

Military analysts call
10 May 2005, 1430
Room 2E572 (OSD Public Affairs)
BRAC: [REDACTED]
Host: Dallas Lawrence
Transcriber: Murphy
On background

Mr. Lawrence: (in progress) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] For those not familiar
with the Pentagon alphabet soup that's force structure, resources and assessment.

For our purposes here on the call, this information is on background. Any information to be quoted or referenced outside of this call should be referenced coming from a senior defense department official. Again, the call is on background.

I am going to go ahead and turn it over to [REDACTED] who's going to open up with kind of a brief overview. Again, this discussion is on the base realignment and closure process. As the invitation stressed, there will be no specifics as to the recommendations discussed at this meeting. This will lay out the process that's brought us to where we are today, leading to the impending release of the recommendations in the coming weeks.

So, [REDACTED]?

[REDACTED] Thank you, Dallas. Good afternoon everybody, how are you today? I just wanted to emphasize a couple of key points on both background and process. Many of you are probably aware of some of it, and I know [REDACTED] will wish to make a couple of points, and then frankly we'll leave as much time for questions as we can, because that's certainly always the most valuable point of these exercises.

As you all are very much aware, the secretary will shortly present his recommendations to the Independent Commission on Base Closure and Realignment, chaired by Secretary Principi. And the secretary (Rumsfeld) take this process, and the senior leadership take this process quite seriously. It's a matter of great importance to the department.

As you know, we've had four prior base realignment and closure rounds, and the result of that has been the closure of 97 major installations in the United States; 55 major realignments; and another 235 or so minor actions of one kind or another.

Based on the budget justification documents that (we?) provide to Congress, our net savings for all of those actions through the implementation period – basically through fiscal year 2001 – was about \$18 billion, and annually recurring savings that accrue to the department every year after that of about \$7 billion.

One of the key points about this round certainly, although savings are important and we'll talk a little bit more about this later on, is that military value was as a matter of policy in prior rounds and was mandated by statute for this round to be the highest consideration for the secretary's judgment in terms of what to recommend to the independent commission.

But as we've approached this process pretty consistently over the last two and a half years, we've had a handful of key imperatives that we've tried to guide ourselves by in this process. One, of course, is to further transformation, and a key part of that to rationalize our infrastructure to our force structure and our mission (sets? Sense?) to ensure have our footprint, our physical footprint where we can maximize capability and military efficiency and effectiveness.

A second key imperative for the department has been to find ways to maximize joint utilization of our assets. And really what we're trying to do here in many ways is look at these assets -- these key military installations, not simply as the asset that belonged to the Army, the Navy, the Air Force or the Marine Corps, but they are key national assets and how can we best position them to support the mission and to support the joint warfighter?

Certainly a third element in this will speak to some degree of savings is certainly we're very much interested in -- as we are in all of our programs -- in converting waste to warfighting. That's a bumper sticker, but really what we mean here is to the extent that we have frankly resources that we are expending either in terms of dollars or in terms of people from a force protection, for example, perspective; addressing or taking care of or supporting assets that we no longer require -- those are assets that are not being put on the pointy end of the spear to support the warfighter. So that is an important part of rationalizing our infrastructure.

The basic process is from a -- after the 16th of May remains very much the same it was in the past. It's an independent commission. The president ultimately will approve or disapprove the work of that commission in whole, but not in part. Congress has an opportunity to reject those recommendations in whole, but not in part. The commission can make some changes. The bar's a little bit higher this time.

The commission has to find not only that the secretary deviated substantially from either the force structure plan that we provided to Congress earlier this year, or our selection criteria. But they can only add an installation as a closure candidate and then actually vote to close it if seven of the nine commissioners agree and at least two of them have visited the installation.

But as we sort of have approached this process, you know, we have the joint process we've established -- the Service unique functions, and I'll largely call them the operational functions, have been handled by the military Services and analyzed by them separately in reporting those into the leadership. And then our common business oriented support functions have been handled by these Joint Cross Service Groups that we established.

And I think that this is really quite a key point. A fundamental lesson that we learned from prior rounds of base closure and realignment was that the joint process -- the joint cross service group process to be specific -- in (19)95 didn't yield much. So what the secretary and the leadership determined was that we would have Joint Cross Service Groups this time, but rather than have them narrowly constructed -- in (19)95 we had a group on depot maintenance, so instead of having a group on depot maintenance, we had a group looking at the entire industrial activities of the department. Similarly for the medical world -- instead of looking merely at medical -- military medical treatment facilities, we're looking at the entirety of the medical asset base, rather than just looking at laboratories, looking at technical, as a business mission area, as well as adding things we have never done before, frankly, on a joint basis. Headquarters and support, our supply and storage activities, our education and training, to look at them in a comprehensive way.

And those groups had real authority to make real recommendations to the leadership, and as a result of that, we ended up with a process that resulted in not guaranteeing that every answer would be joint, but in guaranteeing for the common support structure of the department to support the warfighter, that these functions would get a joint look throughout the process.

Mr. Lawrence: If I could just ask whoever has their phone -- if you could just set your phones on mute, we're hearing that you can't quite hear [REDACTED] on the line. So if you could all put your phones on mute, while he continues. And whoever's outside, if you could please put your phone on mute, that'd be great.

[REDACTED]: And so that's the entirety of the list. (Laughter.) No, just kidding. But I hope you can all capture that, because again, the real sort of point here was on the joint process is that we have

tried to put an enormous emphasis on the joint and the joint process in this round. I know [REDACTED] has a couple points he'd like to make in that regard.

[REDACTED]: Well, clearly, and I know you missed some of what [REDACTED] said so I'll reinforce a little bit of it, but as we looked across all the recommendations and the process that we embarked on this year, military value was really the primary consideration in assessing all the military bases.

And if you look at military value, I look at there basically being four pillars that I use to describe that support this process. [REDACTED] talked through those. But as we saw it from the Joint Cross Service Groups, and, you know, I worked with the vice chairman and the members of the infrastructure steering group, which is the ISG, included the service vice chiefs. So basically the same guys that are sitting at the (J-rock?) came over worked the ISG, so they were very familiar with what the requirements going into for the future force needed to be, so it really became a great sounding board for a lot of decisions that were being made.

But the four pillars, really – enabling transformation, which is critical. And we really looked at doing that by accommodating the redeploying forces both for IDPBS (?) and what's taking place with OIF and OEF, for anticipating and resourcing surge capabilities, because surge is a big issue coming up, and looking at that across operations training and logistics.

The second pillar is really enhancing combat effectiveness. And this is really examining and implementing opportunities for greater joint activity. In many cases this is accomplished by collocating and combining things like training, technology, depot maintenance, and things along those lines.

The third pillar we looked at was clearly cost. It's a huge issue. We looked at recurring annual savings, and converted, and how they could be converted to warfighters' resource savings in the out years, or even in the near years.

And then finally, I think what was really great about this process, is that we tried to work hard to ensure impartiality. It's a balance between what I talked about as far as military value, transformation, jointness, and how you maximize combat effectiveness.

I will tell you that the BRAC DoD organization, and [REDACTED] talked about this earlier, was key to success. They established – it was established early. It was clearly a unity of effort and a common focus. And from the meetings I was at and we supported and worked through, there was clearly an energy and a willingness to look at different ways of doing things. And the Joint Cross Service Groups I think were the real basis for success here. They allowed the Services to think out of the box, and take solutions that they might not have derived on their own.

And finally, from the joint perspective, we represent the combatant commanders involvement in this process; we went out and saw them on the road; we worked a reading room where they were familiar with every scenario that was being worked. And they were paramount to recommending – to making sure that we maximize combat effectiveness while preserving surge capability allowed us to continue to help protect the homeland.

I think I am ready for any questions you may have, and I think [REDACTED] is, as well.

Mr. Lawrence: If folks when they ask their questions if they could state their name and who they're representing on the call, that'd be great. With that, we'll open it up to questions.

Question: This is (Col) Jeff McCausland working with CBS News. Great overview. Quick question and (one other? Longer?) question. Quick question is I saw where Mr. Principi had commented about whether or not the governors have to be involved if you decide to close, let's say a National Guard's by like an airfield adjacent to a major airport, where there's a lot of you, we got fighter

wings and all that kind of stuff. "A," can you talk about that, and the longer question, can you talk about the coordination of this effort with the global restationing plan?

██████████ To the first question, I'll just reiterate what Mr. Wynne said in his letter to a number of members of Congress is that this department will follow all applicable statutes in developing options and recommendations to the leadership and ultimately for the secretary to consider for forwarding to the independent commission, and I wouldn't want to characterize it beyond that.

Your second question – I want to be precise in the answer. Could you repeat for me, please?

Col. McCausland: Yes, could you talk about this process, and how it was coordinated with the global restationing plan, we (balance? Bounce?) out that effort with this effort.

██████████ Yes. We'll there are a number of misperceptions that have been out there with regard to some of the suggestions that have been made or characterization of the Overseas Basing Commission's work. And I know a lot of folks have had both before and subsequent to the release of their report questions about this.

One of the things bear mentioning is that the roots of the global posture review, the integrated global presence and basing strategy that ██████████ referred to both ways, has its roots in QDR one. And so we've been at this for some time. And subsequent to QDR one, the secretary provided directions to the combatant commanders to begin to develop options for the repositioning, resetting the force globally. And we began to work on that process in earnest.

Frankly, that process as it evolved, came together in a way and the decisions were rendered in a way that made them available to inform the BRAC process. And that's important, because to the extent that we were contemplating the return of forces from abroad to the United States, the BRAC process gives us a key opportunity to look at all of our installations and realign our mission sets in order to accommodate returning forces. Yes, that's true, but it gives us an opportunity to ask and answer the question where can returning forces best be positioned? As opposed to the question we'd have to ask and answer without BRAC which is largely where could we fit them?

And the timing of this, the length of time of consideration, the full involvement of the combatant commanders, the State Department, our interagency partners, our consultations with the Congress over the course of some period of time resulted in a fairly comprehensive report to the Congress last year – last September, I believe – that laid out our broad strategy for and decisions for how we would reposition the force globally.

Now certainly a lot of that will – on the things that are overseas related will continue to take the form of negotiations with interested parties and host governments, but those pieces that involve the return of forces to the United States, particularly from Europe, are strongly supported by the combatant commander, General Jones, and certainly in many ways he initiated a good deal of that. And we believe we're well positioned to implement this effectively.

██████████ And Jeff, just to pile on, two points that ██████████ made that are critical here is that we had to build a program this fall that really supported what we wanted to do from a positioning our forces from overseas, and so we had to basically set the table for where BRAC could go. And in line with that, we worked with the Services to make sure that they'd build a force structure – put a force structure plan that we've already delivered to Congress that laid out exactly what we thought force structure would look like in the program review that we build simultaneously with the (? POM?)

Question: This is Ken Beaks from BENS (Business Executives for National Security).

██████████ Ken, how are you?

Mr. Beaks: Great, thanks. When we look at the list on Friday, because I know you don't want to say anything now about which ones are on there obviously, but when we look at the imperatives of furthering transformation and maximizing jointness, should we be looking for a significant number of active, operational joint bases or joint training bases? Is that something that we should expect? And as a second part of that, the secretary's backed off on the 20 to 25 percent excess capacity number to a number that's more like 10 to 12 I think he said the other day. But, we all know that some of the categories had a lot more than that going in. So, should we expect to see more significant cuts in things like depots and some of the labs and P&E facilities? Thanks.

██████████ Ken, to the first part of your question, I really wouldn't want to characterize what would be in the secretary's recommendations before the secretary makes his recommendations. And I don't think that would be prudent thing to do, even on background.

But once he comes to a final determination and makes his recommendations to the commission, we can talk about that and fully explain it in more detail.

I do want to spend a moment on this 20 to 25 percent excess capacity number because it has its roots in two studies that Congress requested be done over the course of a six-year period, first in 1998 and then in – for 2004, the latter part being part of the secretary's justification for additional round of – proceeding I should say with an additional round of base closure.

Those were perimetric (sp) estimates, based on base-loading constructs, and they were sort of comparative, relational ways of looking at number of people to a certain way of looking at an asset in a very linear, almost arithmetic way. It was NOT a BRAC analysis; it was not a military value analysis; it was simply a force-loading construct that if you had so many people at one point in time to so many acres, and those numbers changed over time, what's the difference between the two? And assuming that you were optimally organized in the first instance, do you have excess capacity or under capacity?

All those studies were able to show us was that a gross order of magnitude that we had excess capacity throughout the department, in some cases over, in some cases under capacity, but in a lot of cases we had some excess capacity, and that only a true military value oriented analysis would show us how to rationalize that infrastructure in a way that made sense.

The secretary in his recent comments has commented on a couple of things in relation to the effect on the analysis of returning forces from abroad, as well as the requirement which would have been, again, a matter of policy but Congress included in the statute that we have to accommodate for reasonable expectation of surge. And so, when we sort of do all of that, I mean it was his judgment in looking at it that it wouldn't be 20 to 25 percent. And certainly one of the things about that number over time that got misinterpreted was that that somehow got translated into that that means the secretary believes that one in four bases should close. Capacity is not the same as a base. And so, through this process we will have, I hope – pending the secretary's decision, a robust, transformational BRAC, that we will do some things that are very, very important for the future of the armed forces and for the future of the department and for the future of the country.

But I wouldn't want to sort of characterize numbers or try to give weights, or try to characterize what you should more look for in the report. I think that would be a more fruitful discussion frankly on Friday.

██████████ And as you look at the combat effectiveness across all the different Services, I think the answer to your question also Ken is the collocation ██████████ talking about, and the combining of training, technology, laboratories, depot maintenance, supply chain management operation, things along those lines, that's where the Joint Cross Service Groups really came in and made their impact. So basically, they were empowered to go and look at different ways of doing it, either from a business practice or what made sense basically for example, how you

might want to do something in education and training. So they were able to look, you know, not only across the department, but at each Service to see what made sense there. And I think when what comes out on Friday that you'll basically see – that will be the fruits of that product.

Question: David Rodriguez, the national commander of the American (GI?) Forum (?). Basically what you're saying, we're setting up the military to be a brigade-sized unit, or first strike, and limit our division size, so this way we can kind of down-size the Service, and still be able to do the same kind of job. Is that what you're saying?

█ I think what you're alluding to is basically where the Army is going with modularization. And there are some discussions and decisions that take place not only in the force structure for what the Army's putting in that will impact what could be submitted in a BRAC submission. But that is germane to where we're headed but that's not really one of the things we're looking at as far as the BRAC process.

Question: Don Sheppard, CNN. What provisions have you made in this list for the homeland security mission?

█ Well the homeland defense mission of the department is covered – is governed by the selection criteria and if I can pull the selection criteria up here it's specifically mentioned here in criterion two, where we have to consider the availability and condition of land facilities and associated air space including, you know, the (?inaudible) number of missions, but to also include the homeland defense missions of the armed forces. So we have to take homeland defense into account, and we have.

Mr. Lawrence: Next question please. Are there any additional questions for the group? Thank you very much. Just to reiterate, this was on background, any quotes to be used should be quoted as senior defense department officials. And we look forward to talking to you folks, in the near future.

(end)