

GAO

Report to the Chairwoman,  
Subcommittee on Military Installations  
and Facilities, Committee on Armed  
Services, House of Representatives

March 1991

# MILITARY BASES

## Varied Processes Used in Proposing Base Closures and Realignments



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**National Security and  
International Affairs Division**

B-242417

March 1, 1991

The Honorable Patricia Schroeder  
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on  
Military Installations and Facilities  
Committee on Armed Services  
House of Representatives

Dear Madam Chairwoman:

This report responds to your September 26, 1990, request that we review the process used by the Department of Defense (DOD) in selecting the domestic military bases announced as candidates for closure and realignment by the Secretary of Defense in January 1990. As you know, the fiscal year 1991 National Defense Authorization Act established a new, independent commission to evaluate DOD's base closure and realignment proposals, and DOD must reevaluate its January 1990 candidate bases against criteria yet to be established. This report provides information on DOD's process prior to passage of the act. We received a similar request from Senators Bumpers and Pryor on June 14, 1990, and a separate report was issued to them on January 7, 1991. At their request, we reviewed, as an example, the Air Force's process for selecting Eaker Air Force Base, Arkansas, for closure. We have included that information in this report.

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**Results in Brief**

The Office of the Secretary of Defense did not provide specific written guidance to the services on how to select bases as candidates for closure and realignment. The Secretary gave general oral guidance to the services, instructing them to consider anticipated force structure and budget reductions in selecting candidate bases.

None of the services selected candidate bases using a process as comprehensive and well documented as the one followed by the 1988 Commission on Base Realignment and Closure. The processes used in selecting the January 1990 candidate bases varied: (1) the Navy based its selections on suggestions by knowledgeable officials in the Office of the Secretary of the Navy; (2) the Army based its selections on a task force study by the Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans that assessed the Army's base structure and planned force structure reductions; and (3) the Air Force directed its major commands to select candidate bases, and the commands made their selections based on various internal assessments.

The Strategic Air Command selected Eaker Air Force Base, Arkansas, as a candidate for closure after it received the lowest overall rating of six domestic bases that support B-52G Air Launched Cruise Missile aircraft planned for retirement from the Air Force's inventory. Command officials said that, in their rating process, they assigned values to each base after considering factors such as wartime mission, support of training requirements, and base infrastructure. This analysis, however, was not as detailed and comprehensive as the 1988 Commission's analysis. The ranking of candidate bases was not well documented, which prevented us from properly assessing the adequacy and reasonableness of the Command's analysis.

Candidate bases that meet both the new criteria and DOD's reduced force structure plan are to be submitted to Congress no later than April 15, 1991. Even though bases that appeared on the January 1990 list, such as Eaker Air Force Base, may reappear on the new closure candidate list, they will have to be reevaluated against whatever criteria the Department establishes.

## Background

On December 29, 1988, the Commission on Base Realignment and Closure<sup>1</sup> recommended that 86 domestic bases be closed, 5 be partially closed, and 54 others be realigned by reducing and relocating functions and civilian personnel positions. The Commission (1) developed a comprehensive methodology for identifying bases as candidates for realignment and closure that emphasized military value as the key criterion for assessing bases; (2) grouped bases with similar missions, determined the bases' military value, evaluated the bases' capacity to absorb additional missions, and determined the bases' overall excess capacity; and (3) scored and ranked the bases to identify those warranting further review. The bases that warranted further review were generally those that received the lowest military value scores. In November 1989, we reported<sup>2</sup> on the Commission's methodology and recommendations.

Our 1989 report of the Commission's process stated that, overall, the methodology developed by the Commission was an analytically sound and detailed approach in identifying candidate bases for realignment

<sup>1</sup>On May 3, 1988, the Secretary of Defense signed the charter establishing the Commission to review and recommend bases for realignment and closure. The Commission consisted of 12 members appointed by the Secretary of Defense. It dissolved subsequent to the issuance of its December 1988 report.

<sup>2</sup>Military Bases: An Analysis of the Commission's Realignment and Closure Recommendations (GAO/NSIAD-90-42, Nov. 29, 1989).

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and closure. We found that the Commission's methodology included an analysis of the need for certain military bases and provided an opportunity to compare how individual bases contributed to accomplishing DOD's missions.

The Commission also examined ways to enhance the Department's efficiency by realigning forces with similar missions at fewer bases. We concluded that the Commission's methodology had the potential to enhance readiness and provide for better command, control, and mobilization for future contingencies. DOD agreed with our conclusions and said that base realignment and closure decisions should be primarily based on military value.

On January 29, 1990, the Secretary of Defense announced that the Department was considering closing 35 additional bases and realigning forces at more than 20 others. (See app. I for a list of these bases.) According to DOD, the candidate bases were chosen by the services and the Defense Logistics Agency in response to the Secretary's request that they reevaluate their base structure requirements considering proposed force structure reductions. The need to reduce the defense budget and the lessened tension in Eastern Europe were reasons given by the Department for planning to reduce the size of its forces and the number of bases that support those forces.

After the candidate bases for closure and realignment were announced, studies and evaluations by the military services, as required by 10 U.S.C. 2687 and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, were begun. For most bases the studies and evaluations were to be completed by December 1990, and the Department expected to submit the services' final recommendations and related cost and savings estimates with its fiscal year 1992 budget request. Passage of the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1991, however, requires a reevaluation of candidate bases proposed for closure as well as a revised timetable for consideration by Congress.

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## DOD Did Not Provide Specific Guidance for Selecting Candidate Bases Announced in January 1990

The Office of the Secretary of Defense did not provide written guidance to the services or establish any criteria on how to select the candidate bases announced for closure and realignment on January 29, 1990. According to the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Production and Logistics, in early January 1990 the Secretary of Defense asked the services to submit a list of bases as candidates for closure and realignment that supported the proposed force structure changes presented to the Secretary in December 1989.

In testimony before the Subcommittee on Military Construction, House Committee on Appropriations, on March 15, 1990, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary reiterated that the Secretary of Defense's guidance was that the services tell him which bases make the most sense to close in view of the services' force structure proposals and the budget reductions the services know they have to meet.

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## Services Used Different Selection Processes

The Army and the Air Force selected candidate bases on the basis of various internal assessments and studies conducted during 1989 in response to (1) anticipated force structure and budget reductions; (2) the reduced threat in Eastern Europe; and (3) Department of Defense management review initiatives for streamlining operational, acquisition, and logistics functions. The Navy selected its candidate bases on the basis of suggestions made by knowledgeable Navy officials that work directly for and within the Office of the Secretary of the Navy. The Army's and the Air Force's processes are described below.

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### Army

According to an Army official, the Army did not conduct a comprehensive base analysis such as the one used by the 1988 Commission in selecting its candidate bases. With the exception of four realignment candidates that were selected because of DOD management consolidation initiatives, Army bases were selected as a result of an Army headquarters' base structure study that was conducted between June and October 1989. Department of Army testimony before the Subcommittee on Installations and Facilities, House Committee on Armed Services, on March 15, 1990, indicated that the Army began planning how to reduce its force structure in 1987. This planning, combined with the reduced tension in Eastern Europe, allowed the Army to propose a reduced force structure and consider reducing its basing requirements.

The base structure study resulted in proposals for realignments and base closures. For example, the 194th Armored Brigade at Fort Knox,

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Kentucky, was proposed for realignment from a brigade to a task force group because of the reduced threat in Europe; Fort Ord, California, was proposed for closure and its 7th Infantry Division was to be relocated to Fort Lewis, Washington, because of housing shortages and Fort Ord's lack of expandability; and the 9th Infantry Division at Fort Lewis was proposed for realignment from division to brigade status because of the reduced threat in Europe and its lack of modernized weapons and equipment.

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## Air Force

The assessment of force structure reductions led Air Force commands to conclude that they would have excess base capacity after reducing the number of certain weapon systems. The weapon systems specifically targeted for reduction were the A-10 close air support aircraft, the RF-4C reconnaissance aircraft, and the B-52G Air Launched Cruise Missile aircraft. Bases that support these weapon systems became candidates to study for possible closure.

Each major Air Force command independently developed the methodology and criteria for selecting specific bases from the total number of bases supporting weapon systems targeted for reduction. The Air Force did not provide written guidance or instructions or require documentation of the logic used in the selection process. Air Force headquarters officials told us that candidate bases were nominated by major commands primarily on the basis of force structure reductions; however, when we subsequently visited the Strategic Air Command to obtain details on the selection process that resulted in Eaker Air Force Base, Arkansas, becoming a closure candidate, a somewhat more structured and analytical process was described.

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## Eaker Air Force Base Included in January 1990 Candidate Base List

The Strategic Air Command selected Eaker Air Force Base for inclusion on the January 1990 candidate base list because it has 14 B-52G Air Launched Cruise Missile aircraft in its inventory that the Air Force plans to retire over the next several years. According to Strategic Air Command officials, the Command conducted an installation closure analysis prior to the Secretary's January 1990 announcement that identified Eaker as a candidate for closure. The analysis used multiple factors and criteria in assessing Eaker and five other bases<sup>3</sup> that have

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<sup>3</sup>The five other Strategic Air Command bases that were evaluated were Castle Air Force Base, California; Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana; Griffiss Air Force Base, New York; Loring Air Force Base, Maine; and Wurtsmith Air Force Base, Michigan.

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B-52G aircraft in their inventories. Factors and criteria assessed included each base's (1) ability to support the single integrated operational war plan; (2) ability to support peacetime training and operational missions; (3) quality of life in the local community and its reasonable accessibility to cultural, educational, and recreational activities; (4) impact of closure on the community; (5) quality and quantity of its infrastructure; and (6) expenses to relocate residual missions. Other information that the Command considered included whether the base had single or multi-missions and the aircraft maintenance capability to support sustained operations.

Strategic Air Command officials provided us with Eaker's and the other five bases' comparative rankings for the various factors assessed (see app. II). Each factor was assigned a weight, or number (varying from 1 to 6), according to its importance. The highest weights (5 and 6) were assigned to each base's ability to support its wartime mission and its peacetime training and operational missions. The Command assigned a point value of 1 to 5 for its perception on how the bases met and supported the factors. The point value was then multiplied by the assigned weight factor for a rating score. Eaker ranked lowest and was therefore suggested by the Command as a candidate for closure. Eaker, Castle, and Barksdale received lower ratings for support of their assigned wartime mission because they are located farther from potential targets than the other three northern bases. As a result, their bombers require more time and more air refueling to accomplish the mission. Conversely these bases received higher ratings for the peacetime training and operational missions factor because of their proximity to Military Airlift Command and Tactical Air Command bases. This means their tankers do not have to expend as much flying time as the three northern bases' tankers to provide mid-air refueling for these commands.

Eaker was rated average in the quality of life factor but received a high rating for the impact of its closure on the local community. Command officials stated that they believe the local community would be more severely affected by Eaker's closure than some other bases because of the population reduction and the loss of revenue. Command officials told us that Eaker received a low rating for infrastructure because of the condition and capacity of its ramp, hangar, and support facilities and a low rating for relocation expenses, since no residual missions and functions would have to be moved. Strategic Air Command officials said that closing Eaker, a single-mission base, would not be as costly as closing Griffiss or Barksdale, which would have residual missions after removal of B-52s.

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The Command's installation closure analysis was not as detailed and comprehensive as the 1988 Commission's analysis. For example, the Commission's assessment of the quality of life included a detailed comparison of the availability of on-base family and single housing, recreational amenities, and medical facilities with those required. The Strategic Air Command considered the local communities' accessibility to cultural, educational, and recreational activities; however, it based its scores for quality of life and the impact of closure on the local community on subjective judgments by command personnel. We also noted that the methodology used was not well documented and the supporting documentation for most of the rating process was not retained by the Command. As a result, we were unable to assess the adequacy and reasonableness of the analysis.

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## Congress Enacted New Process for Base Closure and Realignment Proposals

The fiscal year 1991 National Defense Authorization Act mandated the establishment of an independent commission that will be responsible for evaluating the base closures and realignments proposed by the Secretary of Defense. The House and Senate Committees on Armed Services' joint conference agreement supports congressional sentiment that a new fair process is required to select bases for closure and realignment. The new process, which includes public and congressional review of the criteria used by the Secretary of Defense to propose closures and realignments, is to be used biennially over a 5-year period.

In evaluating the base closure and realignment proposals, the Commission is expected to have authority to change the bases selected if it determines that DOD deviated substantially from the criteria.

According to the conference report, DOD is expected to begin anew in its base selection process. Even though bases on the January 1990 list may reappear on the new proposed list, DOD is expected to consider all bases in the United States on an equal footing.

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## Scope and Methodology

To develop information for this report, we examined documents and interviewed officials from the Office of the Secretary of Defense and Army, Air Force, and Navy headquarters, Washington, D.C.; the Strategic Air Command, Offutt Air Force Base, Omaha, Nebraska; the Air Force Logistics Command, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio; and the Air Force Systems Command, Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland.

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We conducted our work between July and November 1990 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. We did not obtain written agency comments on this report. However, program officials reviewed a draft of this report, and we have incorporated their comments where appropriate.

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As arranged with your office, we are sending copies of this report to the Secretaries of Defense, the Air Force, the Army, and the Navy; the Director, Office of Management and Budget; and other interested parties.

Please contact me on (202) 275-8412 if you or your staff have any questions concerning this report. Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix III.

Sincerely yours,



Donna M. Heivilin  
Director, Logistics Issues



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# Bases Proposed in January 1990 for Closure and Realignment

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## Closure

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### Army

- Fort McClellan, Anniston, Alabama
- Fort Ord, Seaside, California
- Sacramento Army Depot, California
- Army Ammunition Plant, Charleston, Indiana<sup>1</sup>
- Army Ammunition Plant, Desoto, Kansas<sup>1</sup>
- Army Ammunition Plant, Parsons, Kansas<sup>1</sup>
- Army Ammunition Plant, Minden, Louisiana<sup>1</sup>
- Detroit Army Tank Plant, Michigan
- Army Ammunition Plant, Picayune, Mississippi<sup>1</sup>
- Troop Support Command, St. Louis, Missouri
- Lima Army Tank Plant, Ohio
- Army Ammunition Plant, Scranton, Pennsylvania<sup>1</sup>
- Army Ammunition Plant, Karnack, Texas<sup>1</sup>

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### Air Force

- Eaker Air Force Base, Blytheville, Arkansas
- Los Angeles Air Force Base, California
- Myrtle Beach Air Force Base, South Carolina
- Bergstrom Air Force Base, Austin, Texas

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### Navy

- Alameda Naval Aviation Depot, California
- Alameda Naval Air Station, California
- El Centro Naval Air Facility, California
- Long Beach Naval Shipyard, California
- Moffett Field Naval Air Station, Sunnyvale, California
- Oakland Naval Hospital, California
- Oakland Naval Supply Center, California
- Treasure Island Naval Station, California
- Louisville Naval Ordnance Station, Kentucky
- South Weymouth Naval Air Station, Massachusetts
- Detroit Naval Air Facility, Michigan
- Philadelphia Naval Air Station, Pennsylvania
- Philadelphia Naval Shipyard, Pennsylvania
- Chase Field Naval Air Station, Beeville, Texas

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<sup>1</sup>These are to be retained in layaway status.

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Defense Logistics Agency • Defense Contract Administration Regional Offices, St. Louis, Missouri; New York, New York; Cleveland, Ohio; and Dallas, Texas

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## Realignment

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Army

- Fort Gillem, Georgia
- Fort Sheridan, Illinois
- Fort Knox, Kentucky
- Fort Meade, Maryland
- Fort Hood, Texas
- Fort Sam Houston, Texas
- Red River Army Depot, Texas
- Fort Lewis, Washington
- Army Materiel Command Headquarters, Alexandria, Virginia
- Depot Systems Command, Letterkenny Depot, Pennsylvania
- Elements of the Army Reserve
- 11 Army management engineering activities
- Parts of the Army Information Systems Command

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Air Force

- Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona
- Luke Air Force Base, Arizona
- Edwards Air Force Base, California
- McClellan Air Force Base, California
- MacDill Air Force Base, Florida
- Eglin Air Force Base, Florida
- Robins Air Force Base, Georgia
- Bangor Air Guard Station, Maine
- Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland
- Hanscom Air Force Base, Massachusetts
- Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada
- Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico
- Tonopah Research Site, Nevada
- Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio
- Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma
- Kelly Air Force Base, Texas
- Hill Air Force Base, Utah

# Closure Candidate Ranking

Air Force Base	Factors assessed and weights assigned						Total	Mission type
	Single Integrated Operational Plan (6)	Peacetime training and operational mission (5)	Quality of life (4)	Community impact (3)	Infrastructure (2)	Relocation costs (1)		
Eaker	12	20	8	12	4	1	<b>57</b>	Single
Wurtsmith	24	10	8	12	6	1	<b>61</b>	Single
Loring	30	10	4	12	8	2	<b>66</b>	Single (conventional)
Castle	12	20	16	9	8	3	<b>68</b>	Single (combat crew training squadron)
Griffiss	24	15	12	9	8	4	<b>72</b>	Multi
Barksdale	12	25	16	9	10	4	<b>76</b>	Multi

Source: Strategic Air Command.

# Major Contributors to This Report

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