

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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PREDATORS AT CHINA LAKE

In an era of joint-service cooperation, it's not unusual for an Air Force FAC (forward-air-controller) to be calling in a Hellfire missile strike against a target on a Navy range.

But what was unusual in one such airstrike recently was that while the Air Force FAC was lasing the target from amidst the creosote bushes on the Land Range at China Lake, the pilot who launched the Hellfire was sitting at a computer console 150 miles away in Indian Springs, Nevada.

Serving the Tactical Community . . .

The successful strike was part of a three-day operational test involving the MQ-1—a weaponized Predator A unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV).

The MQ-1 is a combat-seasoned hunter/killer vehicle. Equipped with a pair of Hellfire missiles and a multispectral targeting system with a laser designator, it has been used against enemy targets in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In the first day of testing at China Lake, the MQ-1 pushed the edge of its operational envelope with a high-altitude, high-off-boresight-angle launch. On the second day, the Air Force FAC performed his mission, calling in a strike on a stationary tank.

The third day's training was against a moving target. A tank, remotely controlled from the China Lake Range Control Center, towed the armored-personnel-carrier target.

In this strike, as in the two previous launches, the Hellfire missile unerringly found its mark.

All the MQ-1s took off from their home base at Indian Springs, flew to China Lake, completed their missions under control of the Indian Springs operators, and returned to Indian Springs—a first for this type of testing.

. . . and the Developmental Community

The following week, the Land Range hosted a test series for the Air Force's Big Safari Systems Group, the program office for Predator A and Predator B (MQ-9).

The MQ-9 is more than four times heavier and double the wingspan of MQ-1, can carry a heftier payload, and has a larger suite of sensors.

Two missions were flown under the control of a pilot in the Air Force ground control station at Armitage Field, and six weapons were launched.

In one mission the MQ-9 conducted the first dual release of two GBU-12 500-pound laser-guided bombs. The targets were lased by an MQ-1 flying in tandem with the MQ-9—a technique known as “buddy lasing.”

All weapons events were, in the words of Bob Francis, Test Manager for UAV/UCAV Projects, “extremely successful.”

The integration tests were supported by the comprehensive data gathering and recording assets of the NAVAIR Range Department.

Services Working Together

Indian Springs Auxiliary Field, near Las Vegas, is the tactics development center for all military UAVs, the site of the Air Force’s UAV Battle Lab, and home to the Air Force’s three Predator A squadrons.

UAVs from Indian Springs conduct most of their training on the nearby Nellis Air Force Base Bombing and Gunnery Range.

When they need to use live ordnance at a greater altitudes and standoff ranges than permitted at Nellis, the China Lake ranges are only 150 miles away.

The Future Becomes Present

During WWII, Navy pilots in propeller-driven fighter aircraft were firing unguided rockets on China Lake’s ranges. Sixty years later, unmanned aerial vehicles are launching laser-guided weapons against remotely controlled moving targets on those same ranges.

As weapons and platforms continue to evolve, the China Lake ranges will be ready to host their developmental testing and training. It’s all part of a commitment to provide dominant combat power for the warfighter.

NAVY WEAPONS AND ARMAMENT RDAT&E CENTER

Rumsfeld Recommends Consolidating Weapons Work at China Lake

In his BRAC recommendations released on 13 May 2005, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld proposed that a Weapons and Armament Research, Development, Acquisition, and Test and Evaluation (RDAT&E) Center be created at the Naval Air Weapons Station, China Lake. With some notable exceptions, China Lake would become the Navy’s home for weapons development and test. Similar centers would be created for the Air Force at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, and the Army at Redstone Arsenal, Alabama.

Creation of the Weapons and Armaments RD&A T&E Center at China Lake would entail the transfer of function and jobs from NSWC, Crane, Indiana; NSWC, Indian Head; Naval Base Ventura County Point Mugu Facility; Naval Weapons Station, Seal Beach, California; and NSWC, Dahlgren, Virginia.

China Lake would not house all weapon and armament RDAT&E: a joint services specialty center for gun and gun ammunition RDAT&E would be created at Picatinny Arsenal, New Jersey; an underwater weapons site would remain at NSWC, Dahlgren, Virginia; and an energetic-materials specialty site would remain at the Naval Surface Weapons Center (NSWC), Indian Head, Maryland.

The energetic materials work that is currently being done at China Lake would remain at China Lake. Energetic materials are the basic chemical compounds used to make warheads and solid propellant rocket motors.

The Naval Air Systems Command Program Executive Offices and Program Managers, located at Patuxent River, Maryland, would not be moved to China Lake.

China Lake would pick up the air electronic warfare and electronics work presently located at the Point Mugu site of the Naval Base Ventura County. In the only recommendation involving joint service consolidation, China Lake would pick up responsibility for joint fixed-wing aircraft live fire

testing with the transfer of work from Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio.

China Lake would lose its fixed wing intermediate maintenance work with the transfer of jobs to Lemoore Naval Air Station and the transfer of China Lake's gun and ammunition work to Picatinny Arsenal.

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The numbers of jobs from each function and activity were not spelled out in the initial BRAC recommendation reports, but the net losses were 44 military and 14 civilians for a total of 58 persons, and the net gains were 198 military and 2,329 civilians for a total of 2,527 persons. The net impact for China Lake was a proposed gain of 2,469 jobs. Using standard multipliers, the Department of Defense estimates that an additional 3,129 indirect jobs (support contractors and community service jobs) would be created in the Indian Wells Valley. Assuming that the recommendations were fully carried out and the indirect job estimate were correct, 5,596 new jobs would appear in the Indian Wells Valley in the next 6 years or so.

Of course, we can't be certain that the Secretary of Defense's recommendations will be completely carried out. The BRAC Commission will review all of the realignments before forwarding its recommendations to the President in September. And beyond that, a lot can happen during the six years of BRAC implementation.

EDITOR'S CORNER **A Long, Hot Summer**

As we've said in earlier issues of *NewsNotes*, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld's announcement on closures and realignments is far from the end of the line, regardless of how China Lake appears to have fared. We can pause for a few minutes and feel good

about how well the base made out, and then its back to the grind to defend the Secretary's "decisions."

China Lake's net gain in the May 13th announcement was 2,469. Some mission and personnel were lost to Lemoore Naval Air Station and Picatinny Arsenal, and some were gained from Point Mugu, Patuxent River, Dahlgren, Indian Head, and Crane. That's good from our perspective. But not good from the perspective of the communities scheduled to lose people. And certainly not good to most of the employees who must make the decision to either pick up stakes and move, retire, or find another job.

In the excitement of the prospect of the arrival of many new families and the economic upturn associated with increased base employment, we should temper our enthusiasm a bit. Let's remember that the Secretary of Defense only recommends. The BRAC Commission will review and in turn make its own recommendations to the President, who has the opportunity to request changes. The Commission can modify BRAC realignment recommendations with a vote of 5 of its 9 members.

The BRAC Commission's power to make changes is only part of the equation that affects the number of people making moves. There are several other factors.

First, the recommendations are for the transfer of function, not jobs. The jobs in the scorecard we've seen are based on the number of employees at each site who were listed as performing the function to be moved at the beginning of October 2003. The data were old as of May 13th, 2005, and will further change as the work requirements for each function evolve over the next six years.

Second, the losing activity and community will be looking for ways to mitigate the potential losses. One way is for the affected community to appeal to the BRAC Commission, but there can also be attempts to redefine work and—as we saw in some cases with BRAC 1995—to simply stonewall the transfers. However, legislation for BRAC 2005 prevents the privatization ploy that was used to prevent the transfer of Naval Avionics Center employees from Indianapolis to China Lake in BRAC 1995.

Third, and perhaps most important, not all the affected employees will choose to transfer. Some will retire, some will leave federal service, and some will find other civil service jobs at the losing activity. China Lake management will then have to recruit replacements to the degree that the workload justifies.

History offers some insights with the absorption of Naval Ordnance Laboratory employees by China Lake in the 1970s. About 60 percent of the Corona employees chose to move to Ridgecrest. Circumstances are different now, but it's a data point. It is worth noting that the Corona arrivals were integrated completely into the China Lake

work force, including management, producing a Technical Director and key Department Head.

All this is not to say that we shouldn't look forward to a major injection of new people and a spurt in the economy. We just need to maintain a little perspective.

Of course to many of us, the big news is that China Lake will be recognized as the sole source of weapons and armaments for the Navy, not one of several scattered about the country. That's not only good news for Ridgecrest and the Indian Wells Valley, it's good news for the Navy and the country.

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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