

EP TIMES
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BRAC testimony

BRAC Commission

AUG 08 2005

El Paso delegates present arguments

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Testifying before Base Realignment and Closure commissioners in San Antonio on Monday, El Paso officials presented compelling arguments that the Air Defense Artillery Center and School should be kept at Fort Bliss.

Initial Pentagon recommendations have the ADA School moving from Fort Bliss to Fort Sill, in Oklahoma. The preliminary BRAC list was made public in May, and now communities throughout the country are responding to those recommendations in a series of regional hearings.

Politics aside, Fort Bliss is tailor-made for the air-defense mission, and space is one of the major advantages the post can offer. Fort Bliss itself is a huge 1.1 million acres, but when you combine that space with adjacent White Sands Missile Range, available space burgeons to more than 4 million acres.

Common sense dictates that when there's air-defense training and research taking place, particularly with missiles, it's essential to have a lot of space for live-fire exercises. Fort Bliss provides that space. Fort Sill does not.

Sure, soldiers can learn about air-defense systems in the class-

room than air defense.

Of course, El Paso is grateful that the Pentagon recommends that Fort Bliss should grow by 11,500 soldiers. And that gratitude was expressed by the El Paso delegation, with U.S. Rep. Silvestre Reyes saying, "Our top priority is to welcome these troops."

El Paso delegates also wanted to set the record straight on what delegation member Bob Cook, interim director of the Regional Economic Development Corp., termed "erroneous and sometimes incomplete data." For example, Cook noted that while the Pentagon list said that Fort Bliss had a vertical limit on its air space, it actually extends from "mud to space." It's good and helpful to get points such as that cleared up.

The catch in the BRAC process, of course, could be politics.

Reyes said, "In spite of the strong case under the BRAC criteria that shows that Fort Bliss is the Number one-rated facility in the country ... there's always the concern that this is a political process. The Department of Defense recommendation flies in the face of all the facts."

This is a process that should

August 3, 2005

Mr. Anthony J. Principi
Chairman, 2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 S. Clark St, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

BRAC Commission

AUG 08 2005

Dear Mr. Principi:

Received

I recently returned to El Paso after spending about 3 months in the Baltimore-Harrisburg area. While there I read information released on the BRAC and nowhere did I read anything about movement of Army combat arms schools except the movement of the Armor School to Fort Benning. Upon my return to El Paso I discovered DOD recommends relocating the Army Air Defense Artillery Center and School to Fort Sill. That makes no sense to me. I find it more logical to move the Field Artillery School to Fort Bliss as I will discuss below.

For more than 60 years, Army air defense artillery and its personnel have built Fort Bliss and the region into the Air Defense Artillery Center of Excellence and numbers of our Allies have considered it as such for years, training and firing any and all air defense weapons in the Fort Bliss air space. It is highly unlikely that any other DOD facility can fire even the shorter range air defense weapons.

Air defense artillery has become a dynamic and forward looking branch of the Army, abandoning all gun systems for missile systems. The result has been a progressive deployment of a series of missiles since the initial staging in the 1950s of the Nike Ajax and Nike Hercules in the air defense of the United States. Since then the school has done the necessary R&D and trained and deployed Redeye, Chaparral, Stinger, Avenger and Patriot units and continues the development of more advanced air defense missile systems.

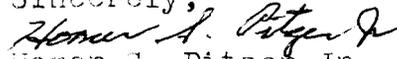
The Commanding General of the Army Air Defense Artillery Center and School is also the Army's senior Air Defense Artillery Officer, responsible for the development of tactics and the training of all ADA units. With ADA units organized and trained **here at Fort Bliss** he has finger on the pulse of Army Air Defense and directs systematic analysis of air defense operations which result in changes to maximize the overall effectiveness of ADA units. In the execution of these various air defense artillery responsibilities, considerable capital has been invested in the building and equipping of numerous unique facilities. Numbers of very skilled DA civilians are employed in the R&D of ADA plus up to 500 analysts and engineers are employed in the El Paso area. Army air defense would lose significant creative talent if the relocation to Fort Sill is directed.

In the near term, there will be a decrease in DOD funds with priority going to support relocation of overseas units. The movement of Air Defense Artillery to Fort Sill would result in a considerable amount of new construction and movement costs and loss of intellectual capital.

To relocate Army Air Defense away from their best testing and training area does not make sense economically or militarily. If the two Army artillery schools must be together (?), then move the Field Artillery School and Center to Fort Bliss. There is adequate space at Fort Bliss for this relocation.

Thanks for your assistance.

Sincerely,



Homer S. Pitzer Jr.

Col(Ret), USA

4327 Pershing Drive

El Paso, TX 79903