

Base Realignment and Closure Commission

EARLY BIRD

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BRAC 2005: Army Looks to Help Reshape Total Force

American Forces Press Service

Jim Garamone

May 18, 2005

WASHINGTON, May 18, 2005 – The U.S. Army looks on the base realignment and closure process as a chance to reshape the total force, Army Secretary Francis Harvey told the BRAC commission today.

Harvey and Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker spoke of how the process allows the Army to continue efforts to transform the force.

Military value was at the heart of all Army BRAC recommendations, the leaders said, with the realization that soldiers will be working more and more with members of other services. "The Army has aggressively undertaken a comprehensive effort to develop a force that is more expeditionary, joint, deployable, flexible and adaptive," Francis said. The BRAC recommendations will allow the service to transform from a Cold War force to one ready to confront the threats of the 21st century, he added.

Harvey said the Army worked to "streamline" the service to better meet current and future threats. It also wanted to eliminate infrastructure no longer needed. Complicating the Army decision was providing bases for thousands of soldiers and their families returning from overseas as part of the changing DoD global footprint.

The service examined 97 major installations and ranked them according to the criteria in the BRAC law, the officials explained. Military value was the most important criterion, they said.

Overall, the Defense Department recommends closing 15 Army installations and seven leased sites. It also recommends closing 176 Army

Reserve installations and 211 Army National Guard facilities. The Guard sites can close only with the approval of state governors.

The department also recommends creating seven training centers of excellence, seven joint technical and research facilities and four joint material and logistics facilities.

The service looked at more than 4,000 Army Reserve and Army National Guard facilities. Harvey said state adjutants general and Army Reserve Regional Readiness commanders participated in the analyses. "The military value criteria was used to identify existing or new installations in the same demographic area that provide enhanced homeland defense, training and mobilization capabilities," Harvey said. "The Army sought to create multi-component facilities - National Guard, Army Reserve and active Army - and multi-service, joint facilities to enhance mission accomplishment."

Harvey said the Army's recommendations went to Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld in broad categories. The first category realigned active duty operational forces including those returning from overseas. Second, the service worked to realign or close reserve component installations to transform command and control functions and force structure. The proposal also creates Armed Forces Reserve Centers.

The third priority was to close or realign installations to consolidate headquarters and create joint installations.

The fourth priority realigned installations to create joint or service training centers of excellence. The fifth priority was aimed at transforming service logistics.

Finally, the service proposed realigning the Defense research, development, testing and evaluation organizations to create joint centers of excellence.

Harvey stressed the BRAC is inextricably linked to the Army's push to create a "modular force" based on brigades rather than divisions.

National News Articles

Pentagon Aims to Disperse Facilities: Rumsfeld's Strategy For Capital Region Embedded in Report

Washington Post
Spencer S. Hsu
May 19, 2005

The Pentagon's recommendation to move more than 20,000 defense jobs from sites in the Washington area is based in part on Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld's goal of shifting operations out of the capital region, according to the base realignment and closure plan released last week.

The dispersal strategy, which had not been announced previously, is mentioned numerous times in the base-closings report as a justification for abandoning leased office space in Northern Virginia and transferring some facilities from Maryland and the District.

The report does not explain why Rumsfeld wants to reduce the concentration of Defense Department activities in and near Washington, and Pentagon officials declined to elaborate yesterday. Several local members of Congress said the policy appears to be an effort to make the department less vulnerable in the event of another terror attack or a natural disaster in the nation's capital.

Several of the lawmakers, including John W. Warner (R-Va.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, expressed concern about Rumsfeld's goal. A Warner spokesman said yesterday that the senator questions the security standards the Pentagon has developed both for buildings and for the metropolitan area. He also said the guidelines could increase defense costs by requiring new construction elsewhere.

"Senator Warner is very concerned about the proposed closures. He has not seen a justification from DOD for the savings that these closures are expected to produce," Warner spokesman John Ulyot said. "He intends to very

closely scrutinize the standards -- the force-protection standards and the savings rationale for the closure of leased office space."

Rep. James P. Moran Jr. (D), who represents Arlington County and Alexandria, called the decision to move defense jobs outside the region "arbitrary" and said the dispersal goal was not included in the criteria the Pentagon had said would guide the new round of base closings.

"What do they accomplish by moving away from the very center of decision-making they have to be a part of?" Moran asked, noting that the Defense Department's headquarters -- the Pentagon -- is not moving.

The plan released Friday would eliminate or reduce forces at more than 800 military installations across the country, with the aim of consolidating far-flung operations and saving \$49 billion over 20 years. A nine-member commission is reviewing the plan and has until Sept. 8 to produce a final list that President Bush must accept or reject in its entirety and forward to Congress.

The Washington area would have a net loss of 14,459 defense jobs, more than any other metropolitan region in the country, according to the Pentagon's calculations. Its definition of the D.C. area, however, does not include some outer counties that would gain employment, such as Anne Arundel, where Fort Meade would get an additional 5,361 military and civilian jobs.

Arlington and Alexandria would be the hardest-hit jurisdictions, losing almost 23,000 defense workers now housed in leased office space.

Northern Virginia officials had expected job losses because those office buildings do not meet new Pentagon requirements that structures be set back at least 82 feet from traffic to protect against truck bombs. But the Pentagon's broader goal of moving jobs outside the region presents local officials with an additional obstacle as they lobby against the loss of the leases.

Moran and Northern Virginia Reps. Thomas M. Davis III (R) and Frank R. Wolf (R) said the

military risks a brain drain because many of its skilled technical workers would take other jobs rather than leave the area. They also argued that moving defense operations out of the region would decrease coordination with other federal agencies involved in security and homeland defense.

The 754-page report on base realignment and closure invokes the goal of dispersing Washington area facilities to help justify scores of moves by defense agencies that would affect thousands of jobs.

For instance, in recommending the transfer of the Defense Contract Management Agency headquarters from Alexandria to Fort Lee, Va., which is south of Richmond, the report cites a desire to achieve "a dispersion of DOD activities away from a dense concentration within the National Capital Region."

The same justification is given for moving the Air Force Real Property Administration from Arlington to Lackland Air Force Base, near San Antonio.

The report says that transferring the Air Force Flight Standards Agency and two C-21 aircraft from Andrews Air Force Base to Will Rogers Air National Guard Base in Oklahoma City "moves federal assets out of the National Capital Region, reducing the nation's vulnerability."

And it says that moving defense intelligence analysts from Bolling Air Force Base in Washington to Rivanna Station near Charlottesville "meets the spirit of the Secretary of Defense's guidelines for relocation outside the National Capital Region."

In an interview yesterday, Philip W. Grone, deputy undersecretary of defense for installations and environment, would not elaborate on the guidelines mentioned in the document. But he said the recommendations involving Washington area operations were based not only on security considerations but also on such factors as cost savings -- achieved by moving from leased to department-owned

facilities -- consolidation of related activities and better use of vacant space.

"No recommendation . . . was based solely on anti-terrorism, force-protection arguments," Grone said. "There is no one-size-fits-all approach."

In fall 2002, Rumsfeld issued what has become known as the "100-mile memo," in which he reserved authority over any real estate purchase, construction or leasing action greater than \$500,000 within a 100-mile radius of the Pentagon. The department also has given jurisdiction over real estate issues in that area to its Washington Headquarters Service.

Big gains, worries at bases

USA Today

Haya El Nasser

May 18, 2005

Communities that stand to gain thousands of people if the Pentagon's proposal to realign bases is approved are quickly going from gleeful to fretful over how to handle all the new residents.

An independent commission is reviewing the Pentagon's proposal to close 150 Army, Air Force, Navy, National Guard and Reserve installations and transfer thousands of people to existing bases.

More than 40 communities in 25 states would each gain 400 or more people under the plan. Some of the 49 bases that would get more workers would grow by more than 10,000. That means more housing for military and civilian employees, schools for their children and jobs for their spouses.

"How are you going to predict how and when those people are going to arrive?" asks John Deegan, chief executive of the Military Impacted Schools Association in Bellevue, Neb. "It's a huge worry."

Many communities already are preparing for a population boom. They're rezoning land for

more houses. Schools are calculating how many teachers and buildings they may need to add. And developers, eager to capture the windfall, are hunting for property. (Related story: Cities near growing Army posts beef up roads, schools, housing)

Members of the Base Realignment and Closure commission will visit many of the bases on the Pentagon's list. They will submit recommendations to President Bush by Sept. 8. Congress must vote by Nov. 7.

The communities, meanwhile, must prepare:

- **Schools.** Districts fear that enrollment will swell. Without enough warning, kids may be crammed into portable classrooms or hastily built additions.

"There's going to be a lag where communities are going to deal with 2,000 kids showing up, but they won't have funding," says Tim Ford, executive director of the Association of Defense Communities.

- **Housing.** Builders are eager to put up homes and apartments but don't want to jump the gun.

"Good news always brings excitement, but you've got to see the whites of their eyes," says Mike Socci, president of Woodruff Contracting in Columbus, Ga., a residential builder. "I just hope it all comes true."

- **Transportation.** In large metropolitan areas, the fear is traffic gridlock. The Pentagon proposes moving 12,000 workers to Fort Belvoir, Va., where about 24,000 already work in the Washington, D.C., suburb.

"It's going to overwhelm the transportation infrastructure in that corner of the world," says Gerry Connolly, chairman of the board of supervisors in Fairfax County, Va.

Dorgan says efforts to delay base closings are futile

Associated Press

Mary Clare Jalonick

May 18, 2005

WASHINGTON - North Dakota Sen. Byron Dorgan says he will not join South Dakota's congressional delegation in trying to delay a Pentagon process that could drastically shrink the duties of the Grand Forks Air Force Base.

Dorgan, North Dakota's Kent Conrad and Minnesota's two senators, Mark Dayton and Norm Coleman, sent a letter to the federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission on Wednesday, asking that the panel hold a hearing in Grand Forks on the Pentagon's recommendations.

"A loss of this magnitude would be very difficult, and certainly warrants a regional hearing," Dayton said in a statement. Dayton, Conrad and Dorgan are Democrats; Coleman is a Republican.

Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., introduced legislation Wednesday that would delay the base closing process until most troops return from the Iraq war, and the Pentagon finishes a defense review that will evaluate its future military strategy.

Thune's bill would nullify a Pentagon list of suggested base closings and changes, issued last week. It recommends that South Dakota's Ellsworth Air Force Base be closed, and that the 50 tanker planes based at North Dakota's Grand Forks base be moved elsewhere.

Under the Pentagon's plan, the Grand Forks base would lose more than 80 percent of its military personnel. The Defense Department estimates the changes would mean the loss of about 5,000 jobs in northwestern Minnesota and northeastern North Dakota.

Thune, who is a member of the Senate's Armed Services Committee, is considering an attempt to add his proposal to a Defense Department budget bill.

Dorgan tried to stop the base closing process two years ago by offering an amendment to defense spending legislation. Dorgan's amendment was defeated, 53-42.

"We've been down that road," Dorgan said Wednesday. "The Senate has already made that decision."

Conrad was unavailable for comment Wednesday night.

South Dakota's other senator, Democrat Tim Johnson, is a co-sponsor of the Thune bill. Johnson acknowledged Wednesday that the legislation will be an "uphill political climb," because the Bush administration is certain to oppose it.

"I would put this in the category of doing everything we can," he said.

In a statement, Thune said the bill has influential Republican supporters, including Trent Lott of Mississippi, the former Republican majority leader; Alaska's Ted Stevens, chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee and former chairman of Senate Appropriations; and New Mexico's Pete Domenici, chairman of the Senate's Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Mississippi, New Mexico and Alaska have major military bases that are targeted for closure.

The independent commission, known as BRAC for short, is reviewing the Pentagon's list of recommendations and will decide whether to change it by September. The recommendations then go to Congress and the White House for approval.

"A site hearing will help us make the case for keeping a robust Air Force presence and securing new missions in Grand Forks, while also showing just how critical the base is to the region's economic health," Dorgan said in a statement.

At a hearing Tuesday, the commission's chairman, Anthony Principi, and commission member Harold W. Gehman Jr., a retired Navy admiral, suggested it did not make sense to keep

the Grand Forks base open while moving away most of its personnel.

Rep. Earl Pomeroy, D-N.D., North Dakota's only House member, and Rep. Collin Peterson, D-Minn., who represents most of western Minnesota, also signed the Wednesday letter.

"A loss of this magnitude would be very hard for any region," it says. "Using the (Defense Department) estimate, this realignment would reduce employment in the Grand Forks and East Grand Forks (Minn.) area by 7.4 percent."

MN Senators Ask For Regional Hearing On Base Closings

Associated Press
May 18, 2005

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Two BRAC commissioners question closing of Fort Monmouth, N.J.

Federal Times
Gordon Trowbridge
May 18, 2005

Members of the commission reviewing the Pentagon's base-closing proposals told Army officials May 18 that they question the service's justification for closing Fort Monmouth, N.J., a move that would cost New Jersey more than 5,200 jobs.

"I disagree with that decision," Commissioner James Bilbray, a former congressman from Nevada, told Army Secretary Francis Henry and Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker during a

hearing on the Army's base-closing recommendations.

The economic impact of closing Monmouth would be substantial — New Jersey would lose more than 4,000 civilian jobs, many of them well-paid research and technology positions. But Bilbray and Commissioner Philip Coyle, an expert on defense-related technology, questioned the move's effect on the Army's research base.

"Do you agree Fort Monmouth possesses a highly skilled, specialized work force, and are you concerned that skill will be eroded?" Coyle asked.

Harvey said that in similar moves in previous base-closing rounds, about one-fourth of Army technical workers had chosen to move to new locations.

"I won't sit here and tell you we expect all the people at Fort Monmouth to move to Aberdeen Proving Ground," Harvey said, referring to another prominent Army research facility in Maryland.

But he said that cost was offset by the need to create a center for command, control and communications research and development at Aberdeen. "We have to do everything we can structurally and process-wise to reduce our cycle time from idea to capability," he said.

That justification failed to persuade Bilbray, who became the first of the nine commissioners in nine days of hearings to voice outright opposition to a closing.

"I can see it's going to take years to re-create the capacity you've got at Fort Monmouth," Bilbray said.

Senator Thune Introduces Legislation to Delay BRAC: Would suspend BRAC process until most troops home from Iraq

Dakota Voice
May 18, 2005

Legislation introduced today by Sen. John Thune, R-SD, would delay the current Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) round. The legislation would delay the process until most troops return from Iraq, a complete analysis is conducted on overseas facility requirements and several pending reports are released and their impact on BRAC is determined, including two Homeland Security related reports and the Pentagon's long-term planning document, the Quadrennial Defense Review. The bipartisan bill would, in effect, nullify the base closings recommended by the Pentagon on May 13.

"It doesn't make sense to close bases now," Thune said. "Given the permanence of base closings, the Pentagon should take the time to review the recommendations of the QDR and other reports first. We need to slow down the process and fully understand the military's long-term needs. Furthermore, we should not be undertaking massive BRAC realignments and closures while we are engaged in a war. This bill will correct what I believe to be a grave error by the Pentagon."

A bipartisan group of senators is co-sponsoring the legislation, including Senators Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Susan Collins (R-ME), Pete Domenici (R-NM), Judd Gregg (R-NH), Tim Johnson (D-SD), Trent Lott (R-MS), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Olympia Snowe (R-ME), Ted Stevens (R-AK) and John Sununu (R-NH).

"Senators from Maine to Alaska are standing united against the Pentagon's premature plans to close military bases," Thune said. "The Pentagon's recommendations got a very cold reception in Congress. It's common sense to wait for the Overseas BRAC and QDR before we move forward."

The Quadrennial Defense Review Report is due to be released early next year. The QDR is a comprehensive examination of America's future defense needs, including potential threats, force structure, strategy, defense infrastructure, and other elements of the defense program. The Commission on Review of Overseas Military Facility Structure of the United States ("Overseas BRAC" or "Overseas Basing

Commission") was established in 2003 to provide Congress and the President with a thorough study and review of U.S. military structure and facilities overseas. The Commission publicly released its report earlier last week, but no action has been taken.

The legislation would also stop the BRAC from moving forward until the implementation and development by the Secretaries of Defense and Homeland Security of the National Maritime Security Strategy and the completion and implementation of the Secretary of Defense's Homeland Defense and Civil Support Directive – only now being drafted. These two planning strategies should be key considerations before beginning any BRAC process.

State, local officials still working on base changes

Associated Press
Estes Thompson
May 18, 2005

RALEIGH, N.C. - When the Defense Department made its recommendations last week for the first round of base closings in a decade, North Carolina came out a relative winner.

The trick, officials said Wednesday, is to keep it that way.

"You have to monitor that intermediate window between the recommendations and when they send the actual list to the president," said Leigh McNairy, North Carolina's special assistant for military issues.

The list of proposed base closures and troop movements released by the Pentagon last Friday is now in the hands of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, which will hold hearings around the country before voting at the end of this year on a set of recommendations for President Bush.

A lot can happen between now and then, McNairy said. During a round of base closings in 1993, squadrons of F/A-18 Hornet fighters

were slated to move from Florida to the Marine Corps Air Station at Cherry Point. By the time the final vote was taken, the jets and their hundreds of support personnel were sent to Virginia, Georgia and South Carolina.

"That's evidence of how the process is fluid," McNairy said.

Defense officials said last week this round of base closings would save \$48.8 billion over 20 years by streamlining services and promoting cooperation across the military, while also shutting down bases deemed inefficient.

The Pentagon's recommendations include moving the Army Forces Command and the Headquarters U.S. Army Reserve Command to Fort Bragg, as well as adding a brigade to the Bragg-based 82nd Airborne Division. But the state would lose personnel at Pope Air Force Base and a Bragg-based Special Forces group.

In all, the state would lose 568 military positions and gain 307 civilian positions out of some 135,000 jobs directly related to the military.

Since the list was released, local supporters and state officials have studied the information Pentagon planners used to make their recommendations. They're searching for the state's strong points and looking for mistakes that might save jobs, said Lindsay Taylor, spokeswoman for Sen. Elizabeth Dole, R-N.C.

"Each base has a strong community support system and you've got all these layers of advocates," McNairy said. "The state's position has always been to be a partner but with the guidance coming from the host community."

Adding the Army Forces Command to Fort Bragg would bring a four-star general to the base, something that adds to the military importance of an area, she added.

That move has already led to protest from Georgia; Fort McPherson outside Atlanta is the command's current home. It would close under the Pentagon's recommendations, with many of

its personnel moving to the Army post adjoining Fayetteville.

"We're prepared to go before the BRAC commission in regional hearings and make the case for why they made a mistake," said Fred Bryant of the Georgia Military Affairs Coordinating Committee.

Bryant said he believes proximity of McPherson to Atlanta's airport, along with the medical and educational facilities in the area and its cost of living, makes a case for leaving the base alone.

But even as efforts continue to save jobs and bases, officials in both states said they expect most of the recommendations to be approved. In previous rounds of base closings, commissions have changed only about 15 percent of what the Pentagon proposed.

Tom Salter, a former Army battalion commander who is chairman of a foundation to save McPherson, said the chance of saving the installations is "certainly an uphill battle."

"We will continue to challenge it," he said.

Rell's "strike force" looking at BRAC details

Associated Press
May 18, 2005

HARTFORD, Conn. -- Gov. M. Jodi Rell's top commissioners on Wednesday began poring over a federal report that recommends closing the Groton submarine base, hoping to find fault with the Pentagon's decision-making process.

The state's environmental commissioner, Gina McCarthy, is already questioning the government's \$23 million estimated price tag for cleaning up the base. McCarthy said that amount would not cover the remediation costs for an estimated 29 contaminated sites on the sprawling 300-acre property.

"It will be staggering to see how you can come up with a \$23 million figure," McCarthy said.

Rell has appointed the commissioners of nine state agencies to a new "strike force." The group held its first meeting Wednesday. Each agency will be charged with attacking a specific issue involved in the decision to close the base.

Four Connecticut military bases are on the Pentagon's list of proposed closures. Besides the U.S. Naval Submarine Base in Groton, federal authorities are recommending closing the Sgt. Libby U.S. Army Reserve Center in New Haven, Turner U.S. Army Reserve Center in Fairfield and the U.S. Army Reserve Center Maintenance Support Facility in Middletown. The Bradley International Airport Air Guard Station would be realigned.

The proposed actions would affect nearly 8,600 Connecticut jobs, nearly all of them from the Groton base.

Brigadier General Thaddeus Martin, interim adjutant general of the Connecticut National Guard, said there is a good argument to be made in keeping the Bradley Guard station intact. He said it is the single largest facility on the East Coast that supports A-10 aircraft.

"We're very optimistic that when we get our hands on the specific data, we can identify the shortfall that was missed by the BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure Commission) committee and correct that error and roll back in with a force of 18 A-10s aircraft assigned to Bradley," Martin said.

Rell said her staff has still not received the data behind the Department of Defense's closure proposals. She said she expects her staff to look through that information with "a fine tooth comb."

In the meantime, she wants her strike force to look at the information used to promote other Navy bases in Virginia and Georgia and see if any data are incorrect.

Rell has also instructed the state Department of Labor to look at the impact of job losses from the base closures, including estimated

unemployment compensation costs and the ability of displaced workers to find new jobs.

The Department of Transportation is examining whether the state needs to invest millions of dollars to make capital improvements to the New London port area, while the Connecticut Development Authority is looking into whether there is available funding to improve the base.

"We know closing the sub base is a mistake and there are some hopeful signs that people in high places in Washington feel the same way - but the BRAC Commission is going to make its decision on cold, hard facts," Rell said. "The job of this strike force is to come up with those facts."

The BRAC will hold public hearings before presenting its recommendations to President Bush by Sept. 8.

Pentagon considered consolidating war colleges, flight training

Marine Corps Times
Gordon Trowbridge
May 18, 2005

Pentagon planners working on base-closing proposals considered some ideas that would have shaken decades of military culture, including consolidating the services' war colleges and combining pilot training, a top Defense Department personnel official said Wednesday.

Such proposals sparked resistance from the services, but eventually were abandoned because they failed to produce cost savings or other efficiencies, said Charles Abell, principal deputy undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness.

Abell's comments came during the third day of hearings by the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission, an independent panel reviewing the Pentagon's plan for the most extensive overhaul of domestic bases in decades.

Abell led a cross-service planning group that examined education and training requirements

across the Defense Department, one of eight such groups that helped develop the overall BRAC recommendations released May 13.

He told commissioners that proposals to combine the services' undergraduate pilot training programs and war colleges made for some of the most contentious meetings of a top-level Pentagon planning group, which included deputy chiefs of staff from each service.

The group did recommend combining orientation training for pilots of the new Joint Strike Fighter at a joint facility at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. But a more ambitious idea — bringing all undergraduate pilot training, the initial flight training pilots undergo, under a single roof — met resistance from the services.

“Our analysis was that it was practically possible,” Abell said, but the services worried about combining too many inexperienced pilots and aircraft types in limited airspace.

More importantly, Abell said, the change would have required moving so many aircraft that it would severely disrupt the pilot training pipeline, something the services could not afford.

“It’s probably a good idea,” he said. “But we’d probably have to get at it incrementally rather than one bold, revolutionary move.”

Even more contentious, he said, was the idea of combining the Army War College at Carlisle Barracks, Pa.; Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.; and Naval War College at Newport, Rhode Island, into a single senior service school, erasing some of U.S. military’s most enduring institutions. The Navy’s school dates to the 1880s, the Army’s to 1901.

“It was among the more exciting meetings” of the Pentagon’s BRAC steering group, Abell said, evoking laughter in the hearing room.

The group considered a plan to leave the schools with their separate identities, but move them to a single location. But the cash savings — a driving force of base closure — would have been

“nothing to write home about,” Abell said. And the services worried about separating their senior service schools from other educational institutions.

Governors, delegations to formulate coordinated BRAC campaign

Associated Press

Glenn Adams

May 18, 2005

AUGUSTA, Maine — Preparing for "a major battle," Gov. John Baldacci said he will meet Thursday with members of Maine and New Hampshire congressional delegations to sketch out a coordinated plan to fight the base closure proposals facing three communities.

Baldacci on Wednesday outlined the next step in an effort to head off the Pentagon’s planned closing of Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery and Defense Finance and Accounting Center in Limestone, and reduction in the Brunswick Naval Air Station’s mission and employment.

The combined effect could be a loss of nearly 12,000 direct and indirect jobs.

Baldacci said he wants a coordinated campaign with the affected communities unified under the state’s umbrella, working closely with the state’s four-member congressional delegation to turn around the curtailment plan.

"You don’t want divisions, you don’t want factions," the governor said, adding that Maine’s delegation of U.S. senators and congressmen will lead the effort.

"What I’m trying to do is get Maine organized. This is a major battle," Baldacci said.

Hundreds of New Hampshire workers could be affected by the Kittery shipyard’s closing, and representatives of the four members of New Hampshire’s congressional delegation said the delegation planned to be at Thursday’s meeting in Washington. New Hampshire Gov. John Lynch said he planned to listen in to the meeting by telephone.

Baldacci said the meeting was not intended to delve into details the Pentagon used in justifying its proposed curtailments, which will be reviewed by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission before it makes final recommendations to President Bush by Sept. 8. If Bush accepts the panel's list, it will go to Congress for final consideration before the end of the year.

"This is an organizational plan for how Maine ... and New Hampshire are going to approach the issue," said Baldacci.

Baldacci met informally with reporters a day after he presented preliminary figures showing the potential economic impact of the curtailments could add up to \$465 million in direct and indirect losses annually.

The governor said Defense Department grants have been approved to help the affected communities adjust to pending closures or reductions. Kittery was due to receive \$175,000, Brunswick \$150,000, and the Limestone area could become eligible for grants because of the possible DFAS closing, Baldacci said.

In addition, the state may be eligible to receive another \$1 million in U.S. Labor Department funds. The money is to be used to better understand labor market impacts, and not for job training.

Senate group attempts to delay BRAC process

Associated Press Writer
Mary Clare Jalonick
May 18, 2005

WASHINGTON (AP) As their parties bicker over Senate judicial nominations, a group of senators is working together to delay the Pentagon process that has targeted military bases for closure.

Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., planned to introduce legislation Wednesday that would delay the base closing process until most troops return from the

Iraq war and the Pentagon issues its Quadrennial Defense Review, which will evaluate the Pentagon's future strategy.

It would also nullify the list of base closings issued May 13.

Thune, who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee, is considering an attempt to add the bill to legislation that authorizes funding for the Department of Defense. South Dakota's Ellsworth Air Force base is among the facilities the Pentagon has recommended by closed.

Sen. Tim Johnson, D-S.D., acknowledged Wednesday that the legislation will be an "uphill political climb" as the Bush administration is certain to oppose it.

"I would put this in the category of doing everything we can," he said.

Thune's office says the bill has some powerful Republican sponsors, however, including former Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott of Mississippi, Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Ted Stevens of Alaska and Maine Sens. Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe.

All of those members' states have major military bases that have been targeted for closure.

Snowe and Collins said in a statement that it makes no sense to close and realign military bases and support offices given the national security needs and while U.S. forces are in the process of returning from overseas bases. They said the loss of Maine bases would also devastate the state's economy.

Rep. Stephanie Herseth, D-S.D., will introduce a similar bill in the House this week, her office said.

An independent commission is reviewing the Pentagon's list of recommendations and will decide whether to change it. In past years, about 85 percent of bases have remained on the list.

The recommendations then go to President Bush before being submitted to Congress for approval.

BRAC panel questions proposed closure of submarine base

Congress Daily

Megan Scully

May 18, 2005

Members of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission pressed Navy leaders Tuesday on their decision to shutter the Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton, Conn., the largest single base-closure recommendation on Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's list.

Commissioners quizzed officials on what alternatives they considered when weighing whether to close the facility, a decision that would affect 8,500 military and civilian jobs. They also questioned how much closing the base would cost, and what it ultimately would save.

The decision comes as the Navy scales back its attack submarine force from about 100 subs several years ago to about 50 today. The diminishing fleet moved the Defense Department to suggest consolidating its sub bases, leaving the East Coast with Norfolk Naval Station, Va., and Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base, Ga.

"Where do we want to be in 20 years? What do I want this to look like?" Adm. Vernon Clark, chief of naval operations, asked the commission. "We believe this is the right choice."

Navy officials said they considered, among other options, moving the submarines stationed at Norfolk to Kings Bay and New London. However, such a move would result in few cost savings at Norfolk, an expansive installation that is home to 78 ships and 133 aircraft.

"If we moved all the subs out of Norfolk, what happens? We don't close the base, and we only marginally affect the public works on the base," Clark said. The Navy doesn't "save large resources until ... you close the fence line."

The Navy expects closing New London to cost \$679.9 million, which includes investing \$238 million to expand Kings Bay to accommodate

roughly 3,200 personnel the service would relocate from Connecticut. Service officials, using "conservative" estimates, said they hope the closure eventually will save \$1.6 billion.

Commission Chairman Anthony Principi voiced concern that relocating personnel to Kings Bay might flood the local community and overwhelm schools, housing and roads. "The last time I was there, [there was] limited infrastructure on the base and in the county," Principi said.

Navy officials countered that the base's commander worked with the commission and they concluded the base and community could handle the additional personnel.

"In all of our moves, we looked at both ends of this," said Navy Secretary Gordon England. Norfolk also would absorb some of the New London personnel.

Despite the advantages the Navy sees in closing the Connecticut facility, Clark conceded the decision to shut down New London was a difficult one, given the base's legacy as the birthplace of the military's submarine force.

"New London is a perfect example to raise when we talk about very, very difficult choices," he said. "We have a heritage in New London."

The Pentagon's recommendation, announced Friday, provoked an immediate backlash on Capitol Hill, where the Connecticut delegation decried the decision.

House Armed Services Committee Chairman Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., likewise said he opposes the decision because of the base's close proximity to Electric Boat's submarine manufacturing facility.

Connecticut Democratic Sens. Joseph Lieberman and Christopher Dodd, attended the hearing, as did Rep. Rob Simmons, R-Conn., whose district encompasses the base.

"We believe the answers that have been given on military value and the cost of closing and moving are not right," Lieberman told reporters

as he left the hearing for a vote. The savings generated from closing New London have been "grossly overstated," he added.

Both senators said they were encouraged that several commissioners had asked the Navy questions about the New London recommendation.

BRAC: Commission hears Army rationale

Associated Press
May 18, 2005

WASHINGTON (AP) — Army officials said today they have carefully weighed the impact of closing some bases and believe the changes are necessary to better combat terrorism.

Army Secretary Francis J. Harvey told the nine-member Base Realignment and Closure Commission that the Army took "a very thoughtful, deliberate and thorough approach" in recommending which installations to close, as part of its effort "to develop a force that is more expeditionary, rapidly deployable, flexible and adaptive."

"We cannot afford to continue to operate as a static overseas base force designed to counter Cold War-era threats," Harvey said.

The Pentagon proposed closing 15 active duty Army installations, 17 leased facilities, 176 Army Reserve installations and 211 Army National Guard facilities. The base closure commission can change the plan before sending it to President Bush and Congress.

Meanwhile, South Dakota's two Republican senators plan to introduce legislation that would delay the base closing process until most troops return from the Iraq war and the Pentagon issues its Quadrennial Defense Review, which will evaluate the Pentagon's future strategy. The bill, if approved, also would nullify the list of base closings issued May 13.

Senate funds base-closure panel: \$1 million appropriated for task force

The Associated Press
Matt Volz
May 18, 2005

The Alaska Senate on Tuesday approved giving \$1 million to a task force that aims to counter the Pentagon's planned cuts of more than 4,800 military and civilian jobs in the state.

Eielson Air Force Base outside Fairbanks would lose its fighter squadrons and about 3,000 jobs under last week's base realignment and closure announcement. Kulis Air National Guard Station in Anchorage would close completely.

Senate Finance Co-Chairman Gary Wilken, R-Fairbanks, said the state has to try to keep those cuts from happening. The 15-member task force created by Gov. Frank Murkowski would be charged with coming up with a response to the BRAC commission within a couple of months.

The Senate Finance Committee included the appropriation in a supplemental spending bill for this year. The money would be combined with a \$500,000 grant the Fairbanks North Star Borough assembly was to consider Tuesday night.

The money would pay for consultants, financial analyses, public campaigning, along with travel to and from Washington, D.C., and towns affected by previous base closures or realignment.

Wilken said the argument for keeping the bases open and fully staffed could come in two parts: homeland security and keeping a strategic military presence in the North.

It is necessary to have two bases in Alaska to protect the Arctic region, Wilken said. Elmendorf Air Force Base is located near Anchorage.

"There has to be a backup for Elmendorf in the Arctic, and that has to be Eielson," Wilken said.

Homeland security also is an issue, said Sen. Gene Therriault, R-North Pole. The trans-Alaska oil pipeline and a proposed natural gas pipeline need to be protected, he said. Relocating military assets to Anchorage would contribute to leaving the pipeline vulnerable, he said.

In 1995, 85 percent of the BRAC recommendations were accepted, and those bases were closed or realigned, Wilken said.

"We need to be part of that 15 percent," he said.

The Senate passed the supplemental spending bill and a capital budget bill on Tuesday.

Panel Members Fail To Halt BRAC At Authorization Markup

Congress Daily
Megan Scully
May 18, 2005

Several House Armed Services Committee members Wednesday attempted to use the markup of the FY06 defense authorization bill to halt the work of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, to no avail.

The committee defeated an amendment offered by Rep. Jeb Bradley, R-N.H., to terminate the process. Bradley then introduced a subsequent amendment to delay base closings until the Pentagon completes several strategic reviews and forces deployed to Iraq return. It was defeated on a voice vote.

Armed Services Readiness Subcommittee Chairman Joel Hefley, R-Colo., who last year led the drive to delay the BRAC round by two years, indicated that now is not the right time to shutter bases around the country, but conceded that it is too late.

"This train has left the station," Hefley said. "I don't see any way to call it back."

Bradley's amendment measure was supported by Rep. Rob Simmons, R-Conn., whose district might lose up to 8,500 jobs if the commission agrees with Defense Secretary Rumsfeld's

recommendation to close the New London Submarine Base.

Rep. Gene Taylor, D-Miss., a longtime opponent of base closings, likewise voiced support for Bradley's amendment. His district is home to Pascagoula Naval Station, also slated for closure.

Lawmakers also pushed for changes in Pentagon weapons-buying, a key piece of subcommittee markups.

During the full committee mark, members unanimously passed an amendment, introduced by Rep. Neil Abercrombie, D-Hawaii, that requires the Pentagon to study using "capital budgeting" approaches for major acquisition programs.

"We continue to use an acquisition system that would be worthy of a Dickens novel," Abercrombie said.

Used by many local and state governments, the capital budgeting approach to acquisition separates revenues and outlays for major programs from revenues and outlays from operating budgets.

It also provides budget authority to spread acquisition of a major asset over several years, rather than pay for everything in the first year of acquisition.

In missile defense, the committee defeated an amendment introduced by Rep. Ellen Tauscher, D-Calif., along party lines, to change authority over ballistic missile defense testing from the Missile Defense Agency to the Pentagon's director of operational test and evaluation.

At presstime, the panel was expected to take up an amendment to the FY06 defense authorization bill that would lessen restrictions placed on female soldiers' combat roles during subcommittee marks last week.

Armed Services Chairman Hunter and Personnel Subcommittee Chairman John McHugh, R-N.Y., pushed forward the

restrictions, which would have barred all women soldiers in forward-deployed support units from moving to the front lines during combat operations.

Their language, approved along party lines, immediately generated a maelstrom of criticism from Army officials and military organizations, who said limiting women's roles in the military would further strain an already stressed force.

McHugh planned to introduce the softer language as an amendment.

The new language would prohibit the assignment of women to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct ground combat, defined in the provision as using individual or crew-served weapons to engage an enemy while being exposed to hostile fire and leaves the door open for other restrictions.

Several other issues were yet to be addressed at presstime, including a \$49 billion "bridge" funding supplemental spending package.

Base realignment plan would cut 18,000 civilian jobs

GovExec

George Cahlink

May 19, 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 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).

Army defends plans to centralize National Guard centers

Congress Daily
Amy Klamper
May 18, 2005

Members of the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission pressed senior Army officials Wednesday on what one member described as the "Field of Dreams" approach to

consolidating reserve and National Guard personnel at Armed Forces Reserve Centers.

Samuel Skinner, a chief of staff for former President Bush, questioned the Army's plan to "build a world-class training center and hope that the Guard will come."

As part of the 2005 BRAC round, the Pentagon invited state adjutants general to submit recommendations for the locations of these new reserve centers being built on federal and National Guard land.

Craig College, the Army's deputy assistant secretary for infrastructure analysis, said the Army expects that these "centers of excellence" will be larger, unconstrained by encroaching development and technologically advanced over existing reserve and Guard installations.

Other commission members wondered if the plan to close 211 reserve and Guard facilities while building 125 centers, would hurt recruiting and retention because soldiers will have to commute greater distances. Army Secretary Francis Harvey acknowledged that the impact is a concern, particularly at a time when the service is struggling to meet recruitment and retention goals. Harvey and Army Chief of Staff Peter Schoomaker emphasized that the plan is backed by many states, and that the consolidated centers would add no more than 50 miles to soldiers' commutes.

The bid to reshape the Army's domestic infrastructure is part of the Defense Department's recommendations released Friday to close or realign more than 800 military installations in the United States. The list includes roughly 400 Army installations, comprised in part of 176 Army Reserve and 387 Army National Guard facilities.

The Army portion of the base-closing recommendations was the topic of today's commission hearing. If the recommendations are implemented, the Army expects to save \$7.6 billion over the next several years, followed by \$1.5 billion in annual recurring savings over the

next two decades. The cost of these closures is estimated at about \$12 billion.

Harvey said that while the closing of overseas bases and the return of U.S. troops to domestic installations also will cost money -- roughly \$800 million -- the combined effort will generate more than \$20 billion in savings. The Army expects to return 47,000 troops, including 11,000 to Fort Bliss, Texas, as part of the global restructuring plan. BRAC commissioners have less than four months to evaluate the Pentagon's recommendations and submit its list to the White House by Sept. 8. The commission continues to await the department's release of thousands of pages of supporting documents detailing the rationale behind its base closure decisions. Members expect to see the documents Friday.

From Base Panel, A Word Of Caution: A member of the realignment commission said previous overhauls might have cut needed facilities.

Philadelphia Inquirer
Dave Montgomery
May 19, 2005

WASHINGTON - A member of the nation's base-closing commission suggested yesterday that the military should proceed cautiously.

"We shouldn't rush into closing down facilities that we may need in the future," James Bilbray, a former House member from Nevada, said as the Base Realignment and Closure Commission continued an opening round of hearings into the Pentagon's plan to close nearly 180 military installations, including 33 major facilities.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld last week submitted recommendations to the commission, which is using them as a starting point for a base-restructuring package to send to President Bush by Sept. 8.

Members are holding four days of hearings, concluding today, as they begin a four-month review that will include at least 15 regional hearings and visits to affected bases.

(Pennsylvania would lose 1,878 jobs under the plan, which includes the closing of the Willow Grove Naval Air Station. New Jersey could lose 3,760 jobs; its closures would include Fort Monmouth.)

Bilbray said yesterday that closing several bases in earlier overhauls may have been unwise and suggested that the military could repeat the mistake.

He said he was particularly concerned about proposed closure of Forts Gillem and McPherson in Georgia, asking top Army officials, "What is the logic of closing those?"

In an interview afterward, Bilbray said he was also concerned that Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota and Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico were on the list, suggesting that they might be needed for aircraft returning from overseas military bases that are being closed or downsized.

South Dakota Sens. Tim Johnson, a Democrat, and John Thune, a Republican, have proposed delaying the process in an attempt to save Ellsworth.

Maine Sens. Olympia J. Snowe and Susan Collins, both Republicans, said yesterday that they supported a delay, saying it made no sense to close military installations in wartime. They want to save Maine's Portsmouth Naval Shipyard.

Army Secretary Francis J. Harvey and Gen. Peter Schoomaker, the Army's chief of staff, defended closure of 15 Army installations and a far-reaching consolidation of Reserve and National Guard units. Schoomaker said the moves were part of "once-in-a-generation" restructuring to transform the Army into a leaner, more agile force to confront post-9/11 challenges.

Chairman Anthony J. Principi, resurrecting a theme that surfaced Monday, questioned plans to close 176 Army Reserve installations and 211 Army National Guard centers.

The Army plans to build 125 new reserve centers, but Principi expressed concern that the consolidation could force reservists and National Guard members to drive longer distances for training, discouraging many from reenlisting.

Harvey said the consolidation would result in minimal inconvenience, explaining that the maximum distance from a regional center would be 50 miles.

Previous base-closing commissions have accepted at least 85 percent of the Pentagon's recommendations, but Principi is promising a "clear-eyed reality check" of the latest proposals.

Cities Near Growing Army Posts Beef Up Roads, Schools, Housing: Prospect for more jobs thrills locals, who must decide how to squeeze thousands more people into town

USA Today
Haya El Nasser
May 19, 2005

When Chamber of Commerce official Biff Hadden heard that Fort Benning could bring 5,000 more permanent military personnel to Columbus, Ga., he did the math.

About 65% of people in the military are married, so add 3,250 spouses. The average Army family has 1.8 children. Add 5,850 kids. About 75% are school-age. That's 4,387 more students in classrooms.

"If they were to put them in our community tomorrow ... we could accommodate 1,000 families," says Hadden, senior vice president for military affairs at the Greater Columbus Georgia Chamber of Commerce. "We have to build 3,000 homes over the next three years."

Fort Benning has about 31,000 military personnel. Add the 5,000 likely to be shifted there, their families, the average 6,000 trainees and soldiers who spend a year living on base and using area roads, restaurants and other services,

and Columbus is bracing for an influx of 20,000 people.

That's the flip side of the realignment of military installations that the Pentagon is recommending. Some bases will close, and the communities will lose thousands. Others are consolidated, creating overnight population booms.

"It's something new for a lot of these communities," says Tim Ford, executive director of the Association of Defense Communities. "How do you deal with the schools? How do you deal with the housing? Spouses need to be working."

Communities around Fort Benning would be among the largest gainers under the Defense Department's proposal: 9,839 military and civilian defense workers plus an estimated 4,000 jobs that will follow their arrival, from food-service workers to contractors.

Hadden and local leaders are thrilled with the prospect of more jobs in the area. But they know what it's going to take to make this sudden boom work for everyone.

"We have two states and six counties all working together to help Fort Benning grow," Hadden says.

It takes that kind of coordination to pull it off. Officials from four counties in Georgia and two in Alabama have formed a committee to prepare for whatever this round of military closings and consolidation brings.

By last summer, they knew the realignment was coming and had a pretty good idea that Fort Benning would gain, not lose. That's when planning began:

*They identified how many people each county can house now and how many students each school district can handle. Among the findings: Muscogee County, where Columbus is, would have to add two elementary schools. The area would need another middle school.

*Land was rezoned for housing.

*Two local colleges prepared to offer courses to help spouses find work with some of the major employers in the area, including insurers Aflac and BlueCross BlueShield of Georgia.

*Columbus State University and Troy State University in Alabama are ready to offer fast-track certification programs to spouses who are teachers.

*The state transportation department is speeding up road projects that would widen Interstate 185, the only direct road from Columbus to Fort Benning. It plans to add an interchange at U.S. 27.

“We have more than 140 volunteers on various committees working on different ways to approach this so that it's a group solution, a regional solution,” says Hadden, a 31-year Army veteran.

“I just hope it all comes true,” says local builder Mike Socci, who says about half of his business comes from military families. “We are scrambling (for land) right now.”

Socci is preparing his staff, buying land and lining up subcontractors to make sure he can meet demand for everything from starter homes to more expensive and larger homes.

“We're getting ready for all different ranks of military coming in,” Socci says. “We're excited.”

In Lawton, Okla., home of Fort Sill, they're also bracing for an influx of almost 6,000 workers. City Manager Larry Mitchell says the area needs more homes that are big enough for military families.

“We need entry-level, three- or four-bedroom units with two-car garages,” he says. “We're getting a lot of interest from developers.”

Three multifamily developments underway will add about 200 housing units. The city just rezoned about 80 acres for retail and commercial space.

“I would expect (construction) to start in the next couple of months,” Mitchell says. “I'm sure the developers are out signing leases right now.”

In Manhattan, Kan., home of Fort Riley, five residential subdivisions are underway, City Manager Ron Fehr says. Fort Riley already was expecting new units to come in for training before deployment next year. Now, the Pentagon proposal would add about 4,700 jobs. The 5% vacancy rate in rental housing near Kansas State University will fill some of the housing needs. An additional 1,408 units will be built over the next two years.

“We've been gearing up,” Fehr says.

School districts are worried that they'll have to deal with a rush of new students after their budgets are approved based on current enrollment. They might have to wait until the following year to collect the extra funding the defense department gives to help schools handle the influx of military families.

“There's going to be a lag where communities are going to deal with 2,000 kids showing up but won't have the funding,” Ford says.

More people on the payroll

Workforce includes those working both on and off military bases. Job gains are both military and civilian.

Lawton, Okla. (Fort Sill) -- Area's workforce: 63,978, Job gain: 5,731 (9%)

Columbus, Ga. (Fort Benning) -- Area's workforce: 163,565, Job gain: 13,828 (8.5%)

Enterprise, Ala. (Fort Rucker) -- Area's workforce: 48,094, Job gain: 3,559 (7.4%)

Manhattan, Kan. (Fort Riley) -- Area's workforce: 72,434, Job gain: 4,673 (6.5%)

El Paso (Fort Bliss) -- Area's workforce: 328,741, Job gain: 20,196 (6.1%)

Fort Walton Beach, Fla. (Eglin AFB) -- Area's workforce: 120,139, Job gain: 3,954 (3.3%)

Anniston, Ala. (Army Depot) -- Area's workforce: 60,648, Job gain: 1,800 (3%)

Sumter, S.C. (Shaw AFB) -- Area's workforce: 54,168, Job gain: 1,421 (2.6%)

Bremerton, Wash. (Naval Station) -- Area's workforce: 119,170, Job gain: 2,921 (2.5%)

Colorado Springs (Fort Carson) -- Area's workforce: 349,783, Job gain: 8,658 (2.5%)

War College's Results Won It A BRAC Reprieve

Harrisburg Patriot News
Brett Lieberman
May 19, 2005

WASHINGTON - Consolidating the U.S. Army War College and other military schools would have saved millions of dollars, but defense officials worried it would damage education programs that have proven successful.

"We were frankly afraid to take the chance," Acting Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon R. England said yesterday.

England said defense officials "talked a lot" about scenarios that would have saved money by merging facilities, including the War College in Carlisle and the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif.

The War College and the Postgraduate School had been seen as likely targets for the base realignment and closure process.

Neither was mentioned last week when the Defense Department released a list that proposed closing 150 posts and realigning 775 more sites. No midstate facilities were on the list.

England, testifying with military leaders on the proposed list during a second day of hearings before the base commission, said defense officials worried about the intangible cost of

what might have been lost if the decision was based solely on cost savings.

"We were afraid we could not replicate that," he said of the War College.

Such an assessment mirrored part of the argument local and state officials made in lobbying for the War College to stay in Carlisle.

Among the possibilities under consideration was combining the War College with the Army's Command & General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kan., or the National Defense University, a cross-service graduate school at Fort McNair in Washington, D.C.

The Pentagon also considered paying universities to run programs for officers, England said.

War College proponents argued against moving the school because of its history as the second-oldest operating post in the United States.

They also argued that moving the War College would not save money. England and other military officials said merging the schools would definitely have cut costs.

Closing the Postgraduate School would have been an especially frugal move because its prime real estate could have generated a windfall for the government.

But England said military education is "hugely valuable to us, maybe more important than a lot of equipment."

The military graduate schools' education of foreign leaders and foreign military officials has also become more critical to military operations and U.S. foreign policy. The relationships built while at school have helped improve relations as American troops increasingly interact with their foreign counterparts, officials said.

Military leaders decided the risk involved with closing the War College "wasn't worth the money," England said.

Those Base-Closing Blues

Times Magazine
Douglas Walker
May 23, 2005

First, the good news: Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld last week recommended closing far fewer military bases than had been expected. (Despite initial estimates of a military bloated by 20% to 25% in excess capacity, the Pentagon, after factoring in the need to accommodate 70,000 soldiers returning from overseas, determined that only 5% to 10% needs trimming.) But the bad news depends, now more than ever, on where the bases are located. Rumsfeld proposed closing 33 of the Pentagon's 318 major military bases, along with shuttering or realigning 775 smaller facilities, to save nearly \$ 49 billion over the next 20 years. But what's "striking" about the base-closing plan, says Loren Thompson, a defense analyst with the nonpartisan Lexington Institute think tank in Arlington, Va., is "the geographical migration of the military out of the Frost Belt and into the Sun Belt." Northern states such as Connecticut, Maine and New Jersey will lose more than 19,000 military and civilian jobs at the facilities on Rumsfeld's hit list, while three Southern states, Georgia, Alabama and Texas, will have a net gain of 16,237 jobs.

Although Rumsfeld insists the realignments will help transform the military into a "more agile" force, with the armed services operating jointly at more bases, the shift south and west conveniently benefits the G.O.P., which dominates those regions. Even so, some red states are feeling rather blue. South Dakota's John Thune, who defeated Senate minority leader Tom Daschle last year partly on a promise that his G.O.P. connections would protect Ellsworth Air Force Base, is livid that it is on the closing list. The Base Realignment and Closure Commission has until Sept. 8 to approve or amend Rumsfeld's list, and Bush and Congress must accept or reject it by the end of the year. Until then, Thune has vowed to lead the congressional fight to delay the closings and may vote against key White House legislation--

bringing new meaning to the election-year tactic of playing to your base.

Panel member says military may need bases slated for closure

Knight Ridder News Service
Dave Montgomery
May 19, 2005

WASHINGTON _ A member of the nation's base-closing commission suggested Wednesday that the military wants to close some bases that could be needed later.

"We shouldn't rush into closing down facilities that we may need in the future," former congressman James Bilbray said as the Base Realignment and Closure Commission continued an opening round of hearings into the Pentagon's plan to close nearly 180 military installations, including 33 major facilities.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld submitted the recommendations to the commission last week. The commission is using that plan as a starting point in preparing a base-restructuring package to submit to President Bush by Sept. 8.

Commission members are holding four days of hearings, concluding Thursday, as they begin a four-month review that will include at least 15 regional hearings and visits to affected bases.

During Wednesday's hearing, Bilbray said the closure of several installations in previous base overhauls may have been unwise and suggested that the military may be on the verge of repeating the mistake.

The former Nevada lawmaker said he was particularly concerned about the proposed closure of Forts Gillem and McPherson in Georgia, asking top Army officials, "What is the logic of closing those?"

In an interview afterward, Bilbray said he's also worried about the proposed closure of Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota and Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico, suggesting that

those installations could be needed for aircraft returning to the United States from overseas military bases that are being closed or downsized.

South Dakota Sens. Tim Johnson, a Democrat, and John Thune, a Republican, have proposed delaying the base-closing process in an attempt to save Ellsworth.

Maine Sens. Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins said Wednesday that they support a delay, saying it makes no sense to close military installations during a war. The two Republicans want to save Maine's Portsmouth Naval Shipyard.

Army Secretary Francis J. Harvey and Gen. Peter Schoomaker, the Army's chief of staff, defended the closure of 15 Army installations and a far-reaching consolidation of reserve and National Guard units. Schoomaker said the moves are part of "once in a generation" restructuring to transform the wartime Army into a leaner, more agile force to confront post-Sept. 11 challenges.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Craig E. College, explaining the rationale for closing Gillem and McPherson, described the two Atlanta-area bases as relatively small "single-function" facilities with limited room to expand and absorb new missions.

Army officials also defended the proposed closure of the Red River Army Depot.

Commissioner Sue Turner, a retired Air Force general, pointed out that workers at the east Texas facility are contributing to the Iraq war effort by rebuilding damaged Humvees and Bradley armored vehicles.

"Why would you choose now to close Red River?" she asked.

Harvey said analysts concluded that the Army no longer needs five repair depots and could increase efficiency and productivity by closing Red River, located near Texarkana. The Army

also wants to shut down the nearby Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant.

Although the commission is still in the preliminary stage of its work, members' questions have suggested several potentially thorny issues. Commission Chairman Anthony Principi, resurrecting a theme that surfaced on the first day of hearings Monday, questioned the Army's plans to close 176 Army Reserve installations and 211 Army National Guard centers.

The Army plans to build 125 new reserve centers that would serve reservists and National Guard members, but Principi expressed concern that the consolidation could force citizen soldiers to drive longer distances for training, discouraging many from re-enlisting.

Harvey, however, said the consolidation would result in minimal inconvenience, explaining that the maximum distance from a regional center would be no more than 50 miles.

Responding to other questions by Principi, Army officials said they're confident that Fort Bliss, which stretches across more than 1 million acres in far west Texas and eastern new Mexico, will be able to absorb 11,000 additional troops returning from overseas bases. Principi asked if Army officials had taken steps to make sure there are adequate schools, housing, roads and water to accommodate the influx.

Previous base-closing commissions have accepted at least 85 percent of the Pentagon's recommendations, but Principi is promising a "clear-eyed reality check" of the latest proposals.

Pentagon Aims to Disperse Facilities: Rumsfeld's Strategy For Capital Region Embedded in Report

Washington Post
Spencer S. Hsu
May 19, 2005

The Pentagon's recommendation to move more than 20,000 defense jobs from sites in the

Washington area is based in part on Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld's goal of shifting operations out of the capital region, according to the base realignment and closure plan released last week.

The dispersal strategy, which had not been announced previously, is mentioned numerous times in the base-closings report as a justification for abandoning leased office space in Northern Virginia and transferring some facilities from Maryland and the District.

The report does not explain why Rumsfeld wants to reduce the concentration of Defense Department activities in and near Washington, and Pentagon officials declined to elaborate yesterday. Several local members of Congress said the policy appears to be an effort to make the department less vulnerable in the event of another terror attack or a natural disaster in the nation's capital.

Several of the lawmakers, including John W. Warner (R-Va.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, expressed concern about Rumsfeld's goal. A Warner spokesman said yesterday that the senator questions the security standards the Pentagon has developed both for buildings and for the metropolitan area. He also said the guidelines could increase defense costs by requiring new construction elsewhere.

"Senator Warner is very concerned about the proposed closures. He has not seen a justification from DOD for the savings that these closures are expected to produce," Warner spokesman John Ulyot said. "He intends to very closely scrutinize the standards -- the force-protection standards and the savings rationale for the closure of leased office space."

Rep. James P. Moran Jr. (D), who represents Arlington County and Alexandria, called the decision to move defense jobs outside the region "arbitrary" and said the dispersal goal was not included in the criteria the Pentagon had said would guide the new round of base closings.

"What do they accomplish by moving away from the very center of decision-making they

have to be a part of?" Moran asked, noting that the Defense Department's headquarters -- the Pentagon -- is not moving.

The plan released Friday would eliminate or reduce forces at more than 800 military installations across the country, with the aim of consolidating far-flung operations and saving \$49 billion over 20 years. A nine-member commission is reviewing the plan and has until Sept. 8 to produce a final list that President Bush must accept or reject in its entirety and forward to Congress.

The Washington area would have a net loss of 14,459 defense jobs, more than any other metropolitan region in the country, according to the Pentagon's calculations. Its definition of the D.C. area, however, does not include some outer counties that would gain employment, such as Anne Arundel, where Fort Meade would get an additional 5,361 military and civilian jobs.

Arlington and Alexandria would be the hardest-hit jurisdictions, losing almost 23,000 defense workers now housed in leased office space.

Northern Virginia officials had expected job losses because those office buildings do not meet new Pentagon requirements that structures be set back at least 82 feet from traffic to protect against truck bombs. But the Pentagon's broader goal of moving jobs outside the region presents local officials with an additional obstacle as they lobby against the loss of the leases.

Moran and Northern Virginia Reps. Thomas M. Davis III (R) and Frank R. Wolf (R) said the military risks a brain drain because many of its skilled technical workers would take other jobs rather than leave the area. They also argued that moving defense operations out of the region would decrease coordination with other federal agencies involved in security and homeland defense.

The 754-page report on base realignment and closure invokes the goal of dispersing Washington area facilities to help justify scores of moves by defense agencies that would affect thousands of jobs.

For instance, in recommending the transfer of the Defense Contract Management Agency headquarters from Alexandria to Fort Lee, Va., which is south of Richmond, the report cites a desire to achieve "a dispersion of DOD activities away from a dense concentration within the National Capital Region."

The same justification is given for moving the Air Force Real Property Administration from Arlington to Lackland Air Force Base, near San Antonio.

The report says that transferring the Air Force Flight Standards Agency and two C-21 aircraft from Andrews Air Force Base to Will Rogers Air National Guard Base in Oklahoma City "moves federal assets out of the National Capital Region, reducing the nation's vulnerability."

And it says that moving defense intelligence analysts from Bolling Air Force Base in Washington to Rivanna Station near Charlottesville "meets the spirit of the Secretary of Defense's guidelines for relocation outside the National Capital Region."

In an interview yesterday, Philip W. Grone, deputy undersecretary of defense for installations and environment, would not elaborate on the guidelines mentioned in the document. But he said the recommendations involving Washington area operations were based not only on security considerations but also on such factors as cost savings -- achieved by moving from leased to department-owned facilities -- consolidation of related activities and better use of vacant space.

"No recommendation . . . was based solely on anti-terrorism, force-protection arguments," Grone said. "There is no one-size-fits-all approach."

In fall 2002, Rumsfeld issued what has become known as the "100-mile memo," in which he reserved authority over any real estate purchase, construction or leasing action greater than \$500,000 within a 100-mile radius of the Pentagon. The department also has given

jurisdiction over real estate issues in that area to its Washington Headquarters Service.

Local News Articles

BRAC list not an ending, but beginning of growth

Southeast Sun (Dothan, AL)
Kay Kirkland
May 18, 2005

It's a new beginning.

U.S. Congressman Terry Everett said Friday's announcement that Fort Rucker is slated to gain about 2,000 new jobs and 5,500 students a year doesn't put a ceiling on the U.S. Army Aviation Center's future growth.

"We have not stopped growing Fort Rucker," Everett said. "This is not an ending; this is a beginning."

Everett and Enterprise Mayor Kenneth Boswell pointed out that the BRAC process, which won't end until the president and Congress act on the recommendations in the fall, doesn't mean that other more isolated realignments and consolidations cannot take place in the future. "We've got good things going on at Fort Rucker," Everett said. "I think not only are we able now to relax and enjoy the fact that Fort Rucker is not on the BRAC list and actually led the state in gaining in BRAC ... but I predict that we'll see even greater things for Fort Rucker."

This year's BRAC round is part of the 2002 National Defense Authorization Act, which began when Rumsfeld sent a memorandum to defense leaders indicating that a broad effort to remove 25 percent in the DoD would help make the military more agile and flexible and able to meet today's defense challenges more effectively. Everett said the recommendations actually have removed only about 12 percent of the originally-reported excesses.

"We want to continue to look at the things that were not named in BRAC, like Whiting Field,"

Boswell said. The Naval rotary wing training done at the airfield at Pensacola has been at the center of a struggle for years between Alabama and Florida political leaders. Everett said Friday he was somewhat disappointed that the Naval rotary wing training was not recommended for relocation to Fort Rucker, particularly since Whiting Field was damaged by last year's hurricanes; but he said the Naval training mission from Whiting "pales in comparison" to the Aviation Logistics School, which will bring about 5,500 students to Fort Rucker along with about 2,000 jobs.

Both he and Everett also noted that the restructuring of America's military installations in Europe is also under way and some missions may come to Fort Rucker as a result of that downsizing and realignment.

Everett said although the BRAC recommendations will now go to the nine-member BRAC committee and on to President George W. Bush and to Congress, he believes that little chance exists that the expected gains will be cut. In fact, Everett is optimistic that Fort Rucker will never be on another BRAC list, if indeed another list is necessary.

"I don't think you'll ever see Fort Rucker on another BRAC list," he said. "Aviation is too important."

"We can feel some comfort today, that Fort Rucker is going to be here for a long, long time," said Friends of Fort Rucker President Charles Nailen.

He said the Friends of Fort Rucker would remain diligent, however, and continue to work for the betterment of Fort Rucker.

Nailen said at a press conference Friday that the group would be analyzing the DoD BRAC data and will work to make sure that none of the expected gains are lost during the remainder of the BRAC process.

"It does not need to stop," Everett said of the Friends of Fort Rucker "We need a community group that's constantly in touch with the

military, still concerned about our troops and can do the things that need to be done to let the DoD recognize that this is a community that not only has a lot of military folks in it, but it's a community that loves the military and is very cooperative with the military."

Both Boswell and Daleville Mayor Wess Etheredge said they support the continuation of Friends of Fort Rucker. They also thanked Ozark Mayor Bob Bunting and the members of the Alabama BRAC committee for their work during recent months.

Fort Belvoir to grow, says BRAC

Times Community (Springfield, VA)

Jason Jacks

May 18, 2005

Others' losses appear to be Fort Belvoir's gains.

The Department of Defense's Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) recommendations, submitted to a federal commission last week, include the consolidation of thousands of area defense workers, many from leased office space throughout the Washington, D.C., region, onto the sprawling U.S. Army post in southern Fairfax by the end of the decade.

As many as 18,000 additional workers could be sent to Fort Belvoir if the BRAC commission approves the military's recommendations and President Bush signs off on them in September, officials said.

Of that figure, 3,677 would be military personnel from various services, and 14,753 would be civilian employees and contractors.

According to Richard Arndt, a post spokesman, Fort Belvoir's current master plan does account for large numbers of new workers assigned to the post—however, just not as soon as the Army would like them there under BRAC recommendations.

Arndt said "the shear numbers" surprised him most when looking at the recommendations.

"This caught us off guard just as everyone else was caught off guard."

If the changes are approved, the Army would want the 18,000 additional personnel reassigned to the post within four years, Arndt said.

That would surely add more traffic to already congested roads found in and around the post.

To combat the expected "gridlock," local officials and the region's federal delegation are now talking about the possibility of extending Metro to the post, either from Metro's Blue line terminus at Franconia-Springfield or the Yellow line at Huntington, according to county officials.

County and school officials are also preparing to assess the impact on local classrooms if a large portion of those workers move to Fairfax.

According to BRAC recommendations, some of Fort Belvoir's new workers would come from the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in the District, which is recommended for closure.

Fort Belvoir officials already had plans to build a new 27-bed hospital on the post. However, because of the recommendation to move some Walter Reed workers there, the post will have to scrap the design and instead build a 165-bed facility to accommodate the growth in staff.

According to Arndt, besides the Walter Reed workers, other new tenants possibly heading to Fort Belvoir under BRAC recommendations include:

Various defense organizations presently in leased space in the national capital region.

Logistic functions from Naval Support Activity in Mechanicsburg, Pa., and Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio.

Elements of PEO Enterprise Information Systems from Fort Monmouth, N.J.

National Geospatial Agency units from leased locations in Bethesda, Md.

BRAC could spur business opportunities

El Paso Times (El Paso, TX)

Louie Gilot

May 18, 2005

After the Base Realignment and Closure announcement last week, Cindy Ramos-Davidson at the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce braced herself for what she thought would be an onslaught of calls from local companies wanting to do business with Fort Bliss.

The calls came, but they were not from El Paso.

They came from small and medium size companies in New York, Virginia, Idaho, Mississippi and even Puerto Rico. The callers wanted to know, "is anyone doing this in El Paso? Providing this service?" Ramos-Davidson, the chamber's chief executive officer, said.

"They are fact-finding now," she said. "Soon, they may be snatching the contracting opportunities from under El Paso companies' noses."

BRAC will start pouring 11,500 additional soldiers and civilian employees into Fort Bliss between next year and 2011, but companies shouldn't wait that long to offer their services building, installing and maintaining things on post, Ramos-Davidson said.

Billions of dollars in goods and services for the military each year are for the taking.

An estimated 3,000 companies are already doing business with Fort Bliss, although it is unclear how many are small and local.

"There's business for everyone," said Pat Villalobos, president of Barnhart-Taylor Inc., an El Paso company that does work at Fort Bliss.

BRAC watcher warns of impact of White Sands cuts

KOBTV- NM

Reed Upton

May 18, 2005

Officials charged with monitoring the impact of the closure and realignment of New Mexico's military facilities now say the impact at White Sands Missile Range may be worse than first expected.

While the Pentagon's announcement that it had targeted Cannon Air Force Base's nearly 3,000 jobs for the chopping block dominated headlines, Sherman McCorkle of the Kirtland Partnership Committee says the loss of nearly 180 jobs at White Sands could be disproportionately devastating.

"The best jobs we have in New Mexico are the research and development jobs," said McCorkle. "That's the part we want to grow. It's the last thing we want to lose."

But research and development, and the jobs and high-wage salaries that go with it, are exactly what may be lost by eliminating the 178 White Sands positions.

McCorkle says that more than \$200 million a year will be lost through the elimination of the roughly 3,000 Cannon jobs. But he says contract defense work from White Sands is worth about \$265 million over five years.

"If you take \$265 million out of our economy, it affects everyone in the state," McCorkle said. White Sands officials actually put the number as high as \$300 million, with an impact on 60 to 100 contractors.

A White Sands spokesperson said he wouldn't put the impact on White Sands on a par with the targeted closure of Cannon, but he says the loss is significant.

"I think it is a big blow to New Mexico," says White Sands Missile Range Chief of Public Affairs Larry Furrow. "I think (the) dollars are significant."

On Friday, the Pentagon is expected to release more information about what exactly could be removed from White Sands. McCorkle says that

means he's playing the same sort of waiting game he was playing last week prior to the release of the Pentagon's initial hit list.

Chamber: BRAC closures could affect 5,000 workers

Texarkana Gazette (Texarkana, Texas)
Aaron Brand
May 18, 2005

Closure of Red River Army Depot and Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant could directly affect as many as 5,000 workers at Bowie County's defense complex, according to a Texarkana Chamber of Commerce official.

Jerry Sparks, the chamber's Base Realignment and Closure Committee chairman, spoke about efforts to remove Red River and Lone Star from the list of bases recommended for closure during Tuesday's board of directors meeting.

"We have a team already working on several levels," said Spark.

He said the effort to save both Bowie County bases could hinge on proving there was a deviation from the BRAC laws, which guide the selection of bases recommended for closure or realignment. He said a mistake in data analysis is one possibility that led to the inclusion of Red River and Lone Star.

Sparks said when contractors and Defense Department-related workers are factored into the total work force related to Red River and Lone Star, the number of affected workers is estimated to be about 5,000.

He said that amounts to about 10 percent of the local work force being either out of work or working at a different job if the bases are closed.

"That should be enough to scare you," Sparks told the board.

He said the decision will boil down to military value and capacity, adding that Red River has been operating at about 25 to 30 percent beyond capacity for the last 18 months.

Ron Collins, chairman of the board of directors, spoke about how difficult it is to redevelop property that has been BRAC-listed and ultimately closed or realigned.

"There's a lot of competition out there for economic development and we don't want to do any more than we have to," said Collins.

Board member Adger Smith spoke about the immediate impact business owners will feel now, even though the list was just released and is not finalized.

"It's not trickle down," said Smith, describing how three customers at his business have already pulled out of projects they had planned. He owns Adger Smith's Performance Engines, a business that builds racing engines.

Sparks said John Jarvis of Century Bank and a former mayor of Texarkana, Texas, will work with the chamber as a loaned executive. They will work on getting data, making political contacts, coordinating the local community effort and fund-raising.

Debbie Stewart, vice president of tourism and communications, spoke about the chamber's branding effort that was recently unveiled.

She said there's more to what the chamber received from North Star Destination Strategies than simply a logo and new slogan to market the city. There are also months of market research information that can be used by the chamber membership, she said.

"It's more than a slogan, it's more than a logo," Stewart said.

Collins said the services received for the \$40,000 spent on the project include that kind of market research information gathered through the North Star survey.

Stewart also said the goal of the new branding image is to market Texarkana to outsiders, people who can bring business to Texarkana.

"It's about getting business here," Stewart said.

She said with the vision survey conducted by North Star, key words like Southern, small-town, and Western were given as responses to describe Texarkana.

"We're not just about where Arkansas meets Texas," said Stewart. "We're about where the South meets the West."

One part of the branding image's purpose is to enhance a visitor's experience by describing the blend of cultures here, she added.

During the meeting, the chamber also passed a motion to support the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's backing of the U.S.-Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement.

Collins, who is also president and CEO of JCM Industries in Nash, Texas, said the issue is about creating a level playing field for U.S. industries doing business in Central America and the Dominican Republic where American goods face quotas and tariffs.

A vote on the trade agreement is due later this year, perhaps before Memorial Day.

Collins described the bill as "a trade effort that is one of the first parts of putting together North America, Central America and South America as a free trade zone."

He said it's a major issue affecting American businesses, given the realities of the global marketplace.

"Businesswise, it's probably the right thing to do," said Jim Cherry, chamber president.

A Political Price For Losing Base

Hartford Courant (Hartford, CT)

Michele Jacklin

May 18, 2005

Who's to blame?

It may be that no one could have stopped the Pentagon from sinking the U.S. Naval Submarine Base in Groton, and that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld based his decision solely on what's best for national security. It may also be that Connecticut's repudiation of President Bush last year is unrelated to his administration's plan to mothball the base, eliminating 8,460 jobs and wreaking economic havoc in this, the bluest of blue states.

It may be all of those things. Nonetheless, there will be a political price to pay in 2006 if the federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission, or BRAC, doesn't step in and rescue the sub base before it's sliced and diced and its pieces are parceled out to Virginia and Georgia.

From now until Sept. 8, when the BRAC panel forwards its closure list to the White House, politics will take a back seat to harmony, as Democrats and Republicans, hand in hand, strive to preserve both the base and the economic vitality of southeastern Connecticut. Three events Monday underscored that point: Gov. M. Jodi Rell's brainstorming sessions at the Executive Residence with members of Congress and legislative leaders, and House Speaker James Amann's "submarine base summit" at the Capitol.

"We're all united today - business and labor, Democrats and Republicans. We're all sitting at the same table and that's a good thing," cooed Amann.

Echoed Rell, after the second of her strategy meetings, "Everyone has agreed to a unified, bipartisan effort to save this base ... This is too important for politics ... We are all together in this battle - and we have to be."

That will be true until Sept. 8, when the gloves will come off. If the base goes South, some political careers may follow.

The most endangered of the bunch is U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, the three-term Republican from eastern Connecticut who made the survival of the naval base the pre-eminent issue of the 2004

campaign. Simmons turned back a spirited challenge from Democrat Jim Sullivan in part because he convinced 2nd District voters that he, and he alone, would keep the base off the BRAC list.

To dramatize his standing as a powerful insider, Simmons recruited U.S. Rep. Duncan Hunter of California, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, to stump with him in the closing weeks of the campaign.

But he who lives by the sword dies by the sword. And right now, the only buffer between Simmons and an Election Day date with the Grim Reaper is White House or congressional intervention. If national Republicans want the 2nd District seat to stay in the GOP column, they'll have to pressure the BRAC panel to remove the base from the closure list.

But experts say Simmons will have to get in line behind similarly imperiled Republicans, including U.S. Sens. Olympia Snowe of Maine, Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania and Trent Lott of Mississippi. Given the high-octane nature of this group, Simmons may not succeed in winning an eleventh-hour reprieve.

Like Simmons, Sen. Joseph Lieberman will be on the ballot next year and could feel some heat from voters, especially in light of his stature as Mr. Homeland Security, his membership on the Senate Armed Services Committee and his supposedly warm relationship with the president.

But Simmons staked his candidacy on his ability to save the base; Lieberman made no such promise. Also, as a Democrat, Lieberman has less clout with key decision-makers than Simmons has - or pretended to have.

The third politician who could be in trouble is Rell, who hasn't said whether she's running for election in '06 but has come under attack as if she were. She's been criticized for her blasé attitude toward the plight of the sub base and her failure to lobby on its behalf. In particular, Rell was faulted for her absence at a National

Governors Association conference in Washington in February.

It's just plain silly to think that Rell's presence would have affected the Pentagon's decision; she doesn't have that kind of political juice. In fact, in a state with a Republican governor and three Republican members of Congress, it appears that none of them have much juice, at least not the kind that keeps military installations off closure lists.

In 1993, Rep. Sam Gejdenson, a Democrat later defeated by Simmons, helped rescue the sub base from the brink of extinction.

Sam, come home. Connecticut needs you.

Fort Monroe Lost Rank In Key Areas

The Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk, VA)

Dale Eisman

May 19, 2005

WASHINGTON — Hampton's historic Fort Monroe is among the Army's least militarily valuable major installations, the service said in documents released Wednesday.

Army analysts found that the moat-enclosed base ranked 68th among 97 installations reviewed in preparation for a new round of base closings. The facility scored poorly in its ability to provide training areas for troops, project U.S. power overseas, and serve the Army's future needs, the documents indicated.

Fort Monroe was among the highest scoring bases only in ratings of the quality of life for troops, the report said. The base, a National Historic Landmark, includes an assortment of stately waterfront homes. The Army spends about \$14 million annually maintaining those and other buildings.

Most of the facilities scoring lower than Fort Monroe are leased offices, ammunition plants or storage facilities.

The findings illustrate the difficulty local lawmakers and civic leaders face in making a

case to save Fort Monroe, the only Virginia base targeted for closure by the Pentagon.

While members of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission closely questioned Army leaders Wednesday about other major proposals – including plans to replace nearly 400 National Guard and Army Reserve facilities with 125 new regional installations – the plan to shut Fort Monroe was barely mentioned.

“Places that we are closing tend to be small, administrative in nature,” Army Secretary Francis J. Harvey told the commissioners. The service looked to preserve multi-use facilities, where it can provide housing for large numbers of troops returning from overseas bases and training areas for those soldiers and others, he said

Judged by those standards, Fort Monroe didn't measure up, Harvey said .

More than 2,300 troops are assigned to the base at the western end of the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel. Most are part of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), essentially a think tank for Army leaders; the Army plans to relocate the command to Fort Eustis in Newport News.

Even with the TRADOC transfer, however, the Army also plans major cuts at Fort Eustis, moving out more than 2,900 troops. The service ranked Eustis 33rd of 97 installations in military value.

State Will Do What's Necessary For BRAC Jobs, Governor Says: But Riley warns against taking gains for granted

Huntsville Times (Huntsville, AL)

John Peck

May 19, 2005

Alabama awarded \$253 million in tax incentives for Mercedes Benz to build a plant in Tuscaloosa County with its promise of

employing 1,500 workers. That's more than \$168,000 per job.

Honda got \$158 million in tax incentives, or \$105,580 per job, to build a plant in Talladega County with an initial work force about the same size as the Mercedes Benz plant.

Gov. Bob Riley, visiting Huntsville Tuesday, said Alabama's military base jobs are equally worth fighting for.

"The state is going to do whatever we need to do to make sure we protect the recommendations," Riley told business and political leaders at the Huntsville-Madison County Chamber of Commerce.

Riley applauded Redstone Arsenal for gaining jobs in a Pentagon list of recommended military base closings and realignments that were announced Friday.

Riley said expenditures on local BRAC efforts are minuscule when compared to the millions of dollars the state typically spends to woo a major industry.

"When we're looking at the number of jobs coming in and compare them with the amount of the investments that we're having to put up, it pales in comparison," he said.

He didn't commit any dollar amount to BRAC efforts. But he promised to help local groups fighting for their bases here and elsewhere in the state in other ways, whether it's providing a state airplane for an important national BRAC meeting, testifying before any committees, making a phone call or help paying some bills.

Riley's administration has appropriated \$600,000 to Alabama's BRAC efforts in the last two years. The Tennessee Valley BRAC, which fights for Redstone, got \$260,000 from the state during that period.

Dave Hargrove, spokesman for the Tennessee Valley BRAC, said the organization overall has spent between \$800,000 and \$1 million over the last couple of years. Huntsville, Madison

County, the city of Madison, Decatur, Athens, Scottsboro, Guntersville and other cities throughout the region, which includes those in Tennessee, have contributed to the local BRAC effort, he said.

Redstone Arsenal would gain 1,655 civilian and military jobs and as many as 1,200 contract jobs under the Pentagon's recommendations released by U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

Fort Rucker would get 1,800 additional positions and Anniston Army Depot would gain more than 1,000 jobs. Montgomery's Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base would lose 1,200 positions.

Riley urged area leaders here Tuesday to prepare a "game plan" and not take the proposed Redstone job gains for granted until Congress approves a final plan, perhaps by the end of the year.

"The last thing we need to do is back off, taper down and let anything diminish the enthusiasm that we have going," he said.

Riley said Redstone will particularly raise its stature if the Pentagon's recommendation to move the Army Materiel Command from Arlington, Va., to Redstone, sticks.

Officials say AMC spends \$20 billion annually in procurements. Firms that want to tap into that business may flock to Huntsville to be closer to the action, Riley said.

"I think it's going to open up a world of opportunities, not only for domestic companies, but international sales," he said. Riley noted the AMC is responsible for buying almost everything the Army needs.

"If you wear it, eat it, drive it, fly it or fix it," he said, "the Army Materiel Command does it."

Oceana Seen As Safe, For Now

The Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk, VA)

Jack Dorsey and Kate Wiltrout

May 19, 2005

Although a federal commission has pointedly raised the possibility of relocating Oceana Naval Air Station, military analysts and retired officers familiar with the base closure and realignment process said Wednesday it's a long shot that the master jet base would leave Virginia Beach any time soon.

They cite a range of factors that work to Oceana's advantage: It wouldn't make sense to parcel out its 14 fighter squadrons to other bases as the Department of Defense is trying to consolidate far-flung operations to streamline the military and cut costs.

Also, while other bases may have less urban development around them – the major reason to move Oceana – they lack sufficient runways and buildings.

Then there are the political obstacles: getting seven of the nine members of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission to support the closure would be a huge hurdle; figuring out the ripple effects of the decision at a time when so many other base changes are afoot is another.

"It's a really daunting task, and Congress intentionally made it that way," said Chris Hellman, an analyst with the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation.

He said it's more typical for BRAC commissioners to remove bases from the Department of Defense's proposed list of base closures than to add them.

Last Friday, the department released its recommendations for realignment – which essentially means downsizing and consolidation – and closure. The appointed commission has until Sept. 8 to review and change the list before sending it to President Bush, who must accept or reject the entire list.

During hearings this week, at least two commissioners wanted to know more about the Defense Department's reasoning on Oceana, where neighbors have long complained about

the jet noise, and surrounding land use is a chronic issue.

The commission grilled Navy leaders Tuesday about why Oceana wasn't recommended for closure and moved, given its significant encroachment problems. Commissioners James T. Hill, a retired Army general, and Samuel Skinner, a lawyer, civilian pilot and former White House chief of staff, suggested that the panel might conduct its own search for an alternative location.

"It is very unusual for commissioners to aggressively propose new changes, but every commissioner this time around is new to the process, so in that case it may not be unusual," said Jeremiah Gertler with the Center for Strategic International Studies in Washington and an analyst for the 1995 base closing round.

Retired Rear Adm. Fred Metz, a well-known advocate for keeping Oceana, said Wednesday he didn't believe the panel would have enough votes to add the base to the closure list.

He speculated that the commission's questioning about Oceana was merely to gauge the reaction.

"It's a smokescreen," he said. "I just don't see it."

To cut up the squadrons and scatter them among other East Coast bases would be too expensive and not in the best interests of training, Metz said, noting that much has been invested in maintenance facilities, trainers and infrastructure at Oceana.

The base was considered by the 1995 commission as a possible candidate for closure because of encroachment issues, according to Gertler.

What he doesn't know is whether any other bases listed for closure this time have similar problems. If so, he said, the commission should ask why they were recommended for closure but Oceana wasn't.

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Vern Clark told the commission Tuesday that the Navy looked for another location for its premier East Coast air station, but couldn't find a suitable site. The Navy's search went as far west as New Mexico and also considered several East Coast Air Force bases.

Navy officials have stated that they're aware of Oceana's liabilities and that's why they considered other locations.

Their concern was reflected Wednesday, when the Department of Defense released its reasons for targeting some bases while sparing other facilities. The documents show that defense planners are worried about development encroaching on Oceana – and for that reason decided against closing a Marine Corps Air Station in Beaufort, S.C.

Though one internal group recommended closing the Beaufort facility, senior Navy leaders decided that it should be retained “for future tactical aviation basing flexibility, especially in light of concerns about the continued viability of tactical basing at Naval Air Station Oceana.”

George Foresman, an assistant to Virginia Gov. Mark R. Warner, said he doubted that the commission would find an alternative site for Oceana in the four months it has to study 33 major base closures and hundreds more realignments nationwide.

“That is just one of thousands or tens of thousands of questions they are going to ask during the process,” he said. “I read nothing” into the commission's comments on Oceana “other than the fact that they're trying to get up to speed.”

However, the commission has enough research staff to examine a new Oceana site by Sept. 8, according to Gertler.

“It would be a lot of work, but I can tell you from experience that staff does a lot of work,” he said.

Metz, a former naval aviator and member of a city task force studying noise and encroachment issues, is confident that Oceana will escape closure this round.

But he conceded that the installation's days are numbered, particularly after the Joint Strike Fighter enters production about 2012 and early models of the F/A-18 Hornet are retired in 2008-09. He believes that Oceana's land use problems will only increase, making it an unlikely choice for the next generation of fighter.

“The Virginia Beach people had better start looking at the future because I don't think it will include the JSF,” he said.

Metz believes that Navy leaders want Oceana replaced by a proposed field in Washington and Beaufort counties, N.C., where it has been trying to buy 30,000 acres of farmland for a field to practice aircraft carrier landings.

“That's where the Navy wants a new base,” he said.

David Dickson, executive director of the Virginia Commission on Military Bases, said the Oceana discussion “certainly has our attention.”

But he isn't sounding the alarm yet. “We're right at the front end of this. It's far too early to speak with certainty about anything.”

BRAC: Two paths

Grand Forks, Ellsworth congressional support begin BRAC battle with different approaches
Grand Forks Herald (Grand Forks, SD)

Mike Brue

May 19, 2005

Six U.S. senators and representatives from North Dakota and Minnesota have asked the federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission to hold one of its public hearings in Grand Forks.

Meanwhile, their South Dakota congressional counterparts Wednesday drove legislation to delay the BRAC process and wipe the Pentagon's recommended closure list clean.

The separate efforts, coming just days after the Defense Department's BRAC recommendations, suggest different initial strategies to help their respective states.

Both North Dakota and South Dakota have communities facing deep cuts in personnel at their Air Force bases - Rapid City with the recommended closure of Ellsworth Air Force Base, and Grand Forks with a proposed realignment that would pull its air refueling tankers from Grand Forks Air Force Base by 2009, according to Sen. Kent Conrad of North Dakota.

But, unlike South Dakota's delegation, the early strategy of the North Dakotans - with help from their Minnesota colleagues - leans toward trying to work the BRAC process to help it work for Grand Forks. In Tuesday testimony before the BRAC Commission, Air Force leaders said the Grand Forks base qualifies as a premium future base of operations for homeland security efforts and as a superior future home for the military's unmanned aerial vehicles program.

Some commission members have questioned the vagueness of the proposed UAV mission. "But, you know, it's the early days of the commission," Conrad said in an audio news release Wednesday. "They're asking questions. I think it's understandable why."

The North Dakota congressional delegation still will lobby to retain part, if not all, of the air refueling tanker mission in Grand Forks.

"We're going to work very closely with the Air Force to try to fill in the blanks for this commission so that Grand Forks can be a recipient base of new missions," Sen. Byron Dorgan said in a phone interview from Washington. "I feel we have a great base to sell The Air Force wants this base to remain open, and that's really a helpful sign."

Case for G.F. hearing

In its letter to commission chairman Anthony Principi, the North Dakota and Minnesota congressional leaders said the Grand Forks-East

Grand Forks area is "unquestionably" one of the areas "most adversely affected" by the Pentagon BRAC proposals.

Under the worst-case economic scenario outlined by the Defense Department Friday, nearly 5,000 jobs directly and indirectly tied to Grand Forks Air Force Base operations would be lost from 2006 to 2011. That totals about 7.4 percent of existing employment in Grand Forks and Polk counties.

"A loss of this magnitude would be very difficult and certainly warrants a regional hearing," Sen. Mark Dayton of Minnesota said in a statement.

The letter was signed by Dayton and Minnesota colleagues Sen. Norm Coleman and Rep. Collin Peterson, plus North Dakota Sens. Conrad and Dorgan and Rep. Earl Pomeroy. All but Coleman are Democrats.

The Grand Forks Air Force base "remains uniquely qualified for a strong tanker mission and other flying missions, given its central location, lack of competing commercial air traffic, and modern condition," according to a news release by the North Dakota and Minnesota senators.

If the BRAC Commission holds its hearing in Grand Forks, commissioners would see how viable the base is to both our national defense goals and to the area's economy, they wrote.

S.D. effort

Sen. John Thune of South Dakota, with support from home state colleague Sen. Tim Johnson, introduced legislation Wednesday that would nullify the Pentagon's BRAC recommendations altogether and delay BRAC until most troops returned from Iraq and until the Pentagon issues its Quadrennial Defense Review, which will evaluate the Pentagon's future strategy.

Thune, a Republican who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee, is considering an attempt to add the bill to legislation that authorizes funding for the Department of Defense.

Democrat Johnson acknowledged Wednesday that legislation will be an "uphill political climb" as the Bush administration is certain to oppose it.

"I would put this in the category of doing everything we can," he said.

Thune's office says the bill has some powerful Republican sponsors, however, including former Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott of Mississippi, Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Ted Stevens of Alaska and Maine Sens. Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe.

All of those members' states have major military bases that have been targeted for closure.

'Isn't going to happen'

Lott and Dorgan introduced a bill last year that would have scuttled BRAC. They argued that the nation first needed to decide the fate of its overseas bases. The Senate defeated the senators' effort.

With BRAC under way, Dorgan said, "President Bush would quickly veto anything that gets through, if it got through."

Dorgan said he understands why his South Dakota Senate colleagues are introducing the legislation, but added, "This isn't going to happen." He said it's legislation stemming from the "disappointment" of having a base recommended for closure. "It's largely going to be irrelevant ... This legislation is not any more than a press release, in my judgment," Dorgan said.

Rep. Stephanie Herseth, D-S.D., will introduce a similar bill in the House this week, her office said.

Johnson said Wednesday that the delegation also plans to work with the Pentagon on redevelopment plans for Ellsworth, in case the delay efforts are not successful and Ellsworth stays on the list.

Mac Schneider, press secretary for Rep. Pomeroy, said Pomeroy would want to evaluate specifics of any House proposals to delay BRAC before deciding whether to support them.

The Herald was unable to reach Conrad Wednesday about the South Dakota legislation

Fort Meade Could Get \$300 Million to Grow: 5,400 New Workers Proposed for Base

Washington Post

Christian Davenport and Daniel de Vise
May 19, 2005

The Department of Defense could pump \$300 million into Fort George G. Meade to help the Army base handle an influx of thousands of new workers, officials said.

The funding would be part of \$10 billion the Pentagon might authorize to help military installations across the country adjust to a massive base realignment that was recommended last week. Under the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) proposal, Fort Meade would add about 5,400 positions, more than any other installation in the state.

The announcement of the proposed changes, dreaded by many states that feared losing their bases, came as welcome news in Maryland, which stands to gain as many as 6,500 jobs. Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. (R) called the proposal "uniformly positive" for the state.

"We're very pleased with the initial numbers," Ehrlich said at a press conference last week. "This is a big deal."

Col. John W. Ives, the Fort Meade base commander, said the additional workers would "bring positive growth to the Fort Meade installation and surrounding communities of Anne Arundel, Howard and Prince George's counties."

The list also calls for growth at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Harford County and the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda.

Before any of the recommendations can be put into play, they must be approved by Congress and President Bush, a process that is expected to take months.

Fort Meade is located next to the National Security Agency, which plans to hire 7,500 workers over five years to help fight the war against terrorism. The two installations are helping to drive the development of what County Executive Janet S. Owens (D) calls "the gold coast," an area of office parks that recently popped up to house offices of some of the country's biggest defense contractors: Lockheed Martin Corp., Boeing Co. and Northrop Grumman Corp.

"I'm pleased to have confirmed what I had expected," Owens said. "I was never seriously worried, but it's reassuring to know that everything I've been informed of has proven to be true. So the challenge will continue to be on all of us in Anne Arundel County to create real opportunity for government and the private sector out in West County. It's wonderful."

Bill Badger, president and chief executive of the Anne Arundel Economic Development Corp., said Fort Meade has a "tremendous multiplier effect" on outside services such as defense contractors, retailers, restaurants and hotels. The new workers would include 682 military personnel, 2,915 civilian employees and 1,764 contractors.

The county had already been working with state and federal officials to widen state Route 175, the major artery leading to the base's northern entrance from Interstate 295. Work is underway to ease traffic flow on Route 32 leading to the base's southern entrance, said Joe Rutter, the county's planning and zoning officer.

Public school planners are accustomed to shifting military populations and will find a way to serve the children of the new Fort Meade arrivals, said Chuck Yocum, a specialist in

student demographic planning with Anne Arundel schools.

Military families tend to bring younger children into the schools, Yocum said, so the crush of new students should hit hardest at four elementary schools on the base: Meade Heights, Manor View, Pershing Hill and West Meade. Of the four, only Manor View has enrollment that exceeds its capacity, with about 560 students, he said.

"We're okay, space-wise, on the post right now," Yocum said. "We're just keeping a very close eye and working very closely with these folks."

Glenna Linville, a Fort Meade spokeswoman, said it was unclear how the \$300 million would be spent. "We don't yet have specifics," she said.

Lindsey M. Willis, a spokeswoman for the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development, said the figure was just an estimate that could be changed.

Opinions/ Editorials

BRAC success a reminder of congressional clout

The Decatur Daily (Decatur, AL)
May 19, 2005

Whether Republican or Democrat, conservative or liberal, we in the Tennessee Valley have a good thing going.

Actually four good things: U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Tuscaloosa; Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Mobile; Rep. Bud Cramer, D-Huntsville; and Rep. Robert Aderholt, R-Haleyville.

Not only did the Base Realignment And Closure process leave Huntsville unscathed, it added new programs and more people.

As convinced as North Alabamians were that no rational BRAC process could target Redstone Arsenal, there was risk. There was the risk that

other military bases could have presented better arguments.

And, of course, there was the risk that the Pentagon would make a bad decision. Yes, that's happened before.

We went into BRAC not only believing Tennessee Valley installations should survive, but with the confidence that our elected leaders had the clout to make sure they would survive.

Sen. Shelby, in the Senate since 1986, is chairman of the Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee and is a member of the full Appropriations Committee.

He is also chairman of the Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations Subcommittee, which shares oversight of NASA, the Department of Justice, the National Science Foundation and other agencies.

Sen. Sessions has been in the Senate since 1997. He is a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee and chairman of the Armed Services Airland Subcommittee.

Rep. Cramer has been in the House since 1991. He serves on the House Appropriations Committee and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

Rep. Aderholt, in Congress since 1996, is also on the House Appropriations Committee. He is vice chairman of the Military Quality of Life Subcommittee.

North Alabama has an all-star presence in Washington. The BRAC victory was a reminder of the delegation's importance to the state.

It's time to fight for Eielson Air Force Base

Juneau Empire (Juneau, AK)
May 17, 2005

This editorial appeared in Sunday's Fairbanks Daily News-miner:

Across the nation, from the biggest states to some of the smallest communities, the cry of "Save Our Base" has been rolling in to Washington, D.C., as astute politicians and others try to keep their coveted military installations open while the next round of base closings proceeds.

Many have been at it for years, some much less so. But regardless of the length of their lobbying effort, their leaders in and out of government were keenly aware that the Base Realignment and Closure Commission was going back to work this year. Base supporters have spent millions of dollars and thousands of hours and have promised more as they try to convince the commission that this Army post or Navy shipyard or that Air Force base or Marine camp shouldn't be shuttered.

And then there's Alaska and Fairbanks, whose stunned officials learned Friday that Eielson Air Force Base is on the list to be all but closed, its aircraft and personnel sent elsewhere.

Alaska and Fairbanks appear to have done nothing to prepare for this possibility. That needs to change - and now.

Here's what other states were doing while Alaska was idle: North Carolina Gov. Mike Easley 16 months ago - 16 months ago - gave his lieutenant governor the job of protecting the state's military installations in the 2005 round of base closings. With the military bringing \$18.1 billion into the state's economy each year, the governor and others clearly recognized the need to play defense. So far, Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue has made several lobbying trips to Washington, has worked with local governments to improve their own base-saving campaigns and has put together a package of military-friendly legislation.

Other states are equally as strident on behalf of their bases. In Illinois, retired military officers, politicians and public relations experts are part of the effort to not only save their bases but also expand them. Illinois has been lobbying since the 1995 round of shutdowns, with the cost of the lobbying effort to date expected to top \$3

million. Michigan officials in March made their case with officials in the Defense Department and the Defense Logistics Agency.

In Georgia, Gov. Sonny Perdue has traveled to the Pentagon to make the case for his state's bases. Georgia also has a topflight Military Affairs Coordinating Committee that includes five retired generals or admirals and is led by two former U.S. senators - Sam Nunn, former chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and Mack Mattingly, former chairman of the Military Construction Appropriations Subcommittee.

In Florida, former Defense Secretary William Cohen and former House Majority Leader Dick Army are part of a \$50,000-a-month consulting team working for the state. Massachusetts has a \$410 million plan to develop bases and has hired a former BRAC chairman to be its lobbyist. In New York, Gov. George Pataki last month said the state expects to spend millions of dollars lobbying the government to keep all of the state's bases open. In California, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has hired President Clinton's former chief of staff to lead his state's military lobbying effort.

Leaders in Alaska and in Fairbanks, meanwhile, were led into complacency. They believed that powerful U.S. Sen. Ted Stevens would not permit the closing of any of the big four installations - Elmendorf and Eielson Air Force bases and Forts Richardson and Wainwright. They assumed the annual lofty pronouncements of visiting high-ranking military guests regarding Fairbanks' "strategic location" meant that the area's military installations were secure from closure.

While the process is far from finished, most of the installations the Defense Department recommends for closing or downsizing do meet their suggested fate. And that leads to a debate about the effectiveness of lobbying; the opinions vary. But if lobbying is to pay off, then it will come between now and the time the commission makes its final list and forwards it to the president and Congress.

Eielson is far too important to this community, and therefore to the state, for the announcement of its near-closing to be received without a fight. It is unacceptable to conclude, as Sen. Stevens did on Friday, that Eielson's closing is regrettable but acceptable given that Alaska as a whole has fared well overall when considering military additions of recent years. Since when is it acceptable for a community to lose thousands of people in one stroke?

So now what?

Although Alaska and Fairbanks are terribly far behind in the lobbying wars, they should immediately open and adequately fund a campaign to save Eielson. The effort must be led by Sens. Ted Stevens and Lisa Murkowski, Rep. Don Young, Gov. Frank Murkowski, local mayors and legislators and the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce. The governor took a good first step on Friday in announcing the creation of a panel that will work to prepare for Eielson's shut down while also working to keep it open. The priority, though, should be on the latter.

Despite what effort may be mounted on Eielson's behalf, the work will be difficult - more so because nothing has been done so far. To drive that point home, here's a sobering statement from a consultant whose firm works for several military communities in the South and Midwest: "For any military community waiting to this stage to hire a lobbyist, it's too late."

Additional Notes