

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



BIRD

October 20, 2005

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Ellsworth future is discussed

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (Rapid City, SD)
October 19, 2005

An airborne laser system is among the possibilities if Ellsworth Air Force Base is to expand its role beyond B-1B bombers, according to Sen. John Thune.

Thune, R-S.D., met at the base last week with Gen. Ronald Keys, head of the Air Combat Command, which operates the Air Force's fighters and bombers.

Adding more missions to Ellsworth became a focus of the state's congressional delegation after the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) in August rejected a Pentagon recommendation to close Ellsworth and move its B-1 bomber fleet to Dyess Air Force Base in Texas.

"Military construction projects aren't enough," Thune said, a reference to millions of dollars invested in infrastructure at the base in the past

10 years. "Just pumping money into infrastructure isn't going to BRAC-proof a base."

Digitalburg.com
Ben Pierce
October 19, 2005

Ellsworth also has been mentioned as the site for an unmanned aerial vehicle mission.

After St. Louis gave up nearly 3,700 jobs in the recent BRAC realignment, a state commission wants to make life more attractive for military families when the federal government makes its next pass at which facilities to close or expand.

Thune said he and Keys talked about the airborne laser, or ABL. The ABL is a weapons system designed to detect, track and destroy ballistic missiles in their boost phase of flight.

The Missouri Military Preparedness and Enhancement Commission created by SB 252 and signed into law May 11 this year embraced recommendations Wednesday, Oct. 19 that would help military spouses get jobs, explore whether their employers should get tax credits and give military families representation on local school boards.

"There's plenty of capacity for the ABL at Ellsworth," Thune said.

On Wednesday, Sen. Tim Johnson, D-S.D., met with Maj. Gen. Roger W. Burg to discuss Ellsworth's future. Burg, who is originally from Hot Springs, is director of strategic security for air and space operations in the Air Force.

Rep. David Pearce of Warrensburg, Vice-Chairman of the Job Creation and Economic development Committee, indicated that several of the recommendations would affect the Waynesville and Knob Noster school districts, home to Fort Leonard Wood and Whiteman Air Force Base. He plans to sponsor several of the recommendations in legislation during the second regular session that begins on Jan. 4, 2006.

Johnson said it's important to both enhance Ellsworth's B-1 bomber mission and work to find future missions.

"I wanted to make sure the general understood our ongoing commitment to this mission as we looked for additional missions," Johnson said in a release.

Among the recommendations are potential tax credits to employers who hire spouses of military personnel stationed in Missouri. Missouri already costs employers about 13% less than the national average, according to a Milken Institute study used by the Missouri Department of Economic Development.

While Ellsworth's bombers aren't going to Dyess, there's a proposal to move the base's maintenance simulator to Texas. Thune said he spoke with Keys in hopes of retaining the program and its 18 jobs.

There was no indication in the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) that finding jobs for spouses of military personnel figured heavily into the decision to maintain, close or expand a facility, except Criteria 7 of the 1990 Act:

Keys also flew the Powder River training range in Wyoming, which played a role in the BRAC decision to save Ellsworth because of its open airspace and because of lawsuits challenging Dyess' ranges.

"It was a good visit," Thune said. "General Keys was very receptive but circumspect.

(3) [Criterion 7] The ability of the infrastructure of both the existing and potential receiving communities to support forces, missions, and personnel.

"One thing he did say was that in trying to develop new missions today, you have to steal from other bases."

New Commission to Promote Military Base Retention

Some of the recommendations make sense not only for military spouses, but for anyone wishing to relocate to Missouri, such as:

- * License reciprocity between Missouri and other states.
- * Provisionally accepting out-of-state background checks to expedite hiring.
- * A law waiving penalties for small businesses that are late with state paperwork when their owners are called to active duty in the Guard or Reserves.
- * A law increasing the size of local school boards from 7 to 9 members, with the two new positions reserved for military personnel and their families.

The committee also recommended a full time staff member for its work, and a consultant to assess possible adverse closure recommendations in the future. Although the state hired an expert consultant during the last round of realignments and closures, the state was unable to reverse the BRAC recommendations.

According to a report today in the Associated Press,

The Department of Defense employed 24,510 civilian and active duty personnel in Missouri last year, and Missouri had an additional 27,029 people in the Army Reserve and National Guard, according to the commission's report that is expected to be presented to the governor next month.

An analysis by the Department of Economic Development figured that the military presence generated a net \$52 million for state government, when taxes were offset by services provided by the state. That doesn't include additional revenues to counties or cities.

Commission recommending more perks for military families

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Jefferson City, MO)
David A. Lieb
October 19, 2005

A state commission wants to make life easier for military families, hoping that better amenities will make Missouri more attractive to the military the next time the federal government reviews which facilities to close or expand.

The recently created Missouri Military Preparedness and Enhancement Commission embraced recommendations Wednesday that would help military spouses get jobs, explore whether their employers should get tax credits and give military families representation on local school boards.

"Any one of these things may not do a lot, but when you combine them all together, hopefully they'll show to future BRACs and people who make those decisions that we want the military in Missouri," said Rep. Terry Witte, D-Vandalia, an Army veteran who serves on the commission.

A state law created the panel in May, about the same time the Pentagon released recommendations to eliminate nearly 3,700 jobs in Missouri and close the Missouri Air National Guard's 131st Fighter Wing in St. Louis.

Although the state hired an expert consultant, Missouri failed to reverse the recommendations, which were embraced in August by the Base Closure and Realignment Commission.

The state already has received a \$1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to assist workers and communities affected by the military job losses.

Members of the state commission said there was little that could be done about the current round of military cuts, so they focused most of their efforts on improving the quality of life for military families stationed here.

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Among the proposals the commission plans to pursue in the coming year is the potential to offer state tax credits to employers who hire the spouses and children of military members.

The commission also plans to promote job training for military spouses. It recommended the Legislature consider laws to recognize the out-of-state professional licenses of military spouses, such as teachers or nurses, and to provisionally accept their out-of-state background checks so they can get jobs more quickly.

It also recommended a new law waiving penalties for small businesses that are late with state paperwork when their owners are called to active duty in the Guard or Reserves.

Commission Chairman Dalton Wright, a Navy veteran and newspaper publisher, said some proposals are on the cutting edge nationally. He cited the reciprocity for licenses and a proposal for a state law expanding local school boards from seven to nine members in districts that serve large military installations. The two new board positions would be reserved for military families.

Rep. David Pearce, R-Warrensburg, said that recommendation would affect the Waynesville and Knob Noster school districts, home to Fort Leonard Wood and Whiteman Air Force Base. He plans to sponsor several of the recommendations in legislation during the 2006 session.

The commission also recommended the Legislature fund a full-time staff member for its work, as well as a consultant to assess the possibility of gains or losses in future base realignments.

Bush OKs Great Falls border base

Great Falls Tribune (Great Falls, MT)

Peter Johnson

October 19, 2005

President George W. Bush on Tuesday signed into law the homeland security spending bill that includes \$18.3 million to put a Northern Border Security Wing into operation in Great Falls next year.

"This is great news for Great Falls because there had been some concerns that Great Falls might be dropped as a base along the northern border," said Great Falls Mayor Randy Gray. "Instead Sen. Conrad Burns helped get extra funding to move the project ahead a year."

Burns, a senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, attended the bill-signing ceremony at the White House.

"It's done. You can bank on it," Burns said in a release. "The money we'll use to construct our new air wing in Great Falls is all but in our hands and I can't wait to get this project started. I look forward to seeing how the new air wing will bring jobs into the Great Falls area, boost Montana's economy and play a role in the defense of the nation as a whole."

All three members of Montana's congressional delegation pushed for the measure.

The Great Falls air wing, which will provide aerial surveillance along the northern border, will employ up to 70 people and be equipped with at least three aircraft, including a Black Hawk helicopter. The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement will run it.

Officials have said that \$12.8 million of the money will go to setting up the base and \$5.5 million to staffing it.

But details have been sketchy, agreed Burns spokesman James Pendleton.

"The Department of Homeland Security is working out details, and we have no particulars yet," Pendleton said. "But getting the funding

was an important first step. One of Senator Burns' senior aides will meet with department officials as early as tomorrow to talk about specifics and to see what we in Montana can do to help."

One key detail yet to be worked out is where the security wing will be housed.

It's up to Homeland security folks to choose, the Burns aide said, but the congressional delegation and community leaders hope it eventually can be placed at Malmstrom Air Force Base.

Doing that would provide greater protection for the security wing and could persuade Congress to reopen Malmstrom's runway, which was closed as part of 1995 Base Realignment and Closure process.

"If having the security wing here could be used to leverage the reopening of Malmstrom's runway, that would be great," Gray said. "With a runway in use, we could attract other missions to Malmstrom, diversifying the base role beyond just missiles and solidifying Malmstrom's long-term presence."

But Gray also said he understands the Great Falls Airport Authority would welcome the security wing at least temporarily at Great Falls International Airport.

Great Falls Airport Director Cynthia Schultz said the airport would love having the security wing at the airport, but could also benefit from having it at Malmstrom, since more flights in the area would insure continued full staffing of air traffic control.

"It's win-win, wherever they choose to place it," she said.

The security wing will complement military assets already in Great Falls, she stressed. If the wing's surveillance spots a threat on the border, the military, up to Montana Air National Guard fighter planes, could respond, she said.

Laser system discussed for Ellsworth

New missions needed to prevent future closure of air base

Aberdeen American News (Aberdeen, SD)
October 20, 2005

RAPID CITY - An airborne laser system is among the possibilities if Ellsworth Air Force Base is to expand its role beyond B-1B bombers, according to Sen. John Thune.

Thune, R-S.D., met at the base last week with Gen. Ronald Keys, head of the Air Combat Command, which operates the Air Force's fighters and bombers.

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"One thing he did say was that in trying to develop new missions today, you have to steal from other bases."

BRAC's view on Oceana defended

Principi responds to critics as questions on Fla. base raised

Richmond Times-Dispatch (Richmond, VA)

Peter Hardin and Bill Geroux

October 20, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Anthony J. Principi, chairman of the independent base-closing commission, fired back yesterday at critics of the panel's recommendation to move Navy jets and jobs from Virginia Beach to Florida. Principi issued an op-ed column that responded to critics who have faulted the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission's (BRAC) homework. Vocal critics have included Democratic Gov. Mark R. Warner and Sen. John W. Warner, R-Va.

BRAC voted to realign master jet-base operations at Oceana Naval Air Station to the former Cecil Field near Jacksonville unless costly steps are taken by the end of March to curb encroachment at Oceana.

Oceana "has well over 40 times the level of encroachment as Cecil Field" in the highest-risk crash zones, Principi wrote in the column. Fewer than 50 homes are in those zones at Cecil Field compared to more than 2,200 homes in such areas in Virginia Beach, he said.

"Contrary to some reports," Principi said, BRAC evaluated Cecil Field's suitability carefully through use of satellite imagery, base visits, aerial tours and Federal Aviation Administration analysis.

"The commission was well aware there was, and is, some minor encroachment at Cecil Field," he said.

"Ultimately the commission could not, and did not, ignore the national security and public safety issues presented by encroachment" at Oceana, Principi added.

Virginia officials have complained for weeks that Jacksonville's case to acquire Navy jet squadrons and 12,000 jobs from Virginia got uneven scrutiny from the base-closing commission. Some state newspaper editorial writers have been critical, too.

"It's remarkable the commission didn't do more due diligence," Gov. Warner said this month.

Florida had pushed Cecil Field as a better, safer alternative. Yet a Jacksonville newspaper reported recently that crash zones near runways at Cecil Field have as many as 925 homes.

"We're just trying to clarify the news reports that are out there," BRAC spokesman Robert J. McCreary said yesterday about Principi's column, posted on the BRAC Web site. "There was a lot of due diligence done" by BRAC, he said.

Susie Wiles, a spokeswoman for Jacksonville, Fla., Mayor John Peyton, said yesterday that Principi's estimate of homes in the primary crash zones of Cecil Field is correct, though hundreds more homes lie in secondary crash zones.

Principi's remarks didn't silence the critics.

Tom Gordy, chief of staff for Rep. Thelma Drake, R-2nd, attacked what he called "false testimony" to BRAC that no homes were in the Cecil Field crash zones and asked why BRAC did not challenge it.

Gordy also questioned the fairness of BRAC requiring Virginia Beach to condemn and purchase properties in the highest-risk areas by Oceana but not directing the same at Cecil Field.

Senator Warner, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said he was working on dealing with the BRAC recommendations and would avoid getting in a debate with its "former" commissioners.

"We have to have the facts in order to make the right decisions about the road ahead," said a spokesman for Governor Warner, pointing to conflicting statements about homes in the Cecil Field crash zones. The Warners are not related.

A spokesman for Sen. George Allen, R-Va., called Principi's statement surprising and challenged his assessment of encroachment at the former base in Florida.

Jacksonville officials said recently they have not decided whether the city wants the jets and jobs at the cost of jet noise and other tradeoffs associated with having a large jet base in its midst.

A recent study by Virginia Beach showed a higher number than Principi's column for homes in the primary Oceana crash zones -- roughly 3,400 homes, along with numerous businesses -- that could cost the city more than \$400 million to acquire.

President Bush sent the BRAC list of base closures and shifts to Congress last month. Congress is not expected to reject the list.

S.A. showing the way on remaking bases

San Antonio Express-News (San Antonio, TX)

L.A. Lorek

October 20, 2005

San Antonio's military bases have created innovative joint ventures to privatize land and buildings, saving the government money and earning a profit for the partners.

There's more to come.

To help spur further development, the city formed the Defense Transformation Institute about a year ago as a nonprofit organization focused on creating public and private partnerships, said Ed Davis, interim assistant director.

"From a city standpoint, our interest is in economic development," Davis said.

Under the latest recommendations from the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, commonly called BRAC, San Antonio is set to gain 3,600 military jobs and several projects that it hopes get either federal funding or private partnerships to develop, Davis said.

The Defense Transformation Institute held a workshop with about 40 leaders from the military, government agencies and private businesses Tuesday and Wednesday at the Crowne Plaza Riverwalk to discuss how to leverage military assets through community and private partnerships.

San Antonio has led the nation in privatization at its military bases, and the Defense Transformation Institute wants that to continue, Davis said. The city has three active military bases, a privatized base known as Brooks City-Base, and KellyUSA, now a business park with 70 tenants.

The city's active military bases have pioneered private development onsite. In the first project of its kind in the country, Randolph AFB has 420 privately developed homes.

Now the Air Force has 16 projects on 15 bases nationwide with 14,615 privately built homes, said Ian Smith with the Air Force housing

privatization program. Its goal is to have 45,600 private homes within two years, he said.

At Fort Sam Houston, Orion Partners won a contract to re-develop 430,000 square feet at the old Brooke Army Medical Center and two other buildings known as the North and South Beach Pavilions. It was also one of the first projects of its kind in the country.

Orion and its partner, Weston Solutions, invested \$40 million in the venture. The project was a big risk because of the buildings' condition and no guaranteed tenants, but it has worked out well, said Thomas H. Chandler, president of Orion. It has leased the North Beach Pavilion and the old hospital back primarily to the military and Department of Defense contractors, and Orion has begun work rehabilitating the South Beach Pavilion, he said.

"Everybody wins," Chandler said. "That is a rare thing."

With the latest round of BRAC, the Air Force is making a big push to work with developers and other partners to privatize land and buildings on bases while retaining ownership of the assets, said George Davies. He's a management consultant with Northrop Grumman's Air Force Real Property Agency.

That's a big shift from when San Antonio struck a deal to privatize Brooks AFB to take over infrastructure needs for the Air Force and reduce the base's costs. Despite the city's efforts, the base made the BRAC hit list and the Air Force is scheduled to move out. But the city created Brooks Development Authority, which will continue to operate Brooks City-Base as a technology research park.

Army plans 1,850 homes at Fort Knox Influx Could Be Good As Gold For Local Economy

Lexington Herald-Leader (Lexington, KY)
October 19, 2005

FORT KNOX - New family housing units will add to already drastic changes expected at Fort Knox.

The Army on Tuesday announced a proposed partnership with Actus Lend Lease for a program to build 1,850 new homes on the installation as part of its Residential Communities Initiative.

"Homes that will be built will be more like what you'll find in Elizabethtown rather than what you see on Fort Knox, where each looks exactly the same," said J.R. Cardin, director of the program at Fort Knox.

The homes -- mostly three and four bedroom models -- will feature walk-in closets, master bathrooms and garages or off-street parking.

The initiative is part of the Army's effort to update housing for soldiers, but remains separate from changes the Pentagon proposed during this year's base closure and realignment -- or BRAC -- process.

Units slated to come to Fort Knox because of the BRAC changes include the U.S. Army Accessions Command and U.S. Army Cadet Command from Fort Monroe, Va., and the Army Human Resources Command.

The Armor Center and School, which has long been the post's most high-profile command, is expected to leave for Fort Benning in the next three years.

Charles Wilson III, director of resource and logistics for the Accessions Command, told the Radcliff-Hardin County Chamber of Commerce on Monday that communities should prepare for the influx of soldiers, civilians and families.

That economic impact will be overwhelming, Wilson said.

Opinions/ Editorials

Additional Notes