



Snohomish County
County Executive's Office

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Everything ship shape as Naval Station Everett avoids federal base closure list

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*Snohomish County Executive Reardon cites NSE's modern facilities,
strategic Pacific Rim location for closure commission's status quo decision*

Nothing's changing at Naval Station Everett.

That's the preliminary announcement today by the federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC), which this morning revealed the list of installations Pentagon officials want shut down or realigned in a massive restructuring of U.S. and global military priorities.

But at NSE, which is homeport for the nuclear aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and more than 6,700 sailors and civilians, neither the mix of ships nor the strategic mission will apparently be altered.

“So far its status quo at Naval Station Everett – and that's very encouraging,” said Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon, who twice flew to Washington, D.C. with other community leaders to lobby civilian Pentagon officials about the advantages enjoyed by the local military installation.

Executive Reardon said that local officials will continue to monitor BRAC until it announces a final base closure list in September. In 1993 Naval Station Everett was added to a BRAC closure list despite a preliminary announcement that it had been spared. Commissioners that year wanted to compare the Everett facility to an older base in Alameda, California which ultimately was closed.

Nonetheless, today's announcement was a welcome one.

Executive Reardon cited NSE's state-of-the-art facilities, its deepwater port, strategic Pacific Rim location and proximity to other Northwest military installations as prime reasons the base was not on the closure list. Moreover, he said the mix of operational and training opportunities available at NSE are a tight fit with the Department of Defense's Force Structure Plan.

"We always stress the same points when we talk to Pentagon officials: Everett has the most modern, efficient facilities of any base in the nation and is located on the strategically important Pacific Rim," Executive Reardon said.

There was one Snohomish County facility on the Pentagon list: The Oswald U.S. Army Reserve Center in Everett. Officials say that units assigned to the center will be relocated to a new Everett-based Armed Forces Reserve Center if the Army is able to acquire suitable land for a new facility. About 57 people are involved in the shift.

Earlier this year, Reardon, Everett Mayor Ray Stephanson and Marysville Mayor Dennis Kendall led a community delegation that met with two top Pentagon officials. They took with them a 48-page Community Assessment of Naval Station Everett that included a point-by-point response to base closure criteria previously laid out by the Department of Defense.

Reardon praised members of Washington state's Congressional delegation who have worked on NSE's behalf, including U.S. Rep. Rick Larson, D-Arlington; U.S. Rep. Norm Dicks, D-Port Orchard; U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Mountlake Terrace; and, U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Shoreline.

He also recognized the efforts of Gov. Christine Gregoire, who came to Everett on the first official visit of her governorship to discuss NSE issues.

The Community Assessment addressed NSE's military value in terms of:

- Strategic location;
- Environmental superiority;
- Facilities;
- Cost effectiveness;
- Joint training opportunities;
- Expansion capabilities;
- Quality of life; and,

- Support infrastructure of the community.

Snohomish County hosts more than 85 percent of the Navy families assigned to Naval Station Everett and such facilities as the Jim Creek Radio Station and the Family Support Complex in Marysville. With more than 5,600 service men and women assigned to NSE, the base is Snohomish County's second largest employer after The Boeing Co.

The four previous BRAC rounds -- in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995 -- brought about 97 major closures, 55 major realignments and 235 minor actions, according to Defense Department figures. Overall, closing and realigning these installations saved U.S. taxpayers around \$18 billion through fiscal 2001 and a further \$7 billion per year since, according to the federal government.

There are currently 425 military bases in the United States. Once a base gets on an initial BRAC closure list, there is still a chance that commissioners will intervene. During the four previous BRAC rounds, 15 percent of the bases originally listed by the Pentagon were kept open, according to Department of Defense records.

A BRAC report submitted in March 2004 estimated there is 24 percent excess capacity in the Defense Department, though in recent weeks Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has said the figure may be below 15 percent.

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