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Hold on



Shane Daniels, a sophomore business major, and Jeff Shaefer, a junior industrial engineering major, ride the Viper at Six Flags Astroworld in Houston this weekend.

Future remains uncertain for Texas military base

WASHINGTON (AP) — With Kelly Air Force Base closing its doors next month, many other Texas communities with military installations are wondering if their bases, posts and depots could share a similar fate.

Those who have watched Texas' military presence diminish from its Vietnam War heyday are squirming. While few think the state is immune from future closures and cutbacks, some say there is room for military growth in the state.

Recent examples include a proposal to consolidate the Air Force's B-1 bomber operations in Kansas and Georgia and move some of them to Dyess Air Force Base in Abilene. Meanwhile, the Navy has said South Texas is under consideration as a site for naval bombing training exercises now conducted on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques.

"Texas has some unique opportunities for the military to maintain and consolidate new missions into Texas," said Bill Ehrlich, chairman of the Texas Defense, Aviation and Aerospace Alliance. "There are some attributes the state has regarding geography, air, space, land use, environmental, all of which are very favorable to the state. On the other hand some of the other states have similar circumstances and situations."

The alliance is a volunteer group advocating Texas' military, commercial and general aviation and aerospace industries.

Texas' geography, terrain and weather conditions have made it a logical place for military posts throughout history, said

Joseph Dawson, a Texas A&M history professor and former director of its Military Science Institute.

"As the military expanded, especially after World War II, Texas presented a nearly perfect place, especially for flying, there-

"Any time BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) is mentioned, Killeen, with its dependency on the military, takes a deep breath."

— Roy Wolfe
president of Greater Killeen Chamber of Commerce

fore the state benefitted," Dawson said. But when military cuts come, Texas is more hard hit, Dawson said.

Fort Hood in Central Texas is the nation's only Army post capable of supporting two full armored divisions. Community leaders wince at renewed talk of Pentagon cutbacks.

"Any time BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) is mentioned, Killeen, with its dependency on the military, takes a deep breath," said Roy Wolfe, president of the Greater Killeen Chamber of Commerce.

One of the Texas military's strongest allies in Congress is Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, who has said she would not support another round of base closings until the Pentagon has assessed its troop strength

needs and can show base closures will yield cost savings.

She said construction and modernizations at Texas bases should help the state until the Pentagon completes its strategic view of the American military.

"I think the president's budget is some key strengths to the bases that we know are part of our core responsibility of the military. And I think in this year we are going to add significantly to about every base in Texas," Hutchison said. "I think if there were another BRAC, we would be in very good shape."

Hutchison's influence has diminished since she lost her chairmanship of the military construction appropriation committee when Republicans lost their majority in the Senate.

Hutchison said she has a good working relationship with Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., the new committee chair, and said she has some common views on the issue.

Rep. Mac Thornberry, a member of the House Armed Services Committee, has said with Hutchison that construction cutbacks will make them harder to scrap.

But Thornberry, R-Clarendon, said defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's testimony last week to the committee persuaded him that the military has too much structure.

Rumsfeld said the additional \$18 billion requested for the Pentagon budget is mostly spent to fix problems and help modernize the military.

Radar station targeted in airstrike on Lebanon

SARIN TAHTA, Lebanon (AP) — Israeli warplanes struck a Syrian military radar station in Lebanon on Sunday, wounding three people, as the government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon aimed to punish Syria for Hezbollah guerrilla action.

Hezbollah quickly responded to the raid, firing rockets and mortars Sunday at Israeli military positions in disputed territory along the Israeli-Lebanese border. Israeli artillery fired back, wounding a farmer, Lebanese officials said.

This was the second time Israel has targeted Syria's presence in Lebanon in retaliation for a significant Hezbollah operation since Sharon came to office this year.

Sunday's tit-for-tat attacks marked a sharp escalation along the border, which has generally been quiet since the withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon in May 2000, except for incidents over a still-contested corner of the boundary.

Two Israeli fighter jets fired two missiles at the Syrian radar position in Sarin Tahta village on the main road between the towns of Zahle and Baalbek around noon Sunday. Israel said

the strike was in retaliation for Hezbollah fire that injured two Israelis on Friday night.

"It's been destroyed," said a Syrian soldier, armed with an AK-47 assault rifle, as he stood guard about 200 yards from the targeted position. He would not give his name. Journalists were not allowed to get any closer to the site, so his claim could not be verified.

Two Syrian soldiers were wounded in the air raid, Lebanese security officials said. Syrian soldiers on the scene said their comrades suffered shrapnel injuries to the arms and legs.

A Lebanese soldier was also wounded, a Lebanese military official said. The soldier was hurt while standing guard at an adjacent position, according to a witness.

The Sarin Tahta radar is one of many radar, tank and anti-aircraft positions that the Syrian army maintains in Lebanon. Syria has had a force of some 25,000 troops in Lebanon since 1976.

In Washington, White House spokesman Scott Stanzel said the State Department was in contact with all sides and was "urging the parties to exercise maximum restraint."

Lebanese Foreign Minister Mahmoud Hamoud said an attack confirmed "Israeli aggressive nature" and called on the United Nations to stop to Israeli airstrikes.

In Cairo, Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa condemned the airstrike, adding "a dark cloud over current developments in the future."

The Israeli Cabinet's statement in Jerusalem said the radar station was destroyed Sunday because Syria was responsible for Friday's Hezbollah guerrilla raid that wounded Israeli soldiers in the Chebaa Farms region.

"This criminal act of Hezbollah takes place without authorization of Syria's army has a presence in Lebanon," the statement said. "will not tolerate" Hezbollah attacks.

Hezbollah has pledged to continue fighting Israel and vacates the Chebaa Farms.

The territory is part of the Golan Heights, which was occupied from Syria. He said Syria and Lebanon do not believe land belongs to Lebanon.

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