

The Patriot-News

Could Pa. military bases fall under the knife to pay for Trump's budget?: Friday Morning Coffee

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Good Friday Morning, Fellow Seekers.

As you've probably heard by now, President Donald Trump wants to spend a shedload of cash on defense and homeland security. And he's going to largely pay for it by slashing spending on a host of domestic programs - from public radio and meals on wheels to environmental protection and affordable housing.

But as the Republican looks to cut down on waste and duplication in government to buy more bullets, guns and bombs, officials at the Pentagon may look to shut down bases to drum up some of the cash.

After 12 years of lying fallow, the federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission may get some fresh legs as a result of Trump's massive defense spending request, our [friends at Federal News Radio](#) report:

"Congressional resistance to BRAC is faltering, said Chris Preble, vice president for defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute, and that may bring some fiscal savings to DoD.

"Opposition to BRAC "is weakening for a couple reasons. One, the Pentagon is quite insistent that they do have excess capacity," Preble told Federal News Radio. "Even if President Trump gets his wish of dramatically increasing military spending, it's still not entirely clear where some of that money will come from, but he says some of the additional funding will come from waste. A key aspect of waste inside the Pentagon budget is excess overhead.

"Preble said BRAC would be part of a package of things that need to be done to squeeze more money out of DoD."

Central Pennsylvania, more astute readers may recall, has more than a few military installations - from the Navy support center in Mechanicsburg to the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle.

Traditionally, local members of Congress have pushed back hard against base shutdowns in their home districts, viewing the bases as less military installations and more drivers of the local economy.

Even so, some members of Congress, including U.S. Rep. Adam Smith, of Washington, the ranking Democrat on House Armed Services Committee, plans to introduce legislation this year that would jump-start the BRAC process, as it's known, Federal News Radio reported.

In the Senate, Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain, R-Ariz, has said Congress has shown "cowardice" for its inability to face BRAC. The committee's ranking Democrat, Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., also said he's willing to give BRAC a fresh look, the broadcast outlet reported.

So how much could be saved from a fresh round of closings and consolidations?

The short answer: Quite a bit.

Citing a 2016 study, Federal News Radio reported:

"The military is operating 22 percent over capacity when it comes to bases.

"The Army has 33 percent more stateside infrastructure than it needs, according to the report. Similarly, the Air Force has an excess of 32 percent. But the Navy and Marine Corps have just 7 percent extra, and facilities managed by the Defense Logistics Agency have 12 percent.

"DoD estimates another BRAC round could save \$2 billion annually, on top of the savings already realized from previous rounds."