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Research in Review: Regional Economic
Impacts of Military Installations in the
Paso del Norte Region

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Research in Review

Regional Economic Impacts of Military Installations in the Paso del Norte Region

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Key Findings¹

Workforce

Total personnel from these bases includes:

Fort Bliss	18,641
HAFB	6,469
WSMR	5,611
Total	30,721

2002 Key Statistics of the Regional Economy

Gross Regional Product/Income	\$20,217.3 million
Total Retail & Wholesale Sales	\$11,254.2 million
Employed Civilian Labor Force	395,953

Three Base-Related Business Effects

	Fort Bliss	WSMR	HAFB
Increased Sales Volume (millions)	\$1,698.9	\$684.0	\$206.9

Total Regional Increase \$2,589.8

Increased Sales/Regional Retail and Wholesale Sales	16.9%	6.1%	51.9 %
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Total Regional Increase 23.0%

¹ The region is defined as: El Paso, Dona Ana, Otero, and Socorro Counties.

Increased Use of Business Property (millions)	\$824.1	\$192.5	\$61.6
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Total Regional Increase \$1,078.2

Expansion in Regional Depository Institutions' Credit Base (millions)	\$659.6	\$93.9	\$40.2
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Total Regional Increase \$793.7

Three Base-Related Household Effects

	Fort Bliss	WSMR	HAFB
Increased Income (millions)	\$1,715.8	\$551.1	\$326.6

Total Regional Increase \$2,593.5

Increased Income/Gross Regional Income	11.0%	2.7%	34.1%
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Total Regional Increase 12.8%

Net Incremental Employment	16,156	5,542	2,586
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Total Regional Increase 24,284

Three Base-Related Government Effects

	Fort Bliss	WSMR	HAFB
Net Local Government Outlays to Provide Municipal Services Allocable to Military Related Influence (millions)	\$112.5	\$48.5	\$34.6

Total Regional Increase \$195.6

Capital Required by Local Government to Provide Military-Related Public Goods and Services (millions)	\$175.3	\$57.6	\$39.4
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Total Regional Increase \$272.3

Increased Regional Sales/Net Local Government Outlays	15 to 1	14 to 1	6 to 1
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Total Regional Increase 13 to 1

Increased Regional Income/Net Local Government Outlays	15 to 1	11 to 1	9 to 1
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Total Regional Increase 13 to 1

and almost 40,000 students added to area schools. Population and school enrollments are substantial and would expand with growth of any of the bases.

As a result of their presence, Fort Bliss, WSMR, and HAFB fit into a regional economy that presently generates over \$20 billion in income or gross regional product. Retail and wholesale sales exceed \$11.2 billion, and the employed civilian labor force exceeds 395 thousand. The role of the military presence in the regional economy is assessed by determining the cumulative impacts generated by the IPED RIM model for each base. In general, these effects are in three categories:

1. Local Business Effects;
2. Local Household Effects; and,
3. Local Government Effects.

The combined impact on the *local business* sector is estimated to be an increase in business sales volume of \$2,589,800,000, an incremental increase which would not occur if these bases were not part of the regional economic make-up. The local economy also benefits from the addition of \$793.7 million to the credit base of regional depository institutions. This amount represents a source of loan funds to the community that would otherwise be unavailable.

Overall, the presence of the three bases accounts for 23 percent of total retail and wholesale sales in the region, such that approximately one of every four dollars spent has a military origin, confirming the military importance to the regional economy. In addition, the use of business property has grown by more than \$1 billion. This represents an increase to the regional inventory, resulting in significant increases in tax revenues from property and added sales.

Local household effects are also dramatic, resulting in a \$2,593,500,000 flow of income into the regional economy. The addition to the overall regional workforce results in a net increase in employment of 24,284; jobs that otherwise would not exist. As a result, approximately 12.8 percent, or over \$1 of every \$8 in personal income in the region, is linked to the military's presence.

The final component examines the relationships between bases and *local governments*. While local government receives some revenues and/or cost savings from the presence of the bases, local government expenditures to provide public schools and municipal services to military installations and related individual and business activities are much greater. In addition, local government must allocate capital and other property to support the provision of municipal services. Annual government outlays to provide municipal services exceed \$195 million, a yearly service fee that is supported through taxes from regional residents, including civilian employees, soldiers and airmen living off post who pay property taxes. Services ranging from schools and additions to the local infrastructure require more than \$272 million of government capital outlays. These government outlays are investments that can be considered in light of the returns they generate in the regional economy in the form of sales, income and capital investments, as well as the previously mentioned increases in regional employment.

In this regard:

- Business sales volume increases by almost \$2.6 billion per year, a regional increase of \$13 in sales in the region for every \$1 of local government outlay.
- Income to individuals and households increases by roughly \$2.6 billion per annum, greater than a \$13 increase for each \$1 of local government outlay.
- More than 24 thousand additional jobs are generated in the region as a result of the presence of Fort Bliss, HAFB, and WSMR.

- Local commercial property employed to support military base related activity is more than \$1 billion, resulting in a return of \$4 in the form of local business property values for each \$1 of government investment to provide services as a result of the military's presence.

These data clearly show that the incremental economic impact of the military on the region is significant, even dramatic. The set of studies undertaken suggest that when viewed from a benefit/cost perspective, the ratios are impressive by any standard!

With more than 30,000 employees and a potential for more than 40,000, the military is the major employer in the region and its impact is critical to the stability of the regional economy. Each base also has the potential to add several thousand jobs outside their installations if BRAC results in a realignment that results in additional personnel coming to the area, providing an even more positive effect on the regional economy. As the regional population increases, it is likely that approximately three new residents will migrate to the region for each one-person increase in military personnel. These increases will not only result in more expenditures in the regional economy, but also increase certain costs that are not fully examined by the model.

The model suggests that gross regional product (GRP) will increase proportionally more than any other factor as the number of personnel increases, as will real disposable personal income and total regional consumption. Regional fixed investment in millions of dollars will also be significantly increased, adding to the overall wealth of the area.⁴

Considerations

In general, we examined two aspects of military presence in the region. One is related to individual impacts of each base. The second reports the overall impact in regional terms. In developing the analysis and working with a variety of military and non-military stakeholders a number of considerations surfaced.

- ✓ Local economic interests are well-served by each of the bases and they are the backbone of the regional economy.
- ✓ The loss of Fort Bliss, WSMR or HAFB would devastate the economies of El Paso, Las Cruces, and Alamogordo, respectively.
- ✓ Local government units should be aware that the return on investment in the overall regional economy well exceeds the costs incurred by any cost to benefit standard.
- ✓ Local governments should also recognize that the property tax dollars lost by the land holdings of the bases are well offset by additional business and residential developments as a result of the incremental impacts each base adds to the regional economy.

Another consideration is the possibility that each base may be a target for expansion. If this occurs, civic leaders need to address several critical issues and questions:

- ✓ Are local infrastructure capacities of water, sewer, fire, hospitals and police, etc., capable of supporting additional military personnel and the three additional residents forecasted to join them?
- ✓ Are local school districts capable of accepting an influx of students based on current capacity? And, at what level of increased enrollment generated by base expansion will new facilities and teachers be required?
- ✓ Can the region effectively market itself to the Department of Defense as a "community" that will welcome and invest local resources for base expansion?

⁴ Expansion scenarios were developed for HAFB and Fort Bliss. They can be viewed at iped.utep.edu/reports.

- ✓ What plans can the business community make to support families and military personnel?
- ✓ Local governments must provide the support necessary for base expansion in a concerted effort, at all levels and among all jurisdictions.
- ✓ Can local developers and construction interests respond in a timely fashion to base expansion and off-base needs, both residential and commercial?
- ✓ Can local creditors provide the credit base for residential purchases, etc., to service the growth as it occurs?
- ✓ Can local communities make the investment up-front to make the transition for additional troops, airmen, and support personnel as minimally frustrating as possible?



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