

BASE VISIT REPORT**FORT BLISS, TEXAS****16-17 JUNE 2005****COMMISSION STAFF:**

Mr. Gary Dinsick (BRAC Army Team Leader)
 LTC Kevin Felix (Army Senior Analyst for IGPBS Recommendation)
 Mr. Mike Avenick (Army Senior Analyst for NET Fires Recommendation)
 Mr. Gary Miller (Interagency Analyst detailed from EPA)

LIST OF ATTENDEES:**FORT BLISS**

COL Bryon Greenwald	Garrison Commander
BG Francis (Fran) Mahon	Deputy Commanding General, Fort Bliss & USAADASCH
Ed Archuleta	El Paso Public Service Board
Linda Vasquez	Plans Program Manager
LTC Sean Lewis	Garrison XO
Mike Caldwell	Base transit Office, SWRO, IMA
Vic Eglinger	Director of Logistics
Mike Lockmey	Director of Public Works
Dennis Ballog	DPW
Keith Landreth	Director, Directorate of Enviroment
Joe Kennedy	DMWR
Bob Canas	Master Planner
Billy Lewis	RMO Analyst
MAJ Jason Barnett	6 th ADA Training Bde XO
Joe Limon	DHR
Don Fleck	Commissary
Colleen Burns	Director of Contracting

Gary McDaniel	Deputy Director, Plans, Training, Mob, Security
LTC Michael Sipple	CDR, USACAS
Robert Fierro	CPAC, Chief
Jean Moffutt	PAO
Vicki Hamilton	Chief, Conservation Division
Jeffery Brown	Director of info management
Michael Radford	PAIO
Marie.doyle	Congressional Liaison
Beverly Rose	IMA, SWRO, RM
Eddie Macias	RMO-GC
MAJ Mike Solis	Garrison Command

MEETING WITH CONGRESSMAN REYES AND STAFF, 17 JUNE 05

Congressman Reyes	16 th District, Texas
Perry Brody	Chief of Staff for Congressman Reyes
Richard Dayoub	President, Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce
John Cook	Mayor of El Paso

PRESENT MISSION:

FORT BLISS

Fort Bliss' vision is to be a DOD flagship installation comprised of state-of-the-art training areas, ranges and facilities, led by adaptive, innovative and warrior-focused professionals, concentrated on individual and unit readiness, leader development, deployment, security and the well-being of Team Bliss. A values-based organization that ensures trained and ready forces can be projected worldwide from one of the nation's most modern power-projection bases. It is an installation whose leaders are committed to ensuring the best possible quality of life and services to a diverse population of soldiers, civilians and family members. Fort Bliss is committed to close, mutually beneficial relationships with the City of El Paso and surrounding communities.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE RECOMMENDATION:

Operational IGPBS. Realign Fort Bliss, TX by relocating air defense artillery units to Fort Sill and relocating 1st Armored Division and various echelon above division units from Germany and Korea to Fort Bliss, TX. Realign Fort Sill by relocating an artillery (Fires) brigade to Fort Bliss. Realign Fort Hood, TX by relocating maneuver battalions, a support battalion, and aviation units to Fort Bliss, TX. Realign Fort Riley, KS by inactivating various units, activating a Brigade Combat Team (BCT) and relocating 1st Infantry Division units and various echelons above division units from Germany and Korea to Fort Riley, KS. Realign Fort Campbell, KY, by relocating an attack aviation battalion to Fort Riley, KS.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE JUSTIFICATION:

Operational IGPBS. This proposal ensures the Army has sufficient infrastructure, training land and ranges to meet the requirements to transform the Operational Army as identified in the Twenty Year Force Structure Plan. It also ensures the Army maintains adequate surge capacity. As part of the modular force transformation, the Army is activating 10 new combat arms brigades for a total of 43 active component brigade combat teams (BCTs). Including the results of the Integrated Global Presence and Basing Strategy (IGPBS), the number of BCTs stationed in the United States will rise from twenty-six to forty.

Relocating the units listed in this recommendation to Fort Bliss, Fort Riley, and Fort Sill takes advantage of available infrastructure and training land. Fort Bliss and Fort Riley are installations capable of training modular formations, both mounted and dismounted, at home station with sufficient land and facilities to test, simulate, or fire all organic weapon systems. This recommendation enhances home station training and readiness of the units at all installations.

MAIN FACILITIES REVIEWED:

After a briefing by the garrison staff, the commission staff participated in an overflight of the training area and installation. Key installations the commission members visited on Fort Bliss included the rail load facility and airfield, the deployment facility, ranges, housing/barracks and other base infrastructure.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Fort Bliss is located to the northeast of El Paso, Texas and extends into New Mexico. The main cantonment area and Biggs Army Airfield are located in a heavily developed area. The El Paso International Airport is located next to Biggs Army Airfield although they are not connected by taxiways. Although the main cantonment area is constrained by development, the maneuver area and ranges have access and limited encroachment issues. Based upon discussions with Fort Bliss there is limited habitat restrictions, primarily confined to one canyon on the west side of the range/maneuver area.

- The base has a Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) permit issued by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). According to TCEQ the base has completed investigations and closed all but one solid waste management unit, an open burn pit located at the closed Caster Range. Once the range is cleared it will be available for development. The removal project has not been funded at this time. TCEQ does not feel they can make a final determination on the impact to groundwater at the base until this unit is investigated and closed. One issue that may impact growth at the base involves a closed oxidation pond. The 4 to 5 acre area was closed to commercial/industrial standards. The base has now asked the State to allow closure to residential standards. The State is requesting additional documentation prior to the change. The base has indicated they plan to build dorms on the property. The base has completed investigations at the site and submitted the documentation to TCEQ for final approval.

- The data provided in the environmental impacts section of the recommendations indicates there are potential water supply issues at Fort Bliss. However, based upon the information obtained during the site visit, there appears to be adequate water supply to sustain an increase in troops at the base. The Fort Bliss drinking water supply is obtained from wells and the El Paso Water Utilities Public Service Board. The El Paso area relies upon both surface water and groundwater to supply potable water to residents. The City has purchased over 30,000 acres in and around El Paso and an additional 70,000 acres further east. This will provide the El Paso area with the ability to obtain additional groundwater resources in the future. In addition the area has been working to reduce water use through conservation plans and the use of grey water for irrigation of golf course and other types of large landscaped areas. The El Paso Water Utilities Public Service Board plans to start construction this summer on a 27.5 MGD desalination plant that will be located on a leased portion of Fort Bliss. This plant will tap into a large groundwater source that is currently not usable without treatment.

- Air Quality impacts. As of 2003 El Paso was in non-attainment for ozone. However, based on the new 8 ozone hour standard the city is now considered to be in attainment. The State is planning to petition EPA to show El Paso is in official attainment for carbon monoxide. The current non-attainment for carbon monoxide does not include Fort Bliss. El Paso is also listed as non-attainment for PM¹⁰ (a particulate based standard), however based upon information in the State Implementation Plan, Fort Bliss training exercises are exempt. Fort Bliss has made some changes to maneuvers to reduce dust generation within the city limits of El Paso. There is the potential that activities while moving to maneuver areas could be limited to prevent the generation of large dust clouds that would impact the cities attempt to meet the PM¹⁰. In general there are no Air Conformity issues that would impact the additional training at Fort Bliss. There would be potential permitting issues with the addition of the new units and equipment to the area.

KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED

- Fort Bliss is number 1 in military value and can accommodate every weapon system in the Army.

- Fort Bliss currently conducts institutional training for the Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and supports the collective training and deployment of the 32d Army Air

and Missile Defense Command consisting of one Air and Missile Defense Brigade and two Corps Level Air and Missile Defense Brigades that are stationed on the installation.

- The Fort Bliss and McGregor Range Complex, as well as the adjacent White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) provide the ranges and maneuver areas to support both the TRADOC mission of training soldiers as well as the operational requirements in a joint environment.

- Fort Bliss, along with its neighbor, Holloman AFB, and White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) provides a unique joint training environment as a part of the Joint National Training Capability (JNTC).

- Fort Bliss has buildable acres to support the population growth of soldiers and families resulting from the recommendation. However, over the next six years Fort Bliss will have difficulty providing its new BCTs with the ranges and infrastructure to support live, virtual and constructive training.

- Fort Bliss maintenance facilities will require a significant increase in bay space as well as modifications/improvements to existing bays and cranes.

INSTALLATION CONCERNS/ISSUES

- Fort Bliss leadership is concerned about the loss of an operational Patriot brigade to Fort Sill. They do not believe that the recommendation considered sufficiently the requirements for strategic deployment and training.

- Fort Bliss leadership believes that the certified data undervalued the airspace capacity at Fort Bliss.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS/ISSUES

- During a visit with Congressman Reyes and his staff, the El Paso community leadership presented the BRAC staff with evidence to support their claim that Fort Bliss has sufficient water resources to accommodate the growth of soldiers and families resulting from the recommendation.

- The community of El Paso has been planning for the growth of Fort Bliss for approximately 2 years. It has a well-developed plan for growth and both developers and city officials have been working closely to prepare for the increased soldier and family population.

REQUESTS FOR STAFF AS A RESULT OF VISIT:

The staff will conduct analysis and assessments as a result of the visit. The staff will continue to refine the assessments of maneuverable acres, with respect to airspace, environmental restrictions, and types of terrain for all installations.