

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



BIRD

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Govs Press Base Closing Lawsuits

Kansas City Infozine

Mark K. Matthews

November 2, 2005

With the Pentagon's latest base closing plan all but a done deal, at least three governors -- M. Jodi Rell of Connecticut, Rod Blagojevich of Illinois and Ed Rendell of Pennsylvania -- plan to pursue lawsuits in an effort to save Air National Guard units in their states.

Their renewed pledges of legal action came after the U.S. House of Representatives last week overwhelmingly rejected a measure aimed at stopping the Pentagon's process of streamlining resources at military bases, called Base Realignment and Closure or BRAC.

Observers said last week's vote cements the shutdown of 22 major military bases and the transfer of personnel and equipment at 33 others.

Last week's vote also cleared the way for Connecticut and Illinois to challenge the BRAC recommendations in court. These two states sued to stop the Pentagon from transferring Air National Guard units to other states, but judges said the lawsuits could not proceed until the BRAC decisions became law. Pennsylvania is in the courts, too, to stop Air Guard aircraft from being transferred.

Under the Constitution, each state's National Guard unit is controlled by the governor in peacetime but can be called to federal duty by the president in time of war. Governors contend the Pentagon cannot move the Guard units in question without their permission because they are not under federal authority.

"Federal law is crystal clear on this. You can't move (Air Guard) units around without the consent of their Commander in Chief," said Rich Harris, a spokesman for Rell, a Republican. "And she is not going to give that consent."

At the same time, Pennsylvania officials are embroiled in their own legal battle. A federal judge sided with the governor's office on the Air Guard issue, but the Pentagon last week appealed that ruling.

"It is a matter of state's rights," said Kate Philips, a spokeswoman for the governor, a Democrat. "Gov. Rendell alone has the authority to deactivate the Air National Guard."

Department of Defense officials would not return calls for comment.

The conclusion of the BRAC process effectively caps years of analysis by the military on which bases to close in order to save costs and bolster defenses. In May, the Department of Defense made its recommendations and handed them over to the independent BRAC commission, which reviewed them.

After months of site visits and reports, the BRAC commission voted to shave the number of major base closing from 33 to 22, saving the Naval Submarine Base New London in Connecticut, the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Maine and Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota.

The commission also reviewed, and often amended, changes to hundreds of other bases and units across the country.

In September, the commission sent their recommendation to President Bush, who approved the changes that month. With the

agreement of Congress, the changes the BRAC commission recommended will become law.

In its final report, the commission recognized the Air National Guard issue as one of the most difficult, encouraging better interaction between the Air National Guard and the Air Force in future BRAC proceedings.

Bush Endorses BRAC Moves

Air Force Magazine
Breanne Wagner
November 2005

President Bush on Sept. 15 endorsed and sent to Congress the Base Realignment and Closure Commission's recommendations to close 22 major military bases and realign 33 more.

The commission would shutter four Air Force, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve Command facilities. There were nine identified for closure on the Pentagon's list.

The BRAC panel rejected the Pentagon's call to close Ellsworth AFB, S.D. It also left open Cannon AFB, N.M., allowing the base to operate until at least 2009 and continue in operation after that if it can acquire a suitable mission.

BRAC legislation permits Bush to either accept or reject the plan that the BRAC panel presented to him. A rejection would have prompted the commission to revise their recommendations, but Bush had signaled that he would not hold up the process. After receiving the commission plan from the President, Congress had 45 days to enact a joint resolution of disapproval or the recommendations would become binding.

In all previous BRAC rounds, Congress had gone along.

The Pentagon's recommendations called for closing 33 major installations and realigning 29 others, for a total annual savings of \$5.4 billion. According to the panel, its proposals would yield \$4.2 billion in annual savings.

Local News Articles

Fort Meade gears up for influx of jobs

The Capitol (Annapolis, MD)

Elizabeth Leis

November 1, 2005

The first 600 employees moving to Fort George G. Meade as part of a massive expansion will be journalists, publishing and information experts who will begin arriving in late 2007, the post commander said.

Personnel from Fort Belvoir, Va., Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, and other leased spaces will bring operations of Soldiers magazine, the Army Broadcasting Service and the Air Force information service to the post.

They'll be the first in a wave of more than 5,000 employees who will arrive at the post through 2010 as part of the federal base realignment process, Col. Kenneth O. McCreedy said. That gives the Army two years to make progress on plans to create massive amounts of space for the new arrivals. Construction of a new facility for the media jobs will be finished in fiscal year 2008.

"(Base Realignment and Closure) will not occur in a vacuum," Col. McCreedy told business executives at a BWI Business Partnership breakfast on Oct. 18. "It will have an influence much wider and with greater impact."

Later this year, Congress and President Bush are expected to approve the move of 5,291 jobs to Fort Meade from bases and leased spaces around the country. Another 15,000 jobs are expected to move Fort Meade over the next decade as the Pentagon shuffles its agencies and the National Security Agency expands at Fort Meade.

The BRAC moves will result in \$4 million in new construction and upgrades to the post, and are expected to pump \$5 billion into the economy over the next five or six years. Slightly more than half of that will be in contracts for services, with another \$1.9 billion in salaries and \$3.75 million in miscellaneous revenues. Less

than 12 percent of the jobs coming to the base will be uniformed military positions.

After the media personnel arrive, another 584 jobs with Defense Military Department Adjudication Activities, which controls security clearances, will be consolidated and moved to Fort Meade by 2010 from offices around the country, including Los Angeles and Boston. Construction for that group will begin in fiscal 2007.

"(The group) is like herding cats because they have never met each other before, and they're being dragged kicking and screaming," Col. McCreedy said. "They're going to be happy in the end, but we need to convince them."

The biggest wave of jobs will be 4,098 in the Defense Information Systems Agency, a combat support agency that handles information technology in various leased spaces and at Fort Monmouth, N.J. The agency won't move until the Army completes a 1 million-square-foot facility for it in fiscal 2010.

In addition to the BRAC moves, another 8,000 jobs will move to Fort Meade as Pentagon agencies move out of Washington-area office buildings.

Not all of the Department of Defense employees will live in Anne Arundel County immediately. Some of those coming from Virginia may choose to commute, while others could move to Howard or other surrounding counties.

The key to accommodating the new jobs may lie in public-private ventures, Col. McCreedy said, citing as an example a 2003 contract with BGE. The company assumes responsibility for providing power, and has agreed to modernize its facilities on the base and bury cables by 2008.

A little-known economic benefit of new federal jobs being moved is around 200 new positions for day-care workers, kitchen aides and other service jobs.

Bridget Boardman, executive director of the West Anne Arundel Chamber of Commerce, said the colonel's speech reminded her that there are several years to prepare for the growth. The expansion of Fort Meade is a mixed bag for some companies, she said.

"It is going to have some degree of negative economic impact as it pertains to individuals because of infrastructure and traffic," she said, although the widening of Route 175 will help.

Robert Leib, chief of staff for the county school system, also said there was enough time to prepare for an influx of students expected to come as employees move their families closer to their jobs.

"We want them to live in Anne Arundel County," he said. "If the schools are going well, they are going to come here."

Top admiral stands by Oceana Naval operations chief tells J. Warner he still opposes closing base

Richmond Times Post-Dispatch (Richmond, VA)

Peter Hardin

November 2, 2005

WASHINGTON -- The Navy's top admiral is sticking with embattled Oceana Naval Air Station in Virginia Beach as "the most suitable option" for the Navy's East Coast master jet base.

In August, an independent base-closing panel recommended moving the master jet base if major steps weren't taken to curb suburban encroachment.

But Adm. M.G. Mullen, chief of naval operations, said in a letter dated Saturday that the Department of Defense did a thorough analysis earlier this year and concluded that Oceana "remained the most suitable option for an East Coast master jet base for the foreseeable future."

"That position has not changed," Mullen added, in the letter to Sen. John W. Warner, R-Va.,

chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Warner released the letter yesterday.

It was some good news, although not conclusive, for defenders of Oceana, who learned last month that Jacksonville, Fla., was abandoning its efforts to capture 250 Navy jets and 12,000 jobs from the Virginia jet base.

"The fact the [chief of naval operations] chose to reiterate the Navy's -- it certainly sounds like to me -- unfettered commitment to staying at Oceana, is certainly something that counts," said Robert Matthias, a Virginia Beach lobbyist and aide to Mayor Meyera E. Oberndorf.

The Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission ordered the Pentagon to study locating a replacement jet base at Cecil Field or elsewhere. That study has not been completed.

Warner cautioned, "Don't read too much into that letter." It reiterated principles laid out earlier, and which haven't changed, he said.

Mullen's letter was dated two days after the House of Representatives effectively approved the BRAC recommendations for axing 22 major bases and realigning others.

Because federal law requires both chambers of Congress to vote down the BRAC list for it to be rejected, the House vote meant the closures can go into effect.

In July, Pentagon officials said the Navy believed its best long-term choice for East Coast tactical -- or shorter-distance -- aviation "would be to build a new 21st century naval air station."

Opinions/ Editorials

Alabama Gains in BRAC

American Chronicle (Beverly Hills, CA)

Senator Richard Shelby

November 1, 2005

On November 8, the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) report will become final. Since the Secretary of Defense first announced his recommendations for BRAC in May,

military bases across the country have presented strong arguments based on military value to the Commission. Alabama was no different.

The Alabama delegation, in concert with local base communities, spent the last several years dedicated to making certain that the Department of Defense, and later the BRAC commission, were well-informed about the tremendous military value Alabama bases play in our national defense. And all of that hard work has paid off.

Our biggest victories came from the Commission's reversal of two of DoD's recommendations that would have removed missions, personnel, and airframes from the state. Maxwell Air Force Base and Gunter Annex was the only Active Duty Alabama military facility recommended by the Department of Defense to lose a mission to a facility in another state. The Operations Sustainment and Systems Group (OSSG), located at Gunter, was slated to relocate to Hanscom Air Force Base, MA, in a research and development (R&D) consolidation. As I continually argued to the Commission, this recommendation had an underlying flaw – the OSSG is a 24/7 operations and sustainment mission for the Air Force, DoD, and joint information technology systems. It is not an R&D group. I am very pleased that the Commission decided to strike this recommendation. It showed that our position was rock solid and that keeping the OSSG in Montgomery not only has significant military value, but its location in Montgomery is good for the warfighter.

The second recommendation that the Commission overturned related to DoD's flawed Air Guard realignments. The 117th Air Refueling Wing will remain in Birmingham. This decision reinforces what I have always known, that the 117th is clearly fulfilling a critical mission for the nation, and it will continue to do so into the future from its Alabama base.

Redstone Arsenal, fundamental to the Army's extensive missile and space research and

development (R&D) programs, will increase by up to 4,000 jobs through the addition of new R&D work. Already home to a majority of Space and Missile Defense Command's (SMDC) missions and a number of Missile Defense Agency (MDA) functions, I am proud that Redstone will gain SMDC's headquarters and additional MDA missions. Further, Redstone will welcome Alabama's first four star command to the state with the arrival of the Army Materiel Command's Headquarters.

Anniston Army Depot was slated to increase in workload and personnel by gaining work from the closure of Red River Army Depot, TX. Much to my disappointment, the Commission recommended that Red River remain open, even though I believe that there was sufficient justification to close that facility due to the excess capacity in the Army industrial base. While Anniston did not gain in this BRAC round, I have every confidence that Anniston will continue to serve the maintenance needs of the Army now and into the future as our Armed Forces continue their work in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere the War on Terrorism requires our presence.

With Army and Air Force rotary wing training already a major mission at Fort Rucker, the installation was set to receive the Army's Aviation Logistics School through realignment. Unfortunately, this did not occur. I believe this consolidation would have created manpower savings, consistency in training, and force stabilization. We fight jointly and we must train jointly. It would have made sense to move the Aviation Logistics School to Fort Rucker. Yet while the Commission decision means that Fort Rucker will not be the recipient of the new mission, I am confident that this installation will continue to grow as the Army brings forth new missions and platforms for the aviation branch.

Although not in Alabama, the relocation of the Army's Armor School to Fort Benning will have a major and positive effect on Phenix City and eastern Alabama. This realignment will increase permanent personnel at the installation by 2,300, with an additional 8,000 students rotating in annually for training.

It is clear that the Commission recognized the value of our installations, and the final outcome of the BRAC process has Alabama well situated for the future. Throughout this process, Alabama's Congressional delegation and military base communities worked diligently to provide consistent arguments to the Commission based on clear military value, indisputable data, and solid statistics. It was always our goal to underscore how Alabama plays an integral role in the defense of our country. I believe we accomplished our mission, and in doing so, we were able to increase our already strong military presence around the state.

Duluth Air Guard's good work prevents base closure;

Duluth News-Tribune (Duluth, MN)
Eric Chandler
November 2, 2005

Whump. The first mortar woke me up. "Huh," I thought, I'm pretty sure that was a mortar impact. WHUMP. Whoa, that was closer. Ka-WHUMP! After the third round hit, the explosion kind of hurt my ears and you could feel your cot lift a little bit. I leaned over and grabbed my body armor and helmet.

"Dude, are you putting your stuff on?" my buddy asked. He was a few feet away inside the dark tent.

"Oh yeah," I said.

The next two rounds hit a little further away. About then, the high-pitched siren that warns of attacks started to wail. I was grinding my teeth while lying on my back and looking up into the dark. I kept hearing that Talking Heads song..."This is not my beautiful house. This is not my beautiful wife. How did I get here?"

That was my first night at Balad Air Base, Iraq, with the 148th Fighter Wing Bulldogs, back in May. Within a week from that day, we would find out that the Secretary of Defense figured the Duluth Guard didn't need to have airplanes anymore. The initial Base Realignment and

Closure list came out while our F-16s were on final approach to land after flying all the way from Spain. Some of the pilots who flew the Vipers into Iraq got the word not 10 seconds after touching their boots to the soil. "Welcome to Iraq! We're getting BRAC'd." Talk about a kick in the... well, you get the point.

I'd been there at Balad AB for about a week already with a crew called the ADVON team. We got there early to prep the location for the arrival of the rest of the squadron. We'd gotten the bitter news about the "retirement" of our F-16s a few hours before the arrival of the airplanes. I was so furious, I got up and stormed out of the building onto the beige, concrete ramp and paced up and down the taxiway. After I cooled off a bit, I asked myself, "How come there's nobody else out here?" Uh, oh. We were actually under attack at that moment and everybody was taking cover. I was so angry, I'd forgotten they were shelling us.

Fortunately, on Friday, Aug. 26, the BRAC commission decided to amend the Department of Defense's recommendation and allowed us to keep our F-16s. Great news! The president agreed with the commission's recommendations. Even better news! Now, the list gets delivered to Congress for final consideration. The commission and the president obviously don't need any more convincing that the Bulldogs should keep flying.

So, what's the point of writing this piece? The reason is that I wanted to share with the people of Duluth what their friends and neighbors have been doing up at the airport for the past few years. Good work has been done by people that are probably too modest or quiet to say what they did. Good thing I'm neither modest nor quiet.

The Bulldogs were activated after Sept. 11 to fly top cover for America. We flew patrols over our nation's cities. On the first anniversary of Sept. 11, we were flying from three locations, one of which was an operation which kept a 24-hour airborne presence over the East Coast. I can draw you a map of New York and D.C. from memory.

not necessarily reflect the opinions of the 148th Fighter Wing leadership or staff.

Additional Notes

While that was going on, the Bulldogs were tasked to go from being an Air Defense Unit to being a General Purpose unit (a unit that drops bombs). We had to do this in a new type of F-16, the C-model instead of the F-16A, while simultaneously doing air defense alert around the country. That's like trying to learn how to use your new laptop computer... while you're running. Everybody needed to get a new qualification in night-vision goggles, learn how to use the laser and infrared technology in a targeting pod and figure out how to use precision-guided munitions. The pilots and maintainers worked unbelievably hard at their new tasks and excelled at them. Two months before we went to combat they said, "Oh, we almost forgot... learn how to use this new reconnaissance (TARS) pod...now." Um... O.K. And we did. In 18 months, the squadron got new airplanes, in a new mission, attended three major exercises to practice our skills and we went to war. Combat's quite a final exam.

Our maintenance troops helped us launch more than 400 sorties from a location you might call unpleasant. A temperature of 110 degrees on the ramp was a normal situation. Sandstorms. Did I mention mortar attacks? And we never lost a single scheduled sortie because of maintenance. Not one. And every single one of our weapons hit its target. That means bad guys don't show up to work tomorrow and the innocents that live next door do. We also took pictures with our targeting pods and TARS pods, which helped our troops on the ground steer clear of ambushes and snipers while performing raids to seize weapons caches and insurgents. Technology doesn't make these things happen. People do.

Your Bulldogs are combat veterans now. They did Duluth proud. I'm glad the BRAC commission saw that good people matter more than which beans get counted on a chart. I knew why we should stay open. I just thought you should, too.

Eric Chandler is an F-16 pilot with the 148th Fighter Wing Bulldogs. The views expressed by the author are his own as a private citizen and do