

Base Realignment and Closure Commission

EARLY



BIRD

May 16, 2005

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Base realignment plan would cut 18,000 civilian jobs

GovExec.com
George Cahlink
May 13, 2005

More than 18,000 Defense Department civilians will see their jobs eliminated or contracted out

as part of the Pentagon's recommendations for closing and realigning military bases.

"Our current arrangements, designed for the Cold War, must give way to the new demands of the war against extremism and other threats of the 21st century," Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said in a prepared statement Friday.

The Pentagon wants to close 33 major bases, realign 22 more and make hundreds of other changes at smaller bases. Those recommendations will be reviewed by an the independent Base Realignment and Closure Commission this summer, which will then prepare a final list for President Bush by Sept. 8. The president has until Sept. 23 to accept or reject the list before sending it to Congress, which has 45 legislative days to reject it or the recommendations become law.

The Defense Department's moves will affect 133,769 military jobs and 84,801 civilian positions at hundreds of installations nationwide. Of those jobs, 122,987 military and 66,578 civilian jobs will move to other bases, while 10,722 military jobs and 18,223 civilian jobs will be eliminated or turned over to private contractors. The Pentagon estimates its base closing recommendations will require hiring 2,818 additional contractors.

Like past base closing rounds, the Defense Department will offer civilian employees at affected bases a variety of career options, among them moving to a new base, being placed on a priority list for other jobs in the area, and incentives to take early retirement. Defense has established a Web site that details assistance offered to its displaced civilians.

The largest relocation of civilian jobs will occur in the Northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, where thousands of Defense civilians work in leased office space. Nearly 23,000 Defense jobs, including 15,754 civilian positions, will move to more secure space at military installations, including thousands to nearby military bases, among them Fort Belvoir, Va. and Fort Meade, Md. Fort Belvoir stands to gain 5,729 civilian jobs and Fort Meade will add 2,915 civilians.

A recent George Mason University survey found that more than 40,000 Defense workers are in leased space that does not meet homeland security requirements. Rumsfeld said moving them to to military bases would guarantee those security standards are met.

Some civilians moving to Fort Belvoir will take spots now occupied by 816 civilian and 75 military personnel, who make up Army Materiel Command headquarters. The command is being relocated to Redstone Arsenal, Ala.

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service, a largely civilian defense agency that processes employee payroll and payments to contractors, will be relocated and consolidated from more than 20 locations into three large facilities.

Military industrial facilities also will see major changes under the Pentagon's plan. Red River Army Depot in Texarkana, Texas, with 2,491 civilians, will be closed and much of that work will go to other depot facilities, including Anniston Army Depot, Ala., and Letterkenny Army Depot, Pa.

Also, the Navy will close Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine, where 4,032 civilians overhaul submarines, and move most of that work to its three remaining shipyards in Virginia, Hawaii and Washington.

Other major closings and realignments for civilians include:

Closing the Army's Communications and Electronics Command at Fort Monmouth, N.J. (4,652 civilians)

Closing Army Training and Doctrine Command at Fort Monroe, Va. (1,948 civilians)

Closing the Army's Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington and building a joint health care facility in Bethesda, Md. (2,357 civilians)

Closing Brooks Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas (1,268 civilians)

The states losing the most civilian jobs are: Virginia (8,843), Maine (4,139), New Jersey (3,713) and Texas (3,175). Those gaining the most civilian jobs are: Maryland (9,012),

Indiana (2,641), Alabama (2,018) and Kentucky (1,482).

Familiar names show up on Army's closure list

CongressDaily
Megan Scully
May 13, 2005

The Pentagon base closure list issued Friday shows a shuffling of many Army warfighting centers, dramatically changing the makeup of some of the service's oldest and best-known bases.

The armor center at Fort Knox, Ky., will move to Fort Benning, Ga., home of Army infantry, to create a maneuver warfighting center. In return, Fort Knox will get a brigade combat team and other relocated offices.

The air defense center at Fort Bliss in Texas will move to Fort Sill, Okla. The Pentagon also recommended closing Fort Monroe, a historic and serene Army base in southern Virginia. The installation is home to the Army's future-minded Training and Doctrine Command, which will move to nearby Fort Eustis, said Army Vice Chief of Staff Richard Cody.

In addition, officials want to shut Fort Monmouth in northern New Jersey, which deals primarily with the service's communications and electronics development programs. A closure there would affect 5,272 employees. Fort Meade and Aberdeen Proving Ground, both in Maryland, and Fort Belvoir, Va., will take on some of those responsibilities.

The Pentagon wants to close the Army's century-old hospital at Walter Reed Medical Center, the world-renowned facility in Washington that has treated presidents as well as soldiers and veterans. The proposal is part of a broad reordering of the military's system for medical education, research and care, which the Pentagon says suffers from a mismatch of needs and resources.

Under the plan, the shuttering of Walter Reed would involve moving some of its staff and

services to an expanded healthcare facility on the campus of the National Naval Medical Center in nearby Bethesda, Md. The new facility would retain the Walter Reed name, officials said.

A major winner in this base-closing round could be California. The state's many military installations were prime targets in previous rounds, but it walked away this year relatively unscathed. The Pentagon's list recommended closing 12 small facilities and realigning 12 others, but the state lost only slightly more than 2,000 military, civilian and contractor jobs.

The biggest hit was the San Diego Naval Medical Center, which might have to lay off 1,630 employees. Florida also won big, gaining a Joint Strike Fighter training center at Eglin Air Force Base, which will gain 2,218 jobs. Statewide, Florida could add 2,757 military-related jobs.

The announcement of the list marks the end of the Pentagon's participation in the base-closing process. The fate of these installations is now in the hands of the independent Base Realignment and Closure Commission, which historically has approved between 80 percent and 90 percent of the Defense secretary's recommendations.

The commission must submit its list to the White House by Sept. 8. In the meantime, lawmakers and lobbyists will woo commissioners to take their bases off the list. They also could attempt to halt the 2005 BRAC round by inserting provisions into the defense authorization and appropriations bills.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Richard Meyers and other top Pentagon officials will testify before the BRAC commission Monday afternoon.

BRAC plan likely to prompt strong fight in Northeast

CongressDaily
Lisa Troshinsky
May 13, 2005

Defense policy experts and industry representatives expect the Pentagon's recommendation to close 33 major U.S. military installations to have a positive effect on the agency's transformation efforts during wartime, but stressed that affected Northeastern states will likely wage major fights to keep their bases open.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld Friday sent to Capitol Hill his recommendations calling for 5 percent to 11 percent cuts in excess military infrastructure. He expects the recommendations to result in \$5.5 billion in annual savings and slightly less than \$50 billion over 20 years.

"Industry all along has said that base closures are good because it frees up money for procurement," said Pete Steffes, vice president of government policy for the National Defense Industrial Association. He acknowledged the upfront costs of shutting down bases, but said in the long term the savings would be realized. The reduction in bases will help provide long-term savings needed to fund the military's transformation efforts, Steffes said.

But another industry source said he does not see this BRAC round as a great step toward the Defense Department's transformation plan, which strives to make the services work together to create efficiencies. "For example, the Air Force has three bases that handle primary flight training and the Navy has two bases that do the same thing. One of the Navy bases in Florida can train more people so why not take one of the Air Force squadrons and train them at the Navy base?" he said.

"The largest fight will be in the Northeast region," said Barry Rhoads, who heads a defense lobbying group. "Groton [Conn.] will lose 8,460 personnel, Portsmouth [Maine] will lose 4,500, and Ft. Monmouth, N.J., will lose over 5,000 employees."

House Armed Services Committee Chairman Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., said Friday that he would ask the commission to retain the Groton-New London base because of its military value. During the 2004 campaign, Hunter visited the New London area and said he had asked the

Pentagon to keep the base off the closing list. His appearance was an effort to bolster Rep. Rob Simmons, R-Conn., who was in a close re-election contest.

But Stephen Pietropaoli, executive director of the Navy League, a civilian advocacy group, said the submarine base in Connecticut is not needed. The Navy says the diminished size of the submarine force and the efficiency of on-line training are reasons it is not worried about losing Groton.

The Navy's submarine force has diminished from 100 attack submarines and 40 ballistic submarines at the height of the Cold War to its current 55 attack and 18 Trident ballistic missile submarines. The Navy can use virtual training on the waterfront or on board in lieu of using a "brick and mortar school house," Pietropaoli said.

All-Navy, Groton Is Stunned at Plans to Close Its Sub Base

New York Times

Kirk Semple

May 16, 2005

GROTON, Conn., May 15 - This is not where John Markowicz expected to be this Sunday afternoon: behind his office desk, poring over stacks of Pentagon documents and trying to make sense of the government's recommendation that the Navy's historic submarine base here on the east bank of the Thames River be closed for good.

For the past two years, Mr. Markowicz, a Navy veteran himself and a former chief engineer of a fast attack nuclear submarine, has led a coalition of government and civic groups from the Groton area in an unsuccessful campaign to keep the base off the Pentagon's newest list of recommended base closings, which was announced on Friday.

The closing of the base - it is officially called the United States Naval Submarine Base New London - would mean the loss of about 8,460 military jobs and possibly thousands more in the

surrounding community, according to the Pentagon's calculations. It represented the single biggest loss of military jobs at any base on the list; Connecticut as a whole would lose 8,586 military jobs, the largest tally of any state.

The Pentagon said that by shutting the base and shifting its fleet of 18 fast attack subs elsewhere, including bases in Norfolk, Va., and Kings Bay, Ga., it would eventually save \$1.6 billion over 20 years.

"I never guessed it would be closure," Mr. Markowicz, chairman of the Subbase Realignment Coalition, said in an interview. "I'm in my office on a Sunday. That says it all, doesn't it?"

The announcement stunned this Navy town, which has been home to the submarine base for nearly a century and calls itself the Submarine Capital of the World. Residents have been grappling with the news with a mixture of emotions ranging from engaged anger to blithe denial.

"People are still in disbelief," said Richard Brown, 53, a resident of Groton since 1980 and an employee at a local firm that makes parts for aircraft engines. "They don't believe they're going to do it, probably because they don't want to think about what's going to happen."

The Pentagon's list of recommendations is not final. It is under review by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, or BRAC, which can add or subtract bases from the list during the next several months before submitting it to President Bush and Congress for approval.

Everyone here agrees that to close the base would most likely mean the collapse of the local economy and the rending of the community's social fabric.

Base employees and their families keep afloat the businesses along neighboring Route 12: the convenience stores, chain supermarkets, restaurants, gas stations and tattoo parlors. Navy families fill entire housing subdivisions here. They hang out in the downtown commercial

district of New London across the river and at the mall in Waterford. Three of Groton's nine elementary schools are almost entirely populated with Navy children.

Two mammoth casinos, Mohegan Sun in Uncasville and Foxwoods in Mashantucket, help prop up the regional economy, but residents say they will not be able to replace the social and economic value of the base.

"We don't know what's going to happen," said Ron, 55, a retired Navy electronics technician who, as a civilian contractor, now repairs computer simulators on the base. Standing outside the Navy Exchange Dolphin Mart Convenience Store off Route 12, he gave only his first name for fear that speaking publicly might annoy his bosses; several other base employees, military and civilian, said they were under orders not to speak to the news media without permission from their superiors.

Ron said he worried the most about older civilians who depend on the base for their livelihood and would find it particularly difficult to move. "It's hard to start over again," he said. "But I'm afraid what the economy will be like around here. It'll be hard to find jobs."

The same kind of fear and anxiety is rippling through military communities across the country. The Pentagon recommended closing nearly 180 military installations and offices, including 33 big bases like Groton's.

But residents here feel that few other military communities on the Pentagon's list have the long history of the base or a similar claim to a tradition of military importance.

The property began as a naval base in 1872 and became a submarine base in 1916. After World War I, the base became a submarine training and warfare research center. Electric Boat, a private company nearby, began building submarines in 1934, helping to establish Groton as a world submarine center. The world's first nuclear-powered submarine, the Nautilus, was built at the shipyard and was christened in 1954 by Mamie Eisenhower.

By the early 1990's, about 40,000 people were employed in the defense industry in Groton, according to Mr. Markowicz: half of them were employed by the base and the rest worked for Electric Boat. But since the end of the Cold War, the work force in the Groton defense industry has been cut in half. (Electric Boat has said it does not plan to leave even if the naval base closes.)

In the 1991 round of base closings, the Pentagon successfully recommended the closing of half the Naval Underseas Warfare Laboratory here. In 1993, half the submarine base was listed for closing, but it was spared in the face of a lobby led by the region's government and civic leaders. In 1995, the remaining half of the warfare laboratory was cut.

According to Mr. Markowicz, this could be the hardest fight of all. He and other advocates must now convincingly argue that the Pentagon's financial calculations were faulty and the military value of the base was underestimated.

His group has saved about \$150,000 in state money to press its case, and he says that Gov. M. Jodi Rell has promised more. "She said she'd do whatever it takes," he said.

Mr. Markowicz, who also is also executive director of an regional economic development agency, was asked how he felt entering what looked to be a grueling four-month endgame. He drew from his experience as a submariner.

"I'm looking at what I consider equivalent to a four-month deployment to the Western Pacific on a fast attack nuclear submarine," he said evenly. "I've been there before. You're pretty much going to work around the clock with some of your closest friends. You hope to return from the mission very successful."

Legislation aims to avoid base closings

Associated Press

Brandi Grissom

May 16, 2005

AUSTIN - With the Pentagon embarking on a new round of military base closures this year, state lawmakers are working to make sure Texas service members and their families are provided for.

Legislators have filed more than 50 bills offering a wide range of benefits, tax exemptions and services to military personnel and their families. Quality of life is one factor considered by the independent base closing and realignment commission, known as BRAC.

"In an effort to inoculate ourselves against BRAC reductions, we wanted to make sure we had strong policies that would show Texas' commitment to military families and their quality of life," said Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, D-San Antonio.

Texas has 18 major military installations that employ about 230,000 uniformed personnel and civilians. The economic benefit is about \$43 billion a year, according to state officials. Since 1988, 17 Texas military bases have been closed and several others realigned.

On Friday Texas had several installations on BRAC's initial closure list, including Brooks City Base in San Antonio and Naval Station Ingleside in South Texas. While the state would gain a net of about 9,000 military jobs, several Texas officials said they plan to fight the recommendations before a final list goes to President Bush in September.

At least 51 bills related to military member welfare have been introduced in this session. In the previous three sessions, an average of about 25 of such measures were introduced.

Four Texas bases are in Van de Putte's hometown, and she has filed eight bills seeking military benefits.

But there may be little lawmakers can do to influence Pentagon decisions, according to Department of Defense officials and a defense analyst. Quality of life is just one of many factors in deciding which bases will stay open,

which will close and which will receive service members reassigned from Asia and Europe.

"It's all well and good to be a good neighbor," said Chris Hellman, policy analyst for the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation "But this is really about war fighting and not really about how well we get along."

Base infrastructure and training facilities, as well as the ability to quickly equip and deploy troops, are the most important issues in closure decisions, Hellman said.

But Texas lawmakers hope improving quality of life can give the state an edge.

Open land, plenty of airspace and climate that allows year-round training are among the attributes Texas has "in spades," said Don Stewart, spokesman for Republican U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, a member of the Armed Services Committee.

"It's the things you don't often think about - a playground for the kids, museums, job opportunities for families," Stewart said.

Republicans U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison and Gov. Rick Perry, and other Texas officials, are working to show that affection for the state can mean improved retention of military personnel. This week, U.S. House Majority Leader Tom DeLay and 15 other Texas lawmakers met with BRAC chairman Anthony Principi and asked for special attention to Texas bases.

One bill sponsored by Van de Putte, who chairs the Texas Senate Veterans Affairs and Military Installations Committee, would allow noncustodial military parents to designate someone to use their child visitation rights while they're overseas.

Another would give veterans and their children college tuition exemptions. Another, which Perry signed into law Tuesday, would provide unemployment insurance for soldiers' spouses who voluntarily give up their jobs because of a military transfer.

"We want Texas to be a place that our military families want to stay and retire," Van de Putte said. "They want to be here, and we want to honor our veterans."

Other proposals would provide a grace period for debt payments while a soldier is on active duty, assist with school transition for soldiers' children and automatically readmit college students who are deployed.

Those bonuses won't necessarily lead to big results for the state, though, Hellman said.

Military officials want good roads with easy access to installations, he said. Space for expansion is a plus. Adequate training facilities are a must

Efforts that impress BRAC decision-makers, Hellman said, are ones like the state's 2003 "revolving loan fund" that provided \$250 million in loans for projects to enhance the military value of Texas bases.

"That's a very tangible thing to do, and it potentially could make a huge difference," Hellman said.

Department of Defense spokeswoman Cheryl Irwin said each base is being scrutinized equally.

"There is no base or facility in the continental United States or the territories that can BRAC-proof itself," Irwin said.

That, Hellman said, is precisely why Texas lawmakers are so busy with military legislation.

"They don't know if it's going to work, and they don't want to be accused of lack of trying," he said.

Base-Closing Commission Will Grill Rumsfeld Monday

The Associated Press
May 16, 2005

WASHINGTON -- After unveiling a sweeping base-closure plan last week, the Pentagon's top officials will start defending it Monday.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Richard Myers are set to testify before the federal base-closings commission, as the panel officially starts work on the far-reaching plan.

The Pentagon's plan recommends closing or reducing forces at 62 major bases and reconfiguring hundreds of others -- in an effort to save billions of dollars a year. Analysts say all four service branches would have to change the way they now operate, and learn to work together.

Commission chair Anthony Principi has already said the closures could have the effect of a "tsunami" on some military towns.

The panel will hold hearings, conduct site visits, and collect data on each facility on the Pentagon's list through August. It takes a simple majority of the nine-member panel to remove bases from the list.

About 180 military installations from Maine to Hawaii would be closed, including 33 major bases and than 100 smaller facilities, including scores of Reserve and National Guard installations.

Many other domestic installations, including 29 major bases, would remain open but with thousands of fewer troops. Dozens of others will gain troops from other domestic or foreign bases.

Rumsfeld said the closures would save \$48.8 billion over 20 years and make the military more mobile and better suited for the global effort against terrorism.

Rumsfeld's plan would also result in a net loss of 29,005 military and civilian jobs at domestic installations.

Overall, he proposes pulling 218,570 military and civilian positions out of some U.S. bases while adding 189,565 positions to others.

The closures and downsizings would occur over six years, starting in 2006.

This is the first round of base closures in a decade, sparking an intense struggle by communities to save their facilities.

Pentagon's base-closure list is fast-tracked: Review panel has less time, more requirements than predecessors did to back alternatives

Boston Globe

Bryan Bender

May 15, 2005

Washington -- The independent commission reviewing Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's proposal to close dozens of domestic military bases will find it harder to recommend changes than its predecessors and must complete its work more quickly, according to defense officials, lobbyists and base closure specialists.

Guidelines now require the support of seven of the nine members of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission to add a base to the list, versus a simple majority in previous rounds. That change, specialists said, will make sparing bases harder, because for every base that the commission wants to keep open, it will probably have to recommend a new closure to help achieve the billions of dollars in savings the government is seeking.

During the last four base closure rounds -- in 1995, 1993, 1991 and 1988 -- the oversight commission ultimately changed 10 to 15 percent of the Pentagon's recommendations, according to senior Defense Department officials.

"It will be a smaller proportion in this round that gets changed," predicted Steve Grundman, former deputy undersecretary of defense for installations. "They won't have enough time or

the disposition" to overrule the Pentagon as much as in previous rounds, he said.

Still, the nine-member base closure commission, made up of retired officers, former Pentagon officials and lawmakers, is not intended simply to rubber-stamp Rumsfeld's consolidation plan.

Its members will crisscross the country with a staff of 90 this summer, visiting dozens of bases and hearing testimony from local officials and top military leaders, before making final recommendations to President Bush and Congress in September. Anthony Principi, the commission chairman, has pledged to give the Pentagon plan a "clear-eyed" examination.

The panel's schedule of base visits has not been set. On Monday it will hear Rumsfeld's rationale for the bases selected.

Some of its members are known as extremely outspoken personalities who are expected to cast a skeptical eye on the process, questioning the Pentagon rationale for shuttering certain facilities and consolidating their operations elsewhere.

"This group of commissioners is a confident and well-informed bunch," said Loren Thompson, chief executive officer of the Lexington Institute, a think tank in Arlington, Va. "They will not be bashful about telling Rumsfeld when he's wrong."

Thompson pointed to James Hansen, a former Republican member of Congress from Utah, who chaired the House Depot Maintenance Caucus and is considered a specialist on military repair depots, which are a chief target of Rumsfeld's overhaul. Another independent voice is expected to be Phillip Coyle, formerly the Defense Department's top weapon tester, who already has raised concerns about the process the Pentagon used to weigh the merits of technical facilities such as military research centers.

Retired Adm. Harold Gehman, meanwhile, recently retired as head of the U. S. Joint Forces Command, giving him a unique perch from which to assess the Pentagon's stated design to

make the military's branches more "joint" -- better able to operate together -- as a result of a realigned base structure.

But ultimately, the commissioners have less room than their predecessors to modify the Pentagon list or question its analysis.

In addition to the seven votes now needed to make changes to the list, the law establishing the 2005 commission also stipulated that a base cannot be added unless two commission members have visited it. Before such decisions are made, Rumsfeld has 15 days to make a counterargument.

But time is already short. The commission must make its final report by Sept. 8, giving it less than four months to complete its painstaking work, compared with six months for previous panels.

As a result, it will have less time to review the underlying analysis used by the Pentagon to make its recommendations, including the military value of the installation in question, the economic impact to the local community of its closure and the environmental impact of abandoning the facility.

"This will still be the largest round of closures the country has ever endured," said Grundman, who was in charge of all military facilities during the Clinton administration. "But the commission will have 60 fewer days. That is a practical limitation." Earlier this month, Principi protested that his staff will be under the gun to complete its work in time.

The Pentagon has sent a clear message that it thinks few changes are necessary. In a rare public show of solidarity, Rumsfeld on Thursday briefed reporters on his rationale for the base closures flanked by top brass representing all the military branches, who said they supported the plan and urged the commission to adopt all the Defense Department's recommendations.

California survived this latest round of closures relatively unscathed. The Northeast, by contrast,

stands to lose some major bases, and for communities such as Kittery, Maine, and New London, Conn., which are on Rumsfeld's closure list, specialists say a reversal at this point is probably wishful thinking.

Government officials and redevelopment specialists say that local communities, while still fighting to save their bases, should focus more on what to do with the bases once they are closed or downsized, including applying for a variety of economic assistance grants that will be made available by the Defense Department, Labor Department and other federal agencies.

Local News Articles

Senators vow to fight BRAC list

Times Record News (Wichita Falls, TX)

Stacy Horany

May 16, 2005

The proposed 2,624 job cuts at Sheppard Air Force Base on the Department of Defense's Base Realignment and Closure recommendation list took many by surprise, including Sen. John Cornyn and Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas.

The senators met with local officials in a private meeting in Wichita Falls on Sunday, then opened the meeting to take questions from the media. They also traveled to three other Texas cities affected by the recommendations, including Texarkana, Corpus Christi and San Antonio.

"We did not expect any reductions at Sheppard Air Force Base," Hutchison said.

Hutchison said it was unexpected because of the hundreds of millions of government dollars that have been invested at Sheppard over the past few years in improvements and additions.

Hutchison said the BRAC recommendations reflect the Pentagon's desire to streamline military operations. She said the medical training personnel, which make up a substantial

portion of the job cuts at Sheppard, will all be stationed at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio.

"They're trying to consolidate to where missions will be all in one base," Hutchison said.

Hutchison also said she felt the Joint Strike Force maintenance training should remain at Sheppard instead of being moved to Elgin Air Force Base in Florida, as the list recommends.

"The testing and maintenance training need to be in Texas," Hutchison said. "Keeping it all together will be an important part of our case," she said.

Hutchison said Florida has more restricted air space and more weather issues than Texas, further bolstering the position of keeping the programs in Texas.

"There is an old saying in Texas - 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it,' " Hutchison said.

"This is not the end, this is only the beginning, and we have not yet begun to fight," Cornyn said.

Cornyn said the BRAC list must now go through a nine-member BRAC commission chaired by Anthony Principi, the former secretary of Veterans Affairs. The commission has until Sept. 8 to make its recommendations on base closures.

Then it will be passed on to President Bush, who can either accept the recommendations or reject them in their entirety by Sept. 23. If the president accepts the plan, it becomes final within 45 legislative days, unless Congress passes a joint resolution to block the entire package.

If Bush rejects the plan, it is sent back to the commission who will have until Oct. 20 to submit a revised list of proposed closures. Bush will then have until Nov. 7 to approve or disapprove the revised recommendations.

"It is important for us not to overreact to this because it is only the beginning," Sen. Cornyn

said. "It is entirely conceivable that they made mistakes in the original inquiry," Cornyn said.

State Sen. Craig Estes and state Rep. David Farabee were also on hand and both echoed the sentiments of Hutchison and Cornyn.

"This was really a surprise, and we pledge to do everything that we can for the bases," Estes said. "This is only the beginning."

"I echo what Senators Hutchison and Cornyn said in terms of being surprised," Farabee said. "As a lifelong resident of North Texas, I can't imagine any place better to relocate missions than Sheppard Air Force Base."

Base closing hearings begin: The Navy Tuesday will explain its reasons for wanting to close the Groton sub base.

Norwich Bulletin (Norwich, CT)

Ray Hackett

May 16, 2005

The focus of the Pentagon's base closing process shifts to Washington this week, with all "local" eyes on Tuesday's hearing with Navy officials.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission will begin a weeklong series of hearings today to hear from Pentagon officials who will explain the methodology and rationale for the decisions to close and realign military bases.

The Navy is scheduled to give its presentation Tuesday afternoon.

"I can assure you, we will study that very carefully," BRAC Chairman Anthony Principi told the Norwich Bulletin Friday.

"It will be an independent analysis," he added, saying the commission will not rubber-stamp the Pentagon recommendations without a detailed examination of the rationale used in targeting the Groton sub base for closure.

The nine-member commission has the authority to remove and add bases to the Pentagon list of those being closed and realigned. A simple

majority -- five votes -- is needed to remove a base. Seven votes, however, will be needed to add a base. The commission's recommendations must be submitted to the president by Sept. 8, and cannot be amended. The president and Congress will have only the option of accepting the list or rejecting it in its entirety.

In an earlier interview with the Bulletin, Principi stressed the commission will not attempt to set policy and dictate to the Defense Department how the future military structure of the nation should be established. Instead, the commission will carefully examine the Pentagon's recommendations to determine if there are any "significant" deviations from the pre-described criteria used to formulate its recommendations. The criteria and the Pentagon's Force Structure Plan -- the long-range, 20-year Defense Department plan -- will be the yardstick by which those measurements will be taken.

"This appears to be more about the deployment of submarines," Subbase Realignment Coalition Chairman John Markowicz said after an initial review of the Pentagon's base closing list.

"It doesn't seem to be about jointness or politics," he said of the specific recommendation to close the Groton sub base. "I don't know how you make the argument that this enhances either the military value or jointness capabilities of Norfolk or King's Bay."

The Pentagon recommendation to close Groton shifts the Atlantic sub fleet to Norfolk, Va., and Kings Bay, Ga. The Groton sub school would also be transferred to Kings Bay and the Northeast Regional Naval Headquarters combined with the Atlantic Fleet Headquarters in Norfolk.

Military value, including the ability to host joint service activities -- jointness -- make up four of the eight criteria in determining the Pentagon's decisions.

U.S Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, said the jointness capabilities of the sub base were overlooked, noting a new Naval Reserve Center is to be built at the base and a Memorandum of

Understanding between the base and Connecticut National Guard greatly enhances the jointness capability.

U.S. Sens. Christopher J. Dodd and Joseph Lieberman also argue the Pentagon failed to take into consideration the synergy between the base and nearby Electric Boat, the nation's premier builder of submarines, a "military value" that cannot be replicated anywhere else in the world.

Markowicz and the coalition will attempt to develop an argument that shows Groton's existing military value was underestimated, and it would be enhanced more if other commands were shifted there rather than vice versa.

One of the hurdles the local coalition will face is the Navy's apparent plans to shift the submarine fleet's focus from the Atlantic to the Pacific. China's emerging submarine fleet poses the greatest threat to the United States' superiority of the seas. North Korea and Iran pose the greatest future threat to the nation's security. The Cold War threat of Russian submarines patrolling the North Atlantic is no longer the issue.

That issue makes Tuesday's hearing a critical first step for those preparing to argue in defense of saving the sub base. How the Navy reached its conclusion to close the base ultimately will be the basis of the argument the coalition will use in convincing the commission the reasoning is flawed.

Warner, Kaine, Kilgore talk BRAC

Augusta Free Press (Augusta, VA)

Chris Graham

All things considered, Virginia didn't come out terribly badly in the Base Realignment and Closure recommendations released by the Pentagon on Friday.

"We fared relatively well. We only had one base closure," Gov. Mark Warner said on Saturday during a visit to Augusta County, noting the recommendation of the Department of Defense to close Fort Monroe.

"Our state has the highest per-capita amount of military installations and personnel of any state in the nation. So for us to come out basically net-even put us in good standing," Warner told The Augusta Free Press.

The recommendations will be taken up by a nine-member commission appointed by President Bush beginning next week. The lobbying effort to spare Fort Monroe and 23,000 jobs in Northern Virginia that could be affected by the recommendation to move military and civilian workers from office space leased near the Pentagon has already begun - both behind the scenes and on the Virginia gubernatorial campaign trail.

"The commission will now have the chance to review the benefits Virginia offers as a home to defense operations, training and planning. I am hopeful and confident they will conclude that Virginia is the best place for such activity and will locate more defense-related jobs here as the process moves forward," Republican Party gubernatorial-nomination frontrunner Jerry Kilgore said on Friday.

"We have strong allies in our federal delegation, including senators Warner and Allen and our members of the House of Representatives, who will be of great assistance as the material is evaluated," said Kilgore, the former state attorney general.

"In particular, I am fully confident that Hampton will have the opportunity to make its case regarding Fort Monroe and its importance to the region and our national defense," Kilgore said.

"While the process is far from complete, (Friday's) announcement is an important step. It shows that under the leadership of Gov. Warner, Virginia Commission on Military Bases co-chairman Owen Pickett and Joe Reeder, and our entire congressional delegation, Republicans and Democrats together, Virginia has made a strong case for locating military installations here, and the Department of Defense has listened," said presumptive Democratic Party gubernatorial nominee Tim Kaine.

"Virginia is proud to play such an important role in the protection of our nation. We will continue to do so as this process continues, and beyond," said Kaine, the state's lieutenant governor.

BRAC: Battle for Arsenal jobs begins

Quad City Times (Davenport, IA)

Ed Tibbetts

May 15, 2005

A day after the Defense Department dealt a body blow to the Rock Island Arsenal, some of the key players in contesting the proposal conceded that they have a tough battle ahead.

But they began Saturday to sketch out some of the arguments they expect to make to the nine-member Base Realignment and Closure Commission, or BRAC.

The Pentagon recommended a massive realignment of Arsenal Island on Friday, stunning hundreds of workers.

The biggest loss is the Tank-automotive and Armaments Command, or TACOM, which employs 1,119 people on the island. Initial Pentagon figures, which were outdated, put the job loss at 740.

Local officials couldn't say which recommendation will be the most ripe for attack. But the decision to move TACOM-Rock Island to Columbus, Ohio, and, especially, to Warren, Mich., is one that will be looked at closely.

"Warren doesn't have the facilities to take 800 to 900 people," said Jim Morgan, the program director for the Rock Island Arsenal Development Group and a former top TACOM executive on the island. He said the bulk of the jobs would go there, while a smaller number would go to Columbus.

He said the most likely line of attack will be to suggest that jobs in Michigan be moved here, where there's space, not the other way around. Otherwise, he suggested the government might have to spend millions to house the new workers there. Local officials also believe Arsenal Island

is a more secure location than the Michigan facility.

Reversing a Pentagon recommendation is difficult, though. On average, 85 percent of the Defense Department's recommendations hold up, and seven of nine commissioners must support a revision. Still, one military analyst said the panel, headed by former Veterans Affairs Secretary Anthony Principi, will take a close look at the proposals.

"I'm sure this commission won't have any problem at all telling (Defense Secretary Donald) Rumsfeld where he got it wrong," said Loren Thompson, a defense analyst with the Lexington Institute in Arlington, Va.

Morgan said the most perplexing proposal is the plan to move the Civilian Human Resource Agency, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service and the Installation Management Agency regional office off the island.

"Those agencies have all come to the island in the last 10 years and have seen increased work load. I can't understand it," he said. Further study will be necessary to determine a line of attack to try to save those positions.

Losing those agencies would cost the island 685 jobs.

With those losses, the TACOM transfer, some depot maintenance losses and the offsetting gains from the proposed movement of the First U.S. Army headquarters here the estimated net loss is 1,708 jobs. Officials say the precise figure still could change slightly as they study the recommendations further.

Initially, the Defense Department reported the net loss at 1,263 positions, but Arsenal officials say they were based on old employment figures.

Factory impact

The potential movement of so many jobs off the island also could have a spinoff effect on the agency that was largely spared by Friday's actions — the Joint Manufacturing and

Technology Center, which employs about 1,000 people.

Because of Army rules, the overhead costs of maintaining the island and its buildings have to be taken into account when the manufacturing center figures its production rates. The loss of so many rent-paying tenants would push its rates upward.

“There will be an impact on the factory rates, we just don’t know what it will be,” said Gale Smith, an Arsenal spokesperson. She added that there would be no impact until the changes are ratified and take effect. That could take years.

The chance those rates would be pushed upward could be offset, too. The Army has planned to offload the overhead costs from the factory by changing the way it funds the manufacturing operation.

That had been set to take place Oct. 1, but has been delayed a year.

That question, while esoteric, could have an impact on the manufacturing center and its survivability. For years, the factory has fought to keep its rates low in order to compete with private industry.

“It is an area of concern,” Quad-City Development Group President Thom Hart said.

Still, for now the Defense Department apparently has decided to keep its industrial capacity intact with the retention of the manufacturing facility here, as well as arsenals at Watervliet, New York and Picatinny, Pa.

Local officials don’t think that decision is permanent, however. And Thompson, the defense analyst, said the new Deputy Secretary of Defense, Gordon England, is pushing for more outsourcing of work.

That will make it difficult for places like Rock Island.

“The Army is still going to have to fight to maintain its industrial base,” he said.

The Iraq war boosted the amount of work at the Arsenal the last couple of years, which local officials believe played a big role in keeping it off the list. But Thompson said additional work load may not be there next time.

The base closing commission has until Sept. 8 to make a recommendation to President Bush, who then will reject it or forward it to Congress. The president and Congress must accept or reject the whole list and can make no amendments.

A decision is expected toward the end of the year.

Work will continue to help base gain missions

The Enid News and Eagle (Enid, OK)
Jeff Mullin
May 14, 2005

The children walking the halls of Eisenhower Elementary School Friday morning looked slightly confused at the sight of a group of smiling adults, all holding cell phones to their heads with one hand and plugging their free ears with the other.

The children couldn’t have known the news those men and women were getting on their cell phones should mean a brighter future for them and their classmates.

A group of politicians and local dignitaries gathered Friday morning at Eisenhower for a press conference following the release of the initial Base Realignment and Closure list by the Department of Defense.

The adults crowded in the Eisenhower lobby were smiling because Vance Air Force Base was not included on the recommended list of bases to be closed, and in fact will grow by nearly 100 military and civilian personnel.

“I thought I was being cautiously optimistic,” said Enid Mayor Ernie Currier, chairman of Vance Development Authority, “and I thought I was handling everything. But the relief I felt

after getting the news told me I was worrying more than I thought.”

The closure of Vance would have been devastating to Enid’s economy, since the base has an annual economic impact of some \$225 million on Enid and Garfield County.

“When you’ve had good people, doing a good mission, supported by a good community, what else can we have expected?” said Rep. Frank Lucas, Oklahoma’s 3rd District congressman. “Thank you Enid for the help you’ve given me in working with you to make this possible.”

The BRAC commission will begin hearings Monday in Washington to begin considering the list of recommendations released Friday by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. The commission has until Sept. 8 to submit its own list to President Bush.

From now until the revised list is submitted, work will continue to make sure Vance is not added to the closure list. Mike Cooper, VDA point man for the efforts to save Vance as well as chairman of Oklahoma Strategic Military Planning Commission, said the efforts will continue in three areas.

“One, keep the decisions that were made, keep this growth and expansion that we’re getting,” said Cooper. “Make sure we do not get added to the list, much like we did in 1995. And also there will be other things that are left on the table for other realignment possibilities. We’ll have ourselves right in the middle of all of that action. I think we’ll be successful, if possibilities are there, because of our relationship inside the Air Force, with (BRAC) chairman (Anthony) Principi, the staff of the commission and, of course Gen. (Lloyd) “Fig” Newton (commissioner and former Vance wing commander).”

Vance already is slated to get additional personnel thanks to a realignment of Moody Air Force Base in Valdosta, Ga. The primary phase of fixed wing pilot training conducted at Moody will be divided among Vance, Columbus AFB in Mississippi and Laughlin AFB near Del Rio,

Texas. The Introduction to Fighter Fundamentals training for pilots will move from Moody to Vance, Columbus and Laughlin, as well as Randolph AFB in San Antonio, Texas, and Sheppard AFB in Wichita Falls, Texas. The IFF weapons systems officer school will move to Vance, Columbus, Laughlin and Sheppard.

Other missions Vance might attract, said retired Air Force Gen. J.B. Davis, a member of the 1995 BRAC commission and a consultant hired by VDA, could include training pilots to fly unmanned drones.

“I think the most likely mission is the unmanned aerial vehicle,” said Davis, “with Kegelman (Auxiliary Field) and with the tremendous air space that you have.”

During the 1995 round, Reese Air Force Base in Lubbock, Texas, was on the initial closure list, so commissioners added all other Air Force undergraduate pilot training bases, including Vance. After months of intense lobbying, all the bases except Reese were removed from the list. That is not the case this year, however, since no undergraduate pilot training bases are targeted for closure.

“You might think that’s not good, since we could have gotten some of their mission, but that’s good news for Vance because there’s no contention,” said Davis. “However, I’m not going to rest on my laurels. We’re going to make absolutely sure that doesn’t change. We’ve got our work cut out for us, but I congratulate this great place.”

The fight to keep Vance from being added to the BRAC list and to maintain the proposed expansion will be different than the battle to get Vance removed from the closure list in 1995.

“The whole process has been different than in 1995,” said Cooper. “We weren’t talking about issues or concerns or problems at Vance. We were talking about how we could facilitate the movement of this or that mission. How could the community and state help us get this or that done. It’s very different this time, because we didn’t just come to the table to BRAC-proof

ourselves. We've been doing these things all along."

Sen. Jim Inhofe, R-Okla., second-ranking member of Armed Services Committee, said his job and that of his fellow members of the Oklahoma congressional delegation is not done, either.

"Our job is to make sure no one tries to do something political to influence the process," said Inhofe.

Davis said he expects the BRAC process to be contentious, in part because so many National Guard and Reserve facilities were targeted for closure.

"I think the secretary of defense will get sued by one or two states, because they say that's not within his purview," Davis said. "But I think that will be a hiccup."

Davis said he expects congressmen from a couple of the states more heavily impacted by the closure list to try and derail the entire BRAC process.

"If the BRAC process is ceased, then they've got to put about \$28 billion back in the budget, and where are they going to find it?" he said.

It was fitting the press conference was held at Eisenhower, the first school to benefit from the \$27 million sales tax and bond package for schools and roads passed by Enid voters in February 2003.

"As I look around the room here today, not only are there people who fill positions of leadership in our community but we also have a group of citizens who helped pave the way and who helped support this with their taxes and their financial assistance," said Currier. "We appreciate everyone in Enid for being here for us."

Development efforts already underway

The Associated Press Local (Bloomfield, IN)
Deana Wrenn

May 16, 2005

Indiana officials aren't giving up on the Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center or its nearly 700 jobs on the Pentagon's chopping block.

But they're also looking at economic development initiatives to soften the blow if lobbying efforts don't get Crane off the base realignment list announced Friday.

Gov. Mitch Daniels said Friday that leaders will lobby Base Realignment and Closure commissioners in an effort to preserve all Crane jobs. He said he'll also work to bring new businesses to the area to promote economic development.

"We are already at work on plans that will, I believe, in time bring more new jobs than are being realigned - and probably before those jobs ever move," Daniels said.

A backup plan is necessary, said Loren Thompson, a defense analyst with the Lexington Institute, a Virginia-based think tank.

"Communities that are well managed always have a plan B in a base closure year," Thompson said.

It can take years to recover from base closings and realignments.

In 1994, residents and officials hoped the Grissom Air Force base near Peru would be spared. But the base lost about 2,500 active-duty jobs when it was realigned as a reserve base.

"I think there was a period of denial where the community was kind of in shock," said Jim Tidd, executive director of the Grissom Redevelopment Authority. "There was a period where it was, 'Well, they don't really mean it. They'll change their minds.'"

But the active duty personnel left, and they took their wallets and paychecks with them. Air Force studies show the downsizing meant a loss of 4,500 direct and indirect jobs, including more than 700 civilian positions, Tidd said.

More than a decade later, the area is still working on economic development. The base hospital has been converted to a nursing home, a state prison has been built and more than 40 businesses have cropped up.

More than 1,200 civilian jobs have been created since the 700 civilian positions were cut, and the area has seen a net gain of about 400 civilian jobs since the closure, Tidd said. But nearly a third of the base's former property is still unused.

"Maybe in the eyes of the DOD we've exceeded civilian jobs," Tidd said. "But I don't know that we have recovered dollar for dollar from the economic loss."

Grissom's position is not unusual, especially for bases in rural areas, Thompson said. He said the impact of a base closing can be significant and protracted for the economies of nearby communities.

"The typical pattern is for a major base closure to have long-lasting negative side effects," Thompson said.

Urban military sites usually have an easier time dealing with cuts and closures, said John Clark, Daniels' senior adviser for economic growth.

High-skilled workers can stay in the city and simply find other employment - an option not readily available at Crane, which employs about 4,000 workers and government contractors and provides nearly half the wages paid in Bloomfield and more than two-thirds of the wages in Loogootee.

"When that happens in a big city, that's tough but people don't have to, by and large, pick up and move to find work," Clark said. "That's not the case down there. The jobs have to be in the neighborhood or else many of them will have to pick up and move."

Ron Henry, who worked at Crane for 30 years before retiring and now lives outside Bloomfield, said the towns surrounding the base

would have dried up if Crane shut down, but that the area could recover from a loss of less than 700 positions.

"In time, they'll probably recoup some jobs," Henry said.

Former U.S. Sen. Dan Coats, whom Daniels hired to lobby for Crane in Washington, said he would lobby BRAC commissioners as the process continues, pointing out Crane's advantages that the Pentagon might have overlooked.

The state has already been working on a development plane for Crane - one that promotes the aerospace, homeland security and other high-tech industries that could do Department of Defense work.

"We're really very bullish about Crane in the long run," Clark said. "We felt that way before BRAC even got started."

Donna Walker, a Loogootee resident who worked for 34 years at Crane before retiring, said Friday's announcement that the base would be realigned, not closed, bodes well for future economic development efforts.

"I still see a good future for Crane," she said.

Experts: capacity at large military installations saved Ohio in base-closing process

The Associated Press State and Local (OH)
James Hannah
May 16, 2005

Extra capacity at its two largest military installations helped Ohio win the Pentagon's recommendation for a net gain of jobs when many other states face the loss of thousands of jobs, defense analysts say.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld's proposals for the first round of base closures in a decade would give Ohio about 241 additional full-time jobs overall.

That would include an extra 1,758 jobs at the Defense Supply Center in Columbus and suburban Whitehall, and an additional 494 jobs at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton.

"Wright-Patterson was poised to be a receiver site," said Michael Gessel of the Dayton Development Coalition. "It has excess capacity. It does good quality work."

With 22,460 workers, Wright-Patterson is the largest single-site employer in Ohio. Under the Pentagon's proposal, it will pick up aerospace medical jobs and aero-medical research jobs from bases in Texas and Florida.

The 550-acre Defense Supply Center is home to 23 different Defense Department agencies and employs 6,160 workers. It supplies the military with spare parts for such things as submarines and destroyers and processes payments to defense contractors.

Rep. Pat Tiberi, R-Columbus, said the installation is a modern compound with room to grow.

"I have said for years that the Defense Department has underutilized the facility," Tiberi said.

Joe Renaud, the state's aerospace and defense adviser, said Ohio also benefited from having units that perform well and are housed in modern facilities. And many bases served as homes to joint branches of the military, something the Pentagon wants to move toward, he said.

Ohio's aerospace heritage didn't hurt, either, said Rep. Marcy Kaptur, who cited the Wright brothers and John Glenn, the first American to orbit the Earth.

"There is a culture of flight that is deeply rooted in this state," said Kaptur, a Toledo Democrat.

The Pentagon's recommended overall job gains for Ohio were tempered by individual losses. An Air National Guard base in Mansfield would

close, and a military finance center in Cleveland would lose 1,028 jobs in a realignment.

Analysts said the changes would slightly alter Ohio's military landscape, with the new jobs at Wright-Patterson helping put additional focus on military research.

"It emphasizes that Wright-Patterson will continue to be a research center, and the Pentagon recognizes that," said Sen. Mike DeWine, R-Ohio. "We literally are the brainpower of the Air Force. We're going to remain that."

Opinions/ Editorials

Pentagon knows McCoy's value

Lacrosse Tribune (Lacrosse, WI)
Tribune editorial board
May 16, 2005

This part of the process is supposed to be the least political.

The Pentagon, in the person of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, announces that which is most sensible when it comes to realigning and closing U.S. military bases.

The Pentagon on Friday proposed shutting down completely about 180 facilities, including 33 major bases.

Fort McCoy would not be one of those.

It's a credit to the military and civilian workforce at Fort McCoy that the Pentagon recognized their value. Western Wisconsin doesn't carry all that much weight in Washington, not compared with the high rollers on either coast. And to pretend that the Pentagon wouldn't take into consideration the political ramifications of its recommendations is to ignore reality. Despite the fact that it's in Wisconsin (remember "Stripes"? Czechoslovakia is like Wisconsin?), Fort McCoy is held in high esteem by the Pentagon.

And while a net loss of 231 jobs at the fort is no small thing in a rural Midwestern county, that McCoy made it through this step is no small feat.

But it's by no means over. These are merely the Pentagon's recommendations to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission. Or, as 3rd District U.S. Rep. Ron Kind said: "This is when the elbows start flying."

Kind already has his elbows sharpened, evidenced by his reference to a smaller base closing, that of La Crosse's Naval Reserve Center, which would result in a loss of seven military jobs. On Friday, Kind called relocation of the 84th Division ARRTC "troubling" and said he wants more justification on why it should be moved. Imagine the reaction among representatives of major closure sites, such as Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico, which would lose more than 2,700 jobs; the Naval Station in Ingleside, Texas, costing more than 2,100 jobs; or Fort McPherson in Georgia, costing nearly 4,200 jobs.

So what's going to happen next in the base realignment and closure process?

This week, the BRAC commission holds hearings on Capitol Hill. Then the BRAC commission will hold regional public hearings around the country into the summer. The U.S. comptroller general is to submit an analysis of the Pentagon's list by July 1, and the BRAC commission is supposed to send its "findings and conclusions" to the president by Sept. 8. By Sept. 23, President Bush must approve or reject the findings. If approved by Bush, Congress has 45 legislative days to pass a joint resolution to block the closures. If no vote is taken, the list automatically is approved. If Congress rejects the list, the president could veto its action. If rejected by Bush, the list goes back to the commission, which must submit its revised list to Bush by Oct. 20. By Nov. 7, the president must approve the revised list or the process ends. If he OKs the list, Congress has another 45 legislative days to act on it.

Once the list becomes law, bases have two years

to start closing and several more years to finish.

We will find out about the legitimacy of the BRAC process in the coming months. Is this truly about national defense? Or will politics rule the day? The fun starts here.

But it's not fun. National security and our neighbors' jobs are at stake. We trust that the work by our region's major base, Fort McCoy, is too important to ignore. And our public officials, both elected and unelected, have been on this case for months, even years.

Here's hoping they prevail.

Additional Notes