

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



BIRD

August 29, 2005

Department of Defense Releases

National News Articles

Closures may save less than expected

Base closure plans had lawmakers scrambling

BRAC panel approves 'necessary' closures

BRAC panel saves flying missions at some Guard bases

BRAC panel set to make final recommendations

Local News Articles

Pentagon Bruises Area's Team Approach (Washington DC)

Meridian base hoping for new flying mission (Meridian, MS)

N.M. town must find new mission for base
Reilly Files Suit To Save Jobs At Cape Cod Base (Boston, MA)

In Maine, Wistful Look At The Past, And Future (Boston, MA)

BRAC seals Naval Reserve's fate (New Orleans, LA)

Opinions/Editorials

A Vital Fort Monmouth (New York, NY)

Keeping Scott flying (Belleville, IL)

Politics in BRAC? Why, surely not! (Fort Worth, TX)

Last words on BRAC (Fairbanks, AK)

Base-Closing Model: More government programs should be evaluated as well (McAllen, TX)

BRAC insulates painful decisions from politics (Decatur, AL)

Additional Notes

N/A

Department of Defense Releases

N/A

National News Articles

Closures may save less than expected

The Miami Herald
Drew Brown
August 28, 2005

Savings from closing or shifting the functions of many domestic military bases are likely to be far below Pentagon estimates, the head of the panel that hammered out the shifts said Saturday.

While the Pentagon had predicted a \$50 billion windfall over 20 years, Anthony J. Principi, chairman of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, said the Pentagon would be lucky to save \$37 billion.

The savings could drop as low as \$14 billion if questionable personnel savings aren't counted, Principi said. The commission, which wound up its work on Saturday, had challenged the Pentagon's savings estimates repeatedly.

Commission vs. Pentagon

The commission's final session followed three days of often intense deliberations in which the panel accepted Pentagon proposals to close five major Army bases, two large Navy installations on the Gulf Coast and the Army's historic Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. The commission also consolidated or shut down hundreds of smaller National Guard and Reserve Centers across the country.

The commission reversed the Pentagon on several tough issues, however, by refusing to close a Navy shipyard in Maine and a submarine base in Connecticut. It also kept open the Red River Army Depot in Texas, and Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota.

The commission also voted to keep open Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico but went along with the Pentagon's recommendation to remove F-16 fighter jets from it. The panel stipulated that the base will close by 2010 unless the secretary of defense gives it a new mission.

The panel also voted to keep KC-135 air refueling tankers at Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota until at least 2011, reversing an earlier plan to move the tankers out and use the base for future unmanned aerial vehicles that have yet to be built.

Panel was unafraid

Principi said the commission "did not flinch from tough decisions" to close bases when it agreed with the Pentagon's recommendations,

but "neither did we flinch" from keeping open other installations the Pentagon sought to close.

The panel's recommendations must be on President Bush's desk by Sept 8. He's got 15 days to accept or reject the list, although he can send it back once for revisions. Once Bush accepts the list, Congress has 45 days to accept it or reject it, but it can't make any changes.

Lawmakers endorsed four prior military realignment plans and are expected to approve this one.

"We worked really hard to find the right answers," said Commissioner Harold Gehman, a retired Navy admiral, as the last session ended.

Some defense analysts lauded the panel's work.

"From the tenor of the questions, and even some of the direct statements made by members of the commission, they're not feeling shy about taking on the Pentagon if they feel it's appropriate to do so," said Chis Hellman, a policy analyst at the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation. The center is a Washington nonprofit that seeks to reduce military spending, especially on nuclear weapons.

The panel's last challenge, on which members worked until nearly 10 p.m. Friday, was a redistribution of hundreds of Air Force fighter jets, refueling tankers and cargo planes among several dozen Air Reserve and Air National Guard bases around the country.

The Pentagon's original plan faced widespread opposition in the Reserve and Guard and among the nation's governors because it would have left many states without aircraft or flying missions.

Gehman said the panel tried to leave at least one Air National Guard flying mission in every state, though some states were left without aircraft or flying units as the final list was drawn up.

Gehman and other commissioners said their version would better address homeland security concerns than the Pentagon's original recommendations.

Panel overstepped

A federal judge had ruled earlier Friday that the panel had no authority to deactivate the 111th Fighter Wing of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard without the approval of that state's governor. The commission voted Friday to leave the unit intact at its base, the Willow Grove Naval Air Station. It did, however, move its A-10 ground attack jets to bases elsewhere.

Commissioner James Bilbray, a former Nevada congressman, said the judge's ruling would have no bearing on the panel's action since the A-10s are federal property.

Base closure plans had lawmakers scrambling

The Dallas Morning News
Todd J. Gillman
August 28, 2005

WASHINGTON - The military base closure process has been a high-wire act for cities across Texas - and for the politicians who represent them. Sure it's about national security and efficient use of Pentagon funds in wartime. But unemployed voters have been known to vent frustration at the ballot box. So even though Congress created the process to remove the politics, politicians have spent months in a frenzy of lobbying on behalf of targeted facilities. Last week came the winners and losers. "You can't leave politics out of anything that emanates from Washington, D.C.," said Rep. Ralph Hall, R-Rockwall. He confessed to a huge sense of relief after the Base Closure and Realignment Commission overruled the Pentagon last week and saved Texarkana's Red River Army Depot, along with 5,000 jobs. Local and state officials spent countless hours buttonholing Pentagon officials and countless more drafting letters, organizing rallies and spiffing up the place once the selection process shifted to the commission. The scene was repeated in San Antonio, Corpus Christi and scores of other cities nationwide - despite the fact that the process is supposed to be apolitical, hinging on each base's merits and contribution to

training and security. "Who you know never hurts," Mr. Hall said. "If you've worked with 'em and they have faith in you, if they're friends with you and they know what you tell 'em is true and they can trust you - that helps an awful lot." Texas' big winners: El Paso, Fort Bliss and Rep. Silvestre Reyes, D-El Paso. Bliss stands to gain 16,000 troops. Texarkana avoided calamity but still loses 700 jobs at the Lone Star Ammunition Plant. The big losers: Corpus Christi (6,000 jobs at Naval Station Ingleside) and Wichita Falls (2,900 jobs at Sheppard Air Force Base). Suffice to say the lawmakers representing those workers, Reps. Solomon Ortiz, D-Corpus Christi, and Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Clarendon, aren't happy. Military bases are rich sources of local pride and economic activity. So politicians fight fiercely to protect them. In the old days, it was easy enough for Congress to stymie Pentagon efforts to ax installations. In 1987, a Dallas-area House member, Republican Dick Arme, found a way to sidestep that problem, maneuvering to passage a law that created an outside commission to review Pentagon recommendations, then subject them to up-or-down approval by the president and Congress. The idea catapulted his House career. He rose to majority leader before turning lobbyist, and, fittingly enough, Florida hired him this year to protect its 21 bases. The process has worked. The Pentagon has saved billions and closed scores of unneeded facilities in several rounds. And few lawmakers, if any, have been punished for letting thousands of jobs slip away. "Congress has really set this thing up in a way that they absolve themselves of blame," said Juan Carlos Huerta, a political scientist at Texas A&M Corpus Christi, not far from Ingleside. "They have their scapegoats. They can blame the Pentagon. They can blame BRAC. It's hard for voters to say this is Ortiz's fault." But it's impossible to tell if all the lobbying made a difference. Mr. Hall thinks so. He credits Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, in particular, for saving Red River. "Kay could be elected mayor of Texarkana right now," he said. But Dr. Huerta said the only thing certain is that voters are more inclined to forgive defeat than inaction. "They might be in trouble if they did nothing," he said. Kathy Frost leaves job Health problems have forced Kathy Frost, a retired Army general

whose last command was the \$8 billion Army and Air Force Exchange Service in Dallas, to withdraw as the American Association of University Women's new executive director. "I have enormous respect for AAUW, and I feel great disappointment that I am unable to be part of its leadership team," she said in a prepared statement. Her husband is former Dallas Congressman Martin Frost.

BRAC panel approves 'necessary' closures

Air Force Times
Gordon Trowbridge
August 27, 2005

ARLINGTON, Va. — The chairman of the independent base-closings commission on Saturday asked Congress to authorize regular rounds of base closings, calling the process "necessary and healthy" despite political criticism of the process.

Failing to authorize future rounds would "inevitably drag down our defense with the anchor" of unneeded or outdated facilities, Anthony Principi, chairman of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, said during the panel's final hearing.

Over four days, the commission approved hundreds of measures to close or shrink installations around the country. But it also rejected several large closings recommended by the Pentagon, including Submarine Base New London, Conn., Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Maine, and Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D.

The commission must formally submit its recommendations to President Bush by Sept. 8. The president can send the report back to the commission once to request revisions – though Bush has said he will not do so. Eventually, the president must approve or reject the list in total. It becomes law unless rejected by both houses of Congress.

Principi said the preliminary estimates showed the commission's plan would save the Pentagon about \$37 billion over the next 20 years, compared to about \$49 billion under the Defense

Department's original recommendations. The commission questioned much of the Pentagon's estimated savings, especially in the area of military personnel. Under the commission's tougher standards, its plan would save about \$14 billion, compared to about \$24 billion under the Defense Department recommendations.

Previous commissions had approved 80 to 85 percent of Pentagon recommendations. Calculating such a figure for this round will prove difficult, because many of the Defense Department's request were linked; Principi and another commissioner, retired Adm. Harold Gehman, said the commission hadn't calculated a figure.

But in several high-profile cases, the commission sided with community concerns over Defense Department reasoning.

"We did not flinch" from reversing Pentagon decisions the commission felt violated the legal selection criteria, Principi said. "Nor did we hesitate to identify and respond to problems ... we felt the secretary should have addressed but did not."

BRAC panel saves flying missions at some Guard bases

Air Force Times
Gordon Trowbridge
August 29, 2005

ARLINGTON, Va. — A plan approved late Friday by the independent base closings commission would leave aircraft at several Air National Guard bases scheduled to lose their flying missions under the Pentagon's proposals. The plan is an attempt to respond to four months of criticism over the Air Force's plan to remove aircraft from 22 Air Guard bases across the country. It maintains the presence of fighter jets in New England and in the Pacific Northwest, two areas about which members of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission had voiced concerns.

The plan also left in place several guard units without aircraft that the Defense Department would have disbanded.

The exact impact of some of the changes was unclear Saturday. To approve its plans, the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission approved a list of complex resolutions without public readings, and the commission staff had yet to place them on its Internet site.

As the commission was laying out its plan, a federal judge in Pennsylvania ruled in favor of that state's argument that federal law prohibits the federal government from changing National Guard organizations without state approval. Pennsylvania, Illinois and Tennessee all have challenged the Air Force plan on that basis.

The commission, aware of the ruling, continued with its deliberations, content to vote as it saw fit and let the courts sort out the legal arguments.

"We believe we're on very solid legal ground," said Commissioner Lloyd Newton, a retired Air Force general. "I'm sure if we're not that somebody will take us to court."

Saturday, the panel's chairman, Anthony Principi, said the commission had an obligation to move forward with its task and let the Justice Department defend the federal government's jurisdiction over the units.

In fact, units in several states that had been most vocal in criticizing the Air Force's recommendations – Pennsylvania, Texas, Massachusetts and Illinois – would still lose their flying missions under the commission's plan.

State adjutants general – the senior military officers in state National Guards — have accused the Air Force of making its changes without consulting them or their governors. The commission had asked the Air Force and Guard officials to work together to bridge what Principi termed "a chasm," but those talks accomplished little.

Newton, who helped craft the plan, acknowledged it likely would not satisfy everyone. He said that while the compromise plan was meant to answer many criticisms from states, the Air Force must be able to plan for a much smaller aircraft fleet.

"There are some who would say [the Air Force recommendations] did it about right," Newton said. "It is unfortunate that they did not share with everyone."

Among the bases from which the Pentagon wanted to strip aircraft: —Fort Smith, Ark., scheduled to lose its F-16 aircraft under the Pentagon plan, but with 18 A-10s under the commission's. Fort Smith was the ranked second among Guard fighter bases in the Air Force's military value rankings.

- Portland, Ore., scheduled to lose its 15 F-15 fighters and eight KC-135 tankers, would retain its F-15s, in what Newton described as a response to fears in the Northwest that the region would have no protection against air attack.

- Great Falls, Mont., scheduled to become a small base with no aircraft, would receive 15 F-15s. Retired Adm. Harold Gehman, also instrumental in guiding the commission's plan, called that move, too, a nod to homeland defense concerns in northern-tier states.

- Duluth, Minn., where 15 F-16s were scheduled to retire, would retain those aircraft, again a response to homeland defense concerns.

- Birmingham, Ala., which keeps eight KC-135s scheduled to move under the panel's plan.

- Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, N.Y., was scheduled to close, losing its National Guard C-130s and Air Force Reserve KC-135s. But the commission voted to assign eight C-130s to the base's reserve unit, and allow the National Guard wing there to remain and team up with reservists to operate those aircraft.

- New Castle Airport, Del., would retain eight C-130s under the commission's plan, reversing a plan to strip those aircraft.

BRAC panel set to make final recommendations

States' rights among thorny issues

Air Force Times

Gordon Trowbridge

August 29, 2005

After a decade of waiting and three months of research, along with debate and cries for mercy from communities across the country, members of an independent commission meet this week to save, shrink or shutter dozens of military bases. The Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission will gather Aug. 24 in a hotel ballroom outside Washington for final deliberations in the first round of base closings since 1995.

In meetings expected to last through the weekend, the nine-member commission will consider a Pentagon plan that would shift thousands of uniformed and civilian defense jobs, overhaul the footprint of the National Guard, reorder the Navy's East Coast aviation and submarine basing structure and set the stage for the return of thousands of U.S. troops from Korea and Germany.

But two dozen hearings, thousands of hours of staff time and hundreds of thousands of documents have yet to resolve several controversies the panel must address. Among them:

- A legal and strategy debate between several states and the Air Force over plans to overhaul the Air National Guard.
- The fate of New England, which under Pentagon plans would lose the last of its significant operational bases, leaving only research and administrative facilities.
- The future of the Navy's East Coast aviation community. Flight and training restrictions at Naval Air Station Oceana, Va., led the

commission to override Navy recommendations in July and consider closing the base. Despite time limitations, the panel's chairman, Anthony Principi, has shown a determination to challenge Oceana that has surprised some observers.

States' rights battle

Perhaps no issue has generated more controversy in more locations than the Air Guard plan, which would eliminate aircraft at 22 Guard bases and leave five states with no planes.

The Air Force contends the moves are necessary to efficiently operate a shrinking fleet of aircraft. But two states have sued, saying the Pentagon has no authority to overhaul Guard units without state approval. The BRAC panel has received conflicting legal advice on the issue, and its pleas to the Air Force and state officials to compromise have gone unheeded.

"The only thing we've heard for sure from the commission is that they're very unsatisfied with the status quo," said Christopher Hellman, an analyst with the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation who follows the BRAC process.

While the legal issue has gotten much attention, several commissioners have questioned whether concentrating Guard aircraft would harm the military's ability to respond to attacks on the homeland. Daniel Goure, a defense expert with the Lexington Institute in Arlington, Va., called that concern "silly."

He argued military planners can cover the nation without keeping warplanes in each state.

"They fly pretty fast, I hear," Goure said.

Whither the Northeast?

Early in the process, Principi began expressing doubts about proposed closings in New England. Not only are Northeast bases such as Submarine Base New London, Conn., and Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Maine, among the largest potential targets, but those and other

recommendations would virtually eliminate the military's war-fighting presence in the area.

"I just don't believe the BRAC commissioners are going to let this happen," said Sen. Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., during a session with reporters about the New London sub base.

More than geography is at play. One base scheduled to close, Otis Air National Guard Base, Mass., is caught in the Air Guard debate. Commissioners have pondered the wisdom of closing New London, which could limit the Navy's flexibility to add subs. And a Government Accountability Office report has cast doubts on the Pentagon's estimates of how much money closing New London would save.

The commission added to the closing list Naval Air Station Brunswick, Maine, which the Navy wants to leave open but without its P-3 Orion patrol planes. But commissioners have focused as much on leaving the base and planes untouched as they have on closing Brunswick.

Goure opposes closing New London but said he thinks the questions about savings and other issues likely won't save the base. The commission may opt to address two controversies in one move by leaving Otis open instead, he said.

Firestorm in Virginia

While the Air Guard issue has generated the most widespread controversy, the commission's scrutiny of Naval Air Station Oceana, Va., brought it into direct conflict with one of Washington's most influential voices on defense.

When the panel added Oceana to the list of possible closures in July, Sen. John Warner, R-Va., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, recruited new Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Mullen to defend the base before the BRAC panel. And when Principi scheduled a session to hear from Florida officials, who propose moving Oceana's fighters to a Florida base closed in 1995, Warner fired

off a letter accusing the panel of exceeding its authority.

Principi shot back with a letter outlining his deference to Virginia officials, and Warner in particular, and pointing out that encroaching development that limits operations at Oceana is largely the doing of local officials.

The tension is somewhat surprising because several commissioners, during the July vote to add Oceana to the list, said they were less interested in closing the base than in helping the Navy with plans to replace Oceana in the future.

Local News Articles

Pentagon Bruises Area's Team Approach; After Leaders' Fight to Keep Jobs on Their Turf, Alliance on Regional Issues Is on Shaky Ground

The Washington Post (Washington DC)

Eric M. Weiss

August 29, 2005

Leaders in the Washington area have adopted "regionalism" as a mantra for solving myriad transportation and environmental problems and finding a permanent funding source for Metro.

But put thousands of local defense jobs on the table, as the federal base-closing commission did last week, and watch leaders from Maryland, Virginia and the District turn provincial and as vicious as cats vying for the same ball of string.

D.C. Mayor Anthony A. Williams (D) was "very, very disappointed" with the decision to move Walter Reed Army Medical Center just 5.94 miles away to Maryland. Virginia successfully lobbied to keep some Defense Department researchers from moving to new digs 10 miles away in Bethesda. Meanwhile, members of the self-styled "Team Maryland" congratulated themselves for picking up thousands of jobs beggared from their neighbors.

In most places in the country, these moves would be considered to be just across town, but local officials fought just as strongly as if the jobs were moving to Wyoming. If last week

showed the strength of local politics, it also exposed the limits of regional ties. Now the challenge is whether area officials can dust off from the tough fight and work together to solve area-wide challenges -- not the least of which are traffic problems that will be caused by the shift of jobs to the outer suburbs.

It might not be so easy. Rep. James P. Moran Jr. (D-Va.), whose district will lose as many as 20,000 jobs, said he has detected a little bragging on the part of Maryland officials.

"Maryland made out like bandits; Virginia got kicked," he said, "It seems a bit immature for Maryland to be gloating, because over the short run it may make you feel good, but we're all involved in an interdependent metropolitan area where employees live in one state and work in another."

Aris Melissaratos, Maryland's secretary of business and economic development, said that with a gain of 8,000 to 10,000 jobs, state officials have a right to be proud. He said most of the positions are coming from Fort Monmouth in New Jersey, which will be closed, so Moran should have no issue with the state's lobbying campaign.

"Some decisions went Virginia's way; some went our way," Melissaratos said. "He can't deny me the right to brag."

Still, Melissaratos added, "the real challenge tomorrow is how we can accommodate the influx of new jobs, build appropriate transportation, housing and education, and cut down on the traffic nightmares. And I think all of it has to be collaborative."

The recommendations approved by the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission now go to President Bush, who can accept the list in its entirety or send it back once for revisions before sending it to Congress, which must vote on the list as a whole. If approved, the closings and job shifts would occur over the next decade.

For years, such organizations as the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments have worked to foster regional cooperation by changing the way local leaders see issues that affect all three jurisdictions, including protecting the Chesapeake Bay.

Jay Fisette (D), vice chairman of the Council of Governments and chairman of the Arlington County Board, said the Pentagon's base-closing plan has set regional planning back a decade and hurt cooperation.

"Before the [base-closing] decision, I didn't feel much parochial competitiveness," he said, citing cooperation after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and on homeland security. But when local jobs are at stake, "leaders fall back to base instincts, which is protecting short-term jobs."

But even then, Washington area leaders came together to fight the Pentagon plan to move 20,000 transit-friendly jobs in Arlington and Alexandria to Fort Belvoir in Fairfax County, which is beyond the Capital Beltway and reachable primarily by car.

"I didn't see Fairfax jumping up and saying, 'Yes, yes, send them to Belvoir!' " Fisette said. "It could have broken down a whole lot more than it did."

D.C. Council member Phil Mendelson (D-At Large) said the District's attempt to save Walter Reed Army Medical Center did not reflect provincialism as much as the concern that another large facility was being moved from the region's core. Much of the staff at the Northwest Washington hospital would be moved to the campus of the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda.

"I don't think it makes sense to close the venerable institution and put it in far-out Bethesda," said Mendelson, chairman of the National Capital Transportation Planning Board. "But that is not as egregious as moving offices from Arlington to Belvoir."

After all, the Navy hospital in Bethesda has its own stop on Metro's Red Line. But Maryland

could pick up 5,000 more jobs at Fort Meade in Anne Arundel County, a base miles from any Metro stop.

Officials at Fort Meade and Fort Belvoir have said they want to explore extending rail service to the bases -- efforts that would undoubtedly take regional cooperation.

Mendelson said that if there is one thing that can unite officials, it is the realization that the Pentagon's moves will create more traffic headaches in a region that is already the third most-congested in the country.

"In every case," he said, "the Pentagon disregarded notions of urban planning that have evolved over decades."

Meridian base hoping for new flying mission

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Meridian, MS)
August 28, 2005

The wing commander of the Mississippi Air National Guard's 186th Air Refueling Wing says the unit's new mission could create even more jobs.

Col. Erik Hearon says the decision to remove nine mid-air refueling KC-135R Stratotankers from the 186th Air Refueling Wing in Meridian will result in the loss of 33 military jobs and 142 civilian jobs at the 1,100-employee Key Field Air Guard Station.

Hearon says a broad range of missions are possible for the 186th, including flying missions. It could fly the C-17 tanker, which the U.S. Air Force is purchasing in the next couple of years, for worldwide strategic and tactical airlift, or the C-27 or equivalent tactical airlift plane for supporting the U.S. Army, he said.

"Those are just some of the numerous options the governor and Maj. Gen. (Harold) Cross are looking at," Hearon said. "They will work closely with the the congressional delegation. I

think they will certainly have input into what mission is brought here."

U.S. Sen. Trent Lott and Rep. Chip Pickering have said they will work to bring new missions to the facility following a decision by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission to strip the base of all its refueling airplanes.

It will be at least two years before the tankers are dispersed among three other U.S. military bases.

"There are quite a number of additional flying opportunities and we're going to be on the cutting edge of this," Cross said.

U.S. Rep. Chip Pickering, R-Miss., expressed disappointment in the BRAC decision.

"It is my firm belief that the tankers provide their greatest military value when they are in the tried and proven hands of the men and women of the 186th Air Refueling Wing operating from Key Field facilities that are second to none," Pickering said.

N.M. town must find new mission for base USA TODAY

Jim Drinkard
August 28, 2005

WASHINGTON — The seal of Clovis, N.M., proclaims: "Home of Cannon Air Force Base." The city of 33,000 won't have to change it — at least for now.

Clovis City Commissioner Cathy Haynes, right, listens to the Base Realignment and Closure hearing dealing with Cannon Air Force Base.

By Eric Kluth, Clovis News Journal

But the coming year will be crucial as local officials scramble for a new mission for the base to head off a threatened 2009 closing, Clovis banker Randy Harris said Sunday.

The national base closing commission spared the rural eastern New Mexico town the potentially

devastating blow of closing its largest employer and economic engine. The panel said Friday that Cannon will stay open at least through 2009, although it will lose the three F-16 fighter squadrons that now are its reason for existing.

That puts the burden on city and state officials to save the 3,782-acre base by working with the Defense Department to come up with a new military mission, Mayor David Lansford said Sunday. The site could become a home to Air Force training planes or to the F-35, a new-generation Joint Strike Fighter now in development, he said.

"Right now there are more questions than answers," Lansford said. The community's leaders and its congressional delegation now need "to establish some certainty ... no community wants to be in a state of uncertainty."

Cannon was among a handful of major military installations the commission saved from the Pentagon's hit list last week, along with Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota; Hawthorne Army Depot in Nevada; and Navy installations in Maine and Connecticut. The panel also overhauled the Air Force's plan to eliminate aircraft from more than two dozen Air National Guard units, instead redistributing planes to keep flying units in more states.

Republican Sen. John Thune of South Dakota, who had pledged to save Ellsworth, home to half the nation's B-1 bombers, said the commission acted in the interest of national security. President Bush has the power to undo the decision — if he rejects the commission's entire report — but, Thune said on ABC's This Week, "my hope would be that the president will allow the process to work."

Anthony Principi, chairman of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, said his panel balanced the Pentagon's recommendations, meant to save nearly \$50 billion over 20 years, "against the human and painful impact of those proposals."

That impact would have been particularly acute in Clovis, where agriculture is the economic engine and the loss of the base — which Lansford said amounts to nearly a third of the local economy — could have been an irrecoverable blow.

"Rural communities can just be devastated," said Harris, CEO of the Bank of Clovis and part of a local group that fought to save the base. "They don't have the capacity or ability to bring in large companies and new development" to an abandoned base.

"We have a door open to discuss with the Defense Department what might be available" as a new mission for Cannon, Harris said. "The coming year is a crucial time."

Reilly Files Suit To Save Jobs At Cape Cod Base

The Boston Herald (Boston, MA)
Laura Crimaldi
August 28, 2005

In the face of impending doom for Otis Air National Guard Base, Attorney General Tom Reilly announced plans yesterday for a Hail Mary lawsuit to save the site - a move some on Cape Cod think might be too little, too late.

"In hindsight, did we do it right? No, we didn't," said Save Otis Coalition spokesman and Mashpee fire Chief George Baker. "If the lawsuit lets us stay more involved, I think that's a benefit for us."

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) voted Friday to close Otis and relocate the 102nd Fighter Wing to Barnes Municipal Air Guard Station in Westfield, which is not currently equipped to accommodate the Cape Cod base's F-15 fighter planes.

Reilly announced the lawsuit plans one day after a federal judge in Pennsylvania ruled that the Defense Department cannot dissolve an Air National Guard division in that state without approval from Gov. Ed Rendell.

“The key is a provision of the U.S. code which essentially says no change can be made to an Air National Guard base without the consent of the governor. Governor (Mitt) Romney did not approve,” Reilly said at a press conference.

The Pennsylvania victory has buoyed hopes in states such as Connecticut, which is trying to save fighter planes at an Air National Guard base near Hartford.

Reilly said Massachusetts didn't take legal action earlier because officials believed their campaign to keep Otis open would prevail.

BRAC experts said timing would have little impact on the lawsuit anyway.

“The timing is less of a problem because BRAC is something of a slow process,” said Alan J. Macdonald, executive director of the Massachusetts Defense Technology Initiative. Under the Pentagon's plan, Otis would close by 2008, draining Cape Cod of 500 jobs.

The BRAC Commission is set to forward its recommendations to President Bush by Sept. 8. Bush then has until Sept. 23 to reject the recommendations in full or send them to Congress for approval.

“Clearly the grounds for a successful lawsuit exist,” said U.S. Rep. Bill Delahunt (D-Quincy), whose district includes Otis' Falmouth home. “There is no basis to believe the BRAC Commission complied with the criteria as they were mandated to under the law.”

Both Reilly (a Democratic candidate for governor) and Romney said political rivalry would not get in the way of this lawsuit.

“This isn't a political issue,” said Romney spokeswoman Julie Teer.

In Maine, Wistful Look At The Past, And Future

The Boston Globe (Boston, MA)
Jenna Russell
August 28, 2005

BRUNSWICK, Maine - Not much has changed in 50 years at Fat Boy Drive-In, where the carhops still deliver frappes and onion rings on trays. The lunch crowd at this Maine landmark has always included enlisted men from the Naval Air Station across the street, and the airfield's fenced-off runways have long spanned the view from the restaurant's green awning.

So for Fat Boy's owner Ken Burton, 59 whose father and son work beside him at the drive-in the news that the Navy airfield will shut down within five years still seems hazy and unreal, days after the decision was announced by a federal panel in Washington, D.C.

"It's always been there, and I can't imagine it being anything else," he said. "It won't sink in until there are no planes flying overhead."

Built in 1943, the 3,000-acre Naval Air Station is the second-largest employer in Brunswick, a coastal town of 22,000 between Portland and Augusta. The base is home to four active and two reserve aircraft squadrons trained in aerial surveillance. It hosts 2,600 active-duty members of the military, and it employs 800 civilians, according to the task force that fought for its survival. Almost 6,000 military family members live in the area.

The decision to shut down the airfield deepens concern about the fate of the region's economy. Bath Iron Works, the military shipbuilder in neighboring Bath that is Brunswick's largest employer, has been increasingly at risk, as the Navy has scaled back orders for warships. Another of Brunswick's top employers, the credit card company MBNA Corp., will soon be absorbed by Bank of America Corp., and could face job losses as a result, analysts say.

Brunswick residents said they were stunned by the vote to close the base. Because there is no other fully active military airfield in New England, the loss would leave a densely populated region more open to attack, they said.

Cape Cod's Otis Air National Guard base was also ordered closed by the Base Realignment

and Closure Commission. The panel's recommendations will be sent to the president, who must reject or accept them in their entirety. The plan, which is expected to save billions, must also be approved by Congress.

Brunswick residents said they also expected their base to be saved because millions have been spent there improving facilities. Renovations in the last five years include a \$9.5 million airfield upgrade, a \$10 million control tower, a \$32 million hangar, and \$69 million for military housing, the task force that worked to save the base said.

Even as they grappled with change most could barely imagine, there were signs that the town was looking forward.

"We'll never understand it, but it's time to move on," said Dianna Baribeau, a real estate property manager. "Brunswick is not going to close down."

The change will be gradual, as military personnel are transferred out in phases over several years. The impact of their departure won't be felt until 2010, said Don Gerrish, Brunswick's town manager. The town stands to lose \$1.3 million in annual federal aid because of the closing, including more than \$800,000 for local schools, where 700 of 3,200 students come from military families.

Maine Governor John Baldacci plans to meet with local officials this week to discuss the fallout from the closure and the future of the base, the first step in a long, complex process for turning the property over to its next use, the governor's spokesman said.

Last week, Baldacci established a new office of redevelopment and reemployment to support Brunswick through the transition, and appointed a legislative aide to run that office.

Around town last week, ideas and rumors were already swirling around the future of the military site. With a public golf course already on base property, some of the land could perhaps be

developed as a resort, one real estate agent suggested.

Burton, the drive-in owner, said he imagined an office park with several large corporations.

Others said the site should be used as an airport, to take advantage of existing infrastructure, including the new tower as well as two 8,000-foot runways.

An airport would be the best use, said Richard Tetreu, the chairman of the task force that lobbied heavily to save the base. But Tetreu, a retired Navy officer who was second in command at the Brunswick air station from 1992 to 1996, says he doesn't think it will happen.

In 1998, after he retired from the military and became director of the regional chamber of commerce, Tetreu hired a consultant to help in researching business uses for the base. That effort came up empty, he said.

"We went to passenger airlines, aircraft maintenance operations, express mail carriers, and we struck out on every one," he said.

Business will be hard to recruit from out of state, he said, because tax rates are higher in Maine than other places.

Others were more optimistic. Successful recruiting in recent years has almost filled one business park in Brunswick, said Gerrish, the town manager.

In addition, town officials were already looking for a place to build a second business park before the base decision.

"People are calling and saying they want to be part of the process; people are saying they're interested in the space," he said. "People are thinking about the future. I'd be more concerned if I wasn't getting calls."

Several residents said they will miss the diversity the military brings to the community.

For some, the airfield is a sentimental landmark. Loren Dudley, 69, of Bath, was stationed there when he met Mary, his wife of 45 years, who was working in a downtown restaurant.

Hoping for a match of her own, 21-year-old Mandi Krauthamer of Freeport said she'll miss the military when she hits the bars in Brunswick.

"I'm really sad," Krauthamer said. "All my Navy men are going to be gone."

But many locals said they are ready to move on, and the quicker the transition, the better the outcome might be.

"Get them out now and get business in there," said Sandy Mauro of Topsham. "The faster we get the land released, the faster we'll bounce back."

**BRAC seals Naval Reserve's fate;
Panel clarifies the command's move from
N.O.**

New Orleans Times-Picayune (New Orleans, LA)

Bruce Alpert

August 28, 2005

WASHINGTON -- The federal base closing commission voted Saturday to "clarify" that it intended, despite some ambiguity in an earlier vote, to move the Naval Reserve headquarters and personnel functions out of New Orleans.

The vote likely will mean the loss of about 900 military and civilian jobs.

While expressing disappointment with Saturday's vote, Louisiana's two senators, Democrat Mary Landrieu and Republican David Vitter, along with Democratic Gov. Kathleen Blanco, said they still consider it a major victory that the Base Realignment and Closure Commission overruled the Defense Department and decided to keep the Algiers military base open as a "federal city." The federal city, to which the state has committed \$50 million to \$100 million, will be anchored by Marine Corps

Reserve commands with the idea that other employers will be drawn to the site later.

"It's still a huge win to reverse the DOD's recommendations and keep the Algiers base open," Vitter said. "The reversal rate is only about 5 percent."

Landrieu expressed mixed emotions.

"I am disappointed in the decision regarding the Navy, but we are truly elated that our base is going to stay open and the federal city will become a reality," Landrieu said. Landrieu and Vitter both said the federal city in Algiers could still be successful without the Navy, although they conceded it would have been stronger with the Navy command.

On Wednesday, the commission appeared to have voted to leave intact the Defense Department's recommendation to move the Naval Reserve headquarters and personnel functions out of New Orleans and transfer them to Norfolk, Va., and Millington, Tenn. But after the vote, a BRAC Commission attorney said the panel's vote could be interpreted to mean that the Naval Reserve Force would remain in New Orleans as part of the refurbished Algiers base.

His view that a clarifying vote was needed raised hopes among state officials that perhaps the commission would agree to keep the Navy in New Orleans. Those hopes were dashed early Saturday morning when the five commissioners on hand for the day's session voted unanimously and without comment to move the Navy operations from New Orleans.

Blanco, in a statement, said Louisiana still "accomplished something that few states did. We persuaded the BRAC Commission to reverse the Pentagon's decision."

The governor said the federal city plan, developed by state and local officials to keep a large military presence in New Orleans, would go forward.

"The federal city plan was being developed whether we kept the Navy or not," Blanco said.

"It is our hope that, with the federal city, perhaps we will get the Navy back. The federal city infrastructure is vital to keeping a strong military presence in Louisiana. It also helps protect us from future closure and realignment concerns. New Orleans needs that military presence and the economic engine that it represents."

U.S. Rep William Jefferson, D-New Orleans, said he's hopeful the development of the federal city will offset the loss of Navy jobs.

"Although I am disappointed with the commission's decision today, I am hopeful that the creation of a federal city will help fill the gap left by the Navy personnel," Jefferson said. "I am committed to working with local officials to ensure the success and strength of our remaining military personnel and the future of the NSA facility."

Opinions/ Editorials

A Vital Fort Monmouth

New York Post (New York, NY)
 Steven M. Clayton
 August 29, 2005

To the Editor:

Re "Panel Rejects Closing of 2 Big Navy Bases in Northeast" (front page, Aug. 25):

I'm terribly disappointed by the decision by the Base Closure and Realignment Commission to close down Fort Monmouth in New Jersey.

As a nearby resident, I'm concerned about all the local jobs that will be lost and about business being adversely affected.

As a American, I'm concerned because Fort Monmouth led the way in the communications capability for our brave men and women fighting in harm's way.

To uproot that infrastructure is harmful both for economic development locally and on a national security level.

Ocean, N.J., Aug. 25, 2005

The writer is a Democratic committeeman in Monmouth County, N.J.

Keeping Scott flying

Belleville News-Democrat (Belleville, IL)
 August 28, 2005

St. Clair County officials are sometimes considered a little fanatical about keeping a buffer around Scott Air Force Base. For example, the county is using eminent domain to block a shooting range in Mascoutah that's partially in an "accident potential" zone. The city saw no problem with this development despite the designation and gave the project a green light.

All we can say is: Thank you, St. Clair County. The people who live near Oceana Naval Air Station are wishing today that their elected leaders had been half as vigilant.

Oceana, a Navy jet training base in Virginia Beach, Va., is in danger of being shut down because residential and commercial development has encroached on the base. Losing the base would mean losing 11,500 jobs and \$1.2 billion in economic benefits.

Over the past 20 years or so, Virginia Beach has allowed development to creep closer and closer to the base, despite the Navy's objections. It's so bad that Navy officials testified before the Base Realignment and Closure Commission that they have difficulty adequately training jet pilots there. The people in the close-in developments objected to the noise, which resulted in local noise-abatement ordinances, which created restrictions on how and when the Navy could fly.

The commission has decided that it will no longer tolerate the hassle.

The commission is giving Virginia some time to see whether its leaders can "clean up the mess they've created." But saving the base will come at a high price. Among the commission's requirements: At least 1,800 homes and

businesses worth more than \$250 million have to be demolished.

Virginia Gov. Mark R. Warner told the commission: "We have heard loud and clear your concerns about encroachment." Too bad for the residents of the region that their leaders didn't anticipate this a long time ago.

St. Clair County leaders get it, thankfully. That is one of the reasons Scott is not in jeopardy of closing.

Politics in BRAC? Why, surely not!

Fort Worth Star-Telegram (Fort Worth, TX)

J.R. Labbe

August 28, 2005

Workers move a Bradley fighting vehicle along the production line at the Red River Army Depot near Texarkana on Wednesday. The BRAC commission voted Wednesday to shut down Naval Station Ingleside in South Texas.

Say what you will about BRAC -- and plenty is being said today through clenched teeth in states that view themselves as big losers in the base realignment and closure process -- the commission managed to prove one thing: It was no rubber stamp for Don-ald Rumsfeld.

Were the SecDef a thin-skinned fellow, he might take the changes made to his list by the commission as refutation of his vision for the military's future. Given how many times commissioners chanted that the Department of Defense "substantially deviated from the final selection criteria" before they ignored the Pentagon's recommendations, Rumsfeld could be feeling downright unappreciated today.

Take the vote to keep open Connecticut's Naval Submarine Base New London -- or "Rotten Groton," as I grew up hearing it called by my since-deceased stepfather, who was director of manufacturing and facilities for General Dynamics.

Under Rumsfeld's future force scenario, the Navy won't need that sub capacity in New

England. The commissioners effectively said: "We think there are more subs in our future than you do, Mr. Secretary, and we'll be keeping this place open, if you don't mind."

Same goes for keeping open Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota. The commissioners were concerned that the "eggs in one basket" consolidation achieved by moving B-1 bombers from that base to Dyess Air Force Base in Abilene would make the fleet vulnerable to attack. At last check, Mexico wasn't altogether happy with the current U.S. administration, but it's hard to imagine that it would attack over it.

Surely the Ellsworth turn-around had nothing to do with the fact that John Thune, a rook-ie Republican senator who defeated one of the Democratic lions of lawmaking (like him or don't, Tom Daschle was a force to contend with in Washington), staked his entire political career on keeping Ellsworth open.

Everyone with a piece on the BRAC chessboard has said from the get-go that the process was designed to keep politics out of the game. They just forgot to tell the politicians.

New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson was blabbering Friday morning on C-SPAN about how he lobbied the commission hard to keep Cannon Air Force Base open. Richardson claimed that he'd made friends with some of the commissioners. Samuel Skinner was obviously one of them, considering that he jumped through all kinds of hoops to keep Cannon open until at least December 2009 rather than close it. Richardson's justification for Cannon's continued operational status had nothing -- nothing! -- to do with military readiness or future force structure. All he could talk about was the need to keep those jobs on line.

BRAC watchers who rightfully preach the "there's life after BRAC" message in their belief that the Defense Department should be something more than a jobs program contend that politics has been part of this round more clearly than in some previous rounds -- with the exception of the in-your-face decision made in 1995, right before President Clinton's re-election

push, to "privatize in place" rather than close California's McClellan AFB.

If the Air Force is unhappy with the 2005 commission's decisions, it has to take some of the blame for doing a half-hearted job of putting together a BRAC package that demonstrated strategic coherence. (Of course, the flying brass were kinda distracted by that pesky Boeing tanker fiasco, sexual harassment charges at the academy and the departure of the old secretary of the Air Force in the middle of the process.)

It's interesting to note that some lawmakers are taking heat for not politicking enough.

U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison is, as they say, being dog-cussed in some quarters for not doing enough to protect every Texas facility that landed on Rumsfeld's list. Community leaders think she spent too much time focusing on the Red River Army Depot in Texarkana to the detriment of other bases.

Our senior senator is many things, but stupid is not one of them. She knew where to invest her capital and where to cut bait.

Naval Station Ingleside needed cuttin'. Red River, a vital support facility for maintenance, repair and overhaul of major weapon systems and components, including Humvees, was a fight she could -- and did -- win.

My favorite part of the process (and this comes from an admittedly pitiful person who enjoys watching the hearings on C-SPAN) was the homeland security rationalization given for keeping open NS Ingleside, near Corpus Christi. Why, how can Americans sleep soundly knowing that they'll no longer be protected by a deep-water port that houses a mine warfare force in the Gulf of Mexico?

Exactly what enemies were the mine sweepers -- sans destroyers or carriers or any other support fleet -- protecting us from? A red tide?

And even if Ingleside has something other than mine sweepers based there, how long does it take a ship to go from the Texas coast to open

ocean, which is where naval resources need to be in the case of a defensive posture? (Let's face it, folks: If the bad guys make it all the way to Corpus Christi before U.S. forces stop them, we've messed up big-time.)

BRAC never has been, and never will be, a process devoid of political influences, but it's the only way that the Pentagon has to change its infrastructure in response to evolving force strategies. The end result of this round is less than it should be, but it's unlikely that President Bush or Congress will turn it down because the cuts weren't deep enough.

They are, after all, politicians.

Last words on BRAC

Fairbanks New Miner (Fairbanks, AK)
August 29, 2005

Throughout the months leading up to the just-concluded work of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, the Daily News-Miner has been publishing excerpts of editorials from newspapers elsewhere in the nation where communities stood to gain or lose from the final decisions. With the BRAC panel now finished with its adjustments to the Department of Defense's recommendations, a last collection of editorial excerpts is presented here. From the Rapid City (S.D.) Journal:

The decision by the Base Closure and Realignment Commission to remove Ellsworth Air Force Base from the Pentagon's base closure list is fantastic news for South Dakota and the Rapid City area economy. We dodged a bullet, and we are thankful that the members of the BRAC commission saw the folly of closing Ellsworth and moving its B-1B bombers to Dyess Air Force Base in Texas.

The arguments in Ellsworth's favor were multiple: It goes against military strategy to put all of the nation's B-1 bombers at one base; the Pentagon overstated the potential savings from closing Ellsworth; the Pentagon omitted crucial data related to litigation that compromises

Dyess' air space; and the economic impact on the Rapid City economy--8.5 percent of the total workforce would be lost--was significantly higher than the average for base closures. The facts spoke for themselves, but it took careful analysis to discover the facts that contradicted the Pentagon's findings and persuasive argument to convince BRAC commissioners that the Defense Department would be making a mistake to close Ellsworth.

From the Times Record (Brunswick, Maine):

When Managing Editor Jim McCarthy announced to the editorial staff that the BRAC Commission had voted 7 to 2 to close Brunswick Naval Air Station, the cautious optimism many of us felt disintegrated to dismay.

The only way the vote can be reversed is if either President Bush or Congress rejects the commission's recommendations, and no one really expects that to happen.

As much as some and perhaps more than most, because we're a local newspaper, The Times Record recognizes what the loss of the Navy's presence will mean to this community.

Navy personnel were easily recognized in their crisp uniforms marching in Memorial Day Parades but less so in countless others ways: rolling up their sleeves to volunteer for public service projects, giving talks to local schools and civic groups, patronizing area businesses and events and as members of our neighborhood, school and worship communities. The military and civilian personnel assigned to BNAS are woven into the fabric of the Mid-coast such that the loss of their presence is bound to tear.

From the Texarkana (Texas) Gazette:

We dodged the heavy artillery, but we have been hurt.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission disagreed with the Pentagon's recommendation to shutter Red River Army Depot and move its workload to depots in Alabama, Georgia,

Oklahoma and Pennsylvania. But it agreed with the Department of Defense on the recommendation to close Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant.

While several hundred families right now are devastated, we could have done much worse. Yet let's not get carried away with the back patting.

Had the U.S. not been fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the decision about the depot might well have been different. BRAC commissioners were quick to point out that much of their decision rested on RRAD's wartime efforts. They just didn't want to tinker with success with troops in war zones. Had this been a peacetime closure recommendation the outcome could have been different and our local economy could have been critically wounded.

Together, we deflected much of the damage this attack could have caused. But no one should come away from this decision thinking we are bulletproof

From the Reno (Nev.) Gazette Journal:

The Hawthorne Army Depot will live another day to serve the nation.

It wasn't political pressure that convinced the commission that the sprawling base should remain open. Rather, the commissioners looked at the Defense Department's numbers and then did their own research, research that indicated that the Pentagon was wrong.

After his visit to the base in July, Chairman Anthony Principi said there was more ammunition stored at the base than what the commission had been told and that the cost of shutting the base down and moving the ammunition could be far greater than the Army had estimated.

It was a well-reasoned decision based on facts and the needs of the Army, not emotion and phantom promises of money to be saved.

Base-Closing Model: More government programs should be evaluated as well

The Monitor View (McAllen, TX)

August 29, 2005

While we understand the angst and consternation of politicians and employees who watch in frustration as their local military bases are targeted for closure or realignment under the recommendations of a nonpartisan federal panel, we also take heart in the whole process.

Think about it. The government generally is impervious to reform and meaningful cuts. It grows and grows.

Yet here is an orderly, deliberate process to sort through the nation's defense industry and close, realign and merge bases and offices, with the goal of saving money and improving bureaucratic efficiency.

The Pentagon suggested its cuts and mergers, based on the Bush administration's goal of a lighter, swifter, more mobile military. The president then, according to law, appointed a commission to review the proposals, and that independent commission will soon provide a final report to the president. Some bases targeted for closure by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld were spared the ax, such as Ellsworth Air Force Base, which is the second-largest employer in South Dakota.

The president will have until Sept. 23 to accept or reject the BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) Commission's findings, and then Congress will have 45 days to reject the entire package of proposals. If not rejected, they go into effect. There is no horse trading.

It's everything or nothing, as a way to insulate the process from partisan wrangling.

That's not to say that politics doesn't enter the process. Some bases were saved from closure — i.e., the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Maine — after local and state officials and military officials argued against it. One key argument has been that the bases are needed because of the impact on local employment.

Still, we're pleased to see some effort to close, realign and reform massive and costly military bases. Whatever the effect on local economies, we must remember that the bases are supposed to be there to bolster our nation's military efforts not to be job providers.

A final observation. The government needs to establish a BRAC-style process to review all government programs and agencies, to shut down, realign and reform those that cease to serve a meaningful purpose.

BRAC insulates painful decisions from politics

The Decatur Daily (Decatur, AL)

August 29, 2005

In a pork-barrel political culture, once in a while someone comes along to remind us that public money is supposed to be spent where it is needed.

Former President Carter, who lost his last election long ago, thrust himself into that role by lobbying successfully to save the Naval Submarine Base New London in Connecticut — at the expense of his native Georgia.

For Georgians, it was an unwelcome gesture. "What was he thinking?" Gov. Sonny Perdue asked, reflecting the chagrin many in his state felt. Closing New London would have shifted six submarines and 3,367 jobs to the Kings Bay base in Georgia. U.S. Rep. Jack Kingston, whose district includes Kings Bay, said, "You just hate to have an ex-president, a Navy guy and a Georgian going against the home team."

Mr. Carter said that in agreeing with him, the Base Realignment and Closure Commission acted "on the merits of the case and not due to any political influences." He said Kings Bay would "continue to provide increasing services to our nation's defense."

The ex-president described exactly what BRAC is supposed to do: take decisions about closing military bases out of politics and make smart use

of resources from a national perspective, overriding localities' economic interests where necessary. Of course, you can't remove politics entirely, but BRAC provides a degree of insulation.

Because of BRAC, congressmen, senators, governors and others must work hard to find merit-based justifications for retaining or expanding bases in their home districts and states. As painful as base closings become for some localities, this approach is in the nation's best interest.

Thus, when BRAC decides — as it did last week — to move programs and jobs to Redstone Arsenal, it's an expression of confidence in the contribution North Alabama has made and will make to the nation's defense. It's also a reminder that the best chance for success in future BRAC decisions comes in Redstone doing outstanding work and leaders marshaling facts and logic, not just political clout.

Additional Notes