

## Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

# EARLY



# BIRD

October 07, 2005

### Department of Defense Releases

N/A

### National News Articles

BRAC closings to reshape Guard and Reserve

Air Force honors Baucus for BRAC work

### Local News Articles

Peyton Pulls Cecil Move Funding Bill (Jacksonville, FL)

Redevelopment panels to examine future use of naval air station (Brunswick, ME)

Mayor withdraws funding for Navy base reopening (Jacksonville, FL)

Prince George's economy primed for Andrews growth (MD)

Base realignment could generate jobs (Owings Mills, MD)

Private sector will have a say on fort reuse (Long Branch, NJ)

### Opinions/ Editorials

No room for error in Oceana decision (Hampton Roads, VA)

BRAC outcome clearer ... sort of (Jacksonville, FL)

### Additional Notes

N/A

### Department of Defense Releases

N/A

### National News Articles

#### **BRAC closings to reshape Guard and Reserve**

Army Times  
Joseph R. Chennelly  
January 01, 2006

Big changes are coming for Army National Guard and Reserve centers across the country. If, as expected, Congress takes no action by the end of October, the recommendations of the 2005 Base Closure and Realignment Commission will become law, forcing the Army to close four active-duty posts and nearly 400 Army Reserve and Army National Guard facilities.

The Army is slated to lose Forts McPherson and Gillem in Georgia, Fort Monroe in Virginia and Fort Monmouth, N.J.

Also shutting down would be Riverbank Army Ammunition Plant, Calif.; Newport Chemical Depot, Ind.; Kansas Army Ammunition Plant; Selfridge Army Activity, Mich.; Mississippi Army Ammunition Plant; Umatilla Chemical Depot, Ore.; Desert Chemical Depot, Utah; and Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant, Texas. All the chemical depot closings are contingent on

completing obligations under chemical weapons treaties.

#### Consolidating Reserve centers

The commission recommended closing 176 Army Reserve facilities and building 125 new Armed Forces Reserve Centers distributed throughout the continental United States and Puerto Rico. The Army has stated that governors would close 211 Army National Guard facilities and relocated the displaced units to the new joint Reserve centers.

The plan called for 27 of the centers to incorporate units from multiple services or to be located on other-service installations, creating "a joint capability for homeland defense and other missions."

These moves were proposed to match up with an Army plan to reshape the command-and-control functions and force structure of the Army Reserve. The Army plans to reorganize the 10 Army Reserve Regional Readiness Commands into four Regional Readiness Sustainment Commands and six new deployable war-fighting units — two maneuver enhancement brigades and four sustainment brigades.

The Army Reserve's new force management strategy, known as the Army Reserve Expeditionary Force, is supposed to synchronize equipping and training cycles to sustain the immediate and long-term readiness required to support Army and joint force operations. As planned, the new strategy is supposed to allow the Army Reserve, a force of limited size, to sustain a campaign for an extended period, according to Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly, the chief of the Army Reserve.

#### **Air Force honors Baucus for BRAC work** Great Falls Tribune October 6, 2005

The Air Force honored Montana Sen. Max Baucus Wednesday for his work on military issues, particularly during the Base Realignment and Closure process.

Baucus and other members of the Montana congressional delegation, along with local and state officials, worked to maintain a flying mission at the Montana Air National Guard in Great Falls.

The BRAC commission has recommended moving F-15 fighters to MANG, reversing the impact of a Pentagon to move and mothball F-16 aircraft currently at MANG.

Congress is expected to finally approve the F-15 move in coming days.

Others honored include Sen. James Inhofe, R-N.M., and Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz.

"It was a real pleasure to work together with the Air Force and Air Guard during this year's BRAC process," Baucus said. "Keeping Montana's flying mission was a real team effort. It just goes to show what working together can accomplish."

Baucus is a member of the Air Force Caucus and recently was asked to join the Space Power Caucus by the Air Force.

Baucus since has turned his focus to the Quadrennial Defense Review, a process in which the Defense Department is evaluating its war-fighting capability.

#### **Local News Articles**

#### **Peyton Pulls Cecil Move Funding Bill Questions about push, fading council support lead to mayor's decision**

Florida Times-Union (Jacksonville, FL)  
David Decamp and Gregory Richards  
October 7, 2005

With support fading on the Jacksonville City Council, Mayor John Peyton shelved a bill Thursday that is crucial to reopening Cecil Field for the Navy.

Peyton said he still believes relocating the Navy's East Coast master jet base with 11,000 jobs from Virginia is good for Jacksonville. But

he said he has no timetable for reintroducing the legislation for \$50 million to help relocate existing businesses at Cecil, now a business park.

The spending is among requirements by a federal commission for the base to be moved.

A mayoral panel and the council will study the positives and negatives for bringing the Navy back. Miscues by his office have raised questions over his blitzing August pitch for the base.

"I will only reintroduce this legislation if it's in our community's best interest to do so," Peyton said.

A majority of the City Council is not convinced, interviews with the Times-Union show.

At least 11 of the 19 council members opposed or leaned against the spending bill, despite a 14-0 vote on Aug. 19 supporting Cecil's reuse. Another five were uncertain, including one original supporter, council President Kevin Hyde.

Hyde said he requested the withdrawal, though Peyton discussed it with various people, including Gov. Jeb Bush.

"It's fair to say a lot of people have had new questions raised in that time," Hyde said of the August vote.

The City Council needs to formally approve the withdrawal at Tuesday's council meeting. Otherwise, the earliest the council could vote on the ordinance would be Oct. 25, when 10 votes would kill it.

Opponents said Peyton was merely trying to avoid a council defeat.

"Fifty million is a lot of money to pay the Navy to come down here and disturb us," Councilman Warren Alvarez said.

But mayoral aide Susie Wiles said the decision was not meant to give Peyton an exit strategy.

Cecil neighbor Michael Griffin, president of the Better Westside Project, said the withdrawal will only leave the community more in limbo.

Councilman Daniel Davis, an early opponent whose district includes Cecil, said Peyton should have made a concise decision that "put it to bed."

Peyton said his approach is reasonable because it's necessary to address the concerns and questions as deeply as possible. It wasn't about votes, he said, but facts.

"I want to encourage those who want us to make a hasty decision without the facts to please be patient until we simply know as much as we can absolutely know," Peyton said.

Griffin and opponents say the return of loud Navy jets would tear the growing suburban fabric of the Westside, stopping development and reducing property values. Peyton has highlighted the jobs the base would send to Jacksonville.

Despite criticism, almost 63 percent of registered Jacksonville voters support reopening Cecil Field, according to a poll by the University of North Florida. But support dropped to 51 percent if the base was within 5 miles of their house.

Peyton's job approval rating was 70 percent.

The poll included 665 voters surveyed Sept. 27 through Tuesday. The margin of error was 3.5 percentage points.

Pressure rose Tuesday after the Times-Union reported about 900 homes were in crash zones near Cecil Field and its outlying Whitehouse practice field. Peyton and top advocates had said there were none.

Peyton also had promised to return 400 more acres than the 17,225 that the old base had, including 2,200 acres that must only be used for recreation. The panel also received a population

estimate in the noise zone around Cecil that did not include 12,000 others in the zone.

In his news conference Thursday, Peyton said he backed his aides' effort under tough, fast-paced circumstances but said the mistakes were "reckless."

"There are questions that are being asked that deserve answers," Peyton said.

Councilman Lad Daniels concluded Thursday that "every time we rush for something" it will be messed up. Daniels, chairman of the council's Military Affairs Committee, said he leans toward supporting the bill -- the only council member interviewed who did.

On Wednesday, Peyton and Hyde met with the governor, who led Florida's drive for the jet base. Peyton described Bush as still "bullish" toward the Navy's return. The Legislature is supposed to approve up to \$200 million for tenant relocation, too. That was to come in a special session this fall.

"I hope that we'll be in a position where we can present this to the Legislature in a special session," Bush said. "But if the city is not supportive of its part of this -- and I believe they continue to be -- we're not going to do a special session unless there's a real chance this is going to happen."

The federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission ordered jet training moved from Oceana Naval Air Station in Virginia Beach if Virginia failed to approve a plan by March 31 to buy out an estimated 3,400 homes in the primary crash zones.

Jacksonville has about 70 comparable homes. Florida also has to return Cecil's original land and approve spending to relocate tenants by December 2006.

Virginia officials said the mistakes highlighted the double standard they felt applied to Oceana and a paltry review of the facts behind Peyton and Bush's appeal for the base.

"The dramatic developments in Jacksonville this week add more ambiguity to the BRAC recommendation on Oceana," said Kevin Hall, spokesman for Virginia Gov. Mark Warner.

To move ahead, the mayor recast the Cecil Field Opportunity Commission. Originally the commission was set up to report how to accommodate the base. Now it will measure whether the facts justify switching the base from a burgeoning business park to a Navy base -- as the Military Affairs Committee will do.

Peyton also will approach the Navy -- which opposed the move -- about details of how the base would operate in the community.

The Defense Department has hired a consultant to prepare a report due in December on the base's long-term location, particularly Oceana's future. That consultant will be in Jacksonville next week, Wiles said.

Where they stand

Had the vote on the \$50 million bond issue for Cecil Field been Thursday, the majority of Jacksonville City Council members said they were either against or were leaning against approving the measure.

AGAINST -- Warren Alvarez, Elaine Brown, Sharon Copeland, Daniel Davis, Ronnie Fussell, Suzanne Jenkins, Glorious Johnson, Pat Lockett-Felder, Lynette Self

LEANING AGAINST -- Reggie Fullwood, Gwen Yates

UNSURE -- Richard Clark, Michael Corrigan, Kevin Hyde, Mia Jones, Lake Ray

LEANING IN FAVOR -- Lad Daniels

IN FAVOR -- None

Note: Councilmen Art Graham and Art Shad could not be reached for comment Thursday.

## **Redevelopment panels to examine future use of naval air station**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire  
(Brunswick, ME)  
Clarke Canfield  
October 6, 2005

Two local panels will be formed to determine what the 3,220-acre Brunswick Naval Air Station should look like after it closes, officials said Thursday.

The formation of local redevelopment authorities in Brunswick and in Topsham is considered an important step forward in the longterm development of the facility.

"I'm excited about the possibilities and potential that can be done here with the resources we have," Gov. John Baldacci told a news conference.

The federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission voted in August to shut down the Brunswick Naval Air Station, the last active duty military airfield in New England. Unless the commission's recommendation is overturned by Congress, which is considered unlikely, the closure will take place in sequential steps and be completed in 2011.

Base officials don't expect any job losses to occur until the base's aircraft start moving to Jacksonville Naval Air Station in Florida. Brunswick now serves as a staging ground in the Northeast with its P-3 Orion aircraft for maritime surveillance patrols and overseas deployment.

The question now is how best to develop the sprawling site, which is located entirely in Brunswick except for 80 acres that are in Topsham.

The future could bring a wide range of uses from houses and offices to industry and recreational areas.

House Speaker John Richardson, D-Brunswick, said the facility could also be used for higher

education or even as an Air Force or Navy reserve center.

"There are a lot of opportunities," he said.

Some suggest that in time the site has the potential to become a regional economic engine.

The formation of local development authorities is one step that is needed to try to make that happen. The boards will take a close look at how the land should be used, and how it should be zoned to accommodate future uses.

The 13-member Brunswick board will be composed of two Brunswick town councilors, one Topsham selectman, two governor appointees, five Brunswick residents and three representatives from other towns in the region. The makeup of the Topsham board will be determined later.

A regional development authority is expected to be created through legislation and be based on the Loring Development Authority, the panel that has overseen development of the former Loring Air Force Base in northern Maine. A little more than a decade after it closed, the former base is filled with businesses that employ about 1,450 workers.

## **Mayor withdraws funding for Navy base reopening**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire  
(Jacksonville, FL)  
October 6, 2005

Mayor John Peyton is withdrawing a \$50 million bond package for the reopening of Cecil Field as a Navy jet base from the City Council so that issues ranging from noise to encroachment to economic development can be studied.

"I will only reintroduce the legislation if it's in the best interest of our community," Peyton said Thursday at a news conference.

Peyton said he still supports a proposal to move fighter jets and 11,000 jobs from Oceana Naval

Air Station in Virginia and reopen Cecil Field, which was closed by the Navy in 1999. Peyton said the withdrawal of the bond issue will allow time for his office, the City Council and a panel he appointed to study the issues.

"We need to think about the implications for schools and infrastructure, compare the economic expectations for Cecil Commerce Center and the Navy, and then present those facts to the community and determine what to do based on facts and hard numbers," Peyton said.

The federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission ordered the base moved from Oceana to Cecil Field if Virginia could not reduce development hemming the base and if Florida met certain conditions. One of those conditions was to move tenants from Cecil Field, which is now a business park.

In addition to \$50 million from the city, the Legislature also must approve \$150 million to \$200 million to move several companies which have moved into Cecil Field.

Peyton also announced a panel he created to look into issues surrounding the reopening of Cecil Field will also look into whether the community would best be served by reopening the Navy base or keeping it a business park.

The Florida Times-Union reported earlier this week that there are about 900 homes in crash zones around the base, although Peyton and other advocates had told officials in August that there were none.

### **Prince George's economy primed for Andrews growth**

Air Force base may gain 2,000 jobs

Business Gazette (MD)

Marcus Moore

October 7, 2005

Prince George's County — home to the 6,800-acre Andrews Air Force Base in Clinton — could gain 2,000 net jobs if Congress approves the latest round of military base closings and realignments.

The announcement was made at a meeting of the Maryland Military Installation Strategic Planning Council in Crownsville last week.

M.H. Jim Estepp, president of the Andrews Alliance, a business group charged with expanding the base's business opportunities, said many of the jobs would be high-tech positions for the base's military and procurement operations.

The base, home to nearly 30,000 military and civilian personnel, is one of 12 bases in Maryland that pump upward of \$40 billion into Maryland's economy each year, Estepp said.

Andrews is the largest employer in Prince George's, with more than 17,280 employees, according to a recent economic and workforce report commissioned by Prince George's Community College in Largo.

Though a moneymaker, Andrews has been taken for granted, Andrews said, mentioning the need for infrastructure upgrades along Suitland Road and the Baltimore-Washington Parkway nearby.

"We want to see the benefits in the surrounding community," Estepp said. "There's a lot of work that needs to be done. We're getting the county involved."

Infrastructure plans near Andrews call for a \$83.6 million interchange near Pennsylvania Avenue and Suitland Parkway, which would involve state and federal funding. Plans in the county's capital improvement budget call for improvements at Auth Road, a side street near Andrews; the widening of Old Branch Avenue to four lanes; and the \$17.5 million overhaul of Suitland Road, a main artery into the Air Force base, which is located along Allentown Road.

Fort Meade, in Anne Arundel County near Laurel, abuts Prince George's County. The base, home to about 5,291 civilian and military personnel, would gain about 5,361 jobs under the military base realignments. Fort Meade, with a current economic impact of about \$4 billion in salaries and contracts, would experience a \$1

billion spike under the BRAC process, according to information from the fort.

Kwasi G. Holman, president and CEO of the Prince George's Economic Development Corp., during an interview Wednesday, referenced the county's five-year economic business plan, which outlines the need for economic development near Fort Meade and the University of Maryland, College Park, among other locations.

"We are moving aggressively to implement that policy," Holman said. When asked, Holman mentioned plans for development near Fort Meade and, while not providing specifics, said those projects could come by next year.

"We're actively working with developers so Prince George's can get its fair share," Holman said.

Prince George's was not completely unscathed by the BRAC recommendations.

The Navy Reserve Center and Army Research Laboratory in Adelphi would close under the plan, resulting in a loss of 43 civilian jobs and 17 military jobs.

In a statement, Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. said that "well over" 10,000 "highly technical and high paying new jobs" could come to Maryland as a result of the military base realignments and closings. The realignments, Ehrlich said, could produce "thousands more indirect jobs."

"The dollars being brought into the Maryland economy will increase dramatically from the \$18 billion a year that it brings in overall economic impact today, further enhancing Maryland's position as a strong economic engine for the mid-Atlantic corridor," Ehrlich said.

Andrews and Fort Meade would not be the only military bases to grow as a result of the military recommendations, as Aberdeen Proving Ground would also be a winner. Originally thought to see a gain of 2,176 jobs, the Harford County installation is expecting an influx of 5,000 to

10,000 new positions, plus "several thousand more jobs off base," garrison Cmdr. John T. Wright said.

In Frederick, Fort Detrick would have a net gain of 104 jobs, mostly military positions, under the Pentagon's recommendations. The Pfc. Flair Army Reserve Center in Frederick would close, resulting in the loss of 20 military and two civilian jobs.

The BRAC Commission delivered its final report to President Bush on Sept. 8; a week later, he forwarded it to Congress, which has until Oct. 30 to accept or reject the recommendations in their entirety.

### **Base realignment could generate jobs**

County located between Meade, Aberdeen Owings Mills Times (Owings Mills, MD)  
Lauren Taylor  
October 6, 2005

Baltimore County, sandwiched between Harford and Anne Arundel counties, could gain more than 2,000 new high tech jobs over the next five years as a result of the realignment of military installations in Maryland.

If implemented, the recommendations of the federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission, known as BRAC, are expected to generate more than 6,500 jobs at the Aberdeen Proving Ground and Fort Meade, and up to 20,000 jobs for contractors.

"The demand is going to be intense," David Iannucci, executive director of the county's Department of Economic Development, said following a Sept. 30 meeting of the Maryland Military Installation Strategic Planning Council in Crownsville. "We're bracketed by BRAC."

BRAC is intended to save \$50 billion nationwide over the next two decades.

Fort Meade is expected to gain 679 military and 2,824 civilian jobs, plus 1,764 contractor positions - more than 5,000 new jobs - according

to figures from the state's Department of Business and Economic Development.

At Aberdeen, a loss of 3,627 military jobs is expected to be countered by 4,789 new civilian jobs, a gain of more than 1,000, according to the state.

As those two installations grow, Baltimore County will benefit, Iannucci said.

One reason: Military contractors must be located near agencies they serve, according to a spokeswoman with the Department of Economic Development.

The growth at Fort Meade alone could generate up to 10,000 private-sector jobs regionally, Iannucci said.

He said likely locations in Baltimore County for such jobs include Owings Mills, Woodlawn and Middle River - where the Baltimore Crossroads @ 95 office and industrial park is being developed.

In addition, the University of Maryland-Baltimore County's research parks in Catonsville are conveniently located for businesses serving Fort Meade, he said.

With 9 percent of Aberdeen Proving Ground's workforce living in Baltimore County already, the post's additional 5,000 or more contractor jobs could have a big impact in White Marsh and Baltimore Crossroads @ 95, Iannucci said.

Many people who work on the post may buy homes in Baltimore County, he said; some companies with contracts at Aberdeen may locate here.

"These are high end, high paying jobs," many of which will be in information technology, Iannucci said. "Most of the jobs may end up in Harford County, but we'll do quite well with our 10 percent."

To prepare for Aberdeen's influx of residents and jobs, Baltimore, Cecil and Harford counties are working on a joint marketing strategy,

including brochures and a trip to Fort Monmouth, N.J., from which Aberdeen's new jobs are relocating, Iannucci said.

It will be two to four years before the jobs are moved, but office buildings need to be erected, schools need to be evaluated and the transportation system needs improvements, Iannucci said.

Colleges and universities in Baltimore County could also benefit from the influx of jobs and new residents. Harford County has no four-year colleges, while Baltimore County has four: UMBC, Villa Julie College, Towson University and Goucher College.

UMBC is the closest four-year college to Fort Meade.

"I wouldn't be surprised if Towson University and Villa Julie College didn't identify opportunities," Iannucci said.

The colleges will benefit from the educational needs of new employees, their spouses and children, and "the county will have to focus on meeting that need," he added.

The Maryland Military Installation Strategic Planning Council started meeting well in advance of the realignment process to prepare for possible changes.

"This exchange of information and aligning of priorities will be paramount in making sure that Maryland stands ready - not only for today, but in the future," Gov. Robert Ehrlich said in a statement.

### **Private sector will have a say on fort reuse**

FMRC will have total of seven voting members  
Atlanticville (Long Branch, NJ)  
Sue Morgan  
October 6, 2005

The committee charged with ultimately mapping out the future of Fort Monmouth will have seven, rather than five voting members.

Via a resolution unanimously approved at its Sept. 28 meeting, the recently established Fort Monmouth Reuse Committee (FMRC) of the Fort Monmouth Host Communities (FMHC), presently composed of public officials from the closing base's three host communities and representatives of county and state government, will take on two members of the private sector.

No decision has yet been made as to who those two individuals will be, as they must first accept the assignment, according to Eatontown Mayor Gerald Tarantolo.

"We're in the process of trying to get those two individuals," said Tarantolo, a co-chair of the FMRC. "They have been approached and I will be naming them soon."

The move to include two private sector members, as recommended by the office of acting Gov. Richard Codey, increases the total number of voting members on the FMRC from five to seven.

It also brings the total membership of the FMRC from seven to nine, not including those persons appointed to serve in an advisory capacity to the group.

The resolution adding the two private sector members amends an earlier one first approved by Eatontown's council on Sept. 14 authorizing creation of the FMRC.

The governing bodies in Tinton Falls and Oceanport also passed resolutions last month to form and to join in the FMRC, a group of public officials charged with exploring new ways to utilize Fort Monmouth's land and facilities upon its closing.

Created in the wake of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission's Aug. 24 vote sanctioning the Pentagon's proposal to shut down the 88-year-old U.S. Army base, the FMRC has worked closely with Codey's office, Tarantolo said.

"We received word from the Governor's Office that the Fort Monmouth reuse committee should have representation from the private sector," Tarantolo said.

Eatontown, Tinton Falls and Oceanport all host a portion of the 1,126-acre fort that the Pentagon, pending a forthcoming vote in Congress, hopes to shut down within two to six years.

Presently, the membership of the FMRC includes Tarantolo, Eatontown Council President Theodore F. Lewis Jr., Oceanport Mayor Maria Gatta, Oceanport Borough Councilman Gerald Briscione, Tinton Falls Mayor Peter Maclearie and Tinton Falls Borough Councilman Brendan Tobin.

Virginia S. Bauer, the New Jersey Commerce secretary, will represent the Governor's Office, and Monmouth County Planning Director Robert Clark is the voice of the Monmouth County Board of Freeholders.

Bauer, of Red Bank, co-chairs the FMRC with Tarantolo. She and Clark are voting members along with the three mayors.

"Each of the host towns has a vote," he said.

Fort Monmouth Garrison Commander Ricki L. Sullivan has agreed to serve the committee in an advisory, but not voting, capacity. Eatontown's Business Administrator Michael Trotta will handle the FMRC's administrative functions.

After researching new proposals for using the fort's facilities, the FMRC is expected to eventually create a separate organization, the Fort Monmouth Redevelopment Authority (FMRA), to establish an actual plan for the shuttered base, Tarantolo said.

In the meantime, the FMRC has submitted its application for funding to start up its work to the U.S. Department of Defense's Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA).

That application should be under review for completeness by the OEA, a federal agency that assists communities impacted by base closures.

Once the FMRC receives the returned application from the OEA, the committee will re-submit it to the federal agency with a request for “seed money” to begin the process of exploring new ways to make Fort Monmouth economically viable, Tarantolo said.

He would not disclose how much money the committee is seeking.

The funding from OEA will be used in part for any professional consulting that the FMRC might employ in its efforts, he noted.

Going forward, meetings of the FMRC will be open to the public as required by the state’s Open Public Meetings Act, Tarantolo added. A public meeting of the committee is scheduled for 2 p.m. Oct. 14 at Eatontown’s borough hall.

The formation of the FMRC was first publicly announced after the BRAC Commission voted 7-1 this summer to shutter Fort Monmouth as recommended by the Pentagon as a cost-cutting measure.

President George W. Bush has signed off and approved the BRAC Commission’s list authorizing the shutdown of Fort Monmouth and 21 other military installations throughout the country.

However, area legislators including U.S. Reps. Rush Holt (D-12) and Frank Pallone (D-6) and U.S. Sen. Jon Corzine have pledged that they will vote against closing Fort Monmouth and all of the other targeted bases when the BRAC list goes before Congress for a final decision later this fall.

To date, officials have suggested that the fort land might be used as a mix of commercial, office and residential uses, depending on the findings of the FMRC.

### **Opinions/ Editorials**

### **No room for error in Oceana decision**

The Virginian-Pilot (Hampton Roads, VA)  
October 7, 2005

So Florida was wrong. Jacksonville’s Cecil Field isn’t surrounded by the vast and empty wilderness that officials had so carefully described to the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

Turns out that Cecil has its own encroachment, the creeping kudzu of residential development that so threatens the mission of Virginia Beach’s Oceana Naval Air Station.

As reported this week in The Florida Times-Union, Cecil has hundreds of houses in its primary crash zones. Virginia Beach, of course, has thousands, but still, the point is plain: Defense officials hoping to avoid encroachment may well find it in Florida.

They’ll also find a bunch of new questions that demand answers:

- Did Florida officials, in their slick presentation before BRAC, lie? Nobody, yet, knows. They may have simply had bad information, though they couldn’t have tried very hard to make sure it was better.
- Did BRAC do its job? The commission issued a set of demands designed to make it difficult for Oceana’s 200 jets to remain in Virginia Beach. But it’s now clear that BRAC’s order, which promised the jets to Cecil on certain conditions, was based on bad information. Good information may not have overcome the politics at play, but it certainly would’ve given Oceana’s home team a better chance.
- Should Virginia Beach see this as an opportunity? State leaders already do, though to what end remains far fuzzier than they would like. There’s no obvious way to revisit the BRAC’s notorious order, but folks are working hard to invent one.

When a decision has the potential to disrupt so many lives — of Oceana’s aviators and sailors, and the community they might be forced to leave behind — it must be right. It must be based on accurate information, and be free of political entanglements.

We’ll leave aside the charges of political shenanigans; we expect to hear more about those in the next few weeks. But BRAC’s decision has been rightfully attacked for the toxic nature of its demands on Virginia Beach, as well as its lack of clarity on certain key points.

There are many who believe the order’s opacity is mostly a function of a harried BRAC trying to make law in a hurry and instead making mistakes. Others believe it was unclear because not all the BRAC’s commissioners knew what they were doing.

Regardless, now that one of the key facts that informed BRAC’s decision has been proven false, Oceana’s advocates are left to wonder how much else the commission got wrong.

### **BRAC outcome clearer ... sort of**

Jacksonville Patriot (Jacksonville, FL)

Jeff Lemaster

October 6, 2005

The office of U.S. Senator Blanche Lincoln, D-Ark., was notified Tuesday about the ultimate effect of the latest round of the Base Realignment And Closure commission on Little Rock Air Force Base. According to a document from an Air Force/BRAC liaison, the base will receive five additional active duty C-130s and one additional C-130 for the 189th Airlift Wing of the Air National Guard. That would bring the base’s total fleet of C-130s up to 80 aircraft. Drew Goesl, a spokesman for Lincoln, said that beyond that basic information, a lot is still unknown. “There are still questions about things like personnel and what models the planes will be,” Goesl said. The document reads as if six is the final number of additional aircraft the base will gain from this round of BRAC. Since the commission approved its proposal more than a month ago, there has been a stark lack of clarity

about how the proposal would affect LRAFB. Goesl said that while the document makes things a little clearer, there could still be room for the base to gain more. “I wish I could answer that question,” he said. “We think that is probably going to be the final outcome for Jacksonville, but we’re not 100 percent sure.” Under a proposal the Department of Defense presented to BRAC in May, the base stood to gain more than 50 aircraft and nearly 4,000 personnel. But after the commission made numerous deviations from the DoD’s proposal, the domino effect left the base gaining less than a dozen additional aircraft.

Widespread speculation ensued after the commission submitted its proposal to President George W. Bush in early September as to how the base would be affected. There were reports that the base would gain nine additional aircraft, but that they would all fall under the command of the Air National Guard. There were other reports that the base would gain 18 aircraft. BRAC spokesmen reported that the commission had no ultimate control over where aircraft were relocated, and that such decisions rested in the hands of the Air Force. The Air Force had not released an official statement until late Monday.

### **Additional Notes**