

Rumsfeld's Base-Closing Plan Attacks American Military Tradition

by Carl Osgood

So far, the arguments against Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's base-closing plan have focussed on the fate of particular bases, without considering whether or not the entire plan makes any sense. To some degree, therefore, the hearings of the Defense Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission have been "begging and pleading sessions," where witnesses—backed by hundreds or thousands of demonstrating supporters—are asking the commission to save their particular bases.

However, the 2005 BRAC round is taking place in a political and strategic context fundamentally different from that of earlier base-closing rounds—that of an imperial strategic policy of global perpetual wars, adopted by the Bush/Cheney White House, and by the same Defense Secretary who is proposing to close more than 30 "major" U.S. military bases, and scores of others, within the United States (**Figure 1**). With this preliminary report, *EIR* begins an assessment, to be continued in future issues, of Rumsfeld's plan, within the strategic context in which it is situated, as well as both its military and economic impact.

The four rounds of base closures and realignments that took place between 1988 and 1995, all came in the context of the end of the Cold War and the consequent reduction of military force structure. The military services were reduced from 2.1 million men and women in uniform in 1988, to 1.3 million by the mid-1990s. If one accepted the logic of that force reduction, reducing military infrastructure may have made sense. There is no force reduction underway in 2005, however. Instead, the military services are being retooled for aggressive war abroad, simultaneous with the destruction of the economy and republican military defense at home. Rumsfeld's base closing plan is part and parcel of that retooling.

The wars of the George W. Bush Administration, aggressive, and focussed as they are on Southwest and Central Asia, with threats to develop in East Asia, are calling forth a military force structured more like that of imperial Great Britain up through World War II, or that of Nazi Germany in the 1930s, than a force structured to defend a republican nation-state such as the United States was founded to be. There's a significant emphasis on a highly mobile force that can deploy

rapidly anywhere in the world, supported by minimal infrastructure. The reorganization of the military that Rumsfeld has been implementing, is predicated on that outlook. So, therefore, is the shrinking of the military infrastructure in the United States, contemplated in the Pentagon's plan.

As Secretary of Defense from 1989-93, Dick Cheney was promoting a preventive war policy, of which nuclear weapons were an integral part, even as the U.S. military force draw-down was getting under way in the late 1980s and early 1990s. That policy was rejected then, in 1991, by the George H.W. Bush Administration, and not resurrected until the George W. Bush Administration came into office in January 2001, with Cheney as Vice President. Along with Donald Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defense, Cheney is now overseeing the reorganization of the military services to carry out that policy of "perpetual war," which he put forward unsuccessfully in 1991-92, after the first Gulf War.

The reorganization that is under way, includes reorganizing the Army's ten divisions into 43—and later 48—"modular" combat brigades, better suited to rapid deployment and to long-term occupation duties on a rotational basis. It also includes the adoption by the Navy, of a posture where it can "surge" up to seven aircraft carrier battle groups within 30 days of being told to do so.

A Positive Mission for Military

The overall reorganization runs counter to the republican military tradition established with the founding of the United States, a tradition which includes that of the citizen-soldier. The U.S. Military Academy at West Point was founded, in 1801, as an engineering school, not only to make available the most advanced science and engineering then existing in Europe, but to develop it and propagate it throughout the United States.

One result was that throughout the 19th Century, engineers trained at West Point, built railroads across the country, and later, helped build them in other countries, including Peru, Thailand, and the Trans-Siberian Railway in Russia, as part of economist Henry Carey's 19th-Century Eurasian Land-Bridge policy to outflank the British Empire's control of the seas.



U.S. Air Force/Master Sgt. Dave Nolan

There is no military force reduction under way in 2005. Instead, the military services are being retooled for aggressive war abroad, simultaneous with the destruction of the economy and republican military defense at home. Rumsfeld's base closing plan is part and parcel of that retooling. Shown here is an Air Force bomber and a munitions technician at Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota, which is slated to be closed.

That same engineering tradition was a key component of the logistical capability without which the United States could not have won World War II. The scientific analog of that tradition can be found at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., which has been at the leading edge of medical science for almost a century, as documented in the July 1 issue of *EIR*. Yet, to the shock of medical professionals, veterans, and citizens alike, Walter Reed is today on the Pentagon's list for closure.

In response to a question at a September 2000 conference in Washington, D.C., Lyndon LaRouche defined a positive mission for the military as follows:

The function of strategy, and strategic thinking, is to secure the kind of world order which we require, as a result of commitments which were shaped, essentially, in the 15th-Century Golden Renaissance. That is, we are for a system of sovereign nation-states, each committed to the general welfare of all its people and their posterity, and who believe that the relations among such states must be joint action to ensure the common ability of each such state to efficiently defend the general welfare of its own people.

The military officer, functioning as a strategist, LaRouche said, "is not trying to find out what war to fight. He's trying to understand what the threat is, to the effort to defend and build this kind of state and this kind of relationship among states." LaRouche went on to specify that the enemy of the general welfare is the British monarchy, the British Empire, which wants to exterminate this general welfare principle, but without taking an unacceptable penalty to do so. "And therefore," LaRouche said, "we have to have the military means to back up our will, in terms of this policy. And that's

Classical strategy."

LaRouche went on to counterpose this to the "Cabinet warfare" doctrine, as exemplified by Henry Kissinger during the Vietnam War, where he would "turn the war on and off," in order to manipulate the Paris peace negotiations with the North Vietnamese, attempting to modify their behavior by the application of force. "This kind of foolishness," LaRouche said, "destroyed the U.S. military," which was "induced to destroy itself by accepting this kind of State Department directive on conducting Cabinet warfare."

LaRouche concluded by defining the principle of statecraft:

The principle of statecraft, as has been proven, is the establishment of sovereign nation-states, whose only legitimate authority is their efficient commitment to the promotion of the general welfare. *And*, the proposal of a system of relations among sovereign nation-states, where we assist each other, and cooperate with each other, in promoting the general welfare of the people of each nation. And we will fight as necessary to protect and promote that policy. That's Classical military thinking. And whatever is necessary to be known, or to be done, to fulfill that, is what is proper military conduct.

The strategic policy of the George W. Bush Administration is, in fact, targetted against the general welfare principle that LaRouche has identified as central to the Republic, not only in the United States, but around the world. The domestic counterpart of the Bush military policy is the budget-cutting austerity being imposed on social welfare programs—including health care—that tend to improve the general welfare.



DOD/U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Cherie A. Thurlby

The Bush/Cheney White House and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld are proposing to close more than 30 major U.S. military bases, and scores of others, within the United States. Here Rumsfeld testifies before a Senate committee about the Defense Department's Base Realignment and Closure recommendations, on May 16, 2005. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Richard B. Myers (right) and Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics Michael Wynne also testified.

Base Closings Are a Depopulation Tool

Historically, the engineering function of the military, as carried out by railroad building and the Army Corps of Engineers, tended to spread population across the undeveloped regions of the country. The Rumsfeld plan, however, whether by design or just by consequence, will have the opposite effect in some less populated areas of the country.

When first briefed on the Rumsfeld plan, on May 15, LaRouche described it as yet another intervention into the overinflated U.S. real estate bubble, in an attempt to keep that swindle going for a while longer. Certainly, the installations like Walter Reed Hospital and the Willow Grove Naval Air Station in Pennsylvania, sit on very desirable property for development. Other areas of the country affected by base closures will be left to collapse, however. In Alaska, South Dakota, and New Mexico, the proposals will not only cost jobs, in the range of 3-4,000 jobs directly, but could result in population outflow from the affected areas.

In Alaska, the Air Force's proposal to realign Eielson Air Force Base, outside Fairbanks, by relocating its flying units to other bases in the Lower 48, and maintaining it in a "warm" status (an oxymoron in Alaska), would take away nearly 3,000 jobs directly, without even a promise of future economic development to replace those jobs. Alaska State Senator Gary Wilken told the BRAC Commission that "The economic impact will be devastating and this small community will take a generation to recover." The local workforce, he said "would, by necessity, migrate far away to new opportunities." Alaska Gov. Frank Murkowski cited the case of Adak, Alaska, a town

in the Aleutians that, until 1997, hosted a Navy base with a population of 6,000 civilians, naval personnel, and their families. Today, the population of Adak is reported to be just 298. The Navy base at Adak is only one of dozens of installations that Alaska has lost in the last two decades or so.

A similar situation exists in South Dakota, where Ellsworth Air Force Base, outside Rapid City, is the second-largest employer in the whole state. Ellsworth's 4,500 military personnel and their 5,600 dependents make up a significant percentage of the overall population of Rapid City and its neighboring counties, which totals about 116,000 people. According to Professor Sidney Goss, of the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, the Rapid City region is already experiencing out-migration, having experienced a net loss of population, between 1990 and 2000, of about 1,300 people. The loss of 10,000 people as a result of the closure of Ellsworth not only would

reduce the population to 1988 levels, but would result in the collapse of much of the community infrastructure, including education, health care, culture, and even emergency services such as fire, police, and search and rescue services.

This is clear because of the degree to which the Ellsworth population participates in the local community. Goss testified at the June 21 BRAC hearing in Rapid City, that the loss of those 10,000 people in one year "would be the equivalent of 76 years of out-migration for this area hitting us all at once."

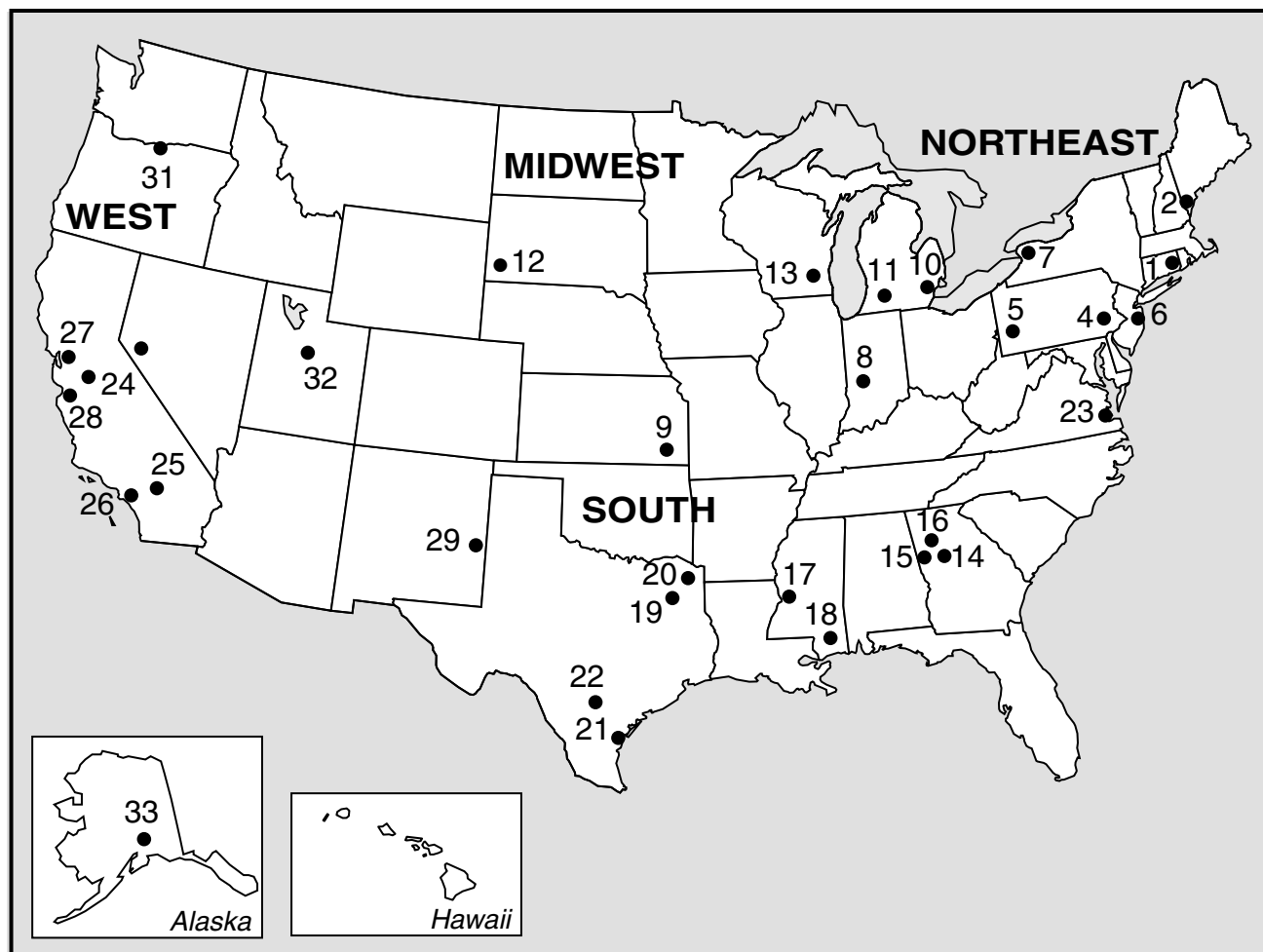
Violating Military Value Criteria

Economic impact, while considerable in many cases, is not the first criterion in the BRAC law that the Pentagon was supposed to consider in making its determinations. The first criterion is military value, defined as "the present and future mission capabilities and the impact on operational readiness of the total force of the Department of Defense, including the impact on joint warfighting, training, and readiness." Military value also includes "The availability and condition of land, facilities, and associated airspace," as well as "the ability to accommodate contingency, mobilization, surge, and future total force requirements," and "the cost of operations and the manpower implications."

In the cases of both Eielson and Ellsworth Air Force Bases, serious questions were raised by retired military officers as to whether or not the Pentagon competently followed these criteria. Both bases are located in sparsely populated regions, with little or no encroachment by development near

FIGURE 1

The 33 Major Military Bases Rumsfeld Would Close Down



Source: U.S. Department of Defense.

1. Connecticut. **Submarine Base, New London (Navy)**
2. Maine. **Naval Shipyard, Portsmouth**
3. Massachusetts. **Otis Air National Guard Base (Air Force)**
4. Pennsylvania. **Naval Air Station, Willow Grove**
5. Pennsylvania. **Pittsburgh International Airport Air Reserve**
6. New Jersey. **Fort Monmouth (Army)**
7. New York. **Niagara Falls International Airport Air Guard Station**
8. Indiana. **Newport Chemical Depot (Army)**
9. Kansas. **Kansas Army Ammunition Plant**
10. Michigan. **Selfridge Army Activity, Macomb County**
11. Michigan. **Kellogg Airport Air Guard Station, Battle Creek**
12. South Dakota. **Ellsworth Air Force Base, Rapid City**
13. Wisconsin. **General Mitchell Air Force Reserve, Milwaukee**
14. Georgia. **Ft. Gillem (Army), Atlanta**
15. Georgia. **Ft. McPherson (Army), Atlanta**
16. Georgia. **Naval Air Station, Atlanta**
17. Mississippi. **Mississippi Army Munitions Plant, Vicksburg**
18. Mississippi. **Naval Station, Pascagoula**
19. Texas. **Lone Star Army Munitions Plant**
20. Texas. **Red River Army Depot, Texarkana**
21. Texas. **Naval Station Ingleside, Corpus Christi**
22. Texas. **Brooks City Air Force Base, San Antonio**
23. Virginia. **Fort Monroe (Army), Hampton Roads**
24. California. **Riverbank Army Ammunition Plant**
25. California. **Naval Support Activity, Corona**
26. California. **Naval Weapons Station, Seal Beach**
27. California. **Concord Detachment (Navy)**
28. California. **Onizuka Air Force Station, Sunnyvale**
29. New Mexico. **Cannon Air Force Base**
30. Nevada. **Hawthorne Army Depot**
31. Oregon. **Umatilla Chemical Depot (Army)**
32. Utah. **Deseret Chemical Depot (Army)**
33. Alaska. **Kulis Air Guard Station (Air Force), Anchorage**

the bases that could impact military operations. The low population density of both regions also means that there is little civilian air traffic to interfere with military training. Eielson, home to Air Force A-10 and F-16 fighter squadrons, is located close to Fort Richardson, home to an Army airborne brigade and a Stryker brigade. This maximizes joint training opportunities between the Air Force and the Army.

“DoD’s recommendation to convert Eielson to warm status will defeat jointness in our state by taking all of the aircraft out of this interior Alaska area and eliminating all close support aircraft—exactly the capabilities we are employing today in Iraq,” testified Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Ak.) at the June 15 Fairbanks hearing.

Ellsworth in South Dakota is home to 28 of the Air Force’s 67 B-1 bombers, the remaining aircraft being stationed at Dyess Air Force Base in west central Texas. The Air Force proposal would consolidate the entire fleet at Dyess. The question, then, is whether or not it makes sense to put the entire fleet in one place. The conclusion put to the BRAC Commission in Rapid City was, “No.”

Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.), who campaigned for election against then-incumbent Sen. Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) in 2004, on the basis that Thune could save Ellsworth, emphatically told the Commission that not only would concentrating the entire fleet in one place make it more vulnerable to terrorist or other type of attack; it would also place the fleet at higher risk of tornados, as Dyess is located in the Texas stretch of the Southwest Plains’ “Tornado Alley.” “We simply cannot afford to risk our nation’s security on the whims of a single deadly tornado that could destroy or damage our entire B-1 fleet,” he said.

Witnesses testified that putting the entire B-1 fleet in one location would also reduce operational readiness. Retired Air Force General Michael Loh, who commanded the Air Force’s Air Combat Command from 1992-95, told the Commission, via videotape presentation, that operating more than 36 heavy bombers at one base is “very inefficient” because “Operational readiness suffers, because too many crews must share too few training ranges and training airspace. Logistics suffers because there’s too little support infrastructure to handle greatly expanded maintenance.” General Loh called the proposal “a recipe for unmanageable congestion and never-ending chaos that spells inefficiency, waste, and degraded operational readiness for the B-1s.”

Adding to the inefficiency is that a major training area, called the Powder River Military Operating Area, is literally 7-8 minutes from the end of Ellsworth’s runway, but close to two hours flying time from Dyess, increasing the costs of training missions while reducing their effectiveness.

Whither the Citizen Soldier?

Of course, the military value criteria exclude the above-noted engineering and scientific traditions of a true Republican military policy. These are capabilities which Secretary

Rumsfeld seems to be in a great hurry to exterminate wherever they do not serve his notions of “military transformation” and the “war on terror.”

That another target of Rumsfeld’s campaign is the citizen soldier, is exemplified by the Air Force’s plan to consolidate the Air National Guard. Under the plan, 28 states will lose some of their Air National Guard units’ aircraft, and five states’ Guards will lose their flying missions altogether.

Proponents of the Air National Guard frequently point out that it flies 34% of the Air Force’s missions on 6% of its budget. Air National Guard pilots and crews are often older and more experienced than their active duty counterparts, and have deep roots into the communities in which they live. These proponents argue that the Air National Guard is best situated for homeland defense missions, and is also a valuable asset for governors responding to natural disasters; yet, the Air Force plan seems to not take any of this into account.

Sen. Kit Bond (R-Mo.), testifying at the June 20 BRAC hearing in St. Louis, said that behind closed doors, the Air Force “chose to take a path where homeland defense, as a factor, was considered but rejected. The result was a BRAC process that has no questions on homeland defense, awarded no points for homeland defense, and weighed no answers on homeland defense.”

The state adjutants general—chiefs of the National Guard in each state, and military advisors to their governors—are also complaining very loudly, that the Air Force did not consult them in the development of its plan. Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, the adjutant general of Nebraska and President of the Adjutants General Association, testified at the same St. Louis hearing that “Until very recently, the Adjutants General were excluded from deliberations to develop what’s called the Air Force future total force, the overall guide used to develop the Air Force BRAC plan.” He said that a review of the still-incomplete information released by the Pentagon “has revealed that the Air National Guard capabilities and operational efficiencies were not properly assessed, resulting in flawed recommendations.”

One example of the problem General Lempke pointed to, is the Air National Guard unit at Charleston, West Virginia, which the Air Force is recommending be closed, and its eight C-130’s distributed to other bases. The Pentagon says the tarmac at Charleston can only handle eight aircraft. But when BRAC Commission chairman Anthony Principi visited Charleston on June 24, there were 13 C-130’s on the ramp, with room for more.

The BRAC Commission has apparently been impressed with the arguments regarding the Air National Guard. Principi told reporters following the June 28 hearing in Buffalo, New York “We’re struggling with this issue of the Guard and Reserve,” according to the *Buffalo News*. When asked to elaborate, he called the Air Force plan “far-reaching,” and said, “We will make sure it’s in the best interests of the states and of homeland security.”