

# The Day

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U.S. Should Add To Sub Base, Not Close It  
By SEN. CHRISTOPHER J. DODD  
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Ever since the shocking recommendation by the Defense Department to close Submarine Base New London, residents of Connecticut — from public officials, to business leaders, to concerned citizens — have come together in common cause to keep alive this unique military asset.

No one in our state needs to be convinced that the effects of closing the base would be devastating. Life in Southeastern Connecticut is inextricably linked to the Sub Base — from the base itself, to Electric Boat and its subcontractors where these extraordinary vessels are built, to the local businesses that serve our military and their families. It is estimated that the closure would ultimately cost Connecticut's economy 31,500 jobs and \$3.3 billion.

The adverse impact of closing the base — while enormous — will not be enough to convince the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission to reverse the Defense Department's recommendation. This is why we intend to show that the Pentagon's recommendation is directly contrary to two essential criteria — military value and cost.

Our Nation is at war, and submarines — which can intercept intelligence signals, participate in special operations, and launch precision-guided weapons — play a critical role in our global fight against terrorism. They will also be indispensable in meeting a growing threat from China, which is seeking to expand its sphere of influence in the Pacific Ocean.

Submarines are as important as they have ever been. And Southeastern Connecticut stands alone as the community with the experience, resources, and infrastructure needed to ensure that the American fleet remains the best in the world.



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Cliona Rosa of Groton holds a sign near the entrance to the Naval Submarine Base in Groton last month, after the decision to close it was announced.

Put simply, there is no place in the world like Groton. Along with its 18 fast attack submarines, the Sub Base is also home to the Navy Submarine Support Facility, where the ships are maintained, the Navy Submarine School, where our nuclear submariners receive education and training, as well as Submarine Development Squadron 12, where the most cutting-edge submarine technologies are developed and tested.

Finally, Groton is home to Electric Boat, the world's premier submarine builder and designer. While their ships are in port, many of the sailors who man the ships literally work side by side with the highly skilled engineers who build and maintain them.

With these many institutions all located in one tightly-knit community in Southeastern Connecticut, mutually beneficial relationships have developed which are unparalleled anywhere in the submarine industry — perhaps in our entire military. These relationships have produced the best submarines in the world, and the best trained submariners in the world.

The Defense Department has suggested that the unique and extraordinary facilities at Sub Base New London could simply be rebuilt — some in Norfolk, Va, and others in Kings Bay, Ga. But it is unrealistic to suggest that institutions and practices that have evolved together over the past 100 years could be rebuilt from scratch, in two different places. If anything, the Navy should be moving submarines and sailors from Kings Bay or Norfolk to Groton — not the other way around.

On a cost basis, as well, it is difficult to understand why the Defense Department believes closing the base in New London would be a good idea. The Department estimates that it would cost \$690 million to close the base, but there is good reason to believe that this estimate is significantly lower than the actual cost. In fact, this number does not include a single dollar for closing and rebuilding the sub school — a task that some believe could cost \$700 million alone.

The information that has been made public thus far raises more questions than it answers. Why was New London given zero points in the “pier space” category when, in fact, the base has ample pier space? Why did New London score lower than both Norfolk and Kings Bay on “specialized skills training,” when more training is done at New London than at both of these bases combined? Why, just one month prior to the release of the base closure list, were the savings associated with closing the New London base adjusted up, while the costs were adjusted down?

To put it simply, the numbers do not add up — and that is the message that we will be sending the BRAC Commissioners between now and September, when they make their final recommendations to the President and Congress. I intend to fight, together with the governor, Connecticut's Congressional delegation, and concerned citizens across our state, to ensure that this message is heard loud and clear.

In order to meet changing and evolving military threats in the 21st century, our nation

will have to make difficult choices. But these choices need to be smart ones. And cutting the heart out of America's submarine force is a mistake we cannot afford to make.

*The writer is Connecticut's senior U.S. senator.* ■

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