

## Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

# EARLY



# BIRD

August 19, 2005

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WASHINGTON -- The assistant secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs

told a panel of Base Realignment and Closure commissioners the Air Force would change its size and modify its missions.

The Air Force will become smaller in terms of the number of aircraft the service keeps. If the Air Force's BRAC recommendations are approved, the Air Force's fighter force will shrink by about 20 percent overall, Michael L. Dominguez said.

"Legacy aircraft designed in the 1970s and largely built in the 1980s are not the aircraft that will guarantee global dominance for the Air Force... into the middle part of the 21st century," Mr. Dominguez said. "We have to right-size our flying squadrons for efficiency and effectiveness. We looked through the inventory of aircraft, regardless of the component to whom they are assigned, and divested the oldest, least capable aircraft."

Mr. Dominguez also told commissioners the Air National Guard is part of that process.

"At points throughout the (BRAC) process, we have shared with Guard and Reserve (leaders) the factors bringing change to the Air Force, the nature of that change, the imperatives we would apply in adapting to that change, our strategy for addressing those imperatives and the likely results," Mr. Dominguez said

While some Guard units will lose flying missions, Mr. Dominguez said some of those installations will continue to have a mission to provide expeditionary combat support as part of their federal mission, and at the same time be able to continue to perform a homeland security mission at home while providing support to their governors.

"The concept of enclaves as opposed to shutting down facilities and closing down National Guard units came out of the National Guard participants in our BRAC executive committee staff," Mr. Dominguez said. "They said we need to make sure governors have assets to use in their homeland defense mission in their disaster recovery, in their firefighting, in their riot control, in their need to protect critical

infrastructure and also have command and control capabilities."

It is around those enclaves, Mr. Dominguez said, that the Air Force will build emerging missions. Those missions include space, expeditionary combat support to austere locations, and command, control, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.

### *National News Articles*

#### **Adjutants General Urge BRAC Panel To Alter Pentagon Proposals**

Air Force official: Report merely 'a critique'  
Inside the Air Force  
Martin Matishak  
August 19, 2005

A senior Air Force official this week criticized a plan offered by a group of state adjutants general that urges the Base Realignment and Closure Commission to reject a vast majority of the Pentagon's Air National Guard-related recommendations.

This counter-proposal, prepared by the Adjutants General Association of the United States (AGAUS) and submitted to the BRAC panel late last week, does not offer any actual alternatives to the Defense Department's May realignment and closure plan, and essentially is a "critique" of the Pentagon's proposals, Maj. Gen. Gary Heckman, deputy chief of staff for plans and programs, told Inside the Air Force Aug. 15.

The document was presented to the commissioners during an Aug. 11 BRAC panel hearing. The AGAUS plan was the latest salvo in an ongoing debate between Air Force officials and Guard representatives. State adjutants general (TAGs) have countered the department's proposals to close or shrink about 30 ANG installations with a steady stream of criticism since the Pentagon released its recommendations in May. The TAGs say they were not properly consulted during the Air Force's decision-making process.

“What I find is in the cases where a recommendation is taking resources from the Guard, they didn’t support that,” said Heckman, who co-chaired the service’s Base Closure Executive Group. “In the cases where [a recommendation] is providing force structure to the Guard, they supported that.”

However, AGAUS President and Nebraska TAG Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke disagreed with that assessment. The proposal is not merely a critique of or an alternative plan to the Pentagon’s BRAC report, he told ITAF Aug. 17. Rather, it is a set of recommendations that would take “most of the programmatic-type actions” out of the BRAC process.

The proposal “does not touch the closure recommendations,” Lempke said. “We believe that’s a proper BRAC task to deal with recommended closures so we left those alone.”

While the adjutants general report does not overtly urge the commission to reject DOD plans to close specific bases, it does call for airframes to remain at bases the department has targeted for closure. Lempke described the difference between directly opposing the proposed closures and using the approach in the group’s report as “subtle.”

AGAUS believes the state governors possess the prerogative to decide if a base should lose its capabilities, Lempke explained. The Justice Department last week issued a statement supporting the Pentagon’s authority to dictate airframe moves within a state without seeking the governor’s consent.

The AGAUS report covers 79 proposals put forth in the Pentagon’s BRAC report, calling for the BRAC panel to “vote down” more than 60 of those. The group’s report accepts -- completely or partially -- more than 10 of the department’s proposals.

Heckman said all of the Air Force-spawned recommendations in the department’s May BRAC report are aimed at maintaining the “proportionality” between active and Guard and Air Force Reserve personnel and equipment.

Were the AGAUS plan to be adopted, the Guard’s share of various weapons systems would increase an average of 15 to 20 percent, according to Heckman. Meanwhile, active and Reserve units’ shares would decrease, he added.

“Our assessment is we wanted to maintain the proportionality,” Heckman said. “It would appear this book, says, ‘Well, in the Guard, we want a bigger share of the pie.’”

Lempke said the counter-proposal is focused solely on Guard installations, not active or Reserve ones. “We didn’t attempt to go back and redo any of the Air Force recommendations,” Lempke said. “If they want to go back and do that, re-recommend something to the BRAC Commission, that’s up to them.”

The AGAUS president said one of his primary concerns is if the Pentagon’s Air Force-related proposals ultimately are approved by Congress and President Bush, the aircraft shifts and retirements would become law. According to the group, that would mean future legislation would be required to move those planes.

However, the service is not concerned about that AGAUS claim, Heckman said.

“We’re not at all concerned about it,” the plans and programs chief said. He pointed to the 1995 BRAC round, a process that also specified specific airframe moves. Those changes were included in the subsequent BRAC legislation that was approved, but were later modified to meet mission and force structure demands without requiring additional legislation, Heckman noted.

A spokesman for the commission said panel members are taking the AGAUS proposal into consideration and are reviewing it.

DOD officials will make their final presentation on the department’s recommendations Aug. 20.

### **Commission to vote next week on base's fate**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

Devlin Barrett  
August 18, 2005

Three anxiety-packed months after the Pentagon announced it wants to close Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, its defenders are bracing for a final vote next week by the commission charged with reducing and reshaping America's military complex.

The teeth-grinding process known as Base Closure and Realignment, or BRAC, will come down to a series of commission votes late next week on which bases should be closed and which should be spared the budget-cutting ax.

The Pentagon recommended closing the Niagara Falls base in May as part of a national cost-cutting restructuring plan. The total package recommends the closure of 33 major bases and substantial reductions at 29 more, to produce an estimated savings of more than \$49 billion over 20 years.

Base supporters were quick to argue the home of the 914th Airlift Wing should be maintained because its mission is crucial to the military effort in Iraq and ongoing homeland security concerns near the United States' northern border.

Niagara has maintained those arguments, but new ones have come to dominate the debate as the nine-member commission sharply questioned the wisdom of using the BRAC process to move relatively small numbers of planes and personnel, and challenged the Pentagon's cost savings estimates.

No one is willing to guess which way the commission will ultimately vote, but the Air Guard debate has become the most contentious piece of this BRAC round.

"It's clear that substantial legal and organizational issues have been raised by both the commission and communities about the ... guard and reserve recommendations," said Robert Gillcash, a military analyst who worked as a legislative aide on past base closure rounds.

The Pentagon's plan calls for shifting people, equipment and aircraft among at least 54 sites where Air Guard units now are stationed. Roughly two dozen sites would expand, while about 30 would be closed or downsized.

The Pentagon would also take four C-130 planes away from the Stratton Air National Guard base in Scotia.

"This particular issue continues to be a source of great concern by both the BRAC staff and its commissioners, which is probably telling in itself for the amount of time being invested in researching this issue," said Gillcash.

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., a member of the Senate Armed Services committee, has urged the commission to reject Pentagon claims that moving C-130's from Niagara and elsewhere would cost about \$102 million. She argues the real figure, based on another military survey, is actually \$292 million.

"There's a lot of mistaken logic being used to justify these closures with Air Guard units that really don't make sense," said Clinton. "Undercutting the logic of the Air Force's case is essential to making the argument on behalf of the Air National Guard."

Even if the commission agrees with the arguments made by Clinton, Reps. Thomas Reynolds, R-Clarence, and Louise Slaughter, D-Fairport, it may not be enough to save Niagara.

The commission could decide to reduce the number of C-130's shifted around the country, but still close Niagara. The panel's nine members have been careful not to commit to any particular position even when questioning top military brass, and could still decide to embrace the Pentagon's entire plan for the Air Guard.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld will make one final pitch for his vision of a streamlined base system when he appears before the commission on Saturday.

The commission will begin several days of hearings Wednesday, when they will first vote

on which bases to add to the closure list, before voting on the Pentagon's recommendations.

The closure votes could stretch into the weekend.

The BRAC votes come even as the 914th is preparing for a third deployment to Iraq.

The commission has until Sept. 8 to send its recommendations to President Bush, who must either approve or disapprove the list by Sept. 23. The White House must submit a BRAC commission list to Congress by November 7.

If Congress fails to pass a motion of disapproval of the list within 45 days, the list becomes law.

### **Alternative uses likely for closing National Guard armories**

The Associated Press

Tim Talley

August 18, 2005

Fifty-three Oklahoma National Guard armories that would be abandoned under a proposed realignment plan will likely be turned over to local governments or state agencies that will find new uses for them, Oklahoma's adjutant general said Thursday.

Maj. Gen. Harry M. Wyatt III said the National Guard plans to pull out of the armories as well as six maintenance facilities across the state as part of a plan to make the Guard more efficient and bring military training and equipment more in line with active-duty and reserve personnel.

But armories the National Guard will no longer use will not necessarily be shuttered and locked up, Wyatt said.

"We are not closing any of these armories," he said. "What I think is a better word than closing is transitioning. These are facilities that will not disappear."

Many armories, including some built in the 1930s and '40s, are functionally obsolete and the cost of upgrading them is prohibitive, Wyatt

said. The National Guard is maintaining armories in 10 communities that are no longer used, including those in Blackwell, Pawnee, Watonga, Konowa and Hartshorne.

Some armories will be returned to local governments that originally deeded the land for them. Others could be sold or turned over to state and county governments for a variety of purposes, including economic development, Wyatt said.

"We've already had inquiries from some of our local communities," Wyatt said. He said many local leaders and groups are already developing ideas about how to use the structures.

The realignment plan calls for construction of seven new Armed Forces Reserve Centers across the state and would leave the state with a total of 39 National Guard armories and reserve centers.

The plan would relocate more than 3,711 Oklahoma guard members and their units to new regional reserve centers for training "and remove them from the outdated facilities they are currently using," Wyatt said. The Oklahoma National Guard has about 7,000 members.

The realignment plan was developed along Base Realignment and Closure Commission recommendations concerning active-duty military bases as well as the state's declining population in rural areas, where many armories slated for closure are located.

Once the realignment plan is fully implemented in 2011 or 2012, armories would be located primarily in urban areas, including Oklahoma City and Tulsa, and along the highly traveled corridors of Interstates 35, 40 and 44.

The new reserve centers will cost \$243 million and will be paid for with federal military construction funds because the realignment plan complies with the Army's emphasis on a modular unit concept.

"We are becoming an equal partner with the Army and Army Reserve," Wyatt said. "We will

train like the active-duty Army. We will be equipped like the active-duty Army. So that we could be deployed on a moment's notice."

The reserve centers include proposed \$55 million facilities in Norman and Oklahoma City as well as centers in Muskogee, McAlester, Broken Arrow and on Vance Air Force Base and Fort Sill Army Post.

The reserve centers will resemble the multiple-use facility in Sand Springs that opened in 2003 and houses both Oklahoma Army National Guard units and Army Reserve units.

### **Delegation, Baldacci concerned over last-minute BRAC hearing**

Bangor Daily News  
Mal Leary  
August 18, 2005

AUGUSTA -- The Base Realignment and Closure commission has scheduled a public hearing for Saturday to allow the Department of Defense to present additional arguments to support its base closing proposals, a move that is causing members of the Maine congressional delegation and Gov. John Baldacci some concerns.

"This means they [DOD] get another bite of the apple," said Republican Sen. Olympia Snowe. "I am concerned about what they may bring up just before the commission starts deliberations."

The BRAC commission is scheduled to begin deliberations next Wednesday, Aug. 24, and complete their voting on recommendations sometime on Saturday, Aug. 27.

Snowe said the timing of the hearings, just days before the commission starts to take votes, is a concern because there will be little time to thoroughly assess any additional facts or arguments made by DOD.

"We have to be ready with the rest of the story, so to speak," Gov. Baldacci said. "Since the beginning, the DOD case has been half-baked."

Baldacci said the state and the delegation have to be alert to any "curve balls" the DOD may present at Saturday's session. He said if anything new is presented, he believes the commission owes it to the state to allow it to respond.

"We need to make sure we can do that," he said. "This is a process and we should have the opportunity to respond."

Republican Sen. Susan Collins shares the concern of Baldacci and Snowe. But she is confident the delegation and the state will be able to respond in some fashion to any additional arguments made by the DOD.

"Even if it is informal, from staff to staff, I think we will have the opportunity to make any additional information available to the commission that we want to present," she said.

Democratic Rep. Tom Allen agreed with Collins. He said the commission has been very careful to allow the states and local communities affected by the BRAC process to have the opportunity to provide information and arguments.

"We will be watching carefully to what is presented and I am sure if there is anything new or that needs a response, we will be able to provide that to the commission," he said. "The commission has made every opportunity to be open in this process and I think that will continue."

In fact, Collins said, the additional hearing could prove beneficial to the state's case on all of the bases.

"The more questions that they ask about the Brunswick Naval Air Station and the Pentagon's illogical realignment plan, the better as far as I am concerned," she said.

Collins, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said with the Saturday afternoon hearing focusing on the Jacksonville Naval Air Station and its proposed realignment, there may be the opportunity to push a realignment that benefits BNAS.

"It would make way more sense to move squadrons from Jacksonville to Brunswick," she said. "Brunswick has the capacity now to handle the new maritime patrol aircraft. Jacksonville does not."

But, Collins added, she believes all four existing bases with maritime patrol missions should be maintained for homeland security reasons as well as national defense.

Allen said the additional discussions on Jacksonville could relate to Brunswick because in his judgment the commission is leaning against closing the base and instead developing a realignment plan.

"If they do come up with a new realignment plan, or DOD comes up with one, we will only have a few days to figure out what impact it will have," he said.

Baldacci said that based on the strong arguments made by the state, he is convinced the panel will not vote to close Brunswick. But he is worried what realignment plan may be proposed by either DOD or the commission.

"The plan as proposed by DOD makes no sense with a few staff left here with the planes moved to Jacksonville," he said. "We don't know what may be proposed."

In announcing the Saturday hearing, BRAC commission Chairman Anthony Principi said the hearing was added to give DOD the opportunity to present the panel information it can use in making its recommendations the following week.

### **BRAC: Final deliberations to begin**

Grand Forks Herald (Grand Forks, ND)

Elisa L. Rineheart

August 18, 2005

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission begins its final deliberations Aug. 24.

The panel of military analysts that will decide whether to approve a Pentagon proposal to realign Grand Forks Air Force Base will open a four-day session at 8 a.m. Aug. 24 in Washington, D.C. The session, which ends Aug. 27, is open to the public, BRAC officials said Tuesday.

The deliberations mark the end of a nearly three-month review process of military installations around the country.

"The commission has had a myriad of data to review and analyze, and during this period, will be making its decisions in the best interest of our country and in accordance with BRAC law," Chairman Anthony Principi said in a statement Tuesday.

Each installation that has been proposed for closure or realignment, including Grand Forks, will be voted on, said Robert McCreary, BRAC deputy director of communications.

The commission will consider the installations it added to the list first, McCreary said.

Pentagon recommendations released May 13 called for 36 of Grand Forks Air Force Base's 40 KC135R Stratotankers and 80 percent of its personnel to be reassigned to other bases around the country. The Defense Department recommended mothballing most of the facilities on base and keeping 10 percent operating, said Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D.

"My expectation is that that would change because it does not square off with what the Air Force wants for Grand Forks," Dorgan said.

Dorgan said there's no way of knowing what the final resolution will be. But he said he's optimistic.

"I hope the results are positive and they give Grand Forks an opportunity to keep a significant military presence," he said.

Base retention leaders have been trying to convince commissioners to retain at least one of the base's four tanker squadrons.

If realigned in its entirety, Grand Forks and surrounding areas would lose nearly 5,000 direct and indirect jobs by 2011. That's 7.4 percent of North Dakota and Minnesota's economic area employment, Pentagon officials said.

As it enters the final leg of the BRAC race, Grand Forks faces three possible outcomes, McCreary said.

The commission could uphold the Pentagon's recommendations to realign the base.

It could vote against it and maintain the current mission.

Or it could propose a partial realignment, he said.

Rep. Earl Pomeroy, D-N.D., said the possibility of Grand Forks being removed from the realignment list - and keeping all its tankers - is slim.

"It's unlikely we'll continue to have four tanker squadrons," Pomeroy said. "I think it will be realigned somewhat because of the UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) mission coming to Grand Forks."

If the commission voted to retain the entire tanker mission, the base wouldn't have enough facilities to sustain both operations, Pomeroy said.

He said the base could be turned into a "warm spot," open but mostly inactive, for some time.

"You could conceivably be left without much of a mission," Pomeroy said. "We've been concerned about that, but the Air Force has assured us that they have robust plans for Grand Forks."

Dorgan disagrees.

"The Air Force has made it very clear that it doesn't intend to put the base in warm status," he said.

Talking about the future of Fargo's 119th Fighter Wing, Pomeroy said that he hasn't received any indication that the commission plans to remove language in the Pentagon report that could prevent the "Happy Hooligans" from receiving a new flying mission when its aging F-16 fleet retires in 2007.

But he said he believes the commission will vote in favor of bringing a follow-on mission to Fargo.

"Things look promising," Pomeroy said. "But as you know, North Dakotans don't bank on their crop until it's in the bin."

The final BRAC report is due on the president's desk by Sept. 8.

The president has said he would accept the BRAC recommendations. He must forward the approved list to Congress for approval by Nov. 7.

### **Plan calls for closing National Guard sites**

Tulsa World

Mick Hinton

August 18, 2005

OKLAHOMA CITY -- A sweeping proposal to close 59 National Guard armories and maintenance facilities and replace them with seven Armed Forces Reserve Centers was announced Wednesday by Oklahoma's adjutant general.

"The plan we present today will realign the Oklahoma Army National Guard into state-of-the-art Armed Forces Reserve Centers and allow us to relinquish control of approximately 53 local armories and six of our maintenance facilities to the communities in which they are located," Maj. Gen. Harry M. "Bud" Wyatt III said.

The plan calls for spending \$ 243 million in federal money to build new centers and maintenance facilities at Broken Arrow, McAlester, Muskogee, Norman, west Oklahoma City, Fort Sill and Vance Air Force Base.

The proposed centers will closely resemble the multiple-use facility in Sand Springs that opened in 2003 and houses both the Oklahoma Army National Guard and Army Reserve units, Wyatt said.

Under the realignment, more than 3,700 Guard members who are currently training in the old armories would be relocated.

The recommendation released Tuesday by Wyatt has been sent to the governor and is being forwarded to the national Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission, which is expected to make its recommendations to the president by Sept. 8.

"It is important to update and retool the state's military so that Oklahoma and its soldiers will be prepared to handle the changed missions of the years ahead," Gov. Brad Henry said, adding that he will study the plan in greater detail in the weeks and months to come.

Wyatt said: "Bottom line, this is a very fluid process and nothing is certain until the BRAC Commission's recommendations are approved by the president and Congress."

Construction at Vance, Norman and McAlester is projected to begin in 2007 and take 18 to 24 months. The remaining reserve center sites would begin construction in 2008 and 2009.

Col. Pat Scully, public affairs spokesman, said other reserve units from the Air Force or Marines could be housed in the centers.

"Several months ago, I recommended to the governor that we develop a plan that would relocate our soldiers into multi-unit, multi-component, modern training facilities and remove them from the out dated facilities they are currently using," Wyatt said.

Earlier, BRAC recommended that 39 armories be shut down, and the adjutant general added 14 more to the list, for a total of 53 armories. The additions were Bartlesville, Bristow, Guthrie, Hominy, Kingfisher, Mangum, Oklahoma City

(2205 N. Central), Pauls Valley, Pawhuska, Perry, Ponca City, Sapulpa, Sulphur and Vinita.

A total of 32 other armories will remain open.

Wyatt said the proposal was developed by considering BRAC recommendations and demographics to transform the Army into a "modular unit concept." He said it would be cost prohibitive to refurbish "our older armories, several built in the 1930s and '40s."

The old facilities could be turned over to counties or cities for use as warehouses or for other purposes, Scully said.

Realignment of the armories is part of a national plan proposed in Washington earlier this year.

Tulsa's Air National Guard wing fared well in the earlier proposals, although the Air Guard at Will Rogers airport in Oklahoma City could lose eight C-130 aircraft.

Recommendations call for adding 22 military and 81 civilian personnel to the 138th Fighter Wing in Tulsa. Nine F-16 fighter aircraft also could be added, bringing the number at the base to 24.

### Local News Articles

#### **Port Authority says closing base will jeopardize security**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire  
(Eatontown, NJ)  
August 18, 2005

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey has told a federal panel that closing Fort Monmouth would severely jeopardize the ability of the region's homeland security agencies to communicate with each other in the event of another terrorist attack, lawmakers said Thursday.

The Port Authority's letter is among hundreds of letters and phone calls - in addition to numerous presentations by the lawmakers - aimed at keeping the research and development facility

open. The Pentagon has recommended Fort Monmouth be closed as part of an effort to save billions of dollars over the next 20 years.

At a news conference here, a group of federal lawmakers, local officials and citizens working to keep the post open reiterated their efforts a week before the Base Realignment and Closure Commission is set to publicly debate and vote on Fort Monmouth's fate. The hearings at a northern Virginia hotel are to begin Aug. 24 and run through Aug. 27.

The homeland security issue is one that the lawmakers have been harping on for months, but this was the first time the Port Authority has weighed in.

In the letter dated Tuesday, Port Authority Chairman Anthony Coscia said the agency oversees a New York metro regional program called the "Regional Information Joint Awareness Network" - RIJAN - that connects local, state, regional and federal operation centers so they can collaborate and communicate during a crisis.

"Critical to RIJAN's success is the role played by Fort Monmouth as the system engineer and executive agent for technical execution," Coscia wrote. "The Port Authority relies heavily on Fort Monmouth, drawing on the unparalleled expertise in engineering large, complex information systems for the U.S. Army.

"The intended relocation of Fort Monmouth's personnel to Aberdeen, Maryland would seriously disrupt RIJAN's development, placing at risk much of the progress already achieved," Coscia wrote.

Whether or not the Port Authority letter or any of the other arguments the lawmakers have made will persuade the commission remains to be seen, but Rep. Frank Pallone, D-Long Branch, believes the group has made its case.

Pallone on Thursday reiterated the key points: Nearly 80 percent of Fort Monmouth's employees would not relocate to Aberdeen, creating a so-called "brain drain" of highly

skilled engineers and scientists; the post has played a vital part in supplying U.S. soldiers fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan with equipment to help them identify enemy targets and prevent friendly fire incidents; and the Pentagon has seriously underestimated the cost of moving the post's facilities to Aberdeen.

Rep. Rush Holt, D-Pennington, whose district includes the fort, said he believes the group's arguments have been effective, and he senses that the commission has grown "increasingly skeptical" of the Pentagon's rationale for closing a number of bases, including the post.

"But we're taking nothing for granted," Holt said. "We will be working right up to the very last minute to drive home the point that closing Fort Monmouth will put the lives of soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan in peril, period."

### **House Speaker asks BRAC to save sub base**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire  
(Washington DC)  
August 18, 2005

U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert has added his voice to those urging the national base closure commission to take the submarine base in Groton, Conn. off the closure list.

In a letter to Anthony Principi, the chairman of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission, Hastert wrote Wednesday that he believes that closing the base would weaken national security and save no money.

"As a fiscal conservative, I cannot support a base closing that does not provide taxpayer savings," wrote Hastert, R-Illinois.

The Navy has claimed that closing the base would save the nation \$1.6 billion over 20 years. But state officials say the Pentagon underestimated costs such as the cleanup of the base. They claim the closure would cost taxpayers over \$641 million, a figure Hastert cites in his letter.

Hastert also said that closing the base would waste the hundreds of millions of dollars already invested in Groton.

"I urge you to remove New London from the BRAC closure list at your earliest opportunity," he wrote.

John Markowicz, chairman of the state group that is fighting to save the base, said he is thankful for Hastert's letter, and pointed out that several BRAC members were appointed by the speaker.

"If his appointees are interested in the speaker's position, then they now have this letter to reflect upon," he said.

The BRAC commission is slated to vote next week on whether to remove any bases from the list, which must be on the president's desk by Sept. 8.

### **Pentagon Defends Oceana Air Station**

Washington Post (Washington DC)  
August 19, 2005

Sen. John W. Warner (R-Va.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, yesterday released an Aug. 17 letter from acting Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon R. England reasserting the Pentagon's view that there is "no viable alternative" to Oceana Naval Air Station.

The U.S. Base Realignment and Closure Commission added the master jet base, Virginia Beach's largest employer with about 15,000 workers, to its proposed closure list last month. It will have a public hearing tomorrow. The commission will meet to complete the closure list starting Wednesday.

"The letter from the deputy secretary of defense to me is dispositive," said Warner, who added that he plans to skip the hearing so local officials can answer military concerns that surrounding growth is hampering flight operations.

### **Admiral Sees An Open Oceana**

### **Panelists check Cecil today as alternative**

Florida Times-Union (Jacksonville, FL)  
Gregory Piatt  
August 19, 2005

A day before members of an independent base closing commission are expected to visit Cecil Field and see if it could be a replacement for Oceana Naval Air Station, the Navy's newly appointed top admiral said he expects the Virginia jet base to remain open.

"There are some challenges [at Oceana]," said Adm. Mike Mullen, chief of naval operations, after speaking with sailors Thursday at Mayport Naval Station.

Real estate development around the Navy's only master jet base on the East Coast is one of the main problems, along with training difficulties there, Mullen told reporters on the flight deck of the USS John F. Kennedy, Jacksonville's only aircraft carrier.

"But I'm confident we can mitigate any risk ... that Oceana will serve us well into the future," Mullen said.

It is the Base Realignment and Closure Commission that is focusing on addressing the training and encroaching development challenges, said Mullen, who took charge of the Navy last month. It is also the commission which has chosen to focus on Cecil Field, a master jet base closed in 1999 under a previous BRAC round, as a replacement for Oceana should the nine-member panel close the Virginia Beach base, Mullen added.

Three members of the commission -- retired Gen. Lloyd Newton, retired Gen. James Hill and former Transportation Secretary Samuel Skinner -- are expected to spend four hours today touring Cecil Field. Next week, the commission is expected to vote on whether to close Oceana.

When asked if Cecil would be a good option if Oceana is closed, Mullen said he hasn't had a chance to review the details about the former air station on Jacksonville's Westside, even though

the Navy has supplied data about the former base to the commission.

On Thursday, U.S. Rep. Cliff Stearns, R-Fla., and members of the Florida congressional delegation sent a letter to BRAC Commission Chairman Anthony Principi. They asked that any or all of the assets now based at Oceana be moved to Cecil, which is in Stearns' district. The letter says Cecil lacks residential encroachment, which hampers Oceana.

Stearns is expected to testify at a BRAC hearing Saturday about Cecil Field. Gov. Jeb Bush, Mayor John Peyton, along with other officials, are expected to testify at the hearing.

In the meeting with sailors on the JFK, Mullen told them they will have to wait for a congressionally mandated review, expected in February, to see if the aircraft carrier will be decommissioned.

This year, the Pentagon recommended mothballing the Kennedy as a budgetary measure, but Congress extended the life of the ship until the review is completed.

Mullen said he agrees with the Pentagon's recommendation to mothball the JFK, but that decision to decommission would be up to Congress. Legislation pending in Congress could start an overhaul of the carrier and extend its life.

"We'll have to wait and see what Congress does to the Kennedy," said Mullen, who is in favor of upgrading Mayport to base a nuclear carrier should the JFK leave.

### **Etheridge Shares Optimism About Future Of Pope AFB**

Fayetteville Observer (Fayetteville, NC)  
Andrew Barksdale  
August 19, 2005

Congressman Bob Etheridge told a group of planners Thursday that he is cautiously optimistic that Pope Air Force Base will keep its 43rd Airlift Wing and 23rd Fighter Group.

The Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission has proposed moving the wing to Little Rock Air Force Base.

The wing has 25 C-130 cargo planes and about 4,300 people. The commission also wants to move the 23rd Fighter Group, with about 1,000 airmen, to Moody Air Force Base in Valdosta, Ga.

Etheridge, a Democrat from Lillington, said he has been lobbying commission members to keep Pope intact.

"The good thing for us is they have made multiple site visits, which is a little bit unusual," he said. "The group of commissioners are asking some tough questions."

Etheridge spoke Thursday to members of the Fort Bragg/ Pope Air Force Base Regional Land Use Advisory Commission at the Fort Bragg Officers' Club.

He testified before the nine-member base-closure commission last week on Capitol Hill.

Local officials, as well as other congressmen from the region and North Carolina's two senators, have lobbied the commission to keep the Air Force presence at Pope.

The commission, among other proposals, would like to move the Army Forces and Army Reserve commands from Atlanta to Fort Bragg.

New missions

Etheridge said the Fort Bragg additions seem certain and would bring new missions for the post and opportunities for the community.

But the proposed realignment for Pope is "very possible."

"One thing we can be assured of, is change is coming," he said.

He expects the commission to decide Pope's fate next month before sending a final

recommendation to President Bush, who has said he would support whatever is recommended.

Then the matter would go to Congress this fall for an up-or-down vote, Etheridge said.

He said the commission has historically approved closing 85 percent of the bases that the Pentagon had sought to close or realign.

### **Texans hopes sinking for Oceana operations**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire  
(Harlingen, Texas)  
Lynn Brezosky  
August 18, 2005

Hopes faded Thursday that the Coastal Bend would be the new home of a Navy Master Jet Base should Virginia's Naval Station Oceana be closed.

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison was not granted a slot at a Base Closure and Realignment Commission hearing scheduled Saturday. Officials touting Florida's Cecil Field as a location for the 254-jet base were invited. The commission is to make its decision on Oceana next week.

"They were told that it was only for the East Coast and they were not contemplating Texas," U.S. Rep. Solomon Ortiz, D-Corpus Christi said.

Hutchison did not immediately return a call for comment.

BRAC spokesman Robert McCreary said the Navy has a West Coast base and wanted to keep an East Coast base, too.

"If you moved it to Texas it was closer to California and California already has a base," he said.

Coastal Bend officials are fighting against the recommended closure of Naval Station Ingleside.

When BRAC commissioners on July 19 added Oceana to the list of bases recommended for closure, Texas officials decided to pitch the Coastal Bend, which has three Navy bases including Ingleside, as an alternative for the jet training.

Gov. Rick Perry announced last week that he had written BRAC Chairman Anthony Principi offering a \$365 million incentive package to have the jet base moved here.

Several BRAC commissioners took an aerial tour of the region on Wednesday.

Perry spokesman Robert Black said the governor was trying for a separate meeting next week.

"Thus far we have not been invited, but I know the governor and our federal counterparts have been trying to persuade Chairman Principi to allow us to make our case," he said.

Ortiz said he didn't understand why the commission would insist the jets stay on the East Coast.

"We're not trying to second guess the commission or the staff or anybody," he said. "All we wanted was to have an opportunity to show the Navy that they can save money. ... We don't have encroachment problems, we have clear skies and we're not limited."

Dick Messberger, head of economic development for Kingsville, said he got new hope Thursday when a BRAC staff member asked him for more information about the region's bases.

"I have been scrambling around, I took that as a positive sign," he said.

He said that in any case, the Coastal Bend's assets would be on the military's minds.

"Let's say Oceana doesn't close this time," he said. "They know they're going to have to address those problems down the line and we think we've made a case."

## Sub base backers ready arguments

Hartford Courant (Hartford, CT)

David Lightman

August 18, 2005

WASHINGTON -- The fate of the Naval Submarine Base in Groton appears likely to rest not on how much money is saved, but on whether the facility fits snugly into the Pentagon's future military needs.

"In the remaining days, we want to make this national security argument," Sen. Christopher J. Dodd said, as base advocates brace for their final push leading to the critical deliberations of the Base Realignment and Closure commission next week. "We think it trumps every argument."

What Dodd and other base advocates are up against, however, is an absence of any agreement within the Navy, or among Pentagon or civilian military strategists, on how big the future submarine fleet should be.

This much is clear: This is a base closing commission round that is unlike any other. It's not about cost savings, said Charles V. Pena, director of defense policy studies at Washington's Cato Institute.

"It's about the Defense Department's global realignment of forces and what (Pentagon Secretary Donald) Rumsfeld is trying to accomplish" with force transformation, he said.

"This process is about rearranging the deck chairs in a way that makes more sense for the fighting force we need for the 21st century," added Christopher Hellman, defense budget and policy analyst at the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation.

And that, said Pena, is not good news for the sub base: Groton's mission "was designed to combat the Soviet threat, and that has gone away," he said.

Connecticut officials counter that there is an emerging threat from an ambitious Chinese submarine building program, but military

analysts note the effort is aimed more at Taiwan, not the United States.

Then there's the mantra Groton backers keep repeating: that there are about 400 subs in the world and only about half "are run by people who are our friends," as Dodd put it Wednesday. The BRAC commission is expected to question the base's future military viability -as well as the increasingly controversial issue of how much money shutting the 90-year-old facility would save-when it convenes Saturday to hear from Pentagon officials. The commission has then scheduled four days of public deliberations, beginning Wednesday to prepare the list of recommendations they will send to President Bush by Sept. 8.

Team Connecticut, the coalition of politicians, business interests and local officials pushing to keep the base open, updated the media Wednesday on the status of its efforts and vowed to continue to argue that the Navy badly overstated savings from the closure.

Instead of the \$ 1.6 billion reduction the Pentagon is using, Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, and others on the team Wednesday estimated that shutting the base would actually cost the government \$ 640 million over the next 20 years.

That figure comes from what he called a series of miscalculations about the cost of moving operations, environmental cleanup, new construction at Georgia and Virginia facilities and other factors.

In the past, base closing commissions did focus sharply on savings estimates, since their primary mission was to reduce excess capacity that was no longer needed when the Cold War ended.

This round of base closings is clearly proceeding in a different way. Members routinely ask questions about how a closing or realignment would fit military strategy, with Chairman Anthony J. Principi stressing at a hearing last month, "We are not conducting this review as an exercise in sterile cost accounting."

Principi has questioned whether the military wants to close too many facilities in the northeast, telling a commission hearing last month, he remained "very concerned" about the recommended closings that also include the Otis Air Force Base and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. The recommendations are "virtually abandoning that section of the country from our operating base," the chairman said last month.

Other New England politicians and coalitions are trying to stoke such concerns.

Sen. Olympia J. Snowe, R-Maine, has blocked the nomination of former Navy Secretary Gordon England to the No. 2 job at the Pentagon until she gets more detailed answers about the Navy's future in the region.

Defense has also recommended closing the Portsmouth Naval Air Station in Kittery, Maine, and cutting back operations at the Brunswick Naval Air Station.

Snowe "has been concerned that we've been stealing resources from the Navy to pay for other branches," said Antonia Ferrier, the senator's spokeswoman.

One of Snowe's concerns -- a worry mentioned by the Connecticut contingent -- is how prepared the United States is to respond to threats from China as well as unfriendly nations.

"There's a growing Chinese naval threat," said Ferrier.

Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman, D-Conn., agreed, saying "there's thinking coming out of China that says just as the battleship was determinative in the first World War and the carrier in the second, that the sub will in the conflicts of this century."

The Chinese government has been rapidly modernizing its fleet, and considers its submarine program a cornerstone of its military program.

Hellman, though, noted that whether or not China is a threat "depends on how you view the

universe." If one thinks China could become a military force rivaling the Soviet Union of the late 20th century, then maintaining a large U. S. sub fleet makes sense. But others believe China's primary concern is Taiwan, not the United States.

Team Connecticut's strategic arguments have other major points, notably that the Electric Boat-Groton synergy is unique and cannot be easily duplicated. And, it contends, eliminating the sub base would be costly, not only in dollars but in expertise.

Electric Boat President John P. Casey upped the cost somewhat Wednesday.

Though the company has said it would continue its operations in Connecticut, Casey suggested it may have to scale back its maintenance force, which numbers between 1,500 and 2,000 in the state.

Should the base close, he said, "We would have to go to where the ships are or the Navy would have to bring the ships to Groton. It is not clear to me what choice the Navy would make."

### **Drones heading to Ellington boost hope for keeping F-16s**

The Houston Chronicle (Houston, TX)  
Dale Lezon, Michael Hedges  
August 18, 2005

Ellington Field may yet lose its F-16 fighter jets, but Houston-area officials got a measure of relief Wednesday with word that a squadron of unmanned planes is moving in.

The 12 Predators, similar to the one that helped track down Saddam Hussein in 2003, will be based at Ellington as part of the Texas Air National Guard's 147th Fighter Wing, Gov. Rick Perry announced.

Perry and U.S. Rep. Tom DeLay said the Predators will play a crucial role in guarding this region's vast petrochemical complex, as well as showing the importance of Ellington and its F-

16s. The Department of Defense has recommended retiring the fighter jets.

The pilotless planes also will be used to conduct anti-terrorism missions abroad and to detect illegal immigrants crossing the border from Mexico, Perry said.

The squadron's addition is expected to bring 450 jobs, he said.

"I'm proud that Ellington will be the home of this squadron of Predators, because it will not only mean great homeland security for the region, but also economic activity and, most importantly, the best support available for our men and women in uniform around the world," Perry said.

DeLay, who has helped spearhead the drive to save Ellington's F-16s, said putting the drones there is a sign that the base and its aircraft are vital to military needs. Many of the fighter wing's planes, crews and support personnel were deployed to Iraq earlier this month.

Can be fitted with missiles

Equipped with cameras and radar for reconnaissance missions, the Predator also can be fitted with anti-tank missiles. Since going into use in 1995, Predators have been used in combat over Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq and Yemen.

A Predator controlled by satellite from Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada helped American troops ferret out and capture ex-Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein in his tiny hideout in a remote Iraqi town in December 2003.

The Air Force chose Texas and Arizona as sites for two Predator squadrons in December 2004, before the Pentagon recommended retiring Ellington's jet fighters, said officials in the Air Force and the Texas Air National Guard.

Once Texas was chosen, a panel assembled by the Air National Guard examined possible bases and recommended that Perry choose Ellington.

Col. Lanny McNeely, commander of the 147th Fighter Wing, said there was no direct relation between the decision to place Predators at Ellington and the Pentagon recommendation to retire the base's F-16 fighters. That decision, under review by the Base Realignment and Closure commission, is being contested by the Texas political contingent in Washington.

Matter of national security

Perry said he chose Ellington because of this area's vital role in national security, including its many petrochemical plants and the Port of Houston.

Texas and Arizona were chosen for reasons including proximity to the Mexican border, open spaces in which the Predators could operate and the weather conditions in the Southwest, military officials said.

The states with southern borders were selected also because the Air Force anticipated that unmanned aerial vehicles eventually would be integrated into Homeland Security missions, said McNeely.

DeLay, R-Sugar Land, said the Predators can be useful in patrolling the Texas-Mexico border "and building that virtual wall that we are attempting to build to protect the border and make the border more secure."

"The Predator unit is a great signal and great sign that Ellington Field is a wonderful asset, not just for the local region, but for the nation," DeLay added.

Ellington-based crews will be ready to operate Predators by June 2006, although the planes will still be based at other sites, said Lt. Col. Chip Webb, the 147th's chief of plans. The first Predators will arrive here by 2007 at the earliest, he said.

The drones can gather surveillance data on possible targets and relay the information to base officials, who could scramble F-16s, Webb said.

"There's a synergistic relationship between the F-16s and Predators," he said.

Operators will be able to remotely control the planes through satellites to complete missions in Texas, the nation or around the world.

Jobs connected to the squadron will include operators, support staff, maintenance crews and intelligence analysts, Webb said. The Ellington Field Task Force, a group of political and businesses leaders, has estimated that the squadron could have an \$ 80 million annual impact on the local economy.

The task force has estimated Ellington's annual impact at \$ 300 million, said John Martinec, task force director.

The Predator announcement follows the state's offer last week of \$ 50 million from the Texas Enterprise Fund as part of a \$ 365 million incentive package to entice the Defense Department to create a Navy Master Jet Base in the South Texas Coastal Bend region.

A similar base in Virginia is among those recommended for closure.

### **Fort's defenders set for D (for Decision) Day**

Asbury Park Press (Asbury Park, NJ)  
Keith Brown  
August 19, 2005

EATONTOWN — Whether the Pentagon will succeed in closing Fort Monmouth or fort supporters keep it open, George Markos just wants someone to decide. Soon.

"I just want the uncertainty to be over," said Markos, owner of Zeek's Kitchens & Bath on Main Street, just south of the fort's main gates.

It may be over by late next week. The Base Realignment and Closure commission — the federal panel that is deciding the fate of 33 major military installations nationwide, including Fort Monmouth — is scheduled to begin public debate on the merits of the

Department of Defense recommendations Wednesday. The BRAC panel could vote on whether to uphold the recommendation to close the post Thursday.

Markos said civilian engineers and scientists who work at the fort and own homes in the area make up a big part of the customer base for his kitchen remodeling business. His receipts have been cut in half since May, when the Pentagon recommendation to close the 88-year-old post was announced.

No one wants to remodel a kitchen in a home they're not sure they'll own for too long, Markos said.

"It's the uncertainty that's holding everyone up," he said.

It's that same uncertainty that unnerves the group of legislators and local mayors who met at borough hall Thursday to reiterate their pro-Fort Monmouth positions and call on the BRAC commission to keep the post open.

"If there is any amount of intellectual honesty in this process, Fort Monmouth will continue to do the great work it has done for years into the future," said U.S. Sen. Jon S. Corzine, D-N.J.

Corzine, a gubernatorial candidate, was joined at the news conference by Reps. Frank J. Pallone Jr. and Rush D. Holt, both D-N.J.; Eatontown Mayor Gerald Tarantolo; and Oceanport Mayor Maria Gatta.

Doug Forrester, Corzine's Republican challenger, could not be reached Thursday. His press secretary, Sherry Sylvester, said it would be a "tragedy" if Fort Monmouth is closed.

"It's a unique facility that should never have been on the list to begin with," Sylvester said.

### **Familiar arguments**

At Thursday's meeting, lawmakers reiterated that the Army has overestimated how much it would save by closing the fort and failed to consider the number of skilled workers who

would not relocate to the Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, where the Pentagon wants to shift the fort's research and development center for communications, surveillance and reconnaissance systems. Shutting the fort would endanger troops in Iraq and Afghanistan who depend on the fort's technology, they added.

If the decision is made based on Fort Monmouth's merits, the post will be kept open, but the decision may not be based on merit alone, said Holt, co-chairman of the Save Our Fort committee.

But Holt admitted nobody knows how the decision will be made.

"We don't know where the commission is on this question," Holt said.

Some people surveyed at random later Thursday expressed skepticism that politicians have any influence on the commission's decision.

"The committee is inspecting the list based on the facts so they can make the right and proper decision," said Larry Cella of Middletown, a patron of the Americana Diner on Route 35 in Shrewsbury. "I have to go by that. If this (Fort Monmouth) can be shifted there (Aberdeen) and maintain our defense and save the taxpayers some money, then close it."

The five towns surrounding the fort — Eatontown, Little Silver, Tinton Falls, Oceanport and Shrewsbury — commissioned a recent study that showed closing the post, which directly employs more than 5,000 civilian and military personnel, could mean:

Hundreds of millions of dollars taken out of circulation, such as the potential loss of \$260 million in annual retail spending by removing the fort's 4,000-plus civilian employees.

Property tax spikes for homeowners.

Losing \$321 million in fort contracts awarded to companies in the surrounding host towns.

Double-digit unemployment rates in some towns.

"We have looked at this from an economic point of view," Tarantolo said.

Another point of view

Outside the Americana, Neptune resident Jack Livingstone agreed that the area's economy would suffer if the fort is shut, but he said that it may be a necessary evil for the greater good of the defense of the country.

"(Closing Fort Monmouth) will have an impact — the people working there and the businesses around it that are in some way or another connected to it," Livingstone said. "But the guys who made buggy whips weren't too happy about the car, either."

Others were reluctant to think of a future without the post.

"It has been such an institution around here for so long," said Joanna Kurimsky, a Union Beach resident who stopped in Shrewsbury to take a break from her commute to Normandy Beach. "I feel sorry for the people who work there that might lose their jobs."

Legislators said they would continue to meet with the BRAC staff and commissioners. Last week, Holt, Pallone and Rep. Christopher H. Smith, R-N.J., met with three of the commissioners to press their case again.

Markos believes that the fort will stay open, likely with a reduction in its work force. That in itself is troubling enough for him, he said.

"I'm just hoping they don't gut the place," Markos said.

### **State sues Rumsfeld over base**

Nashville City Paper (Nashville, TN)  
John Rodgers,  
August 19, 2005

Gov. Phil Bredesen's administration officially filed a lawsuit against Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld Thursday on grounds that Rumsfeld and the federal government "realigned" or decided to close a Nashville-based National Guard unit without Bredesen's approval.

The unit scheduled for realignment is the 118th Airlift Wing of the Tennessee Air National Guard, stationed near the Nashville International Airport.

Bredesen is seeking a judgment that Rumsfeld may not realign the 118th Airlift Wing without his approval.

The 118th is composed of eight C-130 cargo planes and about 700 personnel. Internationally, the aircraft have been mainly used for supporting ground troops' operations. Domestically, they help in relieving natural disasters and emergencies as the unit contains Tennessee's only Aero Medical Squadron unit.

"The (Defense) Department's attempt to realign the 118th Airlift Wing without first obtaining Gov. Bredesen's approval violates federal law, which expressly grants rights to the State of Tennessee and its Governor, as commander-in-chief of the Tennessee National Guard," the lawsuit states.

Bredesen further asserts in the suit that Rumsfeld has overstepped his legal authority under the Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990 and Rumsfeld's actions violate articles of the U.S. Constitution, including violating the Second Amendment, which is the right to bear arms.

The 118th has been used in every major conflict since World War I including the recent war in Iraq, said unit spokeswoman, Capt. Robin Celatka.

Celatka said the unit's eight C-130s were deployed to Saudi Arabia during the initial stages of the war. The unit was the leader of seven divisions of aircraft in February of 2003 in Tabuk, Saudi Arabia.

When members were notified in May that the 118th was being recommended for realignment, they were disappointed, Celatka said.

"They go to defend their country and then they come back and this happens," Celatka said. "It's just a big disappointment."

If Bredesen's lawsuit is successful, Celatka said the 118th would be "elated."

Despite the lawsuit, it is still undecided if the 118th will be officially realigned. The Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) will meet next week and may not recommend the unit's realignment to President George W. Bush, which they must do by Sept. 8, according to the BRAC Web site.

Bush will then have until Sept. 23 to accept or reject BRAC's recommendations. If they are accepted, Congress will have 45 legislative days to reject the recommendations, according to the site.

Even if the BRAC commission keeps the 118th on the realignment list, the unit has up to five years to disburse into their new units, Celatka said.

If the realignment is successful, the eight C-130s will be split between units in Illinois and Kentucky. The Aero Medical Squadron will be sent to Texas.

Memphis will receive the aerial port staff, which is the ground crew, as well as the unit's firefighters.

The suit was filed in Nashville's U.S. District Court. The suit states that Rumsfeld is being sued in his official capacity only. The lawsuit lists eight other defendants who are all members of the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

The governors of both Illinois and Pennsylvania have filed similar lawsuits. Bredesen announced his intentions to sue the federal government prior to ceremonial bill signings Wednesday.

The Defense Department recommended the 118th's disbursement to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission in May.

### *Opinions/ Editorials*

#### **Guard leaders get it wrong**

USA Today  
August 18, 2005

To say that the Defense Department is juggling multiple missions is an understatement. It is fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is undertaking new domestic duties protecting the homeland. It is trying to recover from the prison-abuse scandal and is struggling to meet its recruiting goals.

What the Pentagon doesn't need at this moment is a major battle with politicians and commanders of its own National Guard units over the best places to put personnel and hardware. But that is what has broken out over a proposed overhaul of Air National Guard units across the USA.

As part of the latest base realignments and closings, the Pentagon wants to shut five Air Guard bases and eliminate aircraft from about a third of the Guard's 88 flying units. In Oregon, for example, aging but prized F-15 fighters would be shifted from Portland to Guard bases in Louisiana and New Jersey. In Connecticut, nine A-10 ground attack jets stationed near Hartford would be shifted to join A-10s in Massachusetts.

This has evoked the predictable howls from lawmakers and state commanders who are losing planes. They're urging an independent commission reviewing the proposed base closures to reject the Pentagon's plans.

#### **Targeted For Closure**

The Pentagon has recommended closing five Air National Guard installations:

Alaska: Kulis Air Guard Station  
Mass.: Otis Air National Guard Base

Mich.: W.K. Kellogg Air Guard Station

Minn.: Duluth Air Guard Station

Ohio: Mansfield Lahm Air Guard Station

Source: Defense Department

Though there's never a good time for parochial politics, this is a particularly bad one. The nation is at war, and the military is stretched thin. The armed services need Guard units for important missions. Fighting terror — not providing jobs or maintaining inefficiently small squadrons of fighters at local Guard bases — has to be the top priority.

Congress knows the services need to close bases and reorganize forces. Even so, members also know that hometown pressures prevent them from doing the right thing. As a solution, they created the base closing process, which limits congressional meddling and gives the independent commission a major role. That process worked well through four previous rounds of base closings.

But the dual missions and masters of the Air National Guard make the latest round particularly tricky. In peacetime, Guard units are commanded by governors, who draw on them for emergencies such as hurricanes or riots. That's why state politicians and Guard commanders often work together to block Pentagon changes, even though the federal government pays almost 90% of expenses at bases. In war, command of the Guard flips to the Pentagon, which draws on Guard units to fight abroad and repositions forces within the country.

Just as important is finding savings that allow the Pentagon to focus its resources on the enemy. Take those A-10 jets. Any time a fighter squadron falls below 24 aircraft, it becomes inefficient. In some cases, the number of planes at Guard bases has fallen below eight. By combining units, the Defense Department can take advantage of efficiencies such as a single maintenance operation.

The Pentagon is far from infallible. There might be cases where proposed basing changes won't

achieve the claimed savings or efficiencies. Governors have legitimate concerns about states' ability to respond to natural disasters or civil unrest.

But if the Defense Department is going to accept the responsibilities of fighting abroad and protecting the nation from within, it needs flexibility to carry out those duties without counterproductive interference.

### **Pentagon's Savings Inflated**

Hartford Courant (Hartford, CT)  
August 18, 2005

With the day of reckoning drawing near, new studies suggest that the Pentagon may have dramatically overstated the savings that would result from the closing of the Navy's submarine base in Groton.

One study in particular should give the Base Realignment and Closure Commission pause as it ponders a decision whether to shutter the base. The independent Government Accountability Office says the military's brass may have overstated the potential savings by as much as 40 percent. The GAO estimates the more accurate figure is \$1.2 billion over 20 years, not the Pentagon's \$1.6 billion forecast.

The discrepancy is important for two reasons: First, because it casts doubt on the accuracy of the Pentagon's background work in its entirety; and second, because it calls into question the Navy's rationale for dismantling the sub base and sending its 18 attack submarines to Norfolk, Va., and Kings Bay, Ga.

The GAO says the military underestimated the cost of construction and of relocating the submarine school, and overestimated the potential savings from the elimination of personnel. Also, the Pentagon failed to take into account the \$50 million a year that Electric Boat, the Groton shipbuilder, says the move would cause in higher procurement costs.

It makes you wonder whether the Pentagon did its calculations on an abacus and scribbled a few guesstimates on the back of a napkin.

If that's not worrisome enough, the state Department of Environmental Protection and its private consultants insist the cleanup of the base -- on which lead, diesel fuel, pesticides, medical wastes, solvents, PCBs and other muck have been dumped -- won't come close to the Pentagon's lowball number. The gap between the DEP's projection and the Pentagon's stands at \$130 million and counting.

The BRAC Commission will convene next week to decide on the fate of the Groton sub base and 32 other major facilities across the country.

Notwithstanding the sub base's intrinsic military and strategic value, the cost savings of closure appear to be vastly overblown. If this is the Pentagon's idea of making a convincing case, it needs to go back to the drawing board.

For now, the smart move by the BRAC Commission would be to remove the sub base from the closure list and allow it to continue to be of service to the nation.

### **Cleanup: Open And Shut Case**

Hartford Courant (Hartford, CT)  
August 18, 2005

I don't understand the Base Realignment and Closure Commission process as it applies to the Naval Submarine Base at Groton.

But first, here are three things about BRAC that I do understand.

The military, like any large corporation, must always be looking for ways to do its job better. Tradition may endure, but knives must give way to spears, muskets to rifles and surface ships to intercontinental missiles. Historic military bases like Forts Griswold and Trumbull on opposite sides of the Thames River were built for protection against enemies that no longer exist and for weapons no longer strategic. These

facilities were closed in an earlier era of base realignment.

The state of Connecticut, like any other state, must always be looking for ways to maintain a steady cash flow from the federal treasury. Though the Navy's presence has been an important part of the local cultural identity and a source of family income for centuries, it has always been a cash cow, first for the colony, then the state. It's no surprise to me that nearly every state politician and the agency heads who work for them are standing up to be counted in the chorus of closure complaints. Earlier this summer, I heard a similar political chorus from Alaska regarding closure of Eielson Air Force Base outside Fairbanks, and from Maine regarding its Brunswick air station.

Industrial complexes in general, and military industrial complexes in particular, are often sites of some of the worst environmental contamination. Radioactive wastes, toxic chemicals, unexploded ordinance and spilled fuel contaminate many facilities.

A few that I have examined include Cape Cod's Otis Air Force Base, whose long plume of toxic groundwater is a textbook classic for groundwater hydrology; the Nevada Test Site, where an area the size of an Eastern state is contaminated by fallout from atomic bomb testing; and Rocky Mountain Arsenal, where lost nerve gas bombs have been found within the soil. Safeguarding the environment seems less important when more visible enemy threats are seen or imagined.

Federal cost-cutting, state posturing and the tragic environmental record of the military are playing out all over the country this year. In Groton, it's a three-act play, only the first two of which I understand.

Act 1: The feds put Groton on its closure list because they believe it's no longer necessary and because they hope to save money.

Act 2: State politicians rise up in opposition to keep the funds flowing in.

Act 3: The state argues that the Pentagon has underestimated the cost of environmental cleanup by \$129 million. If the base is closed for military reasons, fine. But the federal government can no longer argue that it will save money on the shutdown.

It's clear that the state shouldn't be forced to pay for pollution created by a federal facility. But it's just as clear to me that the federal government didn't put Groton on its BRAC closure list to speed up the pace of environmental remediation.

This worries me because it raises the possibility of even slower cleanup in the future, regardless of whether the base remains open or not. It's hard to imagine an industrial site with a greater variety of waste, which includes heavy metals, toxic organic compounds, biomedical waste, fuel from surface spills and leaking underground tanks, and radioactive waste -- all in one block of land. Parts of the base were designated as Superfund sites years ago, yet they remain, either killing the Thames River softly, one drop at a time, or biding their time as underground bombs waiting to be detonated by site disturbance. Redevelopment of this otherwise ideal piece of coastal real estate simply cannot proceed until this problem is solved.

So, using the Groton sub base as a case study, I have a three-step suggestion for the BRAC process.

Step 1: Use military strategy as the sole criterion for closing bases.

Step 2: Perform a thorough environmental assessment for each base on the closure list following the example set by the state of Connecticut, whose findings were more complete than the more optimistic federal assessment.

Step 3: Use the federal money saved from closing those bases with the least environmental contamination to clean up those with the most.

This is a win-win-win game. The military becomes more cost-effective, ultimately to the benefit of the states; additional tax dollars are

not needed; and, most important, the environment wins.

**Additional Notes**