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502nd Mission Support Group stands up

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One of the last pieces of the Joint Base San Antonio puzzle moved into place April 26 as the 502nd Mission Support Group officially stood up during a ceremony at Fort Sam Houston's historic MacArthur Field.

The new unit will eventually replace the U.S. Army Garrison at FSH when it reaches full operational capability Oct. 1. Joint Base San Antonio will cover nearly 67 square miles; have more than 80,000 full-time employees performing 211 missions; support 145,000 students and include a retiree community of more than 250,000.

While physically located on three different sides of the city, the 502nd MSG joins the 802nd MSG at Lackland Air Force Base and the 902nd MSG at Randolph AFB to form the support infrastructure for Joint Base San Antonio, the largest joint base initiative in the Department of Defense. The three mission support groups fall under the 502nd Air Base Wing, headquartered on Fort Sam Houston.

Air Force Brig. Gen. Leonard A. Patrick is commander of the 8,000-person 502nd ABW, which consolidates 49 installation management support functions for a military community with an annual operating budget of more than \$850 million and a \$10.9 billion plant replacement value. The wing also supports in excess of \$4.5 billion in directed Base Realignment and Closure and other major projects.

"Today is about team work and it's about moving forward," Patrick said after the ceremony. "Today is about making Joint Base San Antonio a raging success. I can't tell you how excited I am to work with such professionals, particularly at this installation.

"At Lackland and Randolph Air Force Bases, we did a similar reorganization with the 37th Training Wing, 59th Medical Wing and 12th Flying Training Wing," Patrick said.

"For the last couple of months we've had an opportunity to find out how we take core processes to support our 211 partners on these three installations with municipal services," he said.



Joint basing was mandated by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission in 2005 to consolidate functions at adjacent and nearby installations under one military service to optimize management.

Throughout the Department of Defense, 12 military locations will be affected by joint basing. Air Force has lead on six of the joint bases, Navy has lead on four and Army has lead on two. The Air Force was directed to be the executive agent in San Antonio.

Joint Base San Antonio is unique in that it is the only one to have two Air Force bases. Only one other – Joint Base Langley-Eustis in Virginia – has installations that don't share an actual fence line.

“If we do this right, Joint Base San Antonio will be the standard for all the other joint bases throughout the Department of Defense,” said Gen. Stephen Lorenz, commander of Air Education and Training Command at Randolph AFB.

“You think about Fort Sam Houston and its history and see this is a great post. It will continue to be a great post when this is all done. Period. End of story. That's our goal, as a team, and I'm going to stress that – teamwork, teamwork, teamwork.”

“This is a great day for the joint force, both the Air Force and the Army. Today, we officially start the process of joint basing in San Antonio,” said Randall Robinson, director of the Installation Management Command-West Region.

“This union will join the strategic and operational capabilities of the Army and the Air Force and will form an even more powerful military asset for the defense of this great nation.

“Fort Sam Houston is known throughout the military and the nation as home to many major commands,” Robinson said to the audience at the ceremony. “This is the future home of the Army's Installation Management Command. Look at the signal that this sends. We don't have an Army base, we don't have an Air Force base, we have a joint base.”

Joint Base San Antonio will service more DoD students than any other installation, have more active runways than any other installation, host more widely diverse tenant units than anywhere else and house the largest hospital in the DoD.

“Today represents the opportunity for us to move forward for all three installations,” Patrick said. “Think about the power in what we can do for our nation. We are attacking the enemy and defending our network with our cyber warriors. We are producing combat medics to help save lives on the battlefield. We are teaching pilots how to be instructor pilots. Every young man and woman who comes into the Air Force marches across the parade field at Lackland AFB.”

The consolidation preserves core mission capabilities by keeping operational expertise within operational units, according to the 502nd ABW website. Services retain their respective missions and this move respects the history of each installation and maintains their relevance in the new structure of customer support.

“Successful organizations don’t just happen, they are built by great leaders,” Lorenz said. “There have been three successful leaders who have been instrumental in the success of Fort Sam Houston and the transformation of Joint Base San Antonio,” Lorenz said.

“First, I’d like to single out a good friend and a friend to everybody – I know that because I’ve been to all the Fiesta events with him and everybody gives him a great big hug – and that is Maj. Gen. Russ Czerw,” Lorenz continued.

“He’s been instrumental in providing quality base support and service for all the organizations here. Russ, your leadership on the post and in the community has forged an unbeatable team.

“Randy Robinson, the director of IMCOM-West, and his team have guided this joint basing initiative from start to finish. Your vision and leadership has set the conditions for the success that the 502nd will now carry forth,” Lorenz said. “This is important because the IMCOM headquarters is going to be right here on Joint Base San Antonio. We have a great opportunity in the future to learn from each other.

“Finally, I’d like to acknowledge someone who’s become a friend of mine, and who is someone I admire and I am glad she is standing right there ... Col. Mary Garr,” Lorenz said as he acknowledged the colonel’s role as commander of troops for the ceremony’s formation and as commander of the FSH Garrison.

“Mary’s done an incredible job. Working for one boss is hard enough, but working for three or four is really difficult to do. We would not be here today without your determination, dedication and leadership. Thank you for all you’ve done,” Lorenz said.

“The Army’s confidence in this remarkable installation is made clear by the fact that just in the last several years, the Army has invested \$2 billion in construction at Fort Sam Houston,” Robinson said. “This will be the poster child for the Department of Defense when people look at Joint Base San Antonio and say ‘They do it right.’

“General Len Patrick is an outstanding and seasoned leader who is the right person to take this organization forward and take care of all our service members and their families,” Robinson added. “IMCOM is committed to the success of our joint base and the opportunity to leverage the process to create an even better place for our service members and their families to live.

“With our community and civic leaders that have been in lockstep with us, I pledge to you and the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen, that we will not lose the historical identity of these three installations,” Patrick promised the assembled military and civic leaders and other guests.

“Fort Sam Houston will still be called Fort Sam Houston, Lackland will still be called Lackland and Randolph will still be called Randolph. The history of the U.S. military is here.”

“While we know there are other joint bases across the country, we also know that the great people of San Antonio and their pride in Military City USA, will make ours the best joint base in our great nation,” Lorenz said.

“I stand before you wearing a uniform representing the U.S. Air Force, but I am forever cognizant on how closely the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force histories are linked. The creation of the 502nd Air Base Wing and the 502nd Mission Support Group are the cornerstones that bring

great opportunity, great anticipation, and more importantly, great expectations of what we will be able to accomplish tomorrow.

“Those of us in Air Force blues salute our Army teammates and count it a privilege to stand with you in the coming days to forge a future of unmatched success,” Lorenz said.

“We are dominant on the ground and dominant in the air. But imagine what we can do with our combined capabilities under one flag at Fort Sam Houston – together under the flag of one great nation.”