

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

CONSTRUCTION OF A U.S. ARMY RESERVE CENTER AND IMPLEMENTATION OF BRAC 05 REALIGNMENT ACTIONS IN ALLENTOWN-BETHLEHEM, PENNSYLVANIA

On September 8, 2005, the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (“BRAC Commission”) recommended that certain realignment actions occur in the Allentown-Bethlehem, PA area. These recommendations were approved by the President on September 23, 2005, and forwarded to Congress. Congress did not alter any of the BRAC Commission’s recommendations, and on November 9, 2005, the recommendations became law. The BRAC Commission’s recommendations must now be implemented as provided for in the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-510), as amended.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District, has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) which identifies, documents, and evaluates the environmental effects of the BRAC Commission’s recommended realignment of functions in the Allentown-Bethlehem, PA area. The EA has been developed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) and implementing regulations issued by the President’s Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)¹ and Environmental Analysis of Army Actions, 32 CFR Part 651. The 2006 Base Realignment Closure Manual for Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act was used for guidance in preparing the EA. The purpose of the EA is to inform decision makers and the public of the likely environmental consequences of the proposed action and alternatives.

1.0 PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action is to implement the BRAC Commission’s recommendation, as mandated by BRAC law, Public Law 101-510, by acquiring land and constructing new facilities to accommodate the personnel and functions of organizations realigning and relocating in the Allentown-Bethlehem, PA area.

The BRAC Commission’s recommendations are²:

“Close the Wilson Kramer United States Army Reserve Center in Bethlehem, PA, and the United States Army Reserve Organizational Maintenance Shop in Bethlehem, PA, and relocate units to a new United States Army Reserve Center with an organizational maintenance facility in the Allentown/Bethlehem, PA, area if the Army is able to acquire suitable land for the construction of the facilities.”

To implement these recommendations, the following new facilities are proposed for construction:

U.S. Army Reserve Center (USARC) and supporting facilities. The proposed USARC would provide an approximately 39,386 square feet (SF), 200-member training facility with administrative, educational, assembly, library, learning center, vault, weapons simulator, and physical fitness areas for six Army Reserve units. Associated support facilities include an approximately 5,097 SF Organizational Maintenance Shop (OMS), and an approximately 1,369 SF unheated storage building. In addition, there would be approximately 1.65 acres of paved areas including 0.69 acres of military equipment parking (MEP) areas and 0.96 acres of privately-owned vehicle (POV) parking areas and access roads.

Personnel. Implementing the BRAC Commission’s recommendations would result in the total assignment of approximately 228 personnel to the new USARC, 208 of whom are reservists and 20 of whom are full-time personnel, though none of these personnel would be permanently moving into the region of influence. Each of the

¹ Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act, 40 CFR Parts 1500–1508.

² The BRAC recommendation does not indicate a geographic limit to the Allentown/Bethlehem area. During the site selection process, the Army limited the scope of potential sites to within a 15 mile radius of both Allentown and Bethlehem, PA.

six units will be drilling on one of three weekends each month, meaning that not all personnel will be using the facilities on the same weekend. The maximum number of personnel using the facilities on a drill weekend would be approximately 153.

Vehicles. The relocation and realignment of reserve units to the proposed USARC would also bring associated unit vehicles, equipment, and materials. The total number of vehicles that would relocate to the USARC is projected to be approximately 89, including 40 wheeled vehicles, 49 trailers, and 0 tracked vehicles.

2.0 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

CEQ regulations require inclusion of the No Action alternative. The No Action alternative serves as a baseline against which the impacts of the Proposed Action and alternatives can be evaluated. Under the No Action Alternative the Army would not implement the Proposed Action. The six Army Reserve units would continue to train at and operate from their current location with current facilities which are outdated, inadequate, and inefficient; though routine replacement or renovation actions could occur through normal military maintenance and construction procedures as circumstances independently warrant.

The No Action alternative is evaluated in detail in this EA to provide the baseline prescribed by CEQ regulations; nevertheless, since Public Law 101-510, as amended, mandates implementation of the BRAC Commission's recommendations, the No Action alternative analyzed in the EA cannot be selected and subsequently implemented.

The U.S. Army considered and analyzed one other alternative, the Preferred Alternative – Fort James III Subdivision. Under the Preferred Alternative, the U.S. Army would construct the USARC facilities described in the Proposed Action on an approximately 8.6-acre parcel of land located within the Fort James III Subdivision in Forks Township, Northampton County PA approximately 11 miles northeast of Bethlehem, PA.

Other alternatives were considered, but not analyzed in the EA. These included seven other new construction sites located within 15 miles of Allentown and Bethlehem, PA. These other alternatives were considered not feasible to implement the Proposed Action and were therefore dismissed from further analysis.

3.0 FACTORS CONSIDERED IN DETERMINING THAT AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT IS NOT REQUIRED

The EA, which is incorporated by reference into this Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI), identified and examined potential effects of the alternatives. The EA evaluated 12 resource areas and areas of environmental and socioeconomic concern: land use, aesthetic and visual resources, air quality, noise, geology and soils, water resources, biological resources, cultural resources, socioeconomics, transportation, utilities, and hazardous and toxic substances.

The EA determined that implementation of the proposed realignment actions would not have any significant adverse effects or impacts on any of the environmental or related resource areas at the Preferred Alternative site or on areas surrounding the site. All of the resource areas evaluated resulted in a No Effect or a No Significant Effect determination.

None of the predicted effects of the proposed realignment actions would result in significant impacts; therefore, mitigation is not required, and implementation of the Proposed Action will not require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement. Therefore, preparation of a FNSI is appropriate.

4.0 PUBLIC COMMENT

Interested parties were invited to review and comment on the EA and Draft FNSI from March 6, 2009 through April 4, 2009. A Notice of Availability was published on March 6 and 7, 2009 in The Morning Call newspaper.

The EA and Draft FNSI were made available during the public comment period on the World Wide Web at:

http://www.hqda.army.mil/acsim/brac/env_review.htm

The EA and Draft FNSI were also available for review during the public comment at the following local libraries:

Allentown Public Library – Main Branch
1210 Hamilton St.
Allentown, PA 18102

Bethlehem Area Public Library – Main Library
11 West Church St
Bethlehem, PA 18018

Comments on the EA and Draft FNSI were submitted during the 30-day public comment period via mail, fax, or electronic mail to:

Ms. Mona Garrett
99th Regional Readiness Command
99 Soldiers Lane
Coraopolis, PA 15108-2550
fax: (412) 604-8156
email: mona.garrett@usar.army.mil

[XX] comments were received on the EA and the Draft FNSI during the 30-day public comment period.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Based on the EA, it has been determined that implementing the Proposed Action will have no significant direct, indirect, or cumulative adverse effects on the quality of the natural or human environment. Because no significant environmental impacts will result from implementing the Proposed Action, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required and will not be prepared.

Date: _____

William Monk III
Major General, U.S. Army
99th Regional Support Command
Commanding General

[This page left intentionally blank]