

BASE VISIT REPORT

GENERAL MITCHELL ARS, WI

02-JUNE 2005/16-June 2005 (Addendum)

02-June 2005

LEAD COMMISSIONER: N/A

ACCOMPANYING COMMISSIONER: N/A

COMMISSION STAFF: Tanya Cruz

LIST OF ATTENDEES:

Col Merle D Hart, 440th Airlift Wing Commander
Col Jay Flournoy, 440th Operations Group Commander
Col Jane Kitchen, 440th Maintenance Group Commander
Col Betty Bowen, 440th Mission Support Group Commander
Col Laura Talbot, 440th Medical Squadron Commander
Maj Randy Stoeckmann, 440th Mission Support Group Executive Officer
CMSgt Mark Biedenbender, 440th Airlift Wing Command Chief Master Sergeant
Mr Michael J Taylor, 440th Airlift Wing Civilian Personnel Officer

BASE'S PRESENT MISSION:

The mission of the wing is to maintain operational readiness for the airlift of tactical units, airborne units, personnel, supplies, and equipment into prepared or unprepared areas by landing or airdrop. The peacetime and wartime mission of the 440th Airlift Wing is global in scope. During wartime, if mobilized, the 440th would be under the operational control of Air Mobility Command.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE RECOMMENDATION:

Close General Mitchell Air Reserve Station (ARS). Distribute the eight C-130H aircraft of the 440th Airlift Wing to the 94th Airlift Wing (AFR), Dobbins Air Reserve Base (ARB), Georgia (four aircraft) and to the 314th Airlift Wing, Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas (four aircraft). Realign the 440th Airlift Wing's operations, maintenance and Expeditionary Combat Support (ECS) manpower to Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. Air National Guard units at Mitchell are unaffected by this recommendation.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE JUSTIFICATION:

This recommendation distributes C-130 aircraft to two bases of higher military value, Little Rock Air Force Base (17) and Dobbins Air Reserve Base (71). Adding aircraft at Little Rock and Dobbins optimizes squadron size, creating larger, more effective squadrons. Additionally, these transfers move C-130 force structure from the Air Force Reserve to the active duty--addressing a documented imbalance in the active/Air National Guard/Air Force Reserve manning mix for C-130s.

MAIN FACILITIES REVIEWED:

During my visit and a walking tour, in addition to the Wing Headquarters, I saw the following facilities (for visual of the base, see the base map provided):

- Squadron Operations (Bldg. 209)
 - I saw the auditorium and mission planning area. During the walkthrough I was told that the flying squadron has access to two combat readiness training centers.
- Operations Support Flight (Bldg. 113)
 - This building was built in the late 1990s. It houses their intelligence unit, tactics, and life support; and provides easy access to the ramp.
- Aircraft Maintenance/Flightline (Bldg. 222)
 - This facility houses the Electroenvironmental Shop and the Aircraft Maintenance Squadron.
- 34th Aerial Port Squadron (Bldg. 220)
 - According to officials this facility is the newest (approximately 4 yrs. old) in the Air Force Reserves. It is 1 of 43 Aerial Ports in the Air Force Reserves and 1 of 9 Superports (mixes mobile and strategic functions).
- Propulsion Shop (Bldg. 208)
 - In this facility, Gen. Mitchell ARS maintains 1 of 3 of the ARC's valve test stands. This shop was built in the 70s or 80s.
- The Firing Range (Bldg. 301)
 - Gen. Mitchell ARS conducts 600-800 UTAs (Unit Training Assemblies) annually at the Firing Range. This building was built in 1957.
- The Maintenance Hangar (Bldg. 217)
 - This facility, built in 1956, can fully enclose 2 C-130s. Two years ago the heating system was completely revamped and replaced with radiant heating.
- The Medical Training Facility (Bldg. 140)
 - This Medical Training facility is a newer building that operates as a clinic providing physical exams, immunizations, dental, optometry, public health, chemical detection, and has decontamination capabilities.

KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED

- All of the buildings viewed appeared to be in good condition and very well maintained.
- Officials said that they currently have 8 C-130s, are manned for 12, and have the capability to expand to 16 aircraft (the authorized number).
- Current projects underway include ramp expansion (of 75 ft.), propulsion shop expansion, and a new main gate. The ramp project will allow Gen. Mitchell ARS to go up to 22 contingency

MOG (maximum on the ground). The propulsion shop expansion will allow the maintenance facility to do valve housing changes for other bases as well. These projects have already been appropriated.

- There were no encroachment issues identified. According to Col. Hart, the installation size is currently 108 acres but could expand if needed. The Congressional Delegation told Gen. Mitchell ARS that it could expand into state property, if necessary. He also said he has not received any noise complaints.

INSTALLATION CONCERNS RAISED:

MCI Development

Gen. Mitchell ARS officials felt that the Mission Compatibility Index (MCI) developed by the Air Force to determine military value did not ask the right questions. They said that the questions in the model were active duty-centric and did not give their installation credit for a variety of things. For example, Gen. Mitchell ARS provided a grand scale anti-terrorism training for which they did not receive credit because they do not have billeting. Col. Hart said that despite not having on-base housing, Gen. Mitchell ARS has no problem supporting anybody mobilizing in their area. At one time, Gen. Mitchell ARS was slated to get on-base housing but instead developed community partnerships with 5 area hotels. Housing visitors at the hotels saves in overhead and infrastructure maintenance costs. Also, though Gen. Mitchell ARS does not own airspace or runways, they are the primary users, along with the F-15s in Madison. Because Gen. Mitchell ARS is not a Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), many of their depot level maintenance initiatives (e.g. refurbishing aircraft seats, locks, brakes, hydraulic pumps, etc.) were not taken into account. According to officials, the 440th Maintenance Group won approval for several of their repairs that save the USAF money. They calculated an annual taxpayer savings of \$1,138,424.50.

Officials at Gen. Mitchell ARS also said that their Guard counterparts scored higher than they did but fly in the same airspace and use the same runway as Gen. Mitchell ARS.

Recruitment & Retention

Officials identified potential recruitment issues with the receiving locations in the recommendation. For example, there may be an issue with the wage grade differential. Given the industrial labor pool of the Milwaukee area, civilian employees at Gen. Mitchell ARS are paid more than at Pope/Ft. Bragg. The area surrounding Pope AFB/Ft. Bragg is a growing and already saturated area. Officials said that as a result, there will be competition for resources such as affordable housing, good schools, and TRICARE in that area. The bottom line, according to officials, is it is going to be difficult to recruit reservists, especially those with the same level of expertise, in the Pope/Ft. Bragg location. They also noted that these are issues that the Mission Capability Study focused on but may not have been taken into account. Officials provided figures showing that from 2001 to 2004 they have beaten their recruiting goal by over 10 percent each year.

Officials also provided figures from 2001 to 2004 showing that their retention rates have been over 90 percent each year. They commented that their rates are not 100 percent due to retirees. Their ability to retain individuals decreases their training costs.

Location

According to officials, given its location, Gen. Mitchell ARS has a number of unique attributes. For example, they have the Milwaukee/Chicago corridor of restricted airspace which offers increased training opportunities. It takes only 10 minutes flying time to get to the airspace. And, they have all-weather training. Given the sparse population of their ranges, they are able to fly at 300 ft. throughout Wisconsin with minimal environmental impact. Officials commented that should the recommendation be carried out, it will take a number of years to have the combat capability they currently possess. Also, they are able to recruit from South Bend, IN to Green Bay, WI.

Col. Hart agreed that there should be a reverse associate unit (Reserve unit owning the aircraft flown by reservists and actives) at Pope AFB/Ft. Bragg because the customer (Army) is there and this concept ties into Total Force Structure. However, Gen. Mitchell ARS is the only Federal Reserve facility in the area (note: the 928th in Chicago at O'Hare IAP was closed in the 1995 BRAC. The closing of the 928th resulted in Gen. Mitchell ARS expanding from 8 PAA to 12 PAA. Last year they sent 4 aircraft to another location and now have 8 PAA on base).

Installation officials believe that if the recommendation is inevitable, keeping the aircraft with the AFR personnel would yield a greater return on investment. They said the planes should stay with those who have invested time in and have the expertise to maintain them.

Costs

Installation officials said that they are very cost effective and operate at a low fixed cost (\$89,757,311) for a large return on investment.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS RAISED:

According to officials at Gen. Mitchell ARS, their installation has a good amount of community support as well as bipartisan political support. Installation officials said that they were not aware of any community plans for the base if it were to close and emphasized that the community wants Gen. Mitchell ARS to remain open.

REQUESTS FOR STAFF AS A RESULT OF VISIT:

None at this time

ADDENDUM
16-June 2005

LEAD COMMISSIONER: The Honorable Samuel K. Skinner

ACCOMPANYING COMMISSIONER: N/A

COMMISSION STAFF: Tanya Cruz

LIST OF ATTENDEES:

Col Merle D Hart, 440th Airlift Wing Commander
Col Jane Kitchen, 440th Maintenance Group Commander
Col Betty Bowen, 440th Mission Support Group Commander
Lt Col Steve DeGuire, 440th Deputy Operations Group Commander
Maj Randy Stoeckmann, 440th Mission Support Group Executive Officer
CMSgt Mark Biedenbender, 440th Airlift Wing Command Chief Master Sergeant
Mr Michael J Taylor, 440th Airlift Wing Civilian Personnel Officer
Governor Jim Doyle, State of Wisconsin
Andrew Moyer, Legislative Liaison for Governor Jim Doyle
John Rogers, Whyte Hirschboeck Dudek Government Affairs, LLC
Steve Moffitt, Whyte Hirschboeck Dudek Government Affairs, LLC

INSTALLATION CONCERNS RAISED:

The majority of the information presented at this visit was the same as that outlined in the June 2, 2005 write up above. Again, the installation expressed concern that a number of their attributes were not accounted for in the Military Value calculations. The following is either a reiteration of the major points discussed at the previous meeting or additional information not included in the previous write up:

- Currently there are monthly deployments out of General Mitchell ARS. In fact, the 440th is the lead wing of reserve operations for Operation Iraqi Freedom. The installation manages monthly transfers of crews, personnel, and aircraft. The aircraft rotation is maintenance driven as there is no infrastructure in the dessert to do the maintenance necessary.
- General Mitchell has hangar space to fully enclose three aircraft with their tails in.
- The fire department on base is the largest on General Mitchell field. From the community perspective, it is a very important asset. General Mitchell ARS' fire department was the only one in the city with the capability to put out a fire that occurred a few weeks ago.

- The depot level maintenance done at General Mitchell ARS is innovative and cost effective. The annual taxpayer savings of \$1,138,424.50 discussed above is a result of the refurbishing of aircraft parts. For example, the maintenance group refurbishes 10 aircraft seats per year at \$180 each (\$1,920 less than the cost to buy one). The group also refurbishes hydraulic pumps at \$1500 each (\$16,500 less than the cost to buy one from the factory). In addition, officials at General Mitchell ARS told us that they are able to do maintenance on both C-130H2s as well as the C-130H3s.
- The base's ability to do the depot work they do is directly related to the industrial labor pool available in the Milwaukee area. Many of the reservists at General Mitchell ARS work for DERCO Aerospace Inc, a C-130 manufacturer located in Milwaukee, WI.
- Costs to train individuals would increase as a result of the decrease in recruitment and retention that the 440th would experience in North Carolina at Pope/Ft. Bragg.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS RAISED:

Following the base visit, we met with the Congressional Delegation and Community regarding the Secretary of Defense's recommendation to close General Mitchell ARS. The following individuals attended the meeting:

Cecilia B. Smith-Robertson, Manager Milwaukee Office for Senator Russell D. Feingold
 Joanne Anton, Chief of Staff for Senator Herb Kohl
 Danyell Tremmell, District Director for Congressman Paul Ryan
 David Craig, Field Representative for Congressman Paul Ryan
 Rich Zipperer, District Director for Congressman James F. Sensenbrenner
 Lois O'Keefe, Constituent Liaison, Outreach for Congresswoman Gwen Moore
 Governor Jim Doyle, State of Wisconsin
 Andrew Moyer, Legislative Liaison for Governor Jim Doyle
 Marc Marotta, Secretary, State of Wisconsin-Department of Administration
 Sean Dilweg, Executive Assistant, State of Wisconsin-Department of Administration
 Tom Barrett, Mayor of Milwaukee
 Sean Brennan, Assistant to Mayor Tom Barrett
 Matt O'Malley, Representative for Milwaukee County Executive
 Domingo Leguizamon, Director of Veteran Services, Representative for Milwaukee County Executive
 Stephen Moffitt, Whyte Hirschboeck Dudek Government Affairs, LLC
 John Rogers, Whyte Hirschboeck Dudek Government Affairs, LLC
 Alan MacLeod, Whyte Hirschboeck Dudek Government Affairs, LLC

According to Ms. Smith-Robertson, representative for Senator Feingold, the Senator flew with the 440th Airlift Wing to Iraq. As such, he was able to see first-hand the capability and readiness of this unit. The 440th has a strong commitment to Operation Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom as well as the community. The Senator is a strong supporter of the Guard and Reserve. She added that there is bipartisan support for the Wing and no divergence among the delegation in that regard.

Mr. Zipperer, representative for Congressman Sensenbrenner discussed the patriotism of the area, emphasizing that the 440th plays a big part in that their recruitment efforts are symbolic of the work ethic and the quality of the individuals at the base.

Secretary Marotta said that the 440th Airlift Wing at General Mitchell ARS is an example of strategic readiness and of cost efficiency. He asked whether there was a way to provide us with data should they identify any discrepancies. Commissioner Skinner responded that they could contact him directly or submit information to Tanya Cruz of the Review and Analysis Air Force team at the Commission.

Mayor Tom Barrett said that the recommendation to close Chicago O'Hare IAP ARS during the 1995 BRAC was not an issue because the Chicago Mayor wanted the land occupied by the unit. He commented that while he cannot say that losing the 440th would decimate the economy in Milwaukee, it would leave 12 million people in the Milwaukee/Chicago corridor without the opportunity to serve. In addition, the military presence in this area would be gone. He added that he believes that the recommendation is a form of recapitalization; and is a backdoor attempt for the Air Force to move newer planes to the Active Duty side. Commissioner Skinner responded that it is difficult to make that argument; however, the argument that should be made is regarding the depot level maintenance conducted at General Mitchell ARS. He commented that it would be good to emphasize the fact that General Mitchell ARS is the only Air Force Reserve unit authorized to do depot level maintenance, that it is likely the most efficient in the Air Force Reserve, and that the unit has the capability and capacity to do such maintenance.

John Rogers of Whyte Hirschboeck Dudek asked whether the BRAC Commission is concerned with Congressional intent. Commissioner Skinner responded that he doubts that history will play a very large role in BRAC decision making. However, in regards to the National Guard, the question regarding the role of the Governors versus the Secretary of Defense remains. There is no language in the BRAC statute saying that the Commission can override the Secretary of Defense's decisions regarding Guard units.

Ms. Smith-Robertson asked whether the C-130s were being moved because of the 2 year deployment rule. Commissioner Skinner responded that moving planes does not solve the problem and asked how many people would actually move to North Carolina. The response was that a small percentage would probably go and of those that do move few would be traditional reservists.

Lois O'Keefe, speaking on behalf of Congresswoman Gwen Moore, said that Congresswoman Moore would like to keep the base open for the same reasons as everyone else. She added, however, that recruiting and retention is of primary concern to Congresswoman Moore and that she would like us to consider what the Air Force would be losing experientially should the 440th close. Officials stated that since 9/11, General Mitchell ARS has deployed over 600 individuals. Despite the large numbers deployed, the recruitment rate continues to exceed 100 percent; the retention rates continue to be above the national average.