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POSITION PAPER

Reserve Officers Association of the United States
One Constitution Avenue, NE, Washington, DC 20002-5655

Direct Line: (202) 646-7713
Toll-Free: (800) 809-9448 ext 713
www.roa.org - mhanson@roa.org

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A SECOND LOOK AT BASE CLOSURE AND REALIGNMENT (BRAC)

Requested Action:

- Limit any BRAC to base closures where expenses will be covered by savings within the first five years.
- Set a goal to maintain a Title 10 military presence in every state.
- Study overseas basing and relocation within the United States before determining excess domestic infrastructure.
- Do not use Reserve and Guard installations to be the bill payers to keep active facilities open.
- Update bonuses and travel allowances for Reserve Force personnel displaced by future BRAC decisions.
- Provide Reserve Transition Incentives to offset the penalty of earlier retirement. Include the cost of allowances and incentives in calculation of overall BRAC expenses.

Discussion:

Base closures are one of the most important, yet controversial decisions to be made affecting military transformation and operational planning. Military bases are expensive to operate, yet another domestic base closing round hasn't been authorized by Congress over the last two years despite White House requests. Another Base Relocation and Closure (BRAC) commission will be requested by the White House again for FY-2015.

Reports have surfaced that the Pentagon has authority (10 USC Section 2687) to close bases domestically, as archaic laws remain on the books providing DoD with authority to close facilities without Congressional approval. This authority only requires notification. To oversee the process Congress must maintain control; the most effective tool is BRAC.

The BRAC process reduces political influences with the establishment of an independent panel, and an up or down approval of the commission's recommendations by Congress.

In 2004, DoD estimated that it had 25 percent excess infrastructure. The 2005 base realignment and closure process cut roughly 3 percent of that excess. The Pentagon claims that keeping excess bases open costs the U.S. \$10 billion a year. It is estimated that DoD saved more than \$12 billion a year from the five earlier BRAC rounds, although 2005 proved to be fiscally controversial.

Both the Army and the Air Force say that without further infrastructure that budget reduction would require deeper end strength cut, reduced readiness, and reductions in weapons procurement. BRAC by law is not supposed to eliminate units, just relocate them.

While, the Department of Defense insists that BRAC was not a force structure issue, the retiring of equipment, changing of missions, decommissioning of units and moving units from one state to another did change force configuration. In BRAC 2005, Reserve and National Guard facilities were disproportionately closed to avoid badly needed military construction funding and to build joint Reserve Force locations. The 2005 review did not include personnel data of how many Reserve Force personnel were displaced as a result of closings and realignments.

The Army closed one Reserve installation, and 211 National Guard Readiness and 176 Army Reserve Centers, and built 125 new Armed Forces Reserve centers; costing \$3.2 billion. The Navy and the Marine Corps Reserves closed over 37 operational support centers. The Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve closed over 20 facilities.

Closing Reserve centers and Guard armories in order to build new ones and consolidate operations is not always the best option. This is especially true when it means Reserve Force personnel have to travel hundreds of miles to their new monthly training assembly locations at personal expense. Experienced warriors often chose to end their careers; taking with them skills especially need in the all-volunteer total force. Eleven Armed Forces Reserve center were also closed.

Any future round of BRAC must include force realignment analysis to take into account future integration of Reserve and Active duty units, as the elimination of parallel unit structures may give reason for consolidation of infrastructure.

Background:

The first four BRAC rounds of base closures closed 97 major bases, restructured another 55 military installations. DoD's claim is that those rounds saved \$40 billion and continue to save \$7.3 billion annually.

The fifth BRAC round recommended closing 22 major domestic military bases and the "realigned (either enlarging or shrinking) 33 others. DoD calculated that the recommendations would have saved almost \$50 billion over 20 years, but this was reduced by the commission to \$ 37 billion.

In 2007, Pentagon officials were accused of withholding data from the 2005 BRAC commission, misleading the independent BRAC Commissioners, the U.S. Congress, the President, and the rest of the Department of Defense (DoD), about the legitimacy of BRAC actions involving the Department's laboratories.

In 2012, the Government Accountability Office found that the estimated cost of \$21 billion to implement the 2005 BRAC had grown to \$35 billion by Sept. 30, 2011.

Congress became hesitant to approve additional rounds because DoD spent upfront saving by way of new construction, which they also claimed. Additionally, many of the new construction projects fell behind schedule making it difficult to complete the BRAC by the 2012 deadline.



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