



ADC Policy Statement

June 3, 2014

Investing in our country's defense infrastructure is critical to sustaining missions, supporting military families and protecting our national security. No one understands this more than ADC's members -- the communities and states that serve as home to our military installations.

While Congress and DoD remain in a stalemate on the direction of defense policy, our nation's defense communities, regions and states are dealing with the consequences and the reality that difficult choices will need to be made. Within the association there is recognition that these are complex issues that cannot be addressed through support for -- or opposition to -- a particular policy, such as BRAC. At the same time, there is a consensus that these complex issues need to be addressed and not pushed to next year, the next Congress or the next Administration.

Without immediate action, our defense infrastructure is going to face serious and long-term challenges. The lack of maintenance and strategic investment is already impacting the sustainability of installations, the readiness of missions, and the support provided to military families. A slow and painful process has begun that will hollow out installations and cause sustained economic challenges for defense community economies.

This perspective, shared by communities that compose ADC, frames the Association's current overarching policy recommendations:

- Managing the current budget situation without a clear strategy to deal with excess infrastructure is not in the best interest of military installations and communities. It will simply force the military to use its existing powers to begin hollowing out many installations through a process that is conducted behind closed doors.
- The challenges facing DoD are unprecedented, and the Department needs the flexibility and the authority to maximize the value and efficiency of the nation's defense infrastructure.
- Any decisions about infrastructure must be conducted through a process that is independent, fair, transparent and expeditious.
- The infrastructure choices that are made must be driven by strategy but focused on reducing costs and not transformation of the force.
- Regardless of the process used to make downsizing decisions, communities need support to ensure they make it through difficult transitions.

While ADC is not endorsing a particular proposal or legislation, our members have three decades of experience with base closure and believe their unique institutional knowledge should be part of the ongoing policy discussion over how a future base closure process should be structured.

In that frame, ADC offers the following recommendation regarding both the process to identify potential base closures and how transition after closure should occur:

I. The Selection Process

The BRAC process arose from the need to streamline Department of Defense operations and to do so in a manner acceptable across the political spectrum. The procedures that were followed — in 1988, 1991, 1993, 1995 and 2005 — to evaluate and ultimately close or realign bases has been refined significantly over time to deal with political and national security considerations.

With that in mind, ADC offers the following recommendations:

- BRAC should continue to evolve, but the essential process, rooted in the existence of an independent commission assessing DoD recommendations to produce an all-or-nothing list of closures and realignments, should not change.
- National security decisions and strategy should define future basing decisions, but long-term budget challenges require a process that achieves cost-savings by:
 - i. Establishing requirements that ensure all decisions have a solid analytical base;
 - ii. Reducing the overall complexity and the total number of recommendations that DoD can recommend to the commission;
 - iii. Ensuring cost savings by establishing a standard payback period for all recommendations; and
 - iv. Improving the cost estimates of recommendations through more detailed and timely planning before they are submitted to the commission.
- Transparency has been a fundamental part of the BRAC process and it must continue to be improved through:
 - i. Improved quality and accessibility of data by communities;
 - ii. Establishing requirements on when data must be made public;
 - iii. Strengthening the reporting requirements of the commission and its deliberations; and
 - iv. Providing adequate time for the commission to conduct its analysis by requiring commission and staff to be appointed earlier, and lengthening the time for the commission to deliberate.
- The National Guard, with its unique partnership with states, requires a higher level of consultation before DoD finishes drafting its closure and realignment recommendations.

II. The Base Redevelopment Process

For communities, base closure is more than a real estate transaction; it is about people, their jobs, and a way of life—it is a true community issue. Planning for life after closure must be a community-driven process. The federal government's primary responsibility is to support impacted communities with the resources necessary to ensure an accelerated economic recovery. It is a small price to pay for communities' decades of service supporting the military.

Building on the strengths of a process developed over the past 30 years, and the experience of the past decade, the next BRAC process needs to:

- Focus on expediting communities' economic recovery by removing bureaucratic steps that cause major delays. Actions include:
 - i. Provide full exemption for BRAC sites from the Redevelopment Act/McKinney Act; or develop a method to calculate a total contribution to homeless providers for all BRAC closure properties based on a percentage of land sale proceeds.
 - ii. Require improved environmental site characterization and access to information for all closing installations so that redevelopment planning can occur with full knowledge of the risk and opportunities.
 - iii. Encourage the use of environmental services cooperative agreements as a way to manage costs, expedite transfer of property and allow community planning to move forward.
 - iv. Ensure federal environmental and resource protection laws do not act as impediments to economic recovery.

- Reinforce the government's commitments before and after property is transferred to the community.
 - i. Require minimum levels of maintenance established by the General Services Administration on closing installations until the point of transfer.
 - ii. Protect and ensure federal indemnification and similar environmental protections remain in place and prevent attempts to weaken or circumvent this obligation.

- Recognize the uniqueness of base closure property actions by sustaining DoD property disposal leadership, but consolidating the services' separate activities into a single entity in order to:
 - i. Create a clearly identified single mission which sunsets upon mission completion;
 - ii. Increase property disposal institutional capacity through a single professional entity;
 - iii. Ensure consistency and common regulatory interpretation; and
 - iv. Conserve federal resources by reducing administrative costs.

- Provide adequate financial support that recognizes the hardships communities face after closure and provides the investment necessary to jumpstart a speedy recovery.
 - i. Maintain and strengthen the role of OEA.
 - ii. Ensure that addressing community impacts is the priority issue for Congress and the Administration throughout the process.
 - iii. Develop a separate BRAC pool for key government economic development programs to ensure that federally impacted communities are given priority.
 - iv. Bring together agency programs into a joint effort such as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that ensures federal coordination.
 - v. Include facility maintenance and caretaker costs as part of base closure funding; create a single fund for all BRAC sites.
 - iii. Ensure adequate environmental funding that allows redevelopment projects to move forward.