

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

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BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
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ON BRAC 2005 AND FORT BELVOIR, VIRGINIA

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Introduction

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I am pleased to appear before you to discuss the Army's Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Master Plan for Fort Belvoir, Virginia. We appreciate the opportunity to present to you the Army's plan for implementing BRAC 2005 at Fort Belvoir. We would like to start by thanking you for your support to our Soldiers, families and civilians at Fort Belvoir. They are and will continue to be an integral part of the local community and they could not perform their many missions so successfully without your steadfast support.

Base Realignment and Closure

In 1988, Congress established the first Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission to ensure a timely, independent, and fair process for closing and realigning military installations. Since then, the Army has successfully executed four rounds of base closures to reduce and realign military infrastructure to meet the current security environment and force structure requirements. BRAC 2005 will be no exception.

Base Realignment and Closure 2005

In September of 2005, the BRAC 2005 Commission recommended to the President relocation of Department of Defense organizations out of high-cost leased space, with inadequate force protection, to government-owned space on secure military installations. Many of these recommendations required relocation of organizations within the National Capital Region. With land available for expansion, Fort Belvoir became the installation of choice for many of those relocations. Now that the BRAC 2005 recommendations are law, we face the challenge of determining how to accommodate the approximately 22,000 additional personnel moving to Fort Belvoir by Sept 15, 2011.

The Army awarded a contract to formulate a master plan that emphasized architectural and urban planning, program management, and strategic communications for community outreach. The contract team, named Belvoir New Vision Planners, set out to produce a Master Plan that would benefit the Army and everyone within the Northern Virginia community touched by BRAC. We acknowledged in the beginning of this process that key to the success of executing BRAC 2005 at Fort Belvoir was close coordination with local communities and the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Master Plan effort included extensive community outreach to all levels of government to ensure that Army needs were met and Commonwealth and local concerns addressed.

The initial task was to establish preliminary siting for the new tenants moving to Fort Belvoir as part of BRAC in conjunction with location of the National Museum of the United States [Army](#). The Army set out with these ideals in mind: create an achievable vision, provide a model for all installations, create a responsible and sustainable strategy, and foster community developments. The primary challenges to be addressed in the siting were transportation, environment, security, utilities, development, constructability, implementation, and cost.

In addition to the Master Plan, the Army is conducting an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The statutory timeline to complete BRAC by September 2011 requires that the EIS and Master Plan be conducted concurrently. Since the Master Plan depends on determination of the environmental impact of the proposed action, no final siting will be determined until after the signing of the Record of Decision scheduled for June 30, 2007. The EIS analysis, however, cannot be conducted without a land use plan and proposed alternatives, including a preferred plan, from the master planners. This was Belvoir New Vision Planner's immediate task.

The Army issued the Notice to Proceed on March 31, 2006, to Belvoir New Vision Planners who spent the next three months in an intensive effort to gather requirements and concerns. At the Army's direction, they gathered relevant information from Fort Belvoir, future tenants, local and Commonwealth officials and planners, private citizen's groups, and the Virginia Congressional Delegation. It was clear that while there were a myriad of issues to address, primary on the list was transportation concerns.

With this data in hand, the planners presented three siting options for consideration. The options were evaluated, along with input from all stakeholders including the local community, based on the following criteria: community impact, transportation, real estate issues, cost, environmental concerns, implementation capability, infrastructure, and security. I want to assure you that issues that affect the local community were of utmost concern. Each option had advantages and disadvantages, but it was clear that development on Fort Belvoir's Engineer Proving Ground would mitigate transportation problems by keeping traffic away from badly congested U.S. Route 1. By placing much of the population on the Engineer Proving Ground, we will lessen the total miles that new Fort Belvoir tenants will have to travel on local roads. Its proximity to Springfield and Interstate-95 would also encourage ridesharing and use of public transportation. While transportation will be a challenge regardless of where development takes place, it is clear we can lessen the impact by utilizing the Engineer Proving Ground.

The Fairfax County supervisors, however, expressed concerns about concentrating all the traffic on Engineer Proving Ground – they feel dispersal would be a better alternative. The Army agreed and this led to the option to locate some of the tenants on the main post.

During preliminary studies, the planners identified approximately \$626 million of local transportation projects that were called “must haves” for implementation of the plan. Much of this estimate is due to pre-existing transportation requirements in the region. In addition, the Commonwealth of Virginia has already fully funded or partially funded three of these projects. It is clear that significant traffic infrastructure projects will be needed. The Army will do its best to address mitigation of traffic congestion due to BRAC moves in our planning process. We know this is one of the primary considerations that we must address throughout the NEPA process. The community’s traffic concerns are the Army’s traffic concerns.

During the initial siting, Belvoir New Vision Planners identified a parcel of land owned by General Services Administration (GSA) and used as a warehouse in very close proximity to the Springfield Metro and Engineer Proving Ground. This was considered in initial siting options. This property is fully occupied and utilized by the GSA and its tenants. After contacting GSA, we determined that the cost to acquire the property and relocate tenants along with the significant time involved made this option prohibitive. Moreover, since the GSA site is not a part of Fort Belvoir, it could not be used for BRAC actions.

Another concern is the siting for the National Museum of the United States Army. The original proposal for the Museum was Pence Gate, and many in the local community opposed the preliminary siting at Engineer Proving Ground. We attempted to place all assets we could on the main post of Fort Belvoir without undue impacts on traffic or land. Unfortunately, the Museum’s needs for flexibility required acreage larger than what is available at Pence Gate. While the scope of the Museum is still under discussion, I want to emphasize that the future National Museum of the United States Army will be a fitting tribute to the men and women who have made great sacrifices for our Army. This will not be an

amusement park.

In conclusion, the Army has made no final siting decisions. Rather, we have identified a plan that may meet our needs and is sufficient for the next level of review under NEPA. During the next phase, the environmental impact of the preferred plan and all other reasonable alternatives will be analyzed. The Army will prepare a draft EIS which we will make available to the public for comment January 2007. The NEPA process may result in modification of the preferred plan or select a different option as a preferred alternative. Following a public hearing and comment period, the Army will release a final version of the EIS for additional public comment.

I want to assure you, we will fully engage the public before any final decision is made. Again, it is our desire and intent to meet the requirements of BRAC 2005 while working to accommodate the concerns of the local community and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today and for your continued support in helping Fort Belvoir expand and remain as an integral, relevant partner in the region.