



Base Realignment and Closure

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BRAC 2005 comes at 'perfect time' to help Army 'reset'

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – The 2005 Base Realignment and Closure recommendations could not have come at a better time as the Army begins realigning units overseas and looks for a clearer picture on where to put them, service leaders said during a media roundtable May 26 in the Pentagon.

On May 13, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld proposed the closure of 15 active Army bases, seven leased bases, 176 Army Reserve installations, and 211 Army National Guard facilities.

“The timing for this BRAC has been perfect for the Army because it has allowed us through our analysis process to figure out the right location to reset units from overseas as we bring them back,” said Geoffrey Prosch, principal deputy assistant Army secretary for installations and environment.

“The analysis has given us that fidelity, and it has also enabled us to validate where we are standing up these 10 new brigades,” he said, referring to the Army’s transformation to a modular force structure that calls for an increase from 33 to 43 maneuver brigades.

Meanwhile, Prosch said, BRAC 2005 will allow the Army to meet its goal of streamlining its portfolio of installations, part of which is being done through an integrated global presence and basing strategy.

That strategy, he said, will determine how units and assets overseas will be “reset and relocated.”

In Europe, he said, some 148 installations are expected to close and thousands of troops and their families returned to the United States.

According to the Army’s new basing strategy for units returning from overseas, the 1st Armored Division headquarters and three heavy brigades will go to Fort Bliss, Texas, while a brigade from Korea will head to Fort Carson, Colo.

The 1st Infantry Division headquarters and an aviation brigade will be based at Fort Riley, Kansas. Several small maneuver-enhancement brigades and support units will go to Fort Knox, Ky.

Craig College, deputy assistant secretary of the Army for infrastructure analysis and director of the Army Basing Study Group, said several units will deactivate overseas, and Soldiers from those units will be reassigned elsewhere.

In all, he said, more than 47,000 troops from overseas will be reassigned to units in the United States.

Those Soldiers, he added, will return as “individual replacements and fill out new modular brigades throughout the Army.” Still, any move back home by troops overseas will not likely happen before summer 2006.

College said several heavy brigades in Germany slated for Fort Bliss won't get orders to the U.S. until the BRAC Commission make its final recommendation and the plan gets approval from Congress and the president. That action will not come before late fall or winter, he said.

"I don't see any units moving in large numbers until the summer of 2006, and I suspect those wouldn't be large numbers," College said. "I would expect to see the process accelerated in the years 2007 to 2009."

College also added that no move would take place until the installation or the local community is ready to accept the influx of Soldiers and their families.

He pointed out that Army secretary Francis Harvey and Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker have been "adamant" that installations and communities are prepared to accept the new units. "That means things like housing, schools, and that panoply of support services that any family, whether you wear a uniform or not, needs to be able to function," College said.

"We will ... ensure quality of life is enhanced, and we're not going to move people until the communities and facilities and the installation are ready for them," he explained.

However, just as important for the Army is that BRAC 2005 will save the service billions over the next two decades, money that will further support Army transformation.

BRAC 2005 is anticipated to generate a 20-year gross savings of about \$20.4 billion, and a net savings of \$7.6 billion for the Army.

That figure is "three to four times higher" than the savings of the four previous BRAC rounds combined, College said.

In addition, he said, closing overseas facilities will save the Army \$2.5 billion more annually and \$28 billion over 20 years.

Said Prosch, "Our big goal is to win the war, transform the Army, and get resources to accomplish the first two."