

Congressman John B. Larson Denounces Sub Base Closure

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HARTFORD, CT - Congressman John B. Larson today blasted the Department of Defense's recommended closing of the U.S. Naval Submarine Base New London, calling the proposal "short-sighted" and "unjustifiable."

"It is a mistake detrimental to both our national defense and our state economy," Larson said. "It is inconceivable that we are spending almost \$600 million to build the most expensive U.S. embassy in history in Baghdad at the same time we are devastating our own infrastructure here in America. I will work closely with the Connecticut delegation and the Governor in pursuing every avenue to prevent the base's closing."

Larson added: "This is not only a devastating blow to the Groton sub-base area, it is a terrible setback for the entire state," Larson said of the sub base's proposed closing. "We will not allow Connecticut's job and technology base to be sacrificed for an ill-judged scheme to produce a leaner - but not necessarily meaner - military."

Larson has opposed the Pentagon's drive to push through the 2005 round of base closings. Repeatedly over the past three years, he has voted to kill or delay the 2005 round of base closings, arguing that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld should not be barreling ahead with downsizing domestic bases while our nation is at war and bolstering homeland security against another terrorist attack. The continuing tenuousness of the economy compounds the irresponsibility of cutting bases now, he has stated.

The list revealed that the Connecticut Air National Guard stationed at Bradley Airport would be realigned, losing the A-10 "warhogs" that been the key to the 103rd Fighter Wing's mission and heart of its identity. Rumsfeld has proposed moving the A-10s to the 104th Fighter Wing at Barnes Municipal Airport Air Guard Station in Massachusetts. The realignment would shift the Bradley base's primary mission to engine maintenance and repair, specifically of the TF-34.

Larson will continue to work with the Governor to ensure that the proposed realignment adequately addresses the state's and nation's concerns regarding defense and security.

"With these kinds of proposals, the devil is in the details," he said. "We're going to examine this realignment closely. We will fight any measure that compromises our needs now or in the future."

The nine-member, 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission will conduct regional hearings across the country to allow affected communities to comment. At least one member of the commission is expected to visit each base that the Defense Department has tagged for closure. After review, the commission will send its closure list to the President for his approval. The BRAC law gives Congress, upon receiving the final recommendations, 45 days to reject the list or it becomes law.

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