

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES
Affiliated with the AFL-CIO
80 F Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001-1583

MEMORANDUM: 15/204873

May 10, 2005

TO: National Executive Council
DoD Locals (via Email)

FROM: John Gage 
National President

SUBJECT: Announcement of 2005 DoD Recommendations on BRAC

This week will be a terrible week for many DoD employees whose base will appear on the BRAC list. The initial action by AFGE and others will be to seek a delay, although this will be extremely difficult. In addition we have prepared a template for Locals to use during local hearings. At the appropriate time we will deal with negotiating the impact arrangements when and if a BRAC list is finalized.

The Secretary of Defense will announce sometime during the week of May 9, 2005 a list of the Department's recommendations concerning "realignment and closure" of certain military installations. These recommendations will be forwarded to the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission which will examine and hold public hearings on DoD's recommendations. The BRAC Commission then sends its recommendations regarding DoD's recommendations to the President by September 8, 2005. (The Commission may change the list, either adding to it or subtracting from it.) President Bush has until September 23 to decide whether to accept or reject the Commission's recommendations in their entirety. (The President may not change the list.) Then Congress has 45 legislative days to decide whether to accept the recommendations in an up or down vote, with no amendments. If Congress does not act in that 45 day period, the BRAC recommendations go into effect.

Attached are four documents:

One is a set of talking points that you can use when speaking to journalists about AFGE's position on the BRAC. We are urging a two-year delay in BRAC because of the ongoing deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan and the instability associated with the implementation of NSPS. In addition, we are warning against allowing DoD to use BRAC as a back-door means of privatization, either through "privatization in place" or other forms of contracting out DoD work.

The second document is a template for AFGE testimony at local hearings on BRAC. It can be customized to stress the details associated with a particular location.

The third document is a draft national press release.

The fourth document is a draft press release which Locals can modify and release to their local press.

The next Congressional recess is May 27th through June 6th. We are asking Locals to make appointments during that week to discuss a number of key issues including BRAC and NSPS. Please let our Legislative Department know of any meetings held and the outcome of those meetings.

These materials will soon be posted on the AFGE website, as well as a separate BRAC website that we are developing. If you have any questions about these materials, please call AFGE Public Policy Director Jacques Simon at 202-639-6408.

Attachments

cc: Department Directors (w/attachments)
Human Rights Committee (w/attachments)

Talking Points for Delay of BRAC

- It is wrong to eliminate military capacity in the context of two ongoing military engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan. For this reason, AFGE calls for a two-year delay in BRAC.
- There is no question that the closures and proposed realignments effected by BRAC will reduce military capacity, harm national security, and have a negative impact on the Defense Department's (DoD) ability to accommodate the needs of combat troops.
- The timing of this BRAC is especially inappropriate because of current military engagements. DoD cannot say with any certainty when any portion of the 153,000 troops currently deployed in Iraq will be sent home. This fact alone raises questions about DoD's ability to forecast future needs and obligations.
- In Iraq, U.S. combat forces are still engaged actively in both offensive and defensive operations that make use of weapon systems and artillery manufactured, maintained, and repaired at U.S. military installations. In spite of assurances from DoD from as far back as spring 2003 that the Iraq war was over and hostilities were at an end, the Iraqi insurgency remains active and has kept combat forces on a war footing.
- There is no reason to expect that the \$7 billion figure that Secretary Rumsfeld touts as projected savings from BRAC will materialize. DoD's internal accounting procedures are perennially on GAO's "High Risk" list, in large part because promised savings from various initiatives almost never appear. Thus, it is wrong to allow closures that decimate local economies and thousands of civilian workers' lives to go forward on the basis of false promises.
- DoD and Secretary Rumsfeld have not demonstrated that closing productive and efficient military facilities will enhance either the nation's security overall, or the safety or effectiveness of equipment provided to the combat troops currently in theater. On the contrary, Secretary Rumsfeld has said that any savings would be used to purchase expensive new weapon systems that will not address the needs of current forces.
- There is no downside to a two-year delay in BRAC. A two-year delay would allow the Congress to assess the military's progress in bringing democracy to Iraq and Afghanistan as well as its future needs pending developments in those ongoing conflicts.

Testimony Outline for BRAC Public Hearings

Introduction: State name, your position in the union, and a brief description of the work done at your base or installation.

Main Body:

- The main rationale for Base Realignment and Closures (BRAC) is supposed to be to eliminate excess capacity so that the military can allocate resources to priorities with higher “military value.” In order for that to happen, BRAC cannot be used as a means of backdoor privatization, since privatization merely shifts capacity from the government to contractors, doesn’t save any money, and therefore doesn’t allow reallocation of resources to higher priorities.
- The 1995 BRAC experience with privatization demonstrates the need to prevent it from undermining the mission of the new BRAC. We urge the Commission put in place explicit safeguards to make sure that this BRAC round not be used to facilitate privatization. In the last BRAC, DoD used Privatization in Place (PIP) and claimed that it was a means of eliminating excess capacity. However, Privatization in Place only is only a transfer of funds to private sector service contractors, not a reduction in capacity that allows a reallocation of resources or consolidation of functions. As such, it leads to more job loss than would occur with just closure, realignment and consolidation.
- Using BRAC for privatization not only undermines the military’s goal of saving money by eliminating excess capacity. It also displaces career civilian DoD employees and deprives the local economy of good jobs with training and upward mobility, pensions, health insurance, and regular salary adjustments. When government work is transferred to private contractors, local communities suffer despite the fact that the government pays as much or more for the work as it did prior to privatization. This is because contractors pay rank and file workers lower wages and provide inferior benefits, and send the difference back to headquarters in the form of executive salaries and corporate profit.
- Although PIP was limited by Congress after the 1995 BRAC, it was not eliminated. BRAC Commission Chairman, Anthony Principi, has spoken favorably of PIP, and we are concerned that DoD may move ahead with a privatization agenda despite the fact that there would be no reduction of infrastructure or cost savings, and no enhancement of “military value.”
- The “50-50” provision in Title 10 of the United States Code prohibits DoD from spending more than 50% of its depot-level maintenance and repair funds to contract with private firms for the performance of this workload,

and BRAC must not be used to undermine the 50% standard. DoD might try to do this by closing an entire maintenance function, moving it to the private sector, and claiming that doing so is legal as long as sufficient room exists within the 50% cap.

- We also strongly oppose eliminating the 50-50 standard legislatively in the context of BRAC. The 50-50 standard is crucial for protecting the military from complete subservience to its contractors and represents an important military value – the ability to support our troops and equipment apart from the demands and instability of private sector firms. When DoD allows itself to be totally at the mercy of a private firm with a monopoly on knowledge and ability to perform weapons maintenance and repair, our national security is compromised.
- DoD’s civilian workforce has proven its high “military value” for more than a century. The success of our military depends in large part on the support of a dedicated, skilled, experienced civilian workforce, both now and in the future. BRAC was not intended as a tool to further dismantle and downsize the defense civilian workforce – and if it is used for this then BRAC will only weaken our nation’s ability to respond to military crises.
- It is critical that realistic assumptions are made regarding future defense needs. It is bad policy to rely heavily upon the private sector for future surge capacity. If the federal government says today that it cannot bear the burden of maintaining surge capacity and defense expertise for availability in a military crisis, then why would the private sector, with its focus on profit, be expected to do so? If the private sector does invest in maintaining surge capacity at DoD’s behest as a result of BRAC, then where is the cost saving from divestiture of military bases?
- There is no reliable evidence that privatization saves money. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has long questioned the accuracy and reliability of DoD’s reporting on service contract costs. Despite assurances to Congress over four years ago, DoD has yet to develop improvements in the accuracy of its service contract cost reporting.
- DoD should also decide against turning government-owned depots, arsenal and shipyards into Federal Government Corporations (FGC) as a means to get these entities “off its books”. We are strongly opposed to this conversion because it would be extremely detrimental to federal employees. Although current employees could keep their jobs at the FGC location, they would no longer be considered government employees and would thereby not have certain legal protection with regard to personnel, procurement, funding, and finance activities.

- DoD should consider and report to Congress on the impact of base closures and consolidations on the composition of the DoD civilian workforce, especially the impact on veterans and minorities. This impact is a factor worthy of the Commission's attention. While the selection criteria include consideration of operational readiness of DoD's "total force" and "manpower implications," the impact on the civilian workforce is not mentioned.
- Base closures are likely to have a large and negative impact on the hard-won diversity of the DoD civilian workforce. This impact should be measured and acknowledged by the Commission and shared with the Congress. In addition, the DoD civilian workforce includes a substantial number of veterans. DoD hired more than 20,000 veterans in 2002, almost half of the veterans hired into federal service that year. The Commission should consider the number of veterans who will lose their jobs for each recommended closure or realignment and make this number known to the Congress as well.
- Under the new National Security Personnel System (NSPS) for DoD's civilian employees, the procedures for deciding which employees will be affected by reductions in force (RIFs) are being radically altered. Under the current system, a combination of factors, including veteran's status, performance, and length of service are considered when deciding retention rights. While the RIF procedures in the NSPS are not yet in effect, DoD's current proposal is to consider *only* a worker's most recent performance appraisal, allowing a 30-year veteran with 29 years of outstanding appraisals and one year of "above average" to be in an inferior to a worker with one year's tenure and one current "outstanding" rating.
- The proposed NSPS would also allow DoD to redefine "competitive areas" in the context of a RIF in ways that could target specific employees or groups of employees and rob them of the retention status they currently have on the basis of their veterans' status and current jobs. For example, under NSPS, management could define a new "competitive area" that consisted solely of employees who happen to be veterans, thereby eliminating veterans' status as an advantage. This could be accomplished by moving particular individuals into a newly established "business area" such as a weapon system team or functional team. In this way, employees with either veterans' status or length of service protections could be neutralized for large numbers of DoD employees.
- These RIF rules are outrageously unfair on their face, and particularly insupportable in the context of BRAC. We urge the Commission to specify that existing RIF procedures apply to all BRAC related RIF.

Conclusion: The 2005 BRAC should not be used as a back-door method of privatization.. Privatization will undermine the BRAC goal of improving warfighting capacity and efficiency in the allocation of defense resources. Further, privatization should not be proposed as a way of neutralizing the economic losses on a community from a closure, as contractors routinely provide inferior compensation to their employees while charging the government as much or more than the cost of continued government performance. BRAC should not be used as a means of further dismantling and downsizing the DoD civilian workforce, and any recommended closures should be examined for their impact on veterans and on workforce diversity. Further, no proposed NSPS procedures should apply in the context of personnel changes connected to the BRAC.

DRAFT OF NATIONAL NEW RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
May XX, 2005

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AFGE DENOUNCES PENTAGON PLAN TO CLOSE MILITARY INSTALLATIONS

National Labor Union Asks for Delay in BRAC Process

Washington —Members of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) are denouncing a plan to close military installations around the country based on recommendations of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC). The latest round of BRAC closures are expected to be the most sweeping and far-reaching ever since the BRAC closures started in 1988.

AFGE, which represents more than 600,000 federal employees, is asking the Defense Department to consider a two-year delay in the BRAC process based on the fact that the closure process will disrupt the work of the thousands of troops committed to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as current efforts to secure the homeland.

“Our troops are already committed to the war in Iraq and we’re still trying to defend ourselves against future terrorist attacks here at home,” says AFGE National President John Gage. “This is not the time to scale back and close military installations that provide valuable services and equipment that help keep us safe from terrorists.”

AFGE representatives also argue that the impending BRAC closure will be costly and needlessly put loyal employees out of work.

“The Defense Department always says that BRAC closures will save taxpayers money, but that never happens,” says Gage. In the meantime, thousands of loyal workers will lose their jobs and entire communities will be destabilized because military installations are usually the biggest employer in the area, especially in rural areas.”

BRAC was put into place in 1988. The four previous BRAC closure rounds occurred in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995. According to the Defense Department, the BRAC process has resulted in nearly 100 major closures, 55 major realignments and 235 minor actions.

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The American Federation of Government Employees is the largest federal employee union, representing 600,000 workers in the federal government and the government of the District of Columbia.

DRAFT OF DROP-IN NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
[DATE], 2005

**CONTACT: [NAME OF AFGE LOCAL
CONTACT]
(AREA CODE) [PHONE
NUMBER]**

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(202) 639-6405**

WORKERS AT [NAME OF MILITARY INSTALLATION] DENOUNCE PENTAGON PLAN TO CLOSE MILITARY INSTALLATIONS

AFGE Members Ask for Delay in BRAC Process

[CITY], [STATE]—Members of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) Local [LOCAL #] are denouncing a plan to close [NAME OF MILITARY INSTALLATION] based on the recommendation of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC). In addition to [NAME OF MILITARY INSTALLATION], military installations around the country are being targeted for BRAC closures.

AFGE local [LOCAL #], which represents employees at [NAME OF MILITARY INSTALLATION], is asking the Defense Department to consider a two-year delay in the BRAC process based on the fact that the closure process will disrupt the work of the thousands of troops committed to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as current efforts to secure the homeland.

“Our troops are already committed to the war in Iraq and we’re still trying to defend ourselves against future terrorist attacks here at home,” says [NAME OF LOCAL PRESIDENT, president of local #]. “This is not the time to scale back and close military installations that provide valuable services and equipment that help keep us safe from terrorists.” [****FEEL FREE TO MODIFY QUOTE]

AFGE representatives at [NAME OF INSTALLATION] also argue that the impending BRAC closure will be costly and needlessly put loyal employees out of work.

“The Defense Department always says that BRAC closures will save taxpayers money, but that never happens,” says [LAST NAME OF LOCAL PRESIDENT]. In the meantime, loyal workers will lose their jobs and an entire community will be destabilized because military installations like [NAME OF MILITARY INSTALLATION] are usually the biggest employer in the area, especially in rural areas.”

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