

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



BIRD

July 31, 2005

Department of Defense Releases

N/A

National News Articles

N/A

Local News Articles

Brunswick's BRAC Case (Bangor, ME)

Slidell Continues Battle for Military Facility
(New Orleans, LA)

BRAC chairman says deal over bases in
works (Reno, NV)

Opinions/ Editorials

A Second Chance to Get It Right
(Washington, DC)

Closing Base Would Cut the Heart Out of
Our Seafaring Tradition (New London, CT)

Additional Notes

N/A

Department of Defense Releases

National News Articles

Local News Articles

Brunswick's BRAC Case

Bangor Daily News (Bangor, ME)

July 30, 2005

The evidence needed for Maine's congressional delegation to make the case to save Brunswick Naval Air Station is in a letter sent from the Navy to Sen. Susan Collins this week. The Base Realignment and Closure Commission, which recently downgraded Brunswick from realignment to closure on its list, should see the letter as a specific endorsement of the crucial role for the base and vote against closing or realigning it.

The Department of Defense will go only so far as to say Brunswick should be realigned - reduced from an air station to an airfield devoid of its own planes but highly important to the service nonetheless. The letter from Anne Rathmell Davis, special assistant to the secretary of the Navy for base realignment and closure, described why the base was not expendable.

"The loss of [Naval Air Station] Brunswick will increase P-3 response time to any maritime threat against the northeast coast of the United States," the letter reads. "Because this area is not a standard operating area for U.S. Naval vessels, and because of the proximity of NAS Brunswick to the great circle navigation routes from Europe, P-3s operating out of NAS Brunswick currently provide [Marine Homeland Defense] initial response coverage." Later, it says, "Numerous sites in the northeast have been considered as potentially feasible locations to conduct P-3 detachment operations ... and NAS Brunswick continues to be viewed by the Navy as the optimal site in New England for P-3 detachment operations."

The letter details the many ways the Navy and the military generally need Brunswick. It is a crucial refueling hub; it is crucial for military aircraft coming from Europe and for NATO joint training exercises. It serves as a training facility for DoD aircraft and Air National Guard. Its location allows armed aircraft to depart on maritime missions without flying over inhabited areas.

For all of that, however, DoD still would take the planes from Brunswick under realignment while leaving the airfield intact. Clearly, the BRAC commission doesn't like that idea - if it did, it would not have moved Brunswick from realignment to consideration for closure. The hope for Brunswick is that the commission's dislike for realignment and the Navy's insistence that it needs the facility combine to keep the base open.

The letter spells out a clear role for P-3 surveillance aircraft and for additional uses of the Brunswick base beyond the Navy requirements. It is hard to believe that the required seven of nine commissioners could ignore these attributes and vote to close the base.

The DoD debated internally almost until the May 13 closure announcements whether to list Brunswick for closure. But no one knows better than the Fleet Forces Command that the Atlantic is better served by having Brunswick remain open and operational. Realignment is an inadequate option in part because it ignores the effect on the local community. Keeping Brunswick open fulfills the demands described forcefully by the Navy.

Slidell Continues Battle for Military Facility

Times-Picayune (New Orleans, LA)
Paul Bartels, Richard Boyd and Charlie Chapple, St. Tammany bureau
July 30, 2005

The political and community effort to keep the Defense Information Systems Agency operation and its 150 high-tech civilian and contractor jobs in Slidell is continuing.

The City Council unanimously approved a resolution Tuesday evening expressing its intent to continue leasing to DISA at \$1 a year the 100,000-square-foot administrative, computer and support center on city-owned property at 1010 Gause Blvd.

The current lease and options expire March 31, 2015. If DISA is allowed to stay open, the resolution says, the \$1 a year would stay in effect another 20 years after that.

Because of term limits, neither Mayor Ben Morris nor most current council members are likely to be at City Hall 10 years from now. But the administration and council in place at that time almost certainly will abide by the resolution if DISA-Slidell is "saved." Tuesday's council action followed a July 22 meeting in New Orleans of Base Realignment and Closure Commission members, who are reviewing proposals for closing or downsizing military bases and related facilities nationwide.

Mayor Ben Morris was among the officials from Louisiana, Mississippi and Florida who mounted arguments at that meeting against the Defense Department recommendations.

The department wants to close the Naval Support Activity in New Orleans, where almost 1,200 military, civilian and contractor jobs are at stake, and consolidate all or most DISA operations at Fort Meade, Md.

New Orleans and Slidell officials have complained repeatedly that the Defense Department figures are flawed -- badly, in some cases -- and have offered counter-suggestions they say would save jobs and millions of tax dollars.

The department's rationale for closing DISA-Slidell is that leased facilities traditionally cost the federal government significantly more money than buildings it owns, and that DISA's facility in Slidell falls short of requirements for "force-protection" against terrorist attack.

But city officials, DISA employees and community leaders say that catchall rationale overlooks the buck-a-year lease cost and say the building actually exceeds force-protection standards.

Indeed, DISA-Slidell would still be standing if an atomic bomb were dropped on New Orleans, one official insisted this week.

The nine-member BRAC commission must submit its report to President Bush by Sept. 8. He can accept or reject the list. If he approves it, Congress would have 45 legislative days to reject the list but cannot change it.

Longtime Slidell Councilwoman Pearl Williams was among those who attended the hearing in New Orleans. She said this week that commissioners had given New Orleans area officials hope that their arguments will be taken seriously.

One commissioner, retired Army Gen. James Hill, told the Louisiana delegation that the commission will be independent in its work.

"We're no one's blank check or rubber stamp," he said.

BRAC chairman says deal over bases in works

Reno Gazette Journal (Reno, NV)
Ana Radelat
July 30, 2005

WASHINGTON — The head of a panel charged with deciding which military bases should be closed or reorganized said efforts are being made to broker a deal that likely would ground fewer Air National Guard units than defense officials originally proposed.

"We've been meeting with the Air Force, the adjutants general and the National Guard Bureau," said Anthony Principi, head of the Base Realignment and Closure, or BRAC, Commission, in an interview with Gannett News Service. "I'm hopeful that we will arrive at a compromise."

The Pentagon's plan to close or move planes from 29 Air Guard units — including the Nevada Air National Guard Base in Reno — has been attacked fiercely. Critics include Washington, D.C. lawmakers, governors, the politically powerful National Guard Association and the nation's adjutants general, who command the National Guard in each state. Opponents of the plan say it would leave many governors with less military help during emergencies and would hurt the National Guard's ability to attract and retain members. "The Air Force scheme would leave six states without a flying unit," said the Guard association in a statement asking Principi to scrap the plan. "Developed for the Pentagon without consultation with the adjutants general in the 54 states and territories, the plan would eliminate all of the aircraft from 29 Air National Guard flying units around the country." Principi said the plan's long reach — it would affect 50 governors and 50 congressional delegations — has made it "much more visible" than some of the Pentagon's other base-closing recommendations, which include shuttering 33 major military bases.

BRAC commissioners have "real concerns" about the Air Force's recommendations relating to the Air Guard, Principi said. Hopefully, the Air Force and the adjutants general will agree to modify the plan before the BRAC commission begins voting on the Pentagon's base-closing recommendations Aug. 24, he said.

The governors of Pennsylvania and Illinois have sued Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld over the proposal, saying the move would violate federal law that places the National Guard units under state authority until they're called to active duty.

Principi said he was not prepared to say the Pentagon overstepped its authority. He also said he would not support the total rejection of the Pentagon plan.

"Many of us on the commission feel it would be totally irresponsible to throw out the Pentagon's recommendations," he said.

Principi has asked the Justice Department to issue an opinion on whether the Pentagon has legal authority over Air Guard units that haven't been called to active duty.

“If we need to modify our approach, we certainly would do so,” Principi said.

Opinions/ Editorials

A Second Chance to Get It Right

Washington Post (Washington, DC)
Dan Tangherlini (Director of DC Department of Transportation)
July 31, 2005

A number of recent decisions concerning national security may be making us less safe against terrorist attack. We may be over-investing in one area while ignoring the real threat in another.

For example, the most recent round of proposed base realignments and closures could put thousands of people in harm's way. Based on current accident and fatality rates, the proposed realignments and closures could lead to the death of 27 people annually by 2010 and 50 annually by 2020.

These startling figures derive from a comparison of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' recent estimate of increased miles traveled to reach new base locations -- 74,000 new miles a day -- with National Highway Traffic Safety statistics for the average highway accident fatality rate per million miles traveled (1.5 deaths). By relocating employees to more secure facilities in the region, the government might actually increase the incidence of injuries and fatalities.

Too often our response to terrorists has been tailored to the last attack, not to the attack that might come next. For an example, look no further than the disparity between the \$18 billion spent for airport security post-Sept. 11, 2001, and the debate in Congress over whether to spend the same amount on transit security that was spent last year -- \$250 million -- or less than last year. This debate still rages even after the two recent terrorist attacks on the London transit system.

We need to focus on investments that aren't simply palliative. We need to ask tough questions about risk and return. That may mean investing more in redundancy and capacity to lessen the effect of an attack and to deal better with the aftermath. Regrettably, so far the focus has been almost entirely on avoidance, and that doesn't appear to be changing. The recent realignment of the Department of Homeland Security reinforced this by eliminating the assistant secretary for infrastructure protection.

Homeland security investments could be good for the economy while making us safer if we made targeted investments in areas such as rerouting rail traffic away from the center cities that they do not serve. These investments could improve both security and our international economic competitiveness by eliminating choke points, increasing efficiency and replacing aging, unreliable infrastructure. Unlike most other homeland defense investments to date, rerouting could reduce transportation delay and costs.

Our bridges, highways and roads need to be kept at peak condition for emergency situations. Right now two critical links connecting the District, Maryland, Virginia and national defense assets such as Andrews Air Force Base lie rusting and decaying. The 11th Street and South Capitol Street bridges need the kind of funding that the delayed highway bill could provide.

The administration of Mayor Anthony A. Williams has promised to set aside half the District's off-street parking taxes to pay for a new 11th Street Bridge. It also has invested in the Metro Matters program, which protects infrastructure through improved maintenance and contributes to the acquisition of more rail cars. But the limited resources of states and cities are not enough.

According to an old saying, we never seem to have enough time or money to do things right, but we always have enough of both to do them twice. Congress and the administration need to know that they are looking at a second chance.

Will they get it right this time?

Closing Base Would Cut The Heart Out Of Our Seafaring Tradition

The Day (New London, CT)

Theodore P. Jakoboski (CPT U.S. Navy Reserves (Ret))

July 31, 2005

The Base Realignment and Closing Commission will base its decision to retain or close the Sub Base in Groton on the facts — just the facts.

Rummaging through the death records in Eastern Connecticut towns while doing real estate title searches a half-century ago taught me a historical fact that I had been unaware of, namely this: in the 19th century around half the men between 16 and 40 were recorded as having been lost at sea. Southern New England was the birthplace of our nautical heritage. The words, “Stove boat or a dead whale” to “Plot a course under the ice,” all came from here, not from some Southern state without the benefit of New England's nautical traditions.

Additional confirmation, I am positive, may be had by checking the birthplace of all midshipmen at the U.S. Naval Academy since it began. Two statistics will stand out — a high total number and surprisingly high percentages of officer cadets from Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Cape Cod.

In the 1960s and 1970s, I pulled three periods of reserve active duty for training at the Sub Base. I know that the U.S. Navy did everything within its power to minimize the chances of leaks of radioactive material into the bay and surrounding shores. Nevertheless, with a record of 50 years as host to our vast nuclear undersea fleet, even tiny leaks mount up — and they remain virtually forever unless cleaned up.

Calling for the survival of our main Submarine Base for a century is much more than a sentimental or emotional appeal. This involves the spiritual and historical value of the submarine base.

It was not for nothing that Napoleon is quoted as saying, “the spiritual is to the material as three is to one.”

BRAC only considers facts; well, historical and spiritual events and trends are facts, and should be taken into account.

Unless a nation is a seafaring nation, with a large corps of seamen to draw upon, it can never master the subtleties of navigation and ship handling; and thus, it can never become a naval power.

What will result if the heart of our seafaring tradition is cut out of Southern New England?

Closing the base in Groton would be like the British disbanding and dissolving all the named regiments whose ethos goes back three or four centuries in some cases. How much of British military pride and professionalism is tied up in these special regiments? Breaking up in 1940 might have left the way open for Hitler's knockout punch.

A product of that culture myself, I joined the Naval Reserve when I was underage at 16 in Middletown.

Not only people from Southern New England would vote to keep the Sub Base, but I'll wager that all the people across the United States, being aware of the facts cited above, would also vote in favor of keeping the historic, strategic base open.

Yes, there is the emotional argument, but it is in no way confined to local people fearing economic loss. Groton has fans and supporters all over the nation. From what I hear down here in Texas, most people think it is just an unwise decision based purely on politics — with no regard to the consequences for national defense.

Additional Notes