

Utah Comes Out Ahead in *Base Race*

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Despite years of worry about base closures, Utah became one of the biggest winners in the latest round of shutdowns.

Even though Defense Depot Ogden (DDO) will close, Hill Air Force Base and Dugway Proving Ground will stay open. In fact, Hill may gain jobs.

A congressional rebuff of an effort to derail the base-closure list sealed DDO's fate Friday.

In a 343-75 vote, the House rejected a proposal by Rep. Frank Tejeda, D-Texas, to overturn the recommendations of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission.

"It's over now," Tejeda said.

House approval sets in motion a slow process by which the military services close down the scores of bases on the list. They must begin within two years and finish the job within six.

President Clinton reluctantly accepted the hit list July 13, leaving only a contrary vote by the House and the Senate as a way of blocking the closures. Senate action now is unnecessary.

"Today, the Congress overwhelmingly voted to do the right thing and support the recommendations," said Rep. James Hansen, R-Utah. "While I do not agree with every decision of the commission -- and once again they made a mistake in closing DDO -- the process must remain independent and apolitical."

Hansen joined Rep. Bill Orton, D-Utah, in voting to accept the closure list. GOP Rep. Enid Waldholtz, who recently gave birth to a daughter, did not vote.

Now Utah's delegation will work with lawmakers in Oklahoma and Georgia to torpedo plans by Clinton to prevent transferring work to their states from two huge Air Force base closings in California and Texas.

Even though DDO is closing -- costing up to 1,100 jobs -- the extra work the commission expects Hill to win despite the president's plans could bring a net gain of 12,406 jobs to Utah.

Friday's losing effort to reject the closure list was led by House members upset that it calls for the closing of McClellan Air Force Base, Calif., and Kelly Air Force Base, Texas.

At one time in the process, Utah stood to be one of the biggest losers. But the commission chose not to close Hill, which was ranked higher than McClellan and Kelly, and would cost more to close.

It also removed Dugway Proving Ground from the list after the Army found it could not obtain permits to transfer Dugway's testing missions to Arizona and Maryland.