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Shut bases could get nuclear waste

A \$15.5m funding plan allows for reprocessing

The Boston Globe

By Susan Milligan, Globe Staff | May 28, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Closed military bases could become repositories for nuclear waste under a little-noticed section of a spending bill that was passed by the House this week, exacerbating the fears of local lawmakers who are fighting the scheduled closure of four of New England's biggest bases.

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The energy and water bill from the House Appropriations Committee includes \$15.5 million for reprocessing of nuclear waste from power plants and construction of an interim nuclear waste dump. The legislation does not specify where that dump would be. But the Appropriations Committee report, which explains the bill, suggests that mothballed military bases be considered as potential sites for the waste.

Lawmakers said the idea adds to the pain of a region that faces the loss of 14,500 jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars if the recommendations by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission are adopted.

Maine lawmakers met yesterday with the chairman of the BRAC to plead for Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine, which is on the closure list, and the Brunswick Naval Air Station which is to be "realigned," or shrunk.

"I'm very, very concerned about this. Our citizens would be very upset," Maine Governor John Baldacci said when he was shown the committee report language. He said he had been unaware of the proposal, and "to think that someone could put nuclear waste there. . . is outrageous."

Also slated for closure are Otis Air National Guard Base on Cape Cod and the New London Naval Submarine Base in Groton, Conn. All told, the closures in New England would represent half of the 29,000 job losses nationwide under the closure plan.

Meanwhile, under fire from Congress, the Defense Department promised yesterday to give lawmakers access by next Tuesday to detailed material backing up its recommendations to shut down about 180 military installations across the country. Parts of the report are classified, so the Pentagon said legislators and staff with security clearances must review that data at a secure location in northern Virginia.

The announcement comes in the wake of increasing demands from lawmakers and state and

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local officials for the release of what will be an unprecedented amount of data in defense of the base closing plan. Lawmakers hope to use the information to persuade the independent commission reviewing the base closings to remove certain installations from the hit list.

Representative Edward J. Markey, Democrat of Malden, said the proposal to put nuclear waste on closed bases was an insult to local communities that face a hardship from the job losses attached to the closings. "Congratulations -- you may have lost your military facility, but you may be the winner of nuclear waste coming to your community," Markey said.

He sought to kill the idea of temporary nuclear waste dumps by defunding it in the energy and water bill, but his amendment was defeated, 312 to 110. [Continued...](#)

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