

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



BIRD

November 07, 2005

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**Move With the Job or Quit;
Military Base Closures Force Civilian
Employees to Decide**

The Washington Post

Dina ElBoghdady

November 7, 2005

New Jersey resident John Kosinski knows this much about Maryland's Harford County, home to the Aberdeen Proving Ground: It's got the Chesapeake Bay. He prefers the Jersey Shore. It's got one synagogue. His county has about 20. And it's in a state with an official song that derides its neighbors as "Northern scum."

It's also where his job is going under the Pentagon's military base realignment plan, which becomes official tomorrow. To consolidate military installations and save money, as many as 4,000 high-tech jobs, mostly from Northern Virginia, will move to Fort Meade in Anne Arundel County, and 5,000 from New Jersey will move to Aberdeen.

The big question now is how many job-holders will follow those jobs. Most of them are civilians who do not have to go where the military sends them.

Kosinski, for one, may quit first.

"I'm not trying to denigrate Maryland, not at all," said Kosinski, 47, an electronics engineer at Fort Monmouth. "But everybody has a comfort zone when it comes to where they live. And we're being asked to go really far outside of our comfort zone. There are demographic and cultural factors to consider."

Just as Kosinski pauses to cross the Mason-Dixon line, some Northern Virginians hesitate to cross the Potomac River, setting off a new set of personal and professional struggles now that the political battle over what bases to close is over. Military and local officials in Maryland want to persuade Kosinski and other technically skilled, security-cleared employees to move rather than have to search for hundreds of workers to replace them in a tight labor market.

But other communities don't want them to go. In Virginia, Arlington County is not eager to give up 922 workers at the Defense Information Systems Agency, which is moving its headquarters to Fort Meade from Arlington. County officials want to prevail on the scientists and engineers to stay home and look for new jobs instead of moving.

"These are blue-chip people," said Terry Holzheimer, director of Arlington Economic Development. "We will find them another job in our community. We want to make sure that [the agency's] attrition rate is as high as we can get it."

DISA declined to reveal the results of an internal survey that indicates how many of its workers plan to move to Fort Meade. But in a Harris Interactive poll commissioned by the state of New Jersey this summer, less than 20 percent of the Fort Monmouth workers said they definitely would move to Aberdeen.

Maryland officials say they are not worried because the state has a highly skilled workforce that is growing all the time, a steady flow of graduates from world-renowned schools such as Johns Hopkins University, and relationships with some of the world's largest defense contractors, including Northrop Grumman

Corp., one of the state's largest private employers.

"What we are hoping is that as many people as possible move out to Maryland and become Maryland taxpayers," said J. Michael Hayes, Maryland's director of military affairs. "But we are prepared for any scenario."

Besides, Maryland officials say, time is on their side. The jobs should transfer to Maryland gradually over the next five years or so, giving people ample opportunity to sort out their personal lives and find out about Maryland's housing markets and school systems.

"It takes time for people to come to grips with what they really want to do, and quality of life issues always drive these personal decisions," Anne Arundel County Executive Janet S. Owens said. "Many people have no idea where we are right now. They think we're out in the boondocks or something."

Anne Arundel -- home of historic Annapolis, the National Security Agency, the sprawling Arundel Mills mall and Baltimore-Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport -- hopes to dispel that image in coming months.

For starters, county and military officials plan to reach out to the DISA's workforce. The agency accounts for 4,098 of the 5,291 jobs headed to Fort Meade, according to the base, though the agency says the numbers could be lower. The vast majority of those jobs are currently in Arlington and Fairfax counties, a DISA spokesman said. About 75 percent of the ISA's employees live in Northern Virginia, one to two hours from Anne Arundel County's western half, where Fort Meade is located.

"We know crossing the river is a psychological barrier for a lot of people," said William A. Badger Jr., chief executive of the Anne Arundel Economic Development Corp. "But we need to get the word out that this is a pretty sophisticated market."

That might be a tough sell, especially now, when technically skilled people are comfortable with

their job prospects, said Richard Piske, a recruiting executive who specializes in placing security-cleared personnel in government and contracting jobs.

"In our world, six-figure income people won't cross the river," said Piske, vice president and general manager of Kelly FedSecure in Greenbelt, a unit of Kelly Services Inc. "These people are focused on what they want to do, who they want to do it for, and where they want to do it. The critical question as they start a conversation with us is, 'Where is the job?' Lots of conversations end at that point."

That's where it would end for a DISA budget analyst, who would not consider moving to Anne Arundel County and who spoke on condition of anonymity because the agency instructed its employees not to speak to the press, he said.

"I have no interest in driving two hours to get to work," the analyst said as he strolled the aisles of a Target store not far from the DISA office in Falls Church. "I'm not going to Fort Meade. Most of us can just change jobs and go work at a different agency. There are so many agencies close in around here."

Ditto for his friend, a contract specialist, who has no intention of working or living in Anne Arundel County. "I'm already settled," he said. "My wife works close by. It's just too much. I won't do it."

Military officials say there is plenty of time for reluctant workers to reconsider.

"We believe that most workers will commute for three to four years as they balance personal decisions," Col. Kenneth O. McCreedy, Fort Meade's commander, said at a recent gathering of Maryland military base officials in Crownsville.

But commuting is not a practical option for employees at New Jersey's Fort Monmouth, who in many ways face more of a culture shock if they show up at Aberdeen than the Fort Meade-bound employees of Northern Virginia.

Harford County, population 235,594, is a once rural but fast-growing area north of Baltimore with plenty of rolling farmland, some horse breeding, and the Chesapeake Bay along its eastern border. Monmouth County, population 636,298, is a built-up suburb in the New York area and bordered by 27 miles of beach along the Atlantic Ocean.

Under the Pentagon's plan, 5,085 of the 6,004 jobs headed to Aberdeen are coming from Fort Monmouth, which handles hardware and software engineering for land communications between the military forces and for intelligence gathering.

In a report to the federal base-closing commission, the state of New Jersey argued that a majority of its most senior workers would not move and that Maryland would not be able to fill their jobs with people of equal skill in a timely manner.

Those most likely to move will be the least experienced, creating a "brain drain" that will disrupt and undermine the Army's work, said Frank C. Muzzi, co-chairman of the Patriots Alliance, a group that lobbied to keep Fort Monmouth open.

"Maryland officials will tell you, 'We'll fill the jobs,'" Muzzi said. "They have no concept. It's impossible for them to fill the jobs. You can't just replace 15 to 20 years of experience on these very technical programs with someone right out of school. They're trying to dismiss the problems they are going to incur."

One issue is the dearth of workers in the job market who have security clearances. Clearances can take 12 to 18 months to obtain.

Derek B. Stewart, director for military and civilian personnel issues at the Government Accountability Office, said the federal office in charge of granting clearance had a backlog of 185,000 cases as of February.

Should a large number of workers decide not to move to Aberdeen or Fort Meade, the Army has

a problem, Stewart said. The Office of Personnel Management, which handles security clearances, could pay big bucks to have its contractors expedite clearances.

"Sure, the Defense Department may fill the positions," Stewart said. "But at what cost? This can get expensive in a hurry."

And if it does, it would undermine the cost-saving goals of the military base consolidation process, said Loren B. Thompson, an analyst with the Lexington Institute, a think tank in Arlington.

"The more people you have to clear, and hire, and train anew, the more it will cost the government and hence the lower the savings," Thompson said.

The federal base-closing commission is betting that a large number of employees will move.

"A significant number of researchers and scientists will move in order to stay with the projects they're working on," said Anthony J. Principi, chairman of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission. "Good scientists follow the good science and research."

Still, the state of New Jersey managed to raise enough red flags about Fort Monmouth that the commission is requiring the secretary of defense to verify that the move to Aberdeen will not disrupt research that aids the war on terrorism.

And that's why all eyes are on people like Kosinski. If he moves, he leaves behind everything from his doctor to his network of babysitters. He leaves behind the beach, just two miles from his home, and the boardwalk. And he leaves behind a far-reaching family support structure.

"With military, you're in the Army. That's your home. That's your family and that's your culture," said Kosinski, a New Jersey native. "With civilians, it's a different set of conditions."

Kosinski tells his colleagues that moving has its advantages. High-level jobs will open up.

Aberdeen won't be rural for much longer, creating opportunities for those who want to speculate on land.

As for himself, Kosinski remains torn. He knows he's marketable. A few private firms have already approached him, just as they had 24 years ago before he accepted a job at Fort Monmouth.

That doesn't make it easier.

"I chose public service, deliberately trading off salary for a certain sense of stability," Kosinski said. "When they come in and say 'move or else,' well, that kind of takes the edge off the sense of stability."

BRAC plan likely to pass If Senate OKs overhauls, nearly 2,000 jobs could be added at Midlands military bases

The State
Chuck Crumbo
November 7, 2005

A proposed overhaul of U.S. military bases expected to bring 1,900 jobs to three Midlands facilities faces its last hurdle this week in Congress.

The final report of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure commission, commonly called BRAC, is before the U.S. Senate.

"Its chances of going into effect are good," said Kevin Bishop, spokesman for Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. Graham, South Carolina's senior senator, spearheaded the state's base-saving efforts in Washington, D.C.

Legislation establishing the BRAC process gives Congress 45 days — or until Wednesday — to reject the report it received Sept. 15 from President Bush.

The U.S. House and Senate chambers would have to pass a joint resolution to keep the report from becoming law.

The proposal cleared its biggest obstacle Oct. 27 when the House overwhelmingly voted 324-85 against a resolution vetoing the report.

There's no similar resolution before the Senate. None is expected to be introduced.

"It's a done deal," said retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Tom Olsen, the local point man of Sumter's efforts to spare Shaw from the Pentagon's ax.

Hammered out over the summer by the nine-member commission, the report calls for closing 22 major military bases and realigning another 33.

Hundreds of smaller installations will be shuttered, shrunk or expanded. The closures and realignments are expected to save the Pentagon about \$4.2 billion a year.

In South Carolina, the report calls for moving:

- 3rd Army Headquarters and as many as 896 jobs to Shaw Air Force Base in Sumter from Fort McPherson in Atlanta
- Nine F-16 fighter jets and 426 active-duty Air Force members to McEntire Joint National Guard Base near Eastover from Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho
- Three missions to Fort Jackson in Columbia. Those missions include consolidating the Army's drill sergeant schools, establishing a center for all military services' chaplains to be trained, and establishing a new U.S. Army Reserve Command for the Southeast. About 615 jobs would be added to the Columbia post.

The new military jobs in Sumter and Richland counties could pump \$200 million a year into the local economy, officials said.

That would be added to the three bases' combined economic impact of \$3 billion a year.

While the Midlands is a big gainer, Charleston will be losing about 900 jobs with the closing of a Navy engineering command, a Defense

Department payroll office and the transfer of positions from a Navy research and development facility.

The status of two installations in Beaufort County — the Marine Corps Air Station and the Marine Corps Recruit Depot at Parris Island — was virtually unchanged.

Adding the missions to local bases is expected to be completed within six years, but the 3rd Army's move to Shaw could take up to 10 years to complete, Olsen said.

All of the bases will have to expand or build new facilities, which will take money. Olsen said building costs are likely to be spread out over several years.

Columbia leaders already have contacted the commands slated to move to Fort Jackson and McEntire, making presentations about the community, schools and local job opportunities, said Donald "Ike" McLeese, president and chief executive officer of the Greater Columbia Chamber of Commerce.

The community has been ready to pitch in and help in establishing the new missions, McLeese said, but the military has been waiting for the final act of the base closing process to end.

Sumter officials are tackling a number of issues, from housing to schools, in anticipation of the 3rd Army's arrival, Olsen said.

The proposal initially called for the transfer of 817 jobs to Sumter, but updated information shows that number will climb to 892 and could be higher, Olsen said.

"We don't know how much more," Olsen said. "There's a sizable support unit that would come along."

The support unit would include personnel and finance employees, Olsen said.

"The big question is how they are going to flow in. They can't all come at the same time."

A base-closing brawl Governors say they'll fight to save Air National Guard units

US New and World Report

Bret Schulte

November 14, 2005

Just when it seemed the long fight over the Pentagon's latest round of base closings and realignments was over, a handful of states are hoping to make a last stand in federal court.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission's final recommendation to close 22 major military bases and realign an additional 33 breezed through the House of Representatives late last month by a margin of 324 to 85. And with no action on the legislation scheduled in the Senate, the recommendation automatically becomes law this week.

While the legislation marks the formal end of base closings for the foreseeable future, some states see it as only the beginning of a legal battle to maintain control of their Air National Guard forces. "The principle is rooted in . . . the [Second Amendment] rights of states to maintain militias," says Richard Blumenthal, attorney general for Connecticut, which stands to lose its entire squadron of A-10 fighter planes. His case rests on a 1933 federal law that says that any changes in the organization or allotment of state Guard units must have the governor's OK. Nevertheless, the states don't control the Guard's purse strings; the Pentagon does. And the Guard answers to the Pentagon in times of war.

The wrangling started back in August, when the BRAC Commission's final recommendation to streamline military forces included the consolidation of some Air National Guard units across states. A number of those losing planes quickly filed federal lawsuits. In some instances, judges said nothing could be done until the BRAC proposal actually became law--saying, in effect, no harm, no foul. As of this week, expect to hear cries of foul aplenty.

Plane speaking. Pennsylvania, Illinois, Connecticut, and possibly Missouri are poised to push ahead with suits aimed at keeping their National Guard aircraft. Illinois, like Missouri, lost its initial case when federal judges ruled that the lawsuit was premature. Now, Gov. Rod Blagojevich has vowed to continue the fight, calling the BRAC decision to remove all 17 F-16 fighters in Springfield "the wrong recommendation, at the wrong time, for the wrong reasons, on top of being illegal." Missouri, meanwhile, is mulling over a return to court to protect its 15 F-15 Eagles stationed in St. Louis. Connecticut, whose case had stalled in court, now expects to move forward aggressively. Until now, the only state succeeding in federal court has been Pennsylvania, where Gov. Ed Rendell convinced a federal judge that, as commander of all Guard units, he must give his consent before the Pentagon can move 12 planes out of the Willow Grove National Air Station for reassignment in Arizona. The case is pending on appeal.

Plenty of states have sued in the past to keep bases open for active duty personnel--and quickly lost--but experts say this battle for Guard units enters uncharted territory. It could go as far as the Supreme Court, which would very likely have to settle Second Amendment questions, among others. Still, if history bears out, the chances of states wresting control of military units from the Pentagon are "darn close to zero," says Loren Thompson, a defense analyst with the Lexington Institute. One thing is clear: Neither side is ready to raise the white flag.

Move to block base closings is defeated House vote lets BRAC list stand

Air Force Times

Rick Maze

November 07, 2005

It's all over but the closings. The House of Representatives failed Oct. 27 to block the proposals of an independent commission to shut dozens of major military facilities and scale back hundreds of others, freeing the Pentagon to begin planning for the

personnel and unit moves and construction required to make the closure and realignment of bases possible.

By a 324-85 vote, the House shot down a last-ditch attempt to reject the proposals of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

Rep. Ray LaHood, R-Ill., was the chief sponsor of the resolution of disapproval that, if it had passed, could have prevented the closures and realignments recommended in early September by the bipartisan BRAC Commission.

LaHood's interest was not the possible closure of a major base, but rather an attempt to rescue the 183rd Fighter Wing, now based in Springfield, Ill., from a realignment that would move the unit and aircraft as part of an Air National Guard consolidation.

"I believe it is wrong that we are closing and realigning bases while we're at war," LaHood said. "Is that the message we want to send to 140,000 troops in Iraq?"

The prevailing sentiment among House members, however, was that they're glad to get the base-closing process behind them.

Rep. Joel Hefley, R-Colo., a senior member of the House Armed Services Committee who wanted the 2005 base-closing round delayed because of the war, said rejecting the current recommendations would result in another base-closing process next year or the year after.

Another round might lead to entirely different results, he warned, with bases that escaped the current round possibly selected to be shut or have substantial reductions in personnel, operations and payroll in a future round, he said.

The final list is a relief for many communities. The Defense Department had recommended 33 major closures, while the commission headed by former Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony Principi approved just 22. And, the Pentagon's own recommendations were less extensive than feared.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld had talked in recent years about needing to reduce military infrastructure by as much as 20 percent, which could have meant up to 100 bases would be closed.

Hefley said this could be the end of base closings by commission because the process is flawed and there is a question of whether the savings are worth the turmoil that the process causes for communities.

Savings from the current closures and realignments are estimated to be \$15.1 billion over 20 years, with a \$5 billion startup charge to pay for construction, moves and preparing bases for other uses. This is far less than the \$50 billion savings first claimed by the Defense Department, he said.

Flaws include the Pentagon's initial reluctance to provide Congress and communities with any information about how it selected bases to be closed, citing national security needs, he said.

Rep. Gene Taylor, D-Miss., a longtime opponent of the base-closing process, said he hopes this is the last commission.

"Let's do our job and not hide behind some commission to do it for us," he said of deferring to others decisions that could be made by Congress.

Like LaHood, Taylor said the latest base closings are badly timed, not only because the nation is at war, but because the military is in the midst of a transformation that may change basing needs.

"When you close a base, you close it forever," Taylor said.

The base-closing law that created the 2005 commission — the fifth time Congress and the Pentagon have turned to an independent body to decide base closings — gives Congress 45 days from the time it receives the list of recommendations to block it with an up-or-down vote, with no opportunity to make changes.

A vote in the Senate is now pointless because of the House's defeat of LaHood's resolution.

Local News Articles

Quantico attracts 1M s.f. as DoD jobs move south

Washington Business Journal (Washington DC)
Joe Coombs
November 7, 2005

A Stafford County developer is bringing 1 million square feet of office space to the edge of the Marine Corps base in Quantico.

The potential \$300 million development comes at a time when military jobs are migrating to secured locations and the Interstate 95 corridor is growing in Prince William County.

The combined impact of the Pentagon's moves and the regional population's outward push have created a demand for such a large-scale development -- decidedly atypical for the mostly rural region surrounding the Quantico base.

"It will be a very tenant-driven development," says David Newman, a sales and leasing associate with Silver Commercial Development, developer of the project. "We know that there are jobs moving that way, and we'll have the space to provide setbacks and other measures. That puts us in an ideal spot." Design work has started on a pair of Stafford County buildings at the Quantico Corporate Center, adjacent to the south gate of the Marine base in Prince William County. Silver Commercial's planned 12-building complex will cater to defense companies and other contractors that provide support for national security.

The 85-acre project -- between Interstate 95 and Route 1 just south of the Prince William County border -- also will include 22,500 square feet of retail. The development will have the flexibility to accommodate newly minted security requirements for buildings that house military workers.

About 3,000 workers are slated to move to Quantico as result of the recent Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) proceedings. The newcomers include members of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service from the District and the Army Criminal Investigation Command at Fort Belvoir.

Silver Commercial is actively talking with a Fortune 500 defense contractor about leasing a 220,000-square-foot structure that would be the first building at Quantico Corporate Center, says Phillip Baxter, the project's director of sales. Other defense contractors, including BAE Systems and Northrop Grumman, have been approached regarding a planned 140,000-square-foot spec building at the site, Baxter says. Both buildings could deliver next fall.

Fredericksburg-based Silver Commercial snatched up the property in February after a development agreement failed between the property's former owners, Baxter says.

"When we took a look at the property, BRAC was starting up and the anti-terrorism security requirements were taking shape," he says. "Call it dumb luck or good timing, but we were fortunate."

Changes in military operations aren't all that's driving growth in southern Prince William County. As Greater Washington's population and job base continue to swell, outlying counties such as Prince William and Loudoun are projected to handle the bulk of the activity.

Prince William is expected to add nearly 135,000 residents and more than 56,000 jobs by 2020, according to research compiled by the Census Bureau.

Among the other notable projects active on the I-95 corridor: Quantico Center is a 60-acre development by Manassas-based Norman Realty in Dumfries near the north side of the Quantico base that will include 700,000 square feet of office, hotel and retail when complete. Rivergate is a proposed 720-unit condominium development by Arlington-based IDI Group in Woodbridge on the Occoquan Harbor Marina.

"There will be increased demand for office space near Quantico," says Kurt Stout, senior vice president at Grubb & Ellis' District office. "It's in anticipation of BRAC, but a lot of this was already in motion before BRAC. It's a demographic trend. You have growth occurring further and further out into the suburbs."

A base closing that is desired

Chicago Tribune (Chicago, IL)

November 6, 2005

When the military announces another round of base closings, the news sends chills through cities and towns fearful of losing a source of good jobs and a steady flow of cash generated by the troops.

Not so in Concord, Calif. The city, located about 20 miles from Oakland, actually asked federal officials to shut down the Concord Naval Weapons Station, hoping to develop the land. The Defense Department agreed to close a roughly 5,200-acre portion of the property -- quite enough to stir up Concord.

"Everybody is very, very excited about it," says Jim Forsberg, Concord's director of planning and economic development. "It represents a major opportunity to do good things for our city."

The Concord property is on the current list of U.S. military base closings that has been approved by President Bush. If Congress doesn't reject that list in the next two weeks or so it becomes law. Thanks to the hot real-estate market and some high-profile successes with former bases, the current wave of closings is very different from past efforts. Some cities and towns are eager to start planning what to do with these bases, and big-name real-estate developers are angling for the properties.

Even the military, which in the past has often given the land to local communities, has caught on to the real-estate boom.

In the current round of base closings, developers expect the military will try to sell more former bases at market value, potentially bringing millions into the federal coffers. This shift sparked a niche industry of insurers, lawyers and lobbyists specializing in turning massive tracts of government land into housing, shopping centers and parks. The Navy, which by the nature of its business owns lots of valuable waterfront property, has hired real-estate consulting firm Jones Lang LaSalle to advise it.

"It used to be 'Clean it up, give it to city,'" says Jill Votaw, a spokeswoman for the Navy's program-management office for Base Realignment and Closure. "The current administration says, 'Wait a minute that property is worth some money -- maybe we should get some back for the taxpayers.'"

Some sought-after properties on the 2005 BRAC list, according to developers and the Association of Defense Communities, might include the Concord Naval Weapons Station, Ft. McPherson in Atlanta, Ft. Monmouth in New Jersey and the main campus of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in northern Washington, D.C.

Developers, like Lennar Corp. and Actus Lend Lease, are actively analyzing the properties. Others are quietly assessing opportunities and waiting to pounce on some of the 22 major bases that were ordered closed by the commission.

"I can't imagine all the significant developers in the U.S. are not doing what we are," says Jeffrey Simon, a senior vice president of development at Actus Lend Lease, a subsidiary of Australian developer Lend Lease. "They are looking at the list, putting together what they know about the properties and when the time is right they will go after them."

Towns like Concord hope to replicate what happened at the El Toro Marine Air Corps Station in Orange County, Calif., just west of Irvine, which was sold early this year in a closely watched auction.

Fort turns 64 on a sad note;

Set to close, Gillem stirs fond memories
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution (Atlanta, GA)
Add Seymour Jr.
November 5, 2005

Carl Rhodenizer didn't know where Atlanta --- let alone the Atlanta General Depot --- was located when the Army sent him here in 1951.

But the Virginia native grew so close to "The Depot," now known as Fort Gillem, that he never again lived more than five miles from the base.

That's why Fort Gillem's 64th anniversary party on Friday evoked sadness for some longtime Clayton County residents. With the base scheduled to close, there won't be many more celebrations.

"It's been a trying experience for me, especially to think back on the history that brought me here," said Rhodenizer, a retired banker and now a Clayton County commissioner.

Four Georgia military bases --- Fort Gillem, Fort McPherson in East Point, the Naval Air Station in Cobb County and the Naval Supply Corps School in Athens --- will be shut down as part of this year's Base Realignment and Closure process.

Any hopes to keep the forts open died last week when Congress declined to reject the Pentagon's recommendations. President Bush had already approved the base closures.

The state will actually gain 7,400 jobs as other Georgia bases absorb missions from phased-out installations in other states. But 7,233 jobs directly tied to Georgia's four closing bases will be gone, including more than 2,700 civilian jobs.

Pentagon officials expect to save more than \$1.3 billion over the next 20 years by shutting down Fort McPherson and its satellite base, Fort Gillem, alone.

The 1,500-acre Fort Gillem has been part of Clayton County since 1941, when it was established as the Atlanta General Depot. It's a

sprawling mix of warehouses and older brick buildings outside Forest Park. Parts of it have an industrial feel, while other areas --- including two lakes, a tennis court, a playground and a softball field --- look like a giant park.

In 1974 the base was named for former Fort McPherson commander Lt. Gen. Alvan C. Gillem. The base's main duty remained the same --- training supply soldiers and maintaining and processing equipment used in every major conflict since World War II.

"I remember when we were shipping stuff for fallout shelters all over the country," said L.C. Mathis, who worked at the base in the 1960s and '70s. "One of the things they required in the fallout shelters was candy. I don't know why, but it was like the little blocks of different flavors of hard candy."

Supplies weren't all sweet. During World War II, soldiers from Forts McPherson and Benning guarded the base's chemical and engineer supply areas, which were thought to be vulnerable to German sabotage.

The base was also home to an automotive school and a coffee roasting plant that ground some 50,000 pounds of coffee beans a day to serve soldiers. Both those missions ended in 1956.

Mathis remembers Fort Gillem as a fun place. As a child growing up in Clayton, he and his friends fished in the base's lakes, crawled through pipes and played on forklifts.

"A kid could just walk right onto the base back then," said Mathis, now 58. "They had a lot of stuff going on over there for a kid, 'cause this was the country back then."

The Depot's enlisted personnel became part of the community because many lived on the base for several years at a time. Some, like Rhodenizer, never left.

Rhodenizer met his future wife while serving at the Depot. And three months before his enlistment was up, he met Hugh Dixon,

Jonesboro's mayor at the time, and Van Stephens, a local banker.

"These two guys came to me and said, 'would you be willing to stay in Clayton County if we got you a good job?' " Rhodenizer said. "They hired me, and three mergers and 41 years later I was still here."

Nowadays, the base fire department works with the city of Forest Park. Neighborhood children are routinely brought on base to enjoy the playgrounds --- after passing through guarded gates. People from across metro Atlanta flock to monthly parties at the Getaway Club.

Lt. Gen. Russel Honore, handpicked by President Bush to oversee Hurricane Katrina efforts, said the community connection works both ways.

"We work here, we shop here, we get gas here," said Honore, who's based at Fort Gillem. "Fort Gillem will always be part of this community, and we'll just serve it in different ways as decided by our leadership. We'll continue that partnership as long as we can."

The base pumps \$300 million annually into Clayton's economy and employs nearly 1,100 people, which makes it the county's third-largest employer. Clayton officials expect losing the base to cause short-term economic problems --- particularly for smaller businesses in the area. Long-term plans call for a mix of residential, commercial and industrial uses for the base.

"I predict once we get it developed, I think it will be worth three times that [\$300 million]," said Crandle Bray, who leads local planning for the base's future development.

Still, it won't be the same, said Mathis, who now owns the Old South Restaurant down the road from the base.

A lot of his business will disappear as the base gradually closes. "I guess it'll be like seeing your old neighborhood torn down," Mathis said.

New Submarine Escape Trainer Is Feather In Groton Base's Cap

Officials break ground for \$17 million facility New London Day (New London, CT)

Anthony Cronin

November 6, 2005

Groton — The Navy has broken ground on a new, \$17 million submarine escape trainer at the Naval Submarine Base and anticipates the high-tech training facility will be ready in the summer of 2008 to train submariners.

The groundbreaking ceremony on Wednesday included local leaders and Navy officials, who welcomed the new construction for the base, which this summer faced the threat of a shutdown as part of the Pentagon's round of base closings and consolidations.

Tony Sheridan, president of the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut, said the ceremony meant a lot to him and other local leaders in attendance because it was concrete evidence that the base will remain an important component of this nation's submarine force.

"The fact that the Navy is building this new facility is also a very strong statement that they're here to stay," Sheridan said. "That's what makes this base a unique facility, unlike any other facility in the country," he added.

Sheridan said the \$17 million project will mean more construction jobs in the months ahead. The prime contractor for the facility is M.A. Mortenson Co. of Minneapolis, Minn. The projected completion date for the escape trainer is July 2008.

Sheridan said he and other officials at the groundbreaking, including John Markowicz, who heads the Subbase Realignment Coalition, and G.D. "Denny" Hicks, a retired Navy captain and key player in the save-the-base efforts, recognized the importance of the construction project. "A few months ago, we were worried about having a base there," Sheridan said.

The new escape trainer will complement the base's existing submarine escape immersion

equipment. The escape trainer will include a 36-foot-high “Rapid Ascent Tower,” which will be used for officers and sailors at the Naval Submarine School as well as for pre-deployment training for Groton-based submarine crews.

The escape training facility will allow sailors to experience the physical and psychological effects of a pressurized escape from a submarine. It also will help sailors gain and build confidence in the Navy's escape equipment and its methodologies. Besides the actual trainer, the new facility will include additional training and administrative areas, medical offices, maintenance and storage.

Beach plans to discuss zoning limits near Oceana

The Virginian-Pilot (Hampton Roads, VA)
Jon W. Glass
November 5, 2005

VIRGINIA BEACH — The City Council on Tuesday will discuss the possibility of halting new homes and businesses in high-risk areas around Oceana Naval Air Station.

The council is considering the sweeping measure to satisfy a demand by the federal base-closure commission that Virginia Beach stop incompatible development in Accident Potential Zone 1 off of Oceana's runways.

Mayor Meyera E. Oberndorf said the council has not decided whether to adopt the proposal, which is expected to be controversial.

The council plans to ask the city Planning Commission to review the proposal and issue a recommendation at the commission's Dec. 14 meeting.

A majority of council members have ruled out condemning and buying homes and businesses in APZ-1, so the proposed changes to the city's zoning ordinance are another way the city can show its commitment to protecting Oceana, Oberndorf said.

The federal Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission called on the city to roll back existing development and halt further encroachment on the base or risk losing Oceana's jets.

“We're trying to find ways to accommodate the needs of the Navy and the long-term residents,” Oberndorf said.

She said council members want the proposal to get a full public airing. They anticipate opposition from developers and property owners.

The proposal would change the city's zoning code to coincide with Navy guidelines for incompatible uses in APZ-1.

As of Sept. 1, the city estimated that there are 235 undeveloped parcels in the APZ-1, covering 137 acres and valued at about \$30 million.

The proposed revisions go far beyond the restrictions the City Council is considering for an overlay district on top of moderate and high jet-noise zones around Oceana.

If adopted, the zoning ordinance changes would ban property owners from building homes, apartments, restaurants, shops and many other businesses on undeveloped land in APZ-1. That includes parts of Virginia Beach Boulevard and London Bridge Road.

The restrictions would effectively put an end to “by-right” development. Such development – projects that don't need council approval for zoning or use changes – has been one of the Navy's biggest concerns.

Several by-right housing projects now under way in APZ-1 would be unaffected, city officials said.

The changes would leave many land owners with few options to develop their property, city officials acknowledged. The Navy considers manufacturing and industrial uses compatible in the APZ-1, but those uses might be unsuitable next to existing homes, shops and offices.

Because the changes could reduce property values, the city may have to compensate some land owners, Deputy City Attorney Bill Macali said.

R. Edward Bourdon Jr., a n attorney who represents developers, said the proposed changes are essentially a downzoning and would be “plain and simply a regulatory taking away of property rights.” He said the city would have to pay for that.

Owners could rebuild or enlarge existing homes and businesses, but could not increase density. Owners of single-family homes, for example, could not replace them with duplexes, even if the underlying zoning allowed it, Macali said.

Developers with building permits, site plans or preliminary subdivision plats approved before the changes are adopted would be exempt, City Planning Director Robert J. Scott said.

Opinions/ Editorials

Base Realignment and Closure Approved by Congress

TPMCafe (New York, NY)

Eric Massa

November 6, 2005

Congress recently approved the Presidents plan to move forward with the latest round of Base Closings in New York, and across the country. On October 28th the House disagreed to H.J. Res. 65, to disapprove the recommendations of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, by a recorded vote of 85 ayes to 324 noes with 1 voting "present", Roll No. 548.

This administration, including the Department of Defense, and Secretary Rumsfeld continues to stay the course. We can no longer afford more of the same. We need to change the way we think and react, and our government has to be more fluid. The whole purpose of BRAC was to streamline the military in a post cold war era, this occurred before 9/11, and now we must

adapt to the current status of the world and our unique situation.

We need leadership that is willing to be open and accountable for the decisions we make, and more importantly we need responsible leaders who are willing to change the course when the time calls for it. And now more than ever, we continually hear people calling for it.

BRAC is another example of this administrations inability to adapt, and continue their assault on our working families. The cost of BRAC, is not cheap. Closing military installations to build new ones in a time of war, is costly. Relocating thousands of people to new homes in new regions costs time, effort and resources.

The administration believes that by closing these bases we are streamlining our military and preparing it for future threats and attacks from rogue nations, and terrorist organizations.

The strategy behind BRAC is fundamentally flawed. This administrations goal to streamline the military began before 9/11 occurred. Now we have troops in combat situations in two different theaters. Our soldiers, marines, sailors and airmen are constantly being shipped around the world. We now have a global war on terrorism, and the world is not the same place it was when the administration decided to do this.

This plan is as short sighted as the President's plan to invade Iraq.

This plan affects the international community, our country, and our local communities. We will have to bring tens of thousands of troops home from places like Europe, and decrease our visibility with the international community. Families across the country will be moved to new locations, a good percentage will have to do this while a loved one is serving abroad. Rumsfeld's plan to design these super-bases will isolate the military from our local communities,

cost our country billions of dollars, and take jobs away from places where economic development has been built around these bases.

By moving forward with these base closings, we add more unnecessary stress to our soldier's lives, as they have to prepare for their families to be uprooted while they are on a tour of Duty. This stress can easily lead to small mistakes, like forgetting to recalibrate a gauge, or leaving a wrench inside an engine, which could lead to someone getting hurt.

At a time of war, when half of our forces in Iraq and Afghanistan are our National Guard and Reserve, closing these bases forces an invisible tax upon these troops to have to travel further for necessary monthly training. This means taking more time off from work to compensate, and having to pay more money for traveling costs.

I spoke about this before on my website here:

It is step 2 in my four point plan to support our troops now. For example, in my district, the 29th Congressional district of New York, targeting of the Horseheads Naval Reserve Center alone will force Guard and Reserve personnel from all over the Southern Tier to travel many additional hours to report for duty. These extra hours off from work and the cost of transportation to a more remote site are all burdens on these volunteers. This is one of the main reasons that I so strongly oppose the closing of the Horseheads facility.

The Horseheads facility and its personnel are not alone in this. There will be thousands of people across the country forced into the same situation as people here in the 29th.

This plan to continue forward in the face of everything going on is flat out stupid. It affects so many different people, on many different levels, and knowing how this administration pays attention to detail, I am very concerned with this plan proceeding.

I am not alone in this. My former commanding officer General Wes Clark also believes this round of BRAC is ill conceived. Congressman

Gene Taylor (D-MS) has sponsored amendments to halt BRAC, and trying to delay the base closings.

Gene Taylor sponsored an amendment to the FY2004 Defense Authorization bill that would have repealed the 2005 BRAC round. The amendment passed the House of Representatives, but during negotiations, the Senate stripped the provision from the final version.

During debate on the FY2005 Defense Authorization bill, Taylor advocated delaying BRAC by two years. Again, the Senate balked under pressure from the White House and additional threats to veto funding for the military.

The bottom line is, this administration does not listen. They stay the course, time and time again, even when their decisions are mistakes. While the recommendations the BRAC commission came up with compared to what Rumsfeld wanted are moderate, this closure and realignment is not what our military needs. It's time to support new leaders who will listen, and will not succumb to a blind ideology because they are worried about getting re-elected.

We have seen first hand, what happens with our National Guard gone when a natural disaster strikes. Closing these bases, is simply going to leave more areas vulnerable and less equipped to respond, not just to an international crisis but a national one as well.

We need leaders who are willing to listen, adapt, be held accountable, and change the direction our country is heading.

Additional Notes