

NewsNotes

from the

China Lake Defense Alliance

China Lake Defense Alliance: committed to preserving China Lake as a full-spectrum weapon system RDT&E and training resource for the armed forces of the United States and our allies throughout the free world

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CHINA LAKE TO BE NAVY'S INTEGRATED WEAPONS RDAT&E CENTER

On 15 September 2005, President Bush approved and sent to Congress recommendations by the BRAC Commission. The Commission had accepted four Defense Department recommendations affecting China Lake and rejected one. Under the BRAC guidelines, Congress has 45 congressional business days to pass a joint resolution rejecting the Commission recommendations. Otherwise, the recommendations will become law and must be carried out by the end of 2011.

Recommendations affecting China Lake that were accepted by the BRAC Commission are:

Disestablish the Aircraft Intermediated Maintenance Center at China Lake and relocate maintenance and workload capacity to a newly established Fleet Readiness Center at Lemoore Naval Air Station, CA.

Realign China Lake by relocating gun and ammunition research, development and acquisition to Picatinny Arsenal, NJ.

Create a Naval Integrated Weapons and Armaments Research, Development, Acquisition, Test & Evaluation (RDAT&E) Center at China Lake. Weapons and Armaments RDAT&E functions and jobs at seven locations (Dahlgren, VA; Patuxent River, MD; Indian Head, MD; Crane, IN; Point Mugu, CA; Port Hueneme, CA; and Seal Beach, CA) would be relocated to China Lake.

Consolidate fixed-wing aircraft live-fire testing at China Lake by relocating function and jobs from Wright Patterson AFB, OH, to China Lake.

The rejected recommendation:

Realign Point Mugu by relocating sensors, electronic warfare, and electronics RDAT&E to China Lake.

The creation of the Naval Weapons and Armaments RDAT&E Center will account for most of the new jobs. In addition to the impact of the jobs on the community, the BRAC decision is extremely important to the Navy and China Lake. For the first time the Navy will have a single center responsible

for new weapons, and that center will be China Lake.

The relocation of electronic warfare work to China Lake would have accounted for up to 379 direct jobs had it been accepted. Although rejection was a disappointment to local community volunteers, the Commission was concerned about loss of support to troops in combat during the transition. The China Lake Defense Alliance argued that present programs, such as the EA-6B Prowler electronic warfare aircraft project, could continue at Point Mugu while a team was being reassembled at China Lake for the newer EA-18E and Joint Strike Fighter programs. The BRAC six-year implementation period could accommodate the transition, and the Navy would be much better situated with a consolidated aircraft integration team for the more highly integrated systems of the future.

In support of the decision to reject the DOD recommendation, BRAC Commission Chairman Principi commented that the Navy could transition its electronic warfare RDAT&E to China Lake in the future without the need for a BRAC.

The direct job impact, based on numbers used in the BRAC analyses, would be a net gain for China Lake of 2,090. However, the actual number of new military and civilian direct employees will be less – an estimated 300 to 350 employees will stay at Point Mugu to operate the Sea Range, and numbers will vary for transfers from each facility based on the actual count at the time the relocation occurs. The numbers used in the BRAC analysis were based on the job count on September 30, 2003, and new numbers will be negotiated at the time actual transfers are assigned within the six-year BRAC implementation period. Finally, the actual number of direct jobs will depend on the workload at implementation time.

The actual number of new arrivals to the Indian Wells Valley will be increased above the direct job count by support contractors associated with the work, by the families of the direct employees and contractors, and by community infrastructure growth to support the new arrivals.

The BRAC job counts assume that all of the affected employees will transfer, minus about 15 percent to account for consolidation efficiency improvements. In fact, experience has shown that we can expect that as many as two thirds of those asked to transfer will opt to retire or look for other work in their home area. Thus, the arrival of new residents to the Indian Wells Valley will not be in one sudden influx. Direct employees arrivals will occur in groups of varying size with the largest from Point Mugu-Port Hueneme at perhaps 500 to 700 and smaller numbers from other locations. Contractor arrivals will also vary greatly in size depending on individual contracts and the ability of the contractors to move employees. Over time, many new employees will also be recruited from universities and the job market to fill the remainder of the new positions.

EDITOR'S CORNER

Let's All Do Our Part

At last BRAC 2005 is nearing its end. President Bush has approved the BRAC Commission's recommendation, and members of Congress who are unhappy with the Commission's report will be hard-pressed to persuade a majority of their colleagues in both houses to vote to kill the process. We are almost home, and can breathe a sigh and get on with preparing our community to welcome new families to our area.

We in the China Lake Defense Alliance have been receiving congratulations from local citizens and we appreciate their kind words. It's nice to think that we had an impact in gaining recognition for China Lake by the BRAC decision makers, even though there is no way to measure how much that impact was. Of course many others played a major role—our elected representatives and their staffs at all levels of government and the contractors, businesses, and organizations of the Indian Wells Valley have earned our thanks.

We are fully aware, however, that the compelling reasons that China Lake was recognized by the Navy, Department of Defense, and independent BRAC Commission are the contributions made by China Lakers to national defense today, and the enormous potential to deliver new and even more effective systems to our armed forces tomorrow

through cutting edge technology. China Lake will be around for a long time because of the competence and “can do” spirit of the military-civilian team, the outstanding ranges and facilities, and yes, a community dedicated to supporting “our base.”

While we can feel a sense of pride in our base and satisfaction in the BRAC decisions, we should temper our enthusiasm just a bit. We need to remember that decisions we see as proper and appropriate are seen quite differently in the other communities where jobs are going to be lost. Hundreds of hard working, highly competent people are going to be asked to pack up their belongings, sell homes they poured their money and hearts into, and move their families to a place they have only heard about. Thoughtless comments by Congressman Gallegly about “godforsaken Kern Country” and China Lake being “a place that makes

Siberia look like a resort” could only heighten the fears of those being asked to move.

Let’s plan on helping the newcomers to feel welcome and to learn what a great community they’re joining. We need to develop a newcomers program with long-range planning, preparation of materials on the community, and means for helping new arrivals fit in. We need to involve the city and county, the Chamber of Commerce, local realtors and developers, service clubs and all the people who make our community a great place to live. The City of Ridgecrest and Kern County have already begun the initial planning, and the city and IWV 2000 are beginning to make plans for community-wide strategic planning sessions. Let’s all do our part as we did in supporting China Lake in BRAC.

Our goal in *NewsNotes* is to inform you of the BRAC process as it progresses and of how we are doing in supporting China Lake’s future. We want *NewsNotes* to be interesting and useful to everyone who has a stake in the continued success of China Lake. Comments and suggestions from readers will be appreciated.

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