

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



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Now More than Ever, Military Base Closures Should Move Forward, Six Citizen and Policy Groups Tell Congress

U.S. Newswire
October 13, 2005

Fifteen years of positive economic experience and \$37 billion in post-Katrina budget savings are just two reasons why Congress should support the next Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) round, according to a statement sent to lawmakers from a half dozen taxpayer and policy groups. The project is the brainchild of the 350,000-member National Taxpayers Union (NTU), and was unveiled in advance of an expected vote later this month on a "resolution of disapproval" that could stop the fifth installment of the time-tested BRAC process.

"BRAC saves money, makes the military more efficient, puts thousands of acres of land back on local tax rolls, and brings new jobs and new money to listed communities," according to the open letter to Congress. "(The) net savings of \$37 billion over the next 20 years ... could be used to improve the quality of life for our men and women in uniform, be invested in modernized weapons systems, or returned to taxpayers."

Signatories of the letter, which collectively represent millions of concerned citizens, were

NTU, Americans for Prosperity, Americans for Tax Reform, Coalitions for America, Council for Citizens Against Government Waste, and the National Center for Public Policy Research.

The statement noted that fears of economic devastation in areas affected by base closures have been largely proven wrong over the past 15 years of BRAC's operation, and in fact "there are now dozens of success stories where benefits have flowed to communities whose bases are converted to better uses."

The participants also warned lawmakers not to be swayed by BRAC opponents who claim that the latest round is designed to ease fiscal pressures merely to keep overseas bases open. In reality, roughly 30 percent of the Pentagon's infrastructure in Germany and South Korea is being shut down.

"We urge you to oppose this resolution (of disapproval) and to let the BRAC process go forward," the signatories concluded. "Put the BRAC bases back to work for America."

Local News Articles

Bethesda, Walter Reed Move Forward with Integration

Bethesda Journal (Bethesda, MD)

Chris Walz

October 13, 2005

Leaders at the National Naval Medical Center and Walter Reed Army Medical Center are crunching numbers and sifting through each clinic's operational needs before finalizing integration plans for the two facilities.

National Naval Medical Center Commander RDML Adam Robinson and Walter Reed Medical Center Commander Gen. Kenneth Farmer met with staff from both facilities Aug. 18 to share their integration vision. They said integrating the medical centers will happen whether or not Congress approves the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure recommendations.

The commission recommended, and President George W. Bush approved, a plan to realign and integrate the military health care system at Bethesda and Walter Reed.

Robinson and Farmer said the new facility will be "a world-class tertiary-care, teaching and research medical center that's jointly staffed." The Base Realignment and Closure Commission officials have recommended the new center be named the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

Robinson and Farmer also announced late last week that the Office of Integration is officially online. They named Army Col. Thomas Fitzpatrick as director and Navy CAPT Michael Malanoski as deputy director.

Malanoski said there are three different areas for integration. The first, he said, is unifying care and resources at Bethesda and Walter Reed. The second area is the Base Realignment and Closure Commission's initiative to close the Army hospital and create a joint service facility at Bethesda -- and expand Fort Belvoir's DeWitt Army Community Hospital to provide care in the southern parts of the National Capital region. Finally, he said, is organizing all of the military treatment facilities in the area into one health care organization.

The Integration Office's initial focus is on Bethesda and Walter Reed. Robinson and Farmer said they expect to see integrated clinical services, Graduate Education programs and health care operations in 12 to 18 months. They expect the Bethesda and Walter Reed integration to be complete in about 18 to 24 months.

In the meantime, the Integration Office is also working with the Multi-Service Market Office on for a new tertiary care hospital at Bethesda, should Congress accept the Base Realignment and Closure recommendations. The two offices are also working on the new community hospital at Belvoir.

"There are a lot of moving pieces and they are all moving at different speeds," Malanoski said. "But, in the end, we're all going to get to the

same place, an integrated health care system for the [National Capital Area]."

With such a tight deadline, the Integration Steering Committee, which includes key members from area facilities and the Multi-Service Market Office, is calculating each clinics' space and functional needs. The committee is also trying to ensure different departments fit together within the facility. For example, the Integration Steering Committee may decide to locate radiology near oncology and orthopedics. This information will be vital to the architect designing the new facilities.

Planners say consideration must be given to the mission; estimated direct-care workload; planned graduate medical education, training and research; future staffing and manpower; equipment and technology assumptions; and information systems.

Officials hope to have more answers after an Oct. 26 offsite meeting, where they discuss organizational structure, leadership roles and responsibilities, and the joint facility's mission.

Malanoski, however, said Walter Reed personnel won't be packing up their belongings and transferring to Bethesda anytime soon. He said the project's current phase is not about hiring and firing, but rather blending the resources between the two institutions. Doctors will continue commuting to each facility for the foreseeable future -- the two facilities still need to be manned, he pointed out.

"Right now, it's important to emphasize cooperation, not competition," the deputy director said.

If Congress accepts the Base Realignment and Closure Commission's recommendations, the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center integration will be complete by 2011 and would consist of about 350 beds with other renovated or new facilities at Bethesda. The Fort Belvoir community hospital would serve as the major satellite teaching hospital south, officials explained. Initial plans call for it to expand to about 150 beds. Congress has until mid-

November to accept or reject the recommendations in its entirety. Congress can not make changes to the list.

In August, the commanders delivered a united message that military health care services in the National Capital Area will no longer operate in an independent fashion.

"This is not my vision. This is not his vision. This is our vision of where we are headed," Farmer said.

"The key here is this -- we don't make the decision [regarding the Base Realignment and Closure], but we're not going to let that stop us from proceeding to where we need to be," Robinson said. "Where we need to be is a nationally recognized tertiary health care system that focuses on world class research...that focuses on quality patient care...and that focuses on Graduate...Education."

Millions in projects to enhance Vance AFB
The Enid News and Eagle (Enid, OK)
Robert Barron
October 13, 2005

Millions of dollars in projects are planned for Vance Air Force Base, which will take on added missions under Base Realignment and Closure recommendations expected to gain final approval soon.

Mike Cooper, BRAC point man for Vance Development Authority, said one of those projects, for a new west gate, will total about \$14 million. The gate is a security issue for the base and will contain a visitor center and truck turnaround.

Vance also is set to receive about \$14 million in unappropriated funds from Air Education and Training Command, he said. From those funds, work will be done at Kegelman Auxiliary Field near Great Salt Plains Lake, he said, and \$3 million will be used for various other projects, including the base bowling alley, veterinary clinic and improvements to the Vance library.

The funds come from money left unappropriated at the end of the military fiscal year, he said. Bases that have projects that need funding can receive the money, he said.

A new road project at the base will total \$7 million, he said. Plus, the logistics center now under construction will cost between \$13 million and \$14 million.

"There is a lot of construction going on, and most of the materials are being purchased here, and many local companies are doing the work," Cooper said.

BRAC recommendations have gone to conference in Congress, and Cooper said he is confident after talking with members of the state's delegation. He said opponents to the recommendations don't have enough votes to defeat them. He expects the list will be approved by the end of the month.

Under the plan, Vance is slated to pick up at least 99 new jobs (93 military and six civilian) along with 13 T-6 and 12 T-38 aircraft. Vance will pick up part of the undergraduate pilot training mission being moved from Moody Air Force Base in Valdosta, Ga., along with some of Moody's Specialized Undergraduate Pilot Training and Introduction to Fighter Fundamentals training for pilots and weapons systems officers.

Vance also will become home of an \$8.7 million Armed Forces Reserve Center. The commission voted to close 53 state National Guard Armory buildings and create seven such reserve centers, construction of which is supposed to begin in 2009.

Beach planners OK Oceana development restrictions

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Virginia Beach, VA)
October 13, 2005

City planners endorsed rules to restrict development of new homes and hotels in 30,000 acres around Oceana Naval Air Station.

The proposal, adopted unanimously Wednesday night, now heads to the City Council for a vote Oct. 25.

The restrictions would involve land encompassing jet-noise zones that average 70 decibels or more. The Navy views residential uses in those zones as incompatible with Oceana's mission.

While the new rules would not prevent property owners from building homes or hotels on land already zoned for those uses, City Council approval would be needed for a rezoning or a use permit.

Beach officials agreed to enact the so-called overlay district as part of a joint land-use study with the Navy completed last May. Since then, however, the federal Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission mandated the development restrictions as a condition of keeping the fighter jets at Oceana.

Navy officials representing the jet base support the overlay.

"It's a good product; we like it," said Cmdr. John C. Lauterbach Jr., a special legal adviser to Oceana's commanding officer.

Tim Faulkner, an officer with Breeden Co., a real estate development firm, called the restrictions "a first step in the process to retain Oceana," Virginia Beach's largest employer.

R. Edward Bourdon, an attorney representing affected property owners, said the restrictions could cripple redevelopment plans for 19th Street meant to promote the city's new \$203 million convention center.

"We're now saying this land is incompatible with just the type of development we want there," Bourdon said.

Under BRAC's ruling, Oceana's jets would be moved to Florida if the Beach, the state and Chesapeake fail to comply by March.

Jet-noise zone restrictions develop

Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk, Virginia)

Jon W. Glass

October 13, 2005

VIRGINIA BEACH -- The city Planning Commission on Wednesday unanimously endorsed rules that would restrict the development of new homes and hotels in jet-noise zones around Oceana Naval Air Station.

Commission members played down concerns that the proposed restrictions would undermine redevelopment efforts at the resort.

"This will not create a situation where no reasonable use is allowed," said Dot Wood, the commission's chairwoman.

If adopted by the City Council, the restrictions would be part of a proposed overlay district encompassing jet-noise zones that average 70 decibels or more. That covers about 30,000 acres of land, including much of the resort and other prime sections of the city.

The Navy views residential uses in those zones as incompatible with Oceana's mission.

The new rules would not prevent property owners from building homes or hotels on land already zoned for them. But if City Council approval were needed for a rezoning or a use permit, those uses would be denied -- unless there was no other "reasonable" use of the property that the Navy considered compatible.

For example, planners said the city probably would not reject a rezoning for homes on a parcel surrounded by residential neighborhoods, if a use the Navy viewed as compatible -- such as an industrial or manufacturing plant -- was not a reasonable development there.

If approved, the overlay district would make hotels along an approximately 12-block stretch of Oceanfront, from around 33rd Street to Cavalier Lane, an incompatible use.

"I don't think that has ever been done in the history of this city," said R.J. Nutter II, a lawyer representing hotel owners. "It's a serious issue."

Property owners in the western half of the city's transition area, roughly between North Landing and Indian River roads, would see some of the most severe restrictions. The rules would reduce maximum density in that area from one house per acre to one house per 5 acres in noise zones averaging 70 to 75 decibels, and one house per 15 acres in noise zones greater than 75 decibels.

"Taking people's property by zoning decree is not right," said Bill Lee, who owns land on Indian River Road.

Virginia Beach officials agreed to enact the overlay district as part of a joint land-use study with the Navy completed last May. Since then, however, the federal Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission mandated the development restrictions as a condition of keeping the fighter jets at Oceana.

Navy officials representing the jet base support the overlay.

"It's a good product; we like it," said Cmdr. John C. Lauterbach Jr., a special legal adviser to Oceana's commanding officer.

The overlay also had backing from the city's business community.

Tim Faulkner, an officer with Breeden Co., a real estate development firm, called the restrictions "a first step in the process to retain Oceana," Virginia Beach's largest employer.

But some business leaders have begun to raise questions since the restrictions became part of the BRAC ultimatum. The most controversial condition requires Virginia Beach, Chesapeake and the state to create a program to condemn and buy homes and businesses in the high-risk accident-potential zones around Oceana.

R. Edward Bourdon, an attorney representing affected property owners, said the restrictions could cripple redevelopment plans for 19th

Street meant to boost the city's new \$ 203 million convention center.

"We're now saying this land is incompatible with just the type of development we want there," Bourdon said.

Several speakers, including a representative of the Virginia Beach Hotel/Motel Association, asked for a delay until a city consultant completes an economic analysis on the costs of complying with or rejecting the BRAC demands. The study results are expected in early November.

Under BRAC's ruling, Oceana's jets would be moved to Florida if the Beach, the state and Chesapeake fail to comply by March.

The City Council is scheduled to vote Oct. 25 on the restrictions.

City officials said the commission needed to act to meet deadlines for filing legislation in the state General Assembly. State legislators, as required by BRAC, must enact the overlay district as part of Virginia law.

Tom Gordy, chief of staff to U.S. Rep. Thelma Drake, R-2nd District, urged commission members before the formal meeting to approve the overlay to signal support for the Navy, saying the city is "under a microscope."

Legislator Hall lauded for help in BRAC fight

Texarkana Gazette (Texarkana, TX)
Aaron Brand
October 13, 2005

U.S. Rep. Ralph Hall, R-Texas, was honored by local officials Wednesday for his efforts to save Red River Army Depot and Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant during the recent Base Realignment and Closure process.

"He worked tirelessly in this process to preserve the jobs that are so important to this region," said Ron Henson of the Texas Military

Preparedness Commission during the early evening gathering at Northridge Country Club.

Henson and attorney Jim Haltom organized the event as a way for the local community to say thanks for Hall's efforts.

Hall was presented with two certificates of appreciation, one from Red River Army Depot unions and one from Gov. Rick Perry, R-Texas.

Perry praised Hall's contributions to the Northeast Texas region and his "continued legacy of excellence," said Henson, reading Perry's certificate.

Bob Tyson, chief steward for Red River's Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 100, gave Hall the best wishes from RRAD union workers.

"We appreciate very much what you've done for us," Tyson said.

Bowie County Judge James Carlow said citizens of the Texarkana area owe a debt of gratitude to Hall. Carlow said it was the "devastating possibilities" that prompted so much effort to save Red River and Lone Star.

"Congressman Hall is new to this district but has gotten to be an old friend," Carlow said.

RRAD Deputy Commander George Montgomery also praised Hall's efforts, saying "words are inadequate to express the depths of our appreciation."

For his part, Hall deflected much of the praise and thanked those in attendance. He attributed the successes of the BRAC fight to teamwork and the leadership of U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas.

"All of us know what happened. It was teamwork," Hall said, adding that officials who fought to save RRAD and LSAAP "pretty well lined up behind (Hutchison)."

He also lauded the local community's efforts, in particular the support the community showed

when thousands lined the streets to welcome BRAC commissioners.

Hall said the community shouldn't give up the partnerships that formed across the region and across political backgrounds.

"We need to keep that team together," he said, in particular to help fill the void caused by job losses at RRAD and LSAAP.

Earlier on Wednesday, the North East Texas Workforce Development Board hosted the first of three BRAC planning sessions to begin dealing with the BRAC-related job losses at Red River and Lone Star.

"We really wanted to set the stage as far as expectations for the group," said Randy Reed, the board's deputy executive director. He said the board has the responsibility to address work force issues that may arise from the BRAC process.

Reed said the board and other groups involved in the process will meet again in the upcoming weeks to shape ideas and form a consensus.

"Our ultimate goal is to have a plan in place by the end of December," he said.

The chamber of commerce, government officials, private industry and Red River Redevelopment Authority are some of the groups involved in the effort, Reed said.

Carlow, who attended the meeting, said about 650 jobs could be lost at the defense complex because of BRAC, "which is a lot in our economy, but not as bad as 4,000."

Opinions/ Editorials

Additional Notes