

OMAHA, Neb. -- Offutt Air Force Base apparently has missed catching one of two big basing plums, one that could have brought 900 new jobs to the base south of Omaha. The Air Force said a base in Louisiana will land the new command center. The unit will take control of all the Air Force's nuclear-capable missiles and jet wings. It's set to begin later this year. Bellevue leaders and workers said the 900 jobs would have been a boost to the city. "It has a big effect, more than you would realize without doing an analysis," said Bellevue Mayor Ed Babbitt. But bartender Jason Greatorex said the base's group of 12,000 personnel is still a revenue-generating powerhouse. A 2006 economic impact study reported that the base pumps more than \$100 million into the state economy. Sen. Ben Nelson said the decision to reject Nebraska was a "huge" mistake. "I am very disappointed and strongly disagree with the Air Force's decision," Nelson said in a statement. Rep. Lee Terry said Nebraska was an appropriate location for the new command center. "I have long believed that the base's infrastructure and presence of STRATCOM coupled with our community's highly skilled and capable workforce made Offutt stand out as the obvious and best choice for the command," Terry said in a statement released Thursday. Sen. Mike Johanns also weighed in on the announcement. "The servicemen and women at Offutt have long demonstrated their importance to the United States military by showing outstanding leadership at STRATCOM, and would prove to be indispensable should a new assignment come their way," Johanns said in a written statement. Offutt remains in the running for the headquarters of the new cyberspace command, which has been dubbed the 24th Air Force. That could bring with it about 400 new military and civilian jobs. Its mission: to protect key computers and networks and conduct offensive operations.

