

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



BIRD

September 1, 2005

Department of Defense Releases

N/A

[BRAC scratching ; Jim Hansen's Conflict \(Salt Lake, UT\)](#)

National News Articles

[Headline: Judge Delays BRAC Report;](#)

[Good News, Good Work \(Winston Salem, NC\)](#)

Local News Articles

[Move Could Save Jobs At 911th Base At Airport \(Pittsburgh, PA\)](#)

Additional Notes

N/A

[Military-Base Changes May Help Virginia \(Richmond, VA\)](#)

Department of Defense Releases

N/A

[County set to take base closings in stride \(Atlanta, GA\)](#)

National News Articles

[Naval Operations Chief Sees Groton As Safe \(New London, CT\)](#)

Headline: Judge Delays BRAC Report; Gives State Chance To Argue For A-10s
Hartford Courant (Connecticut)
August 31, 2005

[Oceana under fire: Who takes the heat? \(Hampton Roads, VA\)](#)

A federal judge has granted the state's request for a temporary restraining order as it fights to keep the state's Air National Guard flying.

Opinions/Editorials

[Willow Grove Will Remain An Active Base \(Philadelphia, PA\)](#)

The order, issued Tuesday by U.S. District Judge Alfred V. Covello, temporarily prevents the Base Realignment and Closure Commission from recommending to President Bush that the Guard's A-10 attack jets be transferred out of Connecticut.

[A Reader's Guide to Base Closings \(New York, NY\)](#)

Covello will conduct a hearing on the state's claim that the jets cannot be transferred without the governor's consent.

[Oceana Needs Long-Term Solution \(Newport News, VA\)](#)

[DFAS workers still need Dayton's help \(Dayton, OH\)](#)

“The court has granted a temporary restraining order that preserves the status quo, assuring us our day in court to challenge the illegal recommendation to realign the Connecticut 103rd Fighter Wing,” state Attorney General Richard Blumenthal said in a press release. “This order assures that the BRAC recommendation will not be sent to the president before the court rules on our lawsuit’s request for an order stopping it.”

That hearing is scheduled for 11 a.m. Sept. 7. The BRAC commission has until Sept. 8 to forward its recommendations to Bush.

The commission last week approved a Pentagon proposal to move nine of the 103rd Fighter Wing’s A-10 attack jets to a unit based at Barnes Airport in Westfield, Mass. The rest of the jets would be retired. The proposal is part of a larger effort to close or reconfigure dozens of military bases nationwide.

The state on Monday filed suit against the BRAC and Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, contending that the unit cannot be moved or altered without the consent of Gov. M. Jodi Rell.

Last week, a federal judge in Pennsylvania ruled in favor of that state’s governor, who contends the Pentagon needs his permission to dissolve an Air National Guard unit there.

“The governor is pleased that Judge Covello has issued this order and remains optimistic that Connecticut will prevail at next week’s hearing,” said Judd Everhart, a Rell spokesman. “She is confident the facts are on our side.”

Local News Articles

Move Could Save Jobs At 911th Base At Airport

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
Jack Kelly
September 1, 2005

State and local officials yesterday hailed what they called a significant step toward preserving

all of the jobs at the 911th Military Airlift Wing at Pittsburgh International Airport.

U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum announced at a news conference that the Base Realignment and Closure Commission will put into its report to the president language he proposed urging the Defense Department to “permanently locate and operate an optimum number of C-130H [or equivalent] aircraft” at the base, which is known as the Pittsburgh Air Reserve Station.

With Santorum were county Chief Executive Dan Onorato, U.S. Rep. Tim Murphy, R-Upper St. Clair, and state Sen. John Pippy, R-Moon. Joining the news conference by telephone were Gov. Ed Rendell and U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter.

The base closing commission, known as BRAC, on Friday rejected the Pentagon’s recommendation to shut down the 911th but agreed with the Defense Department that the eight C-130H cargo aircraft currently based there be moved to Air Force bases in Arkansas and North Carolina.

The report language adopted by the commission Friday specified that the “realigned” 911th “will be staffed at the current manning level of the [Air Reserve Station].”

But that left up in the air what would happen to the pilots who fly and the crews who maintain the C-130s.

There are 1,275 Air Force reservists and 320 civilian employees assigned to the 911th, of whom 180 also are Air Force reservists. About 750 people are involved in flying, maintaining, loading and unloading the aircraft, a spokesman for the 911th said.

The commission’s decision to accept the additional language Santorum offered -- developed in concert with the Pit-BRAC task force, a coalition of community leaders trying to preserve military installations in Western Pennsylvania -- makes it likely, but does not guarantee, that the jobs of those involved in flight operations will remain in Pittsburgh.

"While not having the force and effect of law, report language has a significant impact," Santorum said.

Santorum said it was his understanding that the language the commission adopted last week about keeping jobs at the 911th applies to reservists, too.

The BRAC commission's report goes to the president next Thursday. Bush has said he does not plan to ask for changes in it.

Once the president has referred the report, Congress will have 45 days in which it can reject, but not amend, the commission's recommendations. If Congress takes no action, they automatically become law.

What saved the 911th was a plan developed by the Pit-BRAC task force to create on the base a Regional Joint Readiness Center that would combine military and non-military assets for homeland defense.

Its strategic location, within 2 1/2 hours' flight time of two-thirds of the U.S. population at an excellent and underutilized airport, and superb medical facilities made Pittsburgh the ideal place to take casualties if local facilities at East Coast cities were overwhelmed by a terrorist attack, the Pit-BRAC task force argued.

The commission agreed, but Rendell said it was a close call.

"Rick [Santorum] and I were hearing on Wednesday afternoon [last week] that we were in danger of having the 911th totally closed," Rendell said.

Last-minute lobbying by the governor and Pennsylvania's senators sold a majority of the nine-member commission on the joint readiness center concept.

Once the commission agreed to try the concept, Santorum and Rendell argued it could not properly be implemented unless aircraft were assigned permanently to the 911th.

Onorato, who chaired the Pit-BRAC task force with Mike Langley, chief executive officer of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, said the group will shift its emphasis to fleshing out details about how the joint readiness center should be organized.

Properly developed, it could be a model for the rest of the country and for the world, Onorato said.

"This is a golden opportunity to make Pittsburgh the hub of homeland security response," he said.

Rendell promised there would be ample funding from state agencies that would be involved with the center.

Murphy said Pennsylvania's federal representatives must begin pushing to have funds earmarked for the center in the budgets of the departments of Defense and Homeland Security.

Because congressional action on the budgets for the fiscal year that begins in October is nearly complete, the earliest funding for the readiness center would be in the 2007 fiscal year budget, Santorum and Murphy said.

"This gives us a few months to get our proposal together and a year to lobby our colleagues," Murphy said.

Military-Base Changes May Help Virginia

Closings, realignment could add 3,000 jobs to state, officials say

Richmond Times-Dispatch (Richmond, VA)
Peter Hardin
September 1, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Virginia may gain as many as 3,000 jobs as a result of votes last week by an independent federal base-closure panel, if Congress and President Bush go along.

Despite the panel's votes to close the moated Fort Monroe in Hampton and relocate about 18,000 military and civilian defense workers

from leased office space in Arlington and Alexandria, state officials said other changes point to the likely net gain for Virginia.

The shifts voted by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC), responding to Department of Defense proposals, would involve about \$2.7 billion in new military construction in Virginia, the officials said.

The job numbers are tentative and imprecise, cautioned Dave Dickson, executive director of the Virginia Commission on Military Bases -- a group appointed by Gov. Mark R. Warner -- and George Foresman, Warner's assistant for commonwealth preparedness.

President Bush and Congress still must go along for the Pentagon-proposed shifts, and a number of changes to them voted by the federal commission, to take effect.

"We kept a lot of important [defense] pieces. We're pretty happy about that," Dickson said about the federal commission votes.

At the same time, "You still have to be saddened about Fort Monroe being closed. It's a great historic property." And officials were not happy about the losses from leased space in northern Virginia, he added.

Moreover, the future of Oceana Naval Air Station in Virginia Beach remains to be played out, he said. The BRAC commission called for steps to stem suburban encroachment there or face removal of its operations to an airfield near Jacksonville, Fla. The Virginia master jet base has about 12,000 workers.

Foresman said there was strong bipartisan cooperation by local and state leaders and congressional officials who worked on responding to the Pentagon proposals and to proposals added by the BRAC commission.

The net gain includes certain jobs that are classified for security reasons, and their numbers have not been made public, the state officials said.

The National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, now headquartered in Bethesda, Md., and having other offices, would be consolidated at Fort Belvoir in Fairfax County. Fort Belvoir would appear to be in line for a significant number of new classified jobs, Dickson said.

The Defense Department proposed a realignment of the Defense Intelligence Analysis Center. It is located at Bolling Air Force Base in the District of Columbia. A new facility outside Charlottesville would gain an undisclosed number of the center's classified workers and 750 people holding nonclassified jobs, Dickson said.

In May the Department of Defense proposed shifts that its data indicated would result in a net loss of 1,574 positions in Virginia. That number did not include classified positions, according to Dickson.

County set to take base closings in stride

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution (Atlanta, GA)
Donna Soper
September 1, 2005

Fayette County business and development leaders don't expect the planned closings of Fort Gillem and Fort McPherson to have a dramatic impact on the county's economy.

Brian Cardoza, president of the Fayette County Development Authority, said it's hard to determine how many Fayette residents, military and civilian, work at the Army bases. Military personnel will be reassigned elsewhere; the civilians who work at the bases are the ones in jeopardy of being unemployed.

"I don't think we'll see a huge impact," Cardoza said. "We may have a few houses sold, but it's hard to judge."

Virginia Gibbs, president of the Fayette County Chamber of Commerce, agreed.

"I think that the county is pretty diversified at this point," Gibbs said. "We aren't expecting that it is going to have a dramatic impact here."

The federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission decided last week not to take Fort Gillem, in Forest Park, and Fort McPherson, near East Point, off the list of military bases targeted for closure. BRAC's recommendations still must be approved by Congress and President Bush to take effect. But no changes to the closure list are expected.

Not all operations at the bases will be closed. The Army's Criminal Investigation Division forensic laboratory and the Georgia Army National Guard will remain at Fort Gillem.

Gibbs said that one area of concern might be retirees who live in the area. Many retirees use the health clinic at Fort McPherson and the commissaries at both bases.

Ron Wharton, public affairs spokesman for the U.S. Army, said that 16,789 Army retirees live in metro Atlanta, though he was unable to give a county-by-county breakdown. Retirees from the other branches of the U.S. military number 19,632 in the area.

Rick Koethe of Fayetteville, a retired Army colonel, said he uses the clinic at Fort McPherson but isn't very concerned about its eventual closing.

Koethe, most recently stationed at Fort Gillem, predicted that it might be five years before the closings are completed.

"This round of base closures is about as removed from the political process as you can get," Koethe said. "By and large, this is a good thing."

Area business and community leaders, who anticipated that the bases might be slated for closure, already have begun to research redevelopment plans.

"Our hope is that with the redevelopment that happens there, the Southside will come out

ahead," Gibbs said. "Obviously, we're optimistic that that will be the case."

Naval Operations Chief Sees Groton As Safe

Mullen believes BRAC recommendations will be adopted, become law

New London Day (New London, CT)

Robert A. Hamilton

September 1, 2005

Newport, R.I. — The new chief of naval operations, Adm. Michael G. Mullen, said Wednesday that he has "every expectation" that the president and Congress will approve a federal panel's recommendation to keep the Naval Submarine Base in Groton open.

Mullen, in one of his first major public addresses at the Naval War College, said the Groton base has been critically important to the Navy and that he will work to continue that legacy if it remains open.

He also backed the proposal to increase submarine production from one to two a year, which submarine force supporters say is critical to reversing a rapid decline in the size of the fleet, and he pledged to work with industry to stabilize the shipbuilding plan.

"I am in the midst of a review of capabilities for the future of the United States Navy, and what the architecture looks like," Mullen said. "I think there's a very viable and critical future with respect to the submarine force, and I'm committed to that. It will require us, in the shipbuilding plan, to build more than one a year. I recognize that."

Mullen assumed the top uniformed position in the Navy on July 22, and many in the submarine force have been watching for signals about his position on submarines — his predecessor was seen as unfriendly to the undersea fleet, and testified earlier this year that the Navy could get by with about 25 percent fewer submarines than it has now.

Mullen fielded several questions from submariners in the overflow crowd of Spruance Auditorium, and said he is committed to the Virginia-class submarine that was designed at Electric Boat and is co-produced by EB and Northrop Grumman Newport News (Va.) Shipbuilding.

“I’ve got to have the capability,” Mullen said, but added that “it is very, very expensive. And the expense issue, it’s not just in submarines, it’s in DD(X) (the new destroyer design), it’s in CVN-21 (the new aircraft carrier), it’s in what we’re building today.

“And getting that cost down — we’ve got to be able to do that,” Mullen said. “My responsibility at this point is to provide a stable shipbuilding plan (for) the business world.”

Mullen has directed his staff to study the Navy’s shipbuilding plan to come up with the type of ships and aircraft the Navy needs, and how many of each. It has been years since the Navy has had a clearly defined force-structure plan, but Mullen said that’s important if you want stability in the shipbuilding and aircraft production process.

“We can have a strategic partnership which then allows us to build the force of the future, and I don’t think I’m that far away from that, quite frankly,” Mullen said. He said he expects all Navy officers and enlisted people to back the plan once he releases it.

In the past, he noted, other services have debated a topic, the service chief has endorsed a solution and everyone has marched off to implement it.

“The Navy has a debate, it’s a vigorous debate, the CNO makes a decision, and everybody goes, ‘Holy cow, he’s serious, we’d better have a debate,’ ” Mullen said, as laughter rippled through the audience. “I’m not going to do that. I don’t have time.”

Mullen praised the work of the independent base closure and realignment or BRAC process, even though it overturned two of the Navy’s biggest

proposed closures, the Groton base and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine.

“I came in just as BRAC deliberations were starting ... and testified once, specifically testified on Oceana (Naval Air Station, Va.), and other than that have said very publicly that I think the independent BRAC commission was a very important part of the process,” Mullen said.

“The process isn’t over yet,” he cautioned. “They’ve got to make a recommendation to the president, the president has to send it to Congress and the Congress has to put it into law, and whatever that process decides, we’ll march off.

“Assuming the process results in New London staying open, and I have every expectation that will be the case, New London has been a great base for a long time, and it’s an important base for us from the standpoint of homeporting our submarines, doing our submarine training, and taking care of the families who live there,” Mullen said. “So I’ll make every effort to make sure that continues.”

Oceana under fire: Who takes the heat?

The Virginian-Pilot (Hampton Roads, VA)

Jon W. Glass

September 1, 2005

VIRGINIA BEACH — No one disputes that 30 years of development around Oceana Naval Air Station now threatens its survival as the Navy’s East Coast master jet base.

But there’s plenty of disagreement over who is to blame.

Fingers point back and forth – at city leaders and Navy brass – after the federal base-closure commission issued an ultimatum last week for saving Oceana.

Popular wisdom blames the city. For nearly 30 years – from 1975 to 2004 – the City Council voted at least 51 times to allow more homes and shops to be built near Oceana over the Navy’s objections.

“I would speculate that if the city had gone with the Navy’s recommendations those 51 times, we wouldn’t be here today talking about this,” Phil Grandfield, a retired Navy pilot who testified for Virginia at a base-closure hearing, told reporters a day before the commission acted on Oceana.

But former City Council members point their fingers back at the Navy.

They say the Navy failed to buy enough land for a jet base, was inconsistent about opposing development around Oceana, and made the city a scapegoat for letting owners develop their property.

“The Navy is the one doing the encroaching,” said John A. Baum, a former councilman who, during 28 years on the City Council, rarely voted the Navy’s way. He said the Navy outgrew Oceana with its louder, high-performance jets.

“Encroach means to trespass or invade on someone’s territory,” Baum said. “Apparently, the socialist Navy officers don’t believe in private property rights.”

Some say it was inevitable that the city’s need to grow and the Navy’s need to train jet pilots would become irreconcilable.

“I think there was a mutual lack of foresight,” said Grover Wright, a Virginia Beach lawyer who represented developers in the 1970s and ’80s as the Beach grew from a small-town resort into Virginia’s most populous city. “It’s grown incompatible mutually.”

Last week, the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission laid the blame squarely at the city’s feet.

The panel issued an ultimatum: Virginia Beach would lose the base’s F/A-18 Hornets and Super Hornets to Cecil Field in Florida unless Virginia, Virginia Beach and Chesapeake were to roll back existing development and halt new, incompatible growth.

BRAC’s toughest demand is that the city condemn and buy property in the riskiest accident-potential zones around Oceana.

City officials estimate that would affect about 1,800 homes with a total assessed value of \$268 million. The actual cost is expected to be much higher and includes buying shops, restaurants and offices.

In a stinging rebuke of Virginia Beach, BRAC commissioner Samuel K. Skinner, a former U.S. transportation secretary, said BRAC’s ultimatum would give the city and Virginia a chance “to try to clean up the mess they have created.”

Last year, The Virginian-Pilot spent several months examining the city’s record of ignoring Navy concerns. The newspaper reviewed 70 City Council votes on development projects that the Navy had opposed, dating back to 1975.

The City Council brushed aside the Navy’s objections in nearly 73 percent of its votes. Of those 51 votes, 19 projects were in accident-potential zones.

BRAC staffers cited that voting history during briefings on how growth around Oceana had hampered pilot training and placed residents at risk.

Some former City Council members said they were insulted by the BRAC panel’s verbal attack on Virginia Beach.

Patrick L. Standing, a former mayor who served on the City Council from 1974 to 1982, said the city has never had the authority to condemn land for the federal government.

“If it were me,” Standing said this week, “I’d wrap Oceana up in a nice, tight bundle and tell BRAC to stuff it.”

But the BRAC panel’s decision came as no surprise to former commanding officers at Oceana.

“It looks like the BRAC Commission came to the same conclusion that the CO s have been

telling the city since the 1960s,” said Danny J. Michaels, a Virginia Beach resident who commanded Oceana from 1978 to 1980. “Some members of council have been listening, but most have not. They do what they want to do.”

John E. Allen, a Chesapeake resident who led Oceana from 1986 to 1988, said he was disappointed by the BRAC panel’s ultimatum.

If the same rules about encroachment applied to every military air base or civilian airport, he said, “We wouldn’t be able to operate commercial aviation or military aviation in this country.”

Still, Allen said, the City Council brought BRAC’s wrath upon itself by failing to heed the Navy’s warnings.

A major development battle came in 1976 over Lynnhaven Mall. At the time, the mall site was on the edge of an accident-potential zone. It now partly lies in one of the lower-risk accident zones.

The City Council approved the mall over the Navy’s vehement objections. Navy officials warned that the site was in line with Oceana’s busiest runways and that thousands of shoppers could die if a jet crashed into it.

No crashes have occurred there, and Navy’s jets continue to fly over the mall.

“The Navy kept telling the city, ‘You’re going to put us in a box,’ and that’s where we are now,” said W.D. Knutson, a California resident who led Oceana during the mall fight. “I certainly can’t feel sorry for the city because they kept doing it to themselves.”

Three former City Council members who voted for Lynnhaven Mall and other developments opposed by the Navy – Baum, Standing and Clarence A. Holland – defended their decisions. They argued that the mall site, according to the Navy’s own maps, was not in a crash zone. They also said the Navy should have bought the property if the military did not want it developed.

“The Navy didn’t do anything to protect themselves,” Standing said. “We were looking for tax revenue to pay for schools and roads and all the other things we needed.”

Holland, a former mayor who was on the City Council from 1970 to 1982, said the city was growing by 1,000 residents a month during the 1980s. “The Navy didn’t give us a whole lot of alternatives,” he said.

Former Councilwoman Nancy Creech, who served from 1982 to 1986, said the council struggled to balance the needs of the city and the Navy and to “do what was fair for the property owner.”

“I don’t think any City Council body has been cavalier in their attitude toward Oceana,” Creech said. “The Navy wasn’t as strong then against development as they are now.”

Robert G. Jones, a former mayor who sat on the council from 1982 to 1988, said problems did not surface until the Navy brought in noisier F/A-18 Hornets in 1998. That shifted the Navy’s noise and accident-potential zones.

Several former councilmen said the Defense Department compounded the problem in 2002, when it began opposing new homes in even the low- and medium-noise zones. That rendered thousands of homes that were once viewed as conditionally compatible as incompatible encroachment.

Allen and Knutson, the retired Oceana skippers, said Virginia Beach never used its zoning powers to buffer Oceana, even though state law allows the city to rezone property to prohibit homes near runways of civilian and military airports.

“It was about money and politics,” Knutson said. “You had big developers who wanted to do things and the city just didn’t want to stop them.”

At the Navy’s urging in the late 1970s and 1980s, Congress approved nearly \$60 million to

buy development rights on nearly 3,700 acres around Oceana and 8,800 acres around Fentress Auxiliary Landing Field in Chesapeake.

But that action did not go far enough, everyone acknowledges.

Former Mayor J. Henry McCoy voted against Lynnhaven Mall, warning at the time that the council would have “blood on our hands” if a crash occurred there. But he also voted for housing developments the Navy opposed.

He said some of the blame for hemming in Oceana rests with the City Council, but that the Navy is not blameless.

“I don’t think anyone,” he said, “ever dreamed it would get to this.”

Opinions/ Editorials

Willow Grove Will Remain An Active Base

Philadelphia Inquirer (Philadelphia, PA)
Edward G. Rendell
September 1, 2005

During the last several months, a stressful and incredibly difficult process to decide the fate of our military installations in Pennsylvania has played out in local newspapers, unfortunately not always with the most accurate or latest information. To be clear and erase any confusion The Inquirer or its readers may have about Willow Grove air base: Willow Grove is not closing and will not close in the future.

Willow Grove will remain as an air base operated by the Pennsylvania Air National Guard. And while Willow Grove will not continue in its current form, without question, a strong and significant military presence will remain there.

The 111th Fighter Wing will not be deactivated. The jobs of its 1,023 airmen and airwomen will remain. On Friday, U.S. District Judge John R. Padova ruled that the Department of Defense had no authority to deactivate the 111th without

the consent of the governor, and since I have not consented, its action was "null and void." Later that afternoon, the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission also rescinded the Department of Defense's recommendation and ordered that the 111th not be deactivated.

We then learned Friday night that the commission agreed that bases where Air National Guard units remain can be run by the state. This is exactly what happened at Fort Indiantown Gap when the 1995 BRAC process removed units that had previously operated the facility.

So, while Willow Grove will no longer be a Naval Air Station, it will remain an armed forces installation and active air base. In addition to the personnel of the 111th, six Army Reserve units from the area were ordered by the Department of Defense and the commission to be relocated to Willow Grove, joining the 1215th Army Reserve Garrison support unit and the 270th Engineering Installation Squadron of the Air National Guard, who were recommended to remain there as well. All told, more than 2,500 military personnel will be part of the newly structured installation and air base at Willow Grove.

The only issue remaining is the fate of the A-10 airplanes that are attached to the 111th. The commission ordered that they be removed and transferred to other bases, but we believe strongly that Judge Padova's ruling legally bars this action. But regardless of the outcome of the legal controversy, I have asked our senators and House members to arrange a meeting with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to persuade him that it makes absolutely no sense for the federal government to pay for the 1,023 personnel of the 111th and not allot airplanes to do the job they have done so well - protecting Pennsylvania's homeland security and fighting the global war on terrorism. (They have flown more than 2,500 combat missions since 1995, including 1,400 in Iraq and Afghanistan.) The Defense Department can agree to this easily because the current plan sends 12 modern A-10s, not scheduled to be taken out of service until 2028, to be mothballed in the desert on inactive status.

So, the news is very good. Though we could not save Willow Grove in its current form, Pennsylvania will have a well-staffed working air base and Army Reserve training center at Willow Grove for decades to come.

Edward G. Rendell is the governor of Pennsylvania.

A Reader's Guide to Base Closings

New York Times (New York, NY)
August 28, 2005

Plenty of good reasons can always be found for keeping open military bases the Pentagon no longer needs. Well-paying, federally financed jobs will be lost. Local economies will be devastated. New strategic threats may develop someday that might make that unwanted base useful again. And so on.

Arguments like these have now persuaded the independent federal commission in charge of reviewing the Pentagon's base closing recommendations to keep open the 205-year-old Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Maine and America's oldest submarine base, in Groton, Conn. The commission also granted reprieves to two Air Force bases that the Pentagon hoped to close, Ellsworth in South Dakota and Cannon in New Mexico, and rejected a plan to scale back operations substantially at Eielson Air Force Base in Alaska.

Such reprieves hearten the communities involved, and it is easy to sympathize with local fears of base closings. Yet every such reversal diverts funds the Pentagon ought to be spending on real and urgent requirements - including the needs of soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan - to the upkeep of installations the military has already concluded it can do without. The commission's actions eliminate a substantial chunk of the nearly \$50 billion the Defense Department estimated it would have saved over 20 years.

Looking over the panel's rationale for most of these changes, we think the Pentagon had it right

the first time. In the case of Portsmouth and the Groton base, a majority of the commissioners seemed to be swayed by the claim that China's naval building efforts might one day create new missions for America's current fleet of 54 underused nuclear-powered attack submarines - a costly legacy of the days when America's main enemy was an oceangoing superpower, not cave-dwelling terrorists. The Portsmouth shipyard is good at repairing submarines. The Groton base, located near the Navy's prime submarine building and repair contractor, Electric Boat, has a school for training submarine crews.

China does theoretically have the economic and technological capacity to build a large and threatening submarine fleet. But it has no obvious reason for doing so unless Washington insists on casting it as a substitute cold war enemy. The United States Navy remains the world's most powerful. The Bush administration has been handing far more dangerous leverage to Beijing by failing to narrow America's gaping budget and trade deficits, which have allowed China to buy a huge amount of the national debt.

Ellsworth had become a symbol of political manhood for Senator John Thune, a South Dakota Republican who spent most of the summer personally lobbying the commission. During the cold war, this heartland redoubt housed nuclear bombers and missiles targeted on the Soviet Union. More recently, it has been home to about half of America's B-1B long-range bombers. Long-range bombers still provide valuable strategic striking power and were used in Iraq. But none of that would have been sacrificed, and, by Pentagon estimates, nearly \$2 billion could have been saved by consolidating the full B-1B fleet at Dyess Air Force Base in Texas, where the remaining bombers are currently based. A similar amount could have been spared for more compelling uses if the Pentagon had been allowed to move Eielson's 24 F-16 fighter jets to Nevada. Cannon will lose its F-16's, but stay open anyway.

We wish the commissioners had paid more heed to the fact that the counterinsurgency wars America has so far been fighting in the 21st century are very different from the kind of

superpower conflicts it built its current forces and base structure around. The military's current deficiencies have nothing to do with the staggeringly advanced and expensive fighter jets and submarines that the services so love to order and military contractors so love to build. The problem lies in the less profitable and less politically networked areas of ground fighting forces and basic supplies. To address those deficiencies, the Pentagon should be shifting resources from the Air Force and Navy to the Army and Marines, and from expensive air and sea combat systems to more soldiers and better armor.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has been far too timid about making such shifts. And when he tries, powerful entrenched interests line up to resist him every step of the way. Service chiefs and military contractors still fight to build every weapon ever imagined, regardless of changing needs and priorities. Navy and Air Force advocates fight tenaciously for their traditional shares of the Pentagon spending pie. Local politicians and businesses wage high-powered campaigns against base closings.

And whenever such resistance succeeds, America's broader defense needs lose.

Oceana Needs Long-Term Solution

Daily Press (Newport News, VA)

Aleck Loker

August 31, 2005

"It is also the sense of the commission that the future of Naval Aviation is not Naval Air Station Oceana." That statement from Base Closure and Realignment Commission should give Virginia politicians considerable pause as they consider whether to invest hundreds of millions of dollars (our dollars) on buying property surrounding Naval Air Station Oceana to attempt to undo the perception or reality of encroachment and save Oceana.

I suspect that the BRAC Commission members' opinions of NAS Oceana came about through conversations with senior Pentagon officials. As the BRAC process played out, it became

apparent that the Navy has a heretofore undisclosed long-range plan to build a new Master Jet Base somewhere else on the East Coast.

Now the BRAC commissioners have strongly urged the Pentagon to look at reacquiring and reactivating Cecil Field in Florida. The Navy will probably not favor this solution, although they could be convinced if sufficient inducements are offered by Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and sufficient political pressure is applied. However, they would see the synergy of keeping their Master Jet Base near to their Atlantic Fleet center at Norfolk.

How to bring that about is the \$64,000 (or perhaps \$640 million) question. There are at least two obvious ways. One is perhaps politically and legally impossible: enacting legislation and making the commitment, by the BRAC's March 31, 2006, deadline, to acquire thousands of private homes in the Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ) surrounding Oceana. This should not happen unless Virginia can have federal assurance that the Master Jet Base will remain at Oceana for at least several decades to make the intrusion on private property rights and the investment in acquiring that private property worthwhile.

The second way to keep the Master Jet Base, its 18,000 jobs and nearly \$2 billion per year economic input to the commonwealth, is to find a new location proximate to the Hampton Roads area, acquire sufficient property to accommodate the new Master Jet Base, and rezone the attendant AICUZ areas to prohibit private, incompatible development there.

The several hundred million dollars Virginia would have to spend on mitigating encroachment around Oceana will probably be too little and way too late. That money would be better spent in a joint venture between the commonwealth and the federal government in the acquisition of land and construction of a new, 21st century Master Jet Base.

The land south of the Chesapeake to Virginia Beach corridor remains relatively undeveloped

and could be the place to locate such a base. The abundant rivers, Back Bay and marshlands could also be preserved by appropriately locating the base and zoning outlying areas to minimize development density in those environmentally sensitive areas.

The location affords over-water approaches that would be appropriate for training naval aviators, it retains this critical mission within the commonwealth of Virginia and it keeps it close to the Norfolk naval facilities. It also provides quick access to the offshore warning areas controlled by the Navy where much of the naval aviation training takes place.

The BRAC commissioners have given the commonwealth of Virginia a ridiculously short time in which to provide the guarantees they demanded to avoid loss of the Master Jet Base to Cecil Field. Leadership in the commonwealth needs to steer the stakeholders quickly to a more appropriate long-term solution -- one that keeps the Master Jet Base in Virginia, efficiently expends taxpayers' money, and doesn't trample on private property owners' rights.

Loker is a former county administrator from Maryland who now lives in Williamsburg.

DFAS workers still need Dayton's help

Dayton Daily News (Dayton, OH)
August 31, 2005

In May 1994, Kettering was surprised by the announcement that the Defense Finance and Accounting Service was moving up to 750 jobs to the Gentile Air Station. The infusion cushioned the blow from the earlier loss of 2,300 jobs when the Defense Electronic Supply Center closed.

Then 11 years to the month later, the community was shocked again to hear that these same jobs were on a Pentagon hit list. Before that recommendation came out, the hope was that Kettering's DFAS would gain jobs in this round of base closures; the Kettering Business Park has plenty of ready-to-use space and DFAS pays just a \$1 a year for rent there.

In retrospect, the ideal scenario was naive. Nationally, DFAS offices were created in 1991 as a way to consolidate 300 operations where military payroll and other accounting functions were performed; consolidation of that work has never stopped. The Base Realignment and Closure Commission this time recommended going from 26 DFAS sites to five; the Pentagon wanted just three.

While the effort to downsize the military's important administrative functions and to become more efficient using technology has taken a while, Pentagon managers have stuck with a plan that was hard to miss.

It's not clear when Kettering's DFAS with its 425 workers is likely to close, but the original recommendation was to shut it down in 2009. If that date holds, the delay gives families and local planners time to create options.

One thing Dayton's employers and those who market the community need to focus on is that a lot of high-skilled workers will be looking for jobs. Some companies spend bundles bringing together talented help. Knowing that so many federal employees - with valuable accounting and computer skills - are going to be available should be seen as a selling point for the Dayton community.

Moreover, the space DFAS will be leaving at Kettering is in good shape, and there's plenty of it. For a business that knows it will be ramping up, it's a good spot to consider.

(Of course, the upside of the site is also its downside. DFAS occupies 200,000 square feet. That's a lot of office space for small, young companies. Meanwhile, established firms that need that much room and that are willing to move people are not easy to find.)

During the BRAC hearing process it was clear that many DFAS employees like living in the community and don't want to move. To keep them here, local companies need ways to connect with displaced DFAS workers. Already plans are being made to have the Montgomery

County Job Center work with those who are going to be out of work and to ensure that they know what positions are open here.

Still, local firms have to turn to, and work with, the Job Center; and they have to give DFAS workers their careful consideration when vacancies occur.

During the BRAC process, there was a lot of talk about how the Dayton community appreciates what workers for the military do. The chance to show that in tangible ways is just around the corner.

BRAC scratching ; Jim Hansen's Conflict

Hard to find ex-congressmen without one Salt Lake Tribune (Salt Lake, UT)
August 31, 2005

When the Base Realignment and Closure Commission voted on actions that mattered to Utah's Deseret Chemical Depot and Hill Air Force Base, commission member and former Utah Congressman Jim Hansen abstained.

Hansen was clearly doing the right thing. His ties to affected military installations, and to Utah generally, would not allow him an unbiased view.

But it shows just how incestuous the Washington influence-go-round is that Hansen's vote on an installation far from Utah sifts out as more than a little fishy.

Hansen, like far too many other former members of Congress, hires himself and his Rolodex out as a paid lobbyist for various causes. One of those causes, which he was long known to support even before the Davis County Council of Governments retained his services, was the controversial Legacy Highway connecting Farmington with North Salt Lake.

Hansen helped write a proposed 11th-hour amendment to the giant transportation bill that, had it passed, would have cut off further court challenges based on Legacy's environmental impact.

One of the people who needed to be lobbied if that plan were to become reality was Rep. Don Young, an Alaska Republican who is chairman of the House Transportation Committee. Young, meanwhile, was also after something. He wanted the BRAC to spare Alaska's Eielson AFB from the closure list.

While both men deny any overt quid pro quo, the fact is that Young got some of what he wanted, thanks to the Hansen-made, BRAC-passed motion to preserve part of Eielson's function.

But, at least on the narrow issue of the Legacy amendment, Hansen did not get what he wanted. His Young-supported Legacy cut-off idea was blocked by Senate Democrats.

That might mean Young is a better lobbyist than Hansen. It definitely means that the presence on the BRAC commission of active lobbyists is something that ought to be avoided in the future.

The strength of the BRAC process, with most of its commissioners being retired military officers and only a couple of political and industry representatives, is that its very difficult decisions are seen as, if not absolutely accurate, at least untainted by log-rolling.

Paid lobbyists on the panel taint that image. It should not be read as a slam at Hansen when we say that it should not be allowed to happen again.

Good News, Good Work

Winston-Salem Journal (Winston Salem, NC)
August 31, 2005

Hurricane Katrina isn't the only storm North Carolina dodged over the past week. Hurricane BRAC, which could have slammed the state's estimated \$18 billion-a-year military economy, blew gently over the state, causing less upheaval than anyone had dared to hope.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission, BRAC, reviewed the Pentagon's

plans to close and consolidate bases across the country. The Pentagon hoped to cut spending by \$50 billion over the next six years, and that raised fears in communities nationwide.

North Carolina has the fourth-largest military presence in the nation and depends heavily on the military, which employs 135,000 people here. In addition, the military presence creates thousands of support and spin-off jobs in the civilian economy, and military veterans retire here in large numbers. So state officials were worried that this round of base closings and realignments would do what previous rounds had not - hit North Carolina hard.

When the BRAC cast its final votes last week, North Carolina had probably had a net gain of jobs rather than a loss. Job estimates are flying here and there, and state officials say they can't be sure of any of them - job estimates are always an iffy proposition. It is clear, however, that the bottom line will work in North Carolina's favor if, as expected, President Bush and Congress approve the BRAC recommendations.

There was a big upgrade in mission for Fort Bragg, while neighboring Pope Air Force Base had a much smaller reduction in forces than had been feared. Some bases gained work and employees, while others lost a few.

North Carolina fared well for several reasons. The military units at Fort Bragg and Camp Lejeune are especially important in anti-terror operations. The state has a long history of supporting the military and strong military-support infrastructure.

North Carolina's bounty of open land also helped. The state has worked to keep development from encroaching on the lands that military bases may need to expand.

The state's political leaders did excellent work. Lt. Gov. Bev Perdue coordinated the efforts from Raleigh. Sens. Richard Burr and Elizabeth Dole led the congressional delegation from Washington. Community leaders and military retirees chipped in to make the case for keeping North Carolina's bases open. And, in the General

Assembly, legislators passed a series of laws aimed at making the military more welcome here.

BRAC could have hit North Carolina with Category 5 hurricane-like winds. Instead, BRAC came through like a lovely spring breeze.

Additional Notes