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On April 21 in its newspaper, Tropic Times, the Southern Command announced plans to move its headquarters to one of seven bases in the US as part of a "phased withdrawal" from Panama. The possible sites are Patrick Air Force Base near Cocoa Beach, Fla.; MacDill Air Force Base near Tampa, Fla.; Fort Polk near Leesville, La.; England Air Force Base northwest of Baton Rouge, La.; the Naval Air Station at New Orleans, and two bases in San Antonio, Tex.: Brooks Air Force Base and Fort Sam Houston. Spokesperson for the Command, William Ormsbee, said no date has been set for the relocation, but that it would take place well before the expiration of the Panama Canal Treaties on Dec. 31, 1999. Ormsbee said moving the headquarters would not necessarily coincide with the relocation of its "component services," including about 10,000 permanent troops, which may be moved to other sites and at different times. Although the headquarters will be relocated early in the withdrawal, substantial US forces and military facilities are considered likely to remain in Panama until expiration of the treaties. The Southern Command was established in 1963 charged with defending the US southern flank and advancing US interests in Latin America. US military presence in Panama began in 1903. (Basic data from Washington Post, 04/23/89; Xinhua, 04/22/89)

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