

Armed Services Chairman Warner Blasts Rumsfeld's BRAC Folly

by Carl Osgood

The growing weight of evidence after 13 public regional hearings conducted by the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC), suggests that in its plan to close 33 major bases, Donald Rumsfeld's Pentagon willfully—or incompetently—ignored the BRAC law in favor of its own agenda. This should not surprise qualified, honest observers of the George W. Bush Administration and its Secretary of Defense. This is the same gang that brought us the disastrous war in Iraq in March of 2003, claiming that it would be a “cakewalk,” and that Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction had to be eliminated immediately. To this day, Rumsfeld angrily denounces anyone who characterizes the war as a “quagmire,” despite the fact that the Administration appears to have no plan for solving the problem that it has created in Iraq.

Senate Armed Services Committee chairman John Warner (R-Va.), a leading author of the May 23 bipartisan Senate agreement that stopped Vice President Dick Cheney's “nuclear option,” and who sees himself as a defender of the American military, is charging that the Pentagon's BRAC recommendations “deviate substantially” from the criteria established in the law. In testimony to the BRAC Commission in Arlington, Va. on July 7, Warner emphasized that he himself had written the BRAC legislation, and therefore is intimately familiar with the intent of Congress, and has been involved in the BRAC process for 17 years. Warner quoted Benjamin Franklin's remark after the 1789 Constitutional Convention: “We have given you a republic, if you can keep it.” He denounced the way the Pentagon made its determinations, and said that he is prepared to take the issue to Federal court, having already written a 37-page legal brief.

Warner stood out in a phalanx of a dozen Senators and Congressmen—most of them Republicans—who mobilized

thousands of citizens to Boston, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Arlington on June 6-8, to fight the Rumsfeld Pentagon's shocking moves to shut down some of the most important military/economic and medical logistical bases in America's history as a nation.

Warner called the commission's attention to a Nov. 15, 2002 policy memorandum, in which Rumsfeld directed the Pentagon's internal BRAC teams to “produce BRAC recommendations that will advance transformation, combat effectiveness, and the efficient use of taxpayers' money.” Military transformation is not one of the goals specified in the law. In fact, the Pentagon's own “Red Team” advised, on March 22, 2005, that “since transformation is not one of the final selection criteria, transformational justifications have no legal basis and should be removed.” By that time, of course, the train had already left the station, as military transformation had been one of the guiding forces behind the entire process for more than two years.

Pentagon Gags an Admiral

The Boston regional BRAC hearing, on July 6, provided more evidence that the Pentagon is pursuing its own agenda, including apparently using the BRAC process to shrink the Navy's submarine fleet, by restricting the infrastructure available to support it. The most dramatic moment in Boston came, however, when Sen. Judd Gregg (R-N.H.) told the commissioners that one witness scheduled to testify on behalf of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Rear Admiral William Klemm, had been blocked from appearing by the Pentagon. Klemm, who retired as Deputy Commander for Logistics, Maintenance, and Industrial Operations of the Naval Sea Systems Command, a couple of months ago, had been the chairman of the subgroup within the Pentagon's Industrial Joint Cross



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis

Sen. John Warner (R-Va.) at the July 7 BRAC regional hearings in Arlington, Virginia.. Having written the BRAC legislation himself, he declared that the Pentagon is not following the law as Congress passed it, and that he is prepared to go to court if necessary to force compliance.

Service Group (IJCSG) that decided that the Portsmouth shipyard should be closed. Gregg said that Klemm's testimony would have been "devastating to the Navy case, because of his expertise and because of the fact that his points went to all the criteria . . . and, refuted, basically, the Navy position on all these criteria points, and showed substantial deviation [from the criteria]."

Klemm's prepared statement did become available, however, two days later, when it was posted on the website of the *Portsmouth Herald* newspaper. Although not commenting on his involvement in the BRAC process, Klemm warned that Portsmouth's closure would eliminate surge capacity in the Navy shipyards, because of the loss of skilled workers. He also described how Portsmouth is the lead shipyard in the improvement of submarine maintenance processes, improvements which are then propagated to the Navy's other three shipyards. These improvements are, in part, a product of the culture of the workforce. "That culture cannot be exported or replicated, it is imbedded in the generations of people who work at this facility. Therefore, the loss of Portsmouth Naval Shipyard equates to an irreplaceable loss of the culture and skill sets of innovation and efficiency."

Klemm further warned that the Navy's three remaining shipyards—in Norfolk, Va.; Puget Sound, Wash.; and Pearl Harbor—do not have the capacity or the resources needed to perform submarine maintenance activities within the prescribed periods of the service lives of the submarines in the fleet. "Faced with the inability to accomplish this work, the Navy will have to keep submarines pier-side in non-operational status until skilled artisans and drydocks become available or schedule them for inactivation." He warned that this will result in a reduction of the size of the submarine

fleet "through a backlog of maintenance actions over the next five years."

Klemm, in fact, had warned of the problems inherent on closing Portsmouth, during the BRAC process itself. According to the minutes of the Nov. 18, 2004 meeting of the IJCSG, Klemm said that closing Portsmouth would leave 1.4 million labor hours of workload that could not be absorbed by the other three shipyards. He stated that these calculations, based on the 2005 20-year force structure plan, "preclude the closure of Portsmouth, unless its three drydocks are replicated at another shipyard."

The chairman of the IJCSG, Michael Wynn, then-Acting Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, asked Klemm's subgroup to perform additional analysis to see if it was possible to replicate Portsmouth's workload at other shipyards, before making a final decision on the merits of closing it. But there is no evidence that the additional analysis was ever completed and submitted to the IJCSG; nor that the Pentagon ever figured out how to include Portsmouth's efficiency in its "military value calculations," an issue that Klemm raised in another IJCSG meeting on Jan. 6, 2005. Yet, the IJCSG decided to close Portsmouth, without any proposal to replicate its three drydocks at the remaining shipyards. Thus, it will be the "justifying" plan to cut the Navy's nuclear submarine fleet in the future.

Asked by reporters why Klemm was not allowed to testify in Boston, Senator Gregg reported that the Navy invoked internal rules, but suggested, only half in jest, that "if you were a conspiracy theorist you might conclude that maybe they thought his case was so strong that they didn't want him to testify."

Retired Vice Adm. Albert Konetzni, who commanded the submarine force for the Pacific Fleet before he retired, issued his own warning that the Pentagon was seeking to reduce the submarine force by restricting its budget and its infrastructure, which includes the proposed closure of Submarine Base New London, in Connecticut. He charged that recent studies, that show the submarine fleet dropping to 37-41 boats by the 2020s, are budget-driven. "I think it's inappropriate for the national defense of this nation, to delete the infrastructure of our great submarine force, prior to truly understanding the national security requirements," Konetzni said. He warned that shutting down that infrastructure "will make sure that this force is minimal, and is minimized as an instrument of national defense."

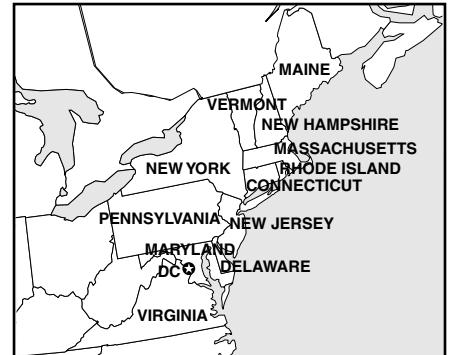
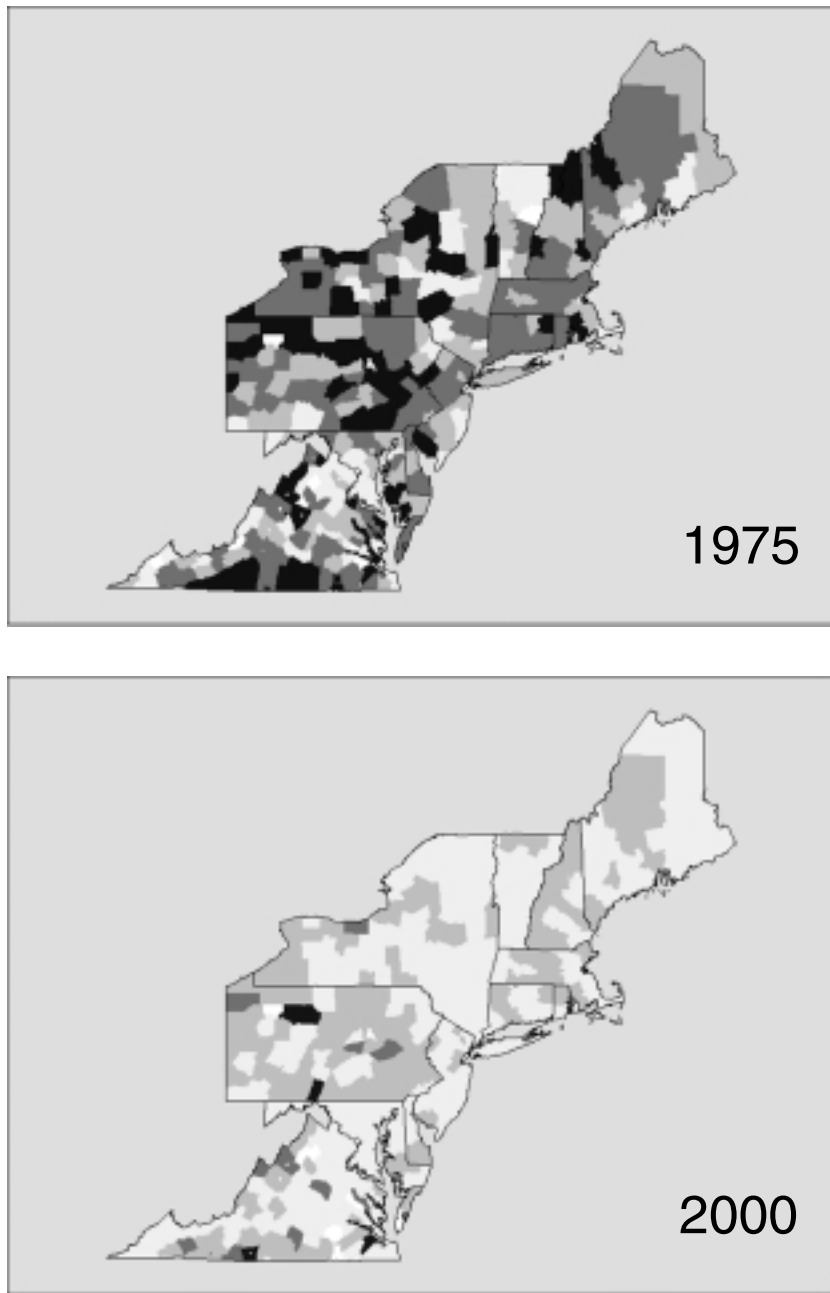
'New England De-Militarized'

In the case of New London, that infrastructure includes the Submarine School where every submariner in the Navy is trained, and supporting institutions that do research, operational, and doctrinal development—institutional capabilities that, like the workforce culture at Portsmouth, would be difficult, if not impossible, to replicate elsewhere.

Warner is not the only member of the Senate chal-

FIGURE 1

Northeast States: Decline in Manufacturing Workers as Percent of Workforce, by County, 1975-2000



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics. Map produced by MapInfo. See www.larouchepub.com/animations.

Darker tones show greater share of manufacturing workers in the workforce of each county, ranging from black (45% or more) down to lightest gray (less than 15%). The 12-state region from New England through the Mid-Atlantic has undergone severe de-industrialization; since 2000, the process has accelerated. In the Massachusetts and New Hampshire region in the 1960s, machine-tool activity supported textile and shoe manufacturing. Instead of phasing in new, high-skilled manufacturing—e.g. computer and medical equipment components—the era of globalization “out-sourced” New England’s manufacturing economy. The high-technology military shipyards, bases, and air infrastructure are invaluable national and regional assets.

lenging the Pentagon’s BRAC process. Sen. Chris Dodd (D-Conn.), following Connecticut’s presentation on the New London submarine base, charged that the entire process is fundamentally unfair. He noted that if Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee chairman Susan Collins (R-Me.), and ranking Democrat Joe Lieberman (Conn.) had not had subpoena power, many of the documents used by opponents of the BRAC would not have been available for the hearing. Like Klemm and other witnesses, Dodd protested that the BRAC commission is being asked to make a policy decision on the future size of the submarine fleet, which should be made by the Bush Administration with the participation of Congress. Dodd said that decisions about force structure “ought to be a national debate.”

Another aspect of the unfairness of the Pentagon’s determinations is the total impact on New England. With the closures of the Portsmouth shipyard and the New London submarine base, and the realignment of the Brunswick, Me. Naval Air Station, the Naval presence in New England would be reduced, as Lieberman noted, to “a naval air station with no planes and a naval station [Newport, R.I.] with no ships. The region’s only remaining commissioned Naval ships would be two museums: the venerable *USS Constitution*, moored in Boston, and the world’s first nuclear submarine, the *USS Nautilus*. Lieberman, Dodd and Rep. Rob Simmons (R-Conn.), whose district includes New London, all warned that such a demilitarization of New England will disconnect the civilian population from the military, with consequent negative effects on recruitment and retention.