

LONG BEACH PRESS TELEGRAM

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# LOCAL NEWS

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## Naval station won't give up base yet

By Neil Strassman  
Staff writer

LONG BEACH — The Port of Long Beach has scaled back a \$170 million plan to convert the Long Beach Naval Station to a container terminal after the base closes at the end of September.

Instead, the Port may get more than 120 acres of naval station land for free.

The Port wanted to bulldoze the base and build a \$70 million 104-acre container terminal and 23-acre rail yard. It also would have spent \$100 million to rebuild barracks and other facilities for sailors whose ships are repaired at the shipyard.

But the Navy isn't ready to give up the entire base, and the Port apparently will have to settle for a chance to get the Navy mole, a slim hook-shaped breakwater and landfill that now defines the outer boundary of the naval station harbor.

The 100-acre mole and a 27-acre strip of naval station land is the only part of the base south of Ocean Boulevard on Terminal Island the Navy is willing to dispose of now, say Navy officials.

The Port wants to put a rail line on the mole and build a small rail yard near Ocean Boulevard, said Geraldine Knatz, Port planning director.

"We don't get the space for a big terminal, but there are other uses we can put there," Knatz said. "We need to get back to the secretary of the Navy with a fine-tuned plan for reuse of the mole. We're preparing that and should submit it in a few weeks."

Tugboats, some ship repair and marine construction facilities, oil-spill cleanup boats and other port operations would be relocated from other parts of the harbor to the mole, freeing up more space for container terminals in the interior of the Port,

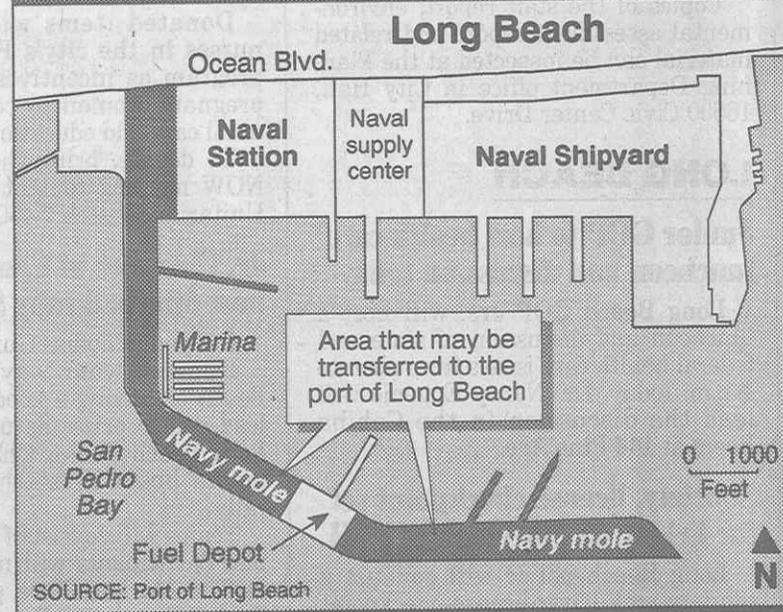
Knatz said. Some bulk cargo, such as steel and lumber, or material on pallets, also could be offloaded on the mole, she said.

The naval station was ordered to close in 1991 by the federal base closure commission. It shuts its doors Sept. 30. The Long Beach Naval Shipyard will oversee the property, though the shipyard itself must survive the 1995 final round of base closings.

The medical and dental clinic, barracks, mess hall, gym, a recreational club and the family services center will stay open to be used by sailors whose ships are at the yard. The commissary and exchange also will stay open, for the time being.

"The Navy may not turn over the entire naval station to the shipyard," said Kimberly Kesler, base closure manager for Long

### L.B. Port plans for Naval Station



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## PORT: L.B. wants portion of Naval station for use as rail yard

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Beach. "There may be a portion we could declare surplus, and that would be the mole area."

The \$38 million fuel pier built on the mole five years ago will remain open, she said.

If the Navy declares the property surplus, other uses must be considered before the Port can get it. It would be screened for use for homeless facilities and state and local government pro-

grams.

"We're not talking about turning the mole property directly over to the Port, but at the same time, we're trying to work with the Port to accommodate the city's reuse plan," Kesler said.

City officials have estimated that the Long Beach community is losing nearly \$1 billion annually in economic benefits because of the closure of the naval station and its related facilities.

California was hit hard in the three rounds of base closings, with 22 bases ordered shut. As much as 40 percent of the base closures and 69 percent of the personnel reductions in the nation were here, a \$7 million dollar hit to the state economy.

To soften the economic blow to communities like Long Beach, the 1994 Defense Authorization Act allows the Department of Defense to transfer property at fair market value or less if it

helps economic development or creates jobs.

That means the Port could get the mole for far less than the land is worth, or possibly free.

Under the Port's new plan, the Allen Center, the elegant officer's club on the base, and the exchange, a large department store, are on the land the Port wants for its rail yard. They would be demolished, but not immediately.

"We still need to decide which

side of the street to draw the line on," said Capt. Paul Ward, in charge of Navy base closure operations in Washington, D.C. "The Navy is working with the Port in defining the area it will consider excess."

Ward said he hoped the property could be leased to the Port by the end of the year. But, he added, the property can't be turned over to the Port until some hazardous waste sites are cleaned up.