



# CHAPTER 2

## ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

As an independent commission, the 2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission examined tremendous volumes of information about the nation's domestic military installations. The Commission believes that during its independent analysis and review it gained insights and experiences that may be valuable to the President, Congress, the Department of Defense, and the general public. The Commission wishes to share these insights, raise major issues or concerns meriting further examination, or to pose questions and/or recommendations for future policymakers on the subjects under its jurisdiction.

Like the 1993 and 1995 Commissions, the 2005 Commission discusses below several major issues that arose during the course of its review and analysis process.

### THE FUTURE OF BRAC

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American military history records repeated transformation of military doctrine and force structure in response to geopolitical and technological developments. Over the last century, military force structure and strategy changed roughly every fifteen years. Recent history indicates these transformations are likely to continue, possibly at a more rapid pace.

When prior BRAC commissions convened, military strength was declining, with no apparent end in sight. The number of active-duty servicemembers fell from 3.5 million in 1968 to 2.1 million in 1974, where it had stabilized when the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990 created the current BRAC system. By the time the 1995 BRAC Commission completed its business and disbanded, 1.5 million servicemembers were on active duty. However, the strategic and military situation prior to the Balkans, before 9/11, before Afghanistan, and before Iraq would be virtually unrecognizable today.

It is highly likely America's security environment and corresponding military organization will continue to change, necessitating periodic re-examinations of the infrastructure supporting that organization. The Base Closure and Realignment process has repeatedly proven its worth by enabling the painful and difficult decisions needed to restructure military installations into alignment with future military requirements. The BRAC process provides for a series of checks and balances between the Department of Defense, the Commission, and the President with oversight by the Congress. The need for such a process will continue after the 2005 Commission ends, and it is likely the Department of Defense will again request Congressional authorization of future base closures or realignments.

The Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990 is a viable, proven, practical and effective mechanism to achieve difficult but necessary goals and the Commission strongly recommends future BRACs every 8 to 12 years, immediately following a Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). The Commission recommends that the next round of BRAC formally begin in 2015 and has proposed legislative text in Appendix R for referral and consideration by Congress and the President.

### STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS AND THE TIMING OF BRAC

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The Commission's work took place during a national strategic debate with an uncertain outcome. The nation is embroiled in a Global War on Terror, with significant deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq, in addition to other worldwide commitments. Simultaneously, military services (particularly the Army) are pursuing transformation of process, organization, and structure. Under the Integrated Global Posture and Basing Strategy (IGPBS), the United States is undertaking a massive movement of heavy forces, previously based in Europe and Korea, to locations within the continental United States. The Mobility Capabilities Study, soon to be finalized, will assess the ability to re-deploy these forces if necessary. The Commission conducted its analysis in the context of a force structure plan derived from the QDR completed in late 2001. Although national strategies have been modified since that time, the underlying strategic plan predates the Global War on Terror. The Department of Defense is now conducting a new QDR, and unofficial reports indicate that sizes and composition of forces may change drastically.

In short, it would have been far preferable for BRAC 2005 to have occurred *after* the new QDR so that the strategic underpinnings for nearly irreversible infrastructure and capacity changes could have been informed by the QDR's output, rather than BRAC providing input to the QDR. The QDR will provide a long-term strategic plan addressing force structure,

force modernization, infrastructure, and budget priorities. The Commission strongly recommends that future BRAC rounds begin *after* the QDR is completed. Infrastructure decisions should flow from a strategic vision, not the other way around.

## ACCESS TO DoD JUSTIFICATION AND BACKUP DATA

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Commission analysis of DoD's BRAC recommendations requires timely access to the backup data justifying the Department's recommendations. In April 2005, senior Commission staff met with senior DoD officials to discuss the release of all backup and certified data and, to facilitate the process, met again with senior DoD officials on May 9, 2005, to formally finalize Commission requirements.

DoD delivered Volume I of the BRAC report on May 13, three days earlier than the statutory deadline. Within seven days, DoD delivered the three Service and five of the six Joint Cross-Service Group-specific Analysis and Recommendation Volumes and the Force Structure Plan. The final Joint Cross-Service Group volume was delivered the next day, following a DoD security review. Between May 18 and May 28 the Commission received the corresponding "Supplemental Information," but DoD was unable to provide open access to the preponderance of backup data due to continuing internal concerns regarding the potential compromise of information. As a result of these concerns, most of the remaining data were classified "Secret" pending completion of an internal DoD review.

On June 1, 2005, DoD established a secure reading room for Commission and Congressional staff holding appropriate security clearances. However, only five staff clearances were complete by June 1, and the reading room was therefore virtually unusable until the required security clearances were processed for Commission staff. On June 14, 2005, DoD had finished its internal review and declassified and made publicly available all but approximately 2 percent of the backup and supporting data. By that date, most of the Commission's Review and Analysis staff had received appropriate clearances, and their analysis was well under way.

In hindsight, the Commission feels that the process could have been expedited had the Department anticipated the potential security risks presented by the aggregation of data and planned ahead to prevent problems with its release.

## OTHER METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

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DoD's presentation of related actions in separate recommendations compounded the inherent complexity of the Commission's task. The Commission often had to deconstruct seemingly unrelated recommendations and reassemble all the actions proposed for individual installations or activities to obtain a clear picture of the Secretary's overall intent for the installations or activities. Determinations of compliance (or non-compliance) with the selection criteria and Force Structure Plan required multiple analyses to evaluate how a change in one recommendation might create a ripple effect across several others. The Commission even had to establish special "re-voting" procedures for use if subsequent votes substantially changed the rationale of an already "decided" matter. In future BRAC rounds, DoD should clearly identify interrelated recommendations and aggregate the net impact of all recommendations on each individual installation or activity.

The Commission also identified proposed actions with tenuous apparent relationships to each other bundled within specific recommendations. The Commission agrees with DoD's "Red Team" observation that combining unrelated proposals complicates the analysis of the recommendations and calls into question the validity of the methodology used in their assembly.

Additionally, the Commission found DoD's recommendations in some cases swept up, in one recommendation, hundreds of positions assigned to divisions or departments with similar sounding titles for realignment without an in-depth analysis to determine which of the hundreds of positions actually were intended to be moved. All too frequently site visits and community inputs revealed that tiny minorities of positions involved were indeed suitable for realignment, but that large numbers were not. It was not possible for the Commission to sort out, position by position, what was the correct number of positions to be realigned. The DoD recommendations were accompanied by COBRA analyses which contained numbers and costs relevant to the recommendation, but these analyses were based on aggregate numbers, not detailed manpower studies, and therefore are viewed by the Commission as illustrative examples of what a realignment or closure might cost or save, but are not to be viewed as part of the official report and are not directive in nature. The Commission recommends DoD to review each of the realignments to determine the appropriate number of positions to be moved.

## JOINT CROSS SERVICE GROUPS AND PROMOTING JOINTNESS

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The Commission noted major differences between the role of Joint Cross-Service Groups (JCSG) in the 1995 and 2005 BRAC processes. In the 2005 BRAC, DoD gave the JCSGs their first-ever substantive role, in contrast with previous BRACs

where JCSGs were advisory to the military departments and were unable to advance their own recommendations. DoD's promotion of JCSGs allowed the military departments to focus on operational concerns, while also ensuring that common business functions benefited from the collective wisdom of all the services and defense agencies. Even though the JCSG process in 2005 was a vast improvement over prior efforts, there are always areas that could be improved, and the Commission highlights several such ideas below.

Combatant Commander (COCOM) input was formally solicited in October 2004, fairly late in the process. Although the Vice Chairman, JCS, was briefed on items of interest to the COCOMs before all Infrastructure Executive Council (IEC) and Infrastructure Steering Group (ISG) meetings, the 2005 process could have benefited from a formal advisory role for the COCOMs. In the future, DoD should consider early and clear definitions of the use and weight of COCOM input. The COCOMs' operational experience and input would improve a numbers-driven exercise wholly executed in Washington, DC.

The JCSG process was hampered by the lack of DoD visits to sites considered for closure or realignment. The installations and Major Commands were not requested to consider the full operational impact of JCSG recommendations and were requested to only validate specific data requests supporting JCSG recommendations. Additionally, JCSG data requests were submitted piecemeal; at no time were installations or MAJCOMS requested to consider and/or evaluate the total operational impact of multiple JCSG recommendations on their installation.

In many cases, the first person involved in the BRAC process, other than a military service BRAC team member assigned to an installation, to actually visit a site facing closure or significant realignment was a BRAC Commissioner or staff member. While it is not practical for DoD representatives to visit all locations under review, the Commission believes that conducting an analytical process affecting infrastructure valued in the billions of dollars without ever physically looking at the major assets under review detracts from the credibility of DoD's process.

Each of the military departments gathered the data they submitted to COBRA differently. The Navy made data calls to the installations; the Army used a combination of data bases and data calls; the Air Force relied on central data bases. Halfway through the BRAC review, the Air Force uncovered approximately \$900 million in possible changes to its COBRA input when it made site surveys while preparing budget justification books. The differences in service branch data collection were also reflected in the data submitted to the JCSGs. DoD's differing information collection systems complicated the Commission's review and analysis. These methodologies led to inconsistencies in individual responses to the questions within a service. Methodological differences complicated meaningful comparison of individual services' recommendations as well as of recommendations crossing service lines. In the future, DoD should consider a standardized method of data collection. Specifically, the Navy method could be used as the model, since it directly engages the installations where the recommendations will be executed as part of the analysis process. This is particularly important if DoD continues to conduct cross-service business functions through the JCSGs. Reliance on existing data bases that were originally designed to perform non-BRAC functions should not be used for future BRAC processes.

In addition, data should be normalized, especially when the services use conflicting data elements—e.g. differences in the square feet allowed per person—and do not standardize common Base Operating Support (BOS) rules. As joint basing becomes a reality, DoD should task a neutral party to study and recommend ways to normalize data, particularly in the real estate/installation areas amenable to common standards.

The Deputy Assistant Secretaries (DAS) deconflicted JCSG scenario options in order to integrate JCSG and military department scenarios. The process could be improved if an independent and dedicated integration group comprehensively presented all of the JCSG options and scenarios to the ISG. The independent group should be able to cancel or amend JCSG options in operational conflict with a service branch scenario if the tradeoffs between cost and risk are unacceptable.

Numerous DoD recommendations were premised on the assumption that realigning military department activities to one location would “enhance jointness.” However, the mechanism for improving jointness was often left unspecified. As initially described by the Department of Defense, the 2005 BRAC was to be an opportunity to promote jointness and jointness was to be its overriding theme. However, of the hundreds of proposals submitted by the DOD, very few increased jointness, and some actually decreased or removed joint and cross-service connections. While jointness was initially described by the DOD as a high principle for the 2005 BRAC, in fact most of the DOD proposed consolidations and reorganizations were *within* the Military Departments, not across the Services.

Given the proposals from the DOD, in several instances the Commission acted to increase jointness through its final decisions. The Commission regrets that joint and cross service proposals were not a stronger part of the DOD recommendations overall.

## COORDINATION OF BRAC WITH OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

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DoD and the Commission are mandated to assess costs and savings to the U.S. government as a whole, not just the Department of Defense. Co-ordination with other Departments such as Homeland Security (DHS, including the U.S. Coast Guard and FEMA), Veterans Affairs (VA), Justice (DoJ, including the FBI), and agencies such as the General Services Administration (GSA) is crucial to successful development and implementation of final recommendations. The Commission found a lack of sufficient interagency coordination in DoD's 2005 BRAC proposals.

For example, many recommendations affect installations used by the Coast Guard. If the Coast Guard has to assume the costs of keeping the installation operational, DoD's costs would not be saved as DoD projects, but simply shifted into the U.S. Coast Guard's already limited budget. Similarly, GSA may incur early termination fees as DoD implements several approved proposals to vacate leased space in the National Capital Region.

Additionally, DoD did not solicit input from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regarding sharing of health care system capacity between DoD and VA, an unfortunate oversight given that the nation is at war and that VA hospitals are located in some of the areas affected by the DoD recommendations.

Neither the Commission nor DoD was well served by the lack of Department of Homeland Security input on the homeland defense role of military installations. While the U.S. Northern Command found "no unacceptable risk" in DoD's post-BRAC support provided to civil authorities, no corollary statement was forthcoming from DHS.

The 2005 BRAC Commission strongly recommends that DoD improve coordination with other affected federal agencies so that savings estimates do not ignore the increased or shifted costs of non-DoD Federal operations. Similarly, DHS must coordinate with DoD on future BRAC processes so DoD fully understands and incorporates the roles and uses of military installations in homeland security as well as in homeland defense missions and capabilities.

## COORDINATION OF BRAC WITH THE AIR NATIONAL GUARD

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The states' Adjutants General (TAGs) expressed grave concerns due to lack of consultation or coordination with the active duty Air Force regarding the impact of the Secretary's recommendations on the Air National Guard. The Air Force stated its communications with the Director of the National Guard Bureau satisfied legal requirements but the Air Force process led to a negative reaction by the states, their TAGs, elected officials, and the general public. Several states are in court challenging the process. The Commission conducted three special hearings where these issues were raised and discussed. TAG and state dissent with the Air Force unnecessarily cost the Commission additional time and resources and damaged the previously exemplary relationship between the Air National Guard and the Air Force. For future BRAC rounds the Commission strongly recommends that all of the services provide for early and constructive TAG and Governor consultation and input on potential base closure and realignment proposals.

## COMMISSION INDEPENDENCE

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BRAC Commissions' independence, both *de jure* and *de facto*, was a key ingredient in prior base closing and realignment rounds' success. The legislative and executive branches, and the citizens to whom they are accountable, are more likely to accept BRAC outcomes if they are convinced the Commission's review of DoD's complex and controversial base restructuring proposals are handled independently, objectively, and honestly. Thus, preserving and protecting the independence of the Commission (both perceived and actual) is not a mere academic exercise, but a necessity.

Independence is not determined solely by statute, but also by policies, perceptions, and practices. The 2005 Commission faced a short mission time frame, combined with delays in initiating administrative support. The 1993 and 1995 Commissions drew from a cadre of 15 permanent staff who rapidly geared up to handle the exploding workload when Commissioners were appointed. However, the permanent staff, office equipment, and office space were dispersed when the BRAC statute expired in 1995. The 2005 Commission had to literally re-create a 100-person operation from scratch in a matter of weeks. Additionally, staff could not be hired or detailed from other agencies prior to the appointment of the Chairman, and even then valuable time was expended overcoming the administrative obstacles inherent in standing up any organization. For example, DoD's Washington Headquarters Service (WHS), whose many responsibilities include support for DoD commissions, was unable, for a variety of reasons, to easily and quickly expedite accommodation to the needs of a large-scale, high-profile, fast-paced, non-DoD entity such as the BRAC Commission. The Commission's organizational needs and available support capabilities were inadvertently but systematically mismatched.

The Commission's mission could have been compromised but for the hard work of many individuals, and steady assistance from its support contractor. In addition to proposals for Congressional consideration, the Commission also recommends the Administration significantly reform arrangements for administrative support of future BRAC Commissions. For example, the Administration could establish a temporary caretaker staff of roughly 15 persons to begin organizing several months prior to the formal appointment of Commissioners. Once the Chairman is appointed and in place, he or she could hire an Executive Director, and the caretaker staff could either be kept or replaced as appropriate. The Commission would then have basic office infrastructure in place when Commissioners are confirmed and an Executive Director appointed. The Commission could then focus on the substance of its mission immediately and exclusively, rather than dissipating time and energy by simultaneously grappling with both logistics and substance.

Additionally, Congress should either ensure the Commission's activities do not span two fiscal years or alter appropriations language to allow expenditure of Commission funds throughout the Commission's lifetime, without regard to fiscal year. Similarly, the independence of a future Commission would be enhanced if it could manage its expenditures autonomously rather than continuously negotiating budget and expenses with DoD, a process inherent in the current organizational structure. If the Congress desires oversight and accountability for funds entrusted to the Commission, it could provide for review by GAO.

The widespread use of electronic document control and management is a success story recommended to future BRAC Commissions. Participants and public consumers of the 2005 BRAC process gave extremely high marks to the E-Library system established with the assistance of the Commission's support contractor. The Commission's web site, [www.brac.gov](http://www.brac.gov), which had near-complete access to the E-Library, received approximately 25 million hits between May 19 (the launch date) and August 28 (more than three months). It provided unprecedented openness and transparency to the BRAC process, giving citizens access to nearly 200,000 unclassified documents at the click of a button. The Commission received approximately 500 electronic comments per week, received tens of thousands of pieces of written correspondence, and made available to the public such internal Commission documents as trip reports, base visit briefing books, memoranda of meetings, and all non-classified submittals to the Commission from interested base communities. Vast amounts of DoD material were initially scanned as unsearchable images but converted into user-friendly, full text-searchable documents when entered into the E-Library.

## THREAT ASSESSMENT

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The Commission finds illogical the seemingly inverse order that the Department followed in arriving at its list of facilities for closure and realignment. In short, this consisted of the May 13, 2005, announcement of the Secretary of Defense's recommendations to be followed by a QDR later in the year. The Commission, as a result, looked to the 20-year threat assessment the Department was required to complete under Sec. 2912(a)(1)(A) of the Base Closure Law, as the basis for the force structure plan, probable end-strength levels and major military force levels that were submitted with the FY 2005 budget. The Commission could find no evidence that a 20-year threat assessment was ever prepared or submitted. Formal requests to DoD in July 2005 for a copy of the threat assessment also confirmed that no threat assessment was ever completed. Nonetheless, DoD's Base Closure and Realignment Report, Volume I and Volume II, May 2005, does contain a four-page summary titled "Probable Threats to National Security."

## RECOMMENDATIONS ON STATUTORY CHANGES TO BRAC

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In response to these and other issues considered during the 2005 BRAC process, the Commission has developed draft legislative proposals for the consideration of Congress. The full text and explanation of the proposals can be found in Appendix R.