

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-13-645](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD may be required to meet specific statutory requirements before closing or realigning installations that are authorized to employ 300 or more DOD civilians. In light of these requirements, DOD has historically used the BRAC process for closing or realigning bases that are above statutory thresholds. However, in March 2012, the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Installations and Environment) testified that because of fiscal and strategic imperatives, in the absence of an additional BRAC round, DOD may be forced to use its existing authorities to begin to realign and close bases. Subsequently, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 mandated GAO to review the processes that DOD uses to close and realign military installations outside of the BRAC process. This report describes the extent to which DOD has processes in place to implement installation closures and realignments within the United States, and the extent to which DOD has implemented closures and realignments outside of the BRAC process.

To conduct its work, GAO examined DOD's approach to implementing basing actions and interviewed DOD officials to identify how their approach ensures compliance with 10 U.S.C. § 2687.

GAO is not making any recommendations in this report. In commenting on this report DOD stated the report, in general, explains the processes it follows to comply with requirements for closing or realigning installations outside of a congressionally authorized BRAC process.

View [GAO-13-645](#). For more information, contact Brian Lepore at (202) 512-4523 or leporeb@gao.gov.

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MILITARY BASES

DOD Has Processes to Comply with Statutory Requirements for Closing or Realigning Installations

What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) and the military services have processes to meet statutory requirements for base closures and realignments, and use these processes hundreds of times each year to make basing decisions outside of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process. These processes provide guidance for all types of basing actions, including, but not limited to base closures and realignments. For example, basing decisions can include actions such as reductions in force, disestablishments, renaming a command, and other organization changes. Generally, each service's basing decision process uses similar criteria, scope, and methodologies to determine where to locate its force structure, and each process is documented in established guidance. Each service's process requires a series of analyses, such as analysis of capability and capacity, cost estimates, and environmental considerations. Additionally, each service basing decision process includes legal reviews and an evaluation of the effect on civilian personnel. According to service officials, these reviews provide them data to determine whether a closure or realignment is above thresholds established in section 2687 of Title 10, U.S. Code (hereafter 10 U.S.C. § 2687), and therefore subject to additional evaluations and congressional notification. Specific statutory thresholds include:

- closure of any installation with 300 or more direct-hire DOD civilian authorized positions (this includes all authorized positions, regardless of whether they are vacant or filled); and
- realignment of any installation with 300 or more direct-hire DOD civilian authorized positions (vacant or filled), if the realignment will reduce the installation by 1,000 or more civilian positions, or 50 percent or more of the total civilian authorized positions.

DOD has conducted closures or realignments that have either fallen below the thresholds of 10 U.S.C. § 2687 or were authorized by the BRAC process, according to DOD officials. For example, the January 2011 disestablishment of Joint Forces Command was a basing decision that, according to DOD, reduced civilian personnel and eliminated functions at multiple installations, but did not require evaluations and congressional notification pursuant to 10 U.S.C. § 2687. Specifically, one of the installations affected by the disestablishment of Joint Forces Command was Naval Support Activity Norfolk, Virginia—the installation where Joint Forces Command was headquartered. Naval Support Activity Norfolk had approximately 3,200 civilian personnel at the time of the disestablishment, of which 1,058 (about 33 percent) were Joint Forces Command personnel. According to DOD, a significant number of Joint Forces Command functions and positions were eliminated through a reduction in force—an action that is not subject to 10 U.S.C. § 2687—and the remainder were part of a realignment of Naval Support Activity Norfolk that fell below the statutory thresholds of 1,000 authorized civilian personnel or 50 percent of the total civilian personnel authorized to be employed at the installation. Officials also told us they do not anticipate any future closures or realignments pursuant to this statute, citing BRAC as the preferred method for implementing basing actions that are above statutory thresholds.