



Highlights of [GAO-05-614](#), a statement before the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

Why GAO Did This Study

The Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990, as amended, authorized a new round of base realignment and closures (BRAC) in 2005, the fifth such round in recent years but the first since 1995. The legislation requires the Secretary of Defense to submit his list of bases recommended for closure and realignment to an independent BRAC commission by May 16, 2005. The Commission is charged with reviewing these recommendations and submitting its report with recommendations to the President for his acceptance or rejection of them in their entirety by September 8, 2005. Subsequently, Congress has final action to accept or reject the recommendations in their entirety later this year. By law, GAO is mandated to review the Department of Defense's (DOD) process and recommendations and to report its findings by July 1, 2005.

For the inaugural hearing of the 2005 BRAC Commission GAO was asked to address: (1) the status of implementing recommendations from previous BRAC rounds, (2) DOD's expectations for the 2005 BRAC round, and (3) the analytical framework for the 2005 BRAC round. GAO offers some suggestions for the Commission to consider as it prepares for the 2005 BRAC round.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-614.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Barry Holman at (202) 512-5581 or holmanb@gao.gov.

MILITARY BASE CLOSURES

Observations of Prior and Current BRAC Rounds

What GAO Found

DOD indicates that recommendations from the previous BRAC rounds were implemented within the 6-year period mandated by law. As a result, DOD estimated that it reduced its domestic infrastructure by about 20 percent; about 90 percent of unneeded BRAC property is now available for reuse. Substantial net savings of approximately \$29 billion have been realized over time. Most communities surrounding closed bases are continuing to recover from the impact of BRAC and faring well compared with average U.S. rates for unemployment and income growth. In examining DOD's proposed closures and realignments, the Commission may want to ensure that all proposed closure and realignment actions can be implemented within the mandated 6-year period recognizing property transfers may take longer.

DOD's expectations for the 2005 BRAC round include the traditional emphasis on eliminating unneeded infrastructure and achieving savings. It also expects to use BRAC to further transformation and related efforts such as restationing of troops from overseas as well as efforts to further joint basing among the military services. DOD's preliminary assessment of excess capacity completed outside the BRAC process in 2004 to help justify the 2005 round has led to much speculation about the percentage of bases likely to close. While DOD's assessment gave some indication of excess capacity across certain functional areas, GAO's assessment showed the methodology had significant limitations, such as use of varying capacity metrics among the military services for similar type facilities. As a result, it is difficult to use that data to make a reliable projection of total excess capacity across DOD, or projections of number of bases likely to close. Further, the methodology neither fully considered the potential impact of major force structuring and other rebasing changes nor the impact of analyzing facilities or functions on a joint or cross-service basis, a priority for the 2005 round. As a result, we await the results of DOD's proposed closures and realignments to see the extent of potential capacity reduction and how the results of this round compare with prior rounds. The Commission may want to look at such measures as projected net reduction in plant replacement value or square footage of space as reduction indicators.

The 2005 BRAC round process follows a historical analytical framework with many elements of the process being carried forward or building upon lessons learned from the past. A key part of that framework is the selection criteria which essentially follow a framework similar to that employed in prior BRAC rounds, with more specificity in selected areas mandated by Congress. The Commission may want to be aware of changes for the 2005 round based on lessons learned from the past related to such issues as privatizing functions in place as a closure option, considering total cost to the government in evaluating closure and realignment recommendations, clarifying the size of reserve enclaves that may be created, and strengthening the emphasis on cross-servicing of selected functions and increased jointness in basing decisions.