DCN: 6690

BASE VISIT REPORT

ELLINGTON FIELD, HOUSTON, TX

July 7, 2005

COMMISSIONER: Commissioner James V. Hansen

COMMISSION STAFF: Brad McRee

LIST OF ATTENDEES: (see attached)

BASE'S PRESENT MISSION: F-16 General Purpose and Air Defense of the Gulf Coast

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE RECOMMENDATION:

Realign Ellington Field Air Guard Station, Texas. The 147th Fighter Wing's F-16s (15 aircraft) will retire. The wing's expeditionary combat support (ECS) elements will remain in place. Ellington retains the capability to support the Homeland Defense mission. The 272d Engineering Installation Squadron, an ANG geographically separated unit moves into available space on Ellington.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE JUSTIFICATION:

Ellington (80) ranked low in military value. The reduction in F-16 force structure and the need to align common versions of the F-16 at the same bases argued for allowing Ellington's F-16s to retire in place with no fighter mission backfill. Ellington is realigned to preserve the homeland defense Air Sovereignty Alert (ASA) site using aircraft assigned elsewhere and operating from Ellington on a rotational basis as tasked by US Northern Command. In a related recommendation, the Lackland Air Force Base, Texas Air National Guard F-16 initial training unit is increased in size to capitalize on Ellington's trained pilots and maintainers.

MAIN FACILITIES REVIEWED: Entire base.

KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED

* Air Force recommendation projects NPV savings of $3.6M. This is a little more than the cost to train one pilot.

* Unit has Block 25 F-16s. Many have had the Falcon Star service life extension (to 8,000 hours) program already. (Ellington Block 25s have 4,500 hours average.) These planes are programmed to retire in 2011.
* Unit received the F-16A in 1989. Completed conversion to the F-16C in 1997. Primary role at this time air defense.
* In 1998 the unit converted to general purpose. Added an air to ground role as well as air to air. NORTHCOM now interested in air to ground capability for Homeland Defense as well.
* Unit also has a specially equipped C-26 for counterdrug missions.
* Unit has recent experience in Iraq and excellent inspection performance.
* Unit close to Ft Polk and does joint training there. Adequately credited for this?
* Eight F-16 units gaining aircraft – yet have lower Military Value than Ellington.
* Most BRAC decisions seemingly "platform-based."
* Some MCI criteria Cold War related.
* Possible errors on credit for supersonic airspace?
* Open to future missions such as Predator, F-35.
* Current personnel strength 90.5%.
* Houston is a huge recruiting base.
* Unit has 31 pilots, average age 34.
* (8) F-16 units with lower MCI scores gaining aircraft.

INSTALLATION CONCERNS RAISED

* Strategic location for Homeland Defense – near Gulf coast and key industries and infrastructure. Houston is the fourth largest US population center.
* Close to Gulf over-water training ranges. Concern that excellent over-water ranges will go away if not adequately used.
* 9,000 ft runways at Ellington are very adequate.
* Huge ramp space since Ellington is a former active duty base. Some used by NASA because
* ANG sets limits on how much infrastructure one can have.

Ellington is a joint base. Besides NASA, there is an Army Nationl Guard facility and a USCG aviation detachment there.
* There will be a $380,000? impact to others if the ANG firefighters leave.
* No lease at Ellington. ANG owns in fee.
* On-base weapons storage capability will be lost if 272nd EIS GSU relocates to base as planned.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS RAISED:

Concern about vulnerability to the Houston area if flying unit pulls out. (Ellington will remain an ASA site.)

REQUESTS FOR STAFF AS A RESULT OF VISIT:

Call Joan Newhouse, Executive Director of Houston area HLS Advisory Council.

Meeting Attendee List
7 July 2005
Wing Conference Room

#	NAME	TITLE	REPRESENTING	C
1	The Honorable James V. Hansen	Commissioner	Base Realignment and Closure Commission	Y
2	Lieutenant Colonel Brad McRee	Analyst	Base Realignment and Closure Commission	Y
3	The Honorable Tom DeLay	Congressman	22nd District State of Texas	Y
4	Major General Charles Rodriquez	The Adjutant General - Texas	Joint Forces Texas	Y
5	Brigadier General Allen Dehnert	Assistant Adjutant General – Air	Joint Forces Texas	Y
6	Bill White	Mayor	City of Houston	Y
7	The Honorable Al Green	Congressman	9th District State of Texas	
8	The Honorable Gene Green	Congressman	29th District State of Texas	
9	The Honorable Ted Poe	Congressman	2nd District State of Texas	
10	CMS Sam Davis	Command Chief	147th Fighter Wing	Y
11	Adrian Garcia	Council Member	City of Houston	
12	Addie Wiseman	Council Member	City of Houston	
13	Shelley Sekula-Gibbs, M.D.	Council Member	City of Houston	
14	Joe Bernard	Vice President	EHCMA	
15	Scott Forbes	Government Relations Manager	Port of Houston	
16	Bill Wheeler	V.P. Security	Texas Medical Center	
17	Doug Able	AVP Government Affairs	Texas Medical Center	
18	John Cook	Chairman	Ellington Field Task Force	
19	John Martinec	Director	Ellington Field Task Force	
20	William R. Parr	Col USAF Ret.	Ellington Field Task Force	
21	Mike Smith	BG USAF Ret	Secretary of State's Office	
22	COL Jack Taliaferro	Homeland Security	Joint Forces Texas	
23	Al Davis	States Project Director	Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison	
24	Beth Cubriel	State Field Director	Senator John Cornyn	

25	David James	Chief of Staff	Congressman DeLay	
26	Major Jeff Stogsdill	Assistant DO	548th CTS Fort Polk, LA	
27	CDR Norm Schweitzer	Commanding Officer	USCG Air Station Houston	
28	CAPT Todd Gentile	Planning Officer	USCG 8th District	
29	Nathan Cook	Regional Assistant	Senator John Cornyn	
30	Lt Col Sherrill Daugherty	Group Commander	Operations Group – 147th FW	
31	Lt Col Joel Henness	Group Commander	Maintenance Group – 147th FW	
32	Ryan Flood	Military Legislative Aid	Congressman Tom DeLay	
33	Joan Neuhaus	Executive Director	Houston Harris County Homeland Security Advisor Council	
34	Jan Lawler	President	Alliance of Houston Port Region	
35	Eugene Tulich	President	Houston Military Affairs Committee	Y
36	Dr. Charles McKay	Dean, Uof H	Ellington Field Task Force	Y
37	Jim Stoa	Member EFTF	Ellington Field Task Force	
38	Jerry Turner	Member, CRE	Ellington Fiele Task Force	
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