

BASE VISIT REPORT
(PART ONE OF TWO)
PORTLAND IAP, OREGON
142nd Fighter Wing (ANG)
May 24, 2005

LEAD COMMISSIONER: Commissioner Coyle

ACCOMPANYING COMMISSIONER: Commissioner Bilbray

COMMISSION STAFF: David Combs, Brad McRee

LIST OF ATTENDEES: separate attachment – to be included later

BASE'S PRESENT MISSION: Air Defense of the Pacific Northwest

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE RECOMMENDATION:

- Realign the 142d Fighter Wing (ANG) by distributing the wing's F-15 aircraft to the 177th Fighter Wing (ANG), Atlantic City, NJ (six aircraft) and the 159th Fighter Wing (ANG), New Orleans ARS, LA (nine aircraft).
- The 142d Fighter Wing's expeditionary combat support elements, along with the 244th and 272d Combat Communications Squadrons (ANG), will remain at Portland and Portland will continue to support a Homeland Defense alert commitment.
- The 214th Engineering Installation Squadron (ANG), a geographically separated unit at Jackson Barracks, LA, is relocated into available facilities at New Orleans.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE JUSTIFICATION:

- This recommendation realigns Portland's F-15 fighter aircraft to an installation of higher military value. Atlantic City (61) ranks higher than Portland (77) for the fighter mission, and realigning Portland's F-15 aircraft to Atlantic City helps create an optimum-sized fighter squadron (24 Primary Aircraft Assigned). While New Orleans (79) ranks slightly below

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Portland for the fighter mission, the Air Force used military judgment in realigning Portland's remaining F-15 aircraft to New Orleans. New Orleans has above average military value for reserve component bases, and realigning aircraft from Portland creates another optimum-sized fighter squadron at New Orleans. Although the ANG will continue to support an alert commitment at Portland, the Air Force determined it is also a priority to support North American Defense Command (NORAD) and United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) air sovereignty alert requirements at Atlantic City and New Orleans. Creating effective sized squadrons at these reserve component locations ensures the Air Force can maintain trained, experienced pilots and maintenance technicians, and is able to fulfill its Homeland Defense alert requirements. Portland's ECS remains in place to support the Air Expeditionary Force and to retain trained, experienced Airmen.

- By relocating the geographically separated ANG squadron onto New Orleans, the Air Force best utilizes available facilities on the installation while reducing the cost to the government to lease facilities in the community.

MAIN FACILITIES REVIEWED: Entire Base in Portland (Louisiana not visited)

KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED:

- 1) Homeland Security and Defense of the Pacific Northwest... lack of information about the proposed Force Structure Plan
- 2) Ambiguity in numbers or personnel affected by proposed realignment... also uncertainty about numbers of personnel related to ECS which is proposed to remain
- 3) Cost Data and projected savings... Were correct models used?
- 4) Correct consideration thought not to have been given to offshore ranges
- 5) Unit performance not quantified in Military Value Calculation
- 6) Was the rationale of having two guard units in the same state flying the same aircraft a factor?
- 7) Military value of Portland greater than New Orleans, which gains aircraft... Should aircraft from New Orleans move to Portland?
- 8) Optimal squadron size the Air Force chooses may not be appropriate for a Guard unit which has greater operating efficiencies
- 9) No public discussion of drawdown of CONUS alert sites
- 10) Loss of experienced human capital and impact to recruiting and retention. Senior pilots and support personnel would likely not move. Post-BRAC readiness rates and training costs are potential issues.
- 11) Strategic location an issue... Was this captured in military value calculations?
- 12) Is adequate tanker support available to Northwest with BRAC proposals?

INSTALLATION CONCERNS RAISED:

- 1) Some pressure from airport authority to reduce military operations at Portland IAP prior to 9-11. Airport authority desired a new runway then. Relationship since 9-11 thought to be good. Currently on a 24 year lease.
- 2) Limited capability for pilot take-off/landing proficiency training in busy commercial air traffic pattern. Community sensitivity to noise. No capability for night vision goggle training at airfield.
- 3) Base in a flood plain and close to a fault line? Flooding in 1940s apparently eliminated by construction of dike.
- 4) New \$5M Fire Station just completed.
- 5) Excellent communications network capabilities.
- 6) If AFRC tanker unit (939th ARW) moves, significant ramp, hanger, and building space would be available. Tanker ramp recently modernized for heavy loads and underground fuel hydrants.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS RAISED:

No meeting was held with the community.

REQUESTS FOR STAFF AS A RESULT OF VISIT:

- 1) Verify data used in DoD calculations.
- 2) Study Homeland Security/Force Structure plan for Pacific Northwest.
- 3) Research "waiver requirement" for air defenders to be in Portland.
- 4) Research 214th EIS proposed move.

BASE VISIT REPORT

(PART TWO OF TWO)

PORTLAND IAP, OREGON

**939th Air Refueling Wing (AFR)
and
304th Rescue Squadron (AFR)**

May 24, 2005

LEAD COMMISSIONER: Commissioner Coyle

ACCOMPANYING COMMISSIONER: Commissioner Bilbray

COMMISSION STAFF: David Combs, Brad McRee

LIST OF ATTENDEES: (see attached)

BASE'S PRESENT MISSION: Air Refueling

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE RECOMMENDATION:

Realign Portland International Airport Air Guard Station, OR

- Distribute the 939th (AFR) Air Refueling Wing's KC-135R aircraft to the 507th Air Refueling Wing (AFR), Tinker Air Force Base, OK (four aircraft), and the 190th Air Refueling Wing (ANG), Forbes field Air National Guard Station, KS (three aircraft).
- Revert one aircraft to backup inventory.
- Operations and maintenance manpower for four aircraft from the 939th Air Refueling Wing is realigned with the aircraft to Tinker Air Force Base. The 939th Air Refueling Wing's remaining manpower, to include expeditionary combat support, is realigned to Vandenberg Air Force Base, CA.
- The 304th Rescue Squadron (AFR) at Portland is realigned to McChord Air Force Base, WA, with no aircraft involved.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE JUSTIFICATION:

- This recommendation realigns Portland's KC-135R tanker aircraft to Forbes Field and Tinker, installations with higher military value. Tinker (4) and Forbes (35) ranked higher than Portland (71) for the tanker mission, and both installations remain operationally effective due to their proximity to air refueling missions. This recommendation will robust the Reserve squadron size at Tinker and Air National Guard squadron size at Forbes, increasing these units' capability. An Air National Guard and Reserve KC-135 unit association will be established at Tinker to access Reserve experience and maximize regional Reserve participation in the aerial refueling mission. This recommendation will also ensure critical KC-135 backup aircraft inventory levels are preserved.

MAIN FACILITIES REVIEWED: Entire Base

KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED:

For 939th:

- 1) Uncertainty as to exactly what numbers of personnel are to go where.
- 2) This wing has been at Portland since April 2003. The rescue wing moved away three years ago. The tanker wing was established there as Fairchild AFB was giving up responsibility for the local air defense support role. If the BRAC recommendation is approved, then it is believed Fairchild would once again have that responsibility.
- 3) All of his people would not follow the planes – especially with three of them going to a Guard unit. He estimates 75% of his pilots would separate.
- 4) Although wing commander was reluctant to share his own opinion (Title 10), he said that tankers are “mobile” by nature and that all they need is an adequate runway and fuel supply.

For 304th:

- 1) Moving is a real concern for them. They are completing a new building tailored ideally for their needs.
- 2) They have an optimal area for training in Portland.

INSTALLATION CONCERNS RAISED:

- 1) The 939th is a tenant to the 142nd FW. The relationship now is good although it has not always been the best.
- 2) Limited capability for pilot take-off/landing proficiency training in busy commercial air traffic pattern. Community sensitivity to noise. No capability for night vision goggle training at airfield.

- 3) They would like more ramp and hanger space for tanker operations. They can park (12) KC-135s if they park in the hangers also. There are more efficiencies for 12 Primary Aircraft Assigned (PAA) than 8 PAA that they have now.
- 4) Tankers cannot be washed at Portland due to environmental concerns.
- 5) The overall operating costs for a Portland-type operation (joint-use) are cheaper than for a stand alone base.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS RAISED: N/A

REQUESTS FOR STAFF AS A RESULT OF VISIT:

Verify accuracy of numbers in DoD recommendation.