# Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

# EARLY BIRD

August 22, 2005


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N/A

***National News Articles***

**If Bases Aren't Needed, Some Fear Fleet Is Next**
New York Times
William Yardley
August 22, 2005

In a report to Congress in March 2004, the Navy projected that it would need a fleet of 55 nuclear-powered attack submarines in 2024. A year later, the Navy lowered the projection to 45. By May, Admiral Vern Clark, who was then the chief of naval operations, said he wanted 41. Others now talk of a fleet in the 30's.

It has been 16 years since the Berlin Wall fell, 14 since the Soviet Union dissolved and about a decade since the Navy began rapidly reducing its number of underwater weapons, which helped win the cold war by keeping Soviet submarines in check and the seas open.

Now, with terrorists the targets of the armed forces and Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld talking of "transformation" in the military, the future is in doubt for the submarine port in Groton, which has been set among old oaks on the east bank of the Thames River for nearly 90 years.

In the coming week, an independent federal commission is expected to vote on whether President Bush should adopt a Pentagon plan to close Groton and move its 18 attack submarines to bases in Georgia and Virginia. The closing of Groton would save $1.6 billion over 20 years, and has been proposed as part of a larger plan to close 33 major bases in a nationwide realignment that would save $48.8 billion in the same time frame, according to the Pentagon.

The panel, the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, has expressed skepticism about the Pentagon's projected savings from closing Groton, and the United States General Accounting Office has said that the Pentagon overstated by $400 million the savings that could result from eliminating personnel and undertaking other reductions there.

But the fight over closing the submarine base, coming at a time when the fleet is shrinking, has underscored a broader debate within the Navy, at the Pentagon and among defense analysts: How many submarines - known as "legacy weapons" for their historic role in defense - are essential in the post-cold-war, terrorism-focused, budget-restricted military?

"No one really seems to have an answer to that," said Christopher Hellman, an analyst at the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation, a research group in Washington.

The question is complicated by uncertainty over the shape of future threats, from terrorism to tension with China over Taiwan, and also by parochial interests in the military and genuine faith in the kinds of weapons that helped fight wars for a century.

"Because today the threat du jour is terrorists, people are running around making strategic decisions and plans based on asymmetrical warfare and terrorists," said John Markowicz, a 1965 Naval Academy graduate who leads a state-financed coalition fighting to save Groton.

"I would remind you that it was not that long ago that major powers with large navies were the threat du jour," Mr. Markowicz said. "Having the flexibility to be able to adapt to threats of the future that we may not be able to anticipate today ought to be the more comprehensive approach."

Connecticut officials, fearing the loss of 8,500 jobs at the base and 22,000 more associated with it, have argued that closing the base would cost the Pentagon about $640 million instead of saving $1.6 billion. They say the Pentagon claimed significant savings from personnel cuts that would not be made, understated the environmental cleanup necessary and miscalculated costs of recreating buildings and piers elsewhere.


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The officials also say the Pentagon has ignored the base's "synergy" with Groton's submarine school and Electric Boat, a private submarine builder a few miles down the Thames in New London. The company says it can work more efficiently if the base remains upriver.

Former President Jimmy Carter, an Annapolis graduate who served on a nuclear submarine, wrote the commission on Aug. 15 urging that the base remain open. Top Republican House leaders also support saving the base, including Speaker J. Dennis Hastert and Representative Duncan Hunter, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. They say closing the base would weaken the nation's defense and save no money. The base is in the district of Representative Rob Simmons, a three-term Republican.

Retired admirals, most of them former submariners, have also spoken out strongly against closing the Groton base.

Critics have accused the Navy of closing the base while the question on fleet size remains unresolved. The Navy says the recent projection to shrink the fleet to fewer than 55 submarines was not a factor in its plan to close Groton, insisting that the plan was meant to save money. But in May, when Admiral Clark, who has since retired, appeared before the base closure commission, he suggested that the plan to shut down Groton was directly linked to the goal of having a smaller fleet.

"This is difficult," he told the commission, referring to closing Groton and other bases. "But here's what - the circumstances we face. A few years back we had almost a hundred attack submarines. We, our number's in the 50's now, and I've testified and submitted documentation that my belief is the number in the future is going to be somewhere in the neighborhood in the low 40's. My number is 41. We've got too much structure."

The commission has until Sept. 8 to forward its decision on the Pentagon plan to Mr. Bush, who will then pass his recommendation to Congress for a vote. Mr. Bush has signaled that he will accept the commission's decision.

Norman Polmar, an author and a consultant to the Navy, said in an interview that submarines were regarded as less crucial than aircraft carriers, destroyers and other ships, which are considered more versatile. "It's a player," he said, "but not a major player."

Submarines also have proven more expensive to build than Navy budgets have predicted. The cost of the new Virginia class of attack submarines, intended as a cheaper alternative to the earlier Seawolf class, has soared to an estimated $3 billion a boat, up from an earlier estimate of $2.1 billion, more than the Seawolf, according to an analysis by Mr. Hellman. The high cost has forced the Navy to build one new boat a year instead of two, although it hopes to raise the rate to two a year in the next decade. The attack submarine fleet, now at roughly 55, had about 100 boats in the late 1980's.

"Their dominant capability was in supporting World War III in Europe - this idea that we have to keep the seaways open against a massive Soviet fleet bent on shutting down our forces in Europe," Mr. Hellman said. The United States military, he said would not be "doing that anymore." But submariners say their boats can fight terrorism through intelligence gathering, spending months at sea monitoring underwater communications cables, and by launching special forces to shore in capsules. The boats can also fire Tomahawk cruise missiles from below the surface to land targets hundreds of miles away. In addition, they say, the boats are crucial for facing more traditional naval concerns that have shifted to the Pacific, where China has invested heavily in submarines - although its fleet is less sophisticated.

Closing the Groton base would be "a big mistake," according to Loren B. Thompson, a military analyst with the Lexington Institute in Arlington, Va., a policy research center.

"The largest concentration of undersea expertise in the world is located in Groton and New London."


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**Pentagon seeks to ease concerns of base-closing commission**
USA Today
Associated Press
20 August, 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% 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," Philip Coyle, a 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.


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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 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."

**Pentagon Defends Consolidation Of Bases**
Commission Plans to Start Voting This Week on Plan Involving 837 Facilities
Washington Post
Bradley Graham
22 August, 2005

Pentagon officials made a final attempt yesterday to defend plans to close or consolidate hundreds of military bases, disputing arguments that cost savings were overestimated and that homeland defense would be compromised.

With several days to go before it starts voting on the Pentagon's recommendations, a nine-member federal commission raised a range of lingering concerns during an unusual Saturday hearing.

The commission is likely to end up supporting much of the Pentagon's plan, several members indicated. But the commissioners also voiced considerable reservations about some key aspects, including the removal of active-duty forces from New England, an overhaul of Air National Guard bases, and the closure of an Army research facility at Fort Monmouth, N.J.

They devoted extra time as well to the idea, which emerged late in the review process, of reopening Cecil Field in Jacksonville, Fla., which closed in 1999, and relocating jets there from Oceana Naval Air Station in Virginia Beach.

"It may sound like we're against the whole thing," said James T. Hill, a commission member and retired four-star Army officer, speaking of the Pentagon's plan. "In point of fact," the recommendations "are for the most part really well-made." But, he added, "we're not going to bless it all, I suspect."

The plan would shut, shrink or consolidate 837 military facilities. It marks not only the first attempt in 10 years to reduce domestic base structure but also a more ambitious attempt than efforts in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995.

The commission, whose members include retired military officers, former lawmakers and onetime Cabinet members, is scheduled to spend several days this week voting in public on the Pentagon list and must submit its final report to President Bush by Sept. 8. The president then can either accept the entire package or send it back once for revisions before forwarding it to Congress, which must reject or accept the plan in full.

As a measure of the intense interest that the proposed changes have drawn around the country, Anthony J. Principi, the commission chairman, said the panel had received 500 phone calls per week, more than 80,000 e-mails and more than 500,000 pieces of mail since starting its review three months ago. Commissioners have made 182 visits to 173 installations.

Principi led off the questioning by zeroing in on the issue of savings, which has dogged the Pentagon plan and which he said continued to trouble him. Although defense officials have projected savings of nearly $50 billion over 20 years, after initial closing costs of $24 billion, the Government Accountability Office reported in July that about half the estimated annual saving comes from counting military personnel


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who, for the most part, would be transferred to other bases, not eliminated.

Michael W. Wynne, the Pentagon's former acquisitions chief who is heading the Defense Department's base closure steering group, argued that such accounting was in keeping with government and corporate practice. Just as cash saved from no longer having to pay for base facilities would be used for other military purposes, so many of the troops affected by the changes would be freed for other military jobs more relevant to 21st century operations, he said.

But other commissioners returned to the cost issue several times during four hours of testimony, expressing skepticism about the Pentagon's accounting.

"It doesn't appear to us the savings are real," said Philip Coyle, a commissioner who served as the Pentagon's top weapons evaluator for much of the 1990s.

As for the homeland security implications of the plan, the commissioners focused largely on New England, where the Pentagon has proposed closing three major military facilities -- the submarine base at Groton, Conn., the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine, and the Otis Air National Guard Base in Massachusetts -- and removing aircraft from Naval Air Station Brunswick in Maine.

"To remove essentially all active-duty military activity -- not just air -- out of the New England area, causes me some discomfort," said Harold W. Gehman Jr., a retired four-star naval officer and former head of U.S. Joint Forces Command.

Wynne, along with several senior military officers who testified with him, offered assurances that the distribution of U.S. forces around the country after the proposed base changes would still provide for the protection of New England. He said the recommendations "not only make economic sense but also, and primarily, military and operational sense."

## Redeveloping bases: The biggest factor is location, experts say

Associated Press
David Sharp
21 August, 2005

The vote to close Loring Air Force Base came in 1991, the same year the flag was lowered for the last time at New Hampshire's Pease Air Force Base, a victim of the previous round of military base closings.

Now called Pease International Tradeport, the former base now boasts 5,500 jobs, five times the number of civilian jobs it had when it was an Air Force base. Loring also has surpassed the number of civilian workers with 1,450 jobs, but it has not been easy.

Unlike Limestone, in Maine's rural potato country, Pease is on New Hampshire's Seacoast, 50 miles from Boston, with highways, a deep water port and plentiful workers.

"When you combine all of those things, Pease was in a perfect location for redevelopment," said Brian Hamel of Presque Isle, who worked on both redevelopment projects. "It's the old 'location, location, location.' It really worked for them."

When the Base Realignment and Closure Commission begins casting final votes on Wednesday, supporters of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and Brunswick Naval Air Station can take heart in the knowledge that both oceanfront sites are considered desirable for redevelopment.

The shipyard is on a 600-acre island in the Piscataqua River between Portsmouth, N.H., and Kittery, Maine. The area's demographics are essentially the same as those of Pease, which extends from the western end of Portsmouth into Newington, N.H.

The Brunswick Naval Air Station is situated on 3,200 waterfront acres near major highways in Maine's growing Bath-Brunswick region.


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For now, though, base supporters aren't talking about redevelopment strategies. Their focus is on keeping the bases open.

"At this point I don't want to discuss any future other than saving the shipyard," said William McDonough, a retired shipyard commander who has led Save Our Shipyard's efforts to save the submarine repair yard.

Brunswick and Portsmouth are among more than 600 major bases the closure commission will consider this week.

Also targeted is the Defense Finance Accounting Service center in Limestone. That was a double-whammy for local officials because the center, which has 323 jobs, was created in 1995 to help offset the economic impact from Loring's closing.

In Brunswick's case, the commissioners have three options when they meet Wednesday: closing it, scaling it back, or keeping it open. The panel will also decide this week whether to keep the shipyard and the accounting center open or to shutter them.

Nationwide, the Pentagon says redevelopment efforts at previously closed bases have come close to replacing lost defense industry jobs.

About 115,000 jobs have been created, compared to 130,000 civilian jobs lost, by the 70 redevelopment efforts that release annual reports, according to Glenn Flood, spokesman for the Pentagon's Office of Economic Adjustment.

But those figures don't tell the entire story.

While the 1,100 civilian jobs lost at Loring have been replaced, Limestone has not come close to replacing the buying power of the 4,000 military personnel who left, said Charles Colgan, an economist at the University of Southern Maine's Muskie Institute.

In northern Maine, the economy imploded when the last Air Force jets departed in 1994. Homes came onto the market with few buyers and scores of businesses went under. The population spiraled downward for 12 years before hitting bottom last year.

Even the Pease redevelopment wasn't easy at first. The Pease Development Authority got the land in 1991 during the middle of a regional recession that did not bottom out until two years later, said David Mullen, the authority's deputy director.

"People need to have patience and recognize that it takes a lot of time to gain traction in redevelopment of any closed defense facility," Mullen said.

For Brunswick and Portsmouth, the biggest obstacles would be environmental cleanups and the new Pentagon goal of selling property at closed bases to make money for the treasury, Colgan said. After previous rounds of closings, the Pentagon usually simply turned over base acreage to state and local officials, he said.

Redeveloping the massive Loring complex was still tough.

"Businesses assumed nothing could take root and grow here. Obviously nothing could be further from the truth," said Carl Flora, who runs the authority from the former base commander's office.

The Maine Military Authority, one of the biggest outfits at the former base, has 540 workers. Sitel has 250 employees at a call center. A Job Corps center has about 144 faculty and 350 students. And, of course, there's the accounting center, which has 353 jobs.

In the long run, Colgan sees neighboring communities doing well, even if all the targeted facilities close. But it would likely take years for the communities to regain lost ground.

"It's not the end of the world by any means," he said. "Over time, the communities will recover and get back to or exceed the prosperity."


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**BRAC decisions set this week**
Grand Forks Herald
Eric Rosenberg
21 August, 2005

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission commission will make its final decisions this week on which military facilities will be closed or cut back.

Proposals call for closing 33 major bases, making big cutbacks at 29 others, and close or cutback nearly 800 smaller facilities.

Grand Forks Air Force Base is recommended for realignment, from an air tanker refueling base to a base supporting "future missions" that include unmanned aerial vehicles. The Grand Forks base is no longer a candidate for closure.

These are among the major recommended closures that the commission will vote on:

* Ellsworth Air Force Base in Rapid City, S.D. In early May, internal Pentagon considerations to retain another north-central U.S. base came down to discussion between Ellsworth and Grand Forks Air Force Base, according to meeting minutes.

* Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine.

* Cannon Air Force Base near Clovis, N.M.

* Fort Monroe in Hampton, Va.

* Fort Monmouth in Eatontown, N.J.

* Red River Army Depot near Texarkana, Texas.

* The submarine base in New London, Conn.

Contentious issue

The most contentious issue before the commission involves Air Force recommendations to make sweeping cuts in the Air National Guard. The Air Force is seeking to remove aircraft from 29 of 88 Air National Guard units as the service consolidates aircraft at fewer locations. Roughly 166 of 1,106 Air National Guard aircraft would be removed or retired under the Air Force recommendations.

Aircraft at the North Dakota Air National Guard base in Fargo would be retired, but the base would not be closed. The Air Force proposes to pair the unit with the Grand Forks base UAV mission.

After three months of testimony from Pentagon officials pressing for the closures and from local community officials in opposition, the nine-member panel will cast votes beginning Wednesday on the Pentagon's base-closing recommendations.

The voting sessions by the commission are scheduled to run well into the evening Wednesday through Friday nights, with Saturday set aside if necessary, said commission spokesman Robert McCreary. The sessions in Arlington, Va., are open to the public. C-SPAN2 plans live coverage.

The Defense Department proposed the base closings May 13 to cut costs and apply the savings for new weapons and other defense priorities.

If approved by the commission, the Pentagon's recommended closings and trims would pare 133,769 military and 84,801 civilian jobs across the country, while adding 122,987 military and 66,578 civilian jobs. The changes would generate an anticipated savings of $48.8 billion over 20 years, according to the Pentagon.

McCreary said the nine commissioners, who include retired senior military officers, former lawmakers and Cabinet members, will have three voting options for each base: They may vote to approve a particular Pentagon recommendation or vote against the recommendation or vote to change it.

All decisions will require the approval of a majority of the commissioners.

Loren Thompson, a defense analyst with the Lexington Institute in Arlington, Va., a think


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tank specializing in military affairs, predicted that the commission would disapprove only a handful of the Pentagon's proposals.

The government has conducted four base-closing rounds, in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995. Those commissions approved 80 percent to 85 percent of the Pentagon's recommendations. Congress has never voted to override the commission's findings.

***Local News Articles***

**Ahead of the Curve**
Atlanta Journal-Constitution
Christopher Quinn
August 22, 2005

The fates of Forts Gillem and McPherson and Naval Air Station Atlanta in metro Atlanta and the Navy Supply Corps School in Athens are up for a vote this week.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission is to begin deliberating proposals Wednesday to shutter or move dozens of bases, military schools and reserve posts across the country, as has been recommended to save money. It is meeting in Arlington, Va.

The nine commission members will have time for final discussion on each base before voting, commission spokesman Robert McCreary said.

"There's no set time" to vote on each base, he said.

The process is expected to take the commission until Saturday to complete.

It will first consider late additions to the closure list that were made in July. Then it will consider, in order, Army, Navy and Air Force installations and finally Department of Defense installations, McCreary said.

Retired Army Brig. Gen. Phil Browning, who has headed Georgia's efforts to talk defense officials out of closing Georgia bases, will be at the meeting.

"As soon as the vote occurs, I will flash that back to the governor's office and any other appropriate folks, like the local redevelopment authority groups," he said.

Local governments in each of the jurisdictions where the bases are located have put together groups of community and business leaders to begin planning the redevelopment of base property.

It is a process that is expected to take years, if the bases are closed.

Browning and other Georgians argued June 30 before commission members that the closings would not save as much money as the military projected. They also said that the closings would damage national security.

The Georgia team, including congressional delegates, followed up with letters and visits to commission members.

"At this point, no more communication will be accepted," Browning said.

The commission must present a final closure list to President Bush for consideration by Sept. 8.

The president can send the list back to the commission for reconsideration with comments and suggestions, but the commission does not have to heed them. It must give a final closure list to the president no later than Oct. 20.

The president must approve the list and forward it to Congress by Nov. 7. He can effectively veto the list by not passing it on, and the process will stop.

Congress has 45 working days to consider the list. It can reject it in full by joint resolution, but it cannot change the list. The list becomes law if Congress does not reject it.

**After Final Public Hearing, No Hint At Oceana's Future**
Norfolk Virginian-Pilot
Louis Hansen


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21 August, 2005

Skeptical base closure commissioners were left undecided and unsatisfied after two hours of hearings Saturday over whether the Navy's top East Coast jet base belongs in Florida or Virginia.

Some expressed doubt the ideal place for the base would be in either state.

The members of the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission said the former Navy air base at Cecil Field remained a viable option, and they acknowledged there is no ideal solution to the encroachment around Oceana Naval Air Station.

"You've got your work cut out for you," Commissioner James V. Hansen told the Virginia delegation. "You might be on the right track, maybe 20 years too late."

The special meeting was the last public hearing to consider closing or downsizing Oceana , the Navy's E ast C oast hub for attack jets and Virginia Beach's largest employer. The Navy has stated Oceana is the only viable East Coast base for the fighter squadrons.

The commission's decision is expected later this week.

The nine-member panel voted in July to consider closing Oceana. Chairman Anthony J. Principi asked Florida Gov. Jeb Bush for a proposal to re open Cecil Field Naval Air Station.

Bush down played political motives behind Florida receiving a special hearing, denying speaking about the matter with his brother, President George W. Bush.

On Saturday, the Virginia and Florida delegations attacked the issues and each other, while assuring commissioners that most of their own shortcomings could be fixed. Each side came with promises.

Florida officials stated that Cecil Field could be re-established within six years. Bush said the state would welcome the military with new, subsidized housing and better access roads to the rural base, which is 15 miles from downtown Jacksonville.

The state and city have pledged $200 million to relocate tenants at the Cecil Commerce Center, the industrial park at the former base. An additional $130 million would go toward a new access road to the facility. Federal, state and local governments already have contributed $133 million worth of improvements.

Florida congressman Ander Crenshaw told commissioners it was the "opportunity of a lifetime."

Several former Navy pilots and top brass said the Virginia base had become too dangerous for young pilots to train. Retired Adm. Stan Arthur said one mistake flying on to a carrier "can often result in a fatality."

John Leehouts, a retired Navy pilot who flew from both bases, said the bombing ranges and ability to fly with other military branches based in Florida made Cecil Field ideal.

Military operations ceased at the rural north Florida base in 1999. Years of industrial use made it a Superfund clean-up site, and local officials struggled to create a new identity for the 18,000-acre base.

The city of Jacksonville has lured military and aviation-related businesses to the commerce park but has failed to reclaim the 9,500 jobs the facility generated in the early 1990s. Fewer than one in five jobs remains.

Virginia leaders testified they had made tangible steps to slow growth around Oceana. The city and state have teamed up to spend $15 million to purchase the property underneath a proposed condominium development in the high-risk area.

The city has pledged an additional $160 million to purchase development rights for properties along the corridor between Oceana and Fentress Naval Auxiliary Landing Field in Chesapeake.


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A bi partisan group of state lawmakers also has agreed to new legislation restricting inappropriate development.

“We have heard, loud and clear, your concerns about encroachment,” Gov. Mark R. Warner told the panel.

Virginia officials also argued that re opening the Florida base was filled with uncertainty and could be more costly than anticipated. They said heavy commercial air traffic between Cecil Field and the Atlantic Ocean would interfere with training operations.

Estimates to re open Cecil Field have ranged from $250 million by a Jacksonville consultant to $1.6 billion by Navy planners.

U.S. Sen. George Allen, R-Va., said spending additional money to replace a viable base would be a waste of taxpayers’ money.

“Oceana remains the best site,” he said.

U.S. Sen. John W. Warner, R-Va., did not attend the hearing, citing other commitments. But in a recent letter to Principi, Warner questioned the legality and practicality of basing the Navy’s active jet fighters at a closed military base.

The rivalry between the two bases dates to the 1993 round of base closings. The Navy pitted Oceana against Cecil Field and two other air bases for the principal home to the service’s top strike fighters.

Cecil Field scored higher marks for military value. But Oceana supported a classified mission that commissioners deemed too important and immovable. Oceana survived. Cecil Field closed.

Twelve years later, a new BRAC panel has shown little indication of its members’ leanings. Many said the Virginia base had serious flaws, and it was their job to consider all viable options. They doubted the Navy’s $1.6 billion estimate to re open Cecil Field.

Commissioner Harold W. Gehman Jr. , a retired admiral and former commander of the U.S. Joint Forces Command, asked if Florida would still grant its incentives to receive only part of Oceana’s operations.

Bush said the incentives would only make sense for the entire base.

Commissioner James H. Bilbray praised the Virginia delegation for its presentation and said Florida officials now had to come up with more certified data to make their case.

Principi said the commission will face numerous difficult decisions when it votes on a final list this week. The commission must finalize its recommendations by Sept. 8.

“There are some really tough ones,” Principi said. “Oceana is a really tough one.”

## RI Arsenal Awaits Final Decisions

Quad City Times (Illinois)
Ed Tibbetts
August 21, 2005

Later this week, in a Washington, D.C.,-area hotel conference room, a panel of nine men and women will be making potentially life-altering decisions for hundreds of Quad-Citians who work on Arsenal Island.

They're people like Tim Donohoe, a 54-year-old from Davenport who's spent 24 years working at the base. Donohoe, a Quad-City native, is eight years from being eligible for full retirement benefits.

But if the commission upholds a Pentagon recommendation to move his employer off the island, he'd be faced with a tough choice: Stay or go.

It's a decision made all the more difficult because it wouldn't be made immediately but would have to come within six years — just two years short of when he'd be eligible to retire.

"I'm in an awkward position," he said last week.


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Among the possibilities: Commute back and forth to his new job, possibly in Detroit, for a couple of years.

It's not an appealing prospect. "Living here, growing up here my whole life, I'm not looking to move," he says.

Hundreds of Arsenal employees face similar dilemmas. Ever since May 13, when the Pentagon recommended a massive realignment of the base, workers there have been faced with the chance they would have to pick up stakes and move to a new city. That, or surrender jobs some have held most of their adult lives.

They've watched as their congressional delegations and community leaders argued against the moves, and they've debated the possibilities among themselves. Mostly, though, they've been in a holding pattern.

That's about to end.

Later this week, the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, meeting at a hotel near the Pentagon over four days, will decide whether to uphold the Pentagon's proposal or reject it, a precursor to the report it will make to President Bush by Sept. 8.

The Quad-Cities has a stake here, too. The net loss of close to 1,600 jobs represents some of the best-paying in the area. Also, losing them will result in the indirect loss of another 1,300 jobs here, according to Pentagon estimates.

That number is surely higher, too, because it is based on Arsenal job losses that were initially underestimated.

The Defense Department recommendation would ship four white-collar agencies off the island, shuffle some work in and out at the factory and add the headquarters of the 1st U.S. Army headquarters, now located in Georgia.

Local officials reasonably confident

Quad-City Development Group officials, who have been leading the campaign to keep Arsenal jobs, said they are reasonably confident. In an e-mail to members last week, Jim Morgan, the group's key man in the effort, said the organization had done its homework and presented "compelling facts" to the commission. However, they're more confident about keeping some agencies here than others.

For example, the case for saving the 1,052-person Tank-automotive and Armaments Command is "pretty good," Morgan said. But, while they feel they have a strong case for saving the 235-person Civilian Human Resource Agency, Thom Hart, president of the development group, said: "We're not sure we've got the traction on that."

The Defense Department also would move the 300-person Defense Finance and Accounting Service and the 130-person northwest regional office of the Installation Management Agency off the island.

The Joint Manufacturing and Technology Center stands to lose some depot maintenance functions but gain metal parts work from two ammunition plants slated to be closed.

Next week's hearings begin Wednesday and could last into Saturday. They'll be shown on C-SPAN.

Over the last three months, much of the attention in the process has been paid to such high profile bases like the Ellsworth Air Force base in South Dakota, the submarine base in Groton, Conn., both slated for closure, and the proposed consolidation of National Guard bases around the country.

The spotlight on the submarine base is so bright that U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert, a Republican, and former President Jimmy Carter, a Democrat, both urged the commission last week to save the base.

With that level of interest in a narrow list of bases, not to mention more than 200 individual recommendations facing the commission, some


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national analysts believe those outside the spotlight may not get as much consideration.

In most cases, the Pentagon proposal is well-documented, says Daniel Goure, vice president of the Lexington Institute, a Virginia-based research organization that studies defense issues. "As a result you tend to focus on about 10 to 15 percent," he said.

Still, he says well-documented protests have a chance. And local officials hope, over the past three months, they have poked enough holes in the department's Arsenal recommendations to win the day.

Overturning a recommendation is difficult. On average, only 15 percent of the proposals are altered. And to do reverse a proposal, the commission must find the Pentagon substantially deviated from congressionally-mandated criteria. The criteria are mostly centered on improving military capability, but they also give consideration to saving money and, to a lesser extent, community impact.

After the commission vote, it will send a report to the president and Congress. They will make the final decision. But local officials say they expect to know the outcome this week. Even though U.S. Sen. Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., said last Wednesday there is sentiment in Congress to stop the process, a commission report has never been rejected.

Arsenal officials are preparing for town hall meetings with employees to answer their questions.

So far, there still are a lot of questions. Among them is whether workers, if they are moved, will be guaranteed positions at their new posts.

But first, the commission will vote. About a half dozen Pentagon recommendations pertain to the Arsenal.

For the most part, the four previous base closing rounds have left the Arsenal alone. In 1991, the commission did recommend sending a predecessor to TACOM to Alabama — and with it about 1,200 jobs. But it reversed itself in 1993.

Donohoe, in his mid-30s back then, remembers he didn't object so much to moving in 1991 and didn't really pay much attention to the process. Times have changed. He's married now — and more interested.

"It really didn't bother me then," he said. "Now, being in a different position in my life, I'm going to every meeting. It's totally different now."

## Military Bases Get Scrutiny This Week

Philadelphia Inquirer
Kimberly Hefling, Associated Press
22 August, 2005

This week could prove pivotal for the future of Pennsylvania's bases.

Tomorrow, a federal judge in Philadelphia will hear arguments in the state's suit to keep the Willow Grove Naval Air Station open.

On Wednesday, the nine-member Base Closure and Realignment Commission will begin voting on each base the Pentagon has recommended be closed or realigned.

Pennsylvania lawmakers are mainly concerned that the commission will recommend the closure of Willow Grove and the Pittsburgh International Airport Air Reserve Station. More than 1,600 jobs are at stake.

They also will be watching closely to see if the Tobyhanna and Letterkenny Army Depots receive the 700 new jobs the Pentagon has recommended be moved to them from the Red River Army Depot in Texas. Tobyhanna is in Monroe County, east of Wilkes-Barre; the Letterkenny depot is in Chambersburg, Franklin County, west of Gettysburg.

The Pentagon plan would close 33 major bases and downsize 29 others. The Pentagon estimates the moves would save $48 billion over 20 years.


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"This is it," said Adrian King Jr., an aide to Gov. Rendell. "This is when we'll find out whether the DOD [Department of Defense] recommendations will stand or... fall."

Voting by the base closure commission could take four days. The commission has until Sept. 8 to submit its recommendations to President Bush, who has until Sept. 23 to accept or reject all of them. Congress then has 45 days to approve them as a whole or reject them.

In Philadelphia, U.S. District Judge John R. Padova agreed to a request by Rendell to rule on the state's case against Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld before the Sept. 8 deadline. It was unknown whether he would rule at tomorrow's hearing.

Rendell, a Democrat who was joined in the suit by Republican Sens. Arlen Specter and Rick Santorum, argues that the U.S. Constitution prevents the Pentagon from making changes to a state's National Guard without a governor's consent.

Willow Grove is home to the 111th Fighter Wing, which the Pentagon recommends deactivating. It flies the A-10 Thunderbolt II, known as the Warthog.

On Aug. 12, the Department of Justice sided with the Pentagon, saying Pennsylvania was asking to return "to a system in which local politics, rather than national planning, determined which facilities were closed and which were spared."

The Illinois governor has filed a similar suit.

Tim Ford, executive director of the Association of Defense Communities, said that Pennsylvania had a tough case to win, but that if Padova ruled for the state, it could have national ramifications.

The Pentagon has proposed shifting people, equipment and aircraft among at least 54 sites where Air Guard units are stationed.

"I think it's going to be interesting to see whether a judge would attempt to stop the process," Ford said. "We've never had that in the past."

Willow Grove is also home to the 913th Airlift Wing, which trains and equips reservists.

The state says that, with the commission seeking to foster more cooperation among the military branches, the Pentagon did not properly consider how Willow Grove works with the other services. If it is closed, 1,200 jobs would be lost.

The Pittsburgh base is home to the Air Force's 911th Tactical Airlift Group, which employs 322 people. It recruits and trains Air Force personnel and provides airlift of airborne forces.

The state has argued the Pentagon improperly concluded that the base cannot expand to hold more aircraft.

This is the first round of base closures in a decade. In the four previous decades, the state lost more than 3,000 military positions and more than 13,000 civilian jobs. The most damaging was the loss a decade ago of the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard.

In all, the Pentagon recommended closing 13 bases in the state and downsizing five.

The state has spent $4.5 million to keep Pennsylvania's bases open.

## 'War Room' Set For Texans As Panel Ponders Closings

San Antonio Express-News
Gary Martin
August 22, 2005

When an independent panel meets at a suburban hotel this week to determine the fate of hundreds of U.S. military facilities, a contingent of Texans will be following events closely from an improvised "war room" nearby.

The suite, rented by Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, is a few floors above the ballroom at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City in Arlington, Va., where the Base Closure and Realignment Commission,


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commonly known as BRAC, will begin marathon deliberations Wednesday morning.

By the end of the week, the panel will have rendered final judgment on a sweeping Pentagon plan to shutter military installations across the country, including four in Texas.

"We are going to keep going right up to the end," Hutchison, R-Texas, told the San Antonio Express-News. "We are going to leave no stone unturned."

Hutchison and other state leaders are working to save missions at Brooks City-Base in San Antonio, Naval Station Ingleside, and the Red River Army Depot and Lone Star Ammunition Plant, both in Texarkana.

In addition, dozens of other Texas bases and facilities face cuts and realignments.

The "war room" will be staffed by Hutchison aides to accommodate officials traveling from Texas to monitor the fates of hometown installations.

It also will serve as a communications hub, relaying information back to communities from daily hearings that are expected to continue late into the night.

The commission will vote on more than 1,800 proposals, including the recommended closure of 33 major bases and the realignment of 29 others.

Altogether, the Pentagon estimates the plan will save $48.8 billion over the next 20 years.

Critics argue the estimated savings are inflated, and they have challenged the legality of closing state Air National Guard centers — as proposed in the plan — without the consent of governors.

The Pentagon says similar claims of exaggerated savings were made in the previous rounds in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995.

"We stand by the recommendations," said Glenn Flood, a Pentagon spokesman.

A recent Justice Department ruling found the Defense Department has the legal authority to shut guard bases and move aircraft often used by states during local emergencies.

The commission's final deliberations follow months of on-site visits and regional hearings to hear testimony from community leaders.

"The process has not been easy," panel Chairman Anthony Principi said. "Much thought and consideration is going into each one of these decisions."

By law, the panel must submit its final recommendations to the president by Sept. 8. The House and Senate have until Nov. 7 to either accept or reject the roster in its entirety.

Bush signaled this month he would endorse the commission's recommendations, telling Texas reporters in an interview: "I'm going to accept their recommendations as presented."

In the four previous rounds, the base closure panels accepted 85 percent of Pentagon recommendations.

Observers of the process predict similar results this time.

"I don't think you are going to see a wholesale rearranging of the list," said Paul Taibl with Business Executives for National Defense, a Washington-based think tank.

"The commission will make some changes due to the fact that there are more realignments than closures, but for the most part the list is going to stand," Taibl said.

To monitor the commission votes, communities have snapped up suites and rooms at the hotel, and lawmakers are providing assistance to the legions of local leaders traveling to the nation's capital to protect federal spending that flows through military installations.

The Texas war room includes a computer, high-speed Internet connection and a fax machine.


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"It's a central location for people to meet and to relay back to their communities what is going on," said Chris Paulitz, a Hutchison spokesman.

"We are going to have eight to 10 communities represented, with three to five officials from each community," Paulitz said.

San Antonio officials have urged the panel to spare Brooks and rethink the realignment of some missions at Lackland AFB, which together would result in the loss of more than 6,000 jobs.

Even so, San Antonio figures to see a net gain of about 3,500 jobs, thanks to an ambitious plan to expand Brooke Army Medical Center and establish Fort Sam Houston as a Center for Joint Enlisted Training. Those projects will generate about $1 billion in construction and bring in more than 9,300 jobs.

"San Antonio is in good shape," Hutchison said.

Retired Brig. Gen. John Jernigan, chairman of a local military task force, said city officials would remain vigilant, though, and monitor BRAC decisions because the Pentagon has proposed "70 different realignments that affect San Antonio."

"I'll be glad when this is all over," Jernigan said.

State leaders are more concerned about Texarkana and the Coastal Bend region with the loss of 7,700 jobs at the Red River depot, the ammunition plant and the Ingleside port.

"I know the Department of Defense is pushing very hard for its recommendations," said Hutchison, who continued to lobby the commission in the week leading up to the vote. "I'm concerned about Red River; I'm concerned about Ingleside."

With good reason.

Taibl said efforts to spare Ingleside would take an "extraordinary effort" and would entail a "hugely costly endeavor" for the Navy to keep it open.

Maintenance depots, meanwhile, like the one in Texarkana, "are not high on this commission's list," Taibl said.

## Base closing commission set to vote on Fort Monmouth's fate

Associated Press
Donna De La Cruz
August 21, 2005

The presentations have been given, the protest letters sent. There's not much more backers of Fort Monmouth can do to persuade a federal panel to keep the Army installation from closing, other than pray and keep their fingers crossed.

Employees at the research and development facility will soon learn Fort Monmouth's fate. The Pentagon has recommended closing the post and moving its mission and more than 2,000 employees to the Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has proposed shutting or consolidating 62 major U.S. military bases and hundreds of smaller facilities, saying his plan will save $49 billion over 20 years.

Fort Monmouth's backers say closing the post would be detrimental to national security because the post has developed many of the devices currently being used by U.S. soldiers in the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts.

Starting Wednesday, the Base Realignment and Closure Commission will publicly debate the fates of military installations nationwide. At the hearings, scheduled to last through Saturday, Aug. 27, the commissioners are scheduled to vote on each installation. It would take the approval of five of the nine members to keep Fort Monmouth open.

Fort Monmouth's chances are difficult to ascertain, but Rep. Rush Holt, whose district includes the post, says the facility has a 50-50 shot at staying open.


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"That's good, compared to where we started, at zero," Holt said.

Holt, along with New Jersey Reps. Frank Pallone, Jim Saxton and Chris Smith, and Sens. Jon Corzine and Frank Lautenberg, have worked with acting Gov. Richard J. Codey and a host of private citizens to try and sway the BRAC commission. At a July hearing, four commissioners seemed receptive to a plan in which Fort Monmouth would remain open and be merged into a Pentagon-recommended "mega base" with Fort Dix, McGuire Air Force Base and Lakehurst Naval Air station. The four New Jersey bases already work together on various projects.

At that hearing, BRAC Chairman Anthony Principi said the plan was "certainly what the secretary of defense is trying to accomplish in this transformation to build more jointness into our warfighting capability, readiness and training, research and development."

Holt said the commissioners have shown a "pretty independent frame of mind."

"They almost surely will be willing to remove bases from the list," he added.

But two military analysts weren't quite as optimistic.

"My best guess is that the commission will go along with the original recommendation and close Fort Monmouth," said Loren Thompson of The Lexington Institute, a Virginia-based think tank.

Thompson said he did not believe there's a synergy with Fort Monmouth and the "mega base" facilities. He added that Aberdeen is closer to Washington, D.C., and the "technological center of gravity," referring to the many technology companies in and around the nation's capital.

Robert Gillcash, a military analyst based in Washington who worked as a congressional staffer during other base closing rounds, said that history shows that previous BRAC commissions have been "extraordinarily judicious."

"I think that history supports the fact that very few, if any, decisions are overturned, absent extraordinary and compelling data that proves the Pentagon deviated substantially from the criteria," Gillcash said, although he noted that Saxton managed to save McGuire Air Force Base and Fort Dix in prior base closing rounds.

Gillcash did say that New Jersey has put forward a "very compelling and persuasive presentation for Fort Monmouth and the BRAC staff has a great deal of work to do when reviewing the final decision."

He added that, in his opinion, the most important issue surrounding Fort Monmouth is the so-called "brain drain," referring to the estimated 80 percent of the post's highly skilled scientists and engineers who said they would not move to Aberdeen.

"Are there skills, talents and capabilities that can't be introduced in a new location? That is the core argument," Gillcash said.

## Thune wishes BRAC timetable would slate Ellsworth earlier

Associated Press
Dennis Gale
21 August, 2005

Supporters have spent countless hours lobbying key decision-makers to try to get Ellsworth Air Force Base off the latest list of military installations for closure. They've used logic in their arguments and have found influential people to help make their case.

But one thing they can't control is timing.

Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., says base supporters have been concerned that the vote whether to remove Ellsworth from the Pentagon's closure list will come late in the process this week.

"We would prefer if we were at the top of the list rather than at the bottom," Thune said,


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"because if they do start taking bases off the list early, there's going to be additional pressure on them as they go forward to find savings."

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission holds its final deliberations Wednesday through Saturday in Arlington, Va.

Thune said he was told that recommendations dealing with the Army will be handled first, followed by the Navy and then the Air Force. That means an Ellsworth decision could be made on Friday, he said.

The 48-member BRAC staff will make recommendations, and the commission will act on 190 Pentagon recommendations in some fashion, Thune said. Unlike the Ellsworth debate, some will not be controversial.

"I would expect that Ellsworth will be a very lengthy and probably spirited discussion. I don't know yet where the (BRAC) staff's going to come down. We've worked them night and day now for the past three months on our data, on our information, on our arguments," Thune said.

Those backing Ellsworth are trying to reverse history, the senator said. In the four base closure rounds to date - 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995 - "the batting average of getting a base off the list once it's listed for closure is 15 percent. So we've got 85 percent odds going against us," he said.

The base supporters are up against the best military minds in the Air Force and the Pentagon and must come up with a rationale for getting the base off the list, Thune said.

"It's a heavy lift, but I think we've got very compelling arguments. And I think we've made considerable headway in getting those arguments in front of the commissioners and hopefully have been persuasive enough in making them that we'll be in the running on this," he said.

Thune said he has met with eight of the nine BRAC commissioners and has talked with them on the phone several times. They are not indicating what they will do.

"They're playing it close to the vest, and if I were them, I probably would, too."

## Navy projected mass savings from Naval Postgraduate School closure

Monterey County Herald (California)
Julia Reynolds
21 August, 2005

Newly released Department of Defense reports and documents show for the first time why the Naval Postgraduate School was put on and then removed from the Pentagon's base closure and consolidation list before the lineup was made public in May.

Top Navy officials said they wanted the Monterey school on the list because closure would save the Pentagon nearly $ 90 million annually "with payback expected immediately."

That analysis, which has been undercut by Monterey officials, calculated that closure would ultimately save the government anywhere from $ 932 million to $ 1.12 billion during the next 20 years, but without taking into account the millions of dollars it would require to train the same personnel elsewhere.

Minutes of Pentagon meetings from throughout April show that executive teams debated several scenarios in case of a Navy school closure, including sending Fleet Numerical Meteorology and Oceanography Center to Mississippi or leaving it in Monterey. Either scenario would present almost immediate payback, Marine Lt. Col. Mark Murphy told team members, according to the Defense Department minutes.

The minutes show the team debated and eventually adjusted the cost of relocating the school's information technology to another base, calculating that the adjustments raised the potential 20-year savings by nearly $ 50 million.

Other released documents describe the economic impact that closure of the Navy school and the


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Army's Defense Language Institute would have on the Monterey area. Closing the Navy school, the documents say, would cause a total loss of 6,684 jobs from 2006 to 2011, representing 2.84 percent of local employment. A similar report made for privatizing the language institute shows a loss of 10,944 jobs, or 4.65 percent of the work force.

One report written in April and made public this month says students who would have attended the Navy school should instead be sent to private universities. That report guided a recommendation to close the Navy school, a recommendation that remained in place until just days before the Pentagon announced its closure and consolidation list May 13.

The report, prepared by the Education and Training Joint Cross Services Group, disputes local arguments that the school's "military value" overrides cost concerns. With the federal base closure commission preparing to start voting on its closure recommendations this week, Navy school supporters have focused on the school's military value while shifting attention away from Monterey's high cost of living.

The report's summary says the group's "military judgment" was that "privatization provided the highest overall military value to the department."

But the financial analysis in the report glaringly leaves out tuition costs for the 1,500 or so students who would presumably be sent to private universities. It also reported the median house value in the Monterey area as $ 265,800. The real figure for Monterey County was $ 698,000 in July.

Monterey City Manager Fred Meurer, who plays a leading role in local efforts to retain the Navy school and the language institute in Monterey, said he couldn't understand how the Pentagon could have failed to include tuition costs.

"We gave up on trying to figure out how they got their numbers," he said.

The report underscores a long-running rift within the Navy that flared after a 2000 article in the journal Naval Institute Proceedings by Navy school graduate Lt. Cmdr. Janice Graham, who argued that it would be cheaper to send Navy graduate students to civilian universities.

That article was followed immediately by another piece countering its claims. It was written by retired Adm. Henry Mauz of Pebble Beach, who is president of the Navy school's private foundation and is active in the retention effort.

Mauz wrote that Graham's recommendations to privatize "seem to reflect the notion that one graduate degree will serve the department just as well as any other. Nothing could be further from the truth."

The debate has continued since, with top Navy officials telling the secretary of defense earlier this year that the Navy "wanted out of the education business," according to former Central Coast Congressman Leon Panetta, co-chairman of California's Council on Base Support and Retention.

In a May hearing before the federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission, Navy Secretary Gordon England, who had just replaced Paul Wolfowitz to serve as acting deputy secretary of defense, acknowledged he had long favored that position when he testified the Pentagon would save money by closing the Navy school and consolidating it with other schools.

"Frankly," he told commission Chairman Anthony Principi, "you could save a lot of money in the case of Monterey."

Despite the savings, England testified in the Washington hearing that other considerations ruled in the end, and it was the opportunity for U.S. officers to interact with foreign students that moved him and other Navy leaders to change their minds.

"We were, frankly, afraid to take the chance that the value we had built up in those institutions --


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we were afraid we could not replicate that," he said. "You look around the world today at all the people we deal with, invariably they came to school here. Not only did we get to know 'em, they got to know each other."

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Vern Clark said that all kinds of merger and closure ideas had been considered, but ultimately, he said, "this is a battle for ideas and ideals."

Meurer is not the only one to question the Pentagon's numbers.

Last week, The New York Times reported that several of the nine BRAC commissions said the Defense Department may have overestimated its predicted $ 50 billion in savings.

Meurer and others have been frustrated by the slow release of department documents during the base closure process because it leaves little time to prepare counter-arguments to commissioners, who will decide this week which bases are closed or merged.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld had promised that this closure round would be the most open in the program's 15-year history. The Pentagon, however, began releasing closure data almost a month after it was promised, and much of it was still classified and unavailable to elected officials without security clearance.

Only after 19 senators sent a protest letter to the president did the materials begin to be declassified in June.

## Base workers temper decisions with caution

Pittsburgh Tribune Review
Brian Bowling
21 August, 2005

Jennifer and Tom Yochum thought they had protected at least one of their military jobs.

Master Sgt. Mark Winklosky knows he took a risk last year when he bought a 15-acre spread in Prosperity, Washington County, about an hour's drive from his job with the 911th Airlift Wing in Moon.

The Yochums, Winklosky and about 850 others who work at three Allegheny County military facilities could get an inkling this week of whether their jobs will survive under the Pentagon's nationwide belt-tightening and modernization program.

The nine-member Base Realignment and Closure Commission is scheduled to start its final deliberations Wednesday on a Defense Department proposal to close or reduce operations at 837 bases nationwide, saving an estimated $5.5 billion a year. The proposal would close 13 military bases in Pennsylvania. The 911th Airlift Wing in Moon and the Army's Charles E. Kelly Support Facility in Collier would be shuttered, while the Army Reserve's 99th Regional Readiness Command would move from Moon to Fort Dix, N.J. The local bases provide 845 jobs directly and support an estimated 571 private-sector jobs.

A similar review in 1995 also targeted the Kelly center, which includes a commissary and exchange where veterans and active duty military personnel can buy reduced-price goods tax-free. At the time, both Jennifer and Tom Yochum of Scott Township worked there.

The center escaped that round of cuts, and the Yochums decided they would be safer if one moved to another military job. Tom, 53, remained at the Kelly center in Collier, where he's a manager in the department that handles Army Reserve unit deployments and other military-related transportation. Jennifer, 49, took a job at the 99th as a budget analyst.

"I moved to the 99th so we wouldn't have all our eggs in one basket," she said.

But the Pentagon recommended doing away with all three major military facilities in Allegheny County.

"It was a shock to both of us that all three were on the list," Tom Yochum said.


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The Yochums were preparing to build their retirement home in Collier when the list came out. Jennifer Yochum said they were within days of signing for the loan when the Pentagon announcement gave them second thoughts.

"Our future is so uncertain," she said.

After running through the possibilities, they decided to move ahead. While they hope to work longer, Tom Yochum is within two years of retirement, so if the Kelly facility stays on the hit list, he could take a pension by the time it closes. Jennifer Yochum has another six years before she's eligible, unless the Defense Department offers an early retirement program.

Their worst-case scenario is that she spends about four years working in New Jersey and commuting home on weekends. They don't like the idea, but it's considerably better than the options many of their co-workers face.

Most employees are reluctant to discuss the situation. One employee said that speaking up would be a good way to put himself at the bottom of the list for transfers to openings at other facilities.

Nearing retirement and both in management positions, the Yochums said they're less worried about themselves than they are about the younger people who work for them. They said several have only 10 of the 30 years they need to qualify for retirement and are single parents with slim prospects of finding other jobs in Pittsburgh that match Defense Department pay and benefits.

"They just feel helpless," Tom Yochum said.

Local Defense Department employees have faced the possible loss of their jobs since the Congress approved the latest base review in 2002.

Winklosky, a public affairs officer for the 911th, said he knew the facility barely escaped closure in 1995 and could end up on the next list when he decided to buy a house on 15.3 acres in Washington County a year ago for about $176,000.

"It was a gamble," he said. "I just felt you can't base your life on what may happen."

Winklosky has been in the military -- regular and reserve -- for 25 years, so the worst case is that he could retire at half pay instead of moving. Another alternative would be to rent out his house while he works somewhere else for the five years before he qualifies for a full pension.

Like the Yochums, he said many employees at the 911th don't have the same options if the commission leaves the air base on the closing list.

"The whole thing with BRAC -- it's scary to everyone," he said. "But what do you do? You just have to wait it out and see what happens."

The employees aren't the only ones waiting to see what happens. Armstrong's restaurant in Moon derives much of its business from the 911th and, to a lesser extent, from the 99th.

"Almost daily, we have members from the 911th coming in here," said Craig Paullet, the restaurant's general manager.

On drill weekends, the reservists will sometime show up a dozen at a time, he added.

"They'll take up a couple of tables, so it's a nice boost," he said.

Moon-area businesses can use any boost they can get after taking a substantial hit when US Airways pulled its hub out of the Pittsburgh International Airport in 2004. Paullet said takeout orders from the airline used to run $200 to $300 per order. Now, the orders are significantly smaller and less frequent. Add in the likelihood that rising gas prices will curb dining out, and the restaurant needs every customer it has, he said.

"Who wants to lose any customers in today's marketplace?" Paullet asked. "It just seems a shame that these guys don't sharpen their pencils


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in other areas instead of going after the military."

**Rep. Christopher Shays, R-4, probably won't get a warm welcome from his Montana colleagues any time soon.**
Connecticut Post
Peter Urban
August 21, 2005

Last month, Shays forced legislative leaders to strip a provision from the 1,600-page transportation bill that would have boosted the chances for the Montana Air National Guard to keep its F-16 fighter planes.

Shays said it was "absolutely outrageous" for Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., to have slipped into a transportation bill a measure aimed at foiling a Base Realignment and Closure recommendation.

"We are fighting for our lives to keep Groton [submarine base] open and this just made us totally disgusted," Shays said at the time.

Baucus was none too pleased with Shays for stopping his effort to reopen a runway at the Malmstrom Air Force Base. He's now likely to get a cold shoulder from Rep. Denny Rehberg, R-Mont.

Rehberg was silent during the brouhaha but now finds himself under attack from his Democratic challenger.

State Rep. Monica Lindeen is accusing Rehberg of not doing enough to save the Air National Guard from being closed in a lengthy attack posted on her campaign Website at www.lindeen.net.

"When it came time to stand up for Malmstrom, Rep. Rehberg's silence was deafening," Lindeen said. "Montanans needed someone to fight for them in Congress." Lindeen accused Rehberg of standing by while members of his party, who misunderstood the provision, stripped it from the highway bill. Malmstrom Air Force Base that was closed in the 1995 round of base closures.

Opening the runway could allow Montana's Air National Guard to keep its F-16 fighter planes, which are on the current BRAC chopping block.

**Court hearing to start pivotal week for Pa. bases**
Associated Press
Kimberly Hefling
22 August, 2005

This week could prove pivotal for the future of Pennsylvania's bases.

A federal judge will hear arguments on Tuesday in the state's suit to keep Willow Grove Naval Air Station open.

On Wednesday, the nine-member Base Closure and Realignment Commission will begin voting individually on each base the Pentagon has recommended should be closed or realigned.

Pennsylvania lawmakers are primarily concerned that the commission will recommend the closure of Willow Grove outside Philadelphia and the Pittsburgh International Airport Air Reserve Station. More than 1,600 jobs are at stake.

They will also be watching closely to see if Tobyhanna and Letterkenny Army depots receive the 700 new jobs the Pentagon has recommended should be moved to the state from Red River Army Depot in Texas.

Combined, the Pentagon plan would close 33 major bases and downsize 29 others. By doing so, it estimates $48 billion would be saved over 20 years.

"This is it," said Adrian King Jr., an aide to Gov. Ed Rendell. "This is when we'll find out whether the DOD recommendations will stand or whether they will fall."

Voting by the base closure commission could take four days. It has until Sept. 8 to submit its recommendations to President Bush. The president has until Sept. 23 to accept all recommendations or reject them. Congress then


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has 45 days to approve them as a whole or reject them.

In Philadelphia, U.S. District Judge John R. Padova agreed to a request by Rendell to rule on the state's case against Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld before the Sept. 8 deadline. It was unknown whether he would rule at Tuesday's hearing.

Rendell, a Democrat who was joined in the suit by Republican Sens. Arlen Specter and Rick Santorum, argues that the U.S. Constitution prevents the Pentagon from making changes to a state's National Guard without a governor's consent.

Willow Grove is home to the 111th Fighter Wing, which the Pentagon has recommended be deactivated. It flies the A-10 Thunderbolt II, also known as the Warthog.

The Department of Justice on Aug. 12 sided with the Pentagon, saying that Pennsylvania was asking to return "to a system in which local politics, rather than national planning, determined which facilities were closed and which were spared."

The Illinois governor has filed a similar suit.

Tim Ford, executive director of the Association of Defense Communities, said Pennsylvania has a tough case to make, but if Padova rules in favor of the state, it could have national ramifications.

The Pentagon has proposed shifting people, equipment and aircraft around at least 54 sites where Air Guard units are stationed.

"I think it's going to be interesting to see whether a judge would attempt to stop the process," Ford said. "We've never had that in the past."

Willow Grove is also home to the 913th Airlift Wing, which trains and equips reservists.

With BRAC seeking to foster more cooperation among the military branches, the state said the Pentagon did not properly consider how Willow Grove works with the other services. If closed, 1,200 jobs would be lost.

The Pittsburgh base is home to the Air Force's 911th Tactical Airlift Group, which employs 322. Its mission is to recruit and train Air Force personnel and provide airlift of airborne forces.

The state has argued the Pentagon improperly concluded that the base cannot expand to hold more aircraft.

This is the first base closure round in a decade. In the four previous, the state lost more than 3,000 military positions and more than 13,000 civilian jobs. The most damaging was the loss a decade ago of the Philadelphia Navy Yard.

In all, the Pentagon recommended the closure of 13 bases in Pennsylvania and the downsizing of five.

The state has spent $4.5 million to keep Pennsylvania's bases open.

"What's at stake here is huge," said Rep. Tim Murphy, R-Pa.

## ***Opinions/ Editorials***

### Defaced GOP Poster Boy

Washington Post
Robert Novak
August 22, 2005

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) will have finished its work by week's end, and Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota probably will be closed forever. That also will close Sen. John Thune's tenure as national Republican poster boy following his victory last year over Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle. This is a cautionary tale of what happens when politicians forget politics.

President Bill Clinton saved Ellsworth for Daschle during the last BRAC process, in 1995, but President Bush was detached in 2005. The resulting closure demolishes Thune's homestate


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prestige and threatens Republican domination of western South Dakota (where Ellsworth is located) by eliminating 6,000 civilian jobs. Local political setbacks may be reversed, but damage done to Thune as a national fundraiser and candidate-recruiter seems irrevocable. He has been transformed from regular to maverick. Bush might ask himself: Is closing one air base worth this?

BRAC's defenders say the price is not too high because no military installations could be closed if politics prevailed. Yet to ignore Thune and consider Ellsworth the same as big-state base closings contradicts the image of a White House that puts politics first. Instead, the Bush team looked like tone-deaf, old-fashioned Republicans interested more in going by the book than in winning elections.

Thune has declined to speak on the record until the BRAC process is finished, but he clearly is no happy warrior. Were it not for Bush, Thune would be finishing his third year as governor of South Dakota. Anxious to regain control of the Senate in the 2002 elections, the president pressured Thune to challenge Democratic Sen. Tim Johnson. Thune lost by 524 votes thanks to questionable election procedures, but instead of protesting, he moved on to challenge Daschle.

While Thune's conservatism was more in tune with South Dakota than Daschle's liberalism, the Democratic floor leader argued that he could do more for the state. Campaigner Daschle told how in 1995 the Air Force marked Ellsworth for closure and he went to Clinton. The president telephoned the Pentagon to take Ellsworth off the list before it reached the BRAC.

Thune tried the same thing this year, but Bush withheld himself from the process. The new senator talked to Vice President Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Bush political adviser Karl Rove and Cheney aide Scooter Libby. But the same people who could not do enough for candidate Thune could do nothing for Sen. Thune. The Air Force, still smarting from Clinton's intervention, made the Ellsworth closing stick this time.

As Republican poster boy, Thune had been in nationwide demand as the Daschle-slayer. In May, he shut down those efforts to concentrate on Ellsworth, declining more than 100 invitations after raising $2 million in one week. He effectively resigned as a recruiter for Senate candidates on the grounds that his own experience was disillusioning. The early favorite as National Republican Senatorial Committee chairman for the crucial 2008 elections is now off the list.

When the year began, Thune's political future seemed unlimited. He was young (44), handsome, articulate, conservative. Now he is becoming a "Son of the Wild Jackass" familiar to the Great Plains. Seeking separation from the White House, Thune came out against confirmation of John Bolton as United Nations ambassador and broke with Bush by opposing the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).

North Dakota's Kent Conrad and Byron Dorgan, two of the most partisan Democrats in the Senate, were able to save Grand Forks Air Force Base even though it fell below Ellsworth in most measurements. The firm of former Air Force chief of staff Gen. Ronald Fogleman received $400,000 from the city of Grand Forks to argue its case. An Air Force old boy exercised more clout than a rising Republican politician.

Thune's political plea that fell on deaf ears at the White House cannot even be offered to the nonpolitical commission. South Dakotans argue that closing their base would save only $252 million and could cost as much as $1.75 billion over 20 years. Chances that the BRAC will accept those numbers and keep the base open? About 15 percent. Like Harry Truman, John Thune has found it hard to find a friend in Washington.

## Ellsworth should be removed from base closure list

Aberdeen American News (South Dakota)
21 August, 2005


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Ellsworth Air Force Base has narrowly escaped closure before and - with hope and some good strategic maneuvering by our Congressmen - it might just be saved again.

This week, starting Wednesday, the independent Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission will hold public hearings to decide which military bases to remove from the Pentagon's initial closing list before a final list is submitted to President Bush on Sept. 8.

The announcement last spring that Ellsworth had been placed on the closure list wasn't entirely unexpected - the possible closure of the base has been a topic of discussion for years - but it was still enough of a shocker to shake up a lot of South Dakotans.

After all, the base has been a part of South Dakota for more than 60 years. According to a history of the base printed in news reports, it was created in 1942 as an Army Air Base used to train B-17 crews. After that it eventually became an Air Force base with long-range B-52 bombers and control over 150 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) buried in underground silos across miles of western South Dakota prairie. The missiles were deactivated upon the conclusion of the Cold War in the early 1990s. The B-52 bombers were phased out of the base in 1986 and the B-1B bombers began their arrival in 1987.

Even the Air Force, in its 2004 Economic Impact Analysis, recognized Ellsworth as the South Dakota's second-largest employer, providing approximately 5,500 military and civilian jobs, and another 1,700 local jobs that can be indirectly linked to the base. Additionally, it pumps $278 million annually into the local economy.

So, this is what the base does for South Dakotans. But what can it provide to the U.S. Armed Forces, and to President Bush's war on Iraq?

This is the question that Senators John Thune and Tim Johnson, and Representative Stephanie Herseth, have been - for months - answering for the BRAC commission.

For one, Ellsworth is not threatened by congested air space, limited natural resources or infringing land development. Nor are inhabitants or neighboring communities threatening a lawsuit because they don't like the idea of the noise of the jets or the fact that they would be so near and low to homes and businesses - like at Dyess Air Force Base, the Texas installation that would gain from Ellsworth's closure.

Sen. Thune has said that the litigation ETH which was unknown to the BRAC commission when the initial list was developed and which may cause major Air Force headaches over the next several years - is a fact that should be strongly considered in favor of keeping Ellsworth open - and he is right.

Another consideration in Ellsworth's favor, and one that wasn't considered initially by the BRAC commission either, is the idea that, especially in a time of war, it isn't a good idea to have only one base open for training and operating of the B-1 planes.

Senators Thune and Johnson have worked with Representative Herseth as a team to keep Ellsworth alive. This joint, nonpartisan effort should be applauded. It is important to know that, despite sometimes significant differences, our Congressmen can pull together for the security of the state.

The state will wait with bated breath on the decision of the BRAC commission. South Dakota's citizens, its military and its Congressmen have given commission members new, pertinent and persuasive information. Let's hope they recognize what we do ETH that it would be smarter - both militarily and economically - to keep Ellsworth open.

***Additional Notes***

N/A



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