

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

EARLY



BIRD

October 06, 2005

Department of Defense Releases

N/A

National News Articles

N/A

Local News Articles

Reserve unit being disbanded, facility closing (Rock Hill, SC)

Army Reserve Center in Rock Hill to close (Rock Hill, SC)

Feds: Cannon assessment team not official (Clovis, NM)

Admiral says Navy will study value of Cecil Field, Oceana (Hampton Roads, VA)

Opinions/ Editorials

Salute appropriate for our base-savers (Norwich, CT)

Additional Notes

N/A

Department of Defense Releases

N/A

National News Articles

N/A

Local News Articles

Reserve unit being disbanded, facility closing

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (Rock Hill, SC)

October 5, 2005

The Army Reserve quartermaster unit that included soldiers who refused orders in Iraq last year has been disbanded, and the facility that housed it is being closed under a base realignment plan.

The name of the 343rd Quartermaster Company is being changed to the 371st Chemical Company and it is moving to Greenwood, Reserve officials said.

The closure of the 41-year-old base, which will result in the loss of six jobs, has been approved by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, but many South Carolina elected officials said they did not know about it.

The moves have nothing to do with the disciplining of a small number of soldiers for refusing orders to drive a fuel convoy in Iraq in 2004, said Maj. William Ritter, spokesman for the Army Reserve 81st Regional Readiness Command in Birmingham, Ala.

About 20 of the 79 soldiers assigned to the 343rd Quartermaster Company will remain in Rock Hill as part of a detachment for the Greenwood headquarters of the 371st Chemical Company, officials said. If Congress approves

the base realignment plan including the closure of the Rock Hill base, then those soldiers would be assigned to Greenwood or Wilmington, N.C. The remaining soldiers would be given the opportunity to transfer or retrain for another unit.

The unit caused an international stir last year when several soldiers refused to transport fuel to Taji, north of Baghdad. Some soldiers said the fuel was tainted and that the trucks lacked armor and maintenance. Another unit from the company was assigned to the fuel convoy the same day. At least five soldiers received reductions in rank, lost pay and were ordered to perform additional duties.

The Rock Hill base could close as early as 2007.

The center was listed under North Carolina in a Defense Department list of proposed closures. It was not mentioned in a list of closing sites in South Carolina.

"I know of no one in the state who knew this center was on the table," state Comptroller General Richard Eckstrom told The (Rock Hill) Herald for a story Wednesday.

Officials were looking into why the center was listed under the wrong state, said Audrey Jones, a spokesman for the realignment commission. The Defense Department recommended closing the Rock Hill center to save money on personnel and maintenance, according to a report.

Army Reserve Center in Rock Hill to close

The Herald (Rock Hill, SC)
Andrew Dys
October 5, 2005

The Rock Hill Army Reserve Center on Cherry Road, home to a quartermaster unit that created an international uproar a year ago when some of its soldiers refused orders in Iraq, will close under a federal plan to consolidate military bases.

In a separate move, the unit at the center of the controversy - the 343rd Quartermaster Company - ceased to exist as of Saturday, Army reserve officials said. The unit has changed its name and been assigned to Greenwood.

The closing of the building and the demise of the 343rd moniker had nothing to do with the disciplining of a small number of soldiers for refusing orders in October 2004, said Maj. William Ritter, spokesman for the Army Reserve 81st Regional Readiness Command in Birmingham, Ala.

About six jobs will be lost when the 41-year-old reserve center closes, Ritter said.

Building closure a surprise

It appears that few - if any - of the state's top elected officials knew of the building closure because the center was listed under North Carolina in a Department of Defense closure plan. The center could close as early as 2007, military officials said Tuesday.

The closure plan, done by the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission in May and endorsed by President Bush last month, made no mention of the Rock Hill center under South Carolina's affected sites. The center has been open since 1964.

"I know of no one in the state who knew this center was on the table," said Richard Eckstrom, state Comptroller General who chaired the governor's task force to keep state military bases open. Task force members made several trips around the Carolinas and to Washington, D.C., to lobby for South Carolina bases. "It never came out on the South Carolina list."

News of the impending closure of the Rock Hill center caused staffers from the offices of Democratic Rep. John Spratt and Republican Sens. Lindsey Graham and Jim DeMint to demand answers Tuesday from the Department of Defense. Spratt said he did not know of the center closure until Tuesday.

Graham spokesman Kevin Bishop and DeMint spokesman Wesley Denton said they were unsure if the senators knew before Tuesday.

York's Spratt, a member of the House armed services committee, said a courier from the Pentagon hand-delivered South Carolina's closure list the day it was announced in May, but the Rock Hill center was not on the list.

York County Manager Al Greene and Rock Hill City Manager Carey Smith said they had not heard of the planned closure.

BRAC officials Tuesday were looking into why a South Carolina center was listed under North Carolina reserve components, said BRAC spokesperson Audrey Jones.

The Defense Department recommended closing the Rock Hill center to reduce manpower needs and maintenance costs, then BRAC approved the closure, the report states. The 343rd and a unit from Albemarle, N.C., will shift equipment to Wilmington, N.C., under the BRAC plan, Ritter said.

Congress has until November to approve the BRAC closures. The Army must find suitable land in Wilmington next year to build a new center before the closure of the Rock Hill center is official, Ritter said.

The 343rd's change to the 371st Chemical Company, based in Greenwood, is part of an Army Reserve geographic reorganization, Ritter said. No other unit is slated to move to the Rock Hill reserve center.

About 20 of the 79 soldiers assigned to the 343rd will remain in Rock Hill as part of a detachment for the Greenwood headquarters, Ritter said. If the center closes as planned, the 20 soldiers would be assigned to Greenwood or Wilmington. The remaining soldiers will be given the opportunity to transfer or retrain for another unit.

The death of the 343rd from Rock Hill ends the unit's affiliation with the city that started with the unit's creation in 1999 and culminated with a

black eye before the world. On Oct. 13 near Talil, Iraq, several soldiers refused to transport fuel to Taji, north of Baghdad. Some soldiers claimed the fuel was tainted and trucks lacked armor and maintenance.

Although another group from the 343rd took the fuel convoy that same day, the unit was demobilized for weeks while the Army launched an internal probe. At least five soldiers were busted down in rank, lost pay and had to do additional duties.

None of the soldiers involved in disobeying orders were from South Carolina. An investigation by The Herald after the incident showed that at least 26 soldiers were added to the unit from other states to get the unit up to manpower requirements before it left for Iraq, including at least four of the units' six officers.

Feds: Cannon assessment team not official

Clovis News Journal (Clovis, NM)
Marlena Hartz
October 6, 2005

Formation of a federal team to assess future missions for Cannon Air Force Base is not official, a Department of Defense spokesman said on Wednesday.

Gov. Bill Richardson said Monday a Pentagon-led team will assess possible missions for Cannon and report the findings to the Pentagon in 180 days.

But Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs Dan Stanley said DoD officials would not make any plans concerning any base on the Base Closure and Realignment list until Congress approves the federal commission's revised list.

Congress has until later this year to approve the list.

The base-closing commission voted in August to remove Cannon's F-16 squadrons, but called upon DoD to find a new Cannon mission.

Air Force secretary nominee Mike Wynne had conversations Monday with Gov. Richardson and delegation members about the future of Cannon, and plans to continue to do so in the future, according to Stanley and Richardson.

Richardson said Monday that Wynne and Hanson Scott, the director of the New Mexico Office for Military Base Planning and Support, would be members of the assessment team.

Stanley said Wynne did not commit to being a member of the team; in fact, the team does not yet exist.

“No special (Cannon) group has been formed. We are waiting for Congress to complete its role,” Stanley said Wednesday in a phone interview.

“Do we make promises about commissions and who’s going to be on them? No, at this time we don’t, not prior to congressional action,” Stanley said.

Scott could not be reached for comment. Wynne was not available for comment, according to Stanley.

Richardson could not be reached for comment on Wednesday, but his spokesperson, Billy Sparks said Stanley’s remarks “in no way conflict with Gov. Richardson’s report of the meeting.” He said the governor and the nominee discussed a 180-day plan, but did not finalize it.

He said the group of individuals Richardson named would not officially form a team until the BRAC list is passed at the congressional level.

New Mexico’s congressional delegation is working hard to snag a mission for Cannon, although no team has been formed by the Pentagon to assess the base, according to Steve Bell, chief of staff for Sen. Pete Domenici, R.-N.M.

Bell said Wynne and other Pentagon officials are engaged in brainstorming with New Mexico officials, but Richardson “overstated his case.”

Domenici is scheduled to meet with Wynne today. A bill that would keep assets at Cannon for at least a year is on the Senate floor. Bell said he expects it to pass by Friday.

Admiral says Navy will study value of Cecil Field, Oceana

The Virginian-Pilot (Hampton Roads, VA)
Louis Hansen
October 6, 2005

VIRGINIA BEACH — Reacting to new reports about development around Cecil Field in Florida, Adm. John B. Nathman said Wednesday to expect more information about the former naval air station.

Nathman, commander of U.S. Fleet Forces Command, said the Navy has hired an independent contractor to assess the military value of Cecil Field and Oceana Naval Air Station.

Nathman said an independent agency would deliver an impartial report.

“You’re going to discover lots of things about Cecil, just like we know about Oceana,” he said. The report is expected by December.

Florida officials said this week there is more suburban encroachment around Cecil Field, outside Jacksonville, than they initially acknowledged in testimony before the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

Florida officials told the federal commission in August that no homes were in high-risk areas around the runways.

As a result, the commission ordered Virginia to roll back development near Oceana Naval Air Station or lose the base to Florida.

This week, however, Florida officials acknowledged in interviews with the Florida Times-Union and The Virginian-Pilot that nearly 1,000 homes would be in zones of heavy, low-flying jet traffic should the base re-open to military aircraft.

Nathman said during a talk on Wednesday that the Navy made a clear evaluation of Oceana's value when they kept it off the original base closing list. BRAC commissioners later added the Virginia base.

The veteran naval aviator, who assumed command of Fleet Forces in February, spoke Wednesday afternoon at a symposium on joint warfare presented by the U.S. Naval Institute.

Nathman said the Navy is prepared to meet its goals in major combat operations, supporting the global war on terrorism and providing homeland defense. The sea service will face an increasing demand to perform deterrence operations in southwest Asia and the Western Pacific, he said.

Nathman also acknowledged that the military under-used its ships, personnel and supplies during hurricanes Katrina and Rita, but said the experience could be used to prepare for future natural disasters and terrorists attacks.

He suggested that the military train other federal agencies to plan and deliver relief to civilians caught in a disaster. "It really was a practice weapons-of-mass-destruction event for our nation," he said.

Opinions/ Editorials

Salute appropriate for our base-savers

Norwich Bulletin (Norwich, CT)
Mal Hoffman, U.S.N., Ret.
October 5, 2005

A very special thank-you to John Markowicz and Team Connecticut. Also to U.S. Sens. Chris Dodd and Joe Lieberman and U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons. I want to thank them for all their efforts that resulted in the saving of our submarine base from the Base Realignment and Closure process. Their efforts are greatly appreciated.

Additional Notes