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DEFENSE BASE CLOSURE AND REALIGNMENT COMMISSION

MEDIA BRIEFING BOOK

REGIONAL HEARING
RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA

DEFENSE BASE CLOSURE AND REALIGNMENT COMMISSION

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MEDIA BRIEFING BOOK

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA REGIONAL HEARING

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Media Advisory – Rapid City, SD

TIME:
Doors Open to Public at 11:30AM
Hearing Coverage- Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Arena
1:00PM-4:00PM / PRE-SET 10:00AM

Media Availability – Lacroix B Room of Civic Center
As each State completes its presentation it will hold a media availability. The BRAC Commission's media avail will begin promptly 15 minutes after the end of the hearing.

Logistical information for media:
-Satellite truck parking available at North end of Civic Center Arena
-400 ft. Cable run to press risers
-65 ft. Max camera throw
-TV quality sound and lighting
-Internet will be available. $150 per line for high speed connection, $85 per line for dial up connection. Please contact Tom Barber at 605-394-4115 by 5pm Friday, June 17 to schedule internet setup.

Credentialing and Media Inquiries:
Contact: James Schaefer, james.schaefer@wso.whs.mil
Director of Communications

2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
Suggested Talking Points Regarding Ellsworth Air Force Base

1. **The most important consideration to the Commission, as it conducts an independent review of the suggestion by the Department of Defense (DoD) to close Ellsworth AFB, is military value.**
    - The Commission is aware of the important defense role that Ellsworth AFB has played since its founding in 1942, and will perform a full evaluations of the current military contributions of the installation before coming to its conclusion.
    - While Ellsworth scored just beneath Dyess AFB in DoD's evaluation of military value and DoD has suggested that all of the B1-B bombers be relocated to Dyess AFB, the Commission is an independent entity and will perform a thorough evaluation, as prescribed by statute, to ensure that DoD's suggestions were made in accordance with the law and that all critical factors were taken into account.

2. **The Commission is entirely non-political in nature and will perform its evaluations by the process set forth by statute.**
    - The factors to be considered in the Commission's evaluation and analysis of Ellsworth AFB have been specifically outlined by law.
    - The Commission is completely open and transparent and was established by the Congress to provide accountability to the public for suggestions made by DoD to close or realign various military installations across the country.

3. **The Commission is keenly aware of the human impact that the suggestion to close Ellsworth AFB could have, should the suggestion be enacted.**
    - Although the most important factor in the Commission's evaluation of a military installation is the installation's military value, the Commission will also take the economic, environmental, and other effects that the suggestion to close the installation could have on the surrounding community.
    - Public input is welcomed by the Commission as a vital part of the evaluation process. The Community is encouraged to contact the Commission through the Commission's official website, www.brac.gov, to inform the Commission of any factors that the community feels may have been overlooked in the evaluation conducted by DoD.

Facts compiled from included press clippings.

2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
Suggested Qs & As Regarding Ellsworth Air Force Base

Q1. Freshman U.S. Senator John Thune has put up a large fight against the suggestion by the Department of Defense (DoD) to close Ellsworth Air Force Base. He stands on the military value of the base, and that no base should be closed during a time of war. Does political influence carry any weight in the evaluation conducted and the decisions made by the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC)?
A1. The Congress established the BRAC Commission as a non-partisan, non-political entity to conduct a thorough, objective, and transparent analysis of the suggestions put forth by DoD to close or realign various military installations and to ensure that those suggestions were made both in accordance with the law and after all critical factors have been taken into account. The criteria by which the Commission will make its decisions has been specifically set forth by law and is based almost entirely upon military value.

Q2. DoD has suggested that, for the sake of efficiency, the B1-B bombers, which are currently split between Dyess Air Force Base in Texas and Ellsworth AFB, be combined at Dyess AFB. DoD's military score for Dyess was slightly higher than that for Ellsworth, therefore Ellsworth was the one suggested for closure out of the two. Does it make sense to place all of these bombers in one location during a time of war?
A2. While DoD determines the strategy for meeting today's changing global threats, the task of the Commission is to ensure that DoD has made its suggestions in full accordance with the law, and has taken all critical factors into account. The Commission will perform a thorough, independent, and transparent evaluation of Ellsworth AFB before coming to its conclusions. The process followed by the Commission has been specifically set forth by statute.

Q3. Ellsworth AFB was established in 1942 and has been the home of the 28th Bomb Wing since 1947. Will the Commission consider the lengthy history of this installation as well as the contributions that it has made to the defense of the United States as the Commission performs its analysis?
A3. Many, if not all, of the military installations in the United States have made very valuable contributions to our country's defense, but in these times of changing global threats, it is important that our military be as streamlined and as efficient as possible and that it not have to carry the weight of excess infrastructure that is ineffective in meeting these threats. The Congress established the Commission to ensure that the suggestions by DoD to close or realign various military installations across the country, to this end, have been made in accordance with the law and that all pertinent factors have been taken into account.

Q4. In the 1995 BRAC round, concerns were expressed about the possibility of moving the bombers to Dyess AFB. Why would this round of BRAC be any different?
A4. The Commission will perform a full and independent evaluation, according to the criteria set forth by statute. In these times of changing global threats, it is crucial that our military is as streamlined and efficient as possible. The Congress established the Commission for this round of BRAC to evaluate the suggestions made by DoD to close or realign military installations and ensure that DoD's suggestions were made both in accordance with the law and after taking into all pertinent factors into account.

Q5. Ellsworth AFB contributes approximately $278 million to the local economy annually, and has a yearly payroll of approximately $161 million. Will the Commission take into account the economic effect that cutting these jobs would have on the region?
A5. While the Commission will base its final decision almost entirely upon military value, it will also take into careful consideration the economic, environmental, and other effects that the closure of Ellsworth AFB would have on the local community. The factors which are included in the Commission's evaluation have been specifically prescribed by law.

Q6. During the 1990s, the domestic economy was surging, whereas now, business confidence is a bit more fragile. On the other hand, whereas once Ellsworth AFB was an extremely important economic factor in the community, some say that now it is one of many things that contribute to the local economy, the others being retail, the housing industry, medical care, restaurants, etc. Will the Commission make a thorough evaluation of the severity of the economic impact that the suggestion to close Ellsworth AFB could have, should the suggestion be enacted?
A6. The Commission will perform a transparent, thorough, and objective analysis, as prescribed by law before coming to any conclusions. While military value is the most important consideration, the Commission will also take the economic and other effects that the closure of the installation could have into full account.

Q7. There are plans to ensure the care of retirees surrounding Ellsworth AFB and there has also been mention of the possibility of a community in which a base is closed, receiving $1 million through the Department of Labor. Will the Commission work to ensure that Communities continue to thrive, should an installation in their region be closed?
A7. DoD has the responsibility of working with communities to ensure continued economic growth after the closure or realignment of a military installation, while the BRAC Commission is responsible only for evaluating the suggestions made by DoD to close or realign a military installation and ensuring that those suggestions were made in accordance with the law and that all pertinent factors were taken into account. The Commission is keenly aware of the human impact that these suggestions could have, should the suggestions be enacted, and will make a full evaluation before reaching its conclusions.

Q8. How can the community make the Commission aware of factors that it feels may have been overlooked by DoD in DoD's evaluation and suggestion to close Ellsworth AFB?
A8. Public input is not only welcomed by the Commission, but it is considered a vital part of the process. The Community is encouraged to provide its input through the official Commission website, which is: www.brac.gov.

Facts compiled from included press clippings.

ELLSWORTH AIR FORCE BASE
SOUTH DAKOTA

National News Articles
Not Another Maverick
Pentagon Classifies Brac Data To 'Segregate Out' Sensitive Material
BRAC Changes To DOD Medicine Focus On Care, Training, Research
Communities Show How To Fight After Military Bases Go: Pentagon Plans To Shut 180 Installations Across The US Need Not Sound The Death Knells Of The Towns Left Behind
Thune And Fellow Lawmakers Try To Slow, Terminate Brac Round
Thune Threatens Legal Action If Closing Details Aren't Released
A Town Prepares (Again) to Lose its Air Force Base
Community Leaders Mull Possible Uses For Ellsworth

Local News Articles
Throwing A Fit Will Not Slow The BRAC Process
Delayed Ellsworth Data Irks Senators
Thune Threatens Legal Action On Ellsworth;
Wants Closing Details Released

Opinion/Editorial Articles
Plan For Worst - Go For $1M In Case Base Closes

National News Articles

Not Another Maverick
National Review
R. Andrew Newman
June 7, 2005

As a game of political chicken shapes up between freshman U.S. Sen. John Thune and the White House, the biggest casualty could be President Bush's agenda.

With strong backing from the national GOP and the president, Thune defeated Tom Daschle, the Democrat's number-one man in the Senate, in a race that saw South Dakota become one of the nation's most contentious political battlegrounds.

Thune and his supporters were able to out Daschle as the liberal obstructionist he really was--as opposed to the moderate he played on the county-fair circuit. Daschle's charade didn't always work, but he could at least trumpet his seniority and position as minority leader to voters concerned about preserving **Ellsworth** Air Force Base in Rapid City. Thune countered that a GOP senator on friendly terms with President Bush would be in a better position to keep the base--South Dakota's second-largest employer--from closing its gates permanently.

Not one year from the election, Thune finds himself in the worst position he could imagine. Those friendly ties didn't stay the Pentagon's hand, and **Ellsworth** has been marked for closure. Democrats are saying that the Thune couldn't deliver the goods when it mattered.

Although it is natural for a state to want to hang on to a military installation with an estimated economic impact of $278 million and an annual payroll of $161 million, local politics cannot stand in the way if national security dictates that the base must close. But, in this case, the Base **Realignment** and Closure Commission has some legitimate reasons to consider a reprieve for **Ellsworth.**

The Department of Defense scored bases on a set of criteria that included current and future mission capabilities, geography, cost of operation, environmental impact, and economic impact on surrounding communities. According to the Pentagon report, Dyess Air Force Base in Texas nudged out **Ellsworth** 56.7 to 50.8 in the scoring.

Thankfully, for **Ellsworth** supporters, this doesn't appear to be a clear-cut victory for Dyess. Are there really sufficient "operational efficiencies" to warrant moving the 24 B-1Bs south? Cost should be an issue, but not at the sake of national security. The B-1B fleet is currently split between the South Dakota and Texas bases. Do we really want to have the B1-B's at one base? Thune has also questioned why the domestic list of base closures was made before the Quadrennial Defense Review and the restructuring of overseas bases were completed.

Politics is about more than helping friends, but without friends, battles can't be won and principles can't be defended. An angry Thune has reversed course and said he'll vote against John Bolton's nomination as U.N. ambassador. Bolton's vote was already going to be close, and it's one the White House can't afford to lose, given that, for better or worse, it has now been styled a referendum on the president's foreign policy. Thune has also refrained from showing his hand on another major component of Bush's second term agenda, the Central American Free Trade Agreement.

Thune need only look one state south to see Chuck Hagel, proof that a Republican senator can buck party and president and face no consequences. The maverick club isn't so exclusive that it wouldn't make room for another member, especially a bright newcomer fresh from a public falling-out with the president.

Such a turn of events would be a defeat for Republicans around the country, as well as for those in South Dakota who defeated Tom Daschle and helped the party and the president secure a legislative majority. The White House and the GOP leadership in Congress had best figure out a way to help their friend from South Dakota.

Pentagon Classifies Brac Data To 'Segregate Out' Sensitive Material

Inside the Army
June 6, 2005

The Defense Department is temporarily classifying databases containing base **realignment** and closure background data, while offering a secure room where BRAC commission members and congressional staff with security clearances can review the information.

DOD officials made the decision to classify the BRAC material following a May 24 security review meeting because such information could cause "serious damage to national security if known by U.S. adversaries," acting Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England writes in a May

27 memo obtained by Inside the Pentagon.

Because separating sensitive and non-sensitive items in the databases will be difficult, England writes, "I am temporarily classifying all of the subject databases and information contained therein, less the BRAC questions themselves, at the Secret Formerly Restricted Data Level."

The memo instructed defense officials to set up a secure room near the offices of the 2005 Base **Realignment** and Closure Commission in the Crystal City area of Arlington, VA, last week. More secure BRAC reading rooms could be set up on Capitol Hill, the document states.

For the Crystal City room, the services must each provide five computers, loaded with their "searchable BRAC databases," according to the memo. The services also must provide personnel who can help congressional staffers access information.

Meanwhile, each military department must establish in its BRAC office spaces an operational security team "to review and assess all BRAC-related information residing in their databases," England writes.

Going through the material, the services are to "segregate out" sensitive or classified data, he adds. The National Security Agency will provide an OPSEC technical adviser to the teams.

Once all sensitive and classified information is removed, the service secretaries will certify to England by June 3 that their remaining BRAC databases are unclassified and without "any OPSEC vulnerabilities," according to the memo.

Since the Pentagon released its base closure recommendations May 13, lawmakers have repeatedly pressed the department to release the information that led to the recommendations.

On May 28, Sens. Susan Collins (R-ME) and Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) sent a letter to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld demanding the release of the BRAC justification data.

"The integrity of the base closure and **realignment** process depends upon openness and transparency," they wrote. "The absence of these qualities due to the department's failure to abide by its statutory obligation to disclose information undermines our confidence in the department's decision-making process and undoubtedly raises similar concerns across the American public."

Reviewing the data under the restrictions imposed by the Pentagon likely will be unsatisfactory for lawmakers, sources on Capitol Hillsaid last week.

"For example, if you can't even take notes -- essentially not use that data -- it is useless in the public defense of a base," a spokesman for Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-ME) said June 1.

Collins, Lieberman and Snowe represent states where DOD proposes to close the following two installations: Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, ME, and the New London submarine base in Groton, CT.

In this year's BRAC round, DOD recommends shutting down 33 major bases and realigning 29 others. The moves would save the Pentagon an estimated $50 billion over the next two decades, according to a May 13 Pentagon statement.

The Pentagon's BRAC proposals have stirred controversy on Capitol Hill since they were

announced last month.

Some lawmakers are turning their attention on the whole base-closure process. For example, a group led by Sen. John Thune (R-SD) is backing a bill that would delay BRAC decisions.

"I said last week that the Pentagon was dead wrong to recommend closing **Ellsworth** Air Force Base in South Dakota," Thune said May 19. "And today I'm here to say that I think the Pentagon is dead wrong for recommending we close a single domestic base while we're at war and before the completion of the overseas BRAC commission and the Pentagon's QDR."

The QDR is short for the Quadrennial Defense Review, a congressionally mandated sweeping Pentagon assessment of military strategy, force structure and organizations.

Over the next few months, the BRAC commission will validate -- or counter -- the Pentagon's base closure and **realignment** proposals and deliver a final report to President Bush by Sept. 8. The panel will hold hearings and visit bases until mid-July before members begin crafting their report in August.

The Government Accountability Office is tasked with delivering its analysis of the Pentagon's BRAC recommendations by July 1.

BRAC Changes To DOD Medicine Focus On Care, Training, Research

US Department of Defense Information
June 6, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Airmen bound for a career in the Air Force Medical Service will start off by training in a joint environment if all Base **Realignment** and Closure recommendations are approved.

The changes will not completely homogenize training for enlisted medical specialists, but they will allow all the services to share resources, said the chairman for the medical joint cross service group for BRAC 2005.

"The recommendation is to move all Air Force medical training out of Shepherd Air Force Base, Texas, to Fort Sam Houston, Texas," said Air Force Surgeon General Lt. Gen. (Dr.) George Peach Taylor Jr. "That's where the Army school house is."

Part of that recommendation is that Navy officials also move their enlisted medical training to San Antonio.

"Think of it as a university campus, with a Navy college, an Air Force college and an Army college for enlisted training," Dr. Taylor said. "They will be able to share resources, lab and class space, and teaching and administrative staff. They will work together, like we do in wartime."

The general also said each service, while working together to train its medics, would still maintain unique training tracks for its people. Airmen will still train to the Air Force's unique mission.

"The challenge is to put the curriculums together, look for the common areas, and not lose the

fact these are still Airmen in training," he said. "They will not be purple medics; they will be Airmen medics."

Besides its focus on military medical training facilities, the joint cross service group also looked for ways to optimize how the services provide medical care and conduct biomedical research.

All services conduct various forms of biomedical research. The general said the group felt it best to merge much of that research into joint activities.

"We recommended the creation of joint centers of excellence," the general said. "This means bringing together the best research and development, and acquisition professionals from the Army, Navy and Air Force and putting them in a location that makes the best possible sense."

The general said the group suggested the creation of six joint centers of excellence to conduct biomedical research. Those centers include an aerospace medicine center at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio; a chemical defense center at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.; a biological defense center at Fort Detrick, Md.; and center for battlefield health and trauma at Fort Sam Houston.

The group also recommended realigning the availability of medical care at facilities nationwide. This included recommendations to realign Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., and medical facilities in San Antonio.

"In the National Capitol Region, our group felt we didn't need four hospitals," the general said. "A wise investment would be to have two military hospitals in the nation's capital. Our recommendation is to have a 165-bed hospital at Fort Belvoir, Va., and create the new Walter Reed National Military Medical Center by building up the Bethesda campus. We expect these to all be jointly staffed."

Currently, the four hospitals in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area are Walter Reed Army Medical Center, the National Naval Medical Center at Bethesda, Md., Malcolm Grow Medical Center at Andrews AFB, Md., and the DeWitt Army Community Hospital at Fort Belvoir.

The general said infrastructure already in place at the Bethesda Naval facility, and the age of infrastructure at Walter Reed make the Bethesda site an ideal location for development of a larger, more modern joint medical facility. Recommendations by other BRAC joint cross service groups will increase the size of Fort Belvoir, an already busy military community just south of Washington, D.C., making that location ideal for the region's second military hospital.

The group also recommended **realignment** of medical care facilities in the San Antonio region. Most notably, the group suggested inpatient care at Wilford Hall Medical Center at Lackland AFB, Texas, be moved to Brooke Army Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston.

"We suggested that instead of running another hospital at Lackland, we install a new, almost 500,000 square foot ambulatory surgery center and outpatient facility," he said. "Combined with new construction at Brooke Army Medical Center, this will rebuild the medical infrastructure in San Antonio and make it ready for the 21st century military."

Despite the suggested **realignments** to improve the DOD's medical infrastructure, Dr. Taylor said what matters most has not changed.

"Nothing in the basic recommendations that came out of our group changed the level of care we

can provide," he said. "It is the same care, but maybe in a new location. In many places, we recommended closing inpatient care, but we wanted simply to move that care to a neighboring facility or a civilian facility."

Even in the communities outside Cannon AFB, N.M. and **Ellsworth** AFB, S.D., where there is a recommendation to close the entire base, plans are in the works to ensure military retirees in the area are taken care of.

"In those places where the BRAC commission recommends closing, we are working with Tricare contractors to ensure there is a good transition plan for retirees," he said.

Dr. Taylor also said that none of the recommendations of his joint cross service group are final until BRAC recommendations are approved by the president and Congress this fall.

Communities Show How To Fight After Military Bases Go: Pentagon Plans To Shut 180 Installations Across The US Need Not Sound The Death Knells Of The Towns Left Behind

Financial Times (London, England)
ANDREW WARD
June 3, 2005

When Steve Hiott becamean apprentice pipe fitter at the US Navy shipyard in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1989, he thought he would stay until retirement. But within months his job was under threat as the fall of the Berlin Wall allowed the US to scale back its cold war military infrastructure.

Mr Hiott lost his job in 1991. Two years later the shipyard was closed. Some 22,000 jobs were lost - equivalent to nearly 5 per cent of Charleston's population.

The closure was a shattering blow to a city with a proud naval heritage stretching back through the maritime battles of the civil war and war of independence.

But Mr Hiott's experience since leaving the navy symbolises the city's recovery.

He enrolled on an accounting course and set up his own business after graduating. Last year, he sold it and became chief financial officer of a local technology start-up called Navigational Sciences.

"If it hadn't been for the force reduction I would still be a pipe fitter," he says.

Mr Hiott's story offers hope to the thousands of people whose jobs were put under threat last month, when the US defence department announced provisional plans to shut 180 installations across the country as part of its Base **Realignment** and Closure programme.

The proposals mark the start of a fifth round of closures since 1988 as the US seeks to make its armed forces more flexible and efficient.

Many of the affected communities are now waging vociferous campaigns to save their bases before the final closure list is submitted to President George W. Bush in September.

But Charleston's resurgence shows that the loss of military jobs need not always be something to fear.

"The town fathers believed it would be the death of Charleston," says Eric Dobson, chief executive of Navigational Sciences. "In retrospect, closure may have been the best thing that ever happened."

Navigational Sciences, which develops maritime navigation and tracking technology, is part of a thriving cluster of science and technology-based companies that has transformed Charleston's economy over the past decade.

"Base closure was a catalyst for change," says David Ginn, chief executive of Charleston Regional Development Alliance, which has spearheaded the drive to attract investment.

Businesses have invested more than Dollars 5bn (Pounds 2.8bn) in the region since 1995, creating 50,000 jobs - more than twice the number lost in the base closure. The latest arrivals include a Dollars 500m joint venture between Alenia Aeronautica and Vought Aircraft Industries to build part of the Boeing 787 aircraft.

Charleston is not the only town to have bounced back from base closure. According to the US Government Accountability Office, 85 per cent of the nearly 130,000 military jobs lost since 1988 have been recovered through the redevelopment of former military land. Of the 62 affected communities, fewer than a third had an unemployment rate above the national average last year.

However, few military towns have as much to fall back on as Charleston. The historic city, founded by English settlers in 1670, draws millions of tourists each year to its elegant centre and nearby Atlantic beaches. Businesses are attracted by an idyllic quality of life coupled with below-average wages and living costs.

Charleston was also fortunate that the base closure came at a time when its commercial container port was entering a period of rapid expansion, fuelled by global trade growth.

The port, which supports a thriving regional logistics industry, has won approval to build an additional terminal at the former naval base. Plans are under way to build residential and commercial properties on another part of the derelict site.

Perhaps the most surprising factor in Charleston's recovery has been the quiet return of the military. Since the base closure 12 years ago, it has gained some new, smaller facilities. These included a naval technology research centre, which employs 11,000 people and grants more than Dollars 500m of contracts to local companies each year.

"Back in the 90s, Charleston had the military of the cold war. Now we have the military of the future - and that makes us less vulnerable," says Tom Mikolajcik, a retired air force general who advises Charleston chamber of commerce.

He concedes that, while the communities cast adrift in the 1990s were cushioned by a surging domestic economy, the latest closures come at a time of more fragile business confidence.

"It's going to be tough for places like **Ellsworth,**" he says, highlighting an air force base in rural South Dakota, where nearly 4,000 jobs are threatened.

"Not everyone is going to be able to do what Charleston has done."

Thune And Fellow Lawmakers Try To Slow, Terminate Brac Round

Inside the Air Force
June 3, 2005

In an effort to save South Dakota's **Ellsworth** Air Force Base from closure, the state's freshman Republican senator, John Thune, is pushing several pieces of legislation that would delay the Defense Department's entire 2005 base **realignment** and closure round. One of the bills cancels the process entirely if the Pentagon does not submit to Congress all documentation related to its BRAC recommendations.

Thune is one of several lawmakers with a major base closure proposed for their state focusing attacks on the entire base-closure process.

However, the pressure is even more acute for Thune, who told voters throughout his 2004 campaign that his ties to President Bush would help save **Ellsworth** from closure. The base is South Dakota's second largest employer with 3,797 military and civilian jobs.

Established in 1942, the base has served as home to the 28th Bomb Wing since 1947. If eventually closed, the base's 24 B-1 Bomber aircraft would be sent to Dyess AFB, TX, home to the 7th Bomb Wing. The move is intended to consolidate the service's entire B-1 fleet at one installation in order to be more efficient.

BRAC commissioners are set to visit **Ellsworth** on June 21 but Thune is not sitting idle until then.

He made his first move May 18 when, with bipartisan support, he offered a bill that would delay the BRAC process until Congress considers various reviews, including the work of the Commission on Review of Overseas Military Facility Structure of the United States-- a separate study that reviews U.S. facilities-- and the ongoing 2005 Quadrennial Defense Review.

Thune also recently introduced legislation that would permit any member of the armed services to testify before the BRAC Commission about the value of a military installation with an added clause that any member who does testify has protection from retaliation including demotion or harassment.

"The men and women who work and live at **Ellsworth** want to save their base and they want to be allowed to talk to the BRAC commissioners about the value of their base and why they think the Pentagon is wrong to close it," Alex Conant, Thune's press secretary, told Inside the Air Force May 31.

DOD spokeswoman Cheryl Irwin told ITAF in a June 2 e-mail it is up to the BRAC Commission as to who they call to tesitfy. Robert McCreary, deputy director of communications for the BRAC Commission, said in a June 2 interview that the commissioners have had no trouble speaking to whomever they want.

In addition, Thune also is co-sponsoring legislation introduced by Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-ME) that would require the defense secretary to submit all documentation related to the Pentagon's BRAC recommendations to Congress no later than seven days after the bill's passage. If those

documents which the bill defines as "related to the application by the Secretary of Defense of the military value criteria" and others is not provided, the base-closure round is terminated.

Snowe's bill has passed through committee and is awaiting the full consideration of the senate, which Conant hopes will come as early as next week.

While he admires Thune's efforts, Paul Taibl, director for policy for Business Executives for National Security, said he was surprised by the bill protecting service members who testify before the BRAC Commission.

"I don't know why they would need a special bill to do that," Taibl told ITAF in a June 1 interview. "I'm sure the people who give sworn testimony probably have protections under the law and I don't know why this has become an issue."

The senator may just be making a case that all parties must be heard in open and free hearings and there is no harm in that, he added.

The other piece of legislation Thune introduced, which has received the most amount of attention on Capitol Hill, also can be refuted, according to Taibl. The counter to BRAC being delayed until other reviews are concluded "would be the fact that the Pentagon did not set the date for any of these studies. The QDR was directed by Congress, as was the timing of the BRAC round, so that kind of comes back in your face if you're in Congress because Congress was the one that set the dates to begin with," Taibl said.

Conant said the measure delaying BRAC is gaining momentum but still may face an uphill climb as there are some senators who benefit from the BRAC process because it brings more jobs to their states. That list includes Sen. John Warner (R-VA), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, which Thune's bill would have to go through before the full Senate votes.

If the base-closure process continues as planned, DOD's recommendations will be reviewed in the coming months by the BRAC commission. The panel will decide which recommendations to approve and whether to make any changes to the list. Based on that review, the commission will send the White House a report by Sept. 8.

By law, the president must approve or reject the commission's list by late September. The recommendations will become final if the president approves the commission's proposals and Congress does not object within 45 legislative days.

Thune Threatens Legal Action If Closing Details Aren't Released

The Associated Press
June 2, 2005

The fight over the future of **Ellsworth** Air Force Base, which already is a political issue, could become a legal battle.

The Pentagon says unclassified documents will be released Friday that may offer details on why **Ellsworth,** just east of Rapid City, is on its proposed closure list.

According to Republican Sen. John Thune, if that doesn't happen, he and other congressional leaders might take the Defense Department to court or start an investigation.

The Pentagon's failure to release information may have violated the Base **Realignment** and Closure law passed in 2001, Thune said.

Thune met with reporters Wednesday in Rapid City and said the local task force needs more information to make its case before the Base Closure and **Realignment** Commission. Several BRAC members are scheduled to be in Rapid City June 21.

Thune and Sen. Tim Johnson said they can see the documents but can't share their contents with the public.

Although the Pentagon claims the documents contain classified information, the delay is inexcusable, Thune said.

The senator likened withholding the information to trying to prepare for a major exam without being allowed to read the textbook.

The way the information is being released is "manifestly unfair," Thune said. The delay hurts communities affected by the BRAC recommendations in preparing their cases, he said.

Asked if he felt betrayed by the Bush administration's support of the recommendation to close **Ellsworth** Air Force Base, Thune would say only that he is upset. The Republican said he will do whatever he can legislatively and politically to elevate the issue, which he called one of national security.

A "boil" is festering in Congress over the delay in providing information, he said.

Johnson, D-S.D., said he also is frustrated. "You have to have security clearance to access it. Members of Congress do, some staff do, but you can't communicate it to anyone else. That would be illegal."

Johnson said it's "very complex, sophisticated material and it takes people with great background and knowledge to properly interpret what it all means.

"I think this whole process has broken down to some degree. They should have had that material ready to go at the time they made an announcement."

Johnson said he thinks much of the material is classified for no particularly good reason. "I don't think there's any great state secrets here."

He said he wouldn't rule out delaying **Ellsworth's** hearing but that he hopes it can go on as scheduled.

A Town Prepares (Again) to Lose its Air Force Base

Voice of America News
Jim Kent
May 31, 2005

The Defense Department's list of 62 major military bases to be closed or scaled back includes South Dakota's **Ellsworth** Air Force base. Located just outside Rapid City, it's one of 2 bases housing the country's B-1 bombers. South Dakota's Congressional delegation has vowed to fight **Ellsworth's** closure, from both a national security standpoint and because of the impact it would

have on the state's economy.

The state's senior senator, Tim Johnson, is determined to do everything in his power to ensure that it is taken off the Base **Realignment** and Closure Commission's list of recommended base closures. "While we've got to be realistic about the difficulty of the challenge we have to get it off the list," he admits, "our fight to save **Ellsworth** isn't over by a long shot."

He and South Dakota's other senator, John Thune, have demanded to see the criteria that placed **Ellsworth** on the Defense Department's defunct list. And they are supporting legislation that calls for a delay in this round of base closures. Senator Johnson insists, "We shouldn't be closing bases at home during a time of war and while thousands of soldiers will be returning from overseas deployments."

He also has concerns about consolidating the nation's B-1 bomber fleet into one place, Dyess Air Force Base, in Texas. "Given the security ramifications that that has, it seems to me to be much wiser to keep our fleet divided in at least 2 places...as we currently have it."

While the military rationale for closing **Ellsworth** escapes him, Rapid City area Chamber of Commerce president Jim McKeon is most disturbed by the impact losing the base will have on his city. "The troops that are stationed at **Ellsworth** are involved in our community," he says. "Soccer coaches, bible school teachers, referees...they're just incorporated in the Rapid City / Black Hills community. Fifty-three percent of them live off base in our community. The economic impact in Rapid City and, again, throughout South Dakota, is about $278 million per year."

In a state with a population of just over 700,000, that's a huge amount of money. Surprisingly, though, local business owners are not overly concerned about the possibility that **Ellsworth** will close. As local realtor Dave Mortimer points out, "this is something that's been going on since the late '60s. **Ellsworth** is gonna be closing, gonna be closing, gonna be closing. And of course they (the Air Force) shifted out their Minuteman Missile thing and changed over there. They also changed over the B-52 program to the B-1 program and have over, you know, a 30-plus year period taken and gone from being an extremely huge financial resource and economic resource to this region, to being one of just another bunch of things."

That 'bunch' includes the city's medical and retail community, as well as the area's housing industry. It also includes restaurants like the Firehouse Brewing Company, a mainstay in downtown Rapid City for 14 years.

Owner Bob Fuchs says he expects the economic impact of **Ellsworth's** closure - if and when it happens - will be substantial. But he's confident that the Firehouse, and other area businesses, will survive - particularly if the federal government offers financial assistance to the community. "If we can C bring in new, attractive businesses, then we're going to be far better off in the long run and we can quit worrying about whether we're going to lose our Air Force base or whatever military installation it might be."

Even business owners new to the community are confident in their ability to survive without their Air Force base. Tracey Scott opened Gizzi's Coffee Shop last July, just down the road from **Ellsworth's** main gate, to give her friends in the military someplace nice to meet.

She says it seemed like a no-brainer that the business would succeed with 95% of her clientele either military personnel or their families. Now, she's not so sure. "I guess I'll know in October," she laughs ruefully. But she has no regrets. "I made awesome friendships and that can't be replaced. As far as the business side of it...well, I'm looking to see for another spot in Rapid City. I have to move. I mean, if they close, I'm gonna have to relocate."

Relocate but, like restaurateur Bob Fuchs, not give up. After all, as Senator John Thune points out, South Dakotans are known for their tenacity. "We will deal with whatever is dealt us. But, right now, we are going to do whatever we can to get this decision reversed and to get **Ellsworth** off the list."

No matter what the outcome, the general consensus seems to be that the Rapid City community is much better prepared to absorb the impact of **Ellsworth's** closure than it was 20 years ago.

Community Leaders Mull Possible Uses For Ellsworth

The Associated Press
May 30, 2005

Among the options for **Ellsworth** Air Force Base if the Pentagon follows through on plans to shut it down is to use the base as a hub for a large aircraft-based delivery business, community leaders say.

The base has a 13,500-foot concrete runway, 4.4 million square feet of office, warehouse and residential building space, and 5,400 acres of land.

Locally, some have speculated that Federal Express, United Parcel Service or a similar company might want the base.

Bob DeMersseman, head of the Rapid City Economic Development Partnership, said his office contacted Federal Express and other firms during the last base-closure round to gauge interest in **Ellsworth** facilities. They didn't have any interest at the time, but he plans to try again.

"We'll contact anybody that moves freight or people," DeMersseman said. "No stone will go unturned."

Spokesmen for both Federal Express and United Parcel Service told the Rapid City Journal it was doubtful they would need **Ellsworth.**

"We've been in business for a long time, and we have a mature network at this point," FedEx spokesman Ryan Furby said. "We operate out of many established airports, and we have strong relationships with those airports."

However, Furby did not completely reject the idea, saying it was too soon to tell whether **Ellsworth** could offer such an opportunity.

UPS spokesman Mark Giuffre said UPS would have no interest in the base.

"First and foremost is the fact that our hubs are strategically located and already well established," Giuffre said in an e-mail.

The company has regional hubs in Ontario, Calif.; Rockford, Ill.; Dallas; Louisville, Ky.; Columbia, S.C.; Philadelphia and Hartford, Conn. All are within driving distance of large population centers.

The Pentagon released its recommendations on May 13. The Base Closure and **Realignment** Commission is now reviewing the list, and may make changes. The list then goes to President Bush before it is sent to Congress for approval.

Members of BRAC are scheduled to visit Rapid City and **Ellsworth** on June 21.

If save-the-base effort fails, the first step in the Pentagon's recovery process is to offer the facility to other federal agencies, DeMersseman said.

Local News Articles

Throwing A Fit Will Not Slow The BRAC Process
The Macon Telegraph
June 5, 2005

Back in 2002, John Thune was a good loser. Falling just 528 votes short of winning a U.S. Senate seat from South Dakota Democrat Tim Johnson, he refused to challenge the results. But today, a freshman senator after his upset win in 2004, he's feeling betrayed by his leaders. There's a lot of kicking and screaming going on.

The Pentagon recommendation to close **Ellsworth** Air Force Base, his state's second largest employer, was not only embarrassing but humiliating. But Thune's so far futile efforts to hold up and obstruct the BRAC process by throwing handfuls of sand into the machinery of national defense and government are not becoming.

Thune asked for it, in a way, when he upset Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle last November. When Democrat Daschle claimed to have kept **Ellsworth** (a $278 million economic engine for the lightly populated state) off the BRAC list under President Bill Clinton, Republican Thune countered that his close ties to the Bush White House would enable him to protect the base now.

His record in three House terms had identified him as a party loyalist and a good soldier. He'd been urged to run for the Senate by the White House. Heavy personal and financial backing in both 2002 and 2004 brought Bush to the state to campaign for him personally. And he campaigned hard for Bush. Thune had been given a seat on the Armed Services Committee. And he'd worked hard with the **Ellsworth** Task Force, lobbying Vice President Cheney even before Thune was sworn in back in January.

But on May 13, when Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld presented his list of bases slated for closure, there was **Ellsworth** - home to half the Air Force's 58 B-1 bombers (some assigned there from Robins a few years ago).

Thune went into orbit. Joined by other wounded politicos, such as Maine's two senators, he sponsored bills to delay the BRAC process until studies are completed. To hold it up until major combat units come back from Iraq. Another nuisance bill demanded that uniformed service members testify to the BRAC commission. The bills failed, but Thune's pugnacious posture continues.

Now he has announced he will withhold his support for Bush's controversial nominee for the post of U.N. Ambassador, John Bolton - apparently for no reason other than to send a message to the White House that it can't mess over John Thune with impunity.

The Base **Realignment** and Closure process was set up specifically to insulate the commission from that kind of political pressure. It has already begun hearings and base visits.

We trust Thune's efforts will fail as the nonproductive posturing they are. And we applaud Defense Secretary Rumsfeld's political independence in making his closure decisions seemingly without fear or partisan favor.

Delayed Ellsworth Data Irks Senators
Argus Leader (Sioux Falls, South Dakota)
Peter Harriman
June 4, 2005

Technical difficulties have indefinitely delayed today's scheduled release of data explaining why defense officials recommended closing **Ellsworth** Air Force Base and 32 other major U.S. military installations.

"One of the problems we've been having is, we've been dealing with hundreds of thousands of pages of information," said Pentagon spokeswoman Cheryl Irwin. "Not a couple thousand - I mean hundreds of thousands of pages."

Irwin said the agency will make the data available for public review "as soon as we can."

But the Pentagon did begin posting other base-closure information on its Web site Friday night. That includes what the Pentagon told bases about how it planned to collect relevant data, along with minutes of Pentagon meetings about the base-closure process.

Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., said Air Force officials have told him the slow pace of releasing information is because it might be possible to extrapolate from some of it shortcomings in the nation's defense.

"It's an analysis of our greatest vulnerabilities," Thune said Friday during a meeting with the Argus Leader editorial board.

Members of Congress and their staff members with security clearance were given the go-ahead early this week to look at information that is still classified. Neither Thune nor Sen. Tim Johnson, D-S.D., has done so yet.

Both senators say that, because they wouldn't be able to share what they have seen with anyone who lacks security clearance, reviewing the data would be useless in the effort to save **Ellsworth.**

Johnson said the Defense Department needs to follow through on its promise to make the remaining information available.

"The delays to this point have been unreasonable," he said. "We need this data to prepare for June 21."

The federal Base **Realignment** and Closure Commission, which will review the Pentagon recommendations, has scheduled a field hearing in Rapid City that day.

The **Ellsworth** Task Force will try to convince commissioners that the Defense Department deviated from its criteria for deciding which bases to close.

But without the classified information to give insight into Pentagon officials' thinking about base closures, "we do not have enough data to put together our arguments," Thune said. "We really do need to know the top-line numbers."

He said supporters will focus their arguments on the base's military value.

"We have to convince BRAC there's a reason to keep that base," Thune said.

The economic hardship the Rapid City area might suffer if the base closes "is part of the argument, but it's not the first point."

On Friday, Thune wrote to Comptroller General David Walker and asked the General Accounting Office to reconcile an apparent discrepancy between the Pentagon's decision to close **Ellsworth** and consolidate the nation's B-1 bomber fleet at a Texas Air Force base and the discussion surrounding the 1995 round of base closures.

In that round, Air Force officials said there would be problems with moving the bomber fleet to Dyess Air Force Base in Abilene, Texas.

The GAO has responsibility for reviewing the Pentagon's base-closure recommendations and reporting to Congress.

In his letter, Thune noted that in 1995, the GAO had reported to Congress that in discussions regarding **Ellsworth,** concerns were raised about overloading Dyess and and placing all B-1s at a single location.

"You may wish to explore whether the concerns brought up by the Air Force in 1995 were adequately addressed in this BRAC round and why they would not be just as valid today," Thune wrote.

He told the Argus Leader board, though, that Air Force officials have told him the concerns about grouping the entire B-1 fleet on one base were greater 10 years ago when the Air Force feared a nuclear attack from a superpower.

Thune acknowledged that **Ellsworth** proponents face a steep challenge as they fight to save the base.

"It's fair to say, based on history, you'll see 15 percent, maybe less, come off the (base-closure) list," he said. "No more than four of the 33."

Thune Threatens Legal Action On Ellsworth; Wants Closing Details Released

Aberdeen American News (South Dakota)
June 3, 2005

The fight over the future of **Ellsworth** Air Force Base, which already is a political issue, could become a legal battle.

The Pentagon said unclassified documents will be released today that may offer details on why **Ellsworth,** just east of Rapid City, is on its proposed closure list.

According to Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., if that doesn't happen, he and other congressional leaders might take the Defense Department to court or start an investigation.

The Pentagon's failure to release information may have violated the Base **Realignment** and Closure law passed in 2001, Thune said.

Thune met with reporters Wednesday in Rapid City and said the local task force needs more information to make its case before the Base Closure and **Realignment** Commission. Several BRAC members are scheduled to be in Rapid City June 21.

Restricted information: Thune and Sen. Tim Johnson, D-S.D., said they can see the documents but can't share their contents with the public. Johnson said he has not met with legal counsel on the issue and the primary effort needs to be on making a strong case to the BRAC commission.

"I want the hearing in Rapid City to be a meaningful hearing rather than just a showpiece," said Johnson, who was in Aberdeen on Thursday.

Although the Pentagon claims the documents contain classified information, the delay is inexcusable, Thune said.

The senator likened withholding the information to trying to prepare for a major exam without being allowed to read the textbook.

The way the information is being released is "manifestly unfair," Thune said. The delay hurts communities affected by the BRAC recommendations in preparing their cases, he said.

Thune upset: Asked if he felt betrayed by the Bush administration's support of the recommendation to close **Ellsworth** Air Force Base, Thune would say only that he is upset. The Republican said he will do whatever he can legislatively and politically to elevate the issue, which he called one of national security.

A "boil" is festering in Congress over the delay in providing information, he said.

Johnson frustrated: Johnson said he also is frustrated. "You have to have security clearance to access it. Members of Congress do, some staff do, but you can't communicate it to anyone else. That would be illegal."

Johnson said it's "very complex, sophisticated material and it takes people with great background and knowledge to properly interpret what it all means.

"I think this whole process has broken down to some degree. They should have had that material ready to go at the time they made an announcement."

Johnson said he thinks much of the material is classified for no particularly good reason. "I don't

think there's any great state secrets here."

Delay not ruled out: He said he wouldn't rule out delaying **Ellsworth's** hearing but that he hopes it can go on as scheduled.

"It would be a great missed opportunity if the hearing date came and went without the **Ellsworth** task force having an opportunity to present a detailed rebuttal of the Air Force's decision," Johnson said.

Opinion/Editorial Articles

Plan For Worst - Go For $1M In Case Base Closes
Argus Leader (Sioux Falls, South Dakota)
May 29, 2005

The U.S. Labor Department says up to $1 million is available for communities facing closure of military bases.

We need to jump on that. Now is the time to start planning for the worst that might happen, and that money is available for worker training, hiring consultants and developing long-range plans for economic development.

Yes, we still ought to work to keep **Ellsworth** Air Force Base open. But let's be realistic - the cards are stacked against us:

§ A bill still survives in the Senate to delay all base closings, but in the House a similar bill offered as an amendment failed, 316-112.

§ A hearing will be held with the Base **Realignment** and Closure Commission - June 21, but only three members of the commission will be here. Only two will visit **Ellsworth.** And the hearing only is for two hours. It's clear the commission isn't interested in a whole lot of comment.

§ And we can't even prepare well for the hearing, because the Defense Department is dragging its feet on releasing information about how various bases ended up on its list of proposed closings. Details come out only in dribs and drabs, and only after congressional threats.

It would be great if we could keep **Ellsworth** open.

But we'd be foolish not to plan for the worst. Let's take the money and start putting it to good use - planning for the future.