Base Realignment and Closure Commission

EARLY BIRD

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BRAC 2005: Rumsfeld, Myers State Their Case to Commission

American Forces Press Service
Jim Garamone
May 16, 2005

WASHINGTON, May 16, 2005 – As the military confronts the "new demands of the war against extremism and other evolving challenges in the world," the Defense Department's

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recommendations for base realignments and closures are necessary, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld today told the commission considering DoD's proposals.
Rumsfeld and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. Richard B. Myers testified before the BRAC Commission today. Both men stressed the joint approach taken in forming this year's BRAC recommendations.

Myers said the emphasis on joint warfighting "improves our efficiency and improves our warfighting capability."

He also said the recommendations that DoD delivered to the commission last week include an important focus on the reserve components. "The recommendations will help the reserve components modernize, improve their mobilization processes and transform for the 21st century security environment."

Finally, the recommendations take into account the changed security environment that stresses the department's homeland defense mission and force protection concerns, the chairman said.

Rumsfeld said the jointness implicit in the recommendations makes it extremely difficult to pull just one base or installation out of a proposal. "The department recognizes that operating jointly reduces overhead costs, improves efficiency and facilitates cooperative training and research," he said. "And I would suggest that one must be careful about taking a selective look at individual components or pieces of these recommendations without considering how these components or pieces fit into the larger whole."

Personnel involved in the two-and-a-half-year DoD BRAC recommendation effort sorted through 25 million bits of information in making their appraisals, Rumsfeld said. "They considered some 1,000 different scenarios or approaches, and devoted some 4,000 man-hours while their staffs devoted tens of thousands of hours more," he said. When the recommendations came to him for approval, the secretary said, he approved them intact.

Those recommendations would close 33 major bases and realign 29 others out of some 318 major bases in the United States. "They would close a bit less than 10 percent of major U.S. military facilities and realign some 9 percent if the recommendations are approved," Rumsfeld said.

The secretary explained that the number of closures and realignments is smaller than many people expected. He said this is in part because of the consideration of military surge capability, an increase in active duty end-strengths and the DoD plan to bring about 70,000 servicemembers back from overseas bases.

The chairman said the imperative is for the U.S. military to transform to meet the challenges of today and those of the future. BRAC is not a "stand-alone event," Myers said to the commissioners. He urged them to view the process as rooted in the new National Defense Strategy and National Military Strategy. He said the department's Global Basing Strategy also helped inform the decision. Finally, he said the Quadrennial Defense Review also helped DoD decisionmakers.

Since the recommendations became public, many people have asked why the department is closing bases in a time of war. "The answer is because the changes are essential in helping us win in this conflict," Rumsfeld said.

The secretary said the changes - if adopted by the commission, the president and ultimately, the Congress - will help relieve stress on the military, will allow forces to work more jointly, better protect the forces and help to properly equip U.S. troops. "We must do all that we can to identify and remove all the excess that exists to be better able to address those pressing needs to help the warfighter," Rumsfeld said.

Ultimately, the warfighter and the American taxpayer benefit from the BRAC process, the secretary said.

National News Articles

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Principi Resigns Exec Post with Pfizer
Congress Daily (PM Edition)
May 16, 2005

Anthony Principi, chairman of the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission, has resigned his executive post with the drug manufacturer Pfizer Corp., the Associated Press reported. Principi, a former Veterans Affairs secretary, told the company late last week he was stepping down in order to fully carry out his responsibilities as chairman of the commission. Word of Principi's resignation came today as the commission was opening hearings on Defense Secretary Rumsfeld's proposal to close 33 major facilities and realign hundreds of others. Principi joined Pfizer as a vice president in March to run the company's Washington, D.C. office.

Closings of bases questioned: Commission charged with deciding on plan asks officials about effect on recruitment.
The Washington Post
Ann Scott Tyson
May 17, 2005

WASHINGTON -- The nine-member independent Base Realignment and Closure Commission quizzed top defense officials Monday on the potential damage of base shutdowns on the recruitment and retention of National Guard and reserve forces sorely needed by a U.S. military at war.

In their first opportunity to challenge the Pentagon list, some commissioners voiced concern that the widespread closure of National Guard and reserve facilities would force personnel to travel greater distances to drill, thereby harming enlistment.

On the guard and reserve base realignments, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Richard B. Myers testified that no recruiting difficulties were "anticipated" by the BRAC process. However, he added that "no doubt there will be some inconveniences, where somebody that was used to drilling a couple of miles away may have to drive further for that training."

Myers said many changes to the Air Force guard and reserve, in particular, were driven by the Pentagon's desire to consolidate aircraft units in order to better carry out missions. Centralizing aircraft will leave behind personnel who will be offered new combat support missions, such as providing command and control over unmanned aerial vehicles, he said. But he and other officials indicated that some Air Force adjutant generals are unhappy about the mission shift.

Commissioners also questioned Myers and Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld on whether the base-closure plan was premature because the Pentagon has not completed a major review of strategy, the Quadrennial Defense Review, or an important study of military transportation capabilities.

Several volumes of the BRAC report are being withheld as the Pentagon checks for classified information.

Rumsfeld defends closure list: Making changes to the proposal for military base closings will be difficult without unraveling the plan, the Pentagon says.
Daily Press
David Lerman
May 17, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld warned an independent commission Monday that any significant change to his military base-closure plan could have a domino effect across the country.

Defending his proposal to close 33 major bases, including Hampton's Fort Monroe, Rumsfeld said the Base Realignment and Closure Commission must consider how each base closure or restructuring would affect other bases before deciding to make changes to his plan.

"It's important to look at the totality of it and see how one piece impacts another," Rumsfeld told the nine-member commission appointed by

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President Bush to review the plan and suggest changes.

The effect would be particularly evident in Hampton Roads. A decision to save Fort Monroe, for example, could increase the job losses at nearby Fort Eustis.

Rumsfeld's plan calls for moving the Army's Training and Doctrine Command headquarters from Fort Monroe to Fort Eustis, which would undergo a big restructuring. But if Monroe is kept open, those jobs would stay in place, and Eustis would lose more work.

Similarly, Naval Station Norfolk would gain 2,800 jobs under Rumsfeld's plan, partly because of the proposed closure of a submarine base in Groton, Conn. If that base is saved, Norfolk presumably would lose jobs - and subs - that would otherwise be transferred there.

"It just pointed out the complexity of our undertaking," said Anthony Principi, the commission chairman, after a three-hour hearing. "All these realignments and closures are linked to one another. We just need to be mindful it's a daisy chain."

The commission has until Sept. 8 to make revisions to the Pentagon's plan, which would close 33 major bases, restructure 29 others and close or realign 775 minor installations across the country. The base-closure initiative - the first in a decade - is expected to save $5.5 billion a year when fully enacted.

Commission members, at a news conference, said they saw no evidence that politics played a role in the Pentagon proposal. But Principi expressed concern about the plan's effect on Northeastern states, many of which backed Massachusetts Democrat John Kerry for president last year.

Among the big losers in the Pentagon plan was Maine, which would shed 4,500 jobs through the closure of Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, and Connecticut, which would lose 8,460 jobs from the closure of Submarine Base New London.

"New England takes quite a hit, in terms of closures," Principi said.

Those two proposed closures would mean huge job gains at both the Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth and Naval Station Norfolk.

Michael Wynne - undersecretary of defense for acquisition, technology and logistics - defended the closure decisions, saying a shrinking submarine fleet requires consolidations. Today's fleet of about 58 attack submarines could be cut to as few as 41 over the next 30 years, a preliminary Navy shipbuilding plan released in March indicated.

"Our nuclear submarine fleet is not growing. It's diminishing," Wynne said. While the Maine shipyard performs admirably, he said, Norfolk Naval Shipyard can easily fill the gap.

"They have personnel down there that are trained in nuclear repair," he said. "There is talent available in that field."

The Navy wanted to consolidate its East Coast submarines bases to two locations, Wynne said, and the bases in Norfolk and Kings Bay, Ga., "outperformed" the base in Groton, Conn. He didn't elaborate.

Monday's hearing marked the beginning of the commission's review of the Pentagon plan, which was submitted to Congress on Friday. The schedule established by Congress gives the commission only three months to review hundreds of bases and propose changes.

Commission member James Bilbray, a former Democratic congressman from Nevada, said Congress didn't provide adequate time for a thorough review.

"No other BRAC commission has had to look at as much as this BRAC," he said, referring to the base realignment and closure process. "I wish Congress had given us more time than three months to look at this."

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Principi has promised that at least one commission member will visit every major base slated for closure, including Fort Monroe.

The commission will hear testimony from Air Force and Navy officials today, followed by Army officials Wednesday. About 16 regional hearings are planned around the country, but no dates or locations have yet been scheduled, officials said.

BRAC panel worried over some base cuts: Rumsfeld says the changes are linked, but the number of National Guard and reserve sites is questioned.
Copley News Service
Otto Kreisher
May 17, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld urged the Base Closure and Realignment commissioners Monday to resist the inevitable pleas to remove bases from his list of recommended reductions, warning that many of the proposed changes are tightly linked.

But commission Chairman Anthony J. Principi told Rumsfeld that Congress specifically created the nine-member panel to provide "an independent, fair and equitable assessment and evaluation of both your proposal" and the process used to develop it. "This commission will provide that assessment -- openly and transparently," he said.

Principi and other commissioners asked a number of questions about the hundreds of National Guard and military reserve facilities that would be closed, expressing concern that the moves would aggravate the current problems in getting and keeping the citizen warriors, who are being used heavily in Iraq.

"I think you're going to have a serious problem with recruiting and retaining," said Commissioner James Hansen, a former Republican congressman from Utah. "Do you think this is a smart move?"

Rumsfeld and Air Force Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, tried to assure the panel that the hundreds of closures and adjustments were developed in consultation with the leaders of the active services and the Guard and reserves.

Myers said the Air Guard moves were made to consolidate aircraft into larger organizations that would be more usable and more efficient to maintain. In some cases the units would lose their aircraft but would get other missions. In other instances, the unit personnel could travel to the new locations to continue flying.

"I think it's a very good plan to bring the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve into the 21st century force," Myers said.

In the commission's first hearing on Rumsfeld's recommendations to close or adjust a total of 837 military facilities across the nation, the defense secretary noted that critics were saying the military should not be closing bases amid the war on terrorism. But, he said, "these changes are essential to help us win this global war. ... These changes are more necessary in a time of war."

Rumsfeld noted that an "unavoidable consequence" of the closure process is that the recommendations "will not meet with universal acclaim. We've already seen that."

"Inevitably, members of Congress and others will ask the commission to reconsider these decisions," he said.

Although the commission should "listen carefully to these arguments," Rumsfeld added, "I would urge you to consider the exhaustive review that has taken place" in producing his recommendations.

Because this base adjustment round was designed to create more joint, or multiservice bases and activities, he said, care must be taken not to look at just one piece of the puzzle without considering "the total intertwined process."

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Rumsfeld noted that when the final package of recommended closings and adjustments came to him after nearly two years of effort, he did not consider it possible to make any changes for fear of disrupting the carefully linked changes.

Myers also noted that "BRAC is not a stand-alone process" but is linked to the repositioning of troops from overseas and the transformation of the military into a lighter, more mobile force.

Although the commission can change Rumsfeld's recommendations, to do so they must find that he fundamentally misapplied the detailed criteria for closing or reducing a base. In the four previous BRAC rounds, at least 85 percent of the Pentagon's recommendations were approved.

The commission will hold additional hearings this week, getting detailed briefings from the armed services' leaders and then from the Pentagon groups that studied every base and activity looking for ways to merge redundant efforts.

Later the commissioners will begin to travel, visiting every base on the closure list and then will hold regional hearings to allow affected communities to appeal Rumsfeld's recommendations.

They must make their final recommendations to President Bush by Sept. 8.

BRAC Debate Continues

ABC News
Sonya Crawford
May 17, 2005

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld testified before Congress Monday about the reasons behind its list of recommendations to the Base Realignment and Closure commission.

With a flair for the dramatic, Sen. Robert Byrd made his feelings clear about BRAC.

"This list does not pass inspection!" said Byrd, as he stomped on the Pentagon's report to the BRAC commission.

The Pentagon's recommended closure of an Air National Guard unit in his state of West Virginia. At Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, the same message.

"The Navy and DOD whacked us a good one on Friday, but we are not down. We're going to stay up. We're going to whack them back," said Union President Paul O'Connor.

Portsmouth is one of 33 major base closures and 29 realignments proposed by the Defense Department. If approved, the Pentagon says it would save taxpayers almost $49 billion over 20 years.

The list is now in the hands of the Base Realignment and Closure commission, which quizzed Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld about his choices.

"Some have asked why are we proposing closures in time of war. Answer is changes are essential in helping us win in this conflict," said Rumsfeld.

Commissioners pledge their deliberations will be devoid of politics and that their job is to be open, independent and fair. That won't stop politicians from lobbying them hard.

The Pentagon has made a major national security mistake and we are calling on the BRAC commissioners to correct that mistake and keep this yard open," said Rep. Thomas Allen, a Democrat from Maine.

One complaint commission members expressed Monday, that the Department of Defense has been slow to provide all the information needed to make decisions. It will continue to hold hearings and conduct site visits over the summer.

Rumsfeld: Base-Closing Concept Incorporates Strategic Thinking

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Washington File Security Affairs Writer
Jacquelyn S. Porth
May 17, 2005

Washington – Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld says the Pentagon's recommendations to close a wide variety of domestic military facilities takes into account data prepared for the last Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) as well as that for a new review that is currently under way.

Rumsfeld made this point May 16 during testimony before the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC), which held its first hearing since the Pentagon submitted its recommendations on May 13.

One commissioner said it was "good to hear" that the BRAC recommendations factor in work on the QDR, plans related to the Global Posture Review, and plans to change the U.S. presence overseas over time. The QDR is a congressionally mandated comprehensive assessment, prepared every four years, of U.S. security needs based on perceived worldwide threats.

Some members of the commission expressed concern that the recommendations that they are reviewing do not appear to account for plans announced by the Pentagon in 2004 to reduce the number of U.S. troops in Europe and East Asia.

While the adjustment in the U.S. presence overseas calls for redeploying some 70,000 U.S. troops and 100,000 family members, Rumsfeld said it will not happen swiftly. The redeployment "will play out over a sustained period of time," he said, because the process involves carefully considered trade-offs as well as negotiations with allies.

The United States is trying to carry out this process in a manner that is respectful of the countries involved, the secretary said, while providing the U.S. military with the greatest level of flexibility. "The timing depends on the negotiations with those countries, the costs and how we phase it in," Rumsfeld told the commissioners.

The domestic base closing recommendations were published in close proximity to the publication of a report by the congressionally created Overseas Basing Commission (OBC). Some of its commissioners have expressed concern that the Pentagon's redeployment plans may occur so quickly that the U.S. military's ability to respond to crises may be hampered. Plans to redeploy some U.S. forces from Germany have been identified as a particular commission concern.

Rumsfeld characterized some of the OBC actions as "unhelpful," particularly posting material (since removed) on the Internet that may have been classified. Some of the posted information, he said, has caused concern for nations with which the United States is currently negotiating. He also questioned some of the factual information in the OBC's report issued May 9.

Air Force General Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, testified with Rumsfeld before the BRAC Commission; he said the new domestic base closing recommendations take into consideration the post 9-11 security environment.

Myers also addressed the issue of adjusting the U.S. military "footprint" overseas. He said the plan to adjust the U.S. overseas posture has been prepared as a broad U.S. government effort, with input from the State Department and other departments and agencies as well as from military commanders assigned to all the geographic regions around the world.

Unless U.S. force adjustments are implemented, Myers said, the U.S. global defense posture will "be stuck in the Cold War [era]."

Myers' remarks followed a previous statement issued by the commander of U.S. European Command, Marine General James Jones, on May 10. Jones said the center of U.S. attention "has shifted from the defense of Western Europe from attack towards a variety of new threats

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from non-state actors and organizations from the eastern and southern regions of our theater."

At this time it is necessary to adjust the United States' 20th century defense posture, Jones said, "which is too linear and geographically constrained, in order to meet the new challenges we collectively face."

Rumsfeld Faces Panel Considering Base Closings

New York Post
Maria Newman
May 16, 2005

Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld today cautioned a commission charged with reviewing his recommendation to close 180 military installations throughout the country that if they want to question a specific base closure, they need to consider how "those components or pieces fit into the larger whole."

In his first public remarks since the Pentagon announced the closings last week, Mr. Rumsfeld appeared before the independent Base Realignment and Closure Commission, or Brac, which will spend the summer reviewing the list of closures. The commission will send a list of its recommendations to President Bush this fall.

The announcement of the proposed closings and consolidations prompted angry and furious reactions in communities throughout the country, and political leaders from Maine to Hawaii vowed to challenge the list, which includes 33 major bases.

"If your proposals are accepted, they will have profound effects on the communities and the people who bring them to life," Anthony Principi, chairman of the nine-member base closing commission, told Mr. Rumsfeld today.

In opening remarks, Mr. Rumsfeld explained the long process involved in coming up with a list of closures designed to save $48.8 billion over 20 years.

"The department is in need of change and adjustment," he said.

"The current arrangement, designed for the Cold War, must give way to new demands of the war against extremism and other evolving challenges in the world," he said.

Mr. Rumsfeld said he knew that local officials would try to persuade the commission that their specific base or installation should be spared from the chopping block.

"Affected communities have legitimate arguments as to why their installation should be considered essential," Mr. Rumsfeld said. "And that's why the Brac process was created, to take a long, hard careful, unbiased look at the overall infrastructure and make tough decisions, so we can shift resources to where they're urgently needed."

But, he said, "I would suggest that one must be careful about taking a selective look at individual components or pieces of these recommendations without considering how those components or pieces fit into the larger whole."

He said that the long process of coming up with the list of recommended closures involved gathering input from countless officials within all the branches of the military to come up with one plan that would maintain a strong and viable military to protect the nation, and one that would be fair to local communities.

He said when the list came to him, he made no changes.

"I looked at it and was convinced and persuaded that I ought not to change any of it," he said, "that were I to try to reach into the middle of it and pull a thread that the interconnections and relationships were such that the non-intuitive effects could be not well understood by me in trying to do so."

Senators balk at list of base closures

USA Today

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Judy Keen and David Moniz
May 16, 2005

WASHINGTON — Some of President Bush's Republican allies in Congress are joining Democrats in challenging the Bush administration to try to save military bases that have been targeted by the Pentagon to be closed or shrunk.

Pa. Gov. Ed Rendell is joined by U.S. Rep. Allyson Schwartz, right, and U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum, center, at news conference Friday. By Joseph Kaczmarek, AP

Several Republican senators who face re-election next year are demanding that bases in their states be removed from the list released Friday. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld announced recommendations that 150 military installations, including 33 major bases, be closed and operations — and jobs — shifted from hundreds more. (Related story: Community prepared to fight)

Rumsfeld said the changes would save $48.8 billion over 20 years and make the military more efficient by merging operations.

The base-closing process was designed to limit political maneuvering. The Pentagon's list will be reviewed by an independent commission that will hear testimony today from Rumsfeld. It takes the votes of seven of the nine members to add facilities to the list; it takes five votes to get one off the list. Once the commission is done, Bush must accept or reject the whole list. It will become final unless Congress votes to reject the entire list.

Even so, lobbying began long before the list was released. Several states hired lobbyists. Gov. Edward Rendell says Pennsylvania will spend $1 million fighting proposed closings. In four previous rounds, 85% of recommended closings and realignments went through.

The recommendations show a shift of troops and operations to the South and West. Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina and Texas — all "red states," those that Bush carried in the 2004 election — would gain. Connecticut, Maine and New York, all "blue states," would lose. "The 'blue states' really took it on the chin," Connecticut state Sen. Gary LeBeau, a Democrat, says on his Web site. "There is certainly a political aspect to this."

But Sen. Olympia Snowe, R-Maine, who faces voters next year and whose state would lose the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, says on her site that the plan is "stunning, devastating, and above all, outrageous." Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa., who's also on the ballot in 2006, will fight for his state's endangered bases. "This process is not over," he says on his site.

Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., also hopes to buck the odds. During Thune's campaign last year, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist went to South Dakota to assure voters that Ellsworth Air Force Base, the state's No. 2 employer, would have a better chance if Thune defeated Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle.

"Who is the president going to listen to more?" Frist asked in May 2004. Not, he suggested, "a senator from another party." Now that the commission has recommended closing Ellsworth, Thune says on his site that he'll introduce legislation to stop or delay the action until the Pentagon first assesses overseas bases. "Closing Ellsworth would weaken America's homeland security," he says.

The list gives the clearest picture yet of the new military envisioned by Rumsfeld. The changes would enhance cooperation and strengthen ties among active-duty units, the National Guard and reserve.

For example, Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., would be merged with a Navy facility in Maryland. A top Army headquarters and an Army Special Forces unit would move to Air Force bases. Pilots who fly the new F-35, no matter which branch they are in, would train at a single base.

Other changes:

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•The National Guard and reserve, increasingly major parts of combat operations, would move closer to the active-duty military.

•Support activities such as health care and accounting that are now in leased space in cities would be moved to military bases to increase security and save money.

•Rumsfeld, who once planned to cut the size of the Army, now makes room for the military to grow. No Army base that houses combat troops is targeted, reflecting the Army's plan to add 30,000 troops. There were no major Marine Corps bases on the list, a signal that it needs space.

"What we are looking at is a world when life may get really tough, and you don't want to give up on land and area and options," says Dan Goure, a military analyst at Virginia's Lexington Institute.

Local News Articles

Navy set to explain why sub base on closure list: Opponents of closing the sub base will be trying to find flaws in the rationale.

Norwich Bulletin (Norwich, CT)
Ray Hackett

WASHINGTON-- When Base Realignment and Closure Commission Chairman Anthony Principi asked Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld Monday about his decision to close the Groton Sub Base, the secretary deferred the question until today when Navy officials address the commission.

"Obviously, we're going to be listening very intently to what they have to say," U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, said.

The commission began a weeklong series of hearings Monday in Washington on the Pentagon's recommendations to close and realign military installations as part of the 2005 BRAC process. Rumsfeld, who released the Pentagon's list Friday, addressed the commission Monday. U.S. Army and Navy officials will make their presentations today.

"What I'm hoping to see is if they provide any additional information," Subase Realignment Coalition Chairman John Markowicz said. "What's been listed so far is a little more than just two pages on the Groton sub base, so I'm interested to see who from the Navy makes the presentation and what they say.

"I'm also curious to see how the commission responds," he said.

Markowicz is in Washington today to attend the hearing. Simmons also is planning to attend at least the opening portion of the proceedings, as is U.S. Sen. Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn. The Navy portion of the proceedings is scheduled to begin at 1:30 p.m. in the Senate's Hart Building and will be televised live on C-SPAN3 television network.

Gov. M. Jodi Rell, meanwhile, will meet with local coalition members, municipal and business leaders today in Groton, part of a three-day series of meetings she is holding on the BRAC process.

She met Monday with the state's congressional delegation and state legislative leaders at the governor's mansion in Hartford.

"We had two great meetings, very productive," Rell spokesman Rich Harris said. After today's meeting with local officials in Groton, "both groups will get their homework assignments. And that is, take a look at the recommendations, pick them apart and find the flaws. We're confident there are flaws in it."

The governor's meeting was one of two held Monday in Hartford. House Speaker James Amann held meetings with business, union and legislative leaders at the Capitol as well.

"Clearly, this is something that has gotten everyone's attention," said Tony Sheridan, president of the Chamber of Commerce of

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Eastern Connecticut, one of the more than 50 people attending the nearly three-hour meeting.

"Everyone is committed to working in a totally bipartisan fashion on this," Sheridan said. "There was a lot of energy with the focus on trying to determine what can be done and then getting it done."

The state has until July to develop a convincing argument in favor of reversing the Pentagon's decision to shut down the Groton sub base, three U.S. Army Reserve Centers and realign the Connecticut Air National Guard's 103 Fighter Wing based at Bradley International Airport. That argument will be presented to the BRAC Commission at regional hearings expected to be held this summer.

The commission will review the Pentagon list of recommended closings and forward a final proposal to the president no later than Sept. 8. The commission has the authority to add or remove bases on the list. Neither the president nor Congress can amend the commission's final report.

Local leaders were able to convince a previous commission to remove the Groton base from the 1993 BRAC list when it found discrepancies in the Pentagon's rationale. That same kind of detailed scrutiny will be given to this list.

Markowicz said the one glaring discrepancy he has found thus far is the Pentagon's estimates for environmental cleanup of the facility. The Navy has estimated it at $23.9 million, a figure Markowicz said is grossly underestimated for a facility with 15 identified Superfund sites on it.

"The Navy simply cannot walk away from its obligation," Simmons said. "Allocating only $23 million for the environmental cleanup is ridiculous."

Markowicz, who spent the weekend poring over the Pentagon's initial release, also questions the "subjective" nature by which the Navy rated the Groton facility; its failure to include the relationship with Electric Boat while including Newport News Shipbuilding as part of the military value of the Norfork Naval Station and the economic impact analysis.

Markowicz hopes those issues will provide a strong basis for an argument the secretary "significantly deviated" from the established criteria, convincing commission members to reverse the Pentagon recommendation.

Base backers fight job loss

Gannett News Service
Ana Radelat
May 17, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Supporters of the Operations and Sustainment Systems Group at Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base will begin battling this week against a Pentagon proposal to move the mission to Massachusetts.

It will be an uphill struggle to reverse the Pentagon's decision, which would cost the Montgomery area thousands of jobs on and off the base.

But local businessmen and politicians are poring over the Pentagon's reasoning for flaws that might persuade an independent base-closing commission to reject the Pentagon's recommendation.

"The Pentagon's recommendation to transfer the OSSG mission from Gunter to Hanscom Air Force Base in Massachusetts was a blow to Maxwell-Gunter and Montgomery," said Rep. Terry Everett, R-Rehobeth. "My staff and I are currently evaluating the Pentagon's initial justifications for the realignment."

Everett and other Maxwell-Gunter supporters are likely to spend the summer lobbying the nine-member commission to reject the Pentagon's proposal. Commissioners will hold hearings in Washington and across the country and will visit most of the bases on the Pentagon's national shutdown list before making final decisions.

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In past base-closing rounds, commissioners have accepted about 85 percent of the Pentagon's recommendations.

"We hope we will be part of the 15 percent,' said Olan Waldrop, an EDS executive and retired Air Force general who is part of a community effort to keep the operations group in Montgomery.

The Pentagon said it wants to move the Maxwell-Gunter mission -- and similar missions at Texas' Lackland Air Force Base and Ohio's Wright-Patterson Air Force Base -- to Hanscom to consolidate its technical facilities.

The OSSG is in charge of all computer systems involved in running the Air Force, from keeping medical records to tracking spare parts. Hanscom Air Force Base also develops computer systems for the Air Force, but they are all combat-related, such as radar systems that track missiles and other threats.

The one-time cost of consolidating the missions is about $254 million, the Pentagon said. But it said the Air Force would save about $36 million a year by moving all of its high-tech missions to Massachusetts.

The cost to Montgomery would be 1,971 military jobs and 1,283 civilian jobs. Some of those military and civilian jobs exist now and some would be created over the next six years if the mission were left at Maxwell-Gunter.

The Montgomery area would be the hardest-hit in Alabama under the base-closing plan the Pentagon released Friday. But the state as a whole would gain almost 2,700 new jobs under the plan, mainly because of expansions at Anniston Army Depot, Fort Rucker and Redstone Army Arsenal.

If the Operations and Sustainment Systems Group is moved from Maxwell-Gunter, high-tech companies in Montgomery are likely to move some of their jobs out of the city, or even close down.

"The contractors have to follow the money," Waldrop said.

Located about 45 miles from Boston, Hanscom is the headquarters of the U.S. Air Force Electronic Systems Center. Kevin Gilmartin, spokesman for the center, said it's too soon to tell how fast Maxwell-Gunter's mission would move to Massachusetts.

The law that established this year's round of base realignments and closures, or BRAC, has a strict timetable. If the Operations and Sustainment Systems Group is on the final list of shutdowns and consolidations accepted by President Bush and Congress, the Pentagon must start moving the mission within two years and complete the move in six.

Massachusetts lobbied heavily to keep Hanscom open. It created a public-private partnership called the Massachusetts Defense Technology Initiative that came up with a plan to make the base more attractive.

Under the initiative's plan, Massachusetts would pay $242 million to build new buildings that would accommodate the new missions at the base. Alan Macdonald, the partnership's executive director, said the base would use unneeded parking lots for new buildings that would double the capacity of the facility.

"Our base is too built out -- we had to demonstrate we had the capability to grow," Macdonald said.

His group's plan, which was sold to the Pentagon by Sen. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., and Massachusetts Republican Gov. Mitt Romney, also included plans to build 860 new housing units on the base, a valuable offering in a housing market where the average single-family home costs about $600,000.

To help pay for the plan, Massachusetts approved a $261 million bond initiative.

"We wanted to make sure the Pentagon knew we were for real," Macdonald said.

The group also stressed that the area is a hub for high-tech research, with centers at Harvard

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University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and other nearby colleges.

"The greater Boston region has the most dense, sophisticated cluster of relevant intellectual capabilities," Macdonald said.

Governor leads rally

Clovis News Journal (Clovis,NM)
Marlena Hartz
May 17, 2005

Rounds of applause rippled through the North Annex of the Clovis-Carver Public Library Monday as Gov. Bill Richardson encouraged residents to be vocal in their support of Cannon Air Force Base.

A Clovis-area staple for more than 50 years, Cannon is one of two Air Force bases in the nation recommended for closure by the Department of Defense.

“Fifteen percent of bases on the initial BRAC list are taken off — I would say our chance is stronger than that — but it will be an uphill battle, and we have to stay together. We are here to show you will do everything we can to make sure that this base will stay open,” Richardson said.

Richardson’s appearance in Clovis signified what officials say will be a unified effort to remove Cannon from the base realignment and closure list. The base generates millions in revenue and employs thousands, boosting the Curry and Roosevelt County economies by 20 percent, according to Pentagon estimates. In coming weeks, BRAC commissioners are scheduled to visit the area, officials said.

“Nine individuals,” said Richardson, referring to the BRAC commissioners who will review and, if necessary, revise the BRAC list, “now will decide the fate of Cannon.”

Five of nine commissioner votes are needed to remove a base from the list.

Hundreds of residents showcased support for Cannon, many vowing to write letters to the BRAC commission. The morning crowd exceeded capacity at the North Annex, spilling into the parking lot and hallways, some waving homemade signs and others stoically displaying printed Cannon slogans on sheets of paper and T-shirts.

Local leaders told the hundreds that had gathered, and hundreds more who listened to the speech via television and radio, that community vocality is essential in the removal of Cannon from the closure list.

“Unity is the answer today,” said Randy Harris, a member of the Committee of Fifty, a local Cannon support group made up of civic and business officials. “You need to be calling (officials), sending in e-mails — it is you folks who will help us all win.”

The Department of Defense’s proposed list would close 33 major bases and realign 29 more in what the department calls an attempt to cut spending and better face the threats of the 21st century. The list is composed with regard to a base’s military value. New Mexican congressional delegates, however, say the list is flawed.

The Department of Defense list is fair and impartial, according to Lt. Col. Kelly Ann Thompson, of the Air Force Public Affairs office.

Delegation Seeks Meeting With BRAC

Press Dakotan (Yankton, SD)
May 17, 2005

SIOUX FALLS (AP) -- Members of South Dakota's congressional delegation want a meeting with the head of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission to make a case against a recommendation to close Ellsworth Air Force Base.
Sens. Tim Johnson, D-S.D., and John Thune, R-S.D., and Rep. Stephanie Herseth, D-S.D., made the request in a letter dated Monday to Anthony Principi, chairman of the BRAC panel.

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The lawmakers also want the commission to hold a field hearing in Rapid City.

Last week, the Department of Defense recommended Ellsworth and several other military installations nationwide be closed.

"The decision to include Ellsworth Air Force Base was shortsighted and detrimental to our national security," the letter said.

The delegation said once they are able to talk to commission officials they will realize the Defense Department "deviated substantially from their established base closure criteria when recommending Ellsworth for closure and will support removing it from the list."

Ellsworth Air Force Base is home to roughly half the nation's B-1B fleet of the long-range bombers -- its only mission. In recommending the base close, the Pentagon said it wants to combine the bombers with those at Dyess Air Force Base in Texas.

The BRAC panel will review the Pentagon's list and send its recommendations to President Bush who will issue a list to Congress.

Pull a string, BRAC plan unravels

The Virginian-Pilot (Williamsburg, VA)
Dale Eisman
May 17, 2005

WASHINGTON — A Pentagon plan to close or reorganize dozens of military bases is so complex that tinkering with one part likely will produce unwanted consequences in other areas, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld warned Monday.

As the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission opened four days of hearings on the proposals, Rumsfeld repeatedly cautioned members against changing the package while insisting that defense officials welcome the independent panel's review of the plan.

Though some communities will make "legitimate arguments as to why their installation should be considered essential," the commission "must be careful about taking a selective look" at the recommendations, Rumsfeld said.

To underscore his point, the famously detail-oriented Rumsfeld said even he refrained from altering the proposals after staff members presented them to him.

After careful study, he concluded that "were I to try to reach into the middle of it and pull a thread, that the interconnections and relationships were such that the ... effects could be not well understood," he said.

The Defense Department proposals, released Friday, would close 33 major bases, including the Army's historic Fort Monroe in Hampton. The Pentagon says the closings, and realignments touching 29 other installations, would save taxpayers nearly $49 billion over 20 years and streamline the military for the war effort.

While the plan would close Fort Monroe and make major reductions in the Army's presence at Fort Eustis in Newport News, it calls for moving an additional 5,600 sailors and Navy civilians into South Hampton Roads. Most of those workers would come from the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine, and the submarine base in New London, Conn., both targeted for closure.

"If your proposals are accepted," said commission Chairman Anthony J. Principi, "they will have profound effects on the communities and the people who bring them to life."

Rumsfeld's comments came as the nine-member commission opened hearings on the Pentagon plan. The panel has until early September to review the proposals and fashion its own set of recommendations to give to President Bush and Congress.

Nearly 100 major bases were closed in four earlier rounds, between 1988 and 1995. The base closing law requires that the president and

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Congress accept or reject the commission's recommendations as a package, a provision designed to keep politics out of the process.

This year's commission will operate under rules that give its members less leeway than their predecessors enjoyed in changing the Pentagon's proposals. While a simple majority – five commissioners – can remove a targeted base from the closing or realignment list, thus saving it, seven votes are required to add a base to the list.

Analysts say the change will make it more difficult for the commission to alter the Pentagon plan. Past commissions accepted more than 85 percent of the Defense Department's recommendations.

The commission announced Monday that it will hold 15 regional public hearings to solicit comments on the proposals and expects to announce a schedule for those sessions soon. Principi also has promised that at least one commission member will visit every installation targeted for closing.

The proposed closings are the product of a two-year review inside the Pentagon, Rumsfeld told commissioners. Teams set up by each service branch and special "cross-service" groups reviewed more than 25 million pieces of data about the military's existing base structure and studied about 1,000 scenarios for rearranging units and facilities.

Rumsfeld sought Monday to answer critics, including Rep. Jo Ann Davis, R-1st District, who greeted Friday's announcement with renewed complaints that the military should not be closing bases in the midst of its global war on terrorists.

"These changes are essential to helping us win" the war, the secretary argued. He added that he expects that another round of base adjustments will be needed in "five or 10 years," as the military continues to adjust to changing threats around the world.

Opinions/ Editorials

Considering purpose of base realignment

Fort Worth Star- Telegram (Fort Worth, TX)
J.R. Labbe
May 17, 2005

The next four months will prove whether politics can be minimized in the Base Realignment and Closure process. If you're a betting person, put money on "no."

In the first hours Friday after the Pentagon revealed its list of military facilities to be closed or realigned, lawmakers from states with bases targeted for closure were in a 4-foot hover, sputtering outrage and calls to arms.

"I am sorely disappointed with this list, and I will fight like hell to change it," said Rep. Rush Holt, D-N.J., whose district includes part of Fort Monmouth.

"It simply makes no sense to close Otis (Air National Guard Base) in the post 9/11 world," said Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., of the Cape Cod facility.

"Today's decision... is nothing short of stunning, devastating and, above all, outrageous," Sen. Olympia J. Snowe, R-Maine, said Friday about the possible closure of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard.

One does not repeat in polite company what the folks in New London, Conn., were saying after hearing that the submarine base there (with its 8,460 jobs) may be going away.

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas was less dramatic in her phrasing as she assumed the genteel and measured tones that she's famous for, but her resolve to fight for Texas bases was clear.

"Regarding bases slated for major losses and closure, this recommendation list is a first step in the base realignment process and is by no means final," Hutchison's news release said Friday. "Sen. (John) Cornyn and I are scheduling

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meetings with local officials on Sunday as the next step in making sure the final recommendations are in the best interest of our national security and local communities."

Nice of her to put national security first, but don't for one minute think that the greater good of the nation will take priority in the senator's efforts to keep Texas facilities from closing.

Pity the nine members of the BRAC Commission, who will be strong-armed by senators and representatives, military task force chairmen and rent-a-general lobbyists between now and Sept. 8, when they have to send their recommendations to President Bush.

A Navy friend once said the key to a successful career is to underpromise and overperform, but he thought that Donald Rumsfeld may have heard it the other way around when it came to the 2005 BRAC.

When the secretary of defense first talked about what he expected to accomplish in this round of BRAC, it was in terms of preparing a nation for 21st-century threats. Think differently, operate differently. Look for "jointness" of operations, how best to be agile and flexible in responding to threats while eliminating facilities that don't contribute to the lean, mean fighting machine that should be the U.S. armed forces.

By golly, he stood ready to trim 20 to 25 percent of the military's capacity.

On Friday, those numbers were scaled down — way down — to 5 or 10 percent excess.

Granted, Sept. 11, 2001, happened between the time that Congress approved this round of BRAC and Friday's announcement.

But that event should have strengthened the determination to construct a U.S. military better positioned and prepared to combat future threats. If facilities aren't being used when the country is engaged in two demanding conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, it's hard to imagine a scenario in which they would be necessary.

Of course, overall military transformation is impossible to gauge if it's only viewed through a BRAC lens. The Defense Department is in the midst of a Quadrennial Defense Review that will "inform," as they said in D.C., how the nation's military should be structured and equipped.

For the QDR, Rumsfeld's Pentagon is using a capabilities-based model (how will future enemies fight?) rather than a threat-based model (who will the enemy be, and where will he be fighting from?).

The old threat-based model is what led the United States to having so many bases in Europe and Asia — bases that can be closed because the traditional bogeymen are gone.

So how will Americans be able to tell whether this round of BRAC, coupled with the QDR, achieves "transformation"?

Say this round of BRAC shows big cuts in a particular support structure — for the sake of argument only, let's pick submarines. If the QDR indicates a change in focus away from sea-based defenses and the '07 budget removes funding for future submarine development and construction — well, connect the dots. That would reflect a strategic transformation.

Let's just hope that our elected officials keep in mind that BRAC is supposed to be about military transformation — maximizing the nation's forces and facilities to best position them to respond to future threats — and not about garnering votes in the next re-election back home.

Battle over BRAC is just beginning

The Daily News (Jacksonville, NC)
May 17,2005

The release of the Pentagon's base closure and consolidation list last Friday was just the opening salvo in what could become a ferocious and protracted political battle.Expect members of Congress to use every weapon at their disposal to delay or derail the process and defend facilities back home. The White House

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and Pentagon will have few allies as they try to fend off attacks, cover their flanks and convince the American people that these changes are in the nation's long-term interest.

The Base Realignment and Closure process is specifically designed to de-politicize these decisions as much as possible, allowing members of Congress to act in a way that is against their political instincts and interests. And it succeeded admirably in that regard through five previous rounds.

But we see more potential this time for successful sabotage efforts, given how virulently political every issue has become in this country and how frequently narrow self interest triumphs over the broader national interest.

The Bush administration, though it has admirably persevered in keeping an unpopular process on track, will need an extra coat of armor to prevail in the battle to come. President Bush and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld will have to stay on the offensive, in terms of explaining to the American people how these closures and consolidations will benefit national security, the military and the taxpayers. They'll have to succeed in selling the idea that this short-term pain will result in long-term gain, to a country in which instant gratification rules. And they won't get much help doing it.

Few members of Congress or governors are likely to take up the base closure cause - and many will be looking for any opportunity to scuttle the process.

Even members of Congress from districts or states that stand to benefit from the changes aren't likely to lend the administration support, for fear of appearing to be seeking advantage in the misfortune of others.

And it's also possible - unless the administration soldiers its arguments in a convincing way - that Congress could simply vote down the list, using the terror threat and ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as a pretext.

To succeed, the administration will have to keep the focus on BRAC's long-term benefits for national security, the military and the taxpayers. If approved, the changes could save an estimated $49 billion over 20 years - or as much as $65 billion, if one factors in savings from a related realignment of overseas bases.

They will help facilitate a long-promised military transformation, as well as reduce duplication among military branches by emphasizing "jointness" in basing arrangements. They'll also allow the United States to reduce its footprint abroad, in response to the end of the Cold War, emerging new threats and changing geopolitical realities.

But all this will be obscured, and the process could unravel, if the debate remains focused on the short-term hardships and pain. Critical to BRAC's success is the nation's ability to take the long view and momentarily suspend short-term self interest in pursuit of a greater good.

It's a test of national character, therefore, as well as political will. And that's what has us worried.

The recent announcement is a good first step and generally provides welcome news for Eastern North Carolina.

As the 3rd District's U.S. Rep. Walter B. Jones noted, "The key word you did not hear with respect to Eastern North Carolina was 'closure.'"

That's not to say that every base in the region went unscathed, however. Hardest hit was Havelock's Cherry Point, where 656 civilian jobs could be lost. But even at Cherry Point, the job loss could have been worse and can be absorbed to a great extent through normal attrition.

North Carolina residents must understand that, if the BRAC process is truly even-handed, some of the state's military operations will come under scrutiny and may share in the cuts.

There's no glee or gloating in about the fact that we seem to have dodged a bullet this time. We understand what the loss of a local base can

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mean to communities and feel for those that have lost them in the past.

But we can take a measure of satisfaction in knowing that by building good will and understanding between the area's military bases and civilian communities, we're also doing something that strengthens national security.

Let's use BRAC success to build

Enid News (Enid, OK)
May 17, 2005

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's recommendation Vance Air Force Base continue and grow its longstanding mission of training military pilots is great news for Vance, Enid and northwest Oklahoma.
Many communities in other states did not fare as well. When you consider pilot training is an extremely portable military mission, Friday's announcement is all the more significant. It is a strong affirmation of what's right with Vance and Enid.

Enid and Vance supporters have every right to celebrate, but it's not time to say "whew," slump back in the easy chair and relax. No, it's actually time to charge ahead with new energy and new optimism — charge ahead in the search for more quality industries and quality jobs for Enid and northwest Oklahoma.

The defense secretary's announcement means several things:

First, bright rays of good news have burst through the dark cloud of economic uncertainty that has cast a shadow over Enid for the last three or four years as the Base Realignment and Closure process slowly has played out. Business expansions and individual financial commitments that have been held back awaiting a BRAC announcement can happen now, and that should be an immediate shot in the arm to the regional economy.

Second, the defense secretary's recommendation is a huge compliment to the quality workforce at Vance, the base's efficiency and the quality of life in Enid. Rumsfeld's decision comes after many months of extensive study by Pentagon staff and consultants. It's not a whim, it's a carefully studied endorsement.

Third, the decision is a credit to the preparation and planning done at the local level. Vance commanders and staff have planned for the long-term efficiency and security of the base. Community leaders have prepared for the BRAC review, working years in advance to address potential weaknesses. Community support for the base has continued, as always, to be strong. That preparation paid off with Friday's announcement.

However, the defense secretary's announcement doesn't end efforts to promote Enid and Vance. Quite to the contrary. During the next three months, communities proposed to lose all or part of their military mission will be fighting furiously to prove their superiority compared with other alternatives. Enid leaders will need to play defense, continuing to reaffirm the military benefits of Enid and Vance.

On the positive side, everyone knows the Defense Department will be shifting various missions among the remaining military installations. The Vance Development Authority already has identified several additional missions that would be appropriate for Vance. Now is the time to convince military decision-makers U.S. military interests would be enhanced by moving additional missions and jobs to Vance.

This is also a great time to re-energize Enid's search for new quality jobs in the private sector. The quality of life, the work ethic and the availability of housing, health care and educational opportunities make Enid a great place for training our nation's pilots. Those qualities also make Enid a great place for other employers.

One of life's truisms is the saying, "success breeds success." So, Enid, with the latest reaffirmation of the quality of Enid and Vance, let's build on that success with more economic development successes.

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Montana Air Guard's future: Nobody knows

The Associated Press State and Local (Great Falls, MT)
May 17, 2005

The future of the Montana Air National Guard and its 15 fighter planes is up in the air and it may be Wednesday until anything is unscrambled, a MANG official said Monday.

Hundreds of jobs may be at state - there is dispute about how many - if the planes are moved or retired from service, making Montana the fourth state in the nation without an Air Guard flying mission. The others are Nevada, Delaware and Connecticut.

Capt. Jeff Pepke, a MANG spokesman, said it probably would be midweek before the fighter wing's leaders determine the intent and impact of a Department of Defense realignment plan.

The federal department this past week proposed moving six of the MANG F-16 planes to Air Guard installations in Iowa and Alabama and taking the remaining fighters out of active service.

The Pentagon said deactivating the mission here as part of the Base Realignment and Closure process could mean the loss of 107 full-time jobs.

Pat Pauli, a recently retired MANG commander, said if all the planes are moved or retired, as many as 500 jobs could be affected.

Rep. Denny Rehberg, R-Mont., on Monday wrote a letter to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld asking for clarification of the job issue at MANG.

"In view of MANG's critical importance both to the Great Falls community and to the state of Montana, we need to know exactly what the bottom line is here," Rehberg said.

He said the state deserves to know if job losses will total 107 "or are there more losses to come?"

The Defense Department recommendations are to be reviewed by the BRAC commission with a report submitted to President Bush by Sept. 8.

Additional Notes

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