of the 18th Airborne Corps, based at Fort Bragg, to respond swiftly to crises at home and worldwide.

They also argued that Pentagon planners who devised the initial recommendations failed to fully consider the economic and logistical implications of turning over Pope to the Army.

While Fort Bragg could easily run the air base's buildings and other infrastructure, replacing the jobs performed by Air Force units would require intensive training and re-equipping - at a cost vastly underestimated in the Pentagon's initial proposals, they said.

"What will happen is, these (existing) costs would just be transferred to the Army, because they're going to have to do it," McIntyre said. "So there's no real cost savings here, and you're having to train folks in the Army to do the job that the Air Force already does so well."

The witnesses praised the Defense Department proposals to relocate two major Army commands from Georgia to Fort Bragg, add a brigade-level combat team to the existing troops, and transfer some European-based forces to the base.

Doing so only reinforces the need to keep Pope's current structure, they said.

"This is where we believe the process missed the mark - when it made the recommendation to transfer the operational responsibilities of Pope

Air Force Base to the Army and to reduce the Air Force presence as part of the joint crisis response force at Pope Air Force Base, even while the Army is increasing its part of that team," Peck said.

Riley plays offense at meeting with base closure panel

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Crystal City, VA)

Jeffrey McMurray

August 10, 2005

Alabama Gov. Bob Riley was in an enviable position Wednesday as he met for the first time with several commissioners reviewing the Pentagon's plans to close some military bases and realign others.

With the state's four largest bases spared any major losses under the recommendations, Riley's mission is to protect their gains and argue against some smaller cuts. Still, the governor pledged a spirited fight for every Alabama mission with military value.

"We will not have a defensive posture in anything we say tonight," Riley said at a news conference before the closed door meeting. "Everything is going to be on the offensive."

The dilemma is that it's the same posture adopted by officials in Texas, whose Red River Depot is viewed as a direct competitor with the Anniston Army Depot for survival. Last month, the Government Accountability Office scrutinized the Pentagon's recommendation to shutter Red River and questioned whether Anniston can handle the extra workload.

Riley insisted it can, although he acknowledged some extra construction would be necessary. He also dismissed suggestions by some Texas officials that there's plenty of work for both depots.

"There's not enough work," he said. "There may be enough work today when we're in a war. That's not going to last."

Riley knows one of the commissioners well - former Utah Rep. Jim Hansen, who served with him in Congress. They were both members of the depot caucus, and Riley said he is confident Hansen is a big believer in the value of the Anniston depot. His goal Wednesday was to get the other commissioners on board, and he said his strongest allies were top Army brass who consider Anniston vital for equipping soldiers in the field.

For the most part, Riley had praise for the entire Base Closure and Realignment Commission, which has the power to both add and remove military installations and missions from the closure list. He said the commissioners were asking the right questions and expressed confidence Alabama would fare well, as it did in May when the Pentagon published its original list.

However, he is seeking to undo a handful of reductions that could cost the state jobs.

Riley said a major topic of discussion would be a proposal to move computer systems management from Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base in Montgomery to Massachusetts. The governor acknowledged there was some merit in moving research components, but he said moving the missions themselves would cost the Pentagon money.

He also said he would fight against a proposal to reshuffle Air National Guard units, which affects the KC-135 tanker jets from the 117th Air Refueling Wing in Birmingham. However, Riley said he had no plans to join other states that have filed a lawsuit, arguing the federal government is overstepping its jurisdiction.

"I have every confidence that the people that are on this commission have the expertise, have the knowledge, are going to have all the facts to make a legitimate decision," Riley said. "We just want to make sure that they understand what the capabilities and capacity of Birmingham is."

Stung once, Limestone waits;

Employees, residents 'optimistic' as DFAS hangs in balance

Bangor Daily News (Bangor, ME)

Jeff Tuttle

August 10, 2005

Last month it was a numbers game. This month, a waiting game.

"I try not to think about it," said Bryan Thompson, a staff accountant at Limestone's Defense Finance and Accounting Service, which is targeted for closure as part of the ongoing Base Realignment and Closure, or BRAC, process.

Those trying to spare the center's 350 employees already have had their day in court, so to speak, countering Pentagon calculations that put the Limestone facility - as well as 22 others - on the closure list.

Now the fate of the Limestone center - and, in some ways, of the town - rests with the independent nine-member commission reviewing the Defense Department plan. The commission is expected to release its findings on Aug. 23, more than two weeks before the Sept. 8 deadline to submit its recommendation to President Bush.

Despite his efforts to be patient during that period, Thompson, 24, has thought long and hard about the prospect of the center's closure.

So has his wife, Melissa. The couple, while "cautiously optimistic" - a common phrase in town nowadays - already have explored moving to greener economic pastures should the center close.

"But we're optimistic," Thompson repeated, prompting a quick, "That's right," from Melissa, who, like her high school sweetheart husband, was born in nearby Caribou.

"Well, we try to be," she added after a pause and a glance up at Bryan as the couple's toddler son, Landon, busied himself exploring a local coffee shop.

The wait-and-see attitude is shared by many in Limestone, a small agrarian town in northern Aroostook County still stinging from the 1994 closure of Loring Air Force Base, the loss of which drained about 10,000 people from the area and crippled the local economy.

"This would be twice," Pauline Gaskins, 61, said over lunch at Kelley's Restaurant, one of Limestone's few remaining Main Street storefronts. "It's just too much."

Like Gaskins, who worked at the base dining hall before it closed, many townspeople take particular exception to the Limestone center's listing, part of the Pentagon's effort to reduce the number of DFAS sites from 26 to three and reduce the work force from 14,400 to 11,000 by 2011.

Once described as the "crown jewel" of the base's redevelopment, DFAS was placed there, in part, to lessen the economic blow from Loring's loss.

Loring's closure, despite similarly concerted efforts to keep it open, still weighs on the minds of people like Paul Haines, 71, a lifelong resident of the area.

"The [Defense Department] did it before. Why wouldn't they do it again?" Haines, a retired insurance company executive, said while finishing his lunch at a nearby table at Kelley's. "We were just starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel."

Second chance

While Haines remains doubtful that the Limestone center will be spared, others in town have been encouraged by recent actions of the base closure commission.

Its unanimous vote last month to add DFAS megacenters in Denver, Indianapolis and Columbus, Ohio, to the closure list marked an early victory for those trying to save Limestone.

The Pentagon had planned to consolidate its accounting operations at those three centers.

Placing them on the list alongside the others levels the playing field when it comes to deciding which DFAS sites will remain open, said Walt Elish, director of the Aroostook Partnership for Progress.

"That will open up everything," said Elish, who after the listing of the three Midwest centers put the chances of Limestone's survival at 50 percent - much better than the 10 percent odds he predicted before their inclusion.

But most agree mere survival will not be enough for Limestone, which commissioners have suggested will have to grow in order to have a place in the consolidated DFAS system.

During the regional base closure hearings in Boston, commission member Gen. Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton, who visited Limestone in June, asked the Maine delegation to provide detailed cost estimates of expanding the facility to 1,000 workers.

The significance, if any, of such requests - or even passing mentions of the "low-cost" Limestone facility at subsequent hearings in Washington, D.C. - have not been lost on the DFAS workers, many of whom are following the BRAC process closely.

"When we hear the name Limestone, we know it's on their minds and they're thinking about it," said Bryan Thompson, who started at the center as an intern about three years ago.

Thompson, who now lives in Stockholm, was just a kid when Loring closed, and Haines, who worked on the failed 1991 effort to save the base, doesn't put much stock in the BRAC commission's praise for the DFAS facility, one of the newest in the system.

"I think we're getting a lot of lip service, but that's all it is, lip service," Haines said.

The current DFAS system - a small operation by Pentagon standards - was created when the Defense Department consolidated about 300 accounting operations into the 26 sites.

DFAS has received relatively little attention thus far in the BRAC process, which also calls for the closure of 33 major military bases, including Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, where more than 4,000 people work.

While some state delegations have made cases to retain their DFAS operations, others, where perhaps economic opportunity is greater, have been more accepting of the loss.

For instance, in Texas, which stands to gain more than 6,000 net jobs under BRAC, there has been relatively little public outcry about saving the 303 civilian jobs at the DFAS center in San Antonio, a city that stands to gain 3,500 jobs under the Pentagon's plan.

In Denver, where the DFAS center employs 1,250 people, some officials even have suggested the land would be worth more if it - like much of the remaining former Lowry Air Force Base - were allowed to be developed privately.

BRAC countdown

The story is much different three hours north of Bangor in Limestone, where the economic impact of DFAS closing is higher than anywhere in the nation.

Defense Department estimates say the lost jobs make up 1 percent of the area's total work force. Maine officials, using a smaller geographic area to measure the impact, put the number at 2 percent.

"The plan will result in a federally induced major economic recession," Gov. John Baldacci warned the commission at the Boston hearings in July.

Today at the sprawling Loring base there's a trickle of traffic on the maze of once busy four-lane roads.

There are a few Humvees from the nearby Maine Military Authority maintenance facility and some civilian traffic to and from the Sitel

Corp., a call center, and from Job Corps, the other federal anchor at the former base.

Ironically, its supporters say, the Limestone DFAS facility - ranked 17th by the Pentagon out of the 26 sites - lost points in the Defense Department analysis for not being on an active military base.

Its backers, which include the entire Maine congressional delegation and Gov. Baldacci, have argued that the standard should not apply to the Limestone facility, which nevertheless sits behind a guarded and locked security gate constantly monitored by surveillance cameras.

Beyond the gate and inside the DFAS center, it appeared to be business as usual during a recent visit. Workers sat in their cubicles and punched away at their keyboards, balancing the books for 38 active-duty Air Force bases and 34 Air National Guard bases.

Sept. 30 marks the end of the fiscal year, and work has taken precedence over worries about a pending closure.

"It keeps your mind off it," said Gail McPherson, who during her eight-year tenure became the first worker there to win the national DFAS Great Performer Award for outstanding customer service.

Like 85 percent of the center's work force, McPherson, 50, is from the area and, like 85 percent of her co-workers, she has a college degree - percentages far higher than at most DFAS facilities, Elish said. Living with her husband on a potato farm about an hour away in Blaine, McPherson has deep roots here.

And no plans to leave.

Despite being "from away," neither does the center's director, Larry Conrad, better known as "Mr. C" by his employees, all of whom he knows by name and who smile and say hello as he gives visitors a tour through the building.

"I was the first one in here when we opened," Conrad, 61, later said from his spacious second-

floor office, "and I told the employees I will be the last one out if it closes."

County must prepare for Meade jobs

The Maryland Gazette (MD)

Vanessa Franko

August 10, 2005

West county's schools, roads and stores aren't prepared for the possible arrival of up to 20,000 jobs expected to shift to Fort George G. Meade over the next decade, the state's top economic development official said Monday.

Aris Melissaratos, secretary of business and economic development, told more than 70 residents, politicians and government officials that county schools need to target math and science programs, more money needs to be pumped into public transit and roads and more upscale retailers need to open.

The first wave of 5,400 jobs would come from Northern Virginia, New Jersey and Florida if the Base Realignment and Closure Commission's recommendations are approved by President Bush and Congress. An additional 10,000 to 15,000 are expected to follow as the Pentagon shifts its Washington-area agencies to secure locations over the next decade.

Already home to the National Security Agency, Fort Meade is the county's largest employment center, with 40,000 jobs.

Mr. Melissaratos urged Howard and Anne Arundel counties, Fort Meade and the city of Laurel, to work together to accommodate the growth.

"It's a matter of land-use planning, it's a matter of transportation planning, it's a matter of education planning," he said.

Col. Kenneth O. McCreedy, Fort Meade installation commander, told the crowd at the Maryland City fire station that Anne Arundel County has to make a case for being as good or better a place to live than areas such as Fairfax County, where some of the jobs will come from.

While working in Northern Virginia, he said he often played a round of golf after to work to avoid driving in the area's notorious rush hour traffic. That makes traffic one plus for Anne Arundel.

"We need to sell them and convince people that we have competitive school systems," said Col. McCreedy, who has a daughter at Meade High School.

Mr. Melissaratos pointed out the draw of the Science and Mathematics Academy at Aberdeen High School and said a similar school should be considered in Anne Arundel County.

Gregory V. Nourse, assistant superintendent for business and management services for the county's public schools, said the county school board is discussing a proposal to add an International Baccalaureate program at Meade High School to fill that need. The county already has programs slated to open this month at Annapolis and Old Mill high schools.

Another issue Mr. Melissaratos and the audience discussed was transportation.

"Now we have congestion at rush hour. We're going to have congestion around five to eight years from now," he said.

Mr. Melissaratos mentioned ways of alleviating the traffic problem, including extending the Washington Metro to Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Fort Meade and eventually to BWI Airport.

Col. John W. Ives, former Fort Meade installation commander, proposed a bus Metro bus link to Fort Meade in June.

Greg Welker, an engineer with the State Highway Administration, said the state recently completed removing the traffic signals from Route 32 in front of Fort Meade and the NSA. SHA improvements are also in the works for adding lanes to the Baltimore-Washington Parkway between Interstates 695 and 195 at BWI.

There is also \$12.5 million earmarked for improvements on Annapolis Road from Route 170 to the parkway.

Mr. Melissaratos said the road in front of Fort Meade needs work, too.

"A lot of (Route) 175 coming out of Fort Meade looks like it did 50 years ago. We can't have that anymore. ... We need to make 175 look and appear and make Fort Meade look like the modern high-tech installation in the world," Mr. Melissaratos said.

He urged members of the audience to push for upgrades to shopping centers bringing in bigger retail brand names.

"We need to upgrade our service shop, the bagel shop, the doughnut shop, the restaurants. Whether the people live here or commute to Northern Virginia, they're going to eat here. They're going to stop to shop here at lunch," Mr. Melissaratos said.

County Planning and Zoning Director Joseph Rutter said the county has west county business plans in the works.

Mr. Rutter said that service facilities around the MARC station in Odenton are an important aspect, including dry cleaners and coffee shops. He said there is also a mixed-use project proposed at Blob's Park in Jessup, a retail and residential complex dubbed Parkside.

In addition to updating retail sites, Mr. Melissaratos suggested creating more housing for the people moving to the area because of the BRAC recommendations.

"We need to find a way to have more affordable workforce housing and to upgrade the housing that exists," Mr. Melissaratos said.

Mr. Rutter said there are west county projects in the works.

"We have over 4,000 units that are approved and in the pipeline," he said.

Mr. Rutter said another 1,000 units are awaiting approval. But he said some of the new jobs would be held by people who already live locally.

The final BRAC recommendations will go to Mr. Bush next month, who will return them or send them on to Congress. Final approval could take several more months.

Maine Pols Make Last-Ditch Pitch To Save Naval Air Base

National Journal (ME)

Megan Scully

August 10, 2005

The Maine delegation today had its last public opportunity to persuade the independent Base Closure and Realignment Commission to keep open the Brunswick Naval Air Station. During hourlong testimony on Capitol Hill, Maine lawmakers said Brunswick is vital to homeland defense, and closing or stripping the base of its aircraft would compromise national security. "Closing Brunswick would leave the Northeast more vulnerable to threats and would create an intolerable risk for the department and the nation," Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Chairwoman Collins told the commission this morning. The base, the only remaining active-duty airfield north of central New Jersey, is home to several P-3 Orion maritime patrol planes, which the Pentagon wants to move to Jacksonville Naval Air Station in Florida.

In May, the Pentagon recommended keeping only a skeleton of the base open, to handle mission needs in New England. But commissioners fear that keeping the base warm - - and not allowing the local community to redevelop the property -- would leave Brunswick with little chance to recover economically from the base closing. Last month, commissioners voted to consider shuttering Brunswick altogether to allow private businesses to develop the base. "The current recommendation does not make a whole lot of sense," Commission Chairman Anthony Principi

said today. Maine lawmakers were joined by retired Navy officials, who dismissed both options. "Closing the last fully capable operational air station in the Northeast is fraught with danger," said retired Rear Adm. Harry Rich. Retired Navy Capt. Ralph Dean added that realigning the airfield would "degrade the readiness of the maritime patrol force and save precious little money in the process." Maine is among the states hit hardest in this base-closure round, with Brunswick and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard on the cutting blocks. If both are closed, the state could lose more than 10,000 jobs tied directly or indirectly to those installations.

Today's hearing was one of the commission's last, with just two weeks to go before they make their base-closure recommendations and forward them to the White House by Sept. 8. Aside from Brunswick, commissioners also heard testimony from the Indiana and Ohio delegations on the consolidation of Defense Finance and Accounting Services centers, as well as the potential closure or relocation of the Air Force Institute of Technology, located in Dayton, Ohio. Meanwhile, North Carolina lawmakers testified on the realignment of Pope Air Force Base, while Virginia and Washington, D.C., officials discussed the consolidation of Walter Reed Army Medical Center and other military medical commands.

August Vote Expected on Cannon's Fate

Albuquerque Journal (Albuquerque, NM)

Miguel Navrot

August 10, 2005

Clovis and eastern New Mexico should know in two weeks if Cannon Air Force Base will escape the military's list of properties it wants closed, Rep. Tom Udall announced Tuesday.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission is expected to vote the week of Aug. 22, a commission spokesman said Tuesday.

Clovis, home to three combat squadrons of F-16 Falcon fighter jets, was among the 33 majors bases recommended for closure.

Since mid-May, Clovis-area residents have rallied through letters and other public pleas to keep the base open. Cannon, which sits seven miles west of Clovis, is estimated to account for a third of the local economy.

"We believe that a strong case has been made that, not only should Cannon remain open, but that it would be an excellent candidate to receive additional missions and workers," Udall, a New Mexico Democrat, said in a prepared statement.

It takes a vote of five commissioners to remove a base from the closure list.

Udall and the rest of the state delegation in Washington, as well as Gov. Bill Richardson, have lobbied commissioners this summer. Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., also has recommended the Air Force consider Cannon for its next models of fighter jets, the F/A-22 Raptor and the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

The Air Force has estimated a 20-year savings of \$2.7 billion by closing Cannon. The military also predicts nearly 21 percent of the area's jobs would be lost by closing the base.

Navy Memo Is Seen As 'Smoking Gun' Sub Base Supporters Say Document Outlines Shortfalls In Kings Bay Plan

New London Day (New London, CT)

Robert A. Hamilton

August 11, 2005

Groton— An internal Navy memorandum obtained by The Day reveals that the Pentagon's plan to move the Naval Submarine School to Kings Bay, Ga., seriously underestimated the costs.

Opponents of the move Wednesday called the memo a "white-hot smoking gun" that will "blow a hole" in the Pentagon's case to close Sub Base New London.

"Clearly the timing and content of this memo is startling," said U.S. Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn. "If this information is indeed deemed

to be accurate and true, it would call into question all data used by the Navy to support its BRAC (base realignment and closure) proposals.

“In particular,” Dodd said, “it would blow a hole in the Navy's analysis recommending the transfer of the Submarine School from Sub Base New London to Kings Bay.”

The plan to move the school, part of the larger plan to close the Naval Submarine Base, calls for construction of 70 classrooms. But Capt. Arnold O. Lotring, the director of the Submarine Learning Center, which would oversee the move, said in the memo he needs 100.

The plan also calls for standard construction, but the memo said the classrooms require highly specialized air conditioning, heating, electrical and information technology improvements that will be much more expensive.

The memo said that to operate effectively at Kings Bay, the sub school must have specialized dormitories, including a wing for students who are being disciplined; a larger cafeteria, or galley; and a brig for at least six people. With as many as 2,200 students at peak periods, there are always a few in serious trouble.

In addition, the memo said, the students will probably require an expanded or new indoor gymnasium because about seven days out of 10, weather conditions in southeast Georgia are too oppressive to meet Navy standards for outdoor workouts.

“It's inappropriate to comment on any specifics within correspondence for internal use,” said William Kenny, Lotring's spokesman. But to put the memo into context, he said Lotring was seeking to carry out the requirements of the BRAC recommendation, and “to this end, he charged his planners to develop and execute a vision of Submarine Force training robust enough to serve the fleet and our sailors into the 22nd century.”

Members of the team fighting to save the Groton base were fuming to learn that the Navy began assessing the cost of the move in June, almost

three weeks after the Pentagon proposed the closure — and more than six months after all the data to support the move was supposed to have been certified by auditors.

“This memo is a disturbing revelation of how the Navy has miscalculated the costs of moving the Submarine School, and it seriously undermines their case to close Sub Base New London,” said Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman, D-Conn. “It shows that they neglected to conduct the necessary research and data certification before arriving at their conclusion on the base's fate.

“We will pursue this with the Navy and will provide all information to the BRAC commission for their deliberations. These flaws clearly provide even stronger evidence that Sub Base New London should remain open.”

Base supporters were furious to learn the memo was never released, even though it was written weeks before they traveled to Boston to argue against the Pentagon recommendation in a hearing before the base closure commission.

In addition, U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, noted the memo was written two weeks before his visit to Kings Bay in June. When he asked at that time whether the galley, the gymnasium and other facilities would be able to absorb up to 2,200 students at a time, he was assured they would.

“That's a matter of great concern to me,” Simmons said. “They must have known about this memo by then. But when all these issues came up, nobody said anything about a memo. How many other important pieces of information are out there that we don't know about?”

“This memo clearly points out that a whole series of assumptions about Kings Bay were simply incorrect. The Submarine Learning Center is the command responsible for coordinating the efforts of the Navy's submarine training sites. Its commanding officer identified issues with moving the submarine school to Kings Bay that were not adequately reviewed

before the Navy decided to recommend the realignment. The visible gap between the Navy's analysis and reality grows wider by the day.”

John C. Markowicz, chairman of the Subbase Realignment Coalition, the grass-roots group fighting to save the base, called the memo a “white-hot smoking gun.”

“I liken this to the Buchanan memo of 1993,” Markowicz said. In that year, Rear Adm. Richard Buchanan, then head of Submarine Group Two in Groton, wrote an internal memorandum that said the Navy plan to move Groton's submarines to Norfolk, Va., was flawed because it would cost much more to maintain them there.

That memorandum, leaked to the coalition, proved critical in overturning the recommendation 12 years ago to close the waterfront.

Staff members of the state delegation said they are drafting a letter to Commission Chairman Anthony J. Principi, which they hope to deliver today, and they will ask Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael G. Mullen to release any other documents that might undermine the Navy case for closing the Groton base.

“The idea that the Pentagon issued its BRAC recommendations regarding the sub school before even considering the analysis by the Navy's senior official charged with overseeing U.S. submarine training is stunning and wholly unacceptable,” Dodd said.

“Our state — needless to say — intends to follow this trail to wherever it may lead,” Dodd continued. “Clearly it will be important for the BRAC commission to take this into account.”

Critics of the Pentagon recommendation have long said the data-collection process to support the BRAC process was slipshod. On at least one occasion, for instance, Navy bases had just 48 hours to collect and return a large volume of information for a “data call.”

Markowicz said a review of the full Navy report on the Groton base showed no information entered for 11 of the 12 items involving military construction projects that would be required to support the sub school move to Kings Bay.

That means the Cost of Base Realignment Activity, or COBRA, computer model would have used default values in those categories, or average construction costs based on Navy experience. Markowicz said he knew those default values would seriously understate the real costs because of the complexity of construction required to support electronic classrooms.

Kenny, the public affairs officer for the Learning Center, said after the BRAC proposals were released by the Pentagon, Lotring established an Integrated Process Team to look at how the recommendation would be carried out.

The big question for base supporters now is how much impact can the memo have on the BRAC process, which is drawing to a close.

The commission has been working since May 13 to review the Defense Department recommendations, and has nearly finished its data-gathering process before heading into its decision hearings Aug. 23-27.

But Markowicz noted the commission continues to seek information about the Pentagon recommendations — for instance, several commission members are slated to meet with a panel of retired Navy admirals on Friday to talk about the Groton recommendation — so he's hopeful that the memo will be reviewed, and considered.

Opinions/ Editorials

Supporters fight down to the wire
Monterey County Herald (Monterey, CA)
August 10, 2005

10-foot-high security fence put in at Alisal High School in the mid-1990s had become a negative symbol, sending the message that this was a dangerous place.

Principal John Ramirez wisely made it a priority to take down the chain-link fence, and with it the stigma it created.

The fence went in after a student was killed nearby in a drive-by shooting. It was intended to keep non-students from going on campus without checking in at the office. However, the fence's removal shouldn't compromise security, a concern at just about any American high school today. A fence remains around the parking lot at the east entrance, where most traffic enters the campus, the school will continue monitoring the back entrance and school resource officers will still be around.

But the barrier that set Alisal apart from the three other high schools in Salinas Union High School District is no more and students returning from summer break in two weeks should find the campus more inviting.

Monterey's bases aren't likely be closed or fully consolidated, but they may be given marching orders on cost-cutting measures, former Central Coast congressman Leon Panetta said Tuesday.

"That's what I'd bet on now," he said, after BRAC staff had indicated the commission is leaning toward making "advisory" recommendations on ways the Defense Language Institute, the Naval Postgraduate School and the Air Force School of technology in Ohio can continue to avoid duplication of efforts, especially in administration and overhead costs.

"I think they'd like to see if not only you can improve the way the schools are operating in terms of curriculum, but also achieve savings in the way the schools are administered," he said.

The day after a hearing of the Base Realignment and Closure commission in Monterey, Panetta said he felt confident the bases would stay where they are. "It's not really an official realignment, more like, 'here are our recommendations for ways to achieve better savings.'"

Additional Notes