



Commission on Review of Overseas Military Facility Structure of the United States

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SLOW DOWN, REORDER PROCESS OF OVERSEAS MILITARY BASE REALIGNMENT, COMMISSION SAYS

Panel says that “The military basing posture of the United States is a significant reflection of U.S. national security interests throughout the world and the totality of this posture is larger than just the Department of Defense.”

WASHINGTON, D.C., May 9, 2005 – The most significant re-thinking of American overseas military posture in more than 50 years – which includes a proposal to return permanently from overseas to the United States some 70,000 military personnel – has proceeded for over a year under a process managed by the Department of Defense (DoD) with little widespread discussion with other important government agencies, an “in-stride” design plan and no significant congressional debate, a Commission created to advise Congress and the President says.

“The Commission fully understands the need for change,” said Al Cornella, chairman of the Commission on the Review of Overseas Military Facility Structure of the United States (Overseas Basing Commission - OSBC), which was created by Congress in 2003 to review a broad range of issues relating to the U.S. military facility structure overseas.

“The task of bringing America’s overseas military posture into the 21st century is critical to our nation’s and the world’s security. But the way the process is moving forward with little overall synchronization leaves the commission skeptical about the ability of the Department of Defense to justify, accomplish or afford the planned time frames,” Cornella said at a news conference held today in Washington, D.C. to release the Commission’s conclusions.

The Commission concluded that the military basing posture of the United States is a significant reflection of U.S. security interests throughout the world and that the totality of this posture serves other agencies as well. Therefore, the nation would benefit from a wider review by all affected governmental entities including Defense, State, Intelligence, Energy, Justice, Commerce, Immigration and Customs, and others.

(more)



The Commission called the timing of decreases in U.S. overseas basing capabilities “front-loaded,” with enhancements planned for later implementation and contingent on uncertain political, technological and other developments. This leads to risk that as we move forward we may find ourselves at least for a period of time in a weaker posture. It is a risk we should not take.

Moreover, the Commission found “no evidence of an overwhelming strategic or operational imperative that would explain why the overseas basing realignment needs to be accomplished on its current schedule without ensuring that essential pieces are in place.” The report notes that neither the 2005 Quadrennial Review nor the Mobility Capability study has yet to be completed. This begs the question as to the timing and synchronization of the entire process.

Other major conclusions include:

- DoD must ensure that infrastructure and quality of life programs remain in place at overseas bases until the last day service members and their families depart, and that all such programs be in place in the U.S. by the first day troops and their families arrive from overseas.
- The detailed synchronization of so massive a realignment of forces requires that the pace of events be slowed and reordered.
- Congress should provide more rigorous oversight (including hearings) of the global basing process, given the scope, impact and cost of DoD re-basing plans.

Additionally, the Commission recommended:

- In the European Theater, one of the heavy brigade combat teams scheduled to return to the U.S. should remain in Europe, and a heavy brigade set be prepositioned afloat in the region.
- That Futenma Marine Corps Air Station be relocated to Kadena Air Force Base and/or Iwakuni Marine Corps Air Station and that all other Marine Corps forces should remain on Okinawa.
- Additional U.S. attention is needed to encourage healthy relationships in many areas of Africa and Latin America that may be key to future strategic interests.
- The U.S. should review its treaty with Iceland and update it to reflect a post-Cold War security environment.



The foundation document for U.S. global re-posturing is the 2004 DoD Integrated Global Presence and Basing Strategy (IGPBS), the assumptions and conclusions of which the Commission analyzed.

“The Commission finds the IGPBS was conceived without the full benefit of wide-scale, senior level deliberations among all relevant U.S. agencies impacted by the rebasing initiative. The Commission concludes that IGPBS is not fully synchronized across ongoing operations and analytical efforts and that no interagency entity is integrating implementation of the related national security activities,” the report said.

“The Commission believes strongly that the sequencing of the implementation of IGPBS should be reordered so that (at a minimum) our earliest steps do not detract from but augment our capabilities,” the report said.

In addition to identifying the timing and synchronization shortcomings of IGPBS, the report raised the concern that a number of issues in major subject areas need to be addressed prior to the return of forces to the U.S. These include **quality of life** issues, **geopolitical** considerations, **operational** concerns, **mobility** requirements, **recruiting and retention and cost** issues.

Quality of Life:

“As we reposition tens of thousands of family members to localities that may not have been given adequate time or budget in the short term to prepare for their proper reception, and as we subject service members to repeated rotations abroad for extended periods of time in the long term, we may find ourselves unable to acquire the requisite numbers of recruits and reenlistments to maintain a viable volunteer force. Most importantly, the Commission recommends that quality of life considerations be a priority in the global realignment process.”

Geopolitics:

“From a geopolitical perspective, each step of the process...creates a new global posture.” Our base structure “must be fully integrated with every other facet of strategy before it can be properly affixed. It is the opinion of the Commission that a full dialogue by all necessary parties on the impact of U.S. security of the IGPBS has not taken place.”

We further decrease our presence in NATO only at risk of lessening our influence in Europe. Simultaneously, we may find ourselves hard pressed to respond to any escalation of crises in the Balkans or elsewhere in Europe, while reducing our ability to respond rapidly to contiguous regions in Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East, the commission said.



Operational requirements:

“Our military forces must be able to meet the force projection demands placed on them under existing strategies and plans. Their training and equipment must be adequate to the task, access to key locations assured, and units and bases protected to the degree commensurate with the risks we ask our service men and women to take. It is not clear that all of these concerns have been addressed.”

The bottom line is that our forces must be able to get to the point of need within required timeframes and in sufficient strength to deter or dissuade the enemy – and if that fails, to defeat him in time to reset and displace to meet other emerging threats, perhaps in divergent theaters. Our goal must be to maintain a trained and ready force to win the first battle, and subsequently to bring any military campaign on which we are embarked to a successful conclusion with maximum protection and minimum risk to our forces.

The overseas basing restructuring must not detract from those considerations at any step in the process, the commission said.

Mobility:

“The Commission is concerned that adequate strategic sealift, airlift and prepositioned equipment and stocks do not exist and that current intra-theater airlift is over-stressed. Moreover, the Commission notes that budgetary plans for mobility assets are inadequate to meet projected lift demand.”

Cost:

DoD estimates the implementation of IGPBS at \$9-12 billion, with \$4 billion of that amount currently budgeted for Fiscal Years 2006-11. An independent analysis conducted for the Overseas Basing Commission put the tab at closer to \$20 billion. Additionally, the costs associated with re-basing forces within the United States have not been fully analyzed. The sum total is enormous and many of the costs are un-programmed and will be drawn from individual service operating budgets planned for other uses. The Commission gives a strong caution that global restructuring and transformation ambitions may be bigger than our wallet.

“Although the law gives the Commission until August 15, 2005 to report, we feel it is critical to provide an early report so quality of life concerns and additional issues related to the Guam and Hawaii can be addressed by the domestic Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) when it receives the BRAC list from the Secretary of Defense in mid-May,” Cornella said.

“Some minor additions to the report will likely be made between now and August, but today’s document represents the essential conclusions and recommendations of the Commission,” he said.