

15 Aug 2005

Inquiry Response

Re: BI-0206 (CT-0839) Opportunity for Comments on Letter from Cannon AFB

Requester: Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (Mr. Ken Small)

Request: Attached is a letter received from the (Cannon AFB) Committee of 50 that includes a series of questions. The Commission will entertain a response if the Department of Defense wishes to comment on any or all of the questions. The Committee of 50 has represented interests of the communities near Cannon Air Force Base.

Response: Provided for the Commission's benefit are Air Force responses to the concerns raised by Cannon Committee of 50. We hope these are helpful to the Commission's deliberations.

Question 1. Did the Air Force adequately considered the issues of encroachment--land, air, and environmental--when it weighted and scored the military value for the different bases? Why was encroachment for fighter bases weighted so low--only 2.28%-- when it is one of the most important factors affecting the future of these bases?

Response 1: The Air Force Base Closure Executive Group (BCEG) adequately considered and weighted encroachment factors. This was the result of several deliberative sessions, which are available online at http://www.defenselink.mil/brac/minutes/brac_af.html. While base encroachment is important, it is not the only factor, nor is it the most important factor. It is merely one in many factors contributing to a realistic combat training environment.

Question 2. Since this BRAC is likely to determine the base infrastructure for the next decade or longer, was the potential for future encroachment at fighter bases adequately considered? (Since the value of bases such as Luke, and other bases, is likely to decrease with increased future encroachment, the relative value of Cannon will likely increase)

Response 2: The Air Force Base Closure Executive Group (BCEG) adequately considered and weighted encroachment factors but did not attempt to analyze hypothetical future encroachment due to its unpredictability and (in some cases) reversibility. It is very important to note encroachment is just one of many attributes that comprised military value as considered by the BCEG. Air Force installations across the United States continue, successfully, to reduce encroachment issues in cooperation with local communities.

Question 3. Why won't the Air Force correct the errors on the Military Value calculations that were made specifically in relation to Cannon AFB? (The operational hours were incorrect, the buildable acres factor was incorrect, the ATC factor was inaccurate, the Proximity to Training Airspace issues was not properly computed, the NM Training Range Initiative wasn't considered, etc.)

Response 3: We do not believe there were calculation errors made specifically in relation to Cannon AFB. While some computation errors made were within the MCI formula, they applied to every installation and the formulas were subsequently corrected. As a result, Cannon still ranked lowest in relation to other active duty fighter installations. The data used in the military value calculations was obtained and certified in accordance with the Air Force Internal Control Plan for BRAC. To fairly consider all installations equally we collected all data as of 30 Sep 03 and included SRM and MILCON projects awarded in FY03 as well as FY04 MILCON projects which were authorized or appropriated by that date.

Question 4. Was the expansion potential for Cannon AFB properly considered in computation of its Military Value? (Base, Melrose Range, and airspace can all be expanded in a flexible way to accommodate new mission requirements)

Response 4: Growth potential for each installation was weighted equally depending on the mission area evaluated (MCI). Buildable acres, however, were intentionally restricted to that owned by the federal government or under current "lease, license, permit, etc. in excess of 10 years." While airspace and ranges can be expanded in a "flexible way," the issue of expansion always begs the question, "How long will it take?" One recent expansion project required 15 years and repeated attempts against very vocal and independent environmental opposition. This unknown aspect of expansion led the Air Force to confine its definition of "expansion potential" to the "bird in hand."

Question 5. Does the AF BRAC proposal adequately provide for potential unforeseen contingencies such as return of fighter units from overseas bases or changes due to the Quad review action? (Post BRAC bed down would not provide Strategic Depth needed if forces overseas were returned to CONUS. Strategic Depth must consider base structure, ranges and airspace available for training, and ability to mobilize rapidly to return to forward locations.)

Response 5: The Base Closure Executive Group (BCEG) maintained awareness throughout the deliberative process of the need to retain excess capacity should overseas units be reassigned to CONUS. The Department's recommendations incorporate this requirement.

Question 6. Did the Air Force look at future missions such as the Airborne Laser Program for Cannon? This program will require the basing of up to (8) B747s and a chemical plant that must be specifically located far from a population center.

Response 6: The Missile Defense Agency has established several milestones that must be met prior to finalizing any production decision on the Airborne Laser (ABL). Assuming the ABL meets them, delivery to the Air Force will be no earlier than fiscal year 2015. Although the ABL is in the early stages of development, the BCEG still reviewed the projected requirements. Our analysis indicates there is sufficient capacity at remaining Air Force installations to house not only the ABL, but also other emerging missions.

Question 7. Does the Net Present Value saving for Cannon actually reflect future savings to the taxpayer and the DoD budget? Why did the NPV savings change so dramatically in the last few weeks prior to May 13th? (NPV doubled in the last few weeks prior to release, the "savings" in military authorizations comprise some 47% of the overall BRAC NPV "savings", but they don't result in actual end strength decreases)

Response 7: The increased savings were primarily the result of the Air Force bringing its savings calculations in line with OSD policy. In earlier calculations the Air Force set aside a portion of the saved manpower to address critical needs such as additional military police and medical personnel but did not include them in the "NPV savings." When OSD established its policy the Air Force changed its calculations to comply.

The impact to future budgets is unknown; however, savings from past BRAC rounds were retained by the DoD and applied to other requirements, consistent with the OSD policy driving the change described above.

Question 8. Why did the numbers for economic impact change so much in the last months before May 13th? (January 2005 showed 3906 direct job losses plus 2688 secondary losses for 6594 or 28 % loss-final figures reflected 2824 direct losses plus 1956 secondary for 4780 total or 20% loss. Why was there such a dramatic change? The community thinks the higher number reflects reality)

Response 8: The changes in the economic impact resulted from better definition in the Air Force force structure plan submitted to Congress in March. This definition allowed the Air Force to properly distinguish between actions caused by BRAC and normal programming actions, such as F-16 retirements. Normal programming actions are not considered as part of BRAC and therefore were not included in the BRAC cost, savings or economic impact calculations.

Question 9. Did the evaluation of economic impact consider impacts in depth such as effect on schools, minorities, employment of the disabled, medical care in the area, etc? (Since the economic impacts in the Clovis area are much greater than the impact at any other BRAC base, these more detailed considerations should be evaluated)

Response 9: In accordance with BRAC Selection Criterion 6, the Air Force assessed economic impact on existing communities consistent with OSD Policy Memorandum Six, 20 Dec 04, available at: http://www.defenselink.mil/brac/pdf/pt1_13_app_eo.pdf, page E-97. In accordance with BRAC Selection Criterion 7, the Air Force assessed the ability of the infrastructure of both the existing and potential receiving communities to support forces, missions and personnel, again consistent with OSD policy memoranda and OSD BRAC Selection Criteria 5 and 6. This includes factors such as population demographics, childcare, cost of living, education, employment, housing, medical care, safety, transportation and utilities. This information is available at: <http://www.defenselink.mil/brac/minutes/action/04-Air-Force-reports-042005-2.pdf>

Question 10. Did the potential for Joint Training operations enter into the Military Value analysis? (Cannon has the potential to support Joint Operations at Ft. Bliss, Ft. Hood, Ft. Carson, and Ft. Sill)

Response 10: Joint Training opportunities were part of the military value analysis. The Department's recommendations reflect this analysis by consolidating aircraft in specific locations to capitalize on the best Joint training opportunities with other Services.

Question 11. Given the current news regarding potential changes to the force structure plan for the Joint Strike Fighter and the F-22, does it follow that the Air Force might need to maintain more F-16s, and thus have a continuing requirement for Cannon AFB?

Response 11: Should the potential changes to the JSF and F/A-22 programs occur, the Department's BRAC recommendations maintain sufficient capacity for the F-16 fleet over the fiscal year defense plan (FYDP).

Approved.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. L. JOHANSEN', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

DAVID L. JOHANSEN, Lt Col, USAF
Chief, Base Realignment and Closure Division