DCN 5566

June

Ms. Charlotte E. Ellis
5 Leveridge Lane, Apt. 37
Sandwich, MA 02563

RECEIVED
06072005

To whom it may concern:

I hope my letter will be read I am not a wash ashore I can remember when we didn't have a Camp Edwards, only a large wooded area. My father was one of the first Cape Coders to work there in the 30's and retired in the 60's. Without the base Cape Cod would become a forgotten place. It is such a wonderful feeling seeing and hearing the planes go over head. Without air Cape Cod many lives would be lost. The base as always been a wonderful neighbor.

As for the people complaining about the noise, they were well aware of it. The lure of cheap taxes drew them wash ashore to Sandwich. Now that we are the highest on Cape they don't take it. People who have lived here all their ~~all~~ lives will have to move. Please reconsider and leave Otis and Air Cape Cod alone. I have lived in Sandwich for 80 yrs.

Charlotte Ellis

June

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Charlotte Ellis

06212005

RECEIVED

David Dow
18 Treetop Lane
East Falmouth, Ma. 02536-4814
June 18, 2005

BRAC Commission
2521 South Clark Street
Suite 600
Arlington, Va. 22202

Dear Sir/Madam:

I want to urge the BRAC Commission not to close the Otis Air National Guard Base (ANG) on Cape Cod, Massachusetts. The ANG Base provides the infrastructure support for the wider Massachusetts Military Reservation (MMR) and shares the airfield with the U.S. Coast Guard. Even though the cost/benefit ratio for the ANG Base might not look that good in isolation, I feel that the base's importance needs to be evaluated in a more holistic fashion. The U.S. Coast Guard could not operate the airfield on it's own. The MMR provides training opportunites for the Army National Guard (Camp Edwards); the home for the Air Force's PAVE PAWS radar system; housing for the U.S. Coast Guard and other military personnel; and supports a number of civilian activities as well. Congressman William Delahunt and Governor Romney are promoting the idea of Regional Homeland Security Center at the MMR.

As someone who lives over top of one of the offbase plumes emanating from the MMR, I appreciate the efforts of the Air Force Center for Environmental Excellance (AFCEE)to restore our sole source aquifer for drinking water under the Superfund Program. AFCEE has made great strides installing pump and treat systems to treat this contamination on and offbase. They have also installed systems to reduce the phosphorus input to Ashumet Pond from the former MMR Sewage Treatment Plant. This nutrient input had reduced the water quality in the pond which results in periodic fish kills and nuissance algal blooms which impair recreational usage.

Former Governor Jane Swift was intrumental in working with the Department of Defense to establish an Environmental Commission at the MMR to address community concerns about protecting the integrity of our sole source aquifer for drinking water and conserving the habitat for state-listed species, while allowing compatible military training. Thus many of the tensions that have existed between the military and surrounding community have been ameliorated.Thus the state/town governments and military leaders are working to move us towards a new future of cooperation rather than confrontation.

There is a complicated arrangement of real estate ownership and leases at the MMR which makes it difficult to predict what types of alternate civilian arrangements might be made if the Otis ANG Base is closed. Most of the developed parts of the MMR occur in the catonnment area operated by Otis ANG Base and would present

the most obvious opportunities for civilian development. The Community Working Group (CWG) which provided advice to Governor Swift on an area-wide Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the MMR received suggestions for: placing the Barnstable County Jail at the MMR (done); establishing parking lots for the steamship authority; moving the Barnstable County Airport to the MMR; warehousing homeless people at the former base housing; building a connector road from the Bourne Bridge to Route 6 through the MMR; etc. Most of these proposals were rejected by the CWG, but many of them would be revived if the ANG closes and this land is opened to civilian development. This civilian development could be worse than the status quo environmentally. It would also create problems for the military and Coast Guard personnel that live on the MMR (our fifth Upper Cape town).

Hopefully the BRAC Commission will evaluate these potential impacts in their totallity and decide to keep the Otis ANG Base open. Thanks for your consideration in this matter.

Yours truly,

David Dow

David Dow
508-540-7142 (e); ddow@cape.com

June 7, 2005

06102005

Dear Sirs:

My husband and I retired to the Cape four years ago. It is truly a blissful place to live notwithstanding the fact that there are only two narrow bridges that connect us to the mainland.

We are just a couple of towns away from Otis Air Force base. We can't tell you how secure we feel for us and the entire East Coast whenever one of the planes from Otis flies overhead. We always say, "God bless those men and women!" The sound of each plane is music to our ears. Please don't silence the music.

Gratefully yours,
Elaine & Mark Goldberg
Mashpee, Ma.

Aaron Leger
122 Spring St.
Fairhaven, MA 0271

RECEIVED
06272005

BRAC Commission
2521 South Clark St.
Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear BRAC Commission,

I write today to inform you that I believe that the Department of Defense has made a major mistake in placing Otis ANGB on the BRAC list for closure. As you may know the DOD has misevaluated the military value of Otis ANG base. These are a couple of topics that I would like you to consider:

1. One of the largest airspaces in the United States.
2. The average of 18 years per person on the F-15 aircraft will be lost.
3. 102FW supports Coast Guard, Army National Guard, and many other functions on the base. These organizations and functions may not survive without the 102FW staying in place at Otis ANGB.
4. National Security will be threatened in the northeast region without the response time and key location of the 102FW on Cape Cod.

There are many other reasons to keep Otis ANGB open. Please take these and many others in consideration.

Thank you

Aaron Leger

Thomas N. George, Attorney
17 Thacher Shore Road • Yarmouth Port, MA 02675 • (508) 775-5386 • Fax: (508) 362-7804

07012005 RECEIVED

June 28, 2005

BRAC Commission
2521 South Clark Street
Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Re: Massachusetts Air National Guard Base (Otis AFB)

Dear Members of the Commission:

I write as a resident of the area and as a former state legislator and in fact as the legislator who led the opposition to the base's closing when it was the subject of a lease termination movement by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Even before 9-11 the base was a strategic military base because of capacity as a training station. The role that our air wing played on 9-11 solidified the sense of value which the base provides as a security measure to densely populated east coast cities. We must be vigilant in our pursuit of national defense.

Though technology has allowed for greater speed and accuracy in warfare, there is no substitute for proximity to the site of crisis. Otis AFB has location, trained personnel and technology to complete any protection maneuver to which it is assigned.

I urge that you reconsider and reverse your decision to close this station.

Very truly yours,

Thomas N. George

TNG/rl

RECEIVED

9 2005

06292005

210 Nottingham Drive
Centerville, MA 02632
June 25, 2005

2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 S. Clark St., Ste. 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Commissioners,

I'm writing this to urge you to overturn the Pentagon's proposal to close Otis Air National Guard Base here on Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

I'm an Air Force Academy graduate (Class of 1969) and a retired Lieutenant Colonel in the Massachusetts Air National Guard. Before retiring several years ago, I served at Otis ANGB for 25 years as a (Title 5) federal civil service employee and for 15 years as an officer in the Massachusetts Air National Guard (culminating my career as the Combat Support Group Commander)..

Thus, I am well aware of the critical air defense (now homeland defense) mission the 102nd Fighter Wing has performed all these years.

It makes absolutely no sense to close Otis. **It is strategically located adjacent to the most heavily traveled international air corridor approaching the highly populated northeast section of the United States. It is also the ONLY Air Force operated and controlled airfield left in all of New England**. Giving it up, with its 2 long runways and extensive ramp space, is absolutely insane. Cost should not be a factor. What happens if a contingency situation develops in the future, or if the Soviet Union becomes a threat again, and our nation needs access to an airfield in the northeast to stage a large number of fighter jets (or other aircraft) out of? **Otis is not only strategically located, it has this tremendous surge capacity.**

Placing 2 or 4 F-15s on alert at Bradley Field, CT with the rest of the F-15s at Atlantic City, NJ makes no sense. **Moving the main body of our northeast F-15 air defense force much further south and further away from the most likely access of attack is absolutely stupid.**

I think there are 2 behind-the-scenes factors the Pentagon used in reaching its decision to close Otis.

The first is a decision to keep Atlantic City open (and thus give it Otis' F-15 mission) because it is New Jersey's only ANG flying unit and because there are 2 Air Guard flying units in MA); and also because NJ is taking a big hit losing Fort Monmouth.

The second factor is money – Otis is expensive to operate versus the number of aircraft assigned. But, if Otis was expanded to a 24 aircraft F-15 unit, it would be more cost effective. Plus, it should be seriously looked at for adding other missions, flying or non-flying, to it because of available space.

It makes more sense keeping Otis open and placing several of Otis' F-15s on alert in Atlantic City (in existing alert facilities) than it does in moving Otis' aircraft to Atlantic City and having to go through the cost of building and supporting a new alert complex at Bradley Field, CT.

And, if money really is the factor, it would make sense in moving the 102nd Fighter Wing up to Brunswick Naval Air Station, Maine, and also keeping an alert detachment at either Atlantic City or Bradley Field. The Navy is pulling its P-3 operations out of Brunswick to save money, yet keeping Brunswick open for "strategic and homeland defense purposes". Wouldn't moving the 102nd Fighter Wing to Brunswick and keeping the P-3 operation there make more sense from both a strategic location and homeland defense standpoint, not to mention that consolidating the 102nd there with the P-3s makes Brunswick a "joint service" and "joint homeland defense" operational facility, and much more cost effective?. And, it's interesting that Otis' F-15s have recently intercepted 2 commercial aircraft entering US airspace with questionable passengers on board and **escorting them to Bangor International Airport in Maine.**

Also, moving Otis' F-15s to Brunswick NAS rather than to Atlantic City would help offset the significant economic losses Maine will experience if the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard closes plus the 2,500 projected manpower loss with the Navy's proposal to move the P-3 operation to Jacksonville, FL.

I know your Commission has a lot of information to review and has to make some major decisions. And, that you will be overturning or modifying some of the basing actions proposed by the Pentagon. You're going to hear a lot of complaints about losing jobs from bases being closed or realigned. **Overturning the Pentagon's proposal on Otis Air National Guard Base is not about jobs or economics – it's 100% about national and homeland defense.**

Respectfully,

William G. Sullivan

LtCol, USAF, Retired

P.S. Or more thing – isn't it interesting how after all the years of decreasing the number of air defense aircraft and locations protecting the lower 48 states, that there were only about 7 locations left on 9/11. And – Otis was one of them. There was a reason why Otis was left as one of those 7 locations and that's because of its strategic **LOCATION – LOCATION – LOCATION!!!!**

i

Steven J. Ingalls

14 Bruce Road
Plymouth, MA 02360-5219

07052005

RECEIVED

June 30, 2005

BRAC Commission
2521 South Clark Street Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

RE: Otis Air National Guard Base Closure

Dear Members:

I am writing in support of keeping the Otis Air National Guard base on Cape Cod open. This base provides a key homeland security function as the 102nd Air National Guard Wing and the Coast Guard Air Wing for the Northeast region both operate from this base and provide critical protection to the Northeast, as we witnessed in the 9/11 attack. They also provide protection to another key homeland security target that being the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Plant located in nearby Plymouth, MA that is located approximately 35 miles from Boston. This nuclear power plant has often been spoken about as a key target for terrorist attack given it's direct oceanfront location and the unobstructed air and sea access to the facility. The proximity of the plant to Otis allows for the air support at Otis to provide immediate protection to this nuclear power plant that no other air base can provide. I have heard that the air support at this base has been scrambled as many as 30 times in the course of one day to respond to potential threats in the region and I believe it would be irresponsible to close this base given it's strategic location and it's past and future role in protecting the citizens and assets of this region. I would encourage consideration of expanding the role that Otis plays in providing for the homeland security needs of this region and our nation.

I ask for your support in removing Otis from the final base closure list. Please find enclosed a recent article from the Old Colony Memorial newspaper and the Boston Globe that discusses this issue in further detail.

Sincerely,

Steven J. Ingalls

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Is Pilgrim Power Plant safe?

By Daniel Axelrod
MPG Newspapers

PLYMOUTH (June 25) - Past the razor and barbed wire fences along the compound's perimeter, down the road lined with tiny cameras, through the two checkpoints manned by national guardsmen and Wackenhut security officers and beyond the parking lot with its ring of about 30 3-by-30 foot concrete barriers near the main building's front entrance, sits the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station.

To tour the plant is to enter a facility as wondrous and secretive as Willy Wonka's factory. But instead of tiny men watching over chocolate production, burly ex-special ops soldiers are subcontracted to guard a 680-megawatt General Electric boiling water reactor in a far less colorful setting bereft of candy.

The security officers defend against a terrorist attack on the plant's core or its pool of spent fuel rods.

Some experts such as nuclear safety engineer David Lochbaum of the Union of concerned Scientists think the consequences of a spent fuel rod fire could be as bad as a reactor accident.

A foul smoke from the burning metal and other materials around the spent fuel rods would waft through the summer wind along with a cloud of radioactive particles.

If it were overcast and windy, a brisk summer wind blowing toward Plymouth residents' houses would keep the radioactive plumes from escaping high into the atmosphere.

A hundred people might die in the first year after the disaster.

A successful attack on the reactor might cause more deaths in the first year afterwards.

But targeting the spent fuel rod pool could cause thousands more deaths from radiation-induced cancer in the years that follow.

Almost two weeks after Wackenhut's training coordinator Kathy Davidson called the Pilgrim plant's security "pathetic" in a Time Magazine story highlighting alleged weaknesses at nuclear power plants across the country, the Old Colony Memorial dispatched a reporter to determine how well the plant's core and spent fuel rod pool are defended against land, sea and air attacks.

Understanding the security

The Pilgrim Nuclear power plant - built by Bechtel in 1972, owned by the Boston Edison Company and sold to Entergy in 1999 - contains one of 103 commercial nuclear reactors at 64 sites across 30 states.

The Pilgrim plant has a 680 megawatt boiling water reactor.

The plant sits on 150 acres of industrial land, but Entergy owns another 1,600 acres of forestry land in the area.

During the 1980s, near the back of the plant not far from the alternate gate through which contractors unload supplies, a man painted green ran down a hill and handcuffed himself to the barbed wire fence surrounding the compound.

The green-painted man was arrested right away and he didn't make it onto the grounds let alone into the building.

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But after more than a decade of security improvements and since Sept. 11, questions still swirl around how far a band of terrorists attacking by land could make it into the plant.

"As we're sitting here doing this interview we're in the owner-controlled area," Entergy spokesman David Tarantino said.

He referred to the office building in the front of the plant and the parking lot.

"No one's ever breached the protected or vital areas beyond this point since it opened in 1972," Tarantino said.

An individual trying to enter the protected area faces several obstacles. Beyond the thick, concrete blast barriers in the parking lot, there's more than one fence over 10 feet tall.

The fences are lined with three layers of barbed and razor wire. They stand next to the entrance and surround the area around the plant's buildings.

Several motion detection systems provide surveillance for personnel in a secret security bunker, while officers sit in several tall towers, called bullet-resistant enclosures, strategically located throughout the compound.

Like Batman's direct line to the police commissioner, the officers inside those bunkers can pick up phones that ring directly to the state police and other authorities.

National Guardsmen patrol the parking lot and other parts of the compound occasionally.

The Coast Guard watches after the waters on one side of the plant and state police helicopters do fly-overs.

Security officers from the Wackenhut Corporation guard the plant.

Wackenhut is the U.S.-based division of the United Kingdom's Group 4 Securicor, whose 4,000 security personnel protect almost half of the power plant sites in the United States.

Wackenhut vice president of nuclear operations Fred Harper wouldn't divulge the exact number of security officers working at the Pilgrim plant, but he said more than 100 officers work at facility.

If that figure were broken down to three eight-hour shifts perhaps 23 or more guards are on duty at any time protecting the reactor, a pool of water full of spent fuel rods and the plant's 565 employees.

Inside the plant, several guards sit in the office at the entrance to the protected area behind thick bullet proof glass.

They watched as Tarantino swiped his security badge and stuck his palm on a hand geometry plate before passing through explosive and metal detectors.

"We don't just sit here in a vacuum and say 'Geeze our security's pretty good,' " Tarantino said. "We work very closely with other security agencies, the police department, the FBI, the Coast Guard, the state police and state and federal governments."

Local, state and federal government officials regularly visit the facility to come up with ways to make it more secure. And every three years the federal government's Nuclear Regulatory Commission runs force on force drills at sites across the country.

The NRC subcontracted Wackenhut to play the role of attackers to test security at the nation's 64 nuclear power plants including the 31 sites already guarded by Wackenhut.

In recent weeks, the Pilgrim plant's security officers have trained with blank ammunition for an NRC force on force drill simulating a land attack with several well-armed commando attackers using laser guided paintball gun-type weapons.

Mock attack

The key to understanding the plant's security is evaluating the criteria by which the government tests the plant.

The heart of that attack plan is called the design-basis threat (DBT) or the largest group of attackers the NRC requires utilities to defend against.

For security reasons, the number of attackers used in the mock attack is a closely guarded NRC secret as is the weapons the attackers use and how well power plants perform.

It's public knowledge, however, that before Sept. 11 the commando teams consisted of three attackers.

"The DBT features a large number of well-armed attackers with insider help," Tarantino said. "But at a certain point the numbers of attackers becomes an enemy of the state situation, which is the responsibility of the military or the government."

Tarantino and the NRC could not provide exact figures, but the Entergy spokesman said 19 terrorists or the number that participated in the World Trade Center would constitute an enemy of the state.

If that many attackers tried to storm a nuclear power plant, guards would fight off the attackers until the military could arrive, according to Tarantino.

Col. Paul Worcester is the top commander of 18 F-15 fighter jets for the 102nd fighter wing of Air National Guard at Otis Air National Guard Base. Worcester is also a Plymouth resident of 25 years who lives six miles away from the Pilgrim plant.

"I can't tell you exactly how quickly a fighter jet would be able to scramble, but I can tell you it would be quickly - the unclassified version is less than 15 minutes," Worcester said. (See related story on Otis possibly closing on page 5.)

"I feel very safe and secure living near the plant," Worcester said. "I even sold my house and moved closer a year and half ago, but that's not to say I won't remain vigilant."

Four or five if by land?

One of the keys to evaluating the plant's security is deducing whether a 15-minute response would be quick enough to thwart an attack and how long it would take to assemble a swat team.

Plymouth police chief Robert Pomeroy declined to cite how long it would take the police to arrive on the scene for security reasons, but he did say the department doesn't have a S.W.A.T team.

Assembling a S.W.A.T. team would fall to the state troopers.

"The police department works very closely with the plant and I'm there frequently working with the state police," Pomeroy said.

Peter Stockton, senior investigator for the nonprofit governmental watchdog group Project on Government Oversight (POGO) , thinks a force the size of the one that carried out the Sept.11 attacks could, with enough planning and training, successfully get into the parking lot of a nuclear power plant like Pilgrim in minutes.

Stockton spent a large part of the 1980s investigating security at nuclear weapons facilities for a congressional subcommittee and another two years doing the same thing for former secretary of energy and current New Mexico governor Bill Richardson.

At the Pilgrim plant, although cameras line the road leading into the facility, there are no cameras in the 1,600 acres of woods surrounding the property.

People can also approach the plant's parking lot by walking along White Horse beach, according to Tarantino.

Attackers could use bolt cutters or pipe shaped explosives to get through the fences

surrounding the woods, Stockton said.

Based partly on a department of energy oversight group video entitled "Systems Under Fire," Stockton said a large group of well-armed attackers could quickly get into the nuclear power plant because they would use powerful weapons like rocket propelled grenades, a variety of automatic weapons and explosives.

"If plants had to defend against three attackers before, POGO is totally comfortable saying the current DBT is less than double the previous total and it's a quarter the size of what the department of energy threat is," Stockton said. "While I'm not comfortable saying my sources, POGO knows an awful lot of people in Washington."

During a 2004 presentation before the National Academy of Sciences, Stockton cited some of his sources including Army Special Ops units, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, the General Accounting Office, NRC security staff, DOE and NRC security contractors.

Stockton said the NRC's DBT is "unrealistic" because the weapons guards are required to defend against aren't sophisticated enough and guards are only equipped with smaller arms such as semi-automatic rifles.

"The guys coming in will have Bangalore torpedoes, platter charges and 50-caliber, armor-piercing bullets," Stockton said. "From one spot with a sniper rifle you could take out a third or half of the bullet resistant enclosures."

Stockton said, overall, the NRC's force on force drills are much better than they used to be. They used to include rubber guns and whistles.

"The bizarre thing is the utility says all you can expect from a private guard force is to hold off these guys till the cowboys arrive, but these things are over in three to eight minutes and it takes one to two hours to assemble a SWAT team," Stockton said.

Tarantino could not disagree more.

"Since 9/11, the industry has spent an additional $1 billion to protect nuclear power plants," the Entergy spokesman said.

NRC chairman Nils Diaz, industry-lobbying group the Nuclear Energy Institute and the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works issued stinging press releases rebutting similar information provided to Time Magazine by another POGO member - executive director Danielle Brian - and other sources the magazine characterizes as "experts."

"The Time article, which prominently featured political special interest groups well-known for opposing any expansion or use of nuclear energy, paints a dim, but inaccurate picture of the plants current state of security," according to the EPW committee's press release.

Tarantino and Wackenhut's Harper agreed the Time story quoted "biased sources."

Both said security at nuclear power plants is stronger than at any other industrial structures in the world.

The Time Magazine story, which portrays security at nuclear power plants throughout the nation as particularly vulnerable, raised eyebrows locally because of the quotes from Davidson - a former Wackenhut security officer at the Pilgrim plant for the last 16-years who spent her last few months on the job as a trainer.

Davidson did not respond to numerous attempts to contact her, she told Time Magazine there aren't enough guards and they have too many "confusing missions" to carry out.

She also accused the guards of flunking 28 of 29 in-house "tabletop drills" or hypothetical situations in which the guards must say what they'd do during an emergency.

And she accused Wackenhut of firing her because she was a whistle blower instead of taking her complaints seriously.

"Her saying 'security is pathetic' embarrasses and angers our truly dedicated security officers out at Pilgrim," Harper said. "We work here, our families and friends are in the area and we take pride in protecting the plant."

Tarantino characterized Davidson as "a disgruntled ex-employee fired for performance reasons."

Whether Davidson is a valid source, Stockton bristled at the notion that anyone would consider him a biased anti-nuclear source.

"The Time reporter certainly talked to POGO and we're not anti-nuclear at all," Stockton said. "And he did have an interview with NEI and he talked with Diaz so I don't know what people are talking about calling us or the story biased."

Stockton wouldn't be surprised if there's merit to what Davidson said.

"For the NRC to examine all those defensive strategies and say they were adequate in just six months is not enough time," Stockton said. "But when you raise too many questions with Wackenhut or any of the security contractors you'll get in deeper and deeper trouble and they'll say shut up."

Stockton cited the concerns of a nuclear power plant guard at Peekskill New York's Indian Point power plant who was ignored and punished for criticizing the bullet resistant enclosures as being iron coffins.

Those criticisms about Wackenhut are untrue, according to Harper. The Wackenhut executive said all security officers including Davidson are always encouraged to report concerns to Wackenhut, the utility or even the federal government.

What about a fish finder?

It was cold gray June day as Tarantino gave a tour of the area inside the fences next to the plant's main buildings.

A tall Wackenhut guard clad all in black with a rifle slung loosely over the back of his right shoulder walked near a bullet resistant enclosure as Tarantino walked around the compound toward Cape Cod Bay.

Two men stood near a television remotely watching a diver clean out a water intake area for the plant. Entergy can keep out the terrorists "but not the blue muscles and the seagulls," Tarantino said.

"If al-Qaida were to muster a force of 100 people and drive down Rocky Hill Road do you think they wouldn't be noticed?" Tarantino said. "They had 19 people, but not in one group. It was small groups on individual airplanes."

But what if five groups of four attackers attacked the plant by land, by sea and by air?

"There's radar, there's television, there's cameras focused on the water, there's a zone around the plant you can't sail into," Tarantino said.

But what if the attackers came from underwater?

"There's no underwater detection equipment, but at some point you have to come up out of the water and all you'll get to is the fence," Tarantino said. "The bottom line is you do the best you can under the regulations."

Coast Guard Lt. Dave Hall, who's stationed at Otis Air Force Base, said calculating how long it would take to respond to an emergency at the plant is no easy task.

Military at the base protect the area from New York City to the Canadian border and response time could be influenced by how far away Coast Guard craft are at a given moment, whether more than one emergency happened at once and the quality of the weather.

"There are so many variables involved, it all depends," Hall said. "If we're sitting here on the deck in the middle of the night we could respond in 10 or 15 minutes."

Yet, if underwater attackers made it to the power plant's fence and somehow got past a multitude of guards, locks and the plant's myriad of inner defenses, the question remains whether they would know how to and somehow be able to cause a nuclear disaster.

"During an attack one of the first things we could do is shut everything down," Tarantino said. "The Three Mile Island nuclear power plant accident occurred because of human error and when you look at the disasters overseas, like Chernobyl, those plants didn't have the same capabilities to avert disasters as modern American plants."

With the flick of a switch the Pilgrim power plant could drop down to 60 percent power and in six seconds the entire reactor could be shut down.

While it would still be hot, no fusion would be going on and no power would be generated.

Throughout the tour of the plant Tarantino pointed out system after system with galvanized steel pipes, platforms, dials and switches used to prevent accidents so the core and the spent fuel rod pool are always cool and full of water.

"We have backups to backups, hydraulics, pumps, diesel generators, passive systems, alternate shutdown panels, redundant systems and if we ever need to we could actually pump the entire ocean in," Tarantino said.

Some of the same control room switches that operate those emergency systems can quickly be reached by employees not in the control room thanks to strategically located boxes of switches throughout the plant.

Understanding how those systems work and how to operate them is complicated. Entergy employs all kinds of engineers and well-trained employees to run the plant.

Potential control room operators must work at the plant for two or three years before they're even asked to train and test for the job.

The operators' training lasts well over a year and includes an apprenticeship and even more testing and training for supervisory positions.

If terrorists were to ever get inside the plant though, Lochbaum thinks it's not as difficult to set off a disaster as it might seem.

"There's enough publicity and publicly available information such as volumes on past nuclear plant accidents to study and find things to trigger a disaster for anyone who has the time to research what the steps are," Lochbaum said.

Lochbaum said the NRC's force on force drills demonstrated a plant can be sabotaged inside or outside a control room.

"From a safety standpoint, it's good to have things outside the control room, in that if a fire destroys the control room things can be done," Lochbaum said. "But the bad news is that that makes it easier for attackers as well."

To Lochbaum, the biggest threat facing nuclear power plants is their pools of spent fuel rods.

All the fuel that's ever been used at the Pilgrim plant since 1972 is still at the plant.

The fuel will remain at the plants pending the outcome of litigation between the states and the federal government as well as the utilities, which are also suing the government.

The government collected $20 billion to cover the costs of transporting nuclear waste from the sites to a secure location such as Nevada's Yucca Mountain, but Nevada residents don't want the nuclear waste in their state.

Pilgrim's spent fuel rod pool contain 2,600 assemblies, each of which contains 60 fuel rods.

By 2012 that pool will be completely full, according to Tarantino.

After five years, the spent fuel is cool enough to be removed from the large concrete and steel-lined pool of water they sit in and placed in giant concrete casks stored on the compound. That hasn't happened at Pilgrim.

"One dry cask storage container is like a big thermos of lead and concrete that weighs about 100 tons and holds about 20 tons of spent fuel," Lochbaum said. "For a plant like Pilgrim one cask would hold about 50 fuel assemblies."

In recent months Entergy reapplied with the NRC for another 20-year license to operate the Pilgrim plant.

If the operating license is renewed and the spent fuel can't be transported off the compound by 2012, the utility then will begin removing it from the spent fuel pool and putting it in casks , according to Tarantino.

Well-filled spent fuel rod pools like the one at Pilgrim are ideal for terrorist attacks because the attackers can drain the water from the pool or throw in enough explosive charges to blow the water out of the pool and cause a fire, according to Lochbaum.

"It would be difficult to make spent fuel rod pools risk free, but simple steps could be done to reduce risk," Lochbaum said. "No matter what, the fuel has to be put in the dry cask storage for when its moved someday, so as soon as the fuel can be removed from the pool, the utilities should start putting them in the dry casks rather than waiting until the pools are completely full."

A smaller number of spent fuel rods in the pool could be spread out like logs so that if there ever were a fire it wouldn't be as big and operators would have more time to prevent a disaster.

Tarantino and NEI's research team question whether a massive disaster would occur if terrorists drained the water out of a spent fuel rod pool or if such an attack is even possible.

"That scenario strains credulity," Tarantino said. "It would take time to remove all the water and you'd need a pump."

After an attacker removed the layer of protective water the radiation would kill the attacker within 60 seconds making it harder to continue to carry out a plot.

Lochbaum said the NRC and the Union of Concerned Scientists' study revealed similar nuclear disaster consequences.

"The government studies done for the reactor and the spent fuel pool show that in the worst case conditions with the wind and the weather a nuclear disaster could kill hundreds right away then tens of thousands over the years as people died from radiation-related cancers and the cost would be $20 to $50 billion to clean up," Lochbaum said.

The difference between the two studies is "the NRC studies put a zero chance on a terrorist action leading to a spent fuel fire," Lochbaum added.

Lochbaum disagreed strongly with accusations the Union of Concerned Scientists are a biased source.

"We have testified before the NRC and Congress a number of times when two reactors in Michigan were shut down and when we felt the problems were fixed we said it's time to reopen the plant," Lochbaum said. "An anti-nuclear group couldn't reach that point."

To Lochbaum and his group, the debate over whether the government or the utility should defend against terrorists doesn't matter as long as more reforms occur to ensure spent fuel rods are well protected.

"Unfortunately, nuclear power plants can't defend against a 9/11 sized attack too well because they're built for a small number of attackers all from the ground, not for an aerial attack and it's not like you can go back in time and change them," Lochbaum said.

Could a plane crash cause a meltdown?

One area of debate is whether an airplane crashing into a nuclear power plant could cause a meltdown.

NRC spokesman Diane Screnci said America's nuclear power plant reactors and spent fuel rod pools could withstand an airplane crash.

"The pools are strong structures, constructed with concrete walls and steel liners located inside protected areas and they're not accessible," Screnci said. "They hold enormous quantities of water and there are backup cooling systems and many are located below ground level or they're shielded by other structures or they have intervening walls that would obstruct aircraft."

Tarantino also dismissed the possibility of a plane slamming into the plant and causing damage. He said such an attack might injure those in the plant, but the structure around the core and the spent fuel rod pool is rugged enough to protect the general public.

"You would have to have a direct hit so the engine could bore through," Stockton said.

But critics of nuclear plant security think such a danger is valid and they say utilities could do more to protect against a plane crash.

Critics say there should be more protective measures such as cables above the roof of the plant, large light barrage balloons like those used in World War II and even constructions beams.

Barrage balloons are large blimp shaped balloons used in London and other locales to keep German planes from flying too close. The balloons' cables were capable of snapping off the wings of the planes.

Stockton thinks avoiding an air attack is vital for a plant with Pilgrim's configuration.

"With boiling water reactors, such as at the Pilgrim plant, the spent fuel pools are generally about five stories in the air and vulnerable to an air attack," Stockton said. "Barrage balloons wouldn't stop a fully loaded 767, which would snap the cables, but we're convinced they'd direct the plane away from a direct spent fuel rod pool hit."

It's possible barrage balloons or other obstacles on the roof wouldn't effectively help defend against an air attack.

"I'm not sure they'd be successful, but I'm not an expert," Col. Worcester said.

Worcester thinks no matter what measures are taken to protect a plant, terrorists will remain crafty.

"If you provide a deterrence in one area, typically a terrorist looks for another weakness, so you if put up barriers above the plant, then there might be a ground or water attack instead."

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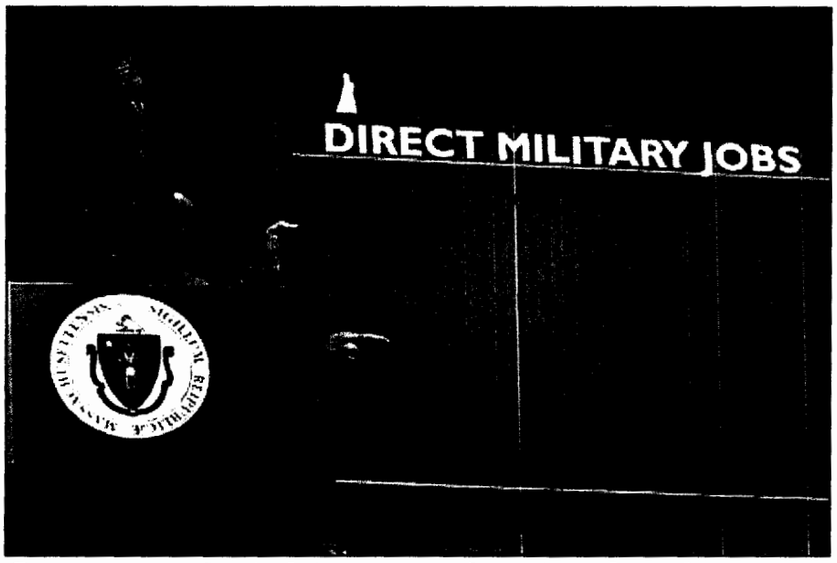

Governor Mitt Romney and state officials expressed concerns at the State House over the Pentagon's plan to shutter military bas on May 13. Romney has sought a review of how the closure of Otis Air National Guard Base will affect state response plans. (Globe Staff Photo / David L. Ryan)

Concerns heighten on plan to shut bases

The Boston Glob

Emergency response seen as compromised

By Bryan Bender, Globe Staff | May 22, 2005

WASHINGTON – The Pentagon's plan to close military bases would ground a third of the nation's Air National Guard units and shutter hundreds of other armories and readiness centers, raising concerns among defense specialists and local leaders that the consolidation would hamper state responses to local emergencies.

The Pentagon plan announced May 13 would have a significant impact on the National Guard, the state militias that are under th control of governors during peacetime unless federalized by the president. More than half of the more than 800 large and small military facilities nationwide that would be closed or reconfigured are operated by the Air or Army National Guard. Among them is Otis Air National Guard Base on Cape Cod.

Many of these bases have played a critical role in homeland security and are designated as staging areas for National Guard troops and emergency management personnel in the event of natural disasters or terrorist attacks. Lawmakers, interest groups, and security specialists worry that the preparedness level will suffer if the Pentagon plan is approved.

"Some of the concern among governors is not only the loss of jobs, but that some of these facilities are really important to state emergency plans," said John Goheen, spokesman for the National Guard Association of the United States, a lobbying group.

National Guard bases such as Otis provide governors with critical communications and other equipment that could be used in an emergency, and could serve as temporary shelters in the aftermath of a disaster, officials said.

Otis is home to the 253d Combat Communications Group, which, according to its mission statement, is required to provide communications for state agencies "during local or statewide disasters of emergencies for protecting life and property, and to preserve peace, order, and public safety."

Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, told the Globe on Friday that he worries the closures of Otis and othe National Guard facilities across the country did not fully assess the homeland security implications.

"Many of us in Congress are concerned that closures of National Guard bases was budget-driven only, and will leave serious

gaps in air defense and homeland security," Kennedy told the Globe in a statement, after visting Otis on Friday with Senator John F. Kerry, Governor Mitt Romney, and other state leaders.

Romney, meanwhile, is also concerned about the effect on state preparedness plans, aides said.

The governor recently ordered the state's emergency management agencies to review the impact of Otis's closure on state response plans.

"Governor Romney has asked the Executive Office of Public Safety and other agencies involved in emergency preparedness to review all implications of the changing base alignment in Massachusetts," said Julie Teer, Romney's press secretary. "The results on Otis will be part of a report submitted to the base commission."

The Pentagon maintains that its plan, now being reviewed by the independent commission, would save billions of dollars while also safeguarding homeland defense.

The base-closing process "enabled the services to match facilities to force structure, and to make the best use of defense dollars," Air Force General Richard B. Myers, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said last week.

Republicans and Democrats are questioning whether the Pentagon's underlying analysis fully takes into account the homeland defense implications of the base realignment.

A bipartisan bill to postpone the base-closing process was put forward in the Senate last week, citing among the reasons for delay the need for a comprehensive homeland security strategy that identifies weak points and where additional military presence may be required.

"Once these bases are closed, they're gone forever," said Senator Susan Collins, Republican of Maine. "And our nation cannot afford to lose invaluable national and homeland security assets at such a critical time in our nation's history."

Air National Guard bases are a particular regional concern. Otis is among the 28 Air National Guard units out of 88 nationwide that would be stripped of their aircraft under the Pentagon plan.

The National Guard Association fears that the Pentagon's proposal to move the aircraft will push experienced pilots and support personnel out of the National Guard because they will not want to move with their aircraft to bases far away.

"Some of the most valuable assets in the nation's defense arsenal would then be gone forever," said retired Brigadier General Stephen M. Koper, president of the association, which represents 45,000 Army and Air National Guard officers on Capitol Hill.

In Massachusetts, officials fear the loss of Otis could put Boston and surrounding areas at risk during a terrorist attack.

"Closing this base will make us more vulnerable by reducing fighter coverage for the Boston metropolitan area and the entire region," Kennedy said at Otis, noting that the 102d Fighter Wing scrambled as recently as Tuesday when a passenger on an Alitalia flight headed to Boston was believed to be on a no-fly list.

"Under the Pentagon proposal, only four interceptor aircraft . . . will be within a 175-mile radius of Boston," Kennedy added, referring to four fighter aircraft that will be stationed near Hartford, instead of the 12 now stationed at Otis. "That's not enough for a large metropolitan area with so many high-value targets."

Located on the Massachusetts Military Reservation on the Upper Cape, Otis also houses Coast Guard units and forces from the Massachusetts Army National Guard. Other local emergency responders have also been trained on the base.

But with the loss of its main unit – the 102d – some like Goheen worry that the facility, like many National Guard bases, "will wither away and die."

"What we have at these bases is mission-essential infrastructure," he said. "The base-closure process seemed to penalize that."

Romney has proposed creating a homeland security training center on the site, telling Michael Chertoff, the homeland security secretary, in a meeting last month that many of the required facilities are already in place.

He made a similar proposal to the Energy Department to train first responders for a possible incident involving liquefied natural gas tankers like the ones that offload in Everett.

Others warn that all National Guard facilities slated for closure or realignment require more scrutiny at a time when the nation is struggling to come up with improved homeland security strategies and local response plans in the event of natural disasters or chemical, biological, or nuclear catastrophes.

"It could impact some of the governor's ability to use state National Guard assets for state emergencies," said Hank Chase, a retired Navy commander who worked on previous base-closure rounds.

"Shutting these armories may undermine homeland security efforts, which rely in part on the geographic dispersion and availability of Reserve units to respond to domestic emergencies," Phillip Carter, a retired Army officer who has written extensively about military overhauls, wrote in a recent article published on his weblog and the website Slate.com.

"The base-closure commission should evaluate this impact before accepting the Pentagon's recommendations," he said. ■

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