WASHINGTON - Plattsburgh Air Force Base was spared the axe Sunday night when a presidential last-minute vote against closing it down, quieting weeks of speculation by North Country residents that the federal government might close the base, the region's single largest employer, and throw off the economic life of millions of dollars.

The seven-member Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission had recommended closure of Loring Air Force Base in northern Maine.

Plattsburgh had been paired with Loring through the panel's deliberations, making those votes tricky for the policymakers to make, given the presence of so many military personnel on those bases.

Some said they worried the panel might have preferred to go with both bases as a painful one for the region, but overall, the choices were between the two as a painful one because of their many similarities.

Back in Plattsburgh, air force economists and Pentagon officials waited to find out the fate of their base, and local residents waited to see if they too might be affected.

In the North Country, the closure or realignment of Plattsburgh was viewed as a huge blow, one that would affect not just the economic viability of the region but also the quality of life for residents.

"There was a lot of relief, a lot of happiness," said retired Air Force General William Brodie, who is now a plattsburgh resident.

"We had been bracing ourselves for the worst, and then we got this news," he said.

However, the news was not all good, as the base still has to go through the lengthy process of downsizing and reducing its military personnel, which will be a challenge for the local economy.

Local officials expressed relief.

**Press-Republican**

**Plattsburgh AFB spared**

**Local officials express relief**

**WASHINGTON -** President Bush has at his command a powerful weapon against qualifying or modifying a base closure or realignment decision made by the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission.

The president's power to veto such a decision is one of the few remaining ways to stop a base closure or realignment.

In the case of Plattsburgh Air Force Base in northern New York, the decision was made by the commission and it was up to the president to decide whether to approve it or not.

Bush has already vetoed two previous attempts by the commission to close bases in the region.

The base closure decision was made in 1995, and the president signed a veto in 1996.

In 1997, the commission made another recommendation to close the base, and the president vetoed that as well.

This time around, the commission recommended closing two bases in the region, including Plattsburgh.

But Bush has had a change of heart, and he is expected to sign the veto on the same day as another veto to stop the realignment of another base.

The decision is expected to be made on Wednesday, and it will be signed before the end of the week.

"This is a tough decision, but it is the right decision for the country," Bush said in a statement.

The decision is expected to have a significant impact on the region, as Plattsburgh is the largest employer in the area.

But the vote is not without its own risks, as there have been concerns raised about the impact on the local economy.

"We are still working on the details of how to implement this veto, but we are confident we can do it in a fair and equitable manner," said White House spokesperson Tony Snow.

The decision is expected to take effect in October, and it will bring significant changes to the region.

But it is also expected to bring some relief, as the base closure was expected to cost more than $1 billion.

In the meantime, local officials are working to ensure that the base remains open and continues to support the region.

"We are doing everything we can to keep the base open," said Plattsburgh Mayor Dave Martin.

"We are still working on the details of how to implement this decision, but we are confident we can do it in a fair and equitable manner," he said.

The decision is expected to have a significant impact on the region, as Plattsburgh is the largest employer in the area.