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BRAC Commission

Base Realignment and Closure Commission
ATTN: Mr. Anthony J. Principi, Chairman
2521 S. Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

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Received

Dear Chairman Principi:

Fort Bliss, with its 1.1 million acres, has four times more militarily useful land than any base in the country, except its neighbor, White Sands Missile Range. It has been underutilized as a maneuver base since the 1st Cavalry Division left in 1943. Now, the Army plans to station four armor combat teams here; but, it demands a very heavy price: the relocation of the Air Defense Center and School to Fort Sill, OK, a much smaller base (one-twelfth the size of Fort Bliss). We don't want to seem ungrateful or impertinent; but, is this trade militarily necessary? It is certainly not needed to free-up space for new maneuver units. *We only ask that question because we remember that it was not military necessity that prompted the Army to move the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment to Fort Carson, CO in 1995!*

We can not identify any military need, operational or otherwise, for this move. Air Defense Artillery (ADA) will be hamstrung by the air and ground space limitations that Fort Sill would surely impose on air defense testing and training (we are told that the Army can not even fire the short-range Stinger missile at Fort Sill, nor properly deploy PATRIOT in Remote Launch mode)! In our opinion, these ground and air space restrictions would only hinder research, development, testing, and training, and seriously weaken air defense. Without adding any military value, the proposed move will not only be disruptive and costly (we understand that significant construction is required at Fort Sill to accommodate air defense elements), but will pose operational risks for our commanders-in-chief (CINCs). We see no overarching need to invite any new risks.

While there should be some synergism in co-locating Armor and Infantry - they fight together - no one should expect similar benefits by co-locating ADA and Field Artillery centers/schools. As you know, there are many operational differences between the ground fires of Field Artillery and the protective air fires of Air Defense Artillery. These differences lie in their roles, missions, and associated capabilities in target acquisition and identification, fire control, communications, and interoperability, which are threat driven (speed, range, altitude, etc). It is impossible to imagine how training with Field Artillery soldiers/units at Fort Sill will somehow cause ADA soldiers/units to perform as well as they currently do at

Fort Bliss and White Sands Missile Range. They will only fight as they train.

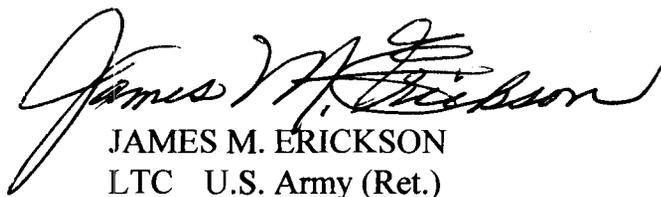
Unfortunately, we can only guess at the role of ADA in Training and Doctrine Command's (TRADOC's) new, yet-to-be-defined, Net Fires concept, since ADA and Field Artillery do not share the same targets. But, if the Army has identified an operational need to develop and test a Net Fires Center, the logical site for that center is not Fort Sill, but Fort Bliss, where there is still abundant maneuver space to properly disperse its nodes and air space to engage its targets. If maneuver space (and now maneuver units) is an important training asset, a stronger case could be made for the Field Artillery School to relocate to Fort Bliss than vice-versa, as the Army proposes.

We haven't been told why the TRADOC and the Army staff think that Fort Bliss is no longer the ideal home for ADA. While TRADOC has threatened this consolidation for at least 10 years, it has never explained its obvious preference for Fort Sill over Fort Bliss. We maintain that Fort Bliss is the only suitable base for air and missile defense training and testing. Frankly, to relocate ADA to Fort Sill, 600 miles away from their best (if not only) testing and training area, does not make sense economically or operationally; and, to do so, would turn back the clock about 60 years, to the age of propeller-driven aircraft!

Finally, when we consider the future air threat from rogue nations, like Iran and North Korea, and we learn more about the looming power of China, we ask ourselves why TRADOC and the Army are not now making every reasonable attempt to strengthen our air defense forces. Please examine the rationale for this very disruptive, costly, and risky, if not outright dangerous, realignment. *The consensus around El Paso is that the real reason is political. We could accept this move, if it offered some clear military advantage on future battlefields, but not for branch favoritism, or for political support, the likely reason that the 3rd ACR was jerked out of Fort Bliss 10 years ago without a word of warning, rationale or discussion by the Army. There are some similarities here.*

El Paso and Fort Bliss can support the new maneuver units the Army intends to station here, and more, as well as the Air Defense Center and School. Let us prove it! Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



JAMES M. ERICKSON
LTC U.S. Army (Ret.)

CF:

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison
Senator John Cornyn
Representative Silvestre Reyes
Governor Rick Perry
Mayor John Cook