

Friday, March 27, 2009

Another \$700 million in BRAC contracts is in the pipeline

San Antonio Business Journal - by [Catherine Dominguez](#)

While many construction projects around San Antonio may be slowing down, construction work at Fort Sam Houston is continuing at full speed ahead.

The new construction, a result of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure decision, will total about \$700 million for fiscal year 2009, which ends Sept. 30, says Randy Holman, program manager for the Army Corps of Engineers and spokesman for the Joint Program Management Office (JPMO).

Holman says the momentum will continue into fiscal year 2010, when an additional \$700 million in contracts will be awarded.

“We are well positioned ... to put the final capstone in place to bring us to the conclusion of the BRAC program in 2011,” he says. “We are still hitting our mark both on time and budget and we are very, very pleased with the level of commitment we are seeing from all our prime contractors and of course a host of support contractors to carry this forward.”

The projects are being managed by the JPMO, which is overseeing the design and construction efforts. The office includes representatives from the **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**, the Air Force Center for Engineering and the Environment, and the Naval Facilities Engineering Command.

In 2005, the Department of Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission opted to realign and consolidate a number of military missions across the country. San Antonio largely benefited from this action because the local BRAC plan calls for spending almost \$2.5 billion on new construction and renovation projects between fiscal 2007 and fiscal 2011. The program involves building and renovating as many as 78 major facilities totaling more than 6 million square feet of space at Fort Sam as well as Camp Bullis, Lackland and Randolph Air Force bases through September 2011.

Well-oiled machine

According to Holman, like any large project, there have been a few minor hiccups during the process, but he says there have been two main reasons the program has stayed on track.

Most important, he explains, is how the projects have been spaced out, with the bulk of the work started in fiscal 2008. More than \$1 billion in construction contracts were awarded that fiscal year.

“We spent a fair amount of time planning out the sequence of projects in the program,” Holman says. “In 2008, we focused on the largest and most complicated and then we have shifted over time to the small-sized projects, the less complex and easier to develop. That gave us the most time up front to deal with larger projects that require more effort.”

Bob Murdock, director of the San Antonio Office of Military Affairs, says while the military is continuing with its part of the project, the city and Bexar County are coming together to help advance infrastructure improvements around the Fort Sam Houston area on the Northeast Side to accommodate the growth at the Army installation.

The Military Transformation Task Force (MTTF) is a nonprofit group made up of city and county representatives, local business leaders and military leaders with the mission to help San Antonio transition during the BRAC process.

“Everything is on track,” Murdock says. “The various committees are continuing to work on the recommendations set forth in the Growth Management Plan.”

Murdock says the MTTF is focused on neighborhood revitalization, including the Walters Street corridor leading into Fort Sam Houston, which is the main entrance to the Army post. The plan, he says, is to widen the street to four lanes.

“The planning is continuing to look at different options so we can best utilize the new road structure to promote business along that corridor,” he says.

Murdock says the road expansion is expected to be completed at the same time the entrance to the Army post off Walters Street is completed.

Come together

COURTESY OF ARMY
CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Construction crews stack modular living quarters being used to build one of three dormitories at Fort Sam Houston.

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Holman says the ability to award contracts for the BRAC project has been helped along due to the MTTF's match-making contracting fairs. The MTTF will host its fourth match-making fair April 8 at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center in downtown San Antonio. The purpose of the fair is to bring together sub- and prime contractors to pursue BRAC construction opportunities.

"(The fair is a) means that we can keep the door open to the community to tell where we are, what opportunities are still available, how they connect and with whom do they connect, and give them the time to sit down one-on-one with these prime contractors," Holman says. "We are federally funded and the program is fully appropriated for 2009 and basically that has left us in a position to continue moving forward (with awarding contracts).

Murdock says the match-making fair has been critical to San Antonio transition during the BRAC process.

"They have been very successful," Murdock says. "Lots of folks have worked very hard to make these match-making fairs a success."

Jamie Blakeslee, spokeswoman with the local office of California-based **Ridgeways Reprographics**, says participating in the fair proved to be a boost for her company. Ridgeways specializes in providing large-format copying, high-resolution scanning and document production for architects, engineers and contractors.

Blakeslee says she attended the MTTF's first match-making fair last April, which helped her company land work as a subcontractor for **Clark Construction** LLC, which is involved in the renovation and construction work at Brooke Army Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston.

"I had been trying to get work from Clark Construction for some time," Blakeslee says. "At the match-making fair, I was able to get some valuable face time with (Clark Construction company executives). Not only was I able to secure that upcoming BRAC work, but I ended up eventually getting (additional work with the company locally) as well."

Blakeslee says making the connection with Clark Construction, which is based in Bethesda, Md., has also helped her company secure additional work with other firms across the nation.

"Out of all the organizations and events I'm involved with in San Antonio, (the match-making fair) has been the most lucrative I have attended," she says. "I secure more contracts, both BRAC and non-BRAC, because of the people I meet there."