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★ The View from the Top

*p. 1*

★ Partners in BRAC

*p. 9, 13, 21*

★ BRAC Brings Dramatic Growth

*p. 24, 47, 59*

★ Realignments Bring Change of Identity

*p. 30, 37*



# The Military and Military City USA Combine to Make 2005 BRAC Recommendations a Reality

by *Deborah Seabron, Chief, Commander's Action Group, 502nd Mission Support Group, Fort Sam Houston*

The 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) recommendations became law on Sept. 15, 2005, starting the clock on a six-year implementation period that ends Sept. 15, 2011, meaning that all 182 BRAC actions are mandated under law to be complete by that date.

For Fort Sam Houston, September brings to a close the most intensive renovation and construction period in its 133-year history. The Fort Sam Houston BRAC construction project broke ground in 2007, leaving behind 6 million square feet of office and facility space, including a massive hospital and medical training center, a major

command headquarters, several totally renovated historic barracks and an ornate theater. The construction alone cost over \$2 billion, with a total positive economic impact estimated at \$8.3 billion through 2011. The BRAC growth is projected to add nearly \$5 billion annually in sales tax revenue to the local economy in the coming years. BRAC 2005 was the fifth round of BRAC and the largest one by far — exceeding the previous four combined in cost and impact. The previous four BRAC rounds disposed of excess property that a smaller, more agile post-Cold-War Defense community no longer needed. Those rounds had taken a

toll on San Antonio, closing Kelly Air Force Base in 1995.

This round, on the other hand, was intended to realign the Defense infrastructure and organization to better serve an operational force that has been transforming for 10 years to a smaller, modular and U.S.-based force. The BRAC Commission in 2005 recommended 182 worldwide actions with the intent to transform and rebalance the total force, active and reserve; contribute to joint operations and basing; accommodate the rebasing of overseas units; reduce cost and generate savings; and promote the well-being of Soldiers and their Families.

The new IMCOM Headquarters building on the left, architecturally mirrors the Southwest architecture of the former regimental barracks that house the rest of the command. The building to the right houses the new IMCOM G9—formerly FMWRC.



Of 182 BRAC recommendations, 19 impacted San Antonio and Fort Sam Houston. Where previous BRAC rounds had closed bases and returned over 200,000 acres to civilian communities, BRAC 2005 was about consolidating schools, headquarters and functions at fewer locations. Fort Sam Houston will double in population with an influx of 10,000 military and government Civilian Families relocating to San Antonio.

## Joint Base San Antonio

The BRAC Commission in 2005 recommended that some specific bases serve as home to more than one branch of the armed services. As a re-



The new Medical Education and Training Campus (METC) features several dormitories where students stay while training at Fort Sam Houston.

sult, BRAC 2005 consolidates operations, training and logistics at 12 joint bases with one of the military services assigned as the lead.

In San Antonio, that means Fort Sam Houston, Randolph Air Force Base and Lackland Air Force Base are elements of a joint base command with a separate base support wing at each installation. So Fort Sam Houston is now part of Joint Base San Antonio, with base services overseen by the 502nd Mission Support Group, which reports to the joint base wing which also resides at Fort Sam Houston.

According to a BRAC brochure published by the San Antonio Military Transformation Task Force, this joint installation will serve more DoD students than any other installation, hold more active runways than any other installation, host more widely diverse tenant units and house DoD's largest hospital.

#### **Four Medical Centers of Excellence**

The largest and most profound change at Fort Sam Houston is the establishment of the San Antonio Military Medical Center (SAMMC), which realigns the

inpatient medical function of the Air Force's Wilford Hall Medical Center (WHMC) to Fort Sam Houston's Brooke Army Medical Center (BAMC).

By September 2011, the new SAMMC will have absorbed all in-patient services from WHMC and will provide all in-patient tertiary care, as well as all trauma and emergency medical care. WHMC will be converted into a large ambulatory care center known as Wilford Hall Ambulatory Surgical Center (WHASC)

WHASC serves as a large, full-service ambulatory care center with se-



**Aerial view of the METC shows the instruction buildings where students will attend classes. This campus at Fort Sam Houston will train all the enlisted medical personnel in their basic health and healthcare courses.**

lected medical and surgical outpatient specialties servicing a large beneficiary and trainee population. WHASC offers ambulatory care services, primary care, and medical, pediatric, and surgical sub-specialty clinics.

Another major addition to the Fort Sam Houston medical community is the Joint Center of Excellence for Battlefield Health and Trauma Research, which integrates all of the combat casualty care research missions and functions from each service into a multi-faceted synergistic research center with a clinical foundation.

Fort Sam Houston also hosts the Medical Education and Training Campus (METC), which will train every enlisted military medic in the armed services. SAMMC will provide medical support to the METC popu-

lation, which includes primary care, dental, physical therapy, optometry, mental health and ancillary services for active-duty military personnel and their families. Military retirees may also receive healthcare services at the center. This new clinic will also treat additional personnel coming to San Antonio as part of other BRAC actions.

#### **Nonmedical Activities**

In the best spirit of joint basing, the Army's Installation Management Command (IMCOM) moves onto Fort Sam Houston in 2011, occupying three buildings of a fully renovated 1929 vintage regimental headquarters quadrangle, a new three-story office building, the renovated and enlarged post theater to house the Army Entertainment Division, including the Soldier Show, and a new structure that will house the Installation

Management Academy. All of the renovated and new buildings on the IMCOM campus meet at least LEED Silver standards for sustainable buildings. The IMCOM campus will be home to the IMCOM Headquarters, including the newly formed G9, created as a staff directorate from the former Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command in June 2011. IMCOM's subordinate Army Environmental Command will also occupy the IMCOM campus.

Another new occupant of Fort Sam Houston is the Mission Installation Contracting Command, with a mission of supporting combatant commanders with contract planning and execution throughout the force generation cycle.

#### **Regional Response to BRAC**

As the BRAC implementation effort comes to a close, several best practices have emerged from the effort. One in particular is the manner in which the DoD and city officials collaborated to ensure that all impacted areas would be provided accurate and timely information to make the critical decisions that guided BRAC to its successful conclusion.

In 2007, The San Antonio Military Transformation Task Force was created as a collaboration among the city of San Antonio, Bexar County and Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce to share information, assist the military in implementing BRAC, address any impacts on the community and leverage BRAC to strengthen the economy and revitalize existing neighborhoods.

To ensure that every area of concern was addressed, the MTTF established an array of committees to include:



- Workforce Development
- Outreach
- Real Estate/Development
- Military Medical Initiatives
- Defense Technology Cluster
- Construction Cluster
- Education
- BRAC Actions
- Public Utility/Energy
- Collaborative Partnerships

The chairs and committee members were appointed based on their knowledge and expertise in their respective areas.

The MTTF and the Fort Sam Houston Public Affairs and Base Transformation Office held numerous town hall meetings throughout the metropolitan area and on the installation to answer questions and alleviate concerns about upcoming construction, job openings and the general impact BRAC changes would have on the community as a whole.

Realizing the highway infrastructure was not adequate to enable easy access to the installation, the state stepped in to make improvements to the main entrance into Fort Sam Houston. Most notably, the Walters Street intersection with Interstate Highway 35 was upgraded with a major interchange featuring a wide overpass with access from all directions.

The Walters Street project was coordinated with Fort Sam Houston to ensure the right improvements were incorporated. The city also held a series of town hall meetings to make sure the public fully understood not only the planned improvements, but also the timeline in which the project would be completed. The improvement project (from IH-35 to the Fort Sam Houston

gate) is estimated to cost \$13 million and is scheduled to be completed in December 2011. Completion of the adjoining access control point is scheduled to be completed by February 2012.

Known as Military City USA, San Antonio has historically maintained a close relationship with its military residents. The history of San Antonio is closely linked to military history. The military bases located in San Antonio have trained, equipped and cared for America's fighting men and women as far back as the 19th century.

Some examples of how San Antonio and Fort Sam Houston disseminate information to the community include: -"BRAC Views from the Top" — This monthly newsletter answers readers' questions ranging from the status of construction projects to upcoming job opportunities. It allows citizens to voice their inquiries concerning BRAC initiatives, which are answered by the base command and staff. This newsletter is received by 13,000 households and is linked to the city's "Embrace BRAC" website.

-San Antonio Joint Program Office Newsletter — This newsletter provides "real-time" highlights of ongoing BRAC construction projects at all military installations located in the San Antonio area.

-Newcomer's Extravaganza — This event is held monthly and is mandatory within 60 days of arrival for all lieutenant colonels and below. Held the last Tuesday of the month, this event helps integrate new military families to the community. It provides information about services offered on the installation and from the civilian sources too.

This event is attended by city council representatives and advisors from the Texas Workforce Commission.

Today, as the 2005 BRAC implementation nears an end, it is clear that this massive undertaking would not have been as successful without the joint efforts of the military and civilian communities.



Deborah Seabron is the Chief of the 502nd Mission Support Group, Commander's Action Group, Fort Sam Houston, TX. She has more than 34 years of federal service with experience in comptrollership, logistics and Lean Six Sigma. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting from the University of the Incarnate Word, a Master's Degree in Quality Systems Management from the National Graduate School, and is a PhD Candidate at Our Lady of the Lake University, San Antonio, TX.

Visit San Antonio's Embrace BRAC website for much more information about BRAC 2005 in San Antonio. The web address is:

<http://www.embracebrac.org/>, or use this QR code:

