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photo by [Tracy Agnew](#)

The Joint Systems Integration Center at U.S. Joint Forces Command hosted the Empire Command 10 event the last three weeks. A defense department recommendation to shutter Joint Forces Command has drawn ire from local elected and military officials.

After USJFCOM

Mod-sim industry would survive closure, officials say

By [Tracy Agnew \(Contact\)](#) | Suffolk News-Herald

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While lawyers are asking questions about the legality of a recommendation to shutter U.S. Joint Forces Command, others in the modeling and simulation field are beginning to think about what a future without the command might look like.

Meanwhile, the region's congressional representatives have organized a roundtable discussion for local leaders to prepare a collective response to the plan.

John Simmons and Ryan Vaart, both advisors with the law firm of Akin Gump Strauss Hauer and Feld, are fighting against the recommendation, issued by Defense Secretary Robert Gates Monday. They say there has been no justification offered for the recommendation.

The law firm is representing and advising the Hampton Roads Military and Federal Facilities Alliance, a group that lobbies on behalf of the area's military and federal installations.

"We're attempting to get them to live up to the president's ideals," Vaart said. "He has said that his administration would be transparent, and decisions would be based on the facts. Nothing has been transparent. There are no facts that are being shared."

U.S. code outlines that bases cannot be realigned without congressional approval if more than 1,000 civilian employees are affected. U.S. Joint Forces Command employs roughly 1,600 civilians, Vaart said.

The command, which is headquartered in Norfolk and has locations on the Peninsula and in Suffolk, employs a total of more than 6,300 at its three locations, including more than 2,200 in Suffolk.

Despite the fact Vaart and Simmons have been working with JFCOM for some time, they were surprised at the recommendation, they said. A media representative for JFCOM also said Wednesday it was a shock.

Vaart said he believes that once the defense secretary fully understands what JFCOM does, the recommendation will get pulled.

“In the end, they will find out that almost all of these functions are necessary, and probably the best place to do them is right there in that location where they conduct their business today,” he said.

Simmons agreed.

“What benefit is there to splitting apart all these functions that work toward a similar goal?” Simmons asked. “What are you accomplishing by breaking it apart, other than making each of those individual components less efficient?”

Meanwhile, executives in other modeling and simulation venues locally were depending on diversification to imagine a future without the military command.

“Modeling and simulation really has become important in a lot of different areas,” said John Sokolowski, executive director of the Virginia Modeling, Analysis and Simulation Center, just down the road from JFCOM. “Certainly in the medical and healthcare area, transportation area and business process area, we’ve seen multiple uses of its capability for analysis and training. It will certainly continue on as a major technology.”

The region’s investment in modeling and simulation education also will make a difference, Sokolowski said. Both Old Dominion University and Tidewater Community College have added modeling and simulation courses during the past decade.

“Producing the modeling and simulation professionals to fill those jobs will certainly continue here in the region,” Sokolowski said.

Richard Moormann, director of communications and development for SimIS, Inc., also expects diversified applications of modeling technology to save the region’s industry from a dismal future.

“The interesting thing about the modeling and simulation industry in Hampton Roads is it’s not 100 percent dependent on JFCOM,” he said. “That’s where it got a real good start, but it’s not just about JFCOM. There are a lot of other entities in Hampton Roads that use modeling and sim.”

He noted that the Army and Navy both use it at local bases. In addition, the technology has found a solid place in the emergency management field. It was used heavily in developing a hurricane evacuation plan for Hampton Roads, Moormann said.

“When they did the lane reversal thing for highways for hurricane evacuations, that was all modeled,” he said.

The transportation industry, as well, has used modeling technology for years.

“The discussions about the third crossing, that’s all been modeled by members of VMASC,” Moormann said. “It’s actually a relatively trivial thing to model traffic flow and find the optimal way to spend taxpayer’s money.”

The VMASC building will play host to the roundtable discussion being hosted Wednesday by congressmen Randy Forbes (R-04), Glenn Nye (D-02), Bobby Scott (D-03) and Rob Wittman (R-01). Local officials including state senators and representatives, mayors and other representatives from the seven Hampton Roads cities, in addition to Isle of Wight County, have been invited. It begins at 3 p.m. at VMASC, 1030 University Blvd.