



OFFICE OF ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT

**FEEDBACK FROM THE FIELD:
COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE WITH BRAC**

May 2005

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This document was prepared on behalf of the Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA) by a contractor team led by BearingPoint, Inc., McLean, VA, under a contract administered by the General Services Administration.

OEA and the BearingPoint Team thank all Focus Group Participants, which included representatives from Local Redevelopment Authorities, former and current elected officials, and private sector developers for the input that made this report possible.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA), a field activity within the Department of Defense (DoD), assists communities to plan and carry out adjustment activities in response to the job losses and other economic impacts related to DoD actions, including those associated with the Defense Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process.

During 2004, in anticipation of the BRAC actions scheduled for 2005, OEA hired a contractor team headed by BearingPoint, Inc. to:

- Obtain comprehensive feedback on how the community adjustment process actually worked for the beneficiaries of the program, including the overall program of assistance.
- Collect BRAC best practices and lessons learned from key redevelopment practitioners – Local Redevelopment Authorities (LRAs), former and current elected officials, and private sector developers.

This report documents the feedback that was received by OEA during four focus groups held in Washington, D.C., St. Louis, Missouri, and Sacramento, California.

Focus group participants provided nearly 800 separate comments on the BRAC process. The participants were encouraged to be candid about the BRAC process and they were, as the following comment demonstrates:

BRAC is the most diabolically complex and stressful activity for a community. There needs to be a strong collaborative role for OEA with the communities and other Non-Governmental Organizations. OEA needs to be empowered as much as possible to do their work. OEA should provide databases, case studies, refereeing, training, facilitation, joint appraisals and make collaborative efforts work. Training is on going and may need to be accomplished in small doses. The LRA's buy-in to the process is important. OEA should help communities get the BRAC response structure right from the beginning.

Feedback provided by the focus group participants has been organized into the following categories:

- Feedback for BRAC Communities
- Feedback for OEA
- Feedback for Military Departments and Other Federal Agencies
- Other BRAC Process Feedback

Feedback has been further organized according to the major themes introduced by the participants during the sessions. These themes are identified at the beginning of each major feedback section. In most cases, the comments speak for themselves and are not further qualified. Finally, a universal comment made at all sessions was the desire on the part of the participants to have their feedback acknowledged, as is demonstrated by the following comment:

The information gathered at these focus groups must be shared with DoD and other agencies involved in the BRAC process.



2. INTRODUCTION

The previous four rounds of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) in 1988, 1991, 1993, and 1995, resulted in 97 major closures and many minor realignments and closures. In each instance where property was made available for civilian redevelopment and a significant portion of the local labor market was impacted, the affected jurisdictions assumed the responsibility of organizing the local community to represent the impact area with one voice, formulated an overall adjustment strategy that commonly included a redevelopment plan for the surplus Federal property, and routinely partnered with the private sector to reuse property in a manner consistent with the local consensus for redevelopment.

The Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA), a field activity within the Department of Defense (DoD), assists communities to plan and carry out adjustment activities in response to the job losses and other economic impacts related to DoD actions. In this capacity, OEA provided over \$210 Million in planning and redevelopment assistance to more than 100 communities and coordinated over \$1.1 Billion in other Federal Agency support to assist worker and community recovery efforts.

With this extensive portfolio, OEA hired a team headed by BearingPoint, Inc. to facilitate a focus group effort during the summer and fall of 2004. OEA's two objectives were:

- Obtain comprehensive feedback on how the community adjustment process actually worked for the beneficiaries of the program, including the overall program of assistance.
- Collect BRAC best practices and lessons learned from key redevelopment practitioners – Local Redevelopment Authorities (LRAs), former and current elected officials, and private sector developers.

This report reflects the results of the four focus groups held in: Washington, D.C. (one group on July 1, 2004, Session 1, and one on December 9, 2004, Session 4); St. Louis, Missouri (held on September 23, 2004, Session 2); and Sacramento, California (held on October 21-22, 2004, Session 3).

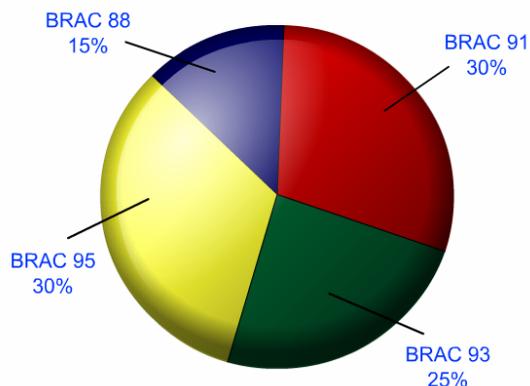
58 total participants, representing 53 communities, participated in the four focus group sessions. Of the 58 participants, 40 were current or former Local Redevelopment Authority (LRA) directors, five were elected officials, five were City Managers, six were property developers and two were associated with State Governments. Participants for all but the Sacramento session were drawn from locations across the United States to ensure geographic diversity of participation. A "California only" session was held in Sacramento with key redevelopment practitioners from that state. In all sessions, however, participants were selected that represented installations affected by BRAC 1988, 1991, 1993, and 1995 actions and Army, Navy/Marine Corps, and Air Force installation communities.

The pie charts on the following page depict the distribution of focus group participants by BRAC round, former installation type (i.e., the Military Department predominately responsible for the closure or realignment action and BRAC implementation process execution), by focus group session and by the principal occupation of the focus group participants.



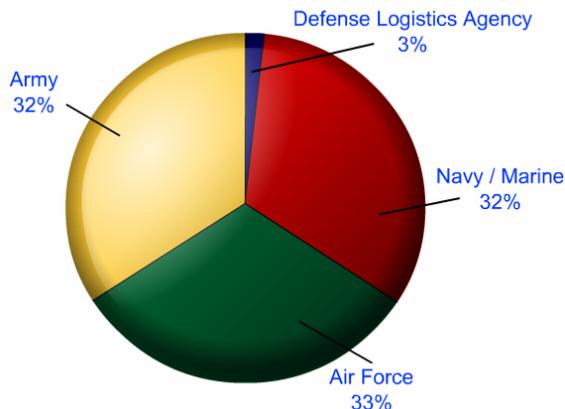
Introduction

Participants per BRAC Round



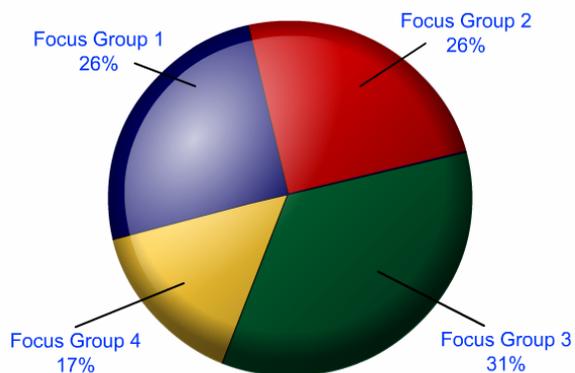
Two Participants had BRAC 91 / 95 experience

Participants by Former Installation

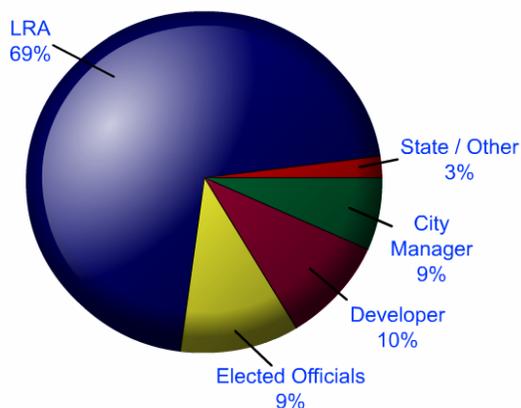


Two Participants had experience with two former installations

Participants per Focus Group



Participants by Position Type



58 Total Participants

Each all-day session began with welcoming remarks from an OEA official. Following this introduction, the support contractor team conducted the remainder of the session, without participation from any of the OEA staff or other observers. The sessions included facilitators, scribes and observers. Participants were advised that their comments would not be attributed to them and were encouraged to be candid, open, and specific. They were. Nearly 800 participant comments were recorded. In keeping with this commitment, this report does not attribute comments to specific individuals.



Introduction

Each session adhered to the discussion guide included as Table 1, below. The guide was structured around the following three major phases or segments of the BRAC process:

- Phase 1 – BRAC closure recommendation through the organization of the LRA
- Phase 2 – Closure approval through property disposal
- Phase 3 – Acquisition and redevelopment of transferred property

Consistent with OEA’s two objectives for the four sessions, attendees were encouraged to focus on OEA’s role in each phase of the BRAC process. Attendees were also encouraged to contribute feedback and other observations beyond OEA’s role. To that end, this report has been organized by feedback type—feedback for BRAC communities, for OEA, for Military Departments and other Federal Agencies and other general BRAC process feedback. Feedback is prefaced by an introductory statement or paragraph. In those cases where no introductory text has been added it is hoped the comments speak for themselves. Specific participant comments included in this report are italicized. Every attempt has been made to capture the context and meaning of what the participants offered.

Table 1. Focus Group Discussion Guide

Phase 1. CLOSURE RECOMMENDATION THROUGH ORGANIZATION OF THE LRA	Phase 2. CLOSURE APPROVAL THROUGH PROPERTY DISPOSAL	Phase 3. ACQUISITION OF AND REDEVELOPMENT OF TRANSFERRED PROPERTY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitioning anxiety to constructive action • Dual tracking • Local leadership • Multiple jurisdictions • Advanced planning • Retained enclaves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking with one voice • Representation and zoning authority • Locating the LRA on-base • Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) • Personal property review • Federal real property screening • Homeless outreach and submission • Environmental Baseline Survey information • National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) scoping • BRAC Cleanup Team and Restoration Advisory Board • Infrastructure studies • Operational / business plans • Addressing state / Federal requirements • Screening by military vs. community • Multiple Federal sources of support – OEA / Base Transition Coordinator / Military Department / Federal Sponsoring Agencies • The Base Reuse Plan / Local Redevelopment Plan • Private vs. public implementation models • Interim leases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing state / Federal requirements • Connecting with potential Federal redevelopment resources • Early transfers / Environmental Services Cooperative Agreements (ESCAs) • Public and negotiated sales • Conveyances – Public Benefit • Economic Development Conveyances • Caretaker cooperative agreements • Where does “as-is, where-is” work well or not work? • Legal services/support • Public-Public / Public-Private Partnerships • Master developer • Environmental cleanup • Financing for demolition, site improvements and redevelopment • Phase-out of OEA organizational support



Feedback for OEA

3. FEEDBACK FOR OEA

The focus group process generated much feedback regarding OEA and its roles. One major theme heard throughout all sessions was that the assistance provided by OEA to prior round BRAC communities was essential and that the role of the OEA Project Manager was widely viewed as being that of an “honest broker.” Focus group participants strongly believed OEA assistance was fundamentally critical to a community’s ability to accept a BRAC decision, to organize and plan, and to carry out transitional and implementation activities.

Focus group participants identified a variety of ways by which OEA had provided assistance to BRAC communities. Some noted that the financial assistance provided by OEA was the most important for their situation while others lauded OEA’s technical and programmatic assistance. In all cases, some combination of this assistance was noted as key to their community’s successful BRAC redevelopment. Participants offered specific feedback for OEA to consider prior to the BRAC 2005 round.

However, not all feedback received about OEA was complimentary. A number of focus group participants offered valuable constructive criticism, some of which is included in this section. This feedback to OEA can be grouped according to four primary themes, which are:

- Maintain and strengthen OEA’s role
- Conduct early outreach
- Provide timely and relevant information
- Explore ways to make OEA’s grant program more flexible

The comments in the following subsections are organized according to these themes.

MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN OEA’S ROLE

A community impacted by base closure has a very narrow window for decision-making. OEA needs to help the community in this process and fill in information that they may not have. The information has to be timely and localized with information about the tools that a community will need in order to make their decisions. Pre-BRAC decision information could include—joint land use and encroachment. The tools that OEA should get to the community are what they should be doing in planning for the inevitable. Environmental Baseline Surveys could be done now. OEA needs to get out to the communities early and often.

OEA must educate communities in the process and realistic possibilities. OEA should assist financially for a good start up, reinforce that planning and development will take time and it will change. OEA needs to stick with communities. Guide 'em, back 'em, get 'em real!

OEA should play a greater role in providing mediation and dispute resolution among other Federal Agencies and the communities.

The community never completely understood all the things that OEA could do for it. OEA needs to develop a family tree that will show clearly where they fit in.



Feedback for OEA

OEA is an important tool for the community and developer. [Our] community became at war with the Military Service. OEA became the peacemaker when the community became political.

OEA can and should play the role of the honest broker.

Even when communities have good relationships with the military, hard facility data is still needed. OEA could help to share how the facility staff and leadership engage with and relate to the community. OEA should be the broker to help obtain the right kind of information, particularly in a realignment action.

There is a real difference between project managers at OEA. Some can play the role of honest broker and others are not as good at it. A lot of it is about people and relationships. Some commanders are also good in this area; others are not. Good people can make a bad process work, and bad people can screw up the best process.

Not every OEA representative was good. OEA needs to have a consistent training system for all of its reps and also good and consistent oversight.

There is often a conflict between the OEA Project Manager and Military Service Program Manager. There needs to be greater communication and cooperation between OEA and Military Services. All must have the same goals and objectives.

CONDUCT EARLY OUTREACH

Participants indicated that OEA should initiate contact with potentially affected communities as soon as the Secretary of Defense issues the BRAC 2005 recommendations in May. Even though the recommendations would not be final at that point, participants felt that communities would gain valuable insight from a visit by OEA to allow them to understand what might happen to them, and what resources they will have at their disposal if the recommendation becomes law. While specifics concerning the most effective type of early interaction varied from on-line help to in-person interaction, there was consensus from the participants that it would be of great value to BRAC 2005 communities for OEA to make contact with appropriate local and state leaders as early as possible. Comments by participants included:

Once a community is on the BRAC list, OEA needs to conduct a 1-2 day seminar and tell community officials what happens during the process – being realistic about expectations.

It is important that OEA provide information and education to the community at the earliest possible time. Don't tell the communities what to do, but provide information about the process.

OEA needs to control false expectations. OEA needs to let the communities know that redevelopment takes years. Educate the community about the process and not about how great things will be.

OEA needs to educate all communities placed on the BRAC list prior to its final approval.

OEA should be the place for "one stop shopping" about BRAC.



Feedback for OEA

Unless a community has been involved in BRAC before, no one knows what OEA is. Early education of states and communities is the key. OEA should provide, "Here's what to expect if you are on BRAC list."

PROVIDE TIMELY AND RELEVANT INFORMATION

Participants indicated that one challenge faced in the earlier rounds of BRAC was that of having to learn much of what they needed to do and create solutions and documents from scratch. The participants believed there were few examples of the various kinds of documents they would need to generate or become familiar with. Examples cited included redevelopment plans, property conveyance documents, model leases, deeds, and redevelopment authority organizational structure templates. All were noted as items that would have been useful to review or adapt to their situation. Many felt such documents were outside the range of documents that communities routinely prepare.

Discussion of the methods by which OEA could provide this information tended to focus on three particular areas: smaller, or more regional in-person conferences; web-based tools that would allow communities to access information, share lessons learned and exchange ideas; and live mentoring by former redevelopment practitioners. Many participants noted that they found the OEA conferences from the 1993 and 1995 rounds of BRAC to be useful, but considered them too large (in terms of numbers of attendees) and simultaneously too limiting with respect to who was authorized to represent their community at the conference.

Regardless of the method of delivery, participants overwhelmingly noted that having an OEA Project Manager make earlier contact with community decision makers would be key to maximizing success for communities facing a 2005 BRAC action.

As a result of the dramatic changes in technology that have occurred since the earlier rounds of BRAC, focus group participants believed that web-based access to educational materials, including various templates and examples of documents used in prior rounds of BRAC would be of great value to communities facing BRAC 2005.

Participants in all sessions noted that communities facing the 2005 BRAC process have one advantage over those who were involved in earlier rounds in that there are many experienced people across the country who have been through the process and know what communities face. It was felt that these individuals could serve as a key source of information to LRAs and others new to the process. OEA participation in public interest group conferences was noted as one way for communities to gain access to this source of intellectual capital.

OEA should not allow the new communities to re-create the wheel. OEA should become a clearinghouse for information, documents, and contracts. How to play in the BRAC arena is important information that OEA can provide for the communities of any size and communities facing change.

Only one person from my community was allowed to come to the OEA-sponsored closure conference. Only one book of OEA information was available per community. Regional meetings might have allowed more people to attend.

OEA should take the new communities through "BRAC boot camp" (an intense workshop) that includes interfacing with previous BRAC communities and documents emphasizing best practices. OEA should facilitate this dialogue with the 2005 BRAC communities to share successes and identify the problems and challenges of closure and redevelopment.



Feedback for OEA

OEA needs to develop a database on base closure and base closure communities on the Internet.

OEA should support a mentoring process; DoD and OEA can never give communities the kind of insight and support that other communities can provide. Communities can tell other communities things that OEA and the Military Services cannot say. A mentor should be available early in the process, as well as throughout it.

Communities do not need case studies of general "good" successful bases, but rather examples of bases that have redeveloped that had "looked like their base." This resource was not provided by OEA. Also examples of how to get organized and what options are available are needed.

EXPLORE WAYS TO MAKE OEA'S GRANT PROGRAM MORE FLEXIBLE

Feedback regarding the OEA grant process clearly indicated the value it brings to a BRAC-affected community. Grants, along with the technical assistance provided by OEA, were consistently noted as two of the most important items that allowed communities to be successful. However, a large number of focus group participants, especially those who had participated in the OEA grants process, expressed strong feelings about the apparent lack of flexibility of the rules governing how OEA grant funds can be expended during the community planning process. Some felt the current rules regarding grant flexibility should be reviewed in light of lessons learned and experience gained from prior rounds. In general, representative focus group comments on this topic are along the lines of those included below:

OEA should consider funding under a block grant program. Dollars would be available for a variety of projects and not limited to OEA constraints.

Getting developers in early requires a different kind of funding. Traditional resource planning takes on a different look if it is done in concert with a developer. OEA may want to consider more customized use of funds in terms of reuse planning and implementation in order to get implementation entities involved early.

Having a "one process fits all" is not necessarily smart. Some communities do not need money if they can fast track the development. Other communities need significant money beyond just preparing the plan. Multi-year funding and a tiered approach might be a good idea. Some communities need dollars while others need project management.

The absence of written guidance from OEA on its grants and what could and could not be funded made the process more complicated than necessary. Some community needs were not eligible for funding—for example, environmental analysis and marketing.

Smaller communities have to struggle with finding the match for the OEA grants.

OEA assistance for staff and planning is great and leads to capital development. Lacking in the grant process are funds for "paying the bills" that must be paid in order to make progress towards redevelopment. Some things will be a loss leader in the beginning, but are needed for success in the long-term. Getting from the closure state to full operations needs money to pay the operating bills whether it comes from OEA, the Federal Aviation Administration or the Economic Development Administration.



4. FEEDBACK FOR BRAC COMMUNITIES

Focus group participants had many suggestions for BRAC 2005 communities and future Local Redevelopment Authorities (LRAs) and their predecessor organizations that will become OEA customers during the 2005 BRAC round. There was a high degree of consensus that the experiences of former OEA customers and OEA personnel themselves from the previous rounds of BRAC would provide 2005 BRAC round communities and LRAs with a much larger knowledge base than had existed in prior rounds. Feedback has been arranged according to the following major themes, representing recommendations and specific advice to BRAC 2005 communities that were introduced by the focus group participants:

- Speak with one voice
- Early involvement with OEA is critical
- Develop and maintain a strong relationship between the military base and the community
- Brace yourself and pace yourself
- Educate yourself about the BRAC process
- Understand the BRAC regulatory process

SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE

The phrase “speak with one voice” was used on a number of occasions during all four of the focus group sessions. While there were many interpretations of this phrase, it was typically used to describe consistency in communicating the messages from a stakeholder group. In the case of a BRAC community, including the LRA, participants referred to speaking with one voice as occurring when the community was in agreement on their goals and needs and communicating those effectively to all recipients of the message. Achieving this condition during the BRAC process was noted as sometimes difficult due to the interplay among various and diverse local groups having widely differing goals. However, it was made clear by the participants that the lack of a consistent message from the community to the Military Departments and regulatory agencies could seriously delay the success of the redevelopment of the closed base.

The BRAC process can be very adversarial. A cohesive vision is helpful for the community. The political element within the community carried the process through, not the Military Departments. The community needs to build a common vision and planning process that will carry the day.

Clarity and unity are constant challenges from the community side as well as from the military.

Speaking with one voice begins with the “save the base” committee that builds public trust and credibility. Communities can fight like cats and dogs among themselves, but must speak with one voice outside the community.

Each community responds differently to BRAC but there is still a need for the community to speak with a single voice. Many communities have tried to resolve the issues without a consensus and failed.

OEA could facilitate getting the local communities together to understand the importance of consensus and speaking with a single voice. Warring factions within the community are bad.



EARLY INVOLVEMENT WITH OEA IS CRITICAL

Focus group participants representing communities believed that some of their BRAC 2005 counterparts might be reluctant to engage with OEA early on. The following comments are illustrative of this sentiment:

The first meeting between the community and OEA is critical. Meeting with OEA could reduce community anxiety.

OEA involvement with the community began early on. This was extremely helpful. OEA provided the community with good information and saved the community dollars and heartache. The [BRAC] process was more complicated than we previously thought.

A significant issue that still prevails in the community is that the individuals involved in saving the base have not given up and their redevelopment efforts have always been half-hearted. OEA has to be the truth teller and the reality check for the community. OEA has to find a way to do this and talk about the "good, bad and ugly."

OEA is a valuable interpreter for communities of the DoD language and culture, and vice versa; DoD lives in a different world than local communities. Some small issues for the military are huge for the local LRA. The ability for OEA to translate for the military and local communities becomes crucial for understanding.

OEA financial assistance was helpful from the very beginning. It helped the community and the LRA to get off the ground. The resources were needed immediately and they were there.

DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A STRONG RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MILITARY BASE AND THE COMMUNITY

Developing and maintaining strong relationships with the local military base and its leadership throughout the BRAC process was cited as another key to success. In cases where communities had existing close relationships with the base leaders, or developed them early in the process, participants noted that it was much easier to move the BRAC process forward. In the opinion of most focus group participants, the community should start developing its relationship with base leaders as early as possible to maximize knowledge of the installation's assets and liabilities.

Understanding what the military means to the community is a good first lesson for the communities. There needs to be connectivity between the military and the community. The community needs to know what is going on at the base; institutional history does not stay with the military but with the community. It is important to know who's there, what's there, what they do and how do they do it as well as to understand the economic impact of all of these activities to the community.

The community needs to establish a warm and close personal relationship with the commander of the base and keep establishing this relationship as the commanders change. The community needs to know what property and missions are on the base and how the base functions.

Ideally, this relationship needs to be in place before BRAC implementation. Close relationships have to be at all levels – staff and leadership; staff relationships are important at the beginning.



The relationship needs to be supported by solid information about the base that the community can rely on. BRAC is like losing a close member of the family. There is a strong interconnectivity of actions between the base and community. This means BRAC elicits a grieving process just like when a family member is lost. The grieving process for the closure of the base needs to be allowed for personnel on both the base and in the community.

Closure represents bad news but an extraordinary opportunity if the community pulls together. So much good can happen if you work together and so much bad if you don't.

RECOGNIZING THE CHALLENGES AND SET EXPECTATIONS ACCORDINGLY

As indicated in the Introduction of this report, a number of focus group participants were current or former Local Redevelopment Authority directors. It was noted that communities need to engage a BRAC action with their eyes open and set realistic expectations related to the complexity of the process.

The BRAC process was overwhelming and confusing to the community at the outset. Community had had little engagement with the military. OEA was helpful in interpreting the issues and forming a liaison between the military and the community.

Base closure is traumatic to the community—for both businesses and the people. This trauma begins at the time the base is placed on the closure list and continues during and after the process. Base closure changes the community forever. OEA helps to make it a positive change.

The Executive Director of any Local Redevelopment Authority has to be able to survive in chaos.

BRAC forges relationships that create conflict; the environment of conflict carries its way through the community forever and creates conflicting interests.

The process is long term. This is [about both] economic and community development.

EDUCATE YOURSELF ABOUT THE BRAC PROCESS

Many focus group participants wanted to ensure that BRAC 2005 communities were aware of the need to educate themselves on the complexities of the BRAC process. In addition, the BRAC regulatory process and how regulators approach the many complex issues associated with BRAC implementation were noted as an important factor that communities need to learn and understand quickly.

Early planning money from OEA was very important. The community spent early money on teaching the community about the BRAC process.

Sit down at the beginning with the State, the EPA and the Military Service to partner on environmental cleanup. Regulators, the LRA and the Military Service must work together from the very beginning.

States need to look at how to respond [to the BRAC process] and get local communities the information they need to respond.



Understanding the regulatory process and how regulators approach the issues is something that the communities need to learn quickly. Every State has an array of regulatory agencies. How you deal with them and successfully work with them is the issue. Navigating the regulatory framework is an important part of BRAC implementation. Regulatory agencies include environmental, historic preservation and fish and wildlife.

The LRA and the community need to first understand the different regulatory agencies and how they play in the world and then secondly there is the matter of getting the job done and getting approval. OEA can play a role in the first instance, but not necessarily in the second. Is there an advocate within the regulatory agencies for communities dealing with BRAC implementation? Education comes first and then execution; OEA cannot do both.

Even with OEA and its grants, BRAC was an evolving situation. Rather than knowing what was allowable, the community wanted to know what was the last deal you [the Military Departments] made. The State of California put base closure communities together every two months to compare notes.



5. FEEDBACK FOR MILITARY DEPARTMENTS AND OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES

Although the principal goal of the Focus Groups was to obtain feedback related to OEA activities, Focus Group participants also relayed various experiences they'd had with the Military Departments and other Federal Agencies during prior rounds of the BRAC process. Consistent themes about the relationship among communities, Military Departments and other Federal Agencies emerged during the sessions. This information is captured in the following themes, grouped by feedback for Military Departments and feedback for other Federal Agencies:

- Feedback for Military Departments
 - Conduct early outreach to BRAC 2005 communities
 - Implement the BRAC process consistently
 - Provide accurate and timely installation information and data
 - Keep communication channels open
 - Recognize that community involvement in BRAC real estate disposal adds value
 - Revisit the role of the Base Transition Coordinator (BTC)
- Feedback for Other Federal Agencies
 - Improve interagency cooperation

FEEDBACK FOR MILITARY DEPARTMENTS

CONDUCT EARLY OUTREACH TO BRAC 2005 COMMUNITIES

The topics of early outreach by the Military Departments and sharing data with communities generated significant feedback among the focus group participants. Early outreach to communities by OEA is mentioned previously in this report, but early outreach to communities by the Military Departments was noted as a significant opportunity for the military to improve the overall communication and coordination of the BRAC implementation process. Participants felt that DoD and the Military Departments need to be a part of the BRAC reuse process from the very beginning and must cooperate with the community to ensure success. All of this must be done with the understanding that BRAC implementation is best viewed as a collaborative process. Discussions during the focus group sessions indicated that the level of interaction between local base commanders and the local community following the BRAC decision varied widely among the participants.

IMPLEMENT THE BRAC PROCESS CONSISTENTLY

Perceived inconsistencies in the Military Departments' implementation of BRAC caused confusion and frustration and a sense of unfair / unequal treatment among communities. Focus group participants who had experiences with multiple Military Departments noted that policies and procedures could vary significantly between and among them. Establishing more process and policy consistency among the Military Departments was cited as a key recommendation that would have a positive effect on the perceived fairness of the BRAC process as a whole. The past practice of communities networking with one another for the purpose of comparing BRAC experiences should be expected to continue with BRAC 2005 communities.



Feedback for Military Departments and Other Federal Agencies

PROVIDE ACCURATE AND TIMELY INSTALLATION INFORMATION AND DATA

In keeping with the overall theme of having access to more information more rapidly, focus group participants noted that community decisions and the effectiveness of BRAC execution are heavily influenced by the timely availability and quality of installation information and environmental characterization data. Participants encourage the Military Departments to be proactive in providing data, to be responsive to community requests for specific information, and to pay attention to the accuracy and completeness of data provided. Most participants agree that data regarding the base should be made available to the community much earlier in the process than in previous rounds. Because of the quality and maturity of installation data that should be available in this round, participants hope that the Military Departments will share this data as soon as possible after the BRAC decision is final.

KEEP COMMUNICATION CHANNELS OPEN

Most participants believe that no amount of communication among BRAC implementers can ever be too much. The need to have close coordination among all stakeholders was deemed to be an essential Lesson Learned that applies to all phases of the BRAC process. Communication and coordination at both the local and higher Military Department levels was cited as both a challenge and an opportunity. Participants felt that all parties must be proactive and should embrace an approach that establishes good working relationships. It was clear from the sessions that the ability of the communities to engage both Military Department and Office of the Secretary of Defense personnel, when needed, is considered a key to success in every aspect of the BRAC process.

RECOGNIZE THAT COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN BRAC REAL ESTATE DISPOSAL ADDS VALUE

Focus group participants wanted the Military Departments to understand the value that communities and LRAs can add to the BRAC property disposal process. Participants noted that pursuing property disposal goals shared by both the community and the Military Departments could help both parties better achieve their goals. Some representative comments include:

The quicker the community can move on, the better. A facilitated session with the community and the Military Service stating the goals and needs on both sides would be a good start.

The goal of BRAC ties into how property will be conveyed. What is considered victory [in BRAC] by DoD and its communities?

Feedback regarding the BRAC property disposal process can be categorized as follows:

- Flexibility of the “Tool Box”
- Public bid sales
- Property valuation
- Early transfer
- Retained Federal enclaves



Flexibility of the “Tool Box”

Focus group participants had many comments regarding the past and current DoD use of a “tool box” approach to property conveyance. Participants, based on their extensive individual experience, were certain that the entire range of conveyance methods were needed to successfully convey real and personal property in prior BRAC rounds and should be used again in the BRAC 2005 implementation process.

Public Bid Sales

While acknowledging that public bid sales can play an important role in BRAC property disposal, focus group participants voiced some skepticism about the use of this conveyance method. Most believed that an over-reliance on the use of public bid sales during BRAC 2005 would result in a less than optimal process. Participants observed that marginal residual properties could become much more difficult disposal challenges. Also, because land use controls required by communities will affect a prospective bidder’s interest, participants urged the Military Departments to work closely with communities at locations where public bid sales are contemplated. Participants generally agreed that this approach would ensure that both the maximum financial return to the Military Department and conformance with the community’s goals would be achieved.

Property Valuation

Focus group participants observed that there have been fundamental differences in the way the Military Departments and communities have assessed the value of BRAC installation property. Participants believe that in extreme cases—generally related to high environmental remediation costs or obsolete infrastructure—BRAC property can be of low or even negative value. Focus group participants observed that the use of different valuation assumptions commonly yielded dramatically different estimates of value. Because of this, participants strongly recommended that, at minimum, appraisal assumptions to be used by each party be shared. Participants suggested that ideally, the joint development and agreement on the basic appraisal assumptions to be used in valuing the property would significantly improve the process. The following comments are representative of the feedback provided by the participants:

The Military Service does not want to lose value in the land transaction, but does not understand the amount of money that the developer needs to put into the land to create development value.

The government did not understand the infrastructure in preparing their appraisal for sale. The cost of bringing the utilities and other infrastructure into compliance with local ordinances far exceeded the value of the base.



Feedback for Military Departments and Other Federal Agencies

Early Transfer

Some participants noted there is mixed acceptance, at the state and community levels, of the early transfer of real property, and questioned whether the early transfer process provides an actual advantage to the community. Other participants held a completely opposite position, noting that early transfer generates more immediate opportunities for long-term, large-scale reuse. The majority of participants agreed that early transfers have worked best where market conditions are favorable and environmental regulators are supportive of the early transfer process. The following comment summarizes this sentiment:

Early transfers are a good idea. They work best if you have a good market and the environmental regulators on your side.

Participants advised that if the Military Department is considering an early transfer of real property, both the community and the state need to be involved in this discussion at the earliest possible point during the implementation process.

Retained Federal Enclaves

Focus group participants acknowledged the Military Departments' and other Federal Agencies prerogative to retain certain BRAC properties. However, they urge the Military Departments to consider the post 9-11 security ramifications on remaining properties, and suggested that a single, consolidated and securable enclave is better than a "Swiss-cheese" effect of multiple, scattered Federal enclaves. Also, at locations where communities are expected to provide public services for retained Federal enclaves, participants hope the Military Departments will recognize that the remaining property must provide sufficient economic leverage for the community to make the process work financially.

In the instance of a large piece of property, if the Federal government keeps three quarters of the property, but the community has to upgrade all of the property and the infrastructure, the community does not have enough economic leverage to make the process work financially. This inhibits reuse of the community's part of the property.

REVISIT THE ROLE OF THE BASE TRANSITION COORDINATOR

Focus group participants, particularly those involved in the 1993 and 1995 BRAC rounds, provided feedback on the role of the Base Transition Coordinator (BTC). Some participants felt that the BTC function was a critical component of the coordination that occurred between the local community and the Military Department, while others believed that a uniformed military BTC was too closely tied to the Military's chain-of-command to fulfill the ombudsman role for which the position was designed. Many participants believe that the positive contributions made by BTCs have not been fully realized. A number of participants suggested that civilian BTCs would provide better continuity than retiring or rotating military BTCs.

Our BTC was helpful in dealing with personal property. The BTC needs to start at day one of closure and stay with the process until the end. Because the [uniformed] military BTCs continuously move on or retire, the best option is for a civilian BTC.



Feedback for Military Departments and Other Federal Agencies

FEEDBACK FOR OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES

IMPROVE INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

Participants discussed the complexities of interacting with other Federal Agencies during the BRAC process including:

- The property disposal process
- The resolution of regulatory issues related to reuse
- The process of obtaining assistance with redevelopment

The lack of efficient interaction among the various Federal Agencies was viewed as an impediment to successful redevelopment. Although participants generally agreed that agencies other than DoD had specific duties and responsibilities in the BRAC process and that some level of conflict was inherent, many provided feedback that better interagency cooperation would improve the BRAC implementation process. The following recommendation was made:

All regulatory agencies, state and Federal, need to have a BRAC point of contact.

Participants noted that regulatory agencies that showed up late in the process, did not make timely decisions, or repeatedly requested “new” information from the Military Department or the community, were particularly frustrating to work with. Generally, all focus group participants believed that interagency cooperation could be significantly improved during the BRAC 2005 implementation process and that the axiom of “there is no such thing as too much communication” can be applied to other Federal Agencies as well.



6. OTHER BRAC PROCESS FEEDBACK

Focus group participants also provided feedback on other parts of the BRAC implementation process. This section includes three topics that were the most frequently mentioned by focus group participants as impacting successful base reuse and property redevelopment. The comments and feedback included in this section are grouped into the following categories:

- BRAC environmental process
- Personal property
- Infrastructure transition

BRAC Environmental Process

Participants commented that the environmental cleanup and other environment-related aspects of the BRAC implementation process constitute a significant challenge to the overall implementation process, and warrant a separate and dedicated discussion outside the scope of this document. The following comments are representative of those offered by participants:

Environmental issues are the real problem. The community can't have control of buildings or other property without the environmental process speeding up.

There needs to be a comprehensive national look at the BRAC environmental cleanup program. This focus group does not have enough time to enumerate all of the environmental problems.

Focus group participants expressed the hope that there would be better interaction and collaboration among Military Department, community, and Federal and state environmental regulators during the BRAC 2005 implementation process. Current and former LRA representatives offered that their BRAC 2005 counterparts would be ready to actively dialogue with Military Department environmental program managers and state and Federal environmental regulators to affect solutions related to environmental issues impacting base reuse.

Personal Property

Focus group feedback about personal property issues associated with the BRAC implementation process revealed that there is considerable room for improvement from both community and military sides of this issue. The following comments are representative of the feedback provided:

Everyone shows his or her worst in dealing with personal property. The community wants everything [all personal property] even if they don't know how to use it.

There is a lack of consistency in the Military Service's implementation of BRAC personal property transfer.

Focus group participants favored a more proactive process toward personal property disposal and hope that such a process will be used during BRAC 2005. Most agree that improved communication and coordination (e.g., early



Other BRAC Process Feedback

and often) between the local Military Department and the community relative to the military's desired disposition of personal property will result in an improved process. Most believe that equitable solutions can be achieved if both parties work together in personal property disposition issues.

Infrastructure Transition

Experience with Caretaker Cooperative Agreements varied widely among focus group participants. Some had little experience with these agreements, generally as a result of certain Military Departments not using them. Others did not have experience because of the BRAC round in which they participated. Others had significant comments regarding the complexity and difficulty related to the negotiation and execution of these agreements.

Focus group participants who had been involved with Caretaker Cooperative Agreements, generally felt that such agreements provided communities with an invaluable opportunity to learn how to manage and operate the installation and to manage and prioritize facility maintenance.



Appendix

7. APPENDIX—FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

George Meyer <i>Pease AFB</i>	Lynn Boese <i>Ft. Harrison</i>	Steve Albright <i>March AFB</i>	Jim Silva <i>El Toro</i>
David Holmes <i>Plattsburgh AFB</i>	James Carlow <i>Red River Army Depot</i>	Michael Cohen <i>Treasure Island, Hunter's Point</i>	Christine Shingleton <i>Tustin</i>
Glen Cooke <i>Seneca AD</i>	Matt Carlson <i>Glenview NAS</i>	Braden Phillips <i>Long Beach</i>	Bill Tuohy <i>Oakland/Alameda</i>
John Van Horn <i>Letterkenny AD</i>	Jim Covington <i>DDD Memphis</i>	Alex Estrada <i>Norton AFB</i>	Mark Barnhart <i>Stratford AEP</i>
Owen Bludau <i>Vint Hill Farms</i>	Charles Finley <i>Pueblo Chemical Depot</i>	Tom Figg <i>Port Hueneme</i>	Michael Cruz <i>Naval Air Station Agana</i>
Larry Grossman <i>Cameron Station</i>	Dan Goddard <i>Grissom AFB</i>	Larry Florin <i>Treasure Island</i>	Gail Goldberg <i>NTC San Diego</i>
Thomas "Buddy" Styers <i>Myrtle Beach AFB</i>	Joe Gurley <i>Eaker AFB</i>	Aliza Gallo <i>Oakland</i>	Diana Gonzalez <i>Homestead AFB</i>
Thomas Kohler <i>NTC Orlando</i>	George Harvel <i>DDD Memphis</i>	Michael Houlemard <i>Fort Ord</i>	Jon Grafton <i>England AFB</i>
Steve DiMeo <i>Griffiss AFB</i>	Duane Lavery <i>Red River Army Depot</i>	Tim Johnson <i>Sacramento AD</i>	Jon Roberts <i>George AFB</i>
Marilyn Cohen <i>Davisville CBC</i>	Dave Limardi <i>Ft. Sheridan</i>	Daniel Jung <i>El Toro</i>	Tom Rumora <i>KI Sawyer AFB</i>
Marcie Kesner <i>Fort Totten</i>	Jessie Lopez <i>Kelly AFB</i>	Larry Kelly <i>McClelland AFB</i>	Sandy Sanders <i>Fort Chaffee</i>
Bob Simpson <i>Cecil Field NAS</i>	Tom Markham <i>Lowry AFB</i>	Rob Leonard <i>Mather AFB</i>	Bob Sweeney <i>Fort Ritchie</i>
James Clarke <i>South Weymouth NAS</i>	Katy Podagrosi <i>Chanute AFB</i>	David Nystrom <i>Mather AFB</i>	Art Thompson <i>Loring AFB</i>
William Burke <i>Fort Devens</i>	Jack Sprott <i>Charleston NS</i>	Kathy Riser <i>San Diego</i>	
Dick Shields <i>Mesa Development</i>	Paul Tauer <i>Lowry AFB, Fitzsimons AMC</i>	Regina Schaap <i>Sierra AD</i>	