

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



BIRD

August 7, 2005

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**Military Pushes For Closure Of Oak Hill
D.C. opposes plan to use detention center
land to expand Fort Meade**

Baltimore Sun (Baltimore, MD)

Phillip McGowan

August 7, 2005

For two decades, District of Columbia leaders have opposed efforts by western Anne Arundel County communities to close a beleaguered juvenile detention center between Laurel and Fort Meade.

But now the district-run Oak Hill Youth Center may be getting in the way of a far more influential neighbor: the military.

With the Pentagon planning to significantly expand Fort Meade, particularly intelligence operations there, some county and Maryland leaders sense an opportunity to shut down the maximum-security juvenile detention center and take control of the strategic parcel.

Last week, the future of Oak Hill was on County Executive Janet S. Owens' agenda as she had lunch with district Mayor Anthony A. Williams in Annapolis.

That afternoon, U.S. Sen. Paul S. Sarbanes announced that he had introduced legislation to close the much-criticized facility and relocate it, preferably to the district. Sarbanes wants Oak Hill's 888 acres divvied up among the county, Fort Meade and the National Park Service.

Fort Meade expects to take on tens of thousands of intelligence-related jobs in the coming decades. The location of Oak Hill, just across Route 32 from Fort Meade, offers the Army post room to grow as a national intelligence center and to provide those assets with additional security.

"There is some big interest to move forward and close that place up," said Del. Brian R. Moe, who represents parts of Prince George's County and western Anne Arundel. He and the three other members of the 21st District delegation have offered their support for Sarbanes' bill.

District officials said last year that they were committed to improving the complex. The district's City Council approved a plan last year to close Oak Hill and replace it with smaller facilities that meet national standards.

Williams spokesman Vincent Morris said city leaders were not interested in vacating the site.

"It's not part of the city's plans to discuss it," Morris said. "It's not on the radar."

The recent push among some Maryland leaders follows a Pentagon recommendation to shift 5,300 jobs to Fort Meade over the coming years.

Within weeks, state leaders and officials at the Army post began to speculate that Fort Meade could expand by tens of thousands of jobs in the years ahead, many of them related to intelligence operations at the National Security Agency.

In June, Fort Meade officials unveiled a three-decade master plan for growth in and around the Army post, with an emphasis on improved security for NSA and its growing cadre of contracting partners. One plank calls for using a piece of Oak Hill's land as a security buffer near Route 32 and the Baltimore-Washington Parkway.

The idea for a security buffer is consistent with bills that have been introduced by Sarbanes and U.S. Rep. Benjamin L. Cardin, a Democrat running for the U.S. Senate.

It's also in line with Owens' thinking. All three want to divvy up the Oak Hill property and use it for parkland, a business park that would likely support NSA contractors and a security buffer.

Cardin has made the closing of Oak Hill a priority. He and local leaders have worked mostly in the shadows for the past two years trying to persuade district officials. Hearings on his bill will take place on Capitol Hill next month.

Sarbanes was noncommittal about Oak Hill's future in an interview in February. But Jesse Jacobs, a spokesman for the senator, said that he and Cardin have been talking for months about the facility.

Sarbanes is confident that the Pentagon's base realignment proposals to move more than 6,000 net jobs to Maryland will be approved, and he is now making Oak Hill a priority, Jacobs said.

Morris said that neither of the congressional bills constitutes a "solid plan."

"The truth is, there are too many unknowns. It's not reasonable to ... introduce a bill without follow-through," he said, speaking to the conditions under which the facility would be moved and where.

Owens was quick to acknowledge the challenges of finding a location in or near Washington for the 208-bed detention center for offenders ages 14 to 21. Oak Hill has been burdened by management woes, crowding, escapes, drug use and abuse.

With land in Washington becoming available, the possibility has arisen that a replacement for the juvenile center could be found. For example, Walter Reed Army Medical Center and its 113 acres in northwest Washington are slated for closing in the Pentagon base recommendations.

But based on her discussion with Williams, Owens doubted a location such as Walter Reed would be viable.

"The key will be ... trying to meet the needs of the D.C. juvenile justice system," Owens said. "He was dubious about finding a relevant property in the district."

Owens said she perceived her face-to-face discussion with Williams as a breakthrough, and is hopeful that it will mark the "beginning of a conversation" on Oak Hill.

One community leader in Laurel, Tim Reyburn, said that the closing of Oak Hill is not a question of if, but only when.

"The closing of Oak Hill will occur because of BRAC," said Reyburn, president of the Russett Community Association. "The freight train is coming. The question is whether he [Williams] is going to stand in front of this and get run over."

After The Groton Base? 'Plan B' In Works Below The Radar, State Explores Alternatives For Property If Effort To Avert Closure Fails

Hartford Courant (Hartford, CT)
Jesse Hamilton
August 7, 2005

GROTON -- State officials say they have a backup plan underway in case the blitz to push the Naval Submarine Base off the federal closure list doesn't work. But no one is keen to talk about it.

With just a month to go before the decision by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission that may save or doom the base, the loud voices of the resistance have drowned out the acknowledged, but intentionally veiled, effort to prepare for the possibility that the military will abandon the Groton base.

What would become of the vacated 687 acres on the east bank of the Thames River?

Such contingency planning is essential, say base-closing experts, because competition for resources to ease the transition can be fierce.

"Who and what we have going on at the moment is adequate for the task at hand," said James Abromaitis, commissioner of the state Department of Economic and Community Development. "We've identified some resources and people. They've had some preliminary discussions."

If Groton closes, he said, "we'll be ready to go in full gear."

But putting too much effort into planning for defeat, Abromaitis said, "would take away from our resources at the other end." All attention should be on saving the base, he said, adding, "We don't want anybody to think we're retreating from that point."

"There is a Plan B. There has been work on a Plan B for quite some time," said Rich Harris, the spokesman for Gov. M. Jodi Rell who has led the state's BRAC opposition. "We're really not talking a whole lot about Plan B. We have no intention of having to use it."

By now, according to the experience of the Association of Defense Communities, the state should be close to answering two questions: What would Connecticut want to do with the base property, and who might be in charge of doing it?

Getting started early has worked best for the communities struck by previous rounds of the BRAC process, according to the nonprofit association's executive director, Tim Ford.

"More and more communities realize that they can't just ignore that side of it," he said. Those that started early "were in a much better position to be able to start a successful redevelopment project."

Ford added: "Most of the time, these [closure plans] are not very public efforts."

In recent weeks, Connecticut's leaders have pointed to hopeful signs, such as positive feedback from BRAC members who will finalize the closure list and endorsements from some of the submarine community's heavy hitters.

The gloom following the announcement that Groton was on Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's recommended list of bases to be closed has lightened. Base advocates have started expressing a belief that the five commissioners they need to vote Groton off the list may be in reach.

At the same time, there is an ugly statistical reality. In the BRAC process, precious few bases are pulled back from the brink, historically not much more than one in 10. Groton, in 1993, was among that fraction when the state's team successfully repelled the removal of its subs.

Today's similar team hopes for a repeat, but the sailing hasn't been entirely smooth.

A recent meeting among U.S. Sen. Chris Dodd, U.S. Sen. Joseph Lieberman, U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons and the new chief of naval operations, Adm. Michael G. Mullen, demonstrated that Mullen supports the Pentagon's wish to shed

Groton. The base is old, he argued, and Kings Bay in Georgia - which would receive a squadron of Groton's subs and its sub school - is much newer.

Simmons objects to that argument. He called Groton "a historic base, but a modern base," listing the recent construction and renovation projects at the base, which saw its first submarines in 1915.

After the Mullen meeting, Simmons, whose 2nd District includes Groton, admitted: "We think we're close, but we're not there yet."

A Long Road

Following the logic of state officials, revealing much about what will happen if the base closes smacks of defeatism.

Neither Abromaitis nor Harris would reveal who is assigned to Plan B work, though Abromaitis said most of the same people working with the state's base-defending "strike force" are now - or would start, if necessary - pitching in on Plan B.

Connecticut is typical in its secretive approach, Ford said. In working with communities around the country that face base closures, he said he has met with congressional staff members in cafeterias to avoid scrutiny. "This is a very political process," he said.

His organization held a conference on the closure process in June. Many of the BRAC-list states showed up, though not Connecticut. Among the states that had gone through previous closures, there were some success stories - but none of them easy, Ford said.

"It took all of those communities a significant amount of time to get to the point where they say, 'Yes, we are successful,'" he said. "We can't ignore that long road."

For Connecticut, though, the road could be especially long. The last pieces of the base wouldn't be vacated until 2011. And then there would be the cleanup of decades of waste and contamination.

Plan B would be complex, Abromaitis said, including trying to figure out the Defense Department's intentions and work on the environmental remediation. Also to be considered are the potential entanglements over the many parcels of land that make up the base, decisions over what people would want to do with the land and questions about the investments that would be needed.

Jeff Blodgett, vice president of research for the Connecticut Economic Resource Center, said it would be a "long, drawn-out process" of perhaps a decade.

"There are some opportunities," he said. But he added, "It'd be 10 years before that land is cleaned up and ready for use."

Meanwhile, the state would have a more immediate economic crisis on its hands with the loss of so many jobs and the threats to related businesses. Blodgett estimated that about 30,000 jobs could vanish if closing the base took sub-builder Electric Boat and a number of other area businesses with it.

Dozens Of Questions

Groton's Route 12, the Submarine Veterans Memorial Highway, is a commercial strip running like a vein through Navy housing developments on its way past the sub base. Three of the businesses on it, a car wash, a laundry and Pop's Kitchen diner, belong to Bud Fay. More than half of his customers, he figures, are sailors or their families.

Losing the base isn't something he can plan for easily. How long would it take? What leaves first? Will the cleanup start right away?

"There are dozens of questions and very few answers," he said.

Fay, a local business leader who is also on the base-defending Subbase Realignment Coalition, said: "Like most everyone else, my preference is to believe that we can overcome this situation."

Problems wouldn't stop at the cash register. Groton's schools would see a major drain of students. Superintendent James E. Mitchell said more than a quarter of his students are dependents of active-duty military families. Many more are from families that rely on those sailors and their Groton mission for their livelihoods.

Still, Mitchell said, "We really haven't made any plans."

The closure would be a long process, he said, and anyway, he's looking optimistically toward the day the BRAC announces its own version of the list. After that, he said, "We'll do the best we can with information we have."

In the city of Groton - the section of Groton across the Thames River from downtown New London - Mayor Dennis Popp had a similar answer: "What we are doing is holding off until we get that indecision out of the way."

The base is one of the city's major electricity and water customers, so some of the city's utility projects have been slowed down "because we don't know what's going to happen."

Come Sept. 8, when the BRAC members hand their final list to President Bush, another fight begins. Save-the-base efforts around the country will cling to the hope that the president or the final authority - Congress - will reject the entire BRAC list, but practicality will also drive each community to the same goals: federal aid dollars, the best consultants, big-name developers.

Among the first grants to pursue will be from the federal Office of Economic Adjustment, the Department of Defense branch charged with helping communities affected by base closures. Another early source of money for the planning process is the U.S. Department of Labor, which already awarded Connecticut a \$1 million planning grant. The Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce also is expected to help.

Roy G. Wuchitech of the Los Angeles office of Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton, a law firm that often works with the developers of former military land, said: "Frequently, they wind up with some very interesting options, in terms of development and re-use," especially former Navy properties on desirable waterfront property.

Those that spend all their efforts on saving a base may lose some time and initiative for redevelopment, he said. "The record is clear that very few bases get saved," he said.

Simmons said "we've had some conversations" with consulting groups, but added that there will be plenty of time if the base remains on the list.

In Ford's opinion, communities have a responsibility to be prepared for the worst. After all, he said, "the statistics are against them."

And with the approach of the commission's deadline, "time is kind of running out."

Simmons, though, prefers to put everything into the fight to maintain Groton as the largest U.S. base for fast-attack submarines. He shies away from talking about the alternative, instead falling back on an old Chinese expression:

"If you speak of the devil," he said, "the devil will come to your door."

Guam Politician Wants Groton Base's Subs Now

New London Day (New London, CT)
Robert A. Hamilton
August 6, 2005

Now Guam has made a bid to grab Groton's submarines.

The congresswoman from the island nation, Rep. Madeleine Z. Bordallo, has asked the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission to reconsider a Navy plan to move submarines from Groton to Norfolk, Va., and Kings Bay, Ga., and instead boost the submarine fleet on Guam.

Three U.S. submarines make their home in Guam. Bordallo contends as many as nine additional submarines can be homeported there, and she noted that using Guam as a homeport effectively doubles the number of days they can devote to missions in the Far East by reducing the transit time from Pearl Harbor or San Diego.

"According to former Navy Secretary Richard Danzig, 'three submarines could do the work of 10' if the Navy homeported them in Apra Harbor," she wrote. "Nine more submarines on Guam would do the work of 30."

She also notes the private Guam Shipyard could use the extra business. Earlier this year, she observed, Guam Shipyard proved its capabilities by drydocking and making emergency repairs to the USS San Francisco, which struck a seamount.

"Without stable and increased work from the U.S. Navy at the Guam Shipyard, there is a risk of a workforce loss, which would reduce the shipyard's value as a vital asset in supporting a forward deployed Navy in Asia," Bordallo wrote.

But her letter did not ignite as much controversy as a white paper issued by a group in Kings Bay earlier this week that attempts to advance the Pentagon's base realignment and closure or BRAC recommendation to close the Groton base.

"While we understand Ms. Bordallo is fighting for her district, there has been no indication that the BRAC Commission or the Navy is considering altering the current East Coast/West Coast attack submarine ratio necessary for Guam to absorb Groton's submarines," said Jonathan Martin, a spokesman for U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District.

Simmons and Bordallo both sit on the House Armed Services Committee and the Navy subcommittee.

John C. Markowicz, chairman of the Subbase Realignment Coalition, a grassroots group

fighting to save the Naval Submarine Base in Groton, seemed similarly unflustered.

“Guam has never come up with any of the discussions we've had with the BRAC Commission or the BRAC Commission staff,” said Markowicz.

Congressional and Navy sources said the reason for the muted response is likely that the BRAC process has paid almost no attention to the possibility.

Navy studies have shown that basing more submarines in Guam would be prohibitively expensive, and put them at greater risk from weather damage because of the typhoons that blow through the area regularly.

One Navy official said it would cost hundreds of millions of dollars, possibly billions, to build the housing, stores, schools and other infrastructure that would be needed to base more submarines in Guam, which is about at capacity.

In addition, while Bordallo proposed homeporting nine more submarines in Guam, the Navy has never suggested homeporting more than nine total on the island, because it would concentrate too much of its fleet off Southeast Asia. There are too many other areas of the world of strategic importance to consider more, Navy officials have said.

Top Navy Official To Pay Visit To Groton Next Week

New London Day (New London, CT)
August 6, 2005

Army played role in decision to put base on closure list

By Robert A. Hamilton, Day Staff Writer

Groton — A top Navy official, whose office played a role in the Navy recommendation to shut down the Naval Submarine Base as part of the base realignment and closure process, will visit the base next week.

Lt. Christine Ventresca, a Navy spokeswoman, confirmed that Wayne Army, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Installations, will swing through the Northeast next week, visiting Groton, as well as the Brunswick (Maine) Naval Air Station and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine, which the Navy has also recommended be shut down.

“Mr. Army expects to visit a variety of bases in the Northeast, to discuss the missions of the base, and various installation and environmental issues,” Ventresca said.

His visit comes as the BRAC process is in its final weeks. The Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission staff is in the process of writing its review of the Pentagon recommendations, and the commission will take up the issue the fourth week of August.

Despite the service's recommendations to close the three installations that Army will visit, Ventresca said, Army still retains responsibility over the bases.

“The BRAC process is not over,” Ventresca said. “There are no final decisions until the BRAC commission, the President and the Congress have reviewed and approved the Pentagon's recommendations.”

Although Ventresca would not comment on the specific day of the visit, Navy sources expect it will be Tuesday or Wednesday, because Army will likely have to be back in Washington, D.C., by Thursday for a hearing on environmental issues before the commission, which has the final say in whether Groton stays on the shutdown list.

“We'll certainly try to get in touch with Secretary Army and seek a meeting during his visit,” said Jonathan Martin, a spokesman for U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District. “The congressman has made an effort to meet with and join most of the visiting defense and BRAC officials when they come up to Groton, and he will certainly do so this time.”

John C. Markowicz, chairman of the Subbase Realignment Coalition, a group fighting to save the Groton base, said it's hard to gauge why Army might be visiting.

“Based on the hearing taking place next week, if the BRAC commission has concerns about environmental costs at known Superfund sites, Mr. Army's visit might be related to gathering information on that subject,” Markowicz said.

“It's just one more indication of the very comprehensive approach that the BRAC commission and it's staff is taking to this process,” Markowicz said.

The base is a known superfund site, and critics of the plan to shut it down contend the Navy has seriously underestimated the cleanup costs it will face if it walks away from the installation.

Gov. M. Jodi Rell has ordered the state Department of Environmental Protection, led by Commissioner Gina McCarthy, to scrutinize the Navy recommendation for flaws.

Markowicz met with Army Sept. 29, 2004, when Army was the acting Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Installations and the Environment.

“If Secretary Army would like to meet with me again, I would be pleased to meet with him again, but if he has environmental questions he should be meeting with Commissioner McCarthy,” Markowicz said. “But I don't think he's looking for a meeting at this point.”

Navy Complex Might Be Leased Out BRAC commissioners thinking outside box

San Diego Union-Tribune (San Diego, CA)

Rick Rogers

August 6, 2005

After touring the Navy Broadway Complex yesterday, Base Realignment and Closure Commission members suggested they might take a novel approach on the 16-acre parcel, which has commanding views of San Diego Bay.

Instead of recommending closure, they suggested giving the Navy and developers time to cut a deal on the prime property, which could be worth \$200 million. Such a deal could spur dramatic change on the waterfront.

Anthony Principi, BRAC chairman, said his commission might suggest "a time-certain lease" in their base closure recommendations to be sent to President Bush in September. The president must accept or reject the entire list.

An agreement could allow redevelopment of the land, on the North Embarcadero, into a district of shops, restaurants, parks and high-rise housing, with the Navy using the proceeds to move some operations to another location, maybe the nearby 32nd Street Naval Base.

If no deal is reached in 12 to 18 months of the recommendations to Bush, Principi suggested, the complex could then be closed under BRAC.

Closure commissioners did not know if such a recommendation has been made before.

The suggestion is unique because San Diego, with the possible exception of the Naval Post Graduate School and Defense Language Institute at Monterey, is literally in a unique position.

Most military bases are in rural communities where land is relatively cheap. The Broadway complex, home to the Navy since the 1920s, is on very prized and expensive land.

There is another difference: Most communities beg commissioners not to close their bases. A coalition of private and business interests in San Diego – as well as the Navy – see opportunity and dollar signs.

"This is not like other BRAC action," said Philip Coyle, a BRAC commissioner.

U.S. Rep. Susan Davis, D-San Diego, who met with the BRAC commissioners yesterday, said the time ultimatum is the nudge needed to jump-start redevelopment of the waterfront.

"This could really be one of the happy things that comes out of base closure," Davis said. "We will do what is best all the way around."

Julie Meier Wright, president and chief executive of the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corp., said there are several advantages to not using BRAC to close the Broadway complex.

In 1992, the city of San Diego, with the Centre City Development Corp. as its agent, agreed with the federal government on a plan to redevelop the Broadway complex. Negotiations began in 1987, but little has been done, in part, because of the poor economy in the early 1990s and anticipation of another round of base closures.

The North Embarcadero Visionary Plan lays out renovation proposals that would cost roughly \$182 million.

Wright said it's uncertain whether the development plan would hold if the government closed the base.

Also, if closed through BRAC, other federal agencies would be offered the land, potentially scuttling the redevelopment agreement.

The Broadway complex is headquarters for Navy Region Southwest, which includes the Navy Readiness Command Southwest and the Fleet and Industrial Supply Center.

About 1,100 people work in the three-building complex. Because of safety concerns, a move to the 32nd Street Naval Station has been suggested. Such a shift would improve security by placing the headquarters in a more fortified area.

Wright has said that developers would be more comfortable buying than leasing the land, but Principi did not mention that option yesterday.

Military experts and developers estimate the site's worth at \$150 million to \$350 million.

Principi said the deal could fall through if the Navy is not made a fair offer for the land.

On Monday, Principi and other closure commissioners are scheduled to meet in Monterey to discuss closing installations in Alaska, Colorado and California.

Arsenal Plan Could Add 1,100 Jobs Warren complex awaits approval

Detroit Free Press (Detroit, MI)

Dan Cortez

August 4, 2005

The U.S. Army's Detroit Arsenal stands to gain 1,100 jobs -- hundreds more than first anticipated -- if the Base Realignment and Closure Commission approves the expansion of the arsenal in Warren, officials say.

It was previously estimated the arsenal -- a central procurement and tank research center for the Army -- would gain 647 jobs, but that did not include about 450 administrative and support staff jobs that would transfer from an arsenal in Rock Island, Ill., the Macomb Chamber said Wednesday in a report to members.

The arsenal now has 4,100 employees. It is still not known how many of the positions will be new jobs, or if the current employees will follow their work to Warren.

The Pentagon's recommendations were made in May and must be approved or altered by Sept. 8 by the commission.

Samuel Skinner, a member of the commission, visited the arsenal July 29 and met with military officials.

Macomb County Commission Chair Nancy White, who was along on the tour, said Skinner seemed to like what he saw.

"He asked questions about efficiencies and economies," White said Wednesday. "He's very impressed by the automotive issues and how we can deal with the automotive companies and academia."

Skinner said the military commission will make final evaluations in about two weeks.

"It's a very impressive operation," he said Wednesday of the arsenal.

Peggy Mazzara, the Macomb Chamber president who has gone to Washington, D.C., to lobby for the arsenal's survival and expansion, said Warren and Macomb County would be ready for the influx of new residents.

She noted that the 312-acre Grand Sakwa development near the arsenal will include 200 houses and 760 condos.

"Our spin is we have an efficient and economic way to take care of the employees here," Mazzara said.

Thom Hart, president of the Quad City Development Group near Rock Island, said he will continue to fight the Pentagon's plans.

"We don't think the recommendations make sense," he said Wednesday.

If approved, the arsenal would have to construct new buildings on the campus.

Agency Applauds Base's Renovation

Chicago Tribune (Chicago, IL)
August 6, 2005

FT. SHERIDAN -- Members of a federal agency charged with advising President Bush and Congress on historic preservation policy touted Ft. Sheridan Friday as an example of how a former military base can be converted into a community asset.

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, which met in Evanston, visited Ft. Sheridan Thursday to gather information and help develop ways to encourage other communities facing base closings on how best to reuse historic properties.

"You've got to figure out the art of the possible," said John Nau, council chairman. "The art of the possible is absolutely what we saw at Ft. Sheridan."

Maryland Air Guard unit weighs possible move under Pentagon plan

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Middle River, MD)
Stephen Manning
August 6, 2005

A family crisis forced Airman Matt Shortridge to leave an active-duty maintenance job working on B-1 bombers at an Air Force base in South Dakota a few months ago and join the Maryland Air National Guard.

He moved to his hometown of Baltimore to care for his mother, who had developed a brain tumor. The part-time Guard job gives Shortridge stability that is rare in the military - he can choose where he is posted and doesn't have to move around. He has applied for a full-time maintenance position with the unit to stay in the military and be near his mother.

"I can't leave her again," said Shortridge, 19, sitting in the small cockpit of one of the Guard's 135th Airlift Group transport planes he repairs as a crew chief at Martin State Airport.

But under the Pentagon's base closing proposals, the unit's eight C-130J planes would be dispersed to bases in California and Rhode Island. That would leave the unit's 400 airmen like Shortridge, most of them civilians, with the difficult decision of whether to move away from the area with the planes.

"These people are embedded in their communities, they have civilian jobs," said Lt. Col. Thomas Hans, commander of the 135th's airlift squadron. "You spend your whole career here."

On a recent muggy afternoon, four of the unit's beefy C-130Js were parked on the expansive tarmac at the airfield east of Baltimore, as technicians hosed down another in a hangar.

Nearby, pilots in green jumpsuits climbed into A-10 attack planes to prepare for training missions.

The C-130J is the Air Force's primary transport plane, able to carry heavy loads of equipment and troops and land at short or rugged airports. The Maryland Air National Guard is one of the few Guard units equipped with only the C-130J, a plane equipped with the Air Force's latest technology.

About 1,650 people, most civilians, serve part time in Maryland's Air Force and Army National Guard units. The soldiers and airmen can be called up for active duty during war and they help out, on the orders of the governor, during natural disasters or other crises.

After last year's floods in Port Deposit and Hurricane Isabel in 2003, the Army Guard helped clean up. A day after the Sept. 11 attacks, the C-130J planes ferried recovery workers to New York City. Two of the Air Guard's planes now fly missions in and out of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The 135th first flew 50 years ago out of a now-defunct airport at the Baltimore harbor. Martin State Airport is now its home. In a crisis, its job is to carry troops, material or other supplies where they are needed.

Just 40 miles north of Washington, the 135th is the best-equipped Air Guard unit that can respond to a terrorist crisis, said Maj. Gen. Bruce Tuxill, commander of the Maryland National Guard. The C-130Js could evacuate people during an attack, he said. If weapons of mass destruction are used in the capital, Guard planes could quickly carry response teams to the scene.

But under the proposals under the Pentagon's Base Closure and Realignment, or BRAC, the eight planes would be distributed to other units, where they would join other Air National Guard C-130Js. Transport planes from an Air Guard unit in New Castle, Del., would also be moved. That leaves the closest unit with similar

capabilities hundreds of miles away in Youngstown, Ohio.

In its report, the Pentagon says the move is meant to create new, larger C-130J squadrons and deems Martin State of "low military value." It estimates the shift could save \$97.1 million over the next 20 years. The military proposals are under review by an independent commission, which will release its own list in September. A final decision by President Bush is expected in the fall.

The recommendations are part of a larger reshuffling of Air National Guard units by the military. At least 54 sites with Guard units would either grow, be downsized or closed. The 135th would be eliminated, along with the jobs of its members who choose not to move. Some may be retrained, but others would likely have to quit the Guard.

Some states have filed lawsuits over the plan or, like Delaware, threatened litigation. They question whether the moves are allowed - the legal counsel for the BRAC Commission studying the Pentagon proposals has suggested it may not have the authority to relocate or disband Air Guard units. A special hearing on the issue is set for Thursday in Washington.

Tuxill said the adjutants general of the states, who command the Air Guard units, want the proposal overturned but would rather the matter be handled internally in the Air Force rather than through lawsuits.

"A lawsuit is going to get in a fist fight with them," he said. "I don't want to get in a fist fight."

In an informal poll conducted recently, only two members of the unit said they were willing to move if the C-130Js are sent away from Martin State, according to Tuxill. The rest said they didn't want to leave their jobs, homes and communities, he said.

That includes Hans. A mild-mannered pilot who lives in Glyndon, Hans used to fly for US Airways out of Baltimore and Washington until

he was furloughed a few years ago. He later saw his pension slashed when the carrier went bankrupt. He is one of the 135th's few full-time employees, but he doesn't hesitate to say he won't leave.

"I'm too established here," he said.

Navy official cancels shipyard visit in face of criticism

The Associated Press State & Local Wire
(Portland, ME)
August 6, 2005

Responding to criticism from the governors and congressional delegations of Maine and New Hampshire, a top Navy official has canceled his planned visit to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard.

Shipyard advocates said Wayne Arny, acting deputy assistant secretary of the Navy for installations and facilities, planned a visit during the coming week to analyze the cost of environmental clean-up operations if the shipyard closes as the Pentagon recommends.

Critics said such a visit would be premature because the Base Realignment and Closure Commission has yet to make its final recommendations to President Bush.

A policy adviser to Maine Gov. John Baldacci said his boss was "quite disappointed" when he heard of Arny's planned visit, saying it was similar to having "the verdict issued before the trial is completed."

"(Arny's) office said they understood the position of the governor's office," Lance Boucher said.

In a joint statement, the Maine and New Hampshire congressional delegations said canceling the trip was appropriate.

Arny's trip "would have presupposed the findings of the independent BRAC commission, which continues to review information provided by the delegation and community groups that

shows substantial deviation from the BRAC selection criteria," the statement said.

Other advocates said they were wary of the visit, even though the trip could have been a positive sign that the Navy is revisiting its figures.

"It's either very late or extremely premature for someone to be doing that sort of analysis," said Dick Ingram, one of the chairmen of the Save Our Shipyard Task Force.

Paul O'Connor, president of the Metal Trades Council at the shipyard, said Arny's visit was solely to put a value on the shipyard's holdings.

"His function in this capacity would be that of a glorified real estate broker," O'Connor said. "If the commissioners keep us on the list, which I hope they don't, come back after that."

Zero Hour Nears For Base Backers Officials will have minutes to make cases

Monterey Herald (Monterey, CA)
Julia Reynolds
August 7, 2005

Advocates of keeping Monterey's military facilities in Monterey are polishing their pitches for Monday, when the federal Base Realignment and Closure commission holds its only West Coast hearing.

At issue: proposals to close or consolidate the Naval Postgraduate School and the Defense Language Institute.

After accompanying BRAC commissioners on morning visits to the schools, local officials will have a few minutes each to offer their arguments.

The California delegation to the hearing was coordinated by Sen. Dianne Feinstein, who met with Rep. Sam Farr, D-Carmel, to discuss strategy and arrange the lineup of speakers. With bases from San Diego, Colorado and Alaska also on the agenda, Monterey speakers will have less than an hour total to make their case.

The hearing is scheduled to run 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. in the Steinbeck Room of the Monterey Convention Center at 1 Portola Plaza, and is open to the public until the room is filled.

For BRAC commissioners, who have been bombarded with letters, calls and e-mails on top of a hectic cross-country schedule, the testimony is likely to be the last word they will hear on Monterey's at-risk bases before casting votes starting Aug. 23. The deadline for public input is Friday.

An advance team of commission staff arrived in Monterey last week to make logistical arrangements for the site visits and hearing.

Retired Adm. Harold Gehman and former Rep. James Hansen of Utah are scheduled to visit the schools early Monday. At 1 p.m., they will join commission Chairman Anthony Principi and commissioners Philip Coyle, a former assistant secretary at the Pentagon who lives in California, and James Bilbray, a former Nevada congressman, at the public hearing.

Local officials plan to sing in unison, pitching their message that keeping DLI and NPS alive -- and in Monterey -- makes military sense.

Farr, the Central Coast's congressman, said he will stress the strategic importance of Monterey's unique mix of educational resources and research facilities.

Former Central Coast Congressman Leon Panetta plans to attend. Monterey City Manager Fred Meurer will argue that the Pentagon's data, particularly concerning the naval school, is flawed.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger may also speak, though his office had not confirmed his appearance as of Friday.

Options still open|

In July, the commission expressed interest in merging the two Monterey schools with Ohio's Air Force Institute of Technology to form a national security research university. But some

commissioners have since said they are looking at other options, including moving both schools out of the area or closing the naval school and sending its students to private universities.

Last week, commissioners Samuel Skinner and retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd "Fig" Newton toured the Air Force school in Dayton, Ohio, where community leaders pitched an opposing message -- move the Monterey bases to Dayton and the government will save money.

Skinner said he had seen the cost analysis for moving the Air Force institute to Monterey, but not the reverse scenario. On Monday, he asked the leaders to send the commission new numbers.

"You've done a very detailed analysis of what it would cost if all these people go west. I'd like also to know what it would cost if NPS came east," Skinner said.

Learning exactly what data and scenarios the commission is seriously considering has been frustratingly hard for communities, despite promises from Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld that this closure round would be the most transparent in the program's 15-year history.

Several weeks after it was promised, the Pentagon began delivering closure data to Congress, but much of it was still classified and unavailable to congressional members without security clearance.

Only after 19 senators sent a protest letter to the president did materials begin to be declassified in June.

The Pentagon also said the data would be posted on its Web site immediately after its closure list was announced May 13, but that, too, took several weeks. Much of the material is still dribbling in.

Added to that is the Army, Navy and Air Force use wildly different formats for their closure scenarios, which are meant to analyze the costs,

savings and impact of closing or consolidating bases.

For instance, while the Army and Navy relied on information-gathering "data calls" from the bases, the Air Force does not do data calls, instead offering its own analysis. Many of the Army's scenarios include summaries of the impact that closure would have on surrounding communities, but many of the Navy's do not.

The result is that the commission has found itself comparing "not just apples and oranges, but apples and cats" when it tries to look at scenarios such as lumping DLI and NPS together, said NPS Foundation President Henry Mauz, a retired Navy admiral who serves on the state's Council for Base Support and Retention.

Vote in Washington

The panel is juggling scenarios that were thoroughly fleshed out a year or more ago, such as privatizing DLI or merging DLI and NPS, prospects that have barely begun to be investigated.

While both local facilities escaped inclusion on the original base closure list in May, they were added to the list to make it possible for commissioners to analyze the various scenarios. The commissioners will rely largely on their staff to analyze and summarize mountains of new data pouring in while the commission conducts additional hearings later in the week.

Then, less than three weeks from now, commissioners will gather in Washington to vote on the closures and consolidations that affect 900 major and smaller installations.

Their list is likely to be the final one. President Bush and Congress can accept or reject the entire list, but appear more likely to accept it. Although there are rumblings in Congress about rejecting the list or delaying BRAC funding, similar efforts never succeeded in past closure rounds.

President Bush has already made his intentions clear.

He told reporters last week that he has decided to accept the commission's recommendations without challenge.

Opinions/ Editorials

Fighting to save Duluth's fighter wing;

Duluth News-Tribune (Duluth, MN)

Rep. James Oberstar

August 6, 2005

The majority of the deployed officers and airmen of the 148th Fighter Wing are back home after almost two months of service in Iraq. It is a time for celebration and recognition of the hard and dangerous work these dedicated men and women performed.

And it is a time to pray for the safe return of the those in the Armed Forces who are still serving overseas. However, it is an ironic twist of fate that while the members of the 148th Fighter Wing were successfully supporting their commander-in-chief's mandate in Iraq, they learned that the Bush administration has put their future mission in doubt.

In May, it was announced that the Fighter Wing's F-16 aircraft are slated to be retired in 2007. There was no follow-on mission identified for the 148th, which creates the very real possibility that half of the wing's positions would be eliminated.

I have a number of concerns about this decision. The specific proposal was listed under the Air Force's so-called Future Total Force (FTF), which is purportedly separate from the Base Realignment and Closure program (BRAC). As a large reorganization proposal, FTF would normally be debated in Congress in conjunction with the annual defense authorization and appropriations processes.

What is disturbing is that the FTF proposals were submitted under the auspices of BRAC. Because of this action, the formerly sharp lines between BRAC and FTF are now quite blurred. I hope that the BRAC commission will do the

right thing and separate the Air Force proposals from the BRAC recommendations.

While the proposed retirement of the 148th Fighter Wing's aircraft in 2007 was unexpected, I see it as an opportunity to further improve the Duluth base's military value. It would make strategic and fiscal sense for the Department of Defense to delay the retirement of the aircraft until a specific follow-on mission is identified.

Along with the rest of the Minnesota congressional delegation and state and local leaders, I am working with the Air Force and the 148th leadership in finding a new mission for the Fighter Wing. I have also invited members of the BRAC commission to tour the base and see for themselves how valuable the city of Duluth and the Fighter Wing are to the overall Air Force mission.

This is a chance for the Air Force to retain a highly professional and dedicated unit that has proven itself time and time again for almost 60 years. As the men and women of the 148th Fighter Wing complete their mission in Iraq, the fight for their future has just begun.

If sub base is put on the shelf, there's a good reason why

Norwich Bulletin (Norwich, CT)
Ray Hackett
August 7, 2005

The phrase "cautious optimism" is probably the most overused expression by politicians -- and repeated all too frequently by journalists. It's the political happy face label to describe a situation that is anything but optimistic.

And it's been used a lot lately in assessing the state's efforts to reverse the Pentagon recommendation to close the Groton submarine base. Granted, the news of late has shown some positive signs that give reason for optimism. A number of retired four-star admirals have come out publicly in support of the Groton base. Members of the independent Defense Base Closure and Realignment (BRAC) Commission

have also publicly expressed "concerns" regarding the Pentagon recommendation.

The local leaders continue to find "flaws" in the Defense Department's reasoning, raising more questions about the actual costs and savings projected. But yet, officials can't help but add the familiar disclaimer to the end of the sentence: "I'm cautiously optimistic."

In this case, however, there is reason to be cautious. The Department of the Navy is determined to close the nation's oldest submarine base, and it's not backing off from that position no matter how many "flaws" Connecticut officials discover in the Pentagon's reasoning. But the biggest hurdle Connecticut faces in trying to overturn the recommendation is that there is, in fact, a certain amount of logic to the Pentagon thinking.

Simple analogy

Consider it this way:

Suppose you were renting three shelves and you needed to find a way to reduce costs because in the years to come you'll be removing more items from the shelves than adding to them.

The top shelf (Groton) is the smallest of the three and pretty well packed, with just enough room to add a little more if needed. The second shelf (Norfolk, Va.) is larger, but just as crowded. You could add a little more if you moved a few things around, but not much.

The third shelf (Kings Bay, Ga.) is the biggest of the three -- and only half filled.

Looking at the three shelves, it becomes pretty obvious you have more space than what you need today. And that empty space will grow as you start to take more items off the shelves in the years to come.

At first glance the solution to the problem would appear to be to take the items off the third shelf (Kings Bay) and put them on the others. But that doesn't work because the items on the third shelf

are too big to fit on the other shelves. So the third shelf (Kings Bay) has to stay.

The second option might be to move some of the items on the crowded second shelf (Norfolk), filling what space is available on the top shelf (Groton). But that doesn't solve the main problem because you still have three shelves -- and more space than what you need because you can't completely eliminate the second shelf.

So it would appear the only "reasonable" option available would be to take everything off the top shelf (Groton) and reposition it on the second (Norfolk) and third (Kings Bay). It works, and now you can get rid of the empty shelf (Groton). But to do that, you'll also need to spend some up-front money to strengthen the two bottom shelves so they can handle the extra weight.

Which brings us to the \$1.6 billion question: Will you actually save any money by eliminating the top shelf after spending money to strengthen the bottom two? The Navy says yes, \$1.6 billion over 20 years after an initial investment of \$680 million to move things around. Connecticut says no, putting the cost closer to \$1 billion, with only \$17 million saved annually.

Both of those arguments have been made to the BRAC Commission. In the days ahead, the BRAC staff will sequester itself behind closed doors and begin pouring over the mountains of data it has received, and ultimately emerge with a recommendation of its own. The nine commissioners will review that recommendation and decide for themselves if it makes any sense to eliminate one of the shelves.

Additional Notes