

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



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NPS may get new governing body; BRAC seeks panel to impose cost cuts
Monterey County Herald
September 10, 2005

The federal base closure commission's full report to President Bush seeks to give some real teeth to a new board that would oversee the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey and its Air Force counterpart in Ohio.

After choosing last month not to close NPS or merge it with the Air Force campus, the Base Realignment and Closure Commission recommended in its report to the White House on Friday that various cost-saving measures be imposed on the graduate schools by a new governing body authorized to act, not just recommend.

Exactly what will become of that idea, however, now moves into the political realm. While Bush must either approve the commission's base closure plan in whole or reject it in whole, it isn't clear how he will respond to the closure commission's unprecedented decision to make policy recommendations as well as base-closure decisions. This commission's attempt to go beyond its traditional charter is sparking court challenges around the country.

NPS officials remained in their Pentagon-imposed "no comment" mode Friday, so there was no way to gauge official reaction to the final report. But retired Adm. Henry Mauz of Pebble Beach, who heads the NPS Foundation and works closely with the school's administration, said the two schools already work extremely well together.

Mauz said in an e-mail that although the commission found nothing to criticize at the Defense Department colleges, "there was a perceived need to 'do something.'"

"It's uncharted territory," Monterey City Manager Fred Meurer said of the policy recommendations. Meurer, a former Army officer who played a key role in the city's successful effort to keep NPS and the Defense Language Institute off the closure list, said he assumes the president could accept the closure decisions, but not the policy recommendations.

The president must act by Sept. 23 and the commission has until Oct. 20 to respond to his response.

Some Navy officials have lobbied for years to close NPS, saying it doesn't belong in such an expensive coastal location and that it would be cheaper to send naval officers to civilian universities.

But Mauz and others argue that NPS serves a distinctly military mission that would be impossible to duplicate on civilian campuses. That argument eventually swayed the commission but, because the commission's principal goal was to save money, its report stresses the need to control costs at NPS and the Air Force campus.

A less-formalized panel formed four years ago to coordinate the missions of NPS and the Pentagon's other primary postgraduate school, the Air Force Institute of Technology in Dayton, Ohio, found needless duplication in the curricula, along with missed opportunities for collaboration and joint research. It also found "significant unused capacity," BRAC stated in the report.

The existing panel, known as the Educational Alliance, had no enforcement powers, so little if anything has been done to address its concerns, the commission reported.

To take advantage of the opportunities for increased efficiencies, the commission recommends formation of a new board in Washington that would be authorized to take action to eliminate unnecessary duplication, implement joint research and instructional efforts, and expand the use of private universities to supplement the military's graduate programs.

"The tough issues... that could result in significant savings and improvement remain unaddressed," the commission said. "The commission believes that rather than continuing as two schools focused on individual service needs, they can and need to be transformed into a joint program with two schools working together to meet joint needs."

Mauz said he disagrees with the report's implication that sending officers to civilian colleges would save money.

"There are some on the commission and even some senior officers in the services (who) have advocated privatization of graduate education," he said. "They do not understand the unique nature of the curricula at NPS and AFIT, and they mistakenly believe that it would be less costly to send students to civilian schools."

Mauz said he found the outcome of the base-closure process "satisfactory," but said he is concerned the Pentagon might "cherry-pick" some fields of study and send officers to civilian schools in response to political pressures.

If the commission's recommendations are enacted, the new board would consist of an equal number of members from the governing boards of each school, civilian educators recommended by the U.S. Secretary of Education and other education officials designated by the Secretary of Defense.

The report does not specify the number of members, nor does it recommend inclusion of congressional representatives as suggested by Leon Panetta, the former Central Coast congressman who played a lead role in protecting NPS from closure.

The governing board of NPS, which would help make up the new board, is the NPS Board of Advisors, which is made up of civilian and military members.

Its membership consists of Elisabeth Pate-Cornell, dean of Stanford's engineering program; Parade magazine executive Walter Anderson; retired Adm. Stanley R. Arthur; retired Vice Adm. Lyle G. Bien; Jack Borsting; Rear Adm. Jay Cohen; Lt. Gen. Michael Dunn; Robert Fossum; retired Vice Adm. David E. Frost; retired Vice Adm. Lee Gunn, Maj. Gen. Thomas S. Jones; retired Adm. T. Joseph Lopez; Vice Adm. J. Kevin Moran; Maj. Gen. David H. Huntoon Jr.; Lt. Gen. John F. Regni; Graham B. Spanier; G. Kim Wincup; and former NASA administrator Sean O'Keefe.

Presumably, the type of cost cutting recommended by the commission would help make NPS "BRAC-proof" during future base-closure rounds, but Meurer predicted that there will be no more formalized base-closure processes such as the one nearing completion. The contentious process has left so many participants with a "foul taste" that the Pentagon in the future will be more likely to make closure and consolidation decisions incrementally, he predicted.

Politics not entirely absent in base closure decisions

Nashua Telegraph
James W. Crawley
September 11, 2005

WASHINGTON – August is normally a month known here for its oppressive heat and humidity.

The only saving grace is that it's a month devoid of politicians.

The president goes to Crawford, Texas. Senators and House members are either home, vacationing in Tahiti or junketing to the four corners on the taxpayer dime.

But this August was a little different.

The nine-member independent Base Realignment and Closure Commission was busy holding hearings and voting on the future of hundreds of military installations and offices.

By the time they finished, the commission had decided the fate of cities, towns and, yes, politicians from nearly every state.

Isn't BRAC supposed to be immune from political influence?

Yes, the powers-that-be did take the politics out of BRAC by setting up a panel to make the final call on which bases to shutter, removing it from congressional horse-trading.

But, no law could take BRAC out of politics.

Having a base close in one's state, congressional district or city limits is very bad karma for anyone who runs for re-election.

No amount of mea culpas or "it's not my faults" would likely silence a political opponent after a base closure. Workers are voters and unemployed workers are mad voters. With thousands of jobs at stake, BRAC can be a political nightmare.

Politicians with local bases on the Pentagon list went into political survival mode.

Many spoke at local rallies as the "save our base" campaigns took on the air of a political campaign.

They attended hearings, visited bases and lobbied commissioners. At press conferences, they vowed to fight the good fight for their bases, jobs and the American Way. They wrote hundreds of letters, held congressional hearings.

Some congressmen tried to block funding for BRAC projects. Three governors sued to halt the BRAC process.

Some politicians went the extra mile for their bases. Despite having no chance to argue their cases, several dozen politicians sat through the commission's three monotonous days of deliberations. They just sat and listened.

It was a most unusual sight – politicians as silent spectators.

“They’re supporting their people,” said Lilly Goren, a political science professor at Carroll College in Waukesha, Wis., who wrote a book on base-closing politics. “Of course, they’re not the ones making the decisions.”

New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson, who was trying to keep Cannon Air Force Base open, was one of them. So was Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, who sat on the front row with a delegation from his state. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, warmed a chair for two days. New England officeholders filled other seats.

When Senate legend Robert Byrd, D-W.Va., strode into the hearing room, reporters quickly found the base he was interested in: a Charleston, W.Va., airport with Air National Guard cargo planes.

The most persistent politician was easily the one politico standing to lose the most if a home state base closed – Sen. John Thune, R-S.D.

Last year, he defeated Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle in a bitter campaign marked by pronouncements that Thune would protect Ellsworth Air Force Base better than Daschle.

When the Pentagon recommended Ellsworth's closure in May, the freshman's political career light flashed yellow for caution.

For three days, he alternately sat in the hearing room, paced the foyer or conducted interviews with reporters as the panel decided the fate of dozens of Army, Navy and Marine Corps bases. Air Force bases were last on the agenda.

When the commission voted to save Ellsworth, Thune was all smiles.

Base and career rescued.

Conspicuously absent were the Virginians. The governor, the two senators and most of the congressional delegation were no shows.

Most claimed they had said all they could say at previous hearings. Some were out of the country on congressional trips.

When commissioners voted on Virginia's Oceana Naval Air Station, the only elected official present was Virginia Beach Mayor Meyera Oberndorf.

Virginia did not do well.

It lost thousands of jobs to Maryland and other states. Oceana was given a reprieve but could be moved to Florida unless state and local officials meet BRAC demands.

On the other hand, Thune, Bush, Hutchinson, Richardson and Byrd all left with bases saved from the chopping block.

In all likelihood, one politician's presence or absence had little or no impact on which bases survived BRAC, but if voters perceive that an officeholder did not go the extra mile for local military bases, then dire consequences could happen at the polls.

**Utah's bases defied odds
State is losing only 6 jobs after last BRAC round**

Deseret Morning News
Leigh Dethman
September 11, 2005

The state's military installations only lost six jobs despite having relatively no political clout in the Base Realignment and Closure process.

Utah was an easy political target to lose a military base like Hill Air Force Base, said

Vickie McCall, president of the Utah Defense Alliance, a local group that coordinated Utah's BRAC defense.

McCall said she feared the state could lose as many as 3,000-5,000 jobs during the recent BRAC round. However, in the final report the commission sent to President Bush late Thursday, the state came out on top with just six jobs lost.

"They are just damn lucky," BRAC commissioner Jim Hansen told the Deseret Morning News in a recent interview. "Just pure lucky they got away from that."

The BRAC process isn't supposed to be political, but it is far from that, the former Utah congressman said. Politics are involved in nearly every part of the process.

During the 1995 BRAC round, Gen. Ronald W. Yates, who at the time was serving as head of the Air Force Materiel Command, told McCall Hill might be strong, but politics were not in the state's favor.

"He said, 'You are the best at what you do, but Hill is the most politically expedient to close. If I have to recommend a base to close, that will be you,'" McCall said of the conversation.

The state might have had Hansen on BRAC to fight for the Beehive State's military installations behind closed doors, but that clout was not enough.

It would be politically easy to close a base thousands of miles away from where major decisions are made, McCall said. It's hard to put up a fight from that distance.

Plus, the state is known for its conservative slant and staunch support of the military, leaving it less vulnerable to the hue of political outcry.

But the Utah Defense Alliance fought back, hiring lobbyists and flying to Washington monthly to make sure the Pentagon and all BRAC commissioners knew just what Utah's military bases had to offer.

Pablo Martinez Monsivais, Associated Press
"We showed them we were not an easy target," McCall said. "They knew we were engaged and that we would do whatever we needed to do to save our base."

One thing that kept Utah's congressional delegation and the Utah Defense Alliance busy was fighting the many misconceptions out there about Hill and Utah in general.

McCall said some defense officials believed Utah's weather was bad for flying and that snow kept F-16s grounded. But in general, Hill pilots enjoy plenty of flying days. Other bases endure bad weather and storms, but that shouldn't be a reason to close a base, McCall said.

Another battle the Utah Defense Alliance faced was a dispute over numbers. State officials and defense authorities disagreed on how high Hill ranked in efficiency.

Hill ultimately proved to be an extremely valuable and efficient base: The base ranked first in two of the eight categories the Air Force used to rank military value among its 154 facilities nationwide.

"Overall we felt that Hill and Dugway really spoke for themselves," said Rick Mayfield, executive director of the Utah Defense Alliance. "They are top-notch facilities, you just don't know how the politics are going to play out."

Once the many misconceptions were cleared up, the delegation and the Utah Defense Alliance let Utah's military installations speak for themselves.

A planned public hearing with BRAC commissioners was canceled, leaving the three commissioners with just a base visit to see what Hill could do.

Both McCall and Rep. Rob Bishop, R-Utah, maintain canceling the public hearing was the right thing to do. They agreed with the Pentagon's initial recommendations and didn't want to push their luck, McCall said.

But Hansen criticized that move, saying Utah's other bases were "ignored" by canceling the public hearing.

"It was really odd, I never figured that out," Hansen said. "They ignored everyone else. But Hill Field is the biggest."

Hill is the largest employer in the state, with nearly 24,000 workers. Losing that would have been devastating, considering Hill's salaries are almost double the average salary in the state, Mayfield said.

A 2004 study by the University of Utah's Bureau of Economic Research details the potential aftershocks if BRAC had included Hill on the closure list:

- 31,000 fewer people would live in Utah
- Since the earnings of civilians working at Hill are almost double the state average, it would take almost 68,000 new jobs to offset the loss of \$2.35 billion in earnings. Utah has not experienced that rate of job growth since the mid-1990s.

Several local leaders have said Utah would sink into a "Great Depression" if Hill ever closed.

McCall said she would not have done anything different and defended the Utah Defense Alliance's strategy of focusing on keeping Hill open.

"Hill is what would have thrown the economy in absolute turmoil," McCall said. "That is where we had to focus our attention on."

Although Hill was included in several different major realignment scenarios throughout the BRAC process, Hansen insisted, "Hill was never in any real danger."

Local News Articles

Report: Navy Made A Strong Case To Close Down Sub Base

Supporters say document contradicts BRAC decision

New London Day (New London, CT)
Robert A. Hamilton
September 10, 2005

The final report of the federal base closure commission said the Navy made a strong case that it could save money by closing the Groton submarine base, a finding that seems to contradict public statements by the commissioners who voted to keep it open.

The base remains open because the report cannot overturn the commission vote.

But the document is the official record of the 2005 base closure process and was a disappointment to submarine base advocates, who thought they had refuted the Pentagon's claim that it could save money by closing the base.

The language in the "commission's findings" section of the report, delivered to President Bush late Thursday and released to Congress and the public on Friday, was viewed by many as a parting shot by the staff of the commission, which favored the Pentagon recommendation to shut down the base.

The report now goes to the president, who has until Sept. 23 to either accept it in its entirety or send it back to the commission for more work. If he accepts it, and he has indicated that he will, it goes to Congress, which has 45 working days to reject it, or it becomes law.

"The Commission found that excess capacity exists in the surface-subsurface category, that significant savings would accrue, and that a solid business case was made for closure of Submarine Base New London," according to the final report.

Commission Chairman Anthony J. Principi had said after the vote that he thought the move would have been more expensive than the Navy projected, and he and two other commissioners commented that the closure could lead to overcrowding at other bases.

“The first sentence of this report is inconsistent with all other public statements I've heard from the commissioners,” said John C. Markowicz, chairman of the Subbase Realignment Coalition, which worked with the state and the congressional delegation to overturn the Pentagon plan.

Several congressional staffers said the language appears to have been drafted by the Navy analysts on the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission staff, who supported the Pentagon recommendation to close Groton. One staffer called it an attempt to save face in the wake of a commission vote that rejected their advice.

Those staffers observed that despite the language, Groton remains open, which was the main point of the fight. Some officials dismissed what they characterized as a parting shot.

“There was probably a ‘solid business case’ made for ‘New Coke’ as well,” one official said.

Others said the effect of the language is irritating but limited — Groton will remain open, as long as the president and Congress agree.

“The statements in the report do seem to go further than those by the commissioners,” said Rich Harris, a spokesman for Gov. M. Jodi Rell. “It’s pretty clear Team Connecticut made an absolutely compelling case that there were no savings to be attained from closing the base, and the military value was grossly understated.”

But even if the phrase has no impact on the outcome, Markowicz said he would have preferred language that slammed the door on the proposal, in case there is another base closure process.

Several others who were involved in the fight said the final report is one more step toward killing the Pentagon plan to close the Groton base, which stood to lose more than 30,000 jobs and about \$3.3 billion a year in the state economy.

“Getting the BRAC commission to save this military facility from the scrap heap was a tremendous victory for our national security, our state and our citizens,” said U.S. Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn.

“I would caution people not to read too much into this fine print,” Dodd continued. “The commissioners themselves spoke to this issue directly and they made clear that closing Sub Base New London didn’t make sense — period. It certainly didn’t make sense in terms of national security, and it didn’t make sense in terms of cost.

“Saying that the Pentagon made a ‘solid’ case isn’t the same as saying they made the case,” Dodd said. “Clearly they didn’t, and the commissioner’s votes reflect that. I intend to continue to work to make sure there is absolutely no confusion on that point.”

And in fact, the report does hand a significant victory to the people who were fighting the base closure recommendation, after the first sentence in the commission’s findings, which praised the Navy plan.

It notes that the commission decided tampering with the synergy from some well-established specialty units such as the Naval Undersea Medical Institute and Naval Submarine Medical Research Laboratory, as well as the Submarine School and nearby Electric Boat, “could adversely affect operational readiness.”

“In addition, the commission found the argument of overall economic impact compelling,” the report stated. “Further, the Commission’s analysis found serious doubts about the threat assessment and resultant Force Structure Plan basis for the number of required Fast Attack Submarines.

“These factors combined to present an inherently unknowable and therefore unacceptable security risk to national security if the base were to close,” the report concluded.

Markowicz said after working for two years to keep the base open, he would have preferred a more unqualified endorsement.

“We're not sure we won't ever face this again, so we'd like the record to be complete,” he said. “It's down in the weeds, I know, but if you're holding your breath, it's an issue. If someone comes back in 10 or 15 or 20 years and looks at the file, we want there to be no doubt about it ... if the commission would change it, I would appreciate it, but I'm still grateful for the final vote.”

911th may get more planes on BRAC say-so

Pittsburgh Tribune Review (Pittsburgh, PA)
Brian Bowling
September 10, 2005

The 911th Airlift Wing in Moon will keep its eight planes and could receive more to match its expanded mission, officials said Friday.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission released its final report on military bases yesterday after sending it to President Bush. The final report keeps the cargo planes in Moon, canceling an earlier recommendation to move the C-130s to other bases.

BRAC spokesman Robert McCreary said Air Force officials will decide whether the base will get more planes.

Allegheny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato said it took two weeks to verify the base would keep its planes. “It was shaky up to this point, but it is a big, big win for our region,” he said.

The BRAC Commission had until Thursday to review a May 13 Defense Department proposal to close or cut back operations at more than 800 facilities nationwide while expanding operations at some other bases. The commission generally approved the Pentagon's plan for reshaping the country's military forces, but revised it for some bases, including the 911th.

The report, available online at www.brac.gov, notes that the Air Force believes an “optimal” C-130 squadron has 16 planes, but that 12 is an acceptable number for an Air Force Reserve or Air National Guard base.

Since the 911th is retaining its current C-130s, the Defense Department should put an “optimum number” of planes at the base, the report says.

U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Penn Hills, said his office received an e-mail from one of the commission's senior analysts, Mike Flinn, that confirmed the 911th will keep its current planes and might gain more to support its new mission as a Regional Joint Readiness Center.

The center would run civil and military operations and provide homeland security and community-based medical support to the Defense and Homeland Security departments.

BRAC official says Moon air base will keep its planes, personnel

Beaver County Times (Beaver County, PA)
Patrick O'Shea
September 10, 2005

MOON TWP. - The 911th Air Force Reserve base in Moon Township will keep its eight C-130H aircraft and its cargo-transport mission, the chief of staff for the congressional Base Realignment and Closure Commission said Friday.

U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Penn Hills, said Mike Flynn told him that the final report from the nine-member panel on restructuring military facilities was sent to President Bush late Wednesday with language stating the 911th should keep its current level of aircraft and personnel.

“This is a huge victory for the people of the 911th,” said Santorum, adding that officials had initially been told the planes would still be going to Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina or a similar facility.

Bush has until Sept. 23 to accept the nearly 200 recommendations and forward them to Congress or send them back to the commission for revisions. Federal officials have indicated Bush likely will accept the list and forward it to Congress next week for an all-or-nothing vote within 45 days.

The 911th was on the Pentagon's initial closure list in May because the Defense Department said there was room for only 10 planes there. However, base supporters successfully argued there is room for at least 20 planes.

When the BRAC Commission made its ruling two weeks ago that the 911th would remain open with a new mission as a regional joint readiness command, which would work with Pittsburgh-area medical facilities and military groups to improve homeland security and emergency military response efforts, there was a lot of rejoicing by local officials.

But there also was some confusion over what would happen with the base's airfield use and personnel attached to the cargo-transport mission. Santorum announced last week that the BRAC Commission had promised to make sure the language sent to the president included a recommendation that planes be allocated to the Moon facility.

Allegheny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato, co-chairman of a task force determining how the new center will be formed, said the retention of the old mission and creation of a new joint readiness center could mean even more planes eventually will be placed at the 911th.

Onorato said the center still is in the concept stage, so it is hard to say how many additional planes might be needed. Officials said they expect the process to take two to three years.

As part of the BRAC process, the president and Congress also will decide whether to realign the 99th Army Reserve Regional Readiness Command in Moon to move much of its operations to Fort Dix, N.J., and close the Army's Charles E. Kelly Support Center, which

has facilities in Collier and Neville townships. Under the proposal, most of the support center personnel would be moved to the 99th.

The Defense Department has agreed to study whether it would be feasible to construct a new commissary and post exchange in Moon to replace the ones to be shuttered with the closing of the support center. The commissary in Collier serves approximately 170,000 active and retired military members and their families from four states each year.

**Panel: Planes may stay at base
Though Willow Grove will likely not remain open, a federal commission suggested it may be an airport.**

Philadelphia Inquirer (Philadelphia, PA)
Marc Schogol
September 11, 2005

Although the federal base-closing commission officially voted to strip the Air National Guard unit at Willow Grove of its A-10 attack planes, its final report surprisingly suggests that the Pentagon consider not taking all 15 jets.

The Base Closure and Realignment Commission also says that the base's future use may be as an airport for civilian and military planes.

In its final report, sent to President Bush on Thursday, the commission reaffirmed its decision last month to remove the Air Guard's A-10s and close the existing Naval Air Station and Joint Reserve Base.

But then - in a nonbinding suggestion - BRAC said the Defense Department should consider keeping some jets at the base.

Or, in bureaucratese, the commission said it "encourages the Department of Defense to consider identifying A-10 aircraft to form an A-10 wing or detachment using the 111th Fighter Wing of the Air National Guard located at Willow Grove."

Bush now can accept or reject the report, which covers bases throughout the nation. If Bush OKs it, the report goes to Congress for a vote.

The language suggesting that A-10s remain at Willow Grove was sought by Pennsylvania Sens. Rick Santorum and Arlen Specter. They sent the BRAC's chairman, Anthony Principia, a letter on Aug. 30 "respectfully" suggesting just that step.

"It's a huge victory for Philadelphia," said Gov. Rendell's press secretary, Kate Philips.

But she added, "I think it's way too early to predict what will happen with Willow Grove."

Daniel J. McCaffrey Jr., cochairman of the military affairs committee of the Suburban Horsham Willow Grove Chamber of Commerce, said that even if the BRAC report is approved, revisions may be "politically handled" in future defense legislation.

The state has waged an all-out fight to save Willow Grove and about 1,200 full-time jobs there.

Under the Pentagon-proposed, BRAC-approved plan, the existing Navy and Marine units there would be transferred to other bases.

What Rendell battled over was the future of the 111th Fighter Wing. He successfully argued in federal court that as a Pennsylvania National Guard unit - not under federal control - it could not be closed without state approval.

So BRAC voted last month to strike the recommendation to deactivate the unit, but approved the Pentagon proposal to transfer three of the unit's A-10s and retire a dozen others.

Rendell, who has suggested the state take over the base, said he would not allow the planes to be removed from the 111th, which has been activated for combat in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Santorum and Specter then pitched in with their letter to the BRAC chairman, which said that

having a flying unit without planes was "unwise."

"We respectfully request that you include language (attached) in your report directing the Secretary to use all available A-10 aircraft and provide A-10 aircraft to the 111th Fighter Wing," they wrote.

BRAC apparently agreed.

It also suggested the "enclave" for the 111th be sufficient to support "flight operations" and be "compatible with joint use of the former Naval Air Station as a civilian airport."

But local officials are opposed to the base becoming a nonmilitary air facility.

A small portion of the base property would also be used to consolidate existing Army Reserve units in one location.

Opinions/ Editorials

N/A

Additional Notes

N/A