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Texas congressmen fight for military bases

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Twenty-one members of Congress from Texas deployed in a rapid-response team Wednesday to defend Texas military installations under threat of being shut down or consolidated.

In a campaign orchestrated prior to their appearance before the independent Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, most of the lawmakers used their allotted five minutes to highlight individual South Texas bases.

Seven Texas military facilities are under scrutiny. The Dallas

Facilities under analysis by Pentagon

Naval Air Station was recommended for closure earlier this year by the Pentagon. The others — Kelly Air Force Base, Naval Station Ingleside, Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Naval Hospital Corpus Christi and Red River Army Depot — were added by the commission last month for comparison with bases on the Pentagon hit list.

The Red River facility in Texarkana is being looked at for consolidation, not closure. And Bergstrom AFB in Austin, already a near-complete casualty of the 1991 base-closing round, could see

the rest of its mission transferred to Carswell AFB in Fort Worth.

Perhaps no one was more to the point than Rep. J.J. "Jake" Pickle of Austin, who told the commission: "Don't move my air base."

The Texans' campaign was designed to show the commission that a bipartisan Texas delegation is rallying in defense of all Texas military facilities. In fact, nine congressmen whose districts are completely untouched by possible base closures agreed to testify about the merits of installations elsewhere in the state.

The commission is expected to vote next week on which bases to recommend for closure. It has until July 1 to forward its recommendations to President Clinton, who must accept or reject the list in its entirety and forward it to Congress. Lawmakers have only a up-or-down vote on the entire list.

Almost half of the Texans accused much of their testimony near Corpus Christi, is the considered most in jeopardy — a large part because of criticism from the General Accounting Office and a well-heeled South Carolina lobby scrambling to save the Charleston naval base.

Fish Camp

Continued from Page 1

"Some people used to think to be a Fish Camp counselor you had to have a certain personality - fun and crazy or cool," she said. "Now people realize you don't have to be any certain way."

She said researching different cultures in addition to education about students with disabilities has helped the Camp develop better programs for the counselors.

Pfrimmer said she talked to minority and ethnic groups about recruiting a diverse group of counselors.

After working with the groups, the camps hired three times as many blacks as last year.

"Some people used to think to be a Fish Camp counselor you had to have a certain personality...now people realize you don't have to be any certain way."

—Anne Pfrimmer, associate director

Tripode said the camp didn't set out to get a certain number of minority counselors but just happened to have some excellent people from various ethnic backgrounds apply.

Pfrimmer said this new attitude has helped counselors "unconditionally accept every freshman."

Fish Camp started when YMCA director Gordon Gay took a few students camping.

It was initially called "Freshman Camp" but later became known as "Fish Camp."

Gay continued his involvement for several years but eventually told upperclassmen to continue the tradition.

Fish Camp will have taken 3,600 freshmen to camp by the end of this summer.

Mike Knox, Fish Camp assistant director, said, "The environment at Texas A&M has changed so Fish Camp had to change throughout the years," but Fish Camp's purpose is still to help the freshmen.

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