

BASE VISIT REPORT

OTIS ANGB, MA

May 31, 2005

LEAD COMMISSIONER: Chairman Anthony Principi

ACCOMPANYING COMMISSIONER: Commissioners Newton, Bilbray, and Coyle

COMMISSION STAFF: Charles Battigula, David Hague, Craig Hall, Brad McRee

LIST OF ATTENDEES: (see attached) (two meetings: one a meeting with community representatives, another with base personnel)

BASE'S PRESENT MISSION: Air Defense of the Northeast

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE RECOMMENDATION:

- Close Otis ANGB, MA. The 102d Fighter Wing's F-15s will be distributed to the 125th Fighter Wing, Jacksonville International Airport Air Guard Station, FL (three aircraft), and 177th Fighter Wing, Atlantic City International Airport Air Guard Station, NJ (12 aircraft).
- The 253d Combat Communications Group and 267th Communications Squadron will remain in place at Otis, with 104th Fighter Wing at Barnes providing administrative support as the parent wing.
- An air sovereignty alert (ASA) facility will be constructed at Bradley International Airport Air Guard Station, CT.
- Firefighter positions from Otis will move to Barnes Municipal Airport Air Guard Station, MA.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE JUSTIFICATION:

- The Air Force distributed reserve component F-15C force structure to bases with higher military value than Otis ANGB.
- The Atlantic City bound aircraft will provide expanded capability for the Homeland Defense mission.

Library Routing Slip 2005 BRAC Commission Materials

Title of Item: Base Visit Report

Installation or Community: OTIS ANGB, MA

Source: Commission Generated

Certified Material? yes no

Analyst / Provider: Brad McRee Date Received: 7/29/05

MAIN FACILITIES REVIEWED: Entire base overview to include:

- Flight operations and support
- Air Sovereignty Alert (ASA)
- Environmental remediation
- Family Housing
- Administrative

KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED

- Military Value of Otis ANGB. Aircraft based at Otis predominantly use airspace W105 (owned by Navy) which is over water and supersonic. According to Wing officials this range/airspace has high military value. Given Otis' low military value score by the USAF, Otis may not have given credit for this range. A small number of questions in the data call were not answered locally, but were answered by at the HQ or MAJCOM level.
- Relocation and Degradation of ASA. The AF recommendation is to create another ASA at Bradley IAP in Hartford, CT. The Otis officials expressed concern about this proposal with respect to the safety of aircraft with forward firing munitions at a commercial field, munitions storage, air traffic restrictions, supersonic restrictions, location, time to respond, etc. Furthermore they say there is no surge capability, or defense in depth with only two or three aircraft there.
- Costs to other tenants of MMR. Otis provides and maintains a large part of the infrastructure, e.g. airfield ops, utilities, communications, at MMR that is used by other tenants, e.g. Army National Guard, USCG, ANG communications unit, and active duty warning station. The resulting cost impacts on other federal tenants may not have been taken into account in determining the cost/savings for closing Otis.
- Recruiting and Retention. Disbanding the 102nd FW will result in an associated loss of skilled pilots and maintainers. Ability and cost to reconstitute a F-15 squadron in Atlantic City (which current bases an F-16 unit) is also an issue.

INSTALLATION CONCERNS RAISED

- Aircraft based at Otis predominantly use airspace W105 (owned by Navy) which is over water and supersonic. Access to this airspace is within 6 minutes from Otis and is not encumbered by commercial air traffic or supersonic flight restrictions. The range itself is available for use 24/7, and is not congested/over utilized and usually available for use. Given Otis' low military value score by the USAF, Otis may not have given credit for this range. A small number of questions in the data call were not answered locally, but were answered by at the HQ or MAJCOM level.
- Otis is home to the sole dedicated ASA in Northeast US which covers NCR to Canadian border. NE is "target rich" from a HLLD perspective with abundant air traffic entering the US and nuclear facilities. The AF recommendation is to create another ASA at Bradley IAP in Hartford, CT. There are some potential decreases to the military value of basing at ASA at Bradley, e.g. munitions storage, air traffic restrictions, supersonic restrictions, time to respond, etc.

- Otis operates a large part of the infrastructure, e.g. airfield ops, utilities, communications, at MMR that is used by other tenants, e.g. Army National Guard, USCG, ANG communications unit, and the active duty 6th Space Warning Squadron. These other tenants will have to provide services themselves or thru some other way. It is unknown whether the Army or USCG will choose to stay at MMR and whether they will be able to operate the airfield. This will increase their cost of residing on MMR. This may not have been taken into account in determining the cost/savings for closing Otis. Otis officials estimated these costs to be about \$21M.
- There are some synergies between Otis and Hanscom lab that would be lost if Otis closes
- Officials made 2 alternate proposals to the AF recommendation of closing Otis: (1) increasing the number of aircraft based at Otis to 22 PAA, and (2) creating an F-22 training base.
- Otis could be used as a training base for the F-22 based at Langley AFB, VA. There is no civilian air traffic at Otis because it is wholly owned by the government. According to the community, Otis offers access to over 10,000 of supersonic over water airspace that is less congested to that in close proximity to Langley.
- MMR has excess capacity (e.g. ramp, hangar, munitions storage, mil housing) and is suitable for expansion – increase aircraft based to 24 PAA. The cost to increase PAA is minimal, if not zero. It also has much joint training opportunities with other Services' and local government units that are based or train at MMR.
- A feasibility study was completed on using MMR as a regional HLD training center in March 2004.
- Otis also operates 559 family housing units. Some tenants work else where in the area. This housing area helps offer a cost-effective alternative to many families.
- The USCG bases 4 helicopters and 4 fixed wing aircraft at MMR, and relies on Otis to operate the airfield. Other USCG units occasionally port ships at MMR, but none are permanently based.
- Otis has a lease extension to 2051. 1100 acres are owned in fee. MMR leases 22,000 acres in all.
- Otis is an alternate landing site for the space shuttle.
- Otis is secure – with three levels of force protection.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS RAISED:

- ANG covers all overhead at MMR—there will be a financial impact to other units at MMR. The USCG unit may have to relocate to another installation that does not have the military value or the strategic location of MMR. USCG does not have the financial resources to stay at MMR--too costly to continue to operate at MMR. USCG units do not usually operate that way, McClellan, CA may be only exception and that is not going well. The next closest Coast Guard location is Elizabeth City, NC.
- MMR/Otis has capacity to base additional aircraft.
- Community does not have full access to the facts regarding the recommendation to close Otis including why the mil value of Otis was rated so low. There appear to be “glitches”

in the analyses. There is concern over the data because of the sheer volume of it. Need to ensure there was fair consideration of the ranges and airspace used by Otis.

- Governors/States were not involved in the ANG BRAC recommendations.
- There are key HLD vulnerabilities in the NE, e.g. nuclear power plants, liquid natural gas, bridges, etc. ASA. Otis is key to protecting these vulnerabilities. Establishing an ASA at Bradley IAP has limitations.
- Otis was key to 9/11 response—first aircraft in the air.
- Otis has outstanding relationship with the community.
- State made a \$2M commitment to create a HLD training facility at MMR. Currently train about 47,000 personnel a year.
- Otis is critical to regional water supply and waste treatment/management. The wastewater plant meets Class I standards. Closing Otis would “pull out the foundation” of all of this.
- Environmental Cleanup: Years ago when Otis was an active duty facility the groundwater was contaminated by pollution. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent so far and much more remains to be done. The community is satisfied that environmental remediation in place at Otis are effective. The community is concerned that closing Otis and possibly MMR will jeopardize this.
- Otis was on the BRAC list in 1993 and it was overturned.
- Otis firefighters also help put out brush fire on MMR and adjacent areas.

REQUESTS FOR STAFF AS A RESULT OF VISIT:

- Why was Otis mil value rated so low? Was it given credit for ranges/airspace, e..g W105?
- Implications of moving ASA to Bradley IAP in terms of cost, mil value, feasibility, etc. What milcon or other actions will be required at Bradley? What is the cost of these actions? Is relocating ASA consistent with NORTHCOM ASA plans?
- Were potential costs to USCG and Army taken into consideration?
- Were recruiting costs considered in the move of F-15 to AC, NJ?
- Read rationale of overturning recommendation to close Otis in 1993 BRAC.
- Is Otis destined to become an ECS site or not?