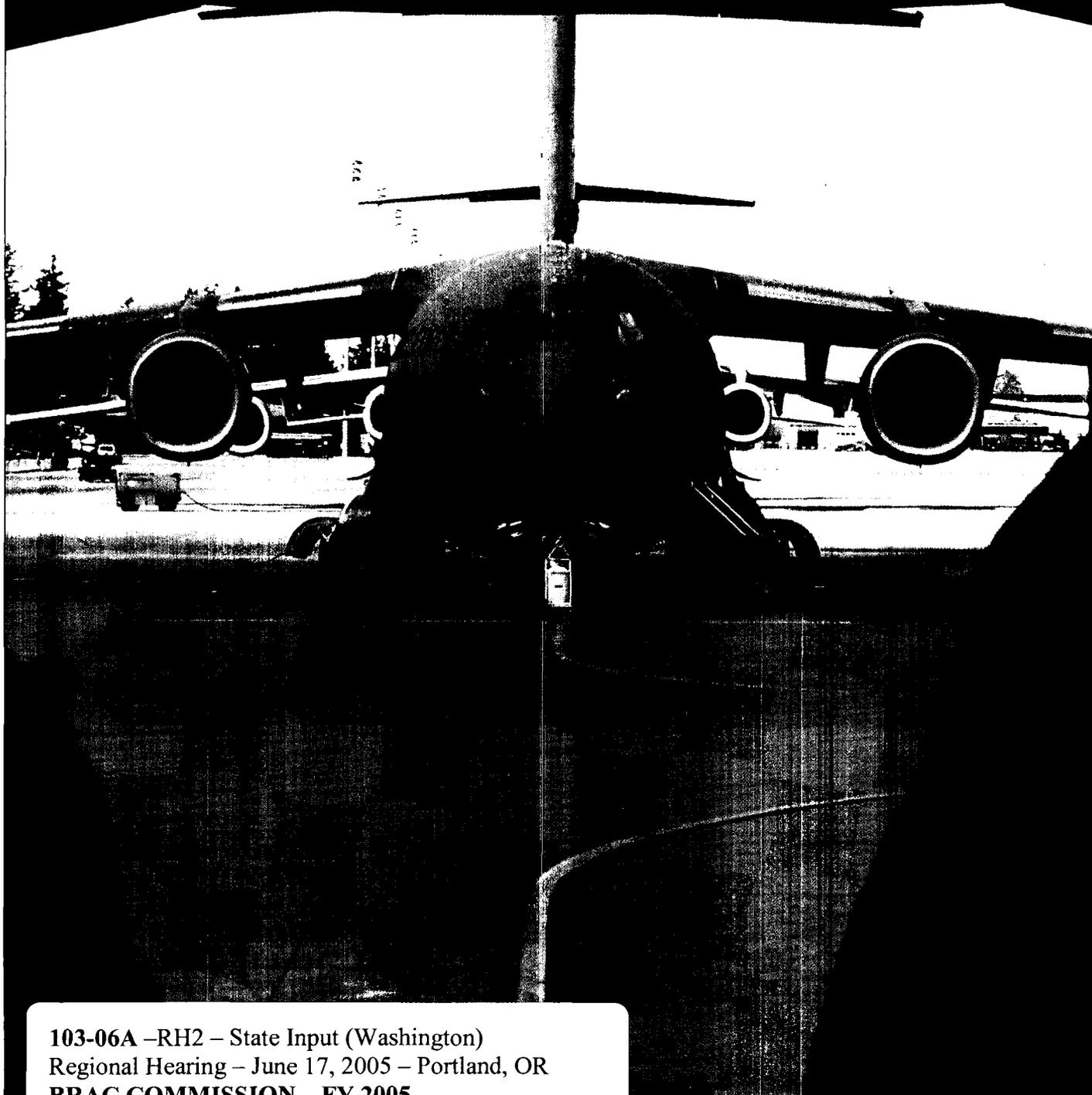


BRAC COMMISSION

Portland Regional Hearing

June 17, 2005



103-06A -RH2 - State Input (Washington)
Regional Hearing - June 17, 2005 - Portland, OR
BRAC COMMISSION - FY 2005
COFF: _____ DISPOSITION: Permanent

Draft Comments
BRAC Commission Portland Regional Hearing
June 17, 8:30 a.m. (Scheduled for second hour)
Eastside Federal Complex
First floor auditorium
911 North East 11th Avenue
Portland, OR 97232

Good morning Chairman Principi and members of the BRAC Commission. I am David Graybill, President and CEO of the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber, representing the BRAC Citizens Committee. Since you may not hear it often, I thank the Department of Defense and the Base Realignment and Closure Commission for working to effectively provide for our nation's defense and efficiently utilize our tax dollars.

Your endeavors are similar to the Corps of Discovery celebrating the 200th anniversary. Like them, you've set up in Oregon after visiting Washington. We thank Commissioners James Bilbray and Philip Coyle for their official visits to Fort Lewis and McChord Air Force Base. We trust you'll find these installations to be a premier Power Projection Platform, especially when coupled with the Ports of Tacoma and Olympia.

Washington State is acknowledged as the most trade dependent state in the nation. This economic foundation is attributable to the real estate mantra: Location, location, location. From here, we find our community in global position of equal accessibility to Europe and Asia. The reasons our private sector international businesses have succeeded are the same reasons power projection is effective here.

From the advantages of global positioning to our natural deepwater harbors, we've benefited through our enterprise to develop our ports and installations. Fort Lewis and McChord AFB are in a class by themselves, a cut above all others. Fort Lewis began with the donation of land by the citizens of Pierce County and McChord Air Force Base began with the donation of the Tacoma Airport by the City of Tacoma. This continues with cooperative designation of the Port of Tacoma as a National Strategic Port and with the consistent customer service the Port of Tacoma and Port of Olympia provide to Ft. Lewis.

Over the decades, our military installations have enjoyed a cooperative relationship with our state and local jurisdictions. Soldiers, Airmen, and smaller contingents from other services, have enjoyed an agreeable quality of life among local citizens who consider them neighbors. Like all citizens, they enjoy a region recognized as "One of America's Most Livable Communities" across the nation every decade. These two bases perennially rank at the top of "preferred assignment" lists.

At the official level, that's reflected in the adoption by our State of anti-encroachment legislation providing for cooperative land use between our communities and defense installations. For individuals, this is reflected in resident tuition for military and their

dependents as well as their friendly reception in our homes, our neighborhoods and our community organizations.

Community involvement and volunteerism of military personnel is recognized as strengths of our communities. The recognition of military as community volunteers is embedded within our Chamber as well as in other organizations like the Red Cross and United Way. We have in hand 22 resolutions from local governments and our ports – in addition to our Governor Christine Gregoire, State Legislature, and Congressional leadership – appreciative and supporting of our military citizens, encouraging additional growth opportunities from area military installations.

We believe there is room for more growth at McChord AFB. Not too long ago, C-130 Hercules shared the air base when McChord AFB had 48 C-141 Starlifters, with a footprint similarly sized to the C-17s now there. And, not too long ago, A-10s occupied facilities, still extant, once utilized by air defense squadrons. The close proximity of those Warthogs enhanced training for the soldiers of I (Eye) Corps, especially at Fort Lewis' affiliated Yakima Training Center.

Now, we are welcoming the third Stryker Brigade to Fort Lewis as it continues as the Army's center for transformation. We are confident that there is room for yet additional units. We never forget our deployed soldiers and airmen from here. Commissioners Bilbray and Coyle notice the yellow ribbons that festoon bridges over Interstate 5 near Fort Lewis and McChord AFB. Similarly, both the City of Tacoma and Pierce County have adopted pay equalization for their National Guard or Reserve employees who are activated. The City of Tacoma earned the "Above and Beyond" award from the Department of Defense's Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve as the first municipality to provide pay equalization.

Some outstanding citizens may leave our communities or lose their jobs as a result of an enactment of the Department of Defense's current recommendations for realignment and this does not escape our attention. We understand the Joint Base Lewis-McChord proposal as it seeks to achieve economies of scale, increased efficiencies and savings while enhancing the national defense capabilities of our nation. And, we are supportive of the consolidation of the installation management as it maintains or increases their respective and joint mission capabilities.

There are, however, a few questions we ask you to consider. If we had data to answer these questions or to propose an alternative for you, we would surely provide it. However, after much research we believe that level of detail is not yet publicly available, therefore your consideration of these questions is encouraged and will be appreciated. Our attempts to reconcile the numbers in text and tables for the realignment of direct jobs for military and civilian personnel for the management consolidation and relocation of medical personnel at both installations have been unsuccessful.

The DoD's BRAC recommendations recognize they require "...flexibility to tailor implementation to the unique requirements at each location." There are two realignment actions that concern us.

The first action is the consolidation of installation management. Again, there are two aspects of the consolidation of installations management personnel that deserve examination. The first is a quantity question. With the reduction of military and civilian workforce at McChord AFB, will there be enough workers on hand at Ft. Lewis to do the job required once envisioned manpower reductions are made?

The second is a question of retention or provision of mission essential personnel, or a "core competency" question. The Army maintains both a garrison command structure and a mission command structure in the form of Fort Lewis and I Corps. Both these functions are currently combined at McChord AFB in the administration of the 62nd Airlift Wing. The supposition arises that recommended cuts in the administration of McChord AFB would also mean cuts in the administration of the 62nd Airlift Wing. The personnel cuts proposed for installations management consolidation represents about 10% of military and civilian personnel at McChord AFB. What sort of mission impact would a 10% cut in the workforce at McChord AFB have on the performance of the 62nd Airlift Wing's mission?

The second action thereafter is the relocation of McChord AFB's medical personnel to Fort Lewis/Madigan Army Medical Center. It appears to us that there may be a limitation on physical facilities at Madigan Army Medical Center if Air Force medical personnel were to be relocated to the hospital. Any provision to office personnel and medical functions in what we term the "Old Madigan," and are in actuality just a storage facility, would be strongly suspect as providing efficiencies or even sufficiency. The medical clinic at McChord AFB is relatively new and it would be our recommendation that a joint administration seek ways to optimize its use for patients' benefits rather than consolidate within an inadequate location hampered by sufficient space or obsolescence.

This action also poses a "core competency" question. Will there be sufficient aviation medicine personnel? Although both service branches have aviators, their roles and missions are substantially different. The Air Force's strategic airlift, with global reach, means they fly higher, longer, and more frequently in strange and multiple locations. Will aviation medicine specialists – and in sufficient numbers with appropriate command structure – support this need once the realignment is completed?

Our community has worked long and hard for Fort Lewis and McChord AFB. This began when our communities donated the land and facilities that became these two premier installations to the Department of Defense. We have done so as we worked for the new Madigan Army Medical Center, an exemplary installation for military personnel and their dependents, and the development and deployment of the new strategic cargo airlifter, the C-17 Globemaster III. We continue to do so with our anti-encroachment legislation. And we will do so as we continue our annual visits to the Pentagon and our Congressional Delegation. Without a doubt, the Honorary Co-Chairs of our BRAC Citizens Committee,

Congressman Adam Smith, whose district encompasses Fort Lewis and McChord AFB, and Congressman Norm Dicks, whose long time, consistent advocacy for all the installations in Washington State, have provided our nation with efficient and capable national defense installations in Washington. As we visit the state's Congressional delegation annually, we are heartened by their commitment to support our installations, service members and their families. Thus we are assured, as our local communities work with our nation's leadership, that we will continue to have installations with a high military value contributing to our nation's defense.

I have provided in accompaniment to copies of my remarks today a comprehensive CD overview of our Bases, their roles, and their alignment with our region's supportive resources

Thank you, and may I answer any questions?