

33 Major U.S. Bases Would Close Under Plan

By LIZ SIDOTI Associated Press Writer
The Associated Press
WASHINGTON

The Pentagon will propose shutting 150 military installations from Maine to Hawaii, including 33 major bases. The Associated Press learned Friday, triggering the first round of base closures in a decade and an intense struggle by communities to save their facilities.

More than 100 other smaller facilities would be closed, including scores of Reserve and National Guard installations. Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld has said the move would save \$48.8 billion over 20 years while reshaping the military for America's expected 21st century adversaries.

The Pentagon has proposed eliminating scores of Reserve and National Guard bases from coast to coast, part of Rumsfeld's effort to promote "jointness" between the active-duty and reserve units.

"Our current arrangements, designed for the Cold War, must give way to the new demands of the war against extremism and other evolving 21st Century challenges," Rumsfeld said in a news release obtained by the AP.

Among the major closures is Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota, home to 29 B-1B bombers, half the nation's fleet of the aircraft, and the state's second largest employer. That would deal a potential political setback to Republican freshman Sen. John Thune, who had claimed he could protect the base if elected during his campaign to defeat former Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle.

Rumsfeld also recommended closing the Naval Station in Pascagoula, Miss., which barely survived previous base closure rounds. The decision was a blow to Sen. Trent Lott, R-Miss., who had fought the 1995 round of closures. At stake are 844 military jobs and 112 civilian jobs.

###