



COMMENTS

National Commission on the Future of the Army
September 24, 2015

Dear Commissioners the Honorable Mr. Lamont, General Stultz, Sergeant Major of the Army Chandler, thank you for taking on this monumental task before you which critical to the future security and prosperity of our nation.

I am Tom Pierson, President and CEO, Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber. Thank you also for this opportunity to comment on the future structure of the Army.

Our comments address the specific issues of national and international interests to the NCFR, but focused on our perspective and expertise of our local area.

JBLM performs an indispensable role in attaining the strategic objective of defense of the nation and its role should be incorporated into this analysis as Army responds to the sequestration imposed by Congress.

The Pacific Rim Region is a vibrant and dynamic economic and geographic area comprising over 48 percent of world trade, 58 percent of world GDP, and approximately 44 percent of the world's population.

And, significantly, the Pacific is host to six of the world's 10 largest armies.

LOCATION –LOCATION-LOCATION

The physical assets that make our region as very attractive as a logistical hub are relevant both to our Puget Sound as an international trading center and transshipment point as they are to military power projection.

I Corps alignment with the US Pacific Command means that I Corps and the brigades on JBLM are keys to the nation's "Rebalance". JBLM and the Puget Sound area provide a robust expeditionary capability to execute this shift. As the nation's premier West Coast power projection platform, it reaps benefits from proximity as a power projection platform adjacent to air, rail and sea hubs and the excellent military training areas at JBLM itself and at the Yakima Training Center (YTC).

JBLM as the closest installation to multiple Power Projection assets for overseas deployments than any other major installation.

The earth, as we know, is a sphere (more accurately, a *spheroid*). The shortest distance between two points is a straight line, right? If you want to fly, boat, bike, or drive, following a straight line saves time and money.

Vessels from as far south as Panama travel almost due North to join the arc that is followed by ships from Puget Sound, while the distances is far less to Manila on the Asiatic side via Yokohama and the Great Circle than by any other route.

JBLM is:

- Proximate to the National Strategic Port-Port of Tacoma and its companion ports in Seattle and Olympia.
- The Ports of Tacoma and Seattle have formed the Seaport Alliance, making their maritime operations the 3rd largest regional port.
- The Ports of Seattle and Tacoma collectively have nine marine terminals that handle international container traffic – five in Tacoma and four in Seattle – with about 6.7 million TEUs of annual capacity in total.
- Complementing deployment, training and regional emergency response are the two MARAD ships at Sperry Ocean Terminal in the Port of Tacoma.

The same is true of commercial airplanes – and military cargo aircraft like the C-17s at JBLM-McChord Field.

- The joint base with the C-17s of the 62nd AW and 446th AW at JBLM-McChord Field is a magnificent deployment center.
- The region is serviced further by Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, King County (Boeing) Airport and Payne Field.
- Serviced by two transcontinental railroads: BNSF and Union Pacific.

Yakima Training Center provides training support for transient units and organizations by sustaining training lands, range complexes, and support facilities in order to enhance readiness. The installation's customers include not only the Joint Base Lewis-McChord and Army National Guard units, but also Special Operations Command, Marine Corps, Air Force, Navy, and Coast Guard units, plus local and federal Law Enforcement and allied forces from Canada and Japan.

The 327,000- acre installation provides an ideal environment for military training and enables the Yakima Training Center to continue as the military's premier training destination in the Pacific Northwest. The recent decision not to list the sage grouse as an endangered species secures the future use of YTC for a year-round training facility.

After well over a decade of conflict and numerous deployments, the “Rebalance to the Pacific” is important to our nation and to our Army, and JBLM has and will continue to be an important part of the Army’s deployable and homeland force structure.

Not all the congestion on our region’s transportation is due to JBLM, and much of it will occur anyway as Interstate 5 (I-5) is the West Coast’s major highway transportation backbone from Vancouver, B.C. to Tijuana, Mexico. It is the only U.S. highway that touches both Canada and Mexico and it continues as national highways in both those countries.

Nonetheless, state and local governments have partnered with the Federal government to invest millions of dollars of transportation and infrastructure improvements to help serve JBLM. Significant improvements already have been made and more projects are underway.

Separately, federal agencies, the state and local governments have already committed to the I-5/JBLM Corridor:

- \$5.7 million for Madigan Army Medical Center access via I-5
- \$15 million for JBLM Corridor's I-5 traffic improvements
- \$500,000 for I-5/SR 512 Interchange improvements

Our Legislature has in the immediate past legislative session passed the 2015 Transportation Package which funding for the I-5 Corridor along JBLM (I-5/Mounts Rd. Interchange on the south to the I-5/Bridgeport Interchange on the north.)

- \$497.4 million is dedicated to JBLM Corridor improvements
- \$200,000 is budgeted for an I-5/JBLM to S. 38th Street HOV lane feasibility study

In the worldwide logistics infrastructure facilitating international commerce and the shipment of goods and equipment, the Transportation Package will provide funding for increased I-5 capacity along the Port of Tacoma corridor to accommodate military movements:

- \$150 million appropriated for I-90/SR 18 interchange improvements which will assist military traffic movement over Snoqualmie Pass for access to Yakima Training Center.
- \$22.3 million for the I-5 / Port of Tacoma Rd. interchange.
- The package includes \$1.85 billion for the Puget Sound Gateway, which includes the substantive completion of State Route 167. The completion of State Route 167—and the larger Puget Sound Gateway project—has been named one of the most important transportation projects in all of North America.

Physical location and its natural attributes facilitating logistics, the existing infrastructure of Joint Base Lewis-McChord and the regional collocation of joint forces in the Puget Sound region, make this location a vital component in the structure of the Army, the anticipated mission requirements, supplying its available and future resources.

And least we forget, as Pres. Obama noted in *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, our veterans and military families. At JBLM or nearby we have one of two regional VA hospitals, Madigan Army Medical Center, five new elementary schools on base, and on-going as we speak the nation's largest, second annual Washington Service members for Life Transition Fair serving veterans, service members and military dependents. Only some of the local attributes that make us renowned for quality of life and the most requested CONUS base in our nation.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these facts with you.

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