

Statement  
of  
Anthony J. Principi

Chairman  
2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment  
(BRAC) Commission

Final Deliberations and Decisions

Arlington, Virginia

August 24, 2005

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Good morning and welcome to this, the first day of the 2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission's final deliberations.

I am Tony Principi, the Chairman of the Commission. With me are my fellow Commissioners, former Congressman Jim Bilbray; former Assistant Secretary of Defense Phil Coyle; former Congressman Jim Hansen; General Tom Hill U.S. Army Retired; Admiral Hal Gehman, U.S. Navy Retired; General Lloyd Newton, U.S. Air Force Retired; Samuel Skinner, former White House Chief of Staff and Secretary of Transportation; and Brigadier General Sue Turner, U.S. Air Force Retired.

On May 13 of this year, as required by law, the Secretary of Defense, presented the Commission, and the Nation, with a list of military installations that he recommends for closure or realignment. DoD subsequently provided the Commission with extensive, certified justification and supporting data.

We immediately began an exhaustive review of the Secretary's recommendations and backup data.

In addition, we analyzed data received from numerous sources including other Federal agencies, the Government Accountability Office, state and local governments, and interested citizens.

Commissioners and staff made 182 visits to 173 installations. We conducted 19 regional hearings around the country.

We held another 16 legislative and deliberative hearings and had hundreds of meetings with community representatives and elected officials. We received over a half million pieces of mail.

We hosted more than 1100 visitors to our offices, responded to over 7000 media inquiries, issued more than 50 press releases and advisories, and received more than 500 telephone calls a week.

Our website was visited eight million times. All these communications have been gratefully and carefully considered.

We went to extraordinary lengths to ensure the soundness, correctness, and integrity of the base realignment and closure process and to fulfill our commitment to transparency, honesty, and fairness for all.

Our goal was an open, nonpartisan, and independent analysis, conducted in full compliance with the spirit and letter of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act.

This BRAC round presented the Commission with unprecedented challenges. The Secretary's recommendations embody almost 900

separate actions affecting installations, ..... which include leased spaces, aircraft, ships, and people.....more than double the combined total of actions considered by all prior BRAC Commissions combined. The relationships within and among recommended actions presented the Commission with daunting analytical challenges.

Last July 19<sup>th</sup>, following the rules set down in the BRAC statute, the Commission added eight installations for consideration for closure or realignment.

Each addition required seven votes.

When we consider those installations today seven votes will once again be required to add an installation to the list recommended to the President for closure or realignment.

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Our Nation needs the BRAC process.

No institution can remain successful if it does not adapt to its constantly changing environment. Our armed forces must adapt to changing global threats, evolving technology, and new strategies and structures.

Military infrastructure must support their progress, not hinder it.

The BRAC process is a systematic, rational process to bring our nation's military infrastructure in line with the needs of our armed forces, not only by reducing costs but also by facilitating their transformation to meet the challenges of the new century.

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At the same time, we know that the decisions we reach will have a profound impact on the communities hosting our military installations and, more importantly, on the people who bring those communities to life.

These are people who have written long and distinguished records of support for our armed forces and our country.

In many cases, they have devoted their careers to our national defense. The Commission made extraordinary efforts to listen to their concerns and to place those concerns fairly on the scales as we balance closing and realignment recommendations against DoD's force structure plan and the eight statutory BRAC criteria.

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Our Commission is independent.

We are neither an arm of, nor an instrument of, the Department of Defense or the Congress.

We are charged to cast a critical eye on the Secretary's recommendations and to make our decisions without regard to partisan or parochial political concerns.

To that end, we took unprecedented measures to make our process open and transparent and to ensure our deliberations are based on a thorough consideration of certified and sworn data, and our analysis fair to everyone.

We heard, or raised ourselves, serious questions about the Department's calculation of the costs and savings of its recommendations,

the effect of their recommended realignments or closures on homeland security,

and the wisdom of proposals that would leave large areas of our country without active-duty military installations.

We proposed closures or realignments ourselves when we believed the Department's recommendations fell short of the mark,

and we listened to the debate surrounding the Department's proposed recommendations for restructuring the Air National Guard.

We are aware that legal issues that may affect the BRAC process have been, or soon may be, brought before the Courts.

The Courts will address these issues, but meanwhile the Commission will meet its responsibility to complete our work on schedule, as required by statute.

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Commissioners and staff worked closely and continuously for three and a half months evaluating the data,

comparing and contrasting information received from all sources,

developing and considering options and alternative scenarios and studying the effects of modification to existing recommendations.

Commissioners devoted countless hours to the study and analysis of the recommendations. They took their task very seriously and brought the full force of their collective experiences and insights to guide them through the BRAC process. Their professionalism and dedication, as well as the personal sacrifices they accepted in the service of the Commission, demonstrate the integrity that made it a pleasure and an honor for me to serve with them.

The culmination of our efforts, and our collective assessment of the proposals, will be reflected in the votes we are about to take.

Before I turn to Charles Battaglia, the Commission's Executive Director to describe the procedures the Commission will follow today, I will ask all of the staff members who may testify to please stand.

Ms. Rumu Sarkar, our designated Federal Officer will administer the oath required by the BRAC statute.

*(Staff Witnesses Sworn In)*

Mr. Battaglia.