

G. V. Sonny Montgomery Weekly Radio Show

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Audio begins at 00:20

Interviewer: This is Congressman Sonny Montgomery's weekly radio report from Washington. You were in Washington on April 17th for a hearing held by the Defense Base Closure Commission. What was discussed at the hearing that might affect the future of Meridian's Naval Air Station?

Montgomery: The General Accounting Office which oversees the Base Closure Commission and they were testifying today, and I was there. And they Mark brought up some valid points that the Navy did not even consider economic value of closing bases what would be the effect on a community. It came out that you could close 10 bases in California and would only affect the economy of that state by 1%, you close Meridian Naval Air Station, it's the General Accounting Office point this out, it affect the economy by 3% of the whole state of Mississippi. It was it was a it was a good hearing. They didn't get a totally into each each base why it was being closed but later on in the day they got into joint pilot training and and wondered why the commission wondered why the Defense Department didn't move ahead with unified training like putting all the helicopter training at Fort Rucker, combining the base training, primary training of Meridian and Columbus being together or Meridian and Pensacola being together. Why why the military didn't move ahead with that. The military really didn't have much excuse. They just didn't tackle the big problems of of jointness or joint training which we've talked about before. But I don't believe after hearing this debate today before the commission. I don't believe they're gone tackle that. If Secretary Perry didn't do it and the Air Force and the Navy and the Army didn't tackle it, I would be very surprised if the commission would would take that on. That would mean you'd have to close some more Air Force bases, but it would help Meridian, but I don't believe the commission is is going that far. We'll just have to wait and see but that was the impression I got today. We have our team Meridian up here Bill Crawford's team is up here and they we're getting pretty good vibes right now of our presentation on last Monday and Tuesday. Meridian our Meridian Naval Air Station in in Birmingham our our team over there the Navy Meridian team gave facts showing why all the pilot training shouldn't take place in Kingsville and that Kingsville could not do it. And one of the staffers on the commission told me said yours was the only presentation that we've had so far across the country where there's talk in generality. It didn't talk about specific areas why their bases should not be closed. So that's a plus for us. However, I picked up over there they Navy is fighting back. They said that they're gone still stick with what they said that all the training could be done at Kingsville and that you don't need Meridian Naval Air Station anymore. So, they're fighting back they're going to meet with the staff of the Navy commission of the Base Closure and Navy commission next week we'll just have to see how that comes out. But I'm proud I'm up here I'm the only member up here sitting on the front row at the commission and all the commissioners know me and it doesn't hurt.

Interviewer: As this program is being taped, you're preparing to travel to Camp Shelby with the Chief of the National Guard Bureau and the Chief of the Army National Guard. What are the details on this visit?

Montgomery: Well I invited General Barker whose Lieutenant General who's Chief of the National Guard Bureau to come Camp Shelby as well as Major General Jack Durooch who is Chief of the Army National Guard to look at Camp Shelby. To see it, General Barker's never been there. It's a great training base and what we'd like to do is maybe get some more money for firing ranges that General Barker would have to recommend also we'd hope that we could get other states to bring in their National Guard or Reserve units and train right there in Camp Shelby, Mississippi. It's a great training base. It certainly helps the economy in that part of the state and helps us to improve Camp Shelby.

Interview: Thank you Congressman. This has been Congressman Sonny Montgomery's weekly radio report from Washington.

Audio ends at 05:08