

## Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

# EARLY BIRD

Aug 21, 2005

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### National News Articles

#### **Pentagon Aims to Ease Fears Over Base Plan**

The New York Times (New York, New York)  
The Associated Press  
August 21, 2005

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Pentagon officials said Saturday in their final appearance before the commission reviewing their plan to close or scale back military bases that the changes do not overestimate savings and would strengthen national security.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld's representatives sought to ease concerns of the nine-member panel just days before it votes on whether to accept or reject parts of a proposal that would affect hundreds of bases.

At least some commissioners still were skeptical.

"I still don't buy their argument about savings," Anthony Principi, the commission's chairman, told The Associated Press.

Michael Wynne, the Pentagon's technology and weapons-buying chief who oversaw the development of the proposal, said the savings projection was "adequately defended."

The commission must send the proposal to President Bush in September and then to Congress later this fall.

Previous commissions -- in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995 -- changed about 15 percent of what the Pentagon proposed. Analysts expect that to happen again this time.

During the rare weekend hearing, Principi told Pentagon officials that significant questions about the plan remain.

Those include whether the plan actually will save \$48.8 billion over 20 years as the Pentagon estimates; whether New England will be left unprotected by the closure of major bases in the region; and whether the Air Force's proposal to restructure the Air National Guard will hurt national security.

"It may sound like we're against the whole thing," said James Hill, a commissioner and a retired Army general. While much of Rumsfeld's proposal is "really well made," Hill said, "we're not going to bless it all, I suspect."

Rumsfeld has proposed shutting down or at least reducing forces at 62 of the largest bases and hundreds of smaller military facilities.

In questioning the Pentagon's estimate on savings, the commission has pointed to its own analysis as well as a report by the Government Accountability Office that found upfront costs will total \$24 billion.

That report said eliminating jobs held by military personnel would make up about half of the Pentagon's projected annual recurring savings. It also said much of that money would not be available for other uses because the jobs -- and salaries -- simply would be relocated.

"It doesn't appear to us the savings are real," Phillip Coyle, a commissioner and former assistant secretary of defense, told officials.

The Pentagon stood by its estimates and Army Secretary Francis J. Harvey said personnel cuts in the "institutional Army" in the years ahead will produce "absolute dollars saved."

Additionally, Wynne said recommendations in the proposal "not only make economic sense but also, and primarily, military and operational sense."

But commissioners fear the proposal could leave the Northeast unprotected. On the Pentagon's chopping block are two major New England bases -- the submarine base at Groton, Conn., and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine. Forces at the Naval Air Station in

Brunswick, Maine, would be reduced drastically.

"We can provide, and believe we are providing, adequately for the area of New England as far as coverage is concerned," Wynne assured commissioners.

Adm. Robert Willard, vice chief of naval operations, said keeping Brunswick open means units can be deployed from there if needed.

Commissioners also are concerned about the impact of restructuring the Air National Guard on homeland security. Governors and their adjutants general, who oversee Guard forces, oppose the plan.

"We don't consider disagreements with a few adjutant generals out there in the states as a rift between the Air Force and the National Guard," Gen. John Jumper, the Air Force's chief of staff, told the commission.

But James Bilbray, a commissioner and former Nevada congressman, said, "I've never seen so many governors united -- whether Democrat or Republican -- and angry about one particular item in my whole political career."

Also Saturday, the commission heard testimony from Virginia and Florida officials, including Virginia Gov. Mark Warner and Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, on whether to relocate the Master Jet Base at the Oceana Naval Air Station in Virginia to Cecil Field in Jacksonville, Fla., which was closed in 1999.

The Pentagon opposes the move, but the commission is considering reopening Cecil Field and relocating the jets there because of what the commission contends are encroachment issues in Virginia.

### **Air Force Officials Press Plan for Overhauling Guard Units**

The New York Times (New York, New York)  
David S. Cloud  
August 21, 2005

WASHINGTON, Aug. 20 - Air Force officials made a final public plea on Saturday for their plan to overhaul more than two dozen Air National Guard units, warning that the squadrons would steadily become more ineffective and poorly equipped unless their proposal was approved.

Testifying with other senior Pentagon officials at the last public hearing of the nine-member commission charged with assessing the Pentagon's base-closing plan, the Air Force chief of staff, Gen. John P. Jumper, warned that "this round of closures and realignment represents the last opportunity we will have for a generation to reset our forces."

The Air Force wants to retire aging aircraft from many Guard units, close or consolidate some of their bases and train some squadrons for new missions, like flying Predator drones, piloted by remote.

But several commissioners suggested that the plan had become so politically controversial in states that would lose their aircraft that it might not survive intact when the commission begins voting on whether to accept the recommendations later this week.

"I've never seen so many governors united, whether Democrat or Republican, and angry about one particular item in my whole political career," said James H. Bilbray, a commission member from Nevada.

Governors share authority with the president over the use of Air Guard units, which are frequently employed in fighting forest fires, recovering from hurricanes and responding to other natural disasters. Governors from states that would lose aircraft, along with state adjutants general who command the units, are arguing that the plan will degrade domestic security and leave them without enough aircraft nearby to respond to natural disasters.

The commission is scheduled to begin voting Wednesday on accepting or rejecting each element of the Pentagon proposal, which would

shut, consolidate or realign more than 800 military facilities in all 50 states. The panel, which includes retired military officers, former members of Congress and former cabinet members, has until Sept. 8 to submit its changes to President Bush. The president and Congress have until Nov. 7 to reject or accept the entire package.

Several commissioners said they remained unconvinced by the Pentagon's claim that the plan would save nearly \$50 billion over 20 years, an estimate that was challenged in a July report by the Government Accountability Office.

But it was the Air National Guard portion of the plan that prompted the most debate. Anthony J. Principi, a former secretary of veterans affairs who is the commission's chairman, said the plan had opened a "chasm" between the Guard units slated to lose their aircraft and the Air Force leadership.

That brought a sharp reply from General Jumper. "We don't consider disagreements out there with a few adjutants general in the states to be a rift between the Air Force and the National Guard," he said.

### **U.S. Base Closing Commissioners Question Cost Savings**

The New York Times  
Reuters  
August 20, 2005

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Cost savings from the latest round of military base closings appear to be far less than the \$50 billion estimated by the Pentagon, members of the commission with veto power over the actions said on Saturday.

Skip to next paragraph The net savings to taxpayers over 20 years looks more like \$14 billion because military jobs cut from the bases will be shifted to other locations or given new missions, Anthony Principi, chairman of the Base Realignment and Closing Commission, said at a Capitol Hill hearing.

The Pentagon estimated in May that the base closings and cutbacks would eliminate nearly 11,000 military jobs, but the military said it is not planning to make reductions in future military force levels.

"I'm still very skeptical, because I think at the end of the day, the bottom line shows that you have not saved any (military) dollars," Principi told Pentagon officials at a the hearing.

He also pointed out that the base closings will cost \$24 billion in one-time costs for a net savings of \$14 billion.

The nine-member commission is preparing to begin final deliberations next week on the Defense Department's recommendations for closures or cutbacks affecting 837 installations in the first round of U.S. domestic military base closings in a decade.

Made up of former generals, admirals, congressmen and other ex-government officials, the commission must submit its changes to President George W. Bush by September 8. He and Congress can accept or reject the commission's list in its entirety but can make no changes.

### **MOVED UNITS**

Commissioner Philip Coyle pointed out that a witness at a previous hearing likened the savings estimates to "Enron accounting." He added that he was skeptical that these positions would actually be eliminated, as many units are simply moving to new locations.

The comments echoed concerns raised by the Government Accountability Office in a July study that found the Pentagon estimates "create a false sense of savings." It found that 47 percent of the Pentagon savings were based on personnel reductions that may not materialize.

But Defense Department officials testified that they regard base personnel cut savings as assets that could be redeployed to new emerging missions, such as shifting jet fighter squadron personnel to controlling unmanned aerial

vehicles and computer-based electronic warfare missions.

“We have voided costs that we would put into future years' defense programs. That, to me, is real money,” said Army Secretary Francis Harvey.

The commission will begin voting on the fate of bases starting on Wednesday.

### **Pentagon Pitches Base Realignment Plan To Commission One Last Time**

Associated Press  
Liz Sidoti  
August 20, 2005

The Pentagon got its last chance Saturday to try to ease the concerns of a commission reviewing Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld's proposal to close or scale back hundreds of U.S. military bases.

“Change is hard, and we fully appreciate its impact,” said Michael Wynne, who led the Pentagon team that drew up the plan.

However, Wynne said, it's also necessary. Closing some bases and shrinking others frees up money to allow the U.S. military to improve its combat capabilities, he said.

In a rare weekend hearing, Defense Department officials told the nine-member commission that they did not overestimate savings from the plan and that the proposal would strengthen, not harm, the country's security.

The hearing was convened just days before the commission holds a series of meetings to vote on whether to accept or reject each part of Rumsfeld's plan.

Anthony Principi, the commission's chairman, has pledged not to “rubber-stamp” the proposal, and on Saturday he told Pentagon officials that significant questions remain just days before the commission's final deliberations.

“Will the claimed savings actually be realized? Are costs understated?” Principi asked in his opening remarks.

The commission has questioned the Pentagon's claim that it will save \$48.8 billion over 20 years if the proposal is enacted. It has pointed to a report by the Government Accountability Office this summer that found upfront costs will total \$24 billion and said eliminating jobs held by military personnel would make up about half of the Pentagon's projected annual recurring savings.

The report said much of that money won't be available for other uses because the jobs - and salaries - simply will be relocating to other areas. Commissioners on Saturday questioned whether those were “true savings” that could be used for other purposes.

Army Secretary Francis J. Harvey said personnel cuts in the “institutional Army” in the years ahead will produce “absolute dollars saved.”

Also a concern is the impact of the Air Force's restructuring of the Air National Guard on homeland security. It would close or downsize nearly 30 facilities where Air Guard units are stationed and leave units with no planes to fly in many of those cases. The Air Force says those units would get new, non-flying missions. State governors, and their adjutants general who oversee Guard forces, oppose the plan.

“Has the chasm gulf separating the Air Force from the Air National Guard been bridged?” Principi asked.

“We don't consider disagreements with a few adjutant generals out there in the states as a rift between the Air Force and the National Guard,” Gen. John Jumper, the Air Force's chief of staff, told the commission. “I don't think there is a chasm out there that has to be bridged.”

The commission also worries that the recommendations will leave the Northeast unprotected. On the Pentagon's chopping block are two major New England bases - the submarine base at Groton, Conn., and the

Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine. Forces at the Naval Air Station in Brunswick, Maine, would be drastically reduced.

"No single installation was considered in a vacuum," Adm. Robert Willard, vice chief of naval operations, told the panel. He said military value, as well as savings, were considered to ensure the best defense of the country.

In May, Rumsfeld proposed shutting down or at least reducing forces at 62 of the country's largest base and hundreds of smaller military facilities to save money and streamline the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps.

Over the past few months, commissioners and staff have made 182 visits to 173 installations and conducted 35 hearings. The commission has received more than 80,000 electronic messages and more than a half-million pieces of paper mail from those commenting on the process.

At least some changes to the proposal are likely. Previous commissions - in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995 - changed about 15 percent of what the Pentagon proposed, and analysts expect history to repeat itself this year.

### **Local News Articles**

#### **Virginia Fights to Retain Oceana Naval Air Station**

Washington Post (Washington D.C.)  
Michael Alison Chandler  
August 21, 2005

Representatives from Virginia testified before the federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission yesterday, lobbying to keep Oceana Naval Air Station and its more than 10,000 jobs from being shifted to Florida.

The commission added Oceana, Virginia Beach's largest employer, to the list of military bases across the country that it recommended be closed or shrunk last month, citing concerns that residential growth around the naval air station poses a safety risk to pilots and residents.

Oceana, a "master jet base," hosts F-14 Tomcats and F/A-18 Hornets and Super Hornets that are deployed aboard aircraft carriers. It is the main naval base for fighter jets on the East Coast.

Virginia Gov. Mark R. Warner (D) argued that both the Defense Department and the Navy support keeping the base in Virginia.

He also said the state is taking steps to address concerns about encroachment, including the possibility of state-mandated zoning regulations and the purchase of development rights in areas close to the base.

"We have heard loud and clear your concerns about encroachment," Warner said.

Meanwhile, representatives from Florida told commission members that Oceana's duties could be taken over by Cecil Field Naval Air Station in Jacksonville, which was transferred from military to commercial use in 1999, following a recommendation from the last base realignment commission.

"Jacksonville was entrusted with a jewel that is the master jet base," Mayor John Peyton told commissioners. "We want to return this jewel to its rightful owners."

Florida Gov. Jeb Bush (R) vowed that the state and city of Jacksonville would keep a greenbelt around the air station to limit development.

He also said the state would offer tax exemptions to builders of affordable rental housing for naval employees, accelerate the construction of a \$130 million road connecting the base to an interstate highway and complete the conversion within the six years required by federal law.

Three former Navy pilots testified that the cramped conditions around Oceana made it difficult to train fliers in simulated combat conditions.

Local noise-abatement ordinances mean that aircraft coming in for landings must approach at

higher altitudes than they would at sea, and they don't land after 10:30 p.m.

"When you are under stress, you must rely on your instincts," said Adm. Stan Arthur, former vice chairman of naval operations.

Those instincts must be developed through "realistic, repetitive training," he said.

A retired naval pilot speaking for the Virginia delegation countered that the restrictions did not hamper combat training for pilots.

Sen. George Allen (R-Va.) argued that no base is perfect and that moving operations to a new one could solve some problems -- and create others.

He pointed to a map of commercial air traffic routes, supplied by the Federal Aviation Administration, showing a web of commercial flights going into and out of Jacksonville, noting that the traffic would give military pilots limited flying opportunities.

"We're talking about encroachment in the air," he said.

Commission Chairman Anthony J. Principi said the nine-member panel would spend the next few days "trying to sort through disconnects on the data," including the disputed overall cost of reconverting Cecil Field to a military base.

The Navy has estimated the cost at \$1.6 billion; Florida representatives say it would be a quarter of that.

The commission will begin voting on the recommendations Wednesday.

Its final list of recommendations is due to President Bush on Sept. 8.

### **Walter Reed may not see 100th anniversary**

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution (Atlanta, GA)  
Josh Sanburn  
August 21, 2005 Sunday Home Edition

Washington --- Calvin Coolidge's son came here because of a blister on his foot from playing tennis. Richard Nixon visited days before his 1960 debate with John F. Kennedy after banging his knee on a car door. And after nearly 100 years, soldiers are still being sent here to mend their wounds.

Walter Reed Army Medical Center has become nationally known for the prominent patients it has helped and the injured soldiers it has treated. But like hundreds of military bases around the country, the medical center could be closed in a massive restructuring of the nation's armed forces.

In 2009, on the 100th anniversary of Walter Reed, historian John Pierce had planned to release the first history of the center since the 1940s. But now that the medical center's future is uncertain, so is the focus of Pierce's book.

"I'm not sure if it's going to be a history or a requiem," Pierce said.

'Like a college campus'

Near the northern end of the District of Columbia, the Walter Reed Army Medical Center sits on 113 acres, four acres more than the Vatican. Spanning nearly 50 buildings, it has expanded with every American war. Critics of the plan to close it --- proposed by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission --- say the hospital is needed because of the large number of wounded soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The complex includes the main hospital, the old hospital, a hotel, a chapel, a gym, a library, a mini-mall, a bowling alley and the largest military medical research laboratory.

"It almost looked like a college campus, believe it or not," said Gary Augustine, a Vietnam War veteran who arrived at Walter Reed after being injured by a land mine. U.S. Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton, a Democrat representing the district, is fighting to keep Walter Reed in Washington.

Under the realignment plan, about 5,600 of Walter Reed's 8,700 civilian and military employees and contractors would move north to the Bethesda Naval Medical Center in Maryland.

'Where do wounded go?'

Augustine, from Cleveland, Ohio, arrived in 1970. He stayed in one of the large wards in the "old building," which was built in 1909 after Maj. William Borden pushed to revive a decade-old idea of a general hospital in Washington. He named it after his patient Maj. Walter Reed, who helped find a vaccine for yellow fever and died in his care.

The hospital began with 10 patients and could hold about 80 until it expanded in World War I.

Pierce, who has testified before the BRAC commission, said he is trying to convince the government of "the fallacy of closing Walter Reed with a war going on."

"Where do the combat wounded go [from Iraq and Afghanistan]?" Pierce said. "They go to Walter Reed."

The commission will forward its list of bases to be closed or realigned to President Bush on Sept. 8. The president will either give the report to Congress, which will vote on the findings, or will return it to the commission for further evaluation.

A realignment would essentially be a closure because it would affect every building in the Walter Reed complex and a majority of the employees. Bethesda's medical center would be renamed the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and the federal or local government could acquire the buildings left behind in Washington.

'Like you're opening a safe'

The Armed Forces Institute of Pathology sits in the only building in the country that was constructed to withstand an atomic blast, said

Dr. Robert Joy, who commanded the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research in 1975-76.

"If you go in the front door it looks like you're opening a safe," he said.

Almost every president in recent memory has visited troops there, and Presidents Bush (the first), Nixon, Truman and Eisenhower have all been patients.

Only days before the 1960 presidential debate between Nixon and John F. Kennedy, Nixon smashed his knee on a car door and developed septic arthritis. He went to Walter Reed but did not spend enough time in the hospital to recover fully. As a result, he lost weight --- and some say the election --- because of his poor physical appearance on the televised debate.

"One of the reasons he looked so bad on TV was because he was sick, and he was a patient at Walter Reed," Pierce said.

Augustine, the Vietnam veteran, spent 18 months recovering from the land mine. Recuperating in massive wards built for 35 soldiers at a time, he was bed-to-bed with others wounded from the war.

"When visitors came there was no privacy," he said. "Everybody visited with everybody. You couldn't sit around feeling sorry for yourself."

He said the wards were packed with soldiers coming back from the war, whereas today a few soldiers are split up into individual rooms. Because of the influx of wounded patients, even the porch was full of soldiers.

"Any place they could put a bed, they put it," he said.

Being together in the same ward helped Augustine because "everybody was in the same boat," he said. "No matter how bad you were, there was always someone who was worse."

After removing shrapnel, having surgery on his spleen and the occasional wheelchair race through Walter Reed's halls, Augustine was

released. Seeing so many soldiers go through the ivy-covered buildings was almost like attending college, he said.

"I felt bad when I heard that it was going to close down," Augustine said. "I almost feel like I graduated from Walter Reed."

GRAPHIC: Walter Reed Army Medical Center  
Walter Reed Army Medical Center boasts nearly 50 buildings, one of which is the only building in the country constructed to withstand an atomic blast. The Base Realignment and Closure Commission has recommended moving most of its staff to Maryland. ; Courtesy of Gary Augustine  
In 1970 at the "old building" at Walter Reed, Gary Augustine pauses outside the door to the ward where he was treated after being injured in a land mine explosion in Vietnam. MAJOR MILESTONES  
Maj. Walter Reed, born in Virginia in 1851, served as an Army surgeon and researcher. He led the team that proved that yellow fever, which so decimated U.S. soldiers in Cuba in 1898, was transmitted by mosquitoes. His efforts led to the eradication of yellow fever from Havana and to greater control of the disease among those building the Panama Canal. He died in 1902.  
1909 --- Walter Reed General Hospital opens with room for 10 patients.  
1917-18 --- Reed expands from 80 beds to accommodate 1,800 to 2,000 patients during the First World War.  
1940s --- The hospital swells again during World War II to hold close to 3,000 soldiers, many with blast injuries and orthopedic wounds.  
1951 --- On the hundredth anniversary of Reed's birth, the hospital is renamed the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. During the 1950s it would take in such famous patients as George Marshall, Douglas MacArthur, Dwight D. Eisenhower and his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles.  
1972 --- Construction begins on a building that dramatically expands Reed. Finished in 1977, the current hospital sees more than 14,000 patients a year in about 5,500 rooms.

## **General lends helping hand to Ellsworth effort**

Rapid City Journal (Rapid City, SD)

Associated Press (State & Local Wire)  
August 20, 2005

The retired four-star general who testified on behalf of Ellsworth Air Force Base when the Pentagon's base closing committee came to Rapid City two months ago will also be part of closing arguments.

Gen. Mike Loh's videotaped presentation at the June 21 Base Closure and Realignment Commission hearing provided crucial support for Ellsworth. Now, just days away from a BRAC decision on whether to remove the base from the recommended closure list, Loh is taking further action and has written to BRAC chairman Anthony Principi.

"I wrote the letter because I am even more convinced now than I was in June that the Pentagon is wrong," Loh said in a telephone interview from his Virginia home.

"In the ensuing two months, a lot more information has come to light."

The Defense Department recommended in May that Ellsworth be closed and that its 29 B-1B Lancer bombers be moved to Dyess Air Force Base in Texas.

"When the list came out, I was floored to see Ellsworth on it," said Loh, who once served as the senior commander of bomber operations for the United States. "It was the wrong thing to do. That's why I got involved in this. I consider it my duty to keep B-1s at two bases at a minimum."

Loh contacted Al Cornella of Rapid City, a longtime friend who was a member of the BRAC commission during the 1995 round of base closings. Cornella now serves as chairman of the Overseas Basing Commission.

"I asked him if there was anything I could do to help," Loh said. "He said there was going to be a BRAC hearing in Rapid City."

But before he could get to the Rapid City hearing, Loh developed a blood clot in his left leg and was hospitalized.

"I told my doctors that I had to get to South Dakota, but they said, 'No way, no traveling,'" Loh said.

Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., said Loh carries a lot of weight in the military community. "He's been a tremendous resource for us, and he's extremely credible," Thune said Saturday.

Loh had authority and jurisdiction over all the Air Force bombers and now is advising the Air Force on future military strategy, the senator said. "He knows what's going on in the inner workings of the Pentagon," Thune said.

In his letter to Principi, Loh calls the Pentagon's recommendation to consolidate the country's B-1 fleet at Dyess "irresponsible."

"I cannot stand by and let this misguided Pentagon recommendation go unanswered," he wrote.

Loh's message was accompanied by a cover letter signed by the members of South Dakota's congressional delegation and Gov. Mike Rounds.

Loh reminded BRAC commissioners that he is "no stranger to the base-closing process. As a result of previous BRACs from 1991 until my retirement in 1995, I personally closed 13 major operational bases in Air Combat Command."

He also stresses Ellsworth's military value for the nation.

"Today and for the foreseeable future, the fleet of 67 B-1 bombers is the backbone of the Air Force's combat power," he said. He also noted that the B-1 has dominated aircraft action in Afghanistan and Iraq, and said that emerging threats in the western Pacific and the Middle East "demand that we not uproot the B-1 force and risk severe degradation of combat readiness by moving all of them to one location."

Many bases hire retired generals as consultants, but Loh has stepped up for Ellsworth on his own, Thune said.

"When he saw Ellsworth on the list, he was very concerned about it, contacted Al Cornella, and then they got in touch with us and got some testimony put together for the (Rapid City) hearing."

Since the hearing, Loh has helped lobby BRAC commissioners and members of the commission's 48-person staff, Thune said.

### **Countdown To BRAC Hearings: Fight To Keep Schools In Area Culminates This Week**

Monterey Herald (Monterey, CA)  
Julia Reynolds  
August 21, 2005

With four days left before the Base Realignment and Closure Commission begins hearings that will decide the fate of military installations across the country, Monterey City Manager Fred Meurer planned to stay home and plant trees Saturday.

But when the work week starts, Meurer will fly to Washington to help ward off any possibility that the commission will close, merge or move Monterey's Defense Language Institute or Naval Postgraduate School when it begins deliberations Wednesday.

When he says "any possibility," Meurer isn't kidding.

Since spring, the Naval Postgraduate School has found itself on, off, and on the list of potential closure targets. The language school, which was added along with the Navy school for consideration in July, was on and off the list in previous rounds.

Although testimony will not be allowed when the BRAC commission meets to discuss and vote, Monterey's officials aim to have the last word.

Meurer plans to be in the audience, and if he hears erroneous information about local bases, he will immediately call Deputy City Manager Fred Cohn in Monterey for backup.

"The technology is so different in this round," Meurer said. "In '93, we actually sent a telegram to the commission when they had heard some information that was wrong. And it got us off the list."

This time, Meurer said, Cohn will be ready to dispatch facts and figures via e-mail, fax, text message or cell phone.

Cohn and Meurer have been amassing answers to a range of possible questions. In the year since this BRAC round was launched, the Navy school has been studied by the Pentagon in numerous scenarios that include closing, downsizing, moving or merging with the Air Force Institute of Technology in Dayton, Ohio. Each scenario has its own cost analysis report, many of which the Pentagon released late to the public and to officials such as Meurer and Cohn.

The city commissioned a study of reuse options for the bases in case either school is closed. Cohn said the study isn't finished because parts of it had to be revised, though he declined to elaborate.

Cohn and Meurer have been preparing for this week "for years," according to Meurer.

Wednesday deadline

Starting Wednesday, the nine-member BRAC commission will meet daily for four days in Arlington, Va. The sessions are scheduled to run 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Up to 900 bases may be affected by closure-and-consolidation proposals that experts say make up the most complex round of closures since BRAC began in 1988. Commissioners have been working around the clock since they were appointed last spring, and some BRAC-watchers have wondered how the panel can reasonably

weigh the pros and cons of so many bases in only a few days.

The commission relies on staff members such as Syd Carroll, who for months has been collecting new information from the Navy school and the language institute to analyze and present to the commissioners.

At a July 19 meeting, Carroll was the staff member who stunned local officials by presenting an unexpected scenario for a merger between the two schools and the Air Force institute. That scenario landed both schools on the possible closure and consolidation list.

Meurer said he also will have support in Arlington.

"We have a man there already," he said, referring to David Berteau, a Washington lobbyist and former Pentagon heavyweight hired by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to work the political side of base retention.

Berteau, who attended an Aug. 8 regional hearing in Monterey, has been helping the city prepare for the vote, Meurer said.

Berteau said he will attend the week's worth of hearings, because more than two dozen California bases are on the list.

Former Central Coast Congressman and White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta said he won't be joining Meurer and Berteau unless "new intelligence" gives him cause for concern about the local bases.

Last week, Panetta said he was confident the commission is only interested in recommending budget cuts for the Monterey schools, not closure or relocation.

"Leon knows a hell of a lot more than I do," Meurer said. "He has great insight into the process, so if he starts flying out there, then I'll be worried."

A spokeswoman for Rep. Sam Farr, D-Carmel, who has lobbied for years with Meurer and

Panetta for keeping military bases in Monterey, said he will be watching proceedings from his home in California.

The commissioners have until Sept. 8 to forward their decisions to President Bush, who by law can only accept or reject the list as a whole.

Bush said he plans to approve the commission's recommendations.

Barring any move by Congress to reject the list, the BRAC commission's votes this week will be binding.

Alternative offers|

Meanwhile, communities across the country are scrambling to stay afloat in a process that has already faced legal challenges, including one from the commission's own counsel on grounds that the panel is not empowered to make many of the micro-managing changes the Pentagon has proposed this time around.

Some communities are even hoping to catch some of the fallout.

After some commissioners suggested in July that taxpayers could save money if Monterey's schools were moved to a lower-cost area such as Dayton, communities from Utah to New England have considered hosting the schools.

Last week, the governor of Rhode Island wrote the BRAC commission's chairman offering to take NPS and merge it with the Naval War College in Newport. The war college could take on some courses, Gov. Donald Carcieri wrote, while others could be outsourced to save money. Because there are federal and university labs in the area, he said, the postgraduate school's research projects could continue.

"The state of Rhode Island is willing to assist the BRAC commission and the U.S. Navy to achieve these goals," Carcieri wrote.

"See," Meurer said, laughing, "everybody wants our mission."

Come Monday, he'll be dead serious and ready to hit the road again.

## **Vote On Base Closings Could Seal Otis' Fate**

Cape Cod Times (Cape Cod, MA)

Amanda Lehmert

August 21, 2005

As the base closure commission enters its final deliberations this week, local officials said they think they have presented the best possible case for saving the Upper Cape air base.

Otis Air Base - home of the 102nd Fighter Wing - was among 33 bases across the services slated to close under the recommendations of the Defense Department in May in an effort to save the Pentagon billions of dollars.

After getting testimony from around the country, this week the nine-member, independent Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission will begin to vote on the Defense Department Recommendations.

Although local air base advocates have admitted that only a small percentage of bases recommended by the Defense Department survive the BRAC panel, they are still hopeful.

"We're cautiously optimistic," said 102nd Fighter Wing Commander Paul Worcester, who is limited in what he can say about the BRAC process because military personnel are prevented from lobbying the commission. "We're staying firm. Obviously, it is out of our hands."

Otis F-15s were the first to arrive in New York on Sept. 11. Closing the Air National Guard base would mean a loss of 505 local jobs.

The Otis jets would move to bases in Florida and New Jersey, and the Air Force would build an alert facility and Bradley International Airport in Connecticut to house two jets, according to the recommendations.

Local officials, who have formed the non-partisan Otis Coalition to save the base, argued

the Defense Department miscalculated what it would save by closing Otis by almost a half a billion dollars.

They claim closing Otis could leave a gap in the national defense - an argument that has piqued the interest of several BRAC commissioners.

"It's difficult to believe that the BRAC commissioners aren't persuaded by the very strong national security arguments in favor of retaining Otis," Sen. Edward Kennedy said in a statement. "I'm optimistic that the commission's vote (this) week will take Otis off the list of bases to be closed."

Local leaders also argue that closing Otis would put a strain on the Coast Guard, which uses the National Guard-maintained runways at the base. On Friday Vice Admiral Vivien Crea, commander of the Coast Guard Atlantic Region, said closing Otis could force a closure of Air Station Cape Cod, but that the Coast Guard would consider all its options after the BRAC commission deliberates.

In previous BRAC rounds, about 90 percent of the Defense recommendations were accepted by the commission, said retired Gen. Jimmy Dishner, who was on an Air Force panel in 1995 that helped select bases for realignment and closure.

"We've got facts on our side," Dishner said. "I just think it's not going to be a slam dunk."

After the commission gives its recommendations to the president next month, he has until Sept. 23 to forward the list to Congress or send it back for revision. Congress has 45 days to vote down the list in its entirety or it becomes law.

Local leaders said they will be watching closely as the commission voting begins on Wednesday.

The sessions are likely to go well into each evening through Friday. The Air Force recommendations are among the items on the commission's agenda, but there is no set time when they will consider air bases.

Local leaders said they will be watching the coverage on the cable channel C-SPAN with great interest. They said they were confident they made a good case for Otis.

"Senator Kerry is optimistic that the hard work of the Massachusetts delegation and the people of Cape Cod who have worked to save Otis will pay off," said April Boyd, Kerry's press secretary. "The BRAC commission cannot ignore that keeping Otis open is the right choice for Massachusetts, the National Guard and our country."

Information from the Associated Press was included in this article.

### **BRAC Hearing Focuses On Savings**

Fairbanks Daily News-Miner (Fairbanks, AK)  
Sam Bishop  
August 21, 2005

WASHINGTON--Three military base review commissioners on Saturday expressed strong skepticism about the Pentagon's treatment of personnel cost savings from the proposed closing and revamping of bases around the nation.

Defense Base Closure and Review Commission Chairman Anthony Principi opened the commission's final hearing in Washington, D.C., by telling the military witnesses that savings would be the issue of the day.

"Will the claimed savings actually be realized?" Principi asked.

In Alaska, critics of the Pentagon's proposal have said that the military wrongly counts the savings that can be expected from sending away most of Eielson Air Force Base's approximately 3,000 personnel. Military officials do not expect to reduce personnel levels nationwide, and moving people from one base to another won't actually save taxpayers money, the critics say.

The Air Force estimates that realigning Eielson will save \$229 million a year, or \$2.78 billion over 20 years. That's part of the \$49 billion in savings the Pentagon expects nationwide for all

branches of the armed forces during the next two decades, if its plan is adopted.

If personnel savings aren't counted, though, Principi said, it appears the total savings are only \$15 billion. That leaves the whole proposal in the red, because the cost of all the shuffling is \$24 billion, he said.

"I need to better understand this concept of personnel savings," Principi said.

Michael Wynne, acting undersecretary of defense for acquisition, technology and logistics, said the military took a broader view of the term "savings" in its proposal, which was released in mid-May.

"The closure or realignment of an installation frees up resources, both cash and personnel," Wynne said. "The department spends that savings by applying the resource to another mission."

For example, he said, the Air Force might need a pilot for the new unmanned aerial vehicles rather than the old F-16s. A current F-16 pilot may or may not get the new job, he said, but the money for the new job will come from the savings that result when the old job is eliminated.

Whether called savings or cost-avoidance, the difference between pre- and post-realignment spending at bases should be counted as a benefit of the process, he said.

Gen. John Jumper, Air Force chief of staff, said the changes in his branch of the military would "free up 12,000 manpower slots we can draw on for future missions or take as savings." The Air Force today has about 360,000 personnel, he said.

Commissioner Phillip Coyle said he and other commissioners understand that the military wants to move people to places where they can do more good. That isn't the same as saving money, though, he said.

"For the taxpayers, that only works if military end-strengths go down. And for the military

departments, that only works if the missions go away," Coyle said.

"Time after time the missions don't go away," Coyle said of the Pentagon's plans. "They are to be continued ... at the receiving locations. It doesn't appear to us that the savings will be real unless the missions go away, and you haven't identified any missions that will go away."

Air Force Maj. Gen. Gary Heckman, assistant deputy chief of staff for plans and programs, said in a brief interview after the hearing that his branch of the military has identified such missions.

"Yes, we have," he said. "Our force structure is going down." That will be reflected by a reduction in fighter aircraft and base numbers, he said.

Commissioner Harold Gehman, in summarizing his biggest remaining concerns, also said he couldn't understand how the military could count savings from personnel positions that are not going away. Wynne said that counting the personnel savings is necessary to the reform process.

"Withdrawing from military bases is what we've done for centuries as we've reformed our forces, and reforming our forces is what we're doing now," he said. "We cannot have stranded assets in locations that are socially acceptable but not militarily acceptable."

Wynne on Saturday appeared to acknowledge, though, that there is a broad range in the savings that can be expected. He said he expects net savings of "at least \$38 billion, and possibly a total of \$73 billion."

Not all commissioners seemed as concerned with defining the savings. Commissioner Samuel Skinner said he didn't think it was the commission's job to worry about how the money saved will be used.

"Whether it goes back to the taxpayer or to the department, that's up to the Congress," he said.

The nine-member commission is charged by Congress with reviewing the Department of Defense's proposed base realignment and closure list to see whether it meets several criteria set by Congress. Cost is one of the four primary criteria. Among the three "other considerations" Congress approved is the number of years "for the savings to exceed the costs."

The commission will modify the Pentagon's list and send a final version to President Bush by Sept. 8. Bush can either reject the list or accept it without modification. If he accepts it, he sends it to Congress, which has the same choice.

During Saturday's hearing, Principi and fellow commissioner James Hansen both questioned the justification for removing the personnel from Eielson and sending its 18 F-16s and 18 A-10s elsewhere. Principi noted the "dramatic economic impact" on Fairbanks from the "near closure" of Eielson. Jumper said Eielson would not close. In fact, it would host a "very large transit community" as fighter pilots came from around the world to use Alaska's training airspace, he said.

Hansen, as he did at a hearing in July, questioned whether putting Eielson in "warm" status during the winter off-season would work. While in Fairbanks in June, he heard tales of crumbling drywall and cracked glass in unheated buildings, he said.

Jumper said the Air Force could handle the job. He noted that his dad was stationed at Elmendorf Air Force Base near Anchorage and "sat alert" at Eielson occasionally. When Jumper was a teenager, "we used to visit him up there," he said. "Surely, it presents some environmental difficulties, but, sir, we've been stationed up there for quite a number of years," Jumper said. "I think the military value of those ranges overcome many other considerations."

## **Focus Is On Waterfront: Federal Base Realignment Process Clouds Vision Of Embarcadero Redevelopment Proposal**

Union Tribune (San Diego, CA)  
Ronald W. Powell  
August 21, 2005

The long-planned redevelopment of the Navy Broadway Complex in downtown San Diego is promoted as a twofer: It would provide residents and tourists with new views and routes to the waterfront while allowing the Navy to move its headquarters from old warehouses to modern facilities at no cost.

The site would become a focal point for shopping, dining and high-rise living as part of a 1.2-mile waterfront project slated to feature lush gardens, hiking and biking trails, plazas, wharves and venues for public celebrations.

When completed, city officials say, the North Embarcadero waterfront could become as much a symbol of San Diego as Balboa Park or the San Diego-Coronado Bridge.

What role the complex will play depends on how it weathers the federal Base Realignment and Closure process, or BRAC. The Pentagon, a BRAC commission, Congress and President Bush are deciding the fate of the 16-acre complex and scores of other military installations nationwide.

Redevelopment plans would probably be shelved if the complex is closed through BRAC, local officials said. If that doesn't happen, they said, the Navy would seek interested developers by year's end.

Bounded by Broadway on the north, Pacific Highway on the east and North Harbor Drive on the west and south, the complex could be a vital part of the North Embarcadero Visionary Plan, which includes \$228 million in public improvements intended to beautify San Diego's bay front from Lindbergh Field to Seaport Village.

The complex as currently configured is one four-block expanse. But if it is redeveloped, E, F and G streets would bisect the property, opening up pedestrian access and view corridors from downtown to the North Embarcadero.

Those corridors would flow into the hiking and biking trails, gardens, ceremonial areas and other features of the plan.

"This (North Embarcadero site) could be an anchor to our entire downtown," said Peter Hall, president of Centre City Development Corp., the city's downtown redevelopment arm. "The whole idea is to weave the water into the city. This completes our city to the waterfront."

Hall is among officials from the city, Navy and San Diego Regional Economic Development Corp. who made presentations to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission during its Aug. 8 meeting in Monterey.

The federal commission has the task of recommending to the president in September which military bases should be closed or consolidated for cost savings and increased military preparedness. The three-building complex is headquarters for Navy Region Southwest.

The commission is deciding whether the base-closure process would accelerate a redevelopment plan forged in 1992 by the Navy and San Diego.

If it recommends closing the complex and Bush does not object, the Navy would move its 1,085 workers to another location in San Diego, possibly the 32nd Street Naval Station.

Julie Meier Wright, president of the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corp., said a closure recommendation could doom redevelopment at the site.

Closing the complex through BRAC would touch off a federal review for control of the property. The Department of Defense would be first in line, followed by other federal agencies and then other claimants.

"It could end up being the gaping hole in the smile of the waterfront," Wright said.

The alternative is for the Navy to avoid the BRAC process and cement a long-term lease with a private developer to convert the complex.

Military experts and developers said the site could be worth as much as \$350 million. In one scenario, the Navy would lease most of the property to a developer who would build new naval headquarters at the site as part of the deal.

In a recent letter to Anthony Principi, chairman of the base-closure commission, the Department of the Defense said the Navy would benefit by proceeding outside of the BRAC process. Principi agrees, saying the Navy should be given up to 18 months to strike a development deal before the complex would be considered for BRAC.

The redevelopment plan between the Navy and city envisions 3.25 million square feet of construction, including a 1 million-square-foot Navy headquarters, a 55,000-square-foot museum, 650,000 square feet of commercial office space, 1,500 hotel rooms, a 1.9-acre park and 3,105 parking spaces.

Real estate experts said the Navy may also seek to add a residential component, which would make the property more valuable to developers.

The redevelopment plan, which expires in January 2007, has received design, environmental and regulatory approvals.

While nearly all of the more than 80-year-old complex belongs to the Navy, the federal government has two long-term leases with the state where E and F streets would cross the property. The streets are inactive on the property, blocked at Pacific Highway.

Those leases give the state a reason to exert its property rights if the commission recommends closing the complex, a state official said.

In 1991, a federal judge ruled that the property, excluding the leased portions of E and F streets, belongs to the federal government.

"But we think the judge was wrong in that case," said Curtis Fossum, senior attorney for the State Lands Commission. "We will look at it very closely to see what interest the state has in the property."

To stave off jockeying by outsiders, Wright said, it's crucial for the BRAC commission to keep its hands off.

"I think we made a compelling argument to the commission that going (the BRAC) route would be filled with risk and uncertainty for the Navy," said Wright, who spoke at the Monterey meeting.

About six months ago, the Navy alerted city officials that it was interested in beginning redevelopment for the Broadway complex. The BRAC issue has put those plans on hold, but Wright said she is confident the Navy would soon solicit developers if the commission allows it to continue its course.

Meanwhile, the overall North Embarcadero Visionary Plan, which includes redevelopment of the Navy complex, is moving forward.

The blueprint is a collaboration of the city, Centre City Development Corp. and San Diego Unified Port District. By year's end, the partners are expected to decide on a financing plan for the project's first phase.

Deputy Mayor Toni Atkins said the Centre City Development Corp. and the Port District will have to provide most of the funding because financial problems linked to the city's pension deficit make it unlikely that San Diego can provide money from its general fund.

"This is important because it's about our waterfront, and the waterfront is our identity," Atkins said.

Port Commission Chairman William Hall said he and his colleagues support the redevelopment concept in general, but they want the city to show how the project can be funded before fully embracing the plan.

"It's the front porch of San Diego, so what we do should be high quality," he said.

In October, the Port Commission will likely vote on whether to endorse detailed design drawings of the plan, he said. A financing plan may also be presented at that time.

The Port Commission wants the city to allow hotel room taxes and parking fees from a hotel planned on the northwest corner of Broadway and North Harbor Drive to pay for part of the North Embarcadero plan. The City Council would have to approve that idea.

Peter Hall of the downtown redevelopment agency speaks with missionary zeal about the plan's potential.

"One hundred years from now, when Petco Park and Horton Plaza are gone, this will still be one of the ways that we define our city," he said. "We can have one of the best waterfronts in the world."

### **Final Hearings Begin This Week**

The Day (New London, CT)  
Anthony Cronin  
August 21, 2005

Five votes.

That's the number Connecticut hopes for this week when the federal base-closure commission meets to publicly consider the fate of more than 30 major military bases around the country slated for shutdown, including the 90-year-old Naval Submarine Base in Groton.

Nine men and women — a decorated Vietnam War veteran, retired generals and former congressmen, among them — make up the federal Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission. On Wednesday, they will begin four days of hearings in Arlington, Va.

They'll meet from 8 a.m. into the evening to hear the testimony of the BRAC staff on each base

the Pentagon no longer wants in its defense arsenal.

And then they will vote. A simple majority is needed from the independent review panel to overturn a Pentagon decision to close a base. Seven votes are needed to add a base to the existing list.

So by Saturday, the last day of the hearings at the Hyatt Regency in the Crystal City complex, if not sooner, Connecticut will know whether its submarine base, which houses 18 subs and 8,000 sailors and officers, has survived this nation's fifth round of base closings and consolidations since 1988.

If the base doesn't get the panel's simple majority vote for reprieve, then it will close, short of a presidential or congressional thumb's down on the entire base-closing list.

After four months of an intensive battle to save the Groton base, Connecticut's congressional delegation, the governor and a local coalition are cautiously optimistic about the base's prospects.

But no one is wagering any bets, because there is far too much at stake: more than 10,000 direct military and civilian jobs and a potential \$3.1 billion economic jolt to the state's economy if the sub base's closing results in the eventual loss of one of the region's other major employers, the Electric Boat submarine builder in Groton.

"I think it's a jump ball right now," said John Markowicz, chairman of the local Subbase Realignment Coalition fighting the closing. "We have fought the good fight, and we will continue until the finality. And it could go beyond next week."

The four days of hearings this week are open to the public and will be aired from opening to closing gavel on the C-SPAN 2 channel of cable television.

Supporters of the base say taking the submarines out of Groton would be like taking the cars out of Detroit. Groton has long prided itself as the "Submarine Capital of the World" — a boast

that's emblazoned on a large submarine-shaped sign overlooking Interstate 95 in Groton. For decades, the EB shipyard has provided the submarines to the Navy. Today, hundreds of EB workers travel to the base each day to work on submarine maintenance at its lower base, which houses the long piers that accommodate the fast-attack fleet.

The relationship between EB and the Navy is a strong one, and the synergy that has developed over the decades has been one of the cornerstone defenses in the fight against the Pentagon proposal to shutter the base.

EB officials have estimated that such synergy shaves about \$50 million off annual shipbuilding costs. They also have warned that at least 1,500 shipyard workers could lose their jobs if the gates close.

•• Since the closing list was announced on May 13, local, state and federal officials have attempted to point out flaws in the Navy's analysis of shutdown costs and savings. They've also pushed the base's strategic military value to national security and enlisted a host of supporters to write the commission. Those who have written include former President Jimmy Carter, Speaker of the House J. Dennis Hastert and House Armed Services Committee Chairman Duncan Hunter, a California Republican.

Nearly a dozen top retired Navy brass, including admirals and chiefs of naval operations, have come to the base's defense on national security grounds.

BRAC chairman Anthony Principi has vowed that his commissioners would remain open-minded and has expressed concern about the number of bases across New England that face closure or consolidation.

Among the many documents sent to commissioners are:

- An internal Navy memo — dubbed by one local base supporter as a "white-hot smoking gun" — saying the Navy underestimated the cost

and the extent of moving the Groton submarine school to new quarters in Kings Bay, Ga.

- A Government Accountability Office's analysis showing a \$400 million overestimation of the savings achieved from shutting down the Groton base.
- A state-sponsored analysis claiming it would cost \$641 million to shutter the base rather than the \$1 billion-plus savings the Navy maintains will occur over the next two decades.

Several members of the state's congressional delegation have said that sentiment is growing in Congress to turn down the BRAC list because of the continuing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and because of worries over harm to the national security if some of the bases close.

“The BRAC (commission) and Congress will have to decide beyond a reasonable doubt that we aren't going to need those facilities for national defense,” said U.S. Sen. Joseph Lieberman, a Democrat.

U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, points out that several bases in the Northeast are slated for shutdown, including the Portsmouth, N.H., naval shipyard and the Otis Air Force base on Cape Cod, which is also home to U.S. Coast Guard personnel and aircraft.

“Otis (personnel) were the first responders to Sept. 11,” the congressman said. If the air base were to close, New England would likely lose some quick protection in the event of a national emergency.

“I don't like this process,” Simmons added.

Despite the arguments and documentation from the local coalition, congressional delegation and other state officials, some experts aren't optimistic about the base's survival.

While noting that efforts to save the base have been powerful, Christopher Hellman, a military policy analyst, doubts the commission will overturn the Pentagon recommendation.

“Groton's prospects are not terribly good,” said Hellman, who has covered the BRAC process since 1987 and is employed by the non-profit Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation in Washington, D.C. “The Navy said it has got three yards on the East Coast and it only wants two. Which one are you going to close?” he asked.

The Pentagon favors expanding the Kings Bay and Norfolk facilities by adding in the assets — submarines, sailors and various commands — from the Groton base.

As part of the BRAC process, the Pentagon established eight important criteria to determine a base's fate. Four of the eight deal specifically with overall military and strategic value — and those four carry the most weight. They include the current and future mission requirements and readiness of military forces, the availability and condition of the base, as well as overall cost and manpower implications. The other, lesser criteria include the environmental impact of shutting down a base and the economic impact on communities.

The BRAC commission can overturn the Pentagon's decisions if it finds that defense officials substantially deviated from those eight criteria. While sub base advocates have said that the Pentagon deviated from many — from low-balling environmental cleanup costs to understating the base's overall strategic military value — Hellman isn't convinced.

The analyst said the Pentagon's strategic focus has shifted to concerns in the Pacific. Along with worries about a growing submarine fleet in China and other smaller nations, there are concerns about the Middle East and keeping submarines “forward deployed” in that region.

The Navy already has four submarine bases on the West Coast.

“What this is all about is, what do we need to support the military mission in the 21st century,” Hellman said. “The fact of the matter is we have seen increasing interest ... in our concerns both economic and strategic in the Pacific. All of the

Pentagon's planning documents are pointing in that direction. To see a shifting of resources from East to West (coast) is not only not surprising, but it's inevitable. This is not new 'news' and not unique to the BRAC process.”

Hellman was at the Boston regional BRAC hearings in July and said the local coalition and state delegation made strong, compelling arguments to the commissioners.

“But at the end of the day, do you need three bases on the East Coast?” he asked.

Paul Tauer, the former mayor of Aurora, Colo., predicted a tough time for southeastern Connecticut if the base closes. He also offered hope for the process of redeveloping the military property.

His city of 300,000 first lost the Lowry Air Force Base, which straddled Aurora and nearby Denver to the west, in 1991. Four years later, the Pentagon announced it would shut down the sprawling Fitzsimmons Army hospital complex in the heart of Aurora.

“We were really disturbed and upset that they both could leave. But both Lowry and Fitzsimmons wound up being phenomenally better developments than what was there,” he said.

He added, however, that the redevelopment process has taken more than a decade and there is more to be done.

Lowry has been transformed into a community within the Denver and Aurora city limits. Houses, schools and businesses occupy the former lengthy air strips where Air Force jets once landed.

At nearby Fitzsimmons, the University of Colorado's health-care system has transformed the 600-plus Army campus into high-rise hospitals and health-care buildings, along with research facilities.

Tauer, who has formed Tauer Solutions and now consults with communities that have lost defense

installations, said the BRAC process is difficult to handle.

Bu, he added, two key federal agencies — the federal Office of Economic Adjustment, part of the Department of Defense, and the Economic Development Agency, part of the Department of Commerce — offer help to communities. In the case of Aurora, the agencies poured millions of dollars into the municipality to help in planning and large-scale redevelopment.

“As soon as it becomes permanent, the best thing to do is to start planning for redevelopment, and do it as soon as possible,” Tauer said. “Always be hopeful, and make the best efforts (to save the base). If it doesn't happen, it's not the end of the world, as disappointing as it can be.”

But Markowicz remains adamant that his regional coalition, along with Gov. M. Jodi Rell, the state's two senators and Simmons, will continue to wage a battle to save Groton until there are no resources left to tap.

“There seems to be in Congress some indication that they aren't particularly pleased with the form and substance of this BRAC process,” he said. “The Subbase Realignment Coalition will not give up its efforts until the 45-day period expires. That's our position. And like I said on May 13, never give up, never, ever give up.”

### **It's Down To Wire For Groton's Sub Base**

The Day (New London, CT)

Anthony Cronin

August 21, 2005

Federal base-closure commissioners questioned the defense department's cost-savings estimates and criticized Pentagon officials Saturday for the large number of military shutdowns proposed in New England, including the Naval Submarine Base in Groton.

During the Pentagon's final presentation before the federal Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, the panel's chairman, Anthony Principi, said that “New England in

particular is virtually stripped,” and showed a map with only a downsized Brunswick Naval Air Station in Maine remaining if the BRAC panel agrees with the closure list for the six states.

“I question the wisdom of doing that,” Principi told the Pentagon officials gathered at the Dirksen Office Building in Washington, D.C.

And, he told the Associated Press, “I still don't buy their argument about savings.”

The independent commission is charged with reviewing the Pentagon's recommended base closings and consolidations and making its independent recommendations to Congress and the president.

Among the bigger installations slated for shutdown in New England are the Groton submarine base, the Portsmouth, Maine, naval shipyard, and Otis Air Force Base on Cape Cod. The Brunswick facility will be kept “warm,” meaning it will be stripped of most of its day-to-day functions but ready for use during a national emergency or pressing military need.

Adm. Robert Willard, vice-chief of naval operations, defended the Navy's plan to shut down the 687-acre submarine base. Willard said many of the retired top Navy brass who have written in support of keeping the base were “linked emotionally to New London,” adding that many of them “regard it as home.”

He said the shutdown of the Groton and Portsmouth facilities would produce nearly 40 percent of the estimated \$7 billion in Navy-related savings from this year's round of base closings. Pentagon officials have said they expect to save nearly \$50 billion over a 20-year period if the BRAC commission were to agree to its entire list. Among the 33 major base shutdowns, the Groton facility would be the largest, directly affecting about 10,000 military and civilian employees there.

“The choice of (Groton) was the right choice,” Willard told the commissioners Saturday. “We based our analysis on fact. The

recommendations were based on the needs of the Navy in the 21st century,” he said.

The admiral said the Groton base had excess capacity, including the 10 piers that house its fleet of fast-attack submarines, and defended the move to concentrate those submarines and related sub base commands at Norfolk, Va., and Kings Bay, Georgia.

He said those two southern bases would serve as a new “center of excellence.” Willard said a “very modern facility in the Southeast, if you will, is the right move.” He also said that “excesses in pier space loom very large for us.”

The admiral referred to the Groton base as “somewhat elderly,” saying it has “been around for many, many years.” The 90-year-old base has been the chief training ground for submariners since its sub school opened its doors shortly after the base was established.

U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, who was seated in the front row of the hearing room throughout the testimony, criticized Willard's remarks afterwards. “I'm really shocked and surprised at that kind of comment,” he said. “This isn't some K through 5 school.”

Simmons added that hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent by the Defense Department on the base and its various commands, including the submarine school. “Why would they want to destroy a center of excellence for submarines? We do it all in Groton. It doesn't make sense.”

Both Simmons and John Markowicz, who heads the local Subbase Realignment Coalition, said they were encouraged by commissioners' questions. Both said the Pentagon's closure plans were effectively stripping New England of an important military role.

During more than three hours of hearings, the nine BRAC commissioners raised repeated questions regarding the overall cost savings projected by the Pentagon.

Those included whether the plan actually will save \$48.8 billion over 20 years as the Pentagon estimates.

Michael Wynne, the Pentagon's technology and weapons-buying chief who oversaw the development of the proposal, said the savings projection was "adequately defended."

In questioning the Pentagon's estimate on savings, the commission has pointed to its own analysis as well as a report by the Government Accountability Office that found upfront costs will total \$24 billion.

That report said eliminating jobs held by military personnel would make up about half of the Pentagon's projected annual recurring savings. It also said much of that money would not be available for other uses because the jobs — and salaries — simply would be relocated.

"It doesn't appear to us the savings are real," Phillip Coyle, a commissioner and former assistant secretary of defense, told officials.

The Pentagon stood by its estimates and Army Secretary Francis J. Harvey said personnel cuts in the "institutional Army" in the years ahead will produce "absolute dollars saved."

Additionally, Wynne said recommendations in the proposal "not only make economic sense but also, and primarily, military and operational sense."

The list must go to President George W. Bush by Sept. 8. If the plan meets with the approval of the president and Congress, the various affected bases would be closed or consolidated over a six-year period.

Previous commissions — in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995 — changed about 15 percent of what the Pentagon proposed. Analysts expect that to happen again this time.

U.S. Sen. Christopher Dodd, D-Conn., said Friday he believes that there is about a 50-50 chance the base will be removed from the closure list.

"I think we've put together a strong case," said Dodd. "But, I think you must understand that there is a presumption, however slight, but nonetheless a presumption to be supportive of the Pentagon's conclusions."

### **Pentagon Defends Fort Closure Plan**

Asbury Park Press (Asbury Park, NJ)

Ledyard King

August 21, 2005

WASHINGTON — The head of the U.S. Army on Saturday strongly defended the proposal to close Fort Monmouth, refuting assertions by New Jersey officials and a group of retired generals that the move would endanger troops in Iraq who rely on the base's technological support.

"We will never ever have a situation where we jeopardize the war fighter," Army Secretary Francis J. Harvey told a panel reviewing the Pentagon's proposal to close Fort Monmouth as part of a nationwide restructuring of its military force. "That will never happen."

The four-hour hearing by the Base Realignment and Closure commission offered Pentagon officials one last chance to sell their recommendations unveiled in May to close or realign 67 major U.S. bases.

The proposal represents the Pentagon's effort to save money, streamline operations and transform the U.S. military into a force better suited to confront 21st-century threats.

On Wednesday, the nine-member panel begins voting on which parts of the plan to keep or reject.

Several commissioners Saturday challenged Defense Department estimates that the plan would save nearly \$50 billion, saying that personnel are largely being shuffled around, not eliminated.

They also said the cost of relocating missions, training new workers and cleaning up

abandoned bases would eat up much of those savings.

The Pentagon wants to close Fort Monmouth and move most of its work developing communications and electronics equipment to Aberdeen Proving Ground, an Army base in Maryland. The Army contends the move would not only save \$1 billion over 20 years, but also offer enough space to conduct on-site testing of its equipment at the larger Maryland base.

But New Jersey officials and a growing chorus of military officials say the move would jeopardize ongoing efforts to support troops in Iraq and Afghanistan who depend on jamming equipment that can blow up roadside bombs.

"The organization would be decimated by attempting to relocate it (to Aberdeen), and the impact upon the survivability and effectiveness of our Warfighters, in the midst of the global war on terrorism, would be devastating," said 11 retired generals in an Aug. 16 letter.

BRAC commissioner Phillip Coyle read from the letter at the hearing, prompting Harvey's vigorous defense of the recommendation. Harvey said the Army might have to duplicate research efforts at both Monmouth and Aberdeen during the transition to ensure there would be no gap in services.

But Coyle remained skeptical. He echoed Monmouth backers' argument that it will take years to rebuild its expertise because most of the fort's engineers, researchers and other skilled workers won't move to Maryland.

"You're jeopardizing fragile intellectual capital," Coyle said.

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey told the panel in a letter 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.

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 would seriously disrupt RIJAN's development, placing at risk much of the progress already achieved."

Rep. Frank J. Pallone Jr., D-N.J., who caught part of the hearing on C-SPAN, said he thinks the Army's aggressiveness in defending the plan to close Monmouth indicates the Pentagon is worried the commission might reverse the proposal.

"It's very much up in the air what (commissioners) are going to do," said Pallone, whose district does not include the base but does have hundreds of Monmouth workers. "The fact that (Coyle) took such a strong stance is significant."

Rep. Rush Holt, D-N.J., who also watched the televised event, said: "We can only hope that the commissioners remain independent-minded and that they're not taking the Pentagon's assertion at face value."

### **Future Of 108th Refueling Wing At McGuire In Balance As Vote Nears**

Asbury Park Press (Asbury Park, NJ)

John Yaukey

August 21, 2005

WASHINGTON — The independent panel reviewing Pentagon proposals to close or restructure dozens of military bases is weighing significant changes to a controversial part of the plan that would shuffle around Air National Guard planes, panel members said Saturday.

The Pentagon has recommended grounding 29 Air National Guard wings and reassigning or retiring their planes. That proposal includes retiring 16 KC-135Es that are based at McGuire Air Force Base and part of the New Jersey National Guard's 108th Refueling Wing.

The Air Guard recommendations have met widespread opposition from state governors who fear they would sacrifice security by losing Air Guard planes. Under the Pentagon's plan, five states — Connecticut, Delaware, Montana, Nevada and North Dakota — would lose all their aircraft.

"Most of us think that every state needs a flying asset," said James Bilbray, one of the nine members of the Base Realignment and Closure commission and a former congressman from Nevada.

Bilbray's comments Saturday came during a break in the final public hearing before the commission starts to vote Wednesday on which of the 67 major base closure and realignment recommendations to approve and send to President Bush by Sept. 8. Bush can either reject or accept them.

Air Force officials assured the commission that the Pentagon's recommendations would enhance homeland security by grouping planes for optimal strategic effect.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John Jumper defended the Pentagon's plan, calling it "the last opportunity in a generation to arrange the force right."

At stake are thousands of civilian jobs in communities that depend heavily on local military installations.

It's not clear what will happen to the 108th Air Refueling Wing at McGuire Air Force Base in South Jersey. Rep. H. James Saxton, R-N.J., opposes the retirement of the 16 planes because he says it would leave the East Coast without adequate air support.

At least two states — Pennsylvania and Illinois — are suing in federal court to block the loss of their Air Guard planes, claiming the federal government doesn't have the right to take the planes without permission from the affected governor. Two of the three legal opinions the BRAC commission has solicited on the Air Guard issue back the Pentagon's proposal.

Commissioners questioned on the Air Guard issue declined to go into detail about which particular Air Guard units might be spared, saying the panel is still deep in deliberations.

The ongoing round of base closures — the fifth since 1988 — is being done to save an estimated \$50 billion and restructure the military to better fight terrorism and modern wars, the Pentagon says.

Some commissioners are concerned the Pentagon's Air Guard recommendations would leave parts of the country vulnerable to the kind of hijack attacks that occurred on Sept. 11, 2001.

"There's a certain amount of comfort in knowing that there are (military aircraft) somewhere near," said commissioner James Hansen, a former congressman from Utah.

### **Ellsworth Gets Boost During Final Discussions: Panel Chairman Questions Figures**

Argus Leader (Sioux Falls, SD)

Diana Marrero

August 21, 2005

Washington - The independent commission that will decide whether to close Ellsworth Air Force Base continued Saturday to question the Pentagon's estimates that its military restructuring would save taxpayers \$50 billion.

As final deliberations wind down on Pentagon proposals to close or restructure dozens of U.S. military bases, several members also expressed concern about the devastating economic impact the closings could have on rural states such as South Dakota, where the Ellsworth base is the second-largest employer.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission will vote next week whether to approve the Pentagon's recommendations.

Directing questions to a panel of military officials, commission Chairman Anthony Principi said he still has not figured out how the Pentagon's proposals will save taxpayer money.

"Can you help me understand how these are true savings?" he asked.

The Pentagon has said the moves not only would save money through strategic spending but also would restructure the military to better fight terrorism and modern wars.

But a recent General Accountability Office analysis found some of the cost-saving estimates overblown. Commissioners have said those estimates might be a factor in the voting.

Closing Ellsworth could cost the military more than \$26 million to complete the environmental cleanup required so that the land could be used for another purpose, according to a study by the Congressional Research Service.

The U.S. Department of Labor has provided a \$1 million grant to South Dakota to assist people who would be affected by the base closing. The state probably would receive additional federal money for economic-development programs.

The nine retired military officials, politicians and Cabinet officials on the Base Realignment and Closure Commission have scheduled four days next week to sift through hundreds of proposals, including ones to close or significantly restructure 67 major bases.

This is the fifth round of base closures since 1988. The commission must send its recommendations by Sept. 8 to President Bush, who can reject or accept the entire list or send it back to the panel for more consideration.

The deliberations and voting are public and will be broadcast on C-SPAN2.

## **Florida, Virginia Spar Over Oceana**

Daily Press (Hampton, VA)

Jim Hodges

August 21, 2005

WASHINGTON -- It was a day for my governor can beat your governor. My captain is right; your captain is wrong. My base is surrounded by green grass.

Right, except for those 26 schools.

It was a day when \$1.6 billion shrank to \$410 million then to \$300 million before going back to \$1.6 billion. And a day when one minus one equaled one.

At the end of Saturday's testimony before the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, only one thing was clear: Some members are serious about having F/A-18 Hornets fly a one-way mission from Naval Air Station Oceana to Cecil Field in Florida.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," said Samuel Skinner, who spent Friday with fellow commission members James T. Hill and Lloyd W. Newton in Jacksonville listening to Florida Gov. Jeb Bush offer everything but the Fountain of Youth to lure the East Coast's Master Jet Base away from Virginia Beach.

On July 19, Skinner was reluctant to vote for adding Oceana to the BRAC closure list, and then only for study. On Saturday, he made it clear that he was ready to see how fast the Navy could get the keys to Cecil Field.

"The state of Florida is totally committed to avoiding encroachment," he said. "I'm not sure the state of Virginia and the city of Virginia

Beach are as committed, though they seem to have made strides."

It was clear that Oceana was on the minds of most of the committee members, as well as the six men who testified on behalf of the Defense Department during the morning round. It was the final chance for the department to defend recommending that 33 bases be closed nationwide, including Fort Monroe, and that 92 facilities undergo some sort of realignment, including Fort Eustis.

Both forts drew scant mention - Fort Monroe as an example of potential environmental cleanup problems; Fort Eustis as an example of adding to synergy by subtracting the helicopter maintenance school. It would move to Fort Rucker, Ala., where the mechanics would join the pilots.

But member after member asked Defense Department representatives about Oceana, especially after Michael Wynne, undersecretary of defense and nominee for secretary of the Air Force, came out four-square for keeping the Hornets in Virginia Beach.

"I ask you to reject" any move of operations from Oceana to Cecil Field, he said.

And Adm. Robert F. Willard, vice chief of naval operations, added that costs "to replicate what currently exists at Oceana" made no economic sense.

All of that was prelude to an afternoon in which Florida - led by Bush - made its case, and Virginia - led by Gov. Mark R. Warner - got a chance to rebut the arguments.

Bush outlined Florida's offer to turn over the 17,668-acre Cecil Field to the Defense Department, which gave it to Jacksonville when the station was closed in 1999.

Also, Bush said, the state would spend \$130 million to pave a road from Interstate 10 to the main gate; offer \$500 million in low-interest loans for low-cost housing to support the base; help Jacksonville raise \$200 million to evict

current tenants; pass legislation that would keep encroachment from ever being a problem and guarantee that all of that could be done within the six-year period mandated by BRAC legislation.

The Navy has said it would cost \$1.6 billion to replace Oceana, but Jacksonville Mayor John Peyton said the figure should be more like \$410 million because of facilities already on site.

"Seventy percent of the base is intact," he said.

Florida Rep. Ander Crenshaw said the figure was more like \$300 million.

The deal was put together in the month since Oceana was put on the BRAC list, which Peyton called "providential timing."

Warner called it "late in the BRAC process" and added that the Navy knew what it was doing when it put a \$1.6 billion price tag on the project. He called it a "certified" figure, as opposed to numbers put forth by the Florida delegation.

Warner added that planes landing at Cecil Field would pass over 26 schools, as opposed to the seven at Oceana; more "certified" numbers.

And to Peyton's claim that Environmental Protection Agency approval of NAS Cecil Field would be "seamless," Warner suggested that the facility was a Superfund cleanup site.

Florida offered retired Navy Capt. John Leehouts, who said that landing patterns at Oceana and Fentress, an outlying landing field, caused problems for young pilots, though not experienced aviators. Because of jet noise, pilots approach landing from an altitude of 1,000 feet at Oceana, 800 at Fentress. Carrier landings are approached from 600 feet.

Added former Hornet pilot John Craig: "No doubt combat training suffers at NAS Oceana and OLF Fentress."

Rebutted Phil Granfield on behalf of Virginia: "The critical part of the landing is the last part."

Bush made it clear that it's an all-or-nothing deal and that Florida did not intend to enter a jet-sharing agreement with Virginia.

When asked by commission member Harold Gehman if Florida's offer had conditions, Bush replied, "It would require a commitment for a master jet base."

Time is running out on the process. Voting begins Wednesday, with completion likely by Friday.

### **State Can Only Wait: In Final BRAC Hearing, Base Closing Defended**

Hartford Courant (Hartford, CT)

David Lightman

August 21, 2005

WASHINGTON -- James V. Hansen, a member of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, took a quarter out of his pocket Saturday morning and flipped it in the air.

That, he said, is how to predict the outcome of the panel's vote this week on the fate of the Naval Submarine Base in Groton.

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The nine-member panel heard the Pentagon defend its decision Saturday to shut Groton and close or realign 61 other major military facilities around the country. It would take five votes to save the Groton base.

There were hints that the Groton decision could be a close vote. After his coin flip, Hansen, a former Republican congressman from Utah, said Groton "has a very compelling case."

Supporters saw fresh reasons for cautious optimism.

Commission Chairman Anthony J. Principi again expressed concern that New England was being virtually abandoned, and held up a map to dramatize his feelings. "I question the wisdom of" the Pentagon's plan to close seven major

Northeastern bases, he said. Other members wondered if the region's homeland security would be jeopardized.

In his opening remarks, Principi singled out an Aug. 15 letter from former President Jimmy Carter supporting the Groton base.

Commission member James H. Bilbray, a former Democratic congressman from Nevada, was skeptical of the Navy's estimate of how much money would be saved by closing the Groton base, a point Team Connecticut, the group leading the fight to save the base, has been making.

Commission member Samuel K. Skinner, a former White House chief of staff, grilled witnesses on just how many submarines the Navy will need in the future.

But Pentagon officials stuck to their insistence that Groton should be closed, even as Bilbray noted that a group of retired admirals had recently told commission members, often in emotional terms, why Groton should remain open.

"Everyone felt closing New London was a bad idea," Bilbray said, pointing out that the former admirals felt compelled to tell commission members how strongly they felt.

"It's a good question," said Adm. Robert F. Willard, vice chief of naval operations. He called the admirals his "close friends," all of whom have ties to New London.

"Most of them were schooled there," he said, referring to the submarine school, which Carter attended in 1948. "Most of them served there."

But Willard said the base-closing process is no place for sentiment. "BRAC transcends that," he said. "We have to transcend the emotions of any single warfare community."

Commission member Phillip Coyle pressed Willard, saying the letter from Carter, as well as support from top House Republican defense

committee leaders, could hardly be called emotional.

Willard would not relent, saying "some of the individuals you're referring to have strong ties to the military community." He called the submarine community, apparently referring to the base itself, "somewhat elderly" and said it was "representative of the excesses" the Navy wants to trim.

The exchanges were typical of the questioning that went on throughout the marathon session, pointed but polite, a barrage of tough inquiries to a team of Pentagon officials who would not budge from their May 13 plan.

The session was the last one scheduled before the commission begins its deliberations and voting Wednesday. Prominent in the cavernous hearing room's front row was U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, who arrived half an hour early to get that prime seat so that the commissioners would be looking right at him constantly.

But trying to assess what will sway the commissioners, all of whom are veteran political officeholders or military personnel, is difficult. The only clues are in their questioning and comments.

Principi, a former Bush administration secretary of veterans affairs, was particularly troubled by the Pentagon's estimated savings of nearly \$50 billion over 20 years; Principi saw the net savings as only about one-third of that.

### **Opinions/ Editorials**

### **Additional Notes**