

## Chapter 4

# The Work of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

The Commission was empowered to ensure that the DoD recommendations did not deviate substantially from Title XXIX of Public Law 101-510. The law also required the Commission to conduct its proceedings in public and open its records and deliberations to public scrutiny.

Four concurrent activities provided the Commission with information. First, the Commission held 15 hearings in Washington, D.C., to receive information from DoD, legislators, and other experts. Second, the Commission encouraged public comments by holding 14 regional and site hearings, where it received testimony on bases being considered for closure or realignment. Third, the commissioners visited the major facilities proposed for closure. Finally, the Commission's research staff reviewed the services' processes and data to help commissioners arrive at their recommendations and to ensure that they had adhered to the statutory standards.

The inputs from communities potentially affected by base closures were tremendous. Community and elected leaders were tireless advocates for their military installations. In the two-and-a-half months the Commission conducted its business, it received more than 143,000 letters and more than 100 phone calls a day. This level of input uncovered for commissioners every possible argument that could be proffered on behalf of potentially impacted bases.

The Commission set up review-and-analysis teams – Army, Navy, Air Force, and Special – to evaluate the services' processes. The Commission's teams focused on the process each service used to adhere to legislative requirements.

The Army team's review paralleled the Army's process. The team determined whether the Army considered all bases and whether its categorization of bases and use of attributes were sound. The Commission did this by comparing the major activities on Army bases with the "measures of merit" and attributes developed by the Army to ensure that all eight criteria were addressed. The Commission then

looked at the Army's proposals in terms of the capacity needed to house its forces in 1995 as envisioned by the force-structure plan.

The Navy presented a special challenge to the Commission. Its selection process was more subjective and less documented than that of either the Army or the Air Force. To determine whether the Navy complied with the law, the Commission's staff held a series of meetings with members of the Navy's Base Structure Committee and other high-ranking naval officers - including the heads of naval aviation, surface warfare and personnel, and training. These individuals responded to questions and supplied information to the Commission. The Commission studied these data to determine whether the Navy's compliance with selection criteria and the force-structure plan was adequate.

The Navy provided additional explanation for its decisions. The Commission, with GAO's help, obtained and analyzed several hundred items of data from some 29 naval installations across the country. Moreover, the Commission examined the Navy's berthing capacity in detail.

The Commission's Air Force team first checked to see that the Air Force had studied

its facilities by identifying all Air Force bases and checking updated manpower documents. Second, the team examined the categories and subcategories used by the Air Force to compare bases. Third, the team checked the Air Force's analysis of capacity within categories and for individual facilities. The team also reviewed decisions to exclude certain categories from further consideration due to a lack of excess capacity. Then, the team checked the Air Force application of the eight criteria to the remaining bases. In this step, the team first examined the individual bases that were excluded as "militarily or geographically unique or mission essential." Finally, the team considered the application of the eight selection criteria to the remaining 72 bases.

These activities provided the Commission with the information it needed to arrive at its recommendations in accordance with the standards mandated in the law. The commissioners used it to develop a "menu of options" - potential additions and substitutions to the DoD proposals (see Appendix H). The Commission's final recommendations are presented in Chapter 5.