

Despite base closings, military golf course development on the rise

By J. BARRY MOTHES

Even though many military bases are being shutdown across the country, a significant number of new nine-hole additions and 18-hole courses are springing up on those that remain active.

About 30 former military golf courses have become private or

municipal golf courses over the past five years as a result of the Department of Defense's Base Realignment and Closure Commission, including such well-known facilities as Fort Ord and The Presidio.

But new 18-hole layouts or additions are currently under con-

struction at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland, Luke Air Force Base outside Phoenix, Ariz., Jacksonville Naval Air Station in Florida, and Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, among others.

This new flurry of additions and courses at active bases, which are funded from the

military's "non-appropriated funds" from sales and services within the military operation, have vastly improved the quality of military golf and eased crowding on many of the courses, according to Al Stetz, the editor of *The Order of Play*, a newsletter of the Military Golf Association. Stetz created the

Military Golf Association to advocate for military golf courses and the rights of retired military personnel to play them.

A rundown of the new golf course construction activity at active military bases across the country includes:

— A new 18-hole course under construction at Andrews Air Force Base in Suitland, Md., which already boasts two of the more highly regarded 18-hole layouts on the military circuit. With the opening of the new 18 designed by Ault, Clark & Associates scheduled for 1998, Andrews will be the only 54-hole military golf complex in the country. The course is being built over a closed landfill.

— A new nine-hole addition opened for play earlier this summer at The Pines Golf Course at Fort Eustis in Newport News, Va., making it a 27-hole complex.

— A nine-hole addition is under construction at the Marine Corps Air to Ground Combat Center in Twentynine Palms, Calif., in the California desert, to make an 18-hole facility that will be open in November of this year.

— A new 18-hole golf course is under construction at Luke Air Force Base outside Phoenix. The course, designed by Gary Panks and Associates, is scheduled to open next year and will be the first at Luke AFB.

"We anticipate doing 60,000 rounds a year," said John Beckett, business operations flight chief at Luke AFB, which is home to about 5,000 active duty personnel with families and another 1,000 employees, "and that's on the conservative side." Beckett said there are also an estimated 65,000 retired military personnel in Arizona, with the vast majority in the Phoenix area. The new golf course at Luke AFB is a joint venture between Maricopa County and the Air Force. The golf course has turned out to be part of a site that serves as a flood retention center.

According to Stetz, the National Security's Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Panel approved \$24 million dollars in fiscal year 1996 to fund a range of golf course construction projects at active bases. That same panel has appropriated \$9.5 million for fiscal year 1997, which covers new golf course construction projects at NCBC Gulfport in Mississippi, Jacksonville Naval Air Station in Florida, Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, and other facilities.

"In spite of all the base closures," said Stetz, "there is still a bright future for golf on military installations."

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