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14. ABSTRACT Each year, Congress overwhelmingly rejects the DoD's request for another round of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), claiming previous rounds did not achieve anticipated savings, and that the present is an inappropriate time to close military bases. However, the first four rounds from 1988 to 1995 saved \$16.7 billion in annual base operations support costs through 2001 and an estimated \$6.6 billion annually thereafter. Although BRAC 2005 cost \$14 billion more than originally estimated, it produced an annual recurring savings of \$3 billion. Expected to save at least \$3 billion per year, a future BRAC would improve military effectiveness by allowing the DoD to shift money to underfunded military programs that directly support the warfighter and consolidate similar functions at fewer bases. Opponents of BRAC worry about the cost of closing bases to the local community; job loss being the primary concern. However, most local economies surrounding closed bases recover within two to six years and become more sustainable through proactive community reutilization planning and federal transition assistance. In order to convince Congress to authorize another round of BRAC, the DoD must present Congress, military communities, and the defense industry specific and compelling evidence that the continued expenditure on excess installation capacity poses a greater risk to national security and their interests than BRAC's costs and second-order effects.					
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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

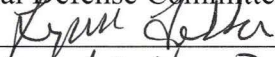
**CONVINCING CONGRESS TO AUTHORIZE DEFENSE BASE REALIGNMENT AND
CLOSURE**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Executive Summary

Title: Convincing Congress to Authorize Defense Base Realignment and Closure

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Thesis: In order to convince Congress to authorize another round of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), the Department of Defense (DoD) must present Congress, military communities, and the defense industry specific and compelling evidence that the continued expenditure on excess installation capacity poses a greater risk to national security and their interests than BRAC's costs and second-order effects.

Discussion: Each year, Congress overwhelmingly rejects the DoD's request for another round of BRAC, claiming previous rounds did not achieve anticipated savings, and that the present is an inappropriate time to close military bases. However, the first four rounds from 1988 to 1995 closed 97 major installations and realigned hundreds more by September 2001, saving \$16.7 billion in annual base operations support costs through 2001 and an estimated \$6.6 billion annually thereafter. Although BRAC 2005 cost \$14 billion more than originally estimated, its efficiency-focused portion only cost \$6 billion and produced an annual recurring savings of \$3 billion. Expected to save at least \$3 billion per year, a future BRAC would improve military effectiveness by allowing the DoD to shift money to underfunded military programs that directly support the warfighter and consolidate similar functions at fewer bases. Opponents of another round of BRAC worry about the cost of closing bases to the local community; job loss being the primary concern. However, most local economies surrounding closed bases recover within two to six years and become more diversified and sustainable through proactive community reutilization planning and federal transition assistance.

Conclusion: The DoD must first remove Congress's prevailing excuses for opposing BRAC by demonstrating the next round will realize estimated net savings within a reasonable timeframe while preserving some capacity to grow force structure. Meanwhile, the DoD needs to address the underlying concerns regarding BRAC (primarily, the economic impact to defense communities surrounding closed bases), by showing previous rounds benefitted the military, voting constituents, and defense industry more than it cost them, and tailoring the narrative in a way that is compelling to each stakeholder's respective parochial interest.

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Preface

For the past several years, the Department of Defense (DoD) has requested congressional authorization for another round of base realignments and closures (BRAC). The DoD requests the opportunity to close bases because it believes there is excess installation capacity, which costs extra money to maintain. Each year, Congress overwhelmingly rejects the proposal, claiming previous rounds did not achieve anticipated savings, and indicating now is not the time to close military bases. Given the current fiscal environment, this research paper evaluates the DoD's BRAC request to determine if it truly benefits the military and what impact BRAC has on defense communities. Assuming BRAC's benefits outweigh its costs, this paper develops a proposed DoD strategy for convincing Congress to authorize another round of BRAC as soon as possible.

I would like to acknowledge several professionals for their assistance: House Armed Services Committee Professional Staff Member Brian Garrett, Lieutenant Colonel Lisa Mabbutt, and Dr. Lynn Tesser. I would not have been able to complete comprehensive research or formulate thorough conclusions without their help.

Introduction

For the past several years, the Department of Defense (DoD) has requested congressional authorization for another round of base realignments and closures (BRAC) based on the belief that there is excess installation capacity, which costs extra money to maintain. During the Senate hearing regarding BRAC on April 2, 2014, Acting Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Installations and Environment John Conger requested the Senate Armed Services Committee's support for BRAC authority in 2017. He explained the combination of budget cuts, force structure reductions, and infrastructure inadaptability drive the need to achieve significant savings only attainable through another round of BRAC. Conger justified his claim by testifying that DoD assessed aggregate excess capacity at 24% in 2004, only reduced that capacity by 3.4% in BRAC 2005, and has since reduced the Army and Marine Corps by 140,000 personnel and the Air Force by 500 aircraft. He claimed previous rounds of BRAC are saving the Department \$12 billion annually, which represents \$12 billion each year that DoD can reinvest in the warfighter or save American taxpayers. Conger testified that the formal BRAC process has the additional advantage of using a comprehensive and auditable analysis designed to increase installations' military value and alignment with DoD strategy.¹

Each year, Congress rejects DoD's new BRAC round proposal, claiming the most recently completed round did not achieve anticipated savings, and that the present is an inappropriate time to close military bases in the United States. During the April 2014 hearing, the Chair of the Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support, Senator Jeanne Shaheen, claimed Congress needs additional data to help accurately anticipate the costs and outcomes of BRAC, without which she would not support a new congressional BRAC authorization. Senator Kelly Ayotte, Ranking Minority Member of the same subcommittee, said the United States could

not afford another round like BRAC 2005, for which the actual cost (\$35 million) exceeded the estimated cost (\$21 million). The senators also encouraged the Department to do more infrastructure and facility consolidation in Europe before launching another BRAC round.² While the House Armed Services Committee similarly opposes another round of BRAC due to the recent history of cost overruns, representatives have also expressed concern “with the inability to quickly dispose of excess property and the potential lack of overall savings to the federal government.”³ In May 2014, the Chair of the House Armed Services Committee, Congressman Buck McKeon, indicated DoD should not close bases when future military force structure is still undetermined.⁴ Furthermore, the last two National Defense Authorization Acts prohibited the DoD from expending any funds to plan or prepare for BRAC.

Many researchers have studied BRAC’s history, benefits, costs, and second-order effects, and consequently, there is substantial academic literature on those topics.⁵ However, those writings focus on the past, so there is an absence of academic literature on the future of BRAC. This paper attempts to fill a portion of that gap by developing a proposed DoD strategy for garnering congressional BRAC authorization.

This thesis examines the DoD request to determine if BRAC’s benefits outweigh its costs, and offers recommendations for convincing Congress to authorize another round of BRAC as soon as possible. DoD must first show that BRAC benefits the military, both financially and operationally, by proving savings from previous rounds and demonstrating how savings from a new round will help fund warfighting programs and improve military effectiveness.

Recognizing members of Congress oppose BRAC primarily because base closures are perceived to be catastrophic to local and defense communities, DoD needs to articulate the cost, benefits, and second-order effects to voting constituents potentially impacted by BRAC. Once that

foundation is set, DoD can develop and implement a strategy to convince congressional members, their staffers, their constituents, and defense industry lobbyists that BRAC is in their best interests. In order to convince Congress to authorize another round of BRAC, the Department of Defense must present Congress, military communities, and the defense industry specific and compelling evidence that the continued expenditure on excess installation capacity poses a greater risk to national security and their interests than BRAC's costs and second-order effects.

BRAC History and Current Debate

A review of the circumstances that prompted existing laws under which the DoD operates with regard to base closures and realignments is critical to understanding the current challenges associated with securing congressional BRAC authorization. Following the initial Cold War buildup, the DoD closed 60 major military bases and realigned hundreds more in the 1960s. During that time, the Office of the Secretary of Defense established base closure criteria and made decisions without consulting Congress. Base closures affected congressional members substantially, and due to the lack of publicly transparent congressional involvement, members viewed the DoD's actions and process in the 1960s negatively. Therefore, in the 1970s, Congress made it more difficult for the DoD to close installations by enacting regulations or limiting funding. In 1977, Congress successfully passed legislation that mandated congressional approval of closures that affect at least 300 DoD civilian employees, which effectively stopped base closures.⁶ In order to reduce excess military installation capacity, the DoD needed to pursue a new process that would generate congressional support for base closures and realignments.

In the 1980s, the executive branch recognized the value of an independent, non-partisan, commission to garnering legislative branch support for BRAC. On May 3, 1988, the Secretary of Defense chartered the twelve-person Commission on Base Realignment and Closure to study the issues associated with BRAC, determine the criteria for choosing which bases to close or realign, and ultimately provide a list of recommended base closures and realignments.⁷ Later that year, Public Law 100-526, also known as the Defense Authorization Amendments and Base Closure and Realignment Act, directed the Secretary of Defense to close and realign all military installations per the Commission's transmitted report.⁸ In addition, the Act made base closure implementation easier by modifying existing statutes.⁹ This legislation was a benchmark agreement between the two branches of government that closing or realigning military bases could produce defense budget savings while maintaining the military's ability to conduct its missions.¹⁰ The BRAC Commission of 1988 recommended 91 base closures and 54 realignments, which both Congress and the President approved.¹¹ Recognizing that communities surrounding closing military bases were concerned about the economic impact, the Commission's report also included recommendations to mitigate the adverse effects.¹² Due to successfully initiating the 1988 round of BRAC, the concept of an independent commission gained momentum into the 1990s.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1991, Title XXIX, Part A, also known as the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Act of 1990, established a recurring independent BRAC commission to make base closure and realignment recommendations for fiscal years 1991, 1993, and 1995. After considering the Secretary of Defense's six-year force structure plan, criteria for base closures and realignments, and recommendations, the Act directed the Commission to transmit their findings, conclusions, and recommendations to the

President. The same legislation required the Commission to provide members of Congress any information they requested relevant to the Commission's BRAC recommendations. The Act then stipulates that the President shall review the Commission's recommendations, and transmit an approved list to Congress. If Congress does not disapprove the recommendations within 45 days, the Act requires the Secretary of Defense to close and realign military installations listed in the Commission's recommendations within six years of the President's approval. Furthermore, the legislation gives the Secretary of Defense authority to provide economic adjustment and community planning assistance to affected local communities, conduct environmental restoration and mitigation at closed or realigned installations, and assist outplaced DoD civilian employees.¹³

Although the first and only BRAC round accomplished after September 11, 2001 used the established independent commission process to make closure and realignment recommendations, the DoD used BRAC 2005 to enable military transformations more so than close bases. Pursuant to the amended Defense Base Realignment and Closure Act of 1990 and the Secretary of Defense's guidance memorandum (*Transformation Through Base Realignment and Closure*), the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission provided Congress its realignment and closure recommendations on May 13, 2005.¹⁴ The report clearly indicated the change in BRAC 2005's intent, as compared to BRAC rounds in the 1990s, by stating the commission focused recommendations on aligning "U.S. base structure with the force structure that is expected to be needed over the next 20 years."¹⁵ The DoD intended the alignment to help implement "global force reposturing," facilitate military force transformations, and restructure support functions.¹⁶ Although the transmittal letter implied resulting financial savings, it did not reference a reduction in excess installations capacity; the focus was "increasing combat

effectiveness and transforming U.S. forces” to “meet tomorrow’s national defense challenges.”¹⁷

Chapter 1 of the report estimated the BRAC 2005 recommendations would reduce plant replacement value, a monetary quantification of installation facility and infrastructure capacity, by only five percent.¹⁸

Given this historical context, there are three primary issues around which the BRAC debate centers: financial savings, community impact, and military capability. Due to defense budget austerity, military leaders and lawmakers are eager to find ways to reduce the cost of operating military installations. Military leaders want to shift facility and infrastructure investments to warfighter investments, while lawmakers, in response to constituents’ pleas for less defense spending, see cutting installation funding as an acceptable risk. Both recognize closing bases would decrease the cost of maintaining aging facilities and infrastructure. However, the struggling overall national economy is the driving force for the declining defense budget, and voting constituents are concerned that closing military bases near their communities will cause further deterioration of their local economies. Members of Congress want their constituency to see them as defending their local districts’ economies, which forces most of Congress to oppose another round of base closures. Finally, many in Congress, mostly Republicans, believe President Obama is irresponsibly reducing force structure and military capability. Consistent with this theme, congressional members who think the military is getting too small are resistant to reduce installation capacity irreversibly, which would hinder their attempts to restore force restructure. Striking a balanced approach that addresses each of these three perspectives is key to garnering widespread support for the BRAC proposal.

Costs and Benefits of BRAC

Congressional legislation enacted in 1988 and 1990 generated four BRAC rounds that closed 97 major installations and realigned hundreds more by September 2001, saving billions of dollars in annual base operations support costs. In an April 1998 report, the DoD claimed the first four rounds of BRAC were on pace to save \$14 billion through 2001 and \$5.6 billion annually after 2001. That same report indicated actual BRAC implementation costs for those rounds were less than or equal to the initial estimates.¹⁹ Since some may be skeptical of an internal DoD report, external agencies have also analyzed prior BRAC rounds to validate savings and costs. In an April 2002 report, the General Accounting Office (GAO) determined the DoD saved \$16.7 billion through 2001 and estimated the DoD would save \$6.6 billion annually after 2001. Put another way, the \$22 billion cumulative cost of the first four BRAC rounds through 2001 produced \$38.7 billion in savings, a 76 percent return on investment. That rate of return continues to increase over time as the implementation costs terminate while annual savings continue indefinitely. However, the GAO report qualified those values by stating BRAC net savings are imprecise, so evaluators should consider the estimates rough approximations.²⁰ Additionally, most people only remember the most recent round, which Congress views more negatively.

Although BRAC 2005 was effective in its transformation intent, it cost significantly more than originally estimated due to its transformational intent, and therefore, the DoD did not achieve the same level of substantial net savings realized in the first four rounds. In a June 2012 report, the GAO indicated BRAC 2005 cost the DoD \$35 billion, which was significantly higher than both the original estimate of \$21 billion and the combined \$25 billion cost of the first four rounds. Although the GAO report validated that BRAC 2005 generated \$4 billion in annual

recurring savings, the GAO determined BRAC 2005 would only realize a net 20-year savings of \$10 billion, far below the \$36 billion originally estimated.²¹ The DoD did not dispute the GAO's findings; a response letter from Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Installations and Environment stated, "the report accurately describes changes in costs and savings."²² However, in Conger's April 2014 written testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, he explained the efficiency focused BRAC 2005 actions, vice transformation focused actions, only cost \$6 billion, reduced infrastructure 3.4 percent, and produced an annual recurring savings of \$3 billion.²³ In other words, if one does not consider its unique transformation enabling aspects, base closures from BRAC 2005 successfully and quickly achieved financial savings. An efficiency focused BRAC is what the DoD is proposing for the next round.²⁴

Although estimated savings from base closures or realignments are not typically calculated until Congress authorizes the BRAC process to commence, the DoD has conducted preliminary analysis that suggests another round of BRAC at this time would generate significant financial savings. In response to Senator Shaheen's questioning during the April 2014 hearing, Conger said the DoD estimated the next round of BRAC would cost approximately \$6 billion to implement. He went on to explain that cumulative savings are expected to reach \$6 billion, fully offsetting the costs, six years after the BRAC round's initiation. Conger based these approximations on the ability to reduce excess capacity by five percent.²⁵ When one considers that the efficiency-focused actions of BRAC 2005 resulted in a 3.4 percent reduction in excess installation capacity and annual recurring savings of \$3 billion, it is apparent that a future five percent reduction in installation capacity would produce at least \$3 billion in annual savings. Given the DoD's previous claims of 24 percent excess capacity, it seems likely that a BRAC round focused on closing bases would easily produce that five-percent reduction target.

Conservatively projecting these figures into the future suggests an estimated 20-year net savings of \$40 billion.

Saving billions of dollars that would otherwise be spent on maintaining excess installation capacity allows the DoD to shift money to underfunded military programs that directly support the warfighter. For example, the expected annual recurring savings from a new round of BRAC (\$3 billion) could procure 26 AH-64 Apache helicopters for the Army, eight P-8A Poseidon aircraft for the Navy, and eight F-35 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft for the Air Force.²⁶ The procurement of these aviation assets for the military services are currently being delayed due to budget constraints, but could be acquired on time if the DoD is able to save money from closing bases. \$3 billion would fund 40 percent of the Air Force's annual requirement for flying hours, which sustains a total force fleet of 5,000 aircraft and 103 weapon systems.²⁷ Even if the BRAC savings stayed within the installations portfolio instead of shifting to weapon systems procurement or operational training, the savings could still be applied to benefit the warfighter; a \$3 billion investment into remaining Air Force bases would restore funding to modernize and maintain recently neglected installations and infrastructure from which the United States projects airpower.²⁸ However, military force structure is not comprised solely of weapon systems and buildings: warfighters are people.

Recently proposed reductions in personnel and compensation driven by the tighter defense budget suggest closing bases could save jobs and restore pay and benefits. The DoD's fiscal year 2015 budget request for military pay and benefits (\$246 billion) was \$7 billion less than the actual fiscal year 2012 expense.²⁹ \$3 billion would restore 42 percent of that reduction, allowing some military members to keep their jobs and originally promised benefits. Unpopular military compensation proposals such as slowing the growth of basic allowance for housing,

increasing TRICARE fees, and reducing retirement pensions may be avoided or lessened if the DoD is able to shift money for excess installations to the military personnel account.³⁰ The fiscal year 2015 budget request also reduced the total number of DoD civilians to 749 thousand, six thousand less than the fiscal year 2014 amount. Assuming the average civilian employee costs the DoD approximately \$100 thousand per year, all six thousand of those civilian positions could be restored for \$600 million per year, one-fifth of the expected annual savings from another round of BRAC. This restoral of civilian positions would help maintain the mission critical civilian workforce that has experienced substantial cuts each year since fiscal year 2013.

Regardless of whether or not base closure savings can restore personnel cuts, the reality is that the military is getting smaller; making similar reductions in the number of military bases will consolidate personnel, thereby enhancing force development opportunities. Basic and initial skills training are only the start of a young DoD employee's development. Much of what a soldier, sailor, marine, airman, or civil servant needs to learn to develop expected competency comes from on the job education, training, and experiences. The mentors that guide each young DoD employee are more senior members of that employee's career field. Each time the DoD cuts end strength numbers without decreasing the number of bases, the density of experienced and qualified personnel within each functional area decreases, which dilutes the pool of mentors necessary for force development. The increasingly technical nature of most jobs in today's military exacerbates this problem, and may ultimately lead to the hollow force many military leaders are guarding against while the defense budget shrinks. Closing military installations would consolidate the smaller DoD force, facilitating more efficient force development and creating a more competent and effective military. Reducing the number of bases can generate consolidation benefits beyond just the personnel realm.

Centralizing or consolidating military missions at the nation's most-capable installations not only saves money by streamlining overhead, but also improves military effectiveness. Consolidating organizations with comparable missions, or centralizing similar mission sets within a single organization, creates operational efficiencies that optimize mission capability. An example of this phenomenon is the DoD's planned consolidation of intelligence operations and missions at a single installation in support of U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command. Those two combatant commands are consolidating their personnel within a single complex "to provide coherent, timely, actionable intelligence" to U.S., allied, and coalition forces.³¹ General David Rodriguez, Commander, U.S. Africa Command, stated in his March 2014 written testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, we "work closely with other combatant commands...to mitigate risk collaboratively...by sharing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets." Furthermore, he stated, "the trust and teamwork between multinational and interagency partners is vital to the success of collective action."³² This plan illustrates consolidation of military missions at a single installation can improve effectiveness, but its business case analysis for financial savings only exists because the plan enables the divestment of excess installation capacity, an authority the DoD has overseas, but not within the United States without congressional BRAC authorization.

The Impact of BRAC on Defense Communities

Although BRAC may produce benefits to the DoD, most opponents of another round are concerned about the cost of closing bases to the local community; job loss being the primary concern. A 2002 GAO report indicated major base closures from the first four rounds of BRAC, from 1988 to 1995, eliminated 130,000 jobs.³³ That immediate job loss figure is significant, and

therefore of concern for communities who feel vulnerable to base closure via BRAC. However, upon further investigation, the job loss is not as detrimental to the local economy as many believe. Historical review of prior BRAC rounds show job losses do not extend beyond DoD employee positions, meaning the evidence suggests non-DoD jobs are not negatively impacted by BRAC.³⁴ Military positions move to different bases, as do some civilian positions, but the departure of spouses of military members vacates other positions, thereby mitigating the job loss impact.³⁵ BRAC certainly causes unemployment to rise locally in the short-term.³⁶ However, BRAC does not seem to cause long-term local unemployment: as of 2002, 71 percent of the communities affected by the 1988 through 1995 BRAC rounds had below average unemployment rates, compared to the national average.³⁷ However, the quantity of jobs is not the only measure of BRAC's impact on the local community: quality matters as well.

Per capita income and its growth are standard measures of the job market's quality, and statistical comparisons show communities affected by BRAC have not suffered a decrease, or slowed growth, in wages. According to GAO, from 1996 to 1999, 53 percent of the communities affected by the 1988 through 1995 BRAC rounds had an above average growth rate in per capita income, compared to the national average.³⁸ In addition, a regression analysis conducted by Mark Hooker and Michael Knetter indicates counties' per capita income in the two years immediately following base closure increased slightly faster than their states' per capita income. Base closures' lack of negative impact on wage rate growth is partially because military and civil service pay is generally less than the community average, so when the DoD eliminates those jobs the average salary goes up. In addition, the civilians that choose to remain local after a base closure are typically older and more highly skilled; therefore, they are able to compete for

higher-paying jobs.³⁹ However, the quantity and quality of jobs are not the only impacts base closure has on local communities.

Base closures can also affect local businesses, housing market, and construction industry, but not all negatively. The housing market (specifically, the rental market) typically suffers an initial decline from base closures. Following the 1991 closure announcement of Castle AFB, California, housing prices fell 25 percent and vacancies increased similarly. Although new home sales in Atwater (the closest city to Castle AFB) increased when the base was closing, the community struggled to reuse the 933 vacated military family housing units and 1800 dormitory spaces. Base closures also hurt the local construction industry. However, bases closed because of BRAC typically require significant environmental remediation, so the emerging environmental industry can mitigate the effects of losing the DoD as a local construction client. Another consequence of BRAC is the removal of military personnel support services such as the commissary, exchange, and hospital. Although a significant portion of the demand for those services departs with the active duty military members and their families, most of the retirees stay. Instead of those retirees going to the commissary for food, exchange for low-priced goods, or the hospital for medical needs, they start going to local grocery stores, small businesses, and community health care providers, thereby enhancing those local economies.⁴⁰

A critical component of a community's ability to recover from a military base closure is how that community reutilizes the vacated installation. A 1998 DoD report highlighted the ways in which the U.S. government facilitates successful reuse of closed military bases. One DoD initiative that accelerates base transition to the community and job creation is Economic Development Conveyance (EDC). EDC gives the DoD flexibility to transfer former military bases to local communities at below-market cost, or in some instances, no cost. The DoD report

stated “thirty recently approved EDCs are projected to create about 142,000 jobs.”⁴¹

Additionally, a benefit of closing military bases via BRAC is the statutory requirement for the DoD to remediate environmental hazards prior to conveying property and facilities to the community. Although the environmental restoration may take time, the DoD conducts it at no cost to the local community (it is included in the BRAC costs), and ultimately provides the community property that is suitable for reuse with minimal restrictions. The various DoD initiatives to assist base transition to the community are important, but equally important is the community’s organic initiative to find and attract new businesses or organizations to reuse the former installation.

A case study for positive community reuse of a closed military installation is Fort Ord, California. In 1993, the DoD closed Fort Ord, which previously employed 20,000 military personnel and contributed substantially to the Monterey Peninsula and Salinas Valley economies. However, in 1994, California State University acquired a portion of the former Army base’s property and facilities for use as a local campus. As of 2004, California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB) occupied 1,300 acres previously owned by Fort Ord, and “replaced the Army as one of the leading economic drivers on the Peninsula, pumping over \$100 million into the Marina, Seaside, Salinas, and Monterey local economies in 2003 alone.” CSUMB converted military family housing units into student, staff, and faculty housing; a physical fitness gymnasium into a college athletic facility; the Army officer’s club into the student union; office spaces into academic laboratories or classrooms; and motor pools into art studios. Plans for new roads, residential communities, and businesses around the campus suggest CSUMB is driving additional economic development. Given CSUMB’s location on the Pacific Ocean coast and new facility construction, it is likely to attract high-quality students for many years to come.

This transition was only successful through visionary leadership and proactive consultation between the DoD and local community, and resulted in a modern model for transition of military base closure.⁴²

Similar examples of successful military base reuse are evident throughout the country. According to the DoD's 1998 BRAC report, "public and private reinvestments are recreating these installations as job centers, with new airports, educational institutions, and multifaceted business developments."⁴³ For example, Charleston, South Carolina experienced the highest percentage of DoD job losses from the 1988 through 1995 BRAC rounds, but as of 1998, 75 percent of the former Navy base's leasable space was occupied by 23 major employers, which created 2,700 new jobs. Alexandria, Louisiana began using the former England AFB as the Alexandria International Airport in 1996; as well as a hospital extension, elementary school, and aviation repair company; replacing the loss of 682 DoD civilian jobs with 1,400 new jobs. Portsmouth, New Hampshire uses the former Pease AFB as the Pease International Tradeport, replacing the loss of 400 DoD civilian positions with 1,285 jobs working for various employers, including the airfield, steel manufacturer, and consular center. Communities are also using former military facilities to help meet public recreation and housing needs.⁴⁴

Proposed DoD Strategy for Garnering BRAC Authorization

The first step in generating more congressional support for BRAC is removing the most prevalent excuses members of Congress use to oppose BRAC: the 2005 round cost too much and did not generate enough savings, the base closure process takes too long, and future military force structure is unknown.

According to the House Armed Services Committee Minority Staff, in order to counter congressional members' stated reason for opposing BRAC, the DoD must show the next round will be fundamentally different than the 2005 round, in that it will generate efficiencies and savings, control cost growth, strengthen the commission, and improve transparency.⁴⁵ In order to emphasize efficiency over transformation, the Secretary of Defense should certify, as part of DoD's legislative proposal, that "the primary objective of the next BRAC round will be to eliminate excess infrastructure capacity and reconfigure the remaining infrastructure to maximize efficiency."⁴⁶ Furthermore, DoD's proposal needs to indicate installations' military value and estimated five-year net savings will be the top priorities for base closure and realignment recommendations. In order to ensure quicker benefits from BRAC, DoD should agree to initiate approved actions within one year and complete them within five years, as compared to previous rounds' standards of two and six years, respectively. Developing a more efficient post-BRAC environmental remediation process that shortens cleanup time and allows for phased property transfer would help expedite the closure process while allowing communities to make quicker use of former bases.

In order to show the DoD is committed to controlling cost growth, the Secretary of Defense should agree to submit detailed base closure and realignment master plans, only carry out construction projects in accordance with those master plans, and account for all the cost elements associated with BRAC recommendations. Master plans for each BRAC recommendation will ensure more reliable cost estimates, and give Congress the ability to hold the DoD accountable for only taking the specific actions required to carry out each recommendation. Since construction scope changes contributed significantly to increased BRAC 2005 costs, the DoD should agree to execute construction projects as specifically identified in the

recommendations' master plans, with new projects only allowed via subsequent congressional authorization. Furthermore, the DoD's proposed BRAC legislation needs to mandate that cost estimates account for all elements, including information technology and public-private partnership contracts, in order to develop more comprehensive and reliable predictions than were given in advance of the 2005 round.⁴⁷

Congress has two primary mechanisms by which to influence BRAC: granting DoD the authorization and appropriation to undertake a new round of BRAC, and validating the Secretary of Defense's recommendations via the appointed BRAC Commission. If members of Congress do not feel the Commission will be strong enough to represent them during the BRAC recommendations' review, it is unlikely they will authorize it in the first place. In order to strengthen the BRAC Commission and improve transparency, the DoD's proposed BRAC legislation should encourage adequate Commission staff, provide the Commission more time to analyze the Secretary of Defense's recommendations, and mandate publication of unclassified information that contributed to the Secretary's recommendations. Since Congress does not play a direct role in validating the DoD's BRAC recommendations, it will want to ensure the BRAC Commission has adequate and appropriate staff to vet each of DoD's proposals. The Commission's assessment process takes significant manpower and time to review and deliberate each recommendation thoroughly, so the DoD proposal should mandate that the Commission certify it has sufficient staff and time to complete a comprehensive review. Furthermore, the Secretary of Defense should commit to publicizing all unclassified information used in the formulation of BRAC recommendations, in order to be transparent with Congress and their voting constituents, while increasing accountability for decisions and estimates.⁴⁸

Although military force structure will continue to change, the DoD needs to show Congress that the military will still be able to grow modestly in size, if necessary, within a reduced infrastructure footprint. As already stated, the DoD believes it has 24 percent excess capacity, but Conger's initial estimation is that that a new BRAC round will only eliminate approximately five percent capacity. Therefore, it is clear that DoD does not intend to eliminate all excess capacity and the ability to surge or grow force structure as future events or budgets dictate. As part of its BRAC recommendations, the DoD needs to show Congress quantitatively how much force structure growth it can preserve with remaining installations. Although a military force unconstrained by budget is an unrealistic expectation, the DoD is capable of identifying the force structure needed to generate a military capability envisioned by those in Congress who believe the White House has cut defense too deeply. Demonstrating that post-BRAC infrastructure retains the capacity to support more force structure will negate the argument that Congress cannot authorize BRAC until the DoD finalizes all future force structure decisions.

Removing the most prevalent excuses members of Congress use to oppose BRAC is an important incremental step in garnering BRAC authorization in that it forces a debate on the root cause of congressional opposition: Members are unwilling to risk their political future in the event their voting constituency is negatively impacted. Although there is no clear solution to removing this political fear, DoD can take a three-pronged approach to mitigating the relative risk in the eyes of Congress. First, the DoD needs to show a majority of Congress that the benefits outweigh the costs, and that not authorizing BRAC could be a more negative alternative for their respective parochial interests. Second, the DoD must target information at the local communities concerned about their vulnerability to BRAC by highlighting benefits voters care

about most (their economy), while reminding everyone of the federal government assistance provided to communities following base closures. Third, the DoD should show the defense industry, and associated congressional lobbyists, that BRAC has holistic benefits to the defense industry's overall economy, in order to garner their advocacy for BRAC.

Directly targeting the underlying opposition of congressional members means showing Congress that BRAC's benefits outweigh its costs, and the alternative to BRAC may be more damaging to the majority of their respective parochial interests. Assuming the DoD's legislative proposal convinces Congress that the next BRAC round will focus on efficiencies like those in the 1990s did, BRAC's financial benefits to DoD are undeniable. However, those DoD benefits need to be translated into benefits for other programs in the majority of states. Since the Senate typically introduces BRAC legislation, the DoD can focus this effort on the smaller chamber and its by-state perspective versus having to tailor a narrative to each of the 435 Representatives and their districts. The DoD needs to identify what \$3 billion in BRAC savings can be reinvested in: for example, a \$60 million military construction project in every state in a single year, which would support the local construction industry and create jobs. Viewed another way, the opportunity cost of not authorizing BRAC could mean a \$3 billion cut to other programs: for example, terminating 30 thousand civil service positions or cancelling procurement of 20 F-35s whose production generates jobs in multiple states. An explanation of what \$3 billion can do to improve military readiness would appeal to those in Congress that have voiced concern over the reduced defense budget limiting warfighter training. By telling members of Congress what each of them stand to lose, or not gain, by blocking the financial savings of BRAC may convince the majority of senators that the risks of BRAC are worth the potentially greater benefits.

Members of Congress are ultimately concerned about reelection; therefore, the DoD must target voters' concerns about post-BRAC economic recovery to make Congress less averse to voting for BRAC. In the aftermath of the 1990s' BRACs, most local communities surrounding remaining military installations established anti-BRAC organizations, designed to "BRAC-proof" their base. Concerned citizens in surrounding communities joined or supported these save-the-base organizations because they feared the negative economic impact of base closure. However, as already shown, BRAC does not have to be an economic catastrophe to a community; in many cases, it produces a long-term benefit. Although the community's support of a local base is desirable while a mission exists there, the DoD needs to provide base commanders the empirical data that proves the military's presence is expendable. Additionally, by showing current military communities that most former military communities have weathered the immediate post-BRAC storm, and eventually developed greater prosperity, the DoD may be able to turn save-the-base organizations' focus from an anti-BRAC strategy to a post-BRAC reutilization strategy. As this thought process shift occurs, many communities will find that an economy absent the military presence actually has greater potential. Furthermore, the DoD should publicize the existing federal programs designed to help communities recover from BRAC, such as economic adjustment, community planning, civilian transition assistance, and environmental restoration.

Since lobbyists substantially influence congressional perspectives, the DoD must show that BRAC savings will benefit the defense industry, in hopes that defense lobbyists will become BRAC advocates. DoD has repeatedly made the link between spending money on excess installation capacity and investments in military readiness and modernization. Although base operations support contracts are a significant portion of the defense industry, weapon system

sustainment and modernization constitute a larger portion of the annual defense budget. The DoD's recent argument that it needs to shift infrastructure investments to readiness and modernization investments provides the overall framework for convincing the defense industry to support BRAC, but more and tailored details are needed to generate public support. DoD needs to be more specific about how installation investment savings will be shifted to readiness and modernization requirements to clearly show the defense industry what they have to gain from BRAC. Although DoD typically likes to retain flexibility to use savings however they deem appropriate during the next budget cycle, the risk of locking themselves into specific readiness or modernization investments to garner BRAC support seems to be lower than the risk of continuing to waste money on excess installations with minimal military value.

Conclusions

BRAC has a proven history over the last two decades of benefitting the military financially and operationally, but there is a stigma that BRAC causes irrecoverable harm to local defense communities, and subsequently, congressional reelection campaigns. Convincing Congress to authorize another round of BRAC requires an incremental and multi-faceted approach to mitigating that stigma while garnering support from key stakeholders. The DoD must first remove Congress's prevailing excuses for opposing BRAC by demonstrating the next round will realize estimated net savings within a reasonable timeframe while preserving some capacity to grow force structure. DoD can do so by presenting a revised legislative proposal that shows it will not repeat previous mistakes, specifically those highlighted from the 2005 round. Meanwhile, the DoD needs to address the underlying concerns regarding BRAC (primarily, the economic impact to defense communities surrounding closed bases), by showing previous

rounds benefitted the military, voting constituents, and defense industry more than it cost them, and tailoring the narrative in a way that is compelling to each stakeholder's respective parochial interest.

Constitutionally, the military is not supposed to play politics, and this paper's thesis of "convincing Congress" implies that DoD should neglect that prohibition and play an inappropriate role in the development of national policy. Our country prides itself on elected civilian leaders exercising control over the military, which restrains the DoD from lobbying on behalf of its own interests. However, military leadership has an inherent responsibility "to represent the claims of military security within the state machinery" and advise "on the implications of alternative courses of state action from the military point of view."⁴⁹ The DoD has yet to fully represent why BRAC is needed to benefit national security and advise on the alternative risks of not executing a BRAC at this time. Additional studies are needed to comprehensively inform congressional leadership and American voters regarding the costs and benefits of BRAC so elected leaders may make the best possible decisions for the safety, security, and prosperity of the United States of America; otherwise, military leadership will be abdicating its critical role in the development of national policy. Congress can empower military leadership to fulfill this role by loosening its restraints on BRAC planning and preparation, such that BRAC analysis replaces BRAC speculation.

Endnotes

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