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AIR FORCE ANNOUNCES PLANS FOR BASE REALIGNMENT AND REDUCTION STUDIES

Secretary of the Air Force Thomas C. Reed today announced several proposed management actions to maximize combat effectiveness through additional reductions in overhead and support costs.

In announcing plans to undertake formal study of a number of base reduction and realignment actions, Secretary Reed said, "These proposed actions to streamline our organization and reduce overhead will permit allocation of additional resources to force modernization and investment in added combat capabilities for future security needs."

According to the Air Force Secretary, these candidate studies could lead to actions that, if completely implemented, would result in support cost savings of approximately \$150 million per year. Secretary Reed stated that these savings could allow us to accelerate actions toward modernizing and maintaining our qualitative technological edge. "For example, the \$150 million annual savings equates to the annual cost of operating nine F-16 fighter squadrons or 13 A-10 squadrons. In general terms, the realignment and reduction actions proposed will contribute significantly to overall Air Force objectives and priorities."

Today's announcement initiates a detailed study process to analyze the effects of closing or reducing the status of five major bases. Three of the bases -- Craig AFB, Alabama; Kincheloe AFB, Michigan; and Webb AFB, Texas -- will be examined to determine the impacts of closure, and two, Richards-Gebaur AFB, Missouri, and Loring AFB, Maine, will be examined to determine the impacts of major activity reductions. At Loring, this would be accomplished by inactivation of the Strategic Air Command (SAC) bomb wing. At Richards-Gebaur the scale-down would be by relocation of Air Force Communications Service Headquarters, and contracting only those residual support activities necessary to sustain the remaining Air Force Reserve mission elements there and to provide protection and maintenance for Air Force real property.

For all but Richards-Gebaur, today's announcement is the first step in the process of compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) that will result in a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

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prior to a decision on each candidate action. At Richards-Gebaur this process and an EIS are already underway and have been announced previously.

The procedures for this study process entail a detailed evaluation of the possible environmental impact of candidate realignment actions and of those alternatives that may be developed. The Air Force will prepare draft environmental impact statements for any major actions which could significantly affect the quality of the human environment. This will include consideration of such environmental factors as pollution, population and traffic conditions, and the socio-economic impact of such realignments on employment, housing, public schools, recreational activities, etc. These statements will be filed with the Council on Environmental Quality and disseminated to all interested agencies, activities, and parties for comment. Notice of the availability of the draft EIS will also be published in the Federal Register along with appropriate information guidance as prescribed by regulations.

Comments will be solicited on the draft EIS. Those received will be evaluated and considered in the final EIS. The final EIS will be filed with the Council on Environmental Quality and announced in the Federal Register.

Other minor base realignment actions have already been subjected to environmental assessments in accordance with NEPA as a part of the regular Air Force decision-making process. In the case of the following listing, assessments have been made and no significant environmental impact has been identified. Nevertheless, the Department of Defense has determined that a 30-day waiting period will be observed on these minor actions to allow for public comment prior to their final implementation.

-- Inactivate the 17th Bomb Wing at Beale AFB, California; and transfer in U-2 operations from Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona, thereby combining U-2 and SR-71 operations at Beale.

-- Place SAC "satellite" units on stand-by status at Malmstrom AFB, Montana; MacDill AFB, Florida; Sheppard AFB, Texas; Whiteman AFB, Missouri; McGuire AFB, New Jersey; Little Rock AFB, Arkansas; Columbus AFB, Mississippi; and inactivate the satellite operation at Glasgow AFB, Montana, and shut down Air Force activities at that location.

-- Transfer the Environmental Health Laboratories from Kelly AFB, Texas, and McClellan AFB, California, and the Radiological Health Laboratory from Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, to Brooks AFB, Texas.

-- Convert the 354th Tactical Fighter Wing at Myrtle Beach AFB, South Carolina, from A-7 to A-10 aircraft.

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-- Convert the 64th Fighter Weapons Squadron at Nellis AFB, Nevada, from T-38 to F-5 aircraft, and transfer the A-10 Operational Test and Evaluation mission and six aircraft from Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona, to Nellis.

-- Modernize Air National Guard tactical fighter and reconnaissance forces by re-equipping units stationed at Tuscon International Airport, Arizona; Des Moines Municipal Airport, Iowa; Sioux City Municipal Airport, Iowa; Standiford Field, Kentucky; Niagara Falls International Airport, New York; Hector Field, North Dakota; and Joe Foss Field, South Dakota.

-- Transfer KC-135 tankers from SAC to Air Reserve Forces units at March AFB, California; Mather AFB, California; and McGuire AFB, New Jersey.

In addition, the Air Force will study the transfer of KC-135s from SAC to Air Reserve Forces units at Greater Pittsburgh International Airport, Pennsylvania; McGhee-Tyson Airport, Knoxville, Tennessee; General Billy Mitchell Field, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Sky Harbor International Airport, Phoenix, Arizona; and Chicago-O'Hare International Airport, Illinois.

The Air Force also announced that 125 civilian manpower positions will be eliminated at the Rome Air Development Center, Griffiss AFB, New York.

The package of major candidate study actions announced today, and the method of announcement, reflect the full integration of the provisions of NEPA into the DoD decision-making process. As a result, this announcement of candidate installation actions is being made early in the decision process, and much of the definitive information available in previous base closure or reduction announcements is not yet available.

Comments on the environmental effects of any of the actions outlined in this announcement should be addressed to the Special Assistant for Environmental Quality, SAF/ILE, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, Washington, DC, 20330.

In addition to the continuing drive to reduce overhead and support costs, other factors leading to today's announcement are the lowered force levels since Vietnam, reduced training requirements and the need for consolidation of training activities, force improvements and realignments, and modernization of the Air Reserve Forces.

Other recent actions announced by the Air Force to streamline the organization and reduce overhead and support costs include the disestablishment of Headquarters Command and the realignment of the Tactical Air Control System.

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During the last decade, the Air Force has reduced total manpower assigned to headquarters functions by 50 per cent, while overall strength has been reduced by more than a third.

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