

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

CONSTRUCTION OF AN ARMED FORCES RESERVE CENTER COMPLEX AND IMPLEMENTATION OF BRAC 05 REALIGNMENT ACTIONS IN NIAGARA FALLS, NEW YORK

On September 8, 2005, the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (“BRAC Commission”) recommended that certain realignment actions occur in Niagara Falls, New York. 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 reserve functions in Niagara Falls, NY. 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 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 constructing new facilities to accommodate the personnel and functions of organizations realigning and relocating in Niagara Falls, NY

Specific BRAC Commission recommendations include:²

- Close the United States Army Reserve Center [USARC] and Army Maintenance Support Activity, Niagara Falls, NY and construct a new Armed Forces Reserve Center [AFRC] on the existing site or on the former Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station [ARS], if a suitable site is available, in Niagara Falls, NY. The new AFRC shall have the capability to accommodate the NY National Guard [NYARNG] units from the Niagara Falls Readiness Center, if the state of New York decides to relocate those National Guard units.

To implement these recommendations, the following new facilities are proposed for construction at the Niagara Falls ARS:

Armed Forces Reserve Center Complex and supporting facilities. The AFRC would provide a 600-member training facility with administrative, educational, assembly, library, learning center, vault, and weapons simulator areas for 12 U.S. Army Reserve units and one NYARNG unit. The AFRC would be approximately 71,720 square feet (ft²) in size. Associated support facilities include an approximately 17,476 ft² Organizational Maintenance Shop (OMS)/Area Maintenance Support Activity (AMSA), an approximately 4,886 ft² unheated storage building, and a Deployable Medical System (DEPMEDS). The DEPMEDS would consist of an approximately 1-acre site with a gravel surface, fencing, lighting, and electrical outlets. The AFRC complex would also include approximately 22,167 square yards (sy) of paved areas including military equipment parking (MEP) areas, privately-owned vehicle (POV) parking areas, and access roads.

¹ Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act, 40 CFR Parts 1500–1508; Environmental Analysis of Army Actions, 32 CFR Part 651; and the U.S. Air Force equivalent, The Environmental Impact Analysis Process, 32 CFR 989.

² The BRAC Commission’s original recommendation stipulated that the AFRC be constructed on the existing USARC site. However, the BRAC Commission subsequently revised their recommendation and included the Niagara Falls ARS as a potential construction site to reflect the continuing availability of the ARS which had previously been recommended for closure.

Anti-terrorism/Force Protection (AT/FP) safety and security measures, including minimum stand-off distance from roads, parking areas and vehicle unloading areas, would be incorporated into the facility designs and siting, and accessibility for disabled persons would also be provided.

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 U.S. Army would not implement the Proposed Action. Units presently assigned to the Niagara Falls USARC would continue to train at and operate from their existing facilities and no new facilities would be built at Niagara Falls ARS. 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. Under the Preferred Alternative, the facilities would be constructed at the Niagara Falls ARS as described in the Proposed Action.

Other alternatives were considered, but not analyzed in the EA. These included (1) use of existing facilities at Niagara Falls USARC or Niagara Falls ARS, (2) new construction at the Niagara Falls USARC, (3) acquisition of new property; (3) leasing existing space off-base; and (4) new construction in locations other than those identified in the Preferred Alternative. 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 (FONSI), 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 (including environmental justice), 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 Niagara Falls ARS or on areas surrounding the installation. Potential effects associated with implementation of the realignment (preferred) alternative are expected to be negligible or minor. These impacts would be experienced in the following areas: land use, visual, air quality, noise, soils, water resources, biological resources, socioeconomics, transportation, utilities, hazardous materials, cumulative effects, and irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources.

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 FONSI is appropriate.

4.0 PUBLIC COMMENT

Interested parties were invited to review and comment on the EA and Draft FONSI from September 12, 2007 through October 11, 2007 and a Notice of Availability was published on September 12 and 13, 2007 in the *Niagara Gazette* newspaper.

The EA and Draft FONSI 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 FONSI were also available for review during the public comment period at the following library:

Niagara Falls Public Library
1425 Main Street
Niagara Falls, NY 14305

Reviewers were invited to submit comments on the EA and Draft FONSI during the public comment period via mail, fax, or electronic mail to:

914th AW Office of Public Affairs
2720 Kirkbridge Drive
Niagara Falls ARS, NY 14304-5001
Fax: (716) 236-3268
Email: 914AW/PA@niagarafalls.af.mil

No comments were received on the EA or Draft FONSI during the 30-day comment period.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Based on the EA, it has been determined that implementation of 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 implementation of the Proposed Action, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required and will not be prepared.

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REINHARD L. SCHMIDT
Colonel, U.S. Air Force Reserve
914th Air Wing
Commander