

**JOINT BASE VISIT REPORT**

**POPE AIR FORCE BASE/FORT BRAGG, NORTH CAROLINA**

**2 AUGUST 2005**

**LEAD COMMISSIONER:**

Admiral Harold W. Gehman (USN, Ret)

**ACCOMPANYING COMMISSIONER:**

General James T. Hill (USA, Ret)

**COMMISSION STAFF:**

Mr. Ken Small, Air Force Team Leader

Michael H. Flinn, Ph.D. (Air Force Senior Analyst for Pope Air Force Base, North Carolina)

LTC Kevin Felix (Army Senior Analyst for Fort Bragg, NC)

**LIST OF ATTENDEES:**

- Lt. General Kensinger (USASOC)
- Col Steve Burgess, 43 AW/CV
- Lt. Col Schmidt
- Maj. General Packett (18<sup>th</sup> ABN Corps)
- COL Al Aycock, Garrison Commander, Fort Bragg
- Lt Col Lisa Markgraf
- BG Cerrone (82<sup>nd</sup> ABN Div)
- Col Eric Wilbur, 43 MSG/CC
- Ms. Carrie Rice, Chief, Plans, Analysis & Integration, Fort Bragg Garrison

**INSTALLATIONS' PRESENT MISSION:**

**POPE AFB**

The 43d Airlift Wing (AW) maintains a high state of readiness to rapidly deploy, upon short notice, a highly trained airlift force that can plan and successfully execute airlift operations. These operations may be conducted in any theater, region, or contingency area as part of any force, joint and allied, in support of national objectives. As the host unit, the 43d Airlift Wing provides base support services to 15-plus tenant units. The Pope Air Force Base (AFB) flight line hosts permanently assigned C-130 and A-10 aircraft.

## **FORT BRAGG**

To maintain the XVIII Airborne Corps as a strategic crisis response force, manned and trained to deploy rapidly by air, sea and land anywhere in the world, prepared to fight upon arrival and win. Fort Bragg also hosts the United States Army Special Operations Command and the Joint Special Operations Center.

### **SECRETARY OF DEFENSE RECOMMENDATION:**

#### **POPE AFB**

Realign Pope Air Force Base, NC. Distribute the 43d Airlift Wing's C-130E aircraft (25 aircraft) to the 314th Airlift Wing, Little Rock Air Force Base, AR; realign the 23d Fighter Group's A-10 aircraft (36 aircraft) to Moody Air Force Base, GA; transfer real property accountability to the Army; disestablish the 43d Medical Group and establish a medical squadron. These movements effect other units and operations at other locations including, but not limited to Little Rock Air Force Base, AR; Quonset State Airport Air Guard Station, RI; Channel Islands Air Guard Station, CA; Yeager Airport Air Guard Station (AGS), WV; and Pittsburgh International Airport (IAP) Air Reserve Station (ARS), PA. Aircraft from Yeager Airport and Pittsburgh will relocate to reconstitute the 911th Airlift Wing's at Pope/Fort Bragg as a 16 aircraft Air Force Reserve/active duty associate unit.

This second base visit was a result of the BRAC ADD to further realign Pope AFB by eliminating the 16 PAA Air Force Reserve/Active Duty Associate Unit.

#### **FORT BRAGG**

Realign Fort Bragg, NC, by relocating the 7th Special Forces Group (SFG) to Eglin AFB, FL, and by activating the 4th Brigade Combat Team (BCT), 82d Airborne Division and relocating European-based forces to Fort Bragg, NC.

### **ORIGINAL SECRETARY OF DEFENSE JUSTIFICATION:**

#### **POPE AFB**

Downsizing Pope Air Force Base takes advantage of mission-specific consolidation opportunities to reduce operational costs, maintenance costs and the manpower footprint. The smaller manpower footprint facilitates transfer of the installation to the Army. Active duty C-130s and A-10s will move to Little Rock (17-airlift) and Moody (11-SOF/CSAR), respectively, to consolidate force structure at those two bases and enable Army recommendations at Pope. At Little Rock, older aircraft are retired or converted to back-up inventory and J-model C-130s are aligned under the Air National Guard. Little Rock grows to become the single major active duty C-130 unit, streamlining maintenance and operation of this aging weapon system. At Pope, the synergistic, multi-service relationship will continue between Army airborne and Air Force airlift forces with the creation of an active duty/Reserve associate unit. The C-130 unit remains as an Army tenant on an expanded Fort Bragg. With the disestablishment of the 43d Medical Group,

the AF will maintain the required manpower to provide primary care, flight and occupational medicine to support the Air Force active duty military members. The Army will maintain the required manpower necessary to provide primary care, flight, and occupational medicine to support the Army active duty military members. The Army will provide ancillary and specialty medical services for all assigned Army and Air Force military members (lab, x-ray, pharmacy, etc). The major command's capacity briefing reported Pittsburgh ARS land constraints prevented the installation from hosting more than 10 C-130 aircraft and Yeager AGS cannot support more than eight C-130s. Careful analysis of mission capability indicates that it is more appropriate to robust the proposed airlift mission at Fort Bragg to an optimal 16 aircraft C-130 squadron, which provides greater military value and offers unique opportunities for jointness.

There was no Secretary of Defense recommendation pertaining to the BRAC ADD to further realign Pope AFB. The BRAC justification of the add was to further investigate the need to provide eight C-130H models from Yeager Airport AGS and an additional eight C-130H models from Pittsburgh International Airport Air Reserve Station. BRAC staff also wanted to further investigate the Government Accountability Office's (GAOs) identification of the apparent discrepancy between the proposed Air Force savings versus the potential Army costs due to the transfer of operations.

## **FORT BRAGG**

This recommendation co-locates Army Special Operation Forces with Air Force Special Operations Forces at Eglin AFB, activates the 4th BCT of the 82nd Airborne Division and relocates Combat Service Support units to Fort Bragg from Europe to support the Army modular force transformation. This realignment and activation of forces enhances military value and training capabilities by locating Special Operations Forces (SOF) in locations that best support Joint specialized training needs, and by creating needed space for the additional brigade at Fort Bragg. This recommendation is consistent with and supports the Army's Force Structure Plan submitted with the FY 06 budget, and provides the necessary capacity and capability, including surge, to support the units affected by this action. This recommendation never pays back. However, the benefits of enhancing Joint training opportunities coupled with the positive impact of freeing up needed training space and reducing cost of the new BCT by approximately \$54-\$148M (with family housing) at Fort Bragg for the Army's Modular Force transformation, justify the additional costs to the Department.

The ADD to further realign Pope AFB is not related directly to the Army recommendations pertaining to the realignment of Fort Bragg.

### **MAIN FACILITIES REVIEWED:**

A windshield tour of the Green Ramp and the Runway was conducted. According to Col. Burgess, there were 32 C-130s on the ramp, of which 9 were "hard broke".

## **JOINT KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED**

The purpose of this visit was to clarify how the various Pope AFB recommendations would be implemented and their effect on the ability of the Army to complete their respective missions. The issues to be addressed pertained to whether the presence of the 43d AW wing was necessary to satisfy the Army's operational requirements as opposed to satisfying those requirements through the use of an Air Force Reserve/Active Duty associate unit and their associated 16 C-130H aircraft, or even no permanently stationed aircraft at all.

The Army-Air Force integration at Pope/Bragg is one of the best examples of jointness that currently exists in the military. The brief windshield tour of the ramp and runway was followed by a meeting with the commissioners. It consisted of a very candid discussion as a result of questions posed by Commissioners Gehman and Hill. Admiral Gehman recognized the value of having the 43d AW at the base stating that in light of the sophistication and complexity of the task involved, it was "better to have planes than not". MG Packett conceded that at least part of the perceived value of having the 43d AW co-located with the 18th Airborne Corps was built on "folklore and legend", but that day-to-day operations created synergies that may be hard to duplicate. The point was made that Joint Fighting Headquarters will be less robust with Army transformation.

A major point of concern is the continued existence of an airlift planning capability at Pope AFB that is currently part of the 43<sup>rd</sup> AW organization. The Army considers the availability of the planning cell a major asset to the unique requirements associated with the training and deployment of the airborne units that are located at Ft Bragg.

The commissioners asked if the mission could continue without permanently stationed planes at Pope AFB. The answer was, as expected, "Yes". Then the Commissioners asked if there was only one C-130 in the Air Force inventory, where should it be based. The answer, "Pope", was unanimous.

The 43<sup>rd</sup> AW presented a briefing that responded directly to questions posed by the BRAC Commission prior to the second visit. The last complete year of data is FY 04. During FY 04, the 43<sup>rd</sup> AW at Pope AFB provided 644 of 977 (65.9%) of C-130 sorties flown in support of the Army at Ft Bragg. An additional 796 C-17 sorties were flown by aircraft from other Air Force Bases. Stationing aircraft outside of Pope and using the JA/ATT system exclusively will increase the cost of airlift to the extent that transit time for C-130s coming from other locations is not applied to other aircrew training. Airlift scheduled outside of the JA/ATT system would be a cost to the Air Force while airlift contracted through the JA/ATT is a budget expense for the Army.

To date, DOD has not accounted for the additional airlift costs resulting from the reduction of C-130s at Pope from the currently assigned 32 to the initially proposed 16, nor to zero assigned aircraft which is the end state prescribed by the BRAC ADD.

Further discussion indicated that the OSD recommendation would require much of the existing infrastructure (i.e. hangars) to remain in place at "Pope Army Airfield". The cost of operating

the Pope facility would be transferred from the Air Force to the Army. Consequently, any apparent savings for the Department of Defense would be minor.

### **INSTALLATION CONCERNS RAISED**

Currently, the mission of the 43d Airlift Wing is hampered by the length of the runway. On hot days, the runway is too short for fully loaded C-5s or commercial aircraft to lift off. This problem could be remedied by extending the runway 3000 feet in either direction. However, extending the runway in one direction is complicated by the presence of wetlands and encroachment by the community of Spring Lake. Extension of the runway in the other direction would require eliminating existing Pope AFB infrastructure. Either option would require a cost to the Government and contradicts the Air Force base closure criteria.

### **COMMUNITY CONCERNS RAISED:**

After the base visit, the Commissioners and staff first met with Brigadier General (USAF Ret) Paul Dordal and Col. (USA Ret) Terry Peck. The meeting with Mssrs. Dordal and Peck was followed immediately by a meeting including North Carolina Governor James Easley, U.S. Congressman Robin Hayes, and local officials who desired to discuss the Pope AFB and Fort Bragg recommendations.

General Dordal stated that the mission of Pope will not change and that the business of transport is the most critical aspect of the power projection platform. He suggested that costs could actually increase if the Army were to take over the cost of running the installation through the use of contracted labor. He provided the salary of a civilian air traffic controller as being 3 times the cost of a military air traffic controller as an example. General Dordal continued his discussion by maintaining that safety is paramount at Pope and suggested that Pope AFB should become a C-130J Operational Center of Excellence. He also noted that the C-130J is pressurized (as are all C-130s) and air refuelable, making it a strategic airlift platform.

Col. Peck stated that the "current leadership at Pope/Fort Bragg would execute the mission and make it successful" but that "it would be unique [in] the Army to run an airfield of the magnitude and operations tempo of Pope" AFB.

Congressman Hayes said that he was going to push for funds for the C-130J to be located at Pope AFB.

Admiral Gehman concluded the discussion adding that the Commission is "keen not to lose the military asset" of Pope AFB and Fort Bragg operations. He continued that the Commission's work is complicated by the fact that the "statute required review of DOD recommendations based on 8 criteria and the twenty year Force Structure Plan." The complication comes from the need to reconcile conflicts when the military criteria and the Force Structure Plan are contradictory.

**REQUESTS FOR STAFF AS A RESULT OF VISIT:**

None