

New hope for Cavalier?

■ Pentagon is thinking twice about closing radar facility

By Marilyn Wheeler
Associated Press

CAVALIER, N.D. — The Pentagon is reconsidering its decision to close the Cavalier Air Force Station in northeastern North Dakota.

The radar facility, now scheduled to close Sept. 30, may remain open through the end of the year while the Air Force decides whether to keep it running rather than risk being unable to start it again.

"What I think is happening is internal debate within the Defense Department," says Rep. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D. "Some believe it is not a wise decision to close the facility, that it is still needed. Others believe it should be closed."

Air Force budget experts, on the one hand, say the closure would yield an \$8 million peace dividend. Scientists, on the other, say its space tracking capabi-

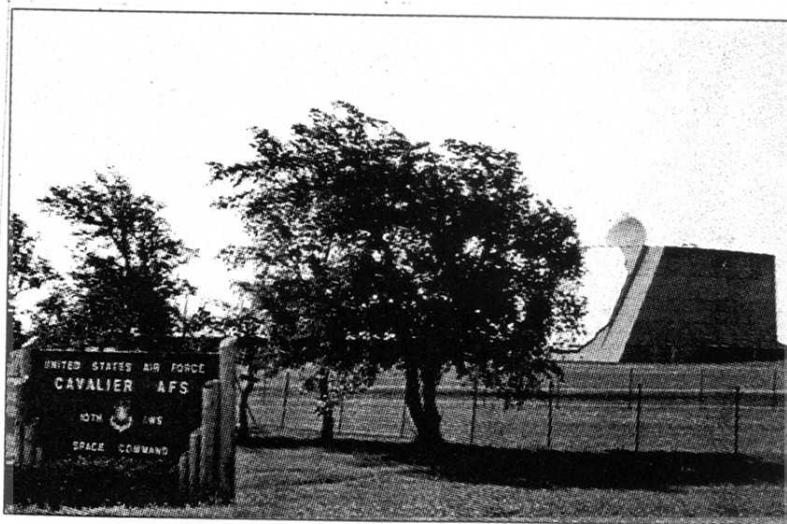
lities are as important as its missile warning system.

Lt. Gen. Charles Horner, head of the Air Force Space Command, the U.S. Space Command and the North American Air Defense Command, met with the Secretary of the Air Force on Wednesday to discuss the future of the Cavalier Air Force Station.

Air Force Space Command spokeswoman Lt. Amy Castro says the radar station will remain in operation until a decision is made. She declines to say how long that might take.

Dorgan and others, including Sen. Kent Conrad, have asked the Air Force to review its plans.

The uncertain future of the Cavalier station has cast a shadow over the economy of northeastern North Dakota. Its closing would mean 102 contract employees in 15 small towns would have nothing to fall back on.



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The Cavalier Air Force Station may not close as planned Sept. 30. The Pentagon will keep the radar system running while it weighs its options, a decision that could take months. The shutdown was expected to save taxpayers \$8 million a year, but would cost northeast North Dakota 102 jobs.