

BRAC the Nuke Complex!

WHAT IS BRAC?

Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) is a process where The Department of Defense (DoD) identified “excess facilities” and closed or realigned them. DoD has done five BRAC rounds since 1988. The total savings to the DoD for the most recent BRAC round, completed in 2005, are estimated at \$35.6 billion



Many Experts have advocated for a BRAC-style analysis the Department of Energy (DOE) and its bloated laboratory and technology complex (mostly created for Cold War era nuclear weapons development). The economic benefits of consolidating and streamlining the DOE lab system would be significant. Its time to BRAC the Nuke Complex!

DOE's OWN INSPECTOR GENERAL PROPOSES BRAC PROCESS

The Department of Energy's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) made this recommendation in a special report investigating management of DOE facilities on November 10, 2011. OIG made the following recommendations and observations:

- DOE should establish a “BRAC-style’ commission to analyze the Department’s laboratory and technology complex.”
- The high support cost of laboratory operations in relation to total laboratory operating costs might be unsustainable in the current budget environment (35-40% support cost of the \$10 billion in total laboratory operating costs).
- By using the DoD BRAC process as a guide, the DOE should establish an independent panel to comprehensively examine alternatives for evaluating, consolidating, and/or realigning the DOE’s laboratory complex.

OTHER EXPERT REPORTS SIMILARLY RECOMMEND THAT THE DOE DOWNSIZE AND CONSOLIDATE THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS COMPLEX

- In 1995, the Advisory Board for the Secretary of Energy recommended that the DOE lab system be “downsized or ‘rightsized’ through elimination of functions and redundancies” and that “through downsizing, there may be opportunities in the future to convert one or more multi-program laboratories into institutions dedicated to only one primary mission.”¹
- In 1994, the Interagency Federal Laboratory Review found that the DOE lab system is “bigger and more expensive than it needs to be” and there is “excessive duplication of capabilities among the labs.”²
- In 2008, the Center for a New American Security proposed that the DOE lab system be restructured and realigned by a system similar to BRAC.³
- In 2011, the Laboratory Joint Analysis Team highlighted past expert opinions advocating that DOE downsize its system in a BRAC-style process and the DOE’s refusal to do so.⁴
- In 2009, the Nuclear Weapons complex consolidation policy network, including Tri-Valley CAREs, released a plan for shrinking the nuclear weapons complex from eight sites to three by 2025.⁵

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HOW BRAC WORKS

The system of identifying and closing or realigning excess facilities has been successfully occurring within the **DoD since 1988**. The DoD has conducted five BRAC rounds to remove excess capacity from its system, each round saving the DoD funds and resources. This process can be used to help establish a similar BRAC-style process for the DOE.

A brief overview of the BRAC process in the DoD:

- The pentagon releases a proposed list of sites for BRAC, and the Secretary of Defense forwards recommendations to the BRAC Commission.
- The BRAC Commission evaluates the proposed list of recommendations and holds public comment.
- The Commission votes on individual recommendations, compiles revised list of recommended sites, and submits the revised list to the President.
- The President may approve the list, usually with the condition that it may only be approved or disapproved in its entirety.
- The approved list is given to Congress, which has 45 days to enact a resolution of disapproval.
- If there is no resolution of disapproval, the BRAC recommendations become final.
- The Secretary of Defense is to implement the recommendations in a given time frame.

The process of closure and realignment:

- The military service in possession of a BRAC property notifies other DoD branches that the property has become available.
- If another branch of the DoD determines that it requires the property, the property may be transferred interagency.
- If no DoD branch requires the property, it is deemed “excess” and notice of its availability is sent to all other federal agencies.
- If no other federal agency pursues acquisition within the time frame allotted, or if the DoD exercises residual authority to deny the request for transfer, the property is deemed to be “surplus.”
- If the property is deemed “surplus,” Local Redevelopment Authorities conduct outreach efforts and design a comprehensive redevelopment plan to reuse the property.
- DoD makes the final determinations, taking the LRA’s plan into account, along with homeless assistance, public benefit transfers, and possibilities of a public auction or negotiated sale.
- Office of Economic Adjustment is established to help communities affected by base closures, as well as other defense program changes. This is helpful, as a BRAC designation may be controversial for an affected community.

¹ Secretary of Energy Advisory Board: *Alternative Futures for the Department of Energy National Laboratories* (1995), 5, 10.

² Executive Office of the President, *Interagency Federal Laboratory Review: Final Report*, (15 May 1995), p. 12.

³ Center for a New American Security, “Remodeling the U.S. Government for Energy Security” (December 2008), 18.

⁴ Laboratory Joint Analysis Team, Letter from Kon J. DeYoung (U.S. Navy Team Member) to Dr. John Fischer (Chair, OSD), “New Missions for the Nuclear Weapons Labs” (November, 2011). P. 1, 2.

⁵ Nuclear Weapons Consolidation Policy Network, “Transforming the U.S. Strategic Posture and Weapons Complex” (April 2009). <https://members.rethinkmedia.org/sites/rt-mem.civicactions.net/files/NWeapPosture=ComplexFNL.pdf>