

# Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

# EARLY BIRD

August 13, 2005

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Air Force Print News  
Master Sgt. Mitch Gettle  
August 12, 2005

WASHINGTON -- The co-chairman of the Air Force's base closure executive group recently discussed the views the Air Force took when considering the Base Realignment and Closure recommendations.

"We have to base our future Air Force on a smaller but more capable force, and organize that force in the most effective way," said Maj. Gen. Gary W. Heckman, assistant deputy chief of Air Force Plans and Programs. "If all the BRAC recommendations are approved, the big thing we accomplish is we get the right force structure, the right sizes for effectiveness, at the best combination of bases."

Three aspects of transformation influence BRAC as well as other endeavors such as the Quadrennial Defense Review.

"There are technological changes, organizational changes and changes in concepts of operations," he said. Considering these changes "we find that when we reset the force to optimum sizes, it not only creates efficiencies, but it also makes our improved technologies and (concept of operations) more effective.

"Previous BRACs have tended to focus on active infrastructure," he said. "Over the first four rounds of BRAC, we closed 25 active-duty bases, three Reserve bases and one Guard installation."

How does the Air Force reset the force? For fighter aircraft, General Heckman said 24

aircraft has been found to be the optimum number in a squadron.

"We know historically, and from senior military judgment, that's a really optimum fighting size," General Heckman said. "We've had that reinforced by some Air Force studies and analyses over the last few years, and have a 1996 (General Accounting Office) report that comes to the same conclusion."

Through force reductions the Air Force has made the effort to maintain the balance of the force and optimize the resources in the flying community.

"Over the last 15 years the force structure in the Air Force has gone down quite a bit -- a third or more," he said. "As we have done that within the active force, we have taken the number of effectively sized squadrons and we've reduced the number. At the request of the Guard, what we have been doing in the Guard force is keeping the number of squadrons; slicing them down to the point that the average fighter squadron now in the Guard is 15."

Squadron size in the Guard became a focal point in commission review of the Air Force BRAC recommendations.

"As we go from today, with a reduced force structure, into a future where we expect the fighter force structure to go down another 20 percent, we just can't afford that kind of inefficiency," the general said. "So what we need to do within the BRAC is to right-size these forces and then put them at the right combination of bases."

The original thought was to close Guard bases that would lose their flying missions; however, the importance of the expeditionary combat support people at these installations changed their thinking, he said.

"These enclaves often deploy independently of the flying unit that happens to be (at that installation)", he said. "They're part of the starting rotation for our expeditionary force, and,

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importantly, these forces have important state uses for the governors as well.

"So we were convinced in our deliberations that it made more military value sense to leave those expeditionary combat forces in the states where they were, and we'd just shrink the footprint of the installation," the general said. "So we keep the expeditionary support, we right-size the units, and we're also able to turn back the excess infrastructure for local use."

BRAC commissioners are currently reviewing recommendations provided by the Air Force. After an initial cost, the Air Force expects to save about \$14 billion over the next 20 years.

If the current BRAC recommendations are approved, the initial investment to move and train all the people and build new infrastructure amounts to \$1.8 billion over six years, General Heckman said.

Two components calculate the return on investment -- actual cost savings and manpower savings.

"For BRAC purposes, according to the Department of Defense, these are considered BRAC savings," he said. "It means the dollars you save can be used for other dollar requirements. The manpower savings can be used for either other manpower requirements, which is our intent in the Guard and Reserve, or down the road for cashing in."

### **USAF Official Open To Allowing BRAC Panel To Dictate Airframe Moves**

Inside the Air Force

Martin Matishak

August 12, 2005

The Air Force's deputy chief of staff for plans and programs this week said it would be acceptable practice to allow the Base Realignment and Closure Commission to dictate where the service should move individual airframes.

Maj. Gen. Gary Heckman told the commission Aug. 11 he would not object if the commission took on the task of specifying where the Air Force should move specific assets -- so long as the panel links those moves to a end strength plan it also would craft. The two-star co-chaired the service's Base Closure Executive Group.

The hearing, which examined the potential effects of the Pentagon's BRAC recommendations on homeland security and the Air National Guard (ANG), came after several weeks of intense debate between Air Force officials and ANG representatives, specifically state adjutants general (TAGs). BRAC commissioners and lawmakers have expressed concerns about the Defense Department's ANG-related recommendations since the Pentagon released its list of proposed closures in May.

Acknowledging the ANG-focused recommendations triggered a "firestorm" from a number of state governors and their respective TAGs, BRAC commissioner Harold Gehman, a retired admiral, asked if it would be best if the Air Force possesses the authority to move its aircraft through traditional service "programmatics" -- rather than through legislative avenues.

If the commission had the ability to shift individual aircraft and Congress signed off on those plans, it likely could take another law to move the airframes back or to another location -- if such a move were deemed necessary, he continued.

Heckman said he would like officials to implement a new process for moving individual aircraft, or "tails," that is more reasonable and less complex.

For his part, Michael Dominguez, assistant secretary for manpower and reserve affairs, bristled at talk of altering the process. It is a meaningless undertaking to throw around hypothetical scenarios, especially without knowing cost factors, he said at the hearing.

Commission Chairman Anthony Principi responded that, before agreeing with such a plan,

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he would have to be sure no unintended consequences would emerge. The Air Force, not lawmakers, should decide where to move individual assets, he added.

Meanwhile, commission members inquired about previous statements made by Lt. Gen. Steven Blum, the National Guard Bureau's chief, about committing an ANG flying unit to every state, while at the same time stating he supports DOD's recommendations. The Pentagon's BRAC proposals do not call for a unit each all 50 states.

Before pursuing the goal of one flying unit in every state, Blum said he would "deal with the hand he will be dealt" after the BRAC process is finished. He added he has gained assurances from senior Air Staff that Guard units will retain enough flexibility to perform missions. Under those agreements, he said officials have assured him that he would have the ability to set units sizes.

When asked by commissioner James Bilbray how he could support DOD's recommendations while at the same time wanting a flying unit in every state, Blum said his commitment should be viewed in the context of Future Total Force, the service's plan for stationing Guard and Reserve with active duty personnel, not BRAC.

The National Guard Bureau chief told the panel he does not plan to increase the size or the number of personnel, but rather would redistribute personnel to meet that goal, adding there cannot be an ANG "without any air in it."

### **National News Articles**

#### **Warner Calls BRAC Move On Florida Illegal**

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot  
Louis Hansen  
August 13, 2005

U.S. Sen. John W. Warner on Friday blasted the federal military base closure commission, saying its decision to hold a new hearing on replacing

Oceana Naval Air Station is illegal and "threatens the integrity" of the base closure process.

In a tough letter to Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission Chairman Anthony J. Principi, Warner rebuked the commission's move this week to consider reopening Cecil Field in Florida to replace Oceana in Virginia Beach.

Florida Gov. Jeb Bush asked BRAC to investigate the Cecil Field option after Principi broached the possibility to him.

Warner, R-Va. and chairman of the powerful Senate Armed Services Committee, wrote to Principi: "Is it appropriate to have what may be perceived as a public auction at a time when the personnel and resources at Naval Air Station Oceana are serving the wartime needs of this nation?"

Saying BRAC's action "appears to stand in violation" of federal base closure law, Warner asked for a prompt response because he is conferring with Virginia Beach and the state "with regard to their legal rights."

The two states are again locked in fierce battle over the fighter jets – and huge economic and community benefits – of Oceana, a competition that has lasted for more than a decade.

The nine-member commission is considering whether to recommend closing or downsizing the Virginia Beach installation because suburban development has compromised training and safety.

Virginia elected officials said they were told late Thursday that the commission would hold a special hearing on alternatives to Oceana. On Friday, more details emerged about the public hearing, and Virginia officials acknowledged that saving Oceana is now in a life-or-death struggle.

"We should assume a worst-case scenario," said George Foresman, an assistant to Gov. Mark R.

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Warner. “Everybody involved is very concerned.”

State and federal officials said the hearing will be held Aug. 20 in Washington, D.C., and will focus solely on Florida’s proposal. Both states are expected to be allowed to argue their case. A BRAC Commission spokesman did not return several phone messages Friday.

Elected leaders in North Carolina and Texas also have submitted proposals to attract Oceana, the Navy’s East Coast hub for fighter jets.

Responding to Principi’s inquiry in late July, Gov. Bush pulled together an offer to re-establish the Jacksonville-area installation closed by another BRAC Commission in 1993.

Federal, state and local governments have spent \$133 million to improve Cecil Field since the Navy closed it and sent most of its squadron to Oceana in 1999.

In an Aug. 1 letter to commissioners, Gov. Bush said public money had been spent to upgrade the control tower, eight hangars, utilities, drains and roads throughout the complex. Jacksonville has secured another \$130 million for a road to provide better access to Cecil Field, he added.

The Florida governor also promised to accelerate the road project and work with the Florida Legislature to find additional money and support for the base. Gov. Bush assured the commission that current civilian tenants of Cecil Field can be removed so the property can return to the Department of Defense.

Ownership of some of Cecil Field has been turned over to state and local agencies. The city of Jacksonville estimates that the cost to reopen the installation would be \$250 million.

But Sen. Warner said the BRAC Commission is explicitly prohibited from considering promises – or “advanced conversion training” – from affected communities.

“Congress specifically intended for the Commission not to exhaust valuable resources

and time reviewing complex promises and proposals from affected communities,” he wrote.

John Ulliot, a Warner spokesman, said the senator is a strong defender of the process, having co-written the original law and its amendments since 1990.

“He’s very serious that the commission is breaking the law in this case,” he said.

The commission must consider only the present military values of the installation, he said, adding “they can’t shoehorn into that process what the Navy might want in 10 or 15 years.”

In his letter, Sen. Warner also said the commission was ignoring recent testimony from Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Mullens that Oceana is the Navy’s choice for its master jet base.

Virginia officials said holding a fresh hearing just days before voting whether to recommend to President Bush whether Oceana’s status should be changed skews the process.

Foresman, who heads up the Virginia Department of Commonwealth Preparedness, said the new hearing intensifies the fight over Oceana.

“On a scale of one to 10,” Foresman said, “this is probably a seven.”

The state remains committed to working with the commission to protect against further encroachments, he said.

Virginia and Florida have tangled over hosting the master jet base since the early 1990s, when the Defense Department decided to contract and close unneeded bases in the post-Cold War era.

The 1993 BRAC Commission found Cecil Field wasn’t being fully used and that other East Coast air stations had higher priority missions.

The commissioners thought the Navy overstated the air space encroachment troubles at Cecil

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Field but still chose to relocate its fighter jets to Oceana and Beaufort Marine Corps Air Station in South Carolina.

### **Justice Says Governors Must Cede Guard Units**

Washington Times  
August 13, 2005

The Justice Department is siding with the Pentagon in a dispute with some states, concluding that governors' consent isn't needed for the military to move Air National Guard units.

The Pentagon's proposal to close or reduce about 30 Air Guard units has emerged as the most contentious issue facing the independent commission that will decide next month which parts of the Defense Department's base-closing plan to accept or change.

Giving governors what would amount to veto power over the Pentagon's plans, at least with respect to National Guard units, would undermine a process created by Congress to reduce the role of politics in deciding which bases to close, the department said in response to a lawsuit filed by the state of Pennsylvania.

Illinois has filed a similar lawsuit, arguing that the Pentagon doesn't have the authority to move units without the approval of the governors, who share control with the president over use of the units.

In siding with the Pentagon, Justice Department lawyers said Pennsylvania was asking to return "to a system in which local politics, rather than national planning, determined which facilities were closed and which were spared."

Pennsylvania officials questioned the propriety of the Justice Department offering opinions to the base closing commission while also representing the Defense Department against the state's lawsuit.

"Where is the independent judgment or analysis?" asked Adrian R. King Jr., an aide to

Pennsylvania Gov. Edward G. Rendell, a Democrat.

"As far as this state's concerned, the only opinion that matters is the opinion of a judge in a court of law and that's why we filed the lawsuit," Mr. King said.

The Pentagon wants to shift people, equipment and aircraft among at least 54 sites where Air Guard units now are stationed. Roughly two dozen sites would expand, while about 30 would be closed or downsized. In many cases, units would continue to exist but no planes would be assigned to them.

The Air Force says units without planes would receive new non-flying missions and also would retain their roles in supporting the needs of governors during statewide emergencies.

### **Air Guard Plan Would Limit Pentagon's Proposed Closures**

Congress Daily  
Megan Scully  
August 12, 2005

Air National Guard leaders have drawn up a proposal to lessen the blow of Pentagon recommendations to ground roughly one-third of the country's 88 Air Guard units, but their detailed plan did not receive immediate endorsement from the independent Base Closure and Realignment Commission. The proposal, written by several adjutants general, asks the commission to accept only 11 of more than 50 recommendations affecting the Air Guard. It would allow every state to keep a flying mission and prevent the Air Force from creating so-called enclave units without planes.

Commissioners, who reviewed the plan for the first time during a public hearing on Capitol Hill Thursday, do not see it as a viable approach to resolving the Defense Department's contentious Guard recommendations. "We will solve this problem," Commission Chairman Anthony Principi told reporters after the hearing. "We will act decisively."

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Commissioner Lloyd Newton, a retired Air Force general, likewise noted that "the problem is still ours." Last month, Principi asked the Air Force and Air Guard to strike a compromise and resolve the matter on their own, before the commission makes its recommendations. The Air National Guard issue has become the most hotly contested of the Pentagon's recommendations, pitting a unified front of adjutants general against senior Defense leaders. Meanwhile, several governors have filed lawsuits contending that the Defense Department does not have the authority to take aircraft from or otherwise alter state-run Guard units.

The recommendations, state officials argue, would restrict states' ability to protect themselves against terrorist attacks. Taking aircraft from Guard units would have a "ripple effect on .. readiness and [our] ability to support homeland security needs that [will be] irreversible," Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, adjutant general of Nebraska and president of the Adjutants General Association of the United States, said at the hearing. But Defense Department officials have stood by the recommendations, stating repeatedly during the hearing that relocating the aircraft will form larger, more capable squadrons and will "not create an unacceptable risk." Admiral Timothy Keating, commander of U.S. Northern Command, told the commission he is less concerned with the location of aircraft than the total number of planes available.

The BRAC panel will consider the Pentagon's recommendations later this month, and forward its own base-closure list to the White House by Sept. 8. Commissioners have said they plan to review an analysis of the Air Guard recommendations conducted by the Justice Department before deciding on the proposed move of Guard aircraft. Principi told reporters Thursday that he had received the Justice Department report Wednesday, but would not reveal any details until the commission completes a legal review of the document. A source who reviewed a summary of the decision said the Justice Department defends the Pentagon's Air Guard recommendations and

does not raise any questions over the legality of the moves. In July, an attorney for the commission wrote in a legal brief arguing that the recommendations might be unconstitutional and infringe on a governor's right to maintain militias.

### **Ruling: Guard base-closing plan doesn't need governors' OK**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire  
August 12, 2005

The Justice Department is siding with the Pentagon in a dispute with some states, concluding that governors' consent isn't needed for the military to move Air National Guard units.

The Pentagon's proposal to close or reduce about 30 Air Guard units has emerged as the most contentious issue facing the independent commission that will decide next month which parts of the Defense Department's base-closing plan to accept or change.

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"As far as this state's concerned, the only opinion that matters is the opinion of a judge in a court of law and that's why we filed the lawsuit," King said.

Connecticut Gov. M. Jodi Rell, a Republican, also questioned the Justice Department ruling.

"We believe the ruling is flawed, that the Pentagon does need a governor's permission to close an Air National Guard base and we would support an appeal of this ruling," said Rell spokesman Judd Everhart.

Rell, in past interviews, has said she's prepared to file a lawsuit if the Connecticut Air National Guard's 103rd Fighter Wing facility at Bradley International Airport remains on the list. The U.S. Air Force has recommended moving nine of the 17 A-10 Thunderbolts based at Bradley to Barnes Municipal Airport in Westfield, Mass., about 30 miles away. The rest of the planes would be retired.

Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal said he's "ready and able" to file immediate court action to stop the realignment of the fighter wing unit.

"The federal government is wrong - and repeating its mistaken legal position won't make it right," he said. "The law is absolutely clear that moving or realigning our National Guard units is illegal without the governor's consent and approval."

The Pentagon wants to shift people, equipment and aircraft among at least 54 sites where Air Guard units now are stationed. Roughly two dozen sites would expand, while about 30 would be closed or downsized. In many cases, units would continue to exist but no planes would be assigned to them.

The Air Force says units without planes would receive new non-flying missions and also would

retain their roles in supporting the needs of governors during statewide emergencies.

For their part, state adjutants general, who oversee the Air Guard in the states, argued that the plan would prevent units from fulfilling their homeland security missions, including protecting the skies and supporting governors in state emergencies.

The base-closing commission has until Sept. 8 to present its recommendations to President Bush, who can accept or reject the whole thing, but not part of it.

### **Justice Dept. deals blow to Guard bases**

Cape Cod Times

Kevin Dennehy

August 13, 2005

The Pentagon scored a critical victory over state governors yesterday in the ongoing struggle over which of America's military bases should be closed - and who should have input in those decisions.

The Department of Justice ruled that defense officials are not obligated to consult with state leaders before closing or reducing National Guard units, a decision that undercuts efforts in dozens of states where Guard bases are threatened.

State reserve units are subject to the authority of the Base Closure and Realignment Act, as are active duty units, wrote C. Kevin Marshall, deputy assistant attorney general, in a letter to Anthony Principi, chairman of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC).

And while there are two statutes under which federal authority over state facilities would be limited, he continued, neither is pertinent in this situation.

"We understand that all of the current round are located on land either owned or leased by the Department of Defense," Marshall wrote.

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"Such installations are included within the definition of 'military installation' and are thus presumptively subject to closure or realignment under the Act."

The decision comes just weeks before an independent commission is scheduled to make a recommendation to President Bush on the latest base closure plan, a sweeping proposal that would eliminate 180 bases.

Among those is Otis Air National Guard, the Cape-based fighter wing recommended for closure by the Air Force.

Leaders in Pennsylvania and Illinois have already filed lawsuits against the federal government, insisting that laws governing the BRAC process require input from governors before state Army or Air Guard units are reduced or eliminated.

Bay State officials have not filed a lawsuit. And while Gov. Mitt Romney is battling the Otis closure, the state has no plans to take the Defense Department to court, said Felix Browne, a Romney spokesman.

However, National Guard Association officials said yesterday that other legal minds have different opinions. The issue will eventually be decided by litigation, insisted John Goheen, a spokesman for the association, which lobbies for better Guard resources and benefits.

"There are going to be states who disagree with this," Goheen said. "Ultimately, it has to be decided by the courts."

The recommended closure or reduction of nearly 30 Air Guard bases has emerged as one of the more controversial aspects of the latest round of recommended base closings.

The BRAC Commission, which is reviewing that plan, has held numerous public hearings and visited bases across the nation, including Otis, home of the 102nd Fighter Wing that patrols the skies over the Northeast for threats from abroad.

According to the Department of Defense proposal, the unit would be dissolved and its F-15 fighter jets relocated to units in New Jersey and Florida.

Like other states, a coalition of Otis supporters from Massachusetts had their hopes raised earlier this summer when a BRAC commission lawyer questioned whether the Pentagon could reconfigure state Guard units without input from the state's commander-in-chief - the governor.

To clarify the issue, the independent commission requested more input from the Justice Department.

During a BRAC hearing Thursday, some members of the independent commission expressed concern that the plan would leave holes in the defense of some states.

### Local News Articles

**Eielson Reduction Concerns Air Guard**  
Fairbanks Daily News-Miner (Fairbanks, AK)  
Sam Bishop  
August 12, 2005

WASHINGTON--Plans to shrink Eielson Air Force Base could harm the Alaska Air National Guard's refueling wing at the base, Alaska's adjutant general has told the military base review commission in a letter.

Maj. Gen. Craig Campbell's letter went to the Defense Department's Base Realignment and Closure Commission last week, several days in advance of a commission hearing held Thursday in Washington, D.C., on National Guard issues.

The Eielson situation, however, didn't get any public discussion at the hearing, which took all afternoon due to the controversy over the Pentagon's proposals to reduce National Guard operations elsewhere in the country.

The Alaska Air National Guard's 168th Air Refueling Wing at Eielson has 580 employees, about half of whom are part-time, and eight KC-135R tankers used to refuel Air Force fighters.

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The Air Force has proposed no changes to the refueling force.

Rather, it suggested removing most of the base's 3,000 Air Force personnel and all F-16 and A-10 jets, while still keeping the base open for training exercises for visiting squadrons.

Campbell, in his letter, noted the Air Force's proposed plan for Eielson, released May 13, would leave about 400 Air Force personnel at the base. However, a recent internal Air Force study found that four times that many would be necessary.

"This dramatic increase in personnel and operational costs raises concerns that Eielson AFB may not be properly maintained to ensure full operational capability of the 168th ARW," Campbell wrote. "It also brings into question the Air Force conclusions that Eielson should be placed into warm storage capacity, because the full cost savings will not be achieved."

The Air Force, in its May 13 recommendations, said it expected to save \$229 million a year from the reduced activity at Eielson.

Campbell also said the internal Air Force review found the department's May 13 proposal had understated the cost of relocating the 176th Wing at Kulis Air National Guard Base to Elmendorf Air Force Base, both of which are near Anchorage. The Air Force's original proposal put the move's cost at \$77 million; the internal review estimated it at \$186 million, Campbell said.

"We are significantly concerned that the Air Force cost savings for both the Kulis and Eielson actions are grossly overvalued and may, in fact, jeopardize the very missions the Air Force claims they want retained," Campbell wrote.

Campbell's letter followed a July 15 letter from Gov. Frank Murkowski that claimed the Defense Department overstepped its legal authority with the Guard proposals.

Murkowski noted federal law states "no change in the branch, organization or allotment of a unit located entirely within a state may be made without the approval of its governor."

"By this letter I wish to formally notify you that I will continue to withhold my consent to the proposed realignment of Kulis Air National Guard Base in Anchorage and the 'warm storage' of Eielson Air Force Base until I receive assurances that the mission of the Air National Guard will not be compromised in Alaska," Murkowski wrote.

The BRAC Commission in late June asked the Department of Defense's Office of Legal Counsel for a "detailed analysis" of such claims, which other governors have also expressed.

Frank Jimenez, the department's acting legal counsel, declined in a July 5 letter to the commission. He confirmed Pentagon attorneys had given advice to military personnel developing the recommendations.

However, "the substance of this advice is protected from disclosure by the attorney-client privilege," Jimenez said.

At Thursday's hearing in Washington, BRAC Commissioner Phil Coyle asked top Air Force officials about allegations that the National Guard cuts were being forced by the purchase of expensive new FA-22 jets for the active-duty Air Force, even though the jets are not always the best choice.

"For example, when we were in Alaska we heard that the F-22 is not what you would necessarily want for air sovereignty," he said. He said there were concerns about the aircraft operating at 70 degrees below zero.

The Air Force is planning to station a few dozen FA-22s at Elmendorf, with the first arriving in 2007.

Michael Dominguez, acting secretary of the Air Force, said the FA-22 is the fighter necessary to maintain the nation's air superiority.

"Legacy aircraft, aircraft that were designed in the 1970s and built in the 1980s, are not the aircraft that will guarantee global air dominance into the middle of the century," he said.

The FA-22's exorbitant expense is a myth, he said. An F-15 costs \$100 million. An FA-22 costs \$120 million.

"The capability between those two platforms are night and day," he said.

Also, he said, Air Guard units will use the FA-22s.

"That's never happened before. We've always rolled out the good stuff to the active force first," he said.

The commission on Thursday heard again the complaint that the Air Force's projected savings from base closures and realignments are vastly overstated.

Maj. Gen. Francis Vavala, adjutant general of the Delaware National Guard, said the Air Force has no plans to reduce its total personnel. Therefore, it cannot count the personnel reductions at each base as "savings." To do so is "Enron-style math," he said.

The Save Eielson committee in Alaska has made the same point.

The Air Force, in response to a News-Miner inquiry on the subject, said the "savings" are real, but may indeed be used by the military for other purposes.

"Dollar savings freed up at Eielson are dollars available for use elsewhere," according to a response approved by David Johansen, chief of the Air Force's Base Realignment and Closure Division. "Likewise, manpower reductions from Eielson are manpower positions available for use elsewhere. If the manpower positions are not used, they constitute savings.

"Either way, by realigning Eielson, the overhead to run the base is substantially reduced."

## **Chamber, City Join Forces In Battle To Save Navy Jet Base**

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk, VA)

Jon W. Glass

August 13, 2005

VIRGINIA BEACH — As part of a joint effort to save Oceana Naval Air Station, City Hall and the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce are waging an ad campaign that will top \$100,000.

Since July 19, when the federal Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission added Oceana to a proposed base-closing list, the city and the chamber have cranked up a public relations campaign featuring ads in the newspaper and on local radio and television stations.

The ads urge residents to let the BRAC Commission know that "we value the military and want Oceana to remain a vital part of our community," according to several in The Virginian-Pilot.

The city expects to spend \$70,000 to \$80,000, while the chamber has raised \$37,000, with a goal of reaching \$50,000, from business members, officials said.

Diane Roche, a Virginia Beach spokeswoman, said the city funds are coming from a reserve account to pay for "unexpected expenses" that arise during the year.

BRAC's decision stunned city, state and federal officials.

"Oceana has more than a billion-dollar impact in Hampton Roads, and we felt this was a wise investment to help keep the base open," Roche said. "We felt we had a responsibility to inform the citizens and let them know how they could let BRAC know how they felt."

Ira Agricola, senior vice president of the chamber, said Oceana, with about 12,000 military and civilian personnel, accounts for 11 percent of Virginia Beach's economy and is a

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“vital part of the region’s economy. It’s equal to three Ford plants.”

Writing to BRAC, either by letter or on its Web site, is the only chance the public has to weigh in on Oceana, Agricola said.

The nine-member independent commission will decide later this month whether to recommend closing or downsizing the base.

So far, officials said, the promotional effort appears to be having an effect.

At an Aug. 4 hearing, Anthony J. Principi, the commission’s chairman, said that nearly 2,000 comments on Oceana had come from Virginia residents during that past week.

“We want them to know that their inputs are appreciated and taken into consideration in our review process,” Principi said, according to a transcript of the hearing.

The business community, including builders, the real estate industry and the Navy League, has contributed money to the chamber’s effort, Agricola said.

In addition, he said, The Virginian-Pilot has run a few ads for the chamber at no charge, including a full-page ad on Aug. 1, the day that four BRAC commissioners visited Oceana.

The ad asked residents for their “help and support” in persuading BRAC to keep Oceana open.

Two local television stations – WTKR and WVEC – have run two 30-second TV commercials with similar messages as free public-service announcements, Agricola said. Cox Cable also has run the ads for free.

WAVY has not aired the spots, said Doug Davis, WAVY’s president and general manager. He said they fell outside the typical public-service announcements that promote charitable or humanitarian issues.

“It’s really a political issue when you look at it,” Davis said. “On the flip side, if Citizens Concerned About Jet Noise came to me, in fairness wouldn’t they have to be given free air time?”

The citizens group, CCAJN, favors relocating Oceana’s fighter jets and bringing in a military use less disruptive to the community.

Kelly McBride, a journalism ethics leader at the Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg, Fla., said the decision by The Pilot and the two TV stations to provide free ads is “part of the messiness of journalism” and that “it’s better if they don’t.”

“Frequently you’ll find the business arm of news corporations doing a variety of activities in the community that do create a perception of a conflict of an interest in the newsroom,” McBride said.

“It happens all the time. Frequently, you have publishers contributing to political campaigns.”

Dee Carpenter, president and publisher of The Virginian-Pilot, said he disagrees that the ads promote a political issue.

He also said that running the free ads was a business decision and that he has not attempted to influence The Pilot’s news coverage of the BRAC issue.

“I see this as pure economic development, or lack thereof,” said Carpenter, who this year is chairman of the chamber’s board of directors.

“If Oceana were to close and we didn’t do everything we could do, it would really affect our business. I’d be crazy not to be interested in whether Oceana stays here or not.”

Carpenter said a “relatively small amount” of free ad space was provided, and it was offered on a “space available” basis.

Mario A. Hewitt, president and general manager of WVEC, also said the station’s decision to run the free TV spots had not affected its news coverage.

#### BRAC Commission Early Bird

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“I see myself as part of this community and for us to lose that base – forget the business side – I think there would be so much disruption to the community,” Hewitt said.

“The only reason I’m running them is for service of this community.”

Frank Chebalo, general manager of WTKR, could not be reached for comment.

### **Delegation Wants Navy Memo Shared With BRAC**

#### **Lawmakers: document shows flaws in sub base calculations**

New London Day (New London, CT)

Robert A. Hamilton

August 12, 2005

State officials have asked the Navy to provide the base closure commission with an official copy of a memorandum showing the cost of moving the Naval Submarine School from Groton to Kings Bay, Ga., was understated.

The officials also wrote directly to the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission informing its members of the memo that they said “calls into question data used by the Navy to support its BRAC (base realignment and closure) recommendations.”

The memo details how the Navy plan has insufficient classroom space and related infrastructure to support the move.

“We are certain you would agree that the Navy's failure to consider such fundamental needs of our sailors would constitute a significant deviation from the BRAC criteria,” both letters state.

The letters were signed by Gov. M. Jodi Rell, U.S. Sens. Christopher J. Dodd and Joseph I. Lieberman, both D-Conn., and U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District.

Although the memo does not include any specifics on additional costs for moving the

school, the officials said what is most disturbing is that the head of the Submarine Learning Center, which has jurisdiction over the school, did not even visit Kings Bay to assess the situation until three weeks after the Pentagon announced its recommendation to close Groton.

“This is a tremendously serious and troubling new development,” Dodd said of the memo. “It needs to be thoroughly and fully explored and examined. If the Navy did in fact put the cart before the horse in this case, it would be a glaring deviation from the BRAC criteria.

“Needless to say, this decision by the Pentagon has drastic implications for our national defense. The Navy needs to provide a prompt explanation for this discrepancy.”

The Navy contends that the BRAC process relied on certified data developed by the bases and individual organizations that would be affected.

“There are no final decisions until the BRAC commission, the president and the Congress have reviewed and approved the Department of Defense's BRAC recommendations,” said Lt. Christine M. Ventresca, a Navy spokeswoman. “The letter was written as a preliminary planning tool in the event that the BRAC recommendation is enacted into law.

“Navy commands affected by this recommendation, including the Submarine Learning Center, provided certified data regarding the cost and savings associated with this recommendation during the data call process. Information that was provided as part of the certified data collection process was considered in the Navy's analysis.”

But Simmons said the memo underscores the fact that the process was flawed.

“The memo shows that the Navy did not accurately assess the costs of moving the Submarine School to Kings Bay,” he said. “It will cost the Navy over one billion dollars to rebuild the entire Submarine School at Kings Bay when we have a modern, expensive set of

#### **BRAC Commission Early Bird**

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facilities in New London that is already paid for.”

The memo that came to light this week was written by the head of the Submarine Learning Center in Groton to the commanding officer of the Kings Bay base, outlining several shortcomings in the Navy plan to move the sub school to Georgia.

“Clearly, the timing and content of these findings are startling,” the officials' letter concludes. “We request that you immediately provide us and the Base Realignment and Closure Commission with the memo related to the June 1, 2005, visit to Kings Bay by Commander, U.S. Submarine Learning Center. We further ask that you supply information to us on any and all subsequent action made to correct this apparent oversight.”

In a separate letter to the commission, the Groton base supporters note the memo “contradicts the Navy's analysis ... (and shows how it) falls far short of the U.S. Submarine School's needs.”

“According to his analysis, the Navy's Kings Bay proposal would not provide adequate capacity for classroom space or supporting facilities such as a galley, correctional brig or gymnasium to meet the needs of the sizable student population of (the sub school),” the officials' letter states. “Such revelations would suggest that the Navy dramatically underestimated the cost of re-constituting Submarine Base New London's largest tenant at a different location.”

### **Landowners around Cannon base agree to sell land for base**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire  
(Clovis, NM)  
August 13, 2005

Property owners near Cannon Air Force Base have agreed to sell land to enable the base to nearly double in size - an effort aimed at keeping the Pentagon from shutting it down.

Gov. Bill Richardson and Clovis Mayor David Lansford announced the agreement Friday, and were faxing a letter about the deal to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission in Washington, D.C.

The proposed land acquisitions, about 3,000 acres worth, would let the Air Force expand Cannon without cost to itself, the two said in the letter.

The independent commission is reviewing the Defense Department's military recommendations and must send its list to the president by Sept. 8. It then goes to Congress, which must accept it or reject it in its entirety.

Cannon, adjacent to Clovis, is one of 33 major bases around the country targeted for closure as part of the Base Realignment and Closure process. The Pentagon has estimated it would save \$2.7 billion over 20 years by closing Cannon, costing more than 2,700 base jobs and about 2,000 more indirect jobs.

The base's economic impact has been estimated at \$200 million a year - about a third of the economy in the Clovis community of about 36,000.

Supporters have expressed frustration that the recommendation to close the eastern New Mexico base, home to F-16 units, did not take into account the fact the Air Force has been working to expand the training range around Cannon.

The letter from Richardson and Lansford said the effort to acquire land shows that the base is protected against encroachment and is positioned for expansion.

The potential land acquisition will allow Cannon's facilities and runways to expand, paving the way for future growth to accommodate the F-35 joint strike fighter training mission, unmanned missions, airborne labor missions, continuing F-16 missions and A-10 missions, the letter said.

"We encourage you to seriously consider this new agreement as you decide the fate of Cannon Air Force Base and its future role as part of the military mission of the United States," the two men wrote.

Richardson also pledged \$5 million in state funds to help Clovis buy the land from the private landowners willing to sell to allow for the expansion.

In addition, three members of the state's congressional delegation on Friday urged the commission to consider locating the joint strike fighter mission, the F-35, at Cannon.

The joint strike mission is in the planning phase, but Sens. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., and Pete Domenici, R-N.M., and Rep. Tom Udall, D-N.M., said an analysis shows it could cost significantly less to put the mission at Cannon.

They wrote BRAC Chairman Anthony Principi that Cannon has ramp space, hangars, airspace, ranges and low-level routes.

### **Alaska guard officials oppose Eielson closure**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire  
(Fairbanks, AK)  
August 12, 2005

Cutting back Eielson Air Force Base could hurt the Alaska Air National Guard's refueling wing at the base, Alaska's adjutant general has told the military base review commission.

Maj. Gen. Craig Campbell's letter went to the Defense Department's Base Realignment and Closure Commission last week, several days in advance of a commission hearing held Thursday in Washington, D.C., on National Guard issues.

The Eielson situation, however, didn't get any public discussion at the hearing, which took all afternoon due to the controversy over the Pentagon's proposals to reduce National Guard operations elsewhere in the country.

The Air Force, in its May 13 recommendations, said it expected to save \$229 million a year from the reduced activity at Eielson.

The Air Guard's 168th Air Refueling Wing at Eielson has 580 employees, about half of whom work part-time, and eight KC-135R tankers used to refuel Air Force fighters.

The Air Force has proposed no changes to the refueling force. Rather, it suggested removing most of the base's 3,000 Air Force personnel and all F-16 and A-10 jets, while still keeping the base open for training exercises for visiting squadrons.

Campbell, in his letter, noted the Air Force's proposed plan for Eielson would leave about 400 Air Force personnel at the base. However, a recent internal Air Force study found that four times that many would be necessary.

Campbell also said the internal Air Force review found the department's proposal had understated the cost of relocating the 176th Wing at Kulis Air National Guard Base to Elmendorf Air Force Base, both of which are near Anchorage. The Air Force's original proposal put the move's cost at \$77 million; the internal review estimated it at \$186 million, Campbell said.

"We are significantly concerned that the Air Force cost savings for both the Kulis and Eielson actions are grossly overvalued and may, in fact, jeopardize the very missions the Air Force claims they want retained," Campbell wrote.

Campbell's letter followed a July 15 letter from Gov. Frank Murkowski that claimed the Defense Department overstepped its legal authority with the Guard proposals.

### **N.C. officials make plea for Virginia-based jets**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire  
(Washington DC)  
August 12, 2005

Elected officials from North Carolina on Friday asked the federal base closing commission to let the state make a pitch for additional jets from Virginia if a Navy air base there is closed.

The federal Base Closing and Realignment Commission may schedule an Aug. 20 hearing on whether to move the Navy's Master Jet Base from Virginia to either Texas or Florida, according to a letter sent to the commission chairman.

Sens. Elizabeth Dole and Richard Burr, R-N.C., Rep. Walter Jones Jr., R-N.C., Gov. Mike Easley and Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue signed the letter.

The officials said BRAC should Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point as a location for the jets from the Oceana Navy air station in Virginia Beach.

"As you know, North Carolina prides itself on being a military friendly state, and we would welcome hosting a new 21st Century Master Jet Base," the letter said.

"A near-term solution to alleviate the congestion at Naval Air Station Oceana should be the current focus, and Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point is the logical answer to this dilemma. The Air Station is close to Oceana and can easily absorb more squadrons in addition to the two it is already slated to receive in 2007."

#### **Warner: hearing on Oceana replacement illegal**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire  
(Virginia Beach, VA)  
August 12, 2005

U.S. Sen. John Warner called a new hearing on replacing Oceana Naval Air Station illegal Friday, saying it would be a "public auction" during wartime.

The Virginia Republican sent a letter to Base Realignment and Closure Commission Chairman Anthony J. Principi after the commission decided this week to consider

replacing Oceana by reopening Cecil Field in Jacksonville, Fla., which was closed in 1999.

"Is it appropriate to have what may be perceived as a public auction at a time when the personnel and resources at Naval Air Station Oceana are serving the wartime needs of this nation?" Warner, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, wrote to Principi.

Florida Gov. Jeb Bush asked BRAC to investigate the Cecil Field option after Principi suggested the possibility to him.

A hearing will be held Aug. 20 in Washington, D.C., that will focus solely on Florida's proposal. North Carolina and Texas also have submitted proposals to replace Oceana, home to 233 fighter planes and more than 11,000 personnel.

Warner asked for a prompt response to his letter because he is conferring with Virginia Beach and state officials "with regard to their legal rights."

Oceana was not on the list of bases that the Pentagon recommended for closure or realignment in May, but the commission took the unusual step of adding it last month. Commission researchers said neighborhood development was encroaching on pilots' ability to practice taking off and landing at all hours.

The BRAC panel will make its final decision later this month about which bases to propose for closing or altering, with President Bush and Congress making a binding decision in the fall.

**Guard Ruling Sets Pa Back;  
Pentagon Can Shut State Unit, Justice Says**  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pittsburgh, PA)  
Ann McFeatters  
August 13, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Pennsylvania lost Round One of its fight to retain the 111th Fighter Wing, the Air National Guard unit based near Philadelphia, when the Justice Department yesterday said the Pentagon doesn't need a

BRAC Commission Early Bird

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governor's permission to close or move Air National Guard units.

A spokesman for Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell said the decision was not a surprise, that it wasn't the final word and that the Pentagon has not yet won.

The independent 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission, or BRAC, which is amid an assessment of the Pentagon's controversial plan for closing 33 domestic military bases, announced the Justice decision late yesterday.

Rendell and the state's two Republican senators, Arlen Specter and Rick Santorum, filed a lawsuit last month arguing that the Constitution prohibits the federal government from closing or moving a National Guard unit without the consent of the affected state's governor.

The Pentagon argues that it is in the best position, especially with Guard units deployed to Iraq, to decide which units should be downsized and which should be expanded or moved. Its plans have caused anger around the country because loss of a military base or a National Guard unit usually brings economic upheaval to nearby communities.

In the case of the 111th, which is at Willow Grove, Rendell said losing it would create problems for the state in dealing with homeland security issues, domestic disturbances and natural disasters -- prime domestic tasks for Guard units.

BRAC will announce Sept. 8 which parts of the Defense Department's plan it will accept. Past commissions have typically accepted about 90 percent of the Pentagon plan. The commission's recommendations are sent to the president, who must accept or reject the entire plan. Congress must also accept or reject the final plan as a whole, a strategy intended to prevent legislators from blocking base closures in their own districts.

Justice lawyers yesterday rejected Pennsylvania's argument on grounds that if a governor has final say over moving or closing a

National Guard base, it would be tantamount to granting a state's chief executive veto power over a Pentagon decision affecting national security.

Deputy Assistant Attorney General C. Kevin Marshall said the modern National Guard descends from the nation's early militia, but that the Constitution says Congress has the power to "provide for organizing, arming and disciplining" the military and for governing them when they are needed for the service of the United States.

Adrian King Jr., Rendell's deputy chief of staff, said: "With all due respect to the Justice Department and the Pentagon, the opinion is of no surprise to us. We expected nothing less, particularly since the Justice Department represents the Defense Department's position in the lawsuit. At the end of the day, the Justice Department's opinion is one of many."

He added: "This decision will be made by the courts and the opinion of a judge, not the Justice Department. We're chuckling around here because the Pentagon is running around like this is some big victory. It's not."

Pennsylvania is not the only state affected by the Justice opinion. Illinois also has sued to try to keep its National Guard units intact, and other states are considering lawsuits.

BRAC, which must remain independent of any government agency, has solicited the opinion of a private law firm to assess the issue of the defense secretary's recommending changes to Air National Guard and National Guard units and installations.

In a memo dated Aug. 3, the Wiley Rein & Fielding law firm advised: "The secretary may recommend the closure and realignment of installations on which National Guard units are located, as well as the relocation of or changes to equipment, headquarters, units and/or missions associated with those closures and realignments, without seeking or obtaining the consent of the governors of the states in which the changes would take place."

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Pennsylvania's suit does not address the proposed dismantling of the 911th Military Airlift Wing at Pittsburgh International Airport, also on the Pentagon list, because that is an Air Force Reserve unit, subject to federal control.

Army Lt. Gen. Steven Blum, the National Guard Bureau chief, has acknowledged that the Pentagon plan would affect 30 flying units and would mean that seven states would have no units. But he has asserted that this would not reduce Air National Guard effectiveness.

**Force's flexibility questioned;  
Need BRAC be involved in every detail?**

Biloxi Sun Herald (Biloxi, MS)

Kate Houlihan

August 12, 2005

Members of the Department of Defense, Air Force and National Guard Bureau insist the 2005 BRAC decisions will not compromise national defense, but members of the Adjutants General Association of the U.S. are skeptical about the effect on the National Guard.

At a Base Realignment and Closure commission hearing Thursday afternoon, Adm. Timothy Keating, commander with the North American Aerospace Defense Command, said a joint NORAD and United States Northern Command team worked to assess the recommendations.

"We believe the decisions... do not create unacceptable risk to our mission," Keating testified, adding the bases on the lists are simply an element of overall security.

In Mississippi, the 186th Air National Guard Refueling Wing in Meridian is on the BRAC list.

Peter Verga, deputy assistant secretary of defense, said the department is focused on protecting the nation as a whole, versus state-by-state, and the proposed closures are in line with that philosophy.

Michael Dominguez, assistant secretary of the Air Force, said the recommendations are crucial to meeting future needs in the Air National Guard.

Throughout the hearing, contentious discussion of the recommendations affecting the Air Force and Air National Guard surfaced.

Various BRAC commissioners expressed concern over the detail involved in the recommendations, asking if it is imperative that the Guard specify exactly what kind of aircraft moves from one state to another and whether the Air Force wished to have more flexibility than it seemed the recommendations would allow.

"If the effect is the same, we'd be willing to talk," said Maj. Gen. Gary Heckman, assistant deputy chief of staff of the Air Force.

The biggest concerns came from a foursome of adjutant generals on hand to give the commission their own recommendations.

Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, president of the Adjutants General Association, said current decisions will take the National Guard "down an uncertain path" in addition to providing little savings and severely affecting personnel.

While none of their recommendations focused on individual bases, Lempke called for a flying unit of the Guard in each state and more cohesive relations between adjutant generals, the National Guard Bureau and the Air Force.

Maj. Gen. Francis Vavala said the concerns stem from homeland security, a lack of savings, the need for more discussion of emerging missions and larger squadrons. "Nothing I've heard today changes that concern," he said.

**Sessions hopeful officials can keep 117th Wing here**

Birmingham News (Birmingham, AL)

Roy L. Williams

August 12, 2005

**BRAC Commission Early Bird**

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U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions said at a Harbert Center breakfast Thursday he is hopeful Alabama can persuade the Base Realignment and Closure Commission to keep the Air National Guard's 117th Refueling Wing in Birmingham open.

The 117th has been targeted for closure in a preliminary BRAC report, which is now under review. Although Congress has no direct influence over the BRAC process, Sessions sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Sessions, speaking at the Birmingham Regional Chamber of Commerce's "Congressional Update Forum," said BRAC would be making a big mistake if it closes the 117th.

Under the BRAC plan, the Pentagon would relocate eight KC-135 tankers operated by the 117th from its base at Birmingham International Airport to three other Air Guard stations. Two would go to the Bangor International Airport station in Maine, four would go to McGhee-Tyson Airport station in Knoxville and two others would go to an Arizona station in Arizona.

Birmingham stands to lose 183 full-time and 326 regular Guard positions if the unit's planes are dispersed. The recommendation has several hurdles to jump before it becomes reality. Sessions said the plan doesn't make sense.

"Birmingham has a 12,000 foot runway capable of allowing aircraft to leave fully loaded," Sessions said. "They're talking of moving it to an 8,000-foot runway in Knoxville where aircraft cannot leave fully loaded. We refurbish their craft right here. I think we have a good argument to keep it open."

Despite the potential losses of jobs in Birmingham and at a base in Montgomery, Sessions said Alabama stands to be among the top three gainers in terms of military jobs once the military realignment is finalized. "Redstone (Arsenal in Huntsville), Anniston (the Army Depot) and Fort Rucker look to be solid winners. We could end up with 3,000 to 4,000 extra jobs though I think we could double that number," he said.

Sessions is also a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, which will begin confirmation hearings in early September on the recent nomination of John Roberts to the U.S. Supreme Court. He called Roberts, an appellate judge, a sound choice for the high court.

"He is a man of integrity. He will fight for the heart and soul of America."

### **Members of panel see dangers in closing Otis**

Boston Globe (Boston, MA)  
Bryan Bender  
August 12, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Just weeks before a final report is due, members of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission said yesterday that they believe closing Otis Air Guard Base on Cape Cod could jeopardize homeland security in the event of another suicide aircraft hijacking in the Northeast similar to the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

In their last public hearing, commission members grilled Pentagon officials and top military officers for hours yesterday on how they would protect the airspace over the most populated areas of the country without combat aircraft on round-the-clock standby. What they heard, however, didn't erase their concerns.

"We're not yet assured," said a commissioner for the panel, Samuel K. Skinner. He said he doubted that the military could quickly intercept hijacked airliners and shoot them down, especially on a moment's notice, as in the 9/11 attacks.

"There is a big, big gap," added another commissioner, James Bilbray, referring to the vast distances that some aircraft would have to fly to take down a hijacked airliner. "The interception time has been so extended because those bases are so far."

Without the 102d Fighter Wing at Otis, the closest Air Guard fighters on alert near major

### **BRAC Commission Early Bird**

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cities such as New York and Boston would be two Air National Guard combat jets at Bradley International Airport in Hartford, 100 miles to the west of Cape Cod. The commission chairman, Anthony Principi, calling Otis the "doorstep to the Atlantic," suggested that might not be close enough to protect an area with some of the most congested airspace in the country, which has lost several other air bases in recent decades.

In other regions, said another commissioner, Phillip Coyle, distances between units are much greater. In the Northwest, he said, the Pentagon's plan would leave two aircraft on alert to cover an area the size of Europe. He suggested that even if they could scramble to an emergency intercept on time, "they could be out of gas when they get there."

The shake-up of two dozen Air Guard units has emerged as the most contentious part of Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld's proposal to close, shrink, or expand hundreds of bases and other military installations nationwide.

Governors Edward G. Rendell of Pennsylvania and Rod R. Blagojevich of Illinois are suing Rumsfeld, saying they had not been consulted, and numerous analysts have said the airspace over major US cities will be more vulnerable if the military gets its way.

As a result, the nine-member commission reviewing the proposal gave the Pentagon and the states a last chance yesterday to argue their cases before its final report -- with suggested changes if necessary -- goes to President Bush and to Congress next month.

The questioning was notable not only for its critical tone, but also because it was coming so late in the process. If the commission overturns the recommendations, the Pentagon would have to find other ways to achieve the savings. Overturning the Guard proposals would upend the entire Air Force plan, a number of Pentagon officials have said.

The Navy officer responsible for protecting US air space, Admiral Timothy J. Keating, insisted

that while large areas of the country might not have aircraft on alert, he can call on other forces in the event of an emergency.

Those forces, he said, could include combat aircraft from other units, fighters from aircraft carriers, or ships armed with missiles. In the Pentagon's view, lack of aircraft in one location does not mean lack of preparedness.

The proposed changes "do not create unacceptable risk to our mission," Keating, the top officer of the North American Aerospace Defense Command, told the commission. "We have a large number of arrows in our quiver," he added, noting that "hundreds and hundreds" of aircraft can be relocated to deal with any particular emergency event.

Commissioner Harold Gehman said Keating's comments were "not a ringing endorsement."

Indeed, military officials acknowledged yesterday that they did not consult the Department of Homeland Security when advising the displacement of the Massachusetts Air National Guard's 12 F-15s at Otis, or of dozens of other planes that patrol airspace, put out forest fires, and fulfill other state missions. "We did not formally consult with the Department of Homeland Security," said Peter F. Verga, deputy assistant secretary of homeland defense.

To some commissioners, the exclusion of homeland security officials from the deliberations was inexcusable, given that the Air National Guard plays a critical role in homeland security missions. As that department gathers intelligence about threats inside the United States, the Air National Guard could be called upon to help eliminate them.

Skinner said he was shocked that Department of Homeland Security officials didn't attend yesterday's hearing. "BRAC recommendations on the national Guard will impact the [homeland security] mission," Principi said.

Representative William D. Delahunt, a Quincy Democrat whose district includes Otis, was in

the gallery during the Capitol Hill hearing yesterday. He said he took the absence of Homeland Security department officials as an indication they were told to skip the hearing because they might question the Pentagon's rationale.

Representatives of the National Guard raised their own questions about the plan's effect on homeland security, reiterating their concerns that the realignment would undermine their ability to support their host states in times of crisis.

Major General Francis D. Vavala, the adjutant general of the Delaware National Guard, told the panel that the plans "ignore critical homeland security needs." He also argued that closing many of the Air Guard bases will cost more than expected. This week, Massachusetts congressional delegation officials released an analysis suggesting the Pentagon underestimated the price for closing Otis by nearly a half-billion dollars.

Vavala also warned that leaving some states without Air National Guard aviation units could force experienced people to leave and make it harder to recruit younger people. Taking away the aircraft marks "the beginning of the end for these Guard units," he said.

"The commissioners obviously understand our concerns about the BRAC recommendations on Otis," said Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts. "Chairman Principi in particular highlighted the consequences of closing Otis, and the risks to our national security.

"Nothing in today's testimony undercuts the very strong case for keeping Otis open," he said.

### **Fla., Texas Gain Ground In BRAC**

The Norfolk Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk, VA)  
Louis Hansen  
August 12, 2005

In an unusual step, the federal base closure panel has scheduled hearings to allow Florida and Texas officials to make their case for moving

operations at Oceana Naval Air Station to their states.

The Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission will hold a special public hearing Aug. 20 to consider proposals to close the Virginia Beach base and move its operations to Texas or Florida, according to officials briefed Thursday evening on the process.

The hearings come after the nine-member independent panel concluded its visits to affected bases, and just a few days before the members are expected to vote on base closings. The commission must send a full list of base closings and realignments to President Bush by Sept. 8.

Virginia officials reached late Thursday called the move surprising and unprecedented. Some hinted that politics were taking a greater role -- President Bush's brother, Jeb Bush, is governor of Florida, and the president once served as Texas governor.

John Reid, a spokesman for Sen. George Allen, said the process should remain transparent. He said he didn't see a political connection, but the new hearing "certainly raises eyebrows how this process is unfolding."

George Foresman, assistant to Gov. Mark R. Warner, said Virginia has never seen this from a BRAC Commission. "This should be a clear indication that the commission has not reached a conclusion," Foresman said.

In the past two weeks, the governors of Texas and Florida presented plans to replace Oceana, the Navy's only master jet base on the East Coast.

On Thursday, Gov. Bush met privately with BRAC officials. The governor supports a proposal to re-establish Cecil Field near Jacksonville. On Monday, Texas Gov. Rick Perry announced a \$ 365 million incentive package to improve three bases.

A spokesman for the commission did not return a phone call late Thursday.

### **BRAC Commission Early Bird**

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Bob Matthias, an assistant to the Virginia Beach city manager, said this is the first time the city has gotten into a bidding war for Oceana. The commissioners, he said, "seem to be making up rules as they go along."

Kevin Hall, a spokesman for Warner, said the state would fight to ensure they can make their case before the commission. "This is unusual and late in the process, and could open Pandora's box," Hall said.

If other states are allowed to introduce new proposals days before the deadline, he said, "we would expect equal treatment."

### **More fighter jets for Madison station endorsed;**

**Doyle lobbies to save 440th Airlift Wing**  
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (Milwaukee, WI)  
Katherine M. Skiba and Jonathan O'Connell  
August 12, 2005

Washington - After heavy criticism of Pentagon proposals for Air National Guard units, new recommendations emerged Thursday that would send more fighter planes to Truax Field in Madison but leave unchanged the tanker fleet at Milwaukee's Mitchell International Airport.

The proposal, from the Adjutants General Association of the United States, was given to a federal panel that has less than a month to act on the Pentagon's base closure and realignment list that was made public in May.

The association gave its recommendations to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, which by Sept. 8 must tell the president which installations it wants shut down or changed.

In a related development, Gov. Jim Doyle met Thursday with BRAC Chairman Anthony Principi about the Wisconsin installation considered most vulnerable. That is the 440th Airlift Wing, an Air Force Reserve unit at Mitchell slated to move to North Carolina and lose its eight C-130H transport planes to two other states.

The association had these recommendations for Wisconsin's Air Guard units:

- \* Accept the Pentagon's bid to give the 115th Fighter Wing at Truax Field Air Guard Station three more F-16 fighter planes, enlarging its fleet to 18. The station is at the Dane County Regional Airport.

- \* Reject Pentagon plans to give the 128th Refueling Wing at Mitchell three more KC-135R tankers, leaving it with its current fleet of nine.

Some of the nine BRAC commissioners noted that the Air Guard proposals had generated a firestorm of controversy.

Principi questioned whether the Air Guard recommendations had gone too far, reminding that the nation is at war - a war that would be fought "for many years to come." He said he wondered whether the proposals would disrupt the balance among the active-duty Air Force, its Guard units and local communities.

Still unresolved is a key question: Can the panel move Air Guard assets without the approval of governors? Principi told reporters he had just received a Justice Department opinion but wanted to consult further with officials there before releasing it.

The adjutants general association represents the senior leadership of Army National Guard and Air National Guard. Its president, Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke of Nebraska, condemned the Pentagon's proposals as irresponsible for putting citizens at risk.

Air Force officials, however, defended the Defense Department's massive blueprint for change by saying the nation had a sophisticated, multi-tiered program in place to detect and deter attacks - a plan they said did not require an Air Guard unit in every state.

Doyle, after meeting Principi, told reporters that he made the point that the Pentagon relied on "inaccurate information" in evaluating the 440th,

because recent improvements to the unit's facilities were ignored.

If the improvements had been taken into account, the reserve station's ranking for airlift missions would have been "well within the range of the bases that are being kept open," he said.

Doyle also said he touted the unit's experience, efficiency and the area's clear skies, which make training missions easier.

He said he thought the state was getting a fair hearing but added: "What the result will be, I don't know."

**Military officials spar over base list; Willow Grove not mentioned in what may be last hearing.**

Morning Call (Allentown, PA)

Jeff Miller

August 12, 2005

State adjutant generals and U.S. Air Force officials squared off before a base-closing commission on Thursday over the Pentagon's plan to mothball dozens of Air Guard units across the country.

Willow Grove wasn't mentioned during the four-hour hearing. But the testimony could help determine the fate of the Horsham Township base, one of 180 installations the Pentagon wants to shutter to save money and make the military more effective.

Pennsylvania officials, who have filed a lawsuit challenging the closure, monitored the hearing but did not testify.

Under the Pentagon's plan, the 111th Air Fighting Wing of the Pennsylvania National Guard based at Willow Grove would be disbanded. Its A-10 tank-killing aircraft would be shipped to Guard units in Idaho, Maryland and Michigan.

The Air Force and the National Guard have been at odds over the plan for several months. Guard

officials complained that they weren't consulted on the closure recommendations before they were announced. Air Force officials insisted that the adjutants general received more briefings than some top Pentagon brass.

Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, president of the Adjutants General Association, said the closure plan would take the National Guard "down an untested path" that would weaken homeland defense.

Lempke, the Nebraska adjutant general, said it would be "irresponsible to put the United States at risk by diminishing the Air Guard."

Air Force officials defended the plan, saying that U.S. homeland defense would not suffer even if some states lost their only Air Guard units.

Adm. Timothy Keating, commander of the U.S. Northern Command, said he's able to move planes, ships and other military assets to cover vast geographic areas regardless of state boundaries.

Keating said the closure plan "poses no unacceptable risk" to homeland defense. But his words were less than inspiring for some commissioners.

"A sentence with a double negative in it is not very compelling," said Hal Gehman, a retired admiral.

Anthony Principi, chairman of the independent Base Closure and Realignment Commission, questioned whether the Pentagon's quest for efficiency had gone "too far in upsetting the balance between communities, the Guard and active forces."

Air Force officials said larger Air Guard units in fewer places would be more efficient to operate. They said the plan would also help the "total force" -- including the Air Guard -- make the transition from older-generation technology to new fighters and unmanned vehicles.

But Lempke and other adjutants general said the Air Force had not considered several factors.

For instance, they said most Air Guard members wouldn't transfer to new units because they have other jobs and strong ties to their communities. Their loss will cost the military vital experience and money to train new Guard members.

Willow Grove's defenders have made the same argument and say that the trend of eliminating bases in the Northeast also hurts military recruiting in the region. They also contend that Willow Grove is a vital homeland security asset.

On Thursday, several members of the state's congressional delegation wrote the base commission to emphasize Willow Grove's proximity to major East Coast cities, its 8,000-foot runway and its status as a joint reserve base where all the branches of the military can work and train.

The letter was spurred by reports that Northern Command is developing war plans to guard against and respond to terrorist attacks in the United States.

The commission had hoped to hear the views of the Department of Homeland Security on Thursday. But the department declined to send a representative to the hearing.

Commissioner Sam Skinner, a former transportation secretary, said he was "shocked" that Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff was a no-show.

"I know he's a busy man," Skinner said. "But I was a Cabinet secretary and I would have rearranged my schedule. I just don't understand."

Pennsylvania also took the rare step of suing in federal court to block Willow Grove's closing. The suit contends the Defense Department can't move Air Guard units without consent from state governors, which Gov. Ed Rendell said he never granted. Illinois has filed a similar lawsuit.

Principi said Thursday that the commission has received a legal opinion on the issue from the Department of Justice. But he declined to say

what the opinion said because commission staff attorneys were still reviewing it.

Thursday's hearing may have been the commission's final one before it begins deliberation over whether to accept or modify the Pentagon's proposal. The commission has until Sept. 8 to submit its revised list to President Bush.

Bush then has until Sept. 23 to accept or reject the recommendations. If he approves, Congress will have 45 days to act on them. Neither the president nor Congress can change the list.

### **Hearings On Bases Question Security**

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pittsburgh, PA)

Maeve Reston

August 12, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Members of the independent commission evaluating Defense Department recommendations for closing or reorganizing bases around the country yesterday expressed skepticism about the department's request to shutter or eliminate aircraft at more than two dozen Air National Guard units while the nation is at war.

The Air National Guard unit at the Willow Grove base north of Philadelphia is on the list of units marked for deactivation. The Air National Guard changes are just a part of the Defense Department list of hundreds of military base modifications the defense secretary proposed in May in an effort to improve efficiency and save money in U.S. military operations.

But the proposed closures and aircraft eliminations at Air National Guard bases has sparked protests in recent weeks by many governors because these units patrol the nation and because their members have been sent to Iraq and Afghanistan to aid missions there.

Many governors, including Pennsylvania's Ed Rendell, have argued that the loss of Air National Guard units could cripple states' ability to respond to disasters or terrorist attacks. The

governors' stance has been endorsed by the Adjutants General Association.

Rendell took those protests a step further in July, arguing in a suit against Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld that his department violated federal law by seeking to deactivate Willow Grove's 111th Fighter Wing because the governor's permission was not sought. Governors control Army and Air Force National Guard units in peacetime unless they are called to active duty.

Sens. Arlen Specter and Rick Santorum, both R-Pa., joined Rendell's suit, and Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich has filed a similar one.

Pennsylvania officials could not use the same argument to defend against closure of the 911th Military Airlift Wing at the Pittsburgh International Airport because it is an Air Force Reserve unit, and thus controlled by the federal government.

It is unclear how Base Realignment and Closure Commission members plan to deal with the legal issues. They have asked the Justice Department to issue an opinion on whether the argument has merit. Commission Chairman Anthony J. Principi yesterday said he had received the Justice Department's response but could not yet reveal its details.

But during a Capitol Hill hearing yesterday, commissioners appeared to be seriously weighing the governors' broader concerns and noted that they were giving special consideration to the fact that governors weren't consulted as the Pentagon base-closing list was being drawn up.

After hearing testimony from top Defense and Air Force officials, who argued that eliminating aircraft at nearly 30 Air National Guard bases would not impair national security, Principi said he was "struggling to understand" how moving those units entirely out of some states or even parts of them could help ensure safety against an attack.

Noting that having National Guard units dispersed around the nation helps to maximize recruitment and retention, the former Veterans Affairs secretary said he wondered whether the Pentagon's Air National Guard recommendations "haven't gone too far in disrupting the balance" between communities, guard and active forces.

"We are a nation at war," Principi said. "Sometimes we have to forgo a little efficiency."

Commissioner James H. Bilbray, a former Nevada congressman, went further: "It's more than just the perception by the public that there is going to be a big gap in the defense of the United States," he said, suggesting that the modifications could alter the time it would take to intercept planes such as those terrorists hijacked for the Sept. 11, 2001, domestic attacks. "I think it's actual fact that our national defense is being hampered, will be impaired, by the proposals of the Department of Air Force."

Peter F. Verga, principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for homeland defense, assured commissioners that the Air National Guard closure recommendations were consistent with the department goal of improving efficiency. Yet he said the Pentagon had not formally consulted with the Department of Homeland Security about those closures -- and whether they posed risks -- because that would have violated rules for drafting the list.

"We do look at the defense of the United States as defending the nation, not defending individual states," Verga told the commissioners. While some recommended closures "might appear to be lessening security in a given area, they're balanced by some other decisions," he said, and states that lose guard units could form compacts with other states for mutual protection.

Adm. Timothy J. Keating, commander of the North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command, who also testified on behalf of the Defense Department, added that the closures and realignments were just an element of the overall modernization of the military. "We are confident that on the narrow

issue of base realignment and closure -- important to be sure -- there is no increased risk to the United States of America," he said.

But later in the hearing, there was confusion about comments by top Air Force officials, who stood by their closure recommendations, appearing to contradict Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum, who heads the National Guard Bureau.

He told commissioners that if flying units are eliminated in the BRAC process, he was committed to restoring them. "How do you have the Air Guard with no flying units?" he asked rhetorically.

Though the focus of yesterday's hearing was the impact of base closings on homeland security, all invited Homeland Security Department officials, including Secretary Michael Chertoff, declined to testify.

Commissioner Samuel K. Skinner, a chief of staff and transportation secretary for President George H.W. Bush, said: "This is an issue that is as important -- as you know from Sept. 11th -- as any we've had facing our nation, and we can't get the Secretary of Homeland Security to show up here. I know he's a busy man, but I was a Cabinet secretary and don't think I would have missed the opportunity."

BRAC's nine members are to begin voting on the closures Aug. 24 and must send their final report to President Bush by Sept. 8. He can accept or reject the entire list of recommendations.

**Herseth: Ellsworth odds have improved**  
Sioux Falls Argus Leader (Sioux Falls, SD)  
Ben Shouse  
August 13, 2005

Rep. Stephanie Herseth said Friday that the odds of Ellsworth Air Force Base staying open have improved substantially since it was targeted for closure.

"I would say we went from a one- or two-chance in 10, to a four- or five-chance in 10," she said

in a meeting with the Argus Leader editorial board.

"My guess is that it comes off the list."

Herseth and South Dakota's senators have been fighting the closure, which could cost the area an estimated 6,800 jobs. They agree they have made a strong case.

But Alex Conant, a spokesman for Sen. John Thune, took issue with Herseth's odds making.

"It's impossible to handicap these things. We fully anticipate that many of the commissioners will be undecided the morning of the vote," Conant said.

That vote will be some time during the week of Aug. 22, when the Base Realignment and Closure Commission will decide if it will remove any bases from the closure list the Pentagon made public in May.

"We're not setting expectations one way or the other. Historically, the odds are against us," Conant said.

Thune was in Washington this week to meet with BRAC commissioners, and Conant said he focused on the lawsuit that currently restricts the air space around Dyess Air Force Base. If Ellsworth closed, the Texas base would be the only home for the B-1 bomber, and the air space restrictions could impair training routes at Dyess.

That is a recent twist on a larger argument that Ellsworth supporters have made all along - that it is unwise to consolidate the nation's B-1s at a single base.

Herseth said Friday that at least two of the nine commissioners are clearly sympathetic to that argument, and a third, Philip Coyle, seems sympathetic. Five votes are needed to remove a base from the closure list.

"I would say we're at three, and we've got the potential to get three more," Herseth said.

At the editorial board meeting, Herseth discussed several other topics, including health care, media ownership rules and her plans for the rest of the August Congressional recess.

Executive Editor Randell Beck asked her about the state of the Iraq War.

"My assessment is that it has gotten substantially worse, that (with) our misjudgments and our poor planning at the outset, the problems have manifested themselves more severely," she said.

She added, however, that the timetable for a new constitution and another election could allow the U.S. to consider reducing troop levels in late 2006.

"By the time of the next presidential election, candidates from both sides will be laying out a timetable for when we'll be out," she said. "By 2010, yeah, maybe we'll be out of there."

### Opinions/ Editorials

#### **Maine officials wise to stick to BNAS message**

#### **The delegation shouldn't choose between closing or downsizing the base.**

Portland Press Herald (Portland, ME)  
August 12, 2005

Gov. Baldacci and other officials seeking to keep the Brunswick Naval Air Station open and fully staffed did well to ignore distractions and stay on message before the Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

When asked - repeatedly - whether they would rather see the air base closed or downsized, their answer was succinct: neither. To use a martial turn of words, they stuck to their guns.

For the safety of the nation, for the benefit of New England, for the health of Maine, the base should remain open. BNAS is critical to national security, and Baldacci and Maine's congressional delegation put their own questions to the BRAC commissioners who command the base's future:

What if the commissioners were in charge of defending the Northeast, and the region was attacked by an off-shore cruise missile barrage, or threatened by a powerful weapon concealed in a container ship? Would they want the P-3 Orion planes in Maine, or in Florida, where the Pentagon has proposed relocating them?

As retired Rear Adm. Harry Rich told the BRAC commissioners, our nation is at war. The war is being fought on many, shifting fronts, including the vast Atlantic coastline.

Maine's advocates didn't prevaricate. Under relentless questioning by the commissioners, they refused to address which of the two evils Maine would like to see, closure or downsizing.

In doing so, they not only stressed and reaffirmed their message, but they also didn't give the BRAC commissioners an out. The commissioners will not be able to sentence BNAS to closure or a half-existence and rationalize it as something that Maine found less onerous than another option.

The future of BNAS is too important to the country and Maine to waste time on distractions - and that's all that particular line of questioning represents.

### Additional Notes

#### BRAC Commission Early Bird

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