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Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) and Organizational Restructuring in the DoD

Implications for Education and
Training Infrastructure

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Summary

The Department of Defense (DoD) is continually seeking to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its support activities. A major vehicle for achieving cost savings is the consolidation of defense facilities, which has periodically been done through the base realignment and closure (BRAC) process. Another vehicle for improving efficiency and effectiveness is governance change, which can be achieved, for instance, through the consolidation of defense agencies or field activities or by reassigning sponsorship of functions or institutions.

When defense infrastructure is reconfigured or organizational lines are redrawn, support functions, including education, training, and development (ET&D), can experience complementary changes to their governance structure and physical infrastructure. In the past, some ET&D institutions have welcomed infrastructure change, while others have resisted it. Still others did not have the opportunity to implement infrastructure change even though it might have benefited them.

With a new round of BRAC scheduled for 2005, the DoD Office of the Chancellor for Education and Professional Development asked RAND to examine the ways in which selected ET&D institutions have been affected by past efficiency improvement initiatives. As the principal advocate for academic quality and cost-effectiveness of DoD civilian educational activities, the Chancellor's Office can provide a systemwide and cross-service view of the potential effects of future DoD efficiency improvement initiatives on the ET&D infrastructure.

We conducted four case studies. Two of the institutions studied, the Defense Information School (DINFOS) and the DoD Polygraph

Institute (DoDPI), experienced significant changes in infrastructure in the 1990s. Two others, the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) and the National Geospatial Intelligence College (NGC, formerly the National Imagery and Mapping College [NIMC]), did not. We interviewed a variety of stakeholders associated with each case study site, including current faculty and administrators, former directors and other institutional authorities, resource sponsors, functional sponsors, site historians, community leaders, former BRAC Commission staff, BRAC office staff, and special task force members. For each case study site, we document the rationale and processes that preceded decisions about infrastructure change, describe the institutional context at the time of the proposed change, provide a detailed account of the change process in cases where change occurred, and generate an assessment of the effects of changes on the institution's effectiveness and efficiency.

Based on the experiences of the four case study sites, we derived a number of lessons and recommendations for ET&D institutions and their sponsors that might face decisions about infrastructure change in the future. Those lessons and recommendations are organized around four scenarios—relocation, remaining in a location after base closure, new facility construction, and consolidation of institutions—and are summarized below.

Relocation

The study focused on two sites that underwent relocation—DINFOS and DoDPI—and one for which relocation was proposed—DLIFLC. The experiences of those three institutions yielded the following lessons and recommendations:

- **Ensure that potential effects on both quality and cost-effectiveness are considered in selecting a new location.** To achieve its mission, an institution must function in a location that affords it the tools to do so effectively and at a reasonable cost. Further, decisions about relocation made by entities that assume more than one

ET&D sponsorship role are likely to be more balanced in terms of quality and cost-effectiveness considerations, and therefore more easily accepted, than decisions generated by a single sponsor. In cases where resource sponsors also assumed the roles of functional and policy sponsors, balanced decisions were made about relocation, the institutions and their customers were involved in the decisions, and the decisionmaking process proceeded relatively smoothly. However, in one case where the resource sponsor did not also fill functional or policy sponsorship roles or solicit the involvement of those sponsors or the institution's leadership, the decisionmaking process was controversial and chaotic, and the resource sponsor's recommendation was ultimately rejected.

- **Make human resource considerations a top priority.** When relocating an educational institution, human resource considerations are of critical significance. Although both DINFOS and DoDPI relocated, only DoDPI lost large portions of its staff. The main reason for the difference in the two institutions' experiences is arguably that DoDPI's staff was predominantly civilian, whereas DINFOS's was staffed almost entirely by military personnel. Some at DoDPI considered the staff turnover that resulted from relocation a serious setback, but others considered it an opportunity to make needed changes to staff composition. Sponsors should anticipate the numbers of existing faculty and staff that will move with the institution and evaluate the desirability and manageability of the anticipated staffing effect. Other considerations include moving costs, cost of living in the new location, and related issues.
- **Inform and involve staff in planning and managing relocation.** Decisive leadership and communication with stakeholders make for a smoother relocation experience. Although any relocation can be disruptive in the short run, effective management of the process—especially human resource issues—can avoid major disruptions of an institution's normal operations and facilitate planned changes. DINFOS's successful relocation benefited from its functional sponsor's ability to balance the role of leaders in the relocation process with that of other stakeholders, who were

involved in ongoing consultations about the move. But consultation with stakeholders in itself does not always ensure a smooth relocation. Although DoDPI also made regular efforts to involve stakeholders, its leadership was hampered by delays beyond its control and communication problems that led to stress and economic hardship for some faculty and staff before and after the move.

Remaining After the Closure of a Parent Installation

DLIFLC is the only example in our study of an institution that stayed in place after its host installation was closed. Although the situation is unusual, it is possible that another ET&D institution might find itself in a similar situation during the next round of BRAC. We derived the following lessons and recommendations from DLIFLC's experiences in the 1991 and 1993 BRAC rounds:

- **Carefully consider an institution's need for support from a host base.** The language instruction provided by DLIFLC did not require many resources of the sort that only a larger military facility could provide; this may not be the case for many institutions. Institutions and their sponsors should examine options for basic facility support (i.e., public works) and housing for students, as well as factors that might affect the institution's ability to fulfill its mission (e.g., collegial support).
- **Identify partnerships that can sustain the institution in its current location.** Several types of organizations could be interested in supporting an institution's decision to stay in its original location, including DoD sponsors, other organizations with interests in the same functional area, or local governments. For DLIFLC, the City of Monterey played an important role in this regard, serving as an advocate for DLIFLC to remain in Monterey and assuming large portions of the institution's support costs.

New Facility Construction

Two of the institutions we studied, DINFOS and DoDPI, designed and occupied new facilities built specifically for them using BRAC funds. Their experiences highlighted the following lessons and recommendations.

- **Look for opportunities presented by the BRAC process.** While most institutions cannot invite themselves into the BRAC process, institutions and their sponsors who anticipate being affected by the process should consider how they might seize opportunities presented by BRAC to benefit the institution and its stakeholders. Neither DINFOS nor DoDPI would likely have been able to construct a new facility outside the BRAC process. The availability of BRAC funding was particularly significant in the case of DINFOS, which was able to use funds tied to the impending closure of two bases to facilitate the physical consolidation of three schools and build a state-of-the-art facility.
- **Involve faculty and staff in designing new facilities.** A major goal of new construction is to design a facility that meets the needs of its occupants. Faculty and staff should be consulted throughout the design process regarding building and equipment features that would enhance their ability to communicate, collaborate, and produce high-quality work.

Consolidation of Institutions With and Without Physical Infrastructure Change

While both DINFOS and NGC resulted from the administrative consolidation of institutions that were located in different geographical locations, the DINFOS consolidation included a physical consolidation of facilities, while the NGC consolidation did not. Examination and comparison of the experiences of DINFOS and NGC provide interest-

ing lessons about the value of physical consolidation as a complement to administrative and academic consolidation. Those lessons are the basis for the recommendations presented below.

- **Take advantage of opportunities to consolidate institutions as a means to eliminate unneeded redundancy.** Both academic and physical consolidation can lead to significant improvements in efficiency. In many cases, course content is general enough to serve the needs of more than one community. By undergoing both academic and physical consolidation, DINFOS was able to reduce the amount of instructional space needed as well as the total number of courses offered while attending to the unique needs of each service.
- **When feasible, complement administrative consolidation with physical consolidation.** Collaboration and integration of communities is difficult without physical consolidation. NGC's experience illustrates the difficulty of integrating different communities when those communities remain geographically separate. NGC's academic consolidation was particularly difficult because the different schools it brought together had long-standing differences in terms of cultures and work styles. DINFOS addressed cultural differences by encouraging close collaboration among groups and by collocating them in a single facility. If physical consolidation is not an option, efforts should be made to relocate faculty and staff to achieve appropriate representation of each community at each location, and travel of faculty and staff between campuses should be supported and encouraged.
- **Reevaluate and, if warranted, revise organizational structures to reflect the goals of the consolidation.** If a goal of a consolidation is to merge disciplines, then faculty, staff, and students should be reorganized along lines that reflect the end goal of the merger. Another important way to facilitate consolidation is by directing faculty and staff to work together to coordinate curricula. The building of a common curriculum allows faculty and staff to interact and learn ways in which their disciplines can be coordinated.

Improving Decisionmaking at the System Level

The experiences of the four ET&D institutions studied here demonstrate the variability with which institutions and their sponsors are formally allowed and informally capable of influencing and implementing infrastructure change. Stakeholders at the system level also vary in the degree to which they are authorized to make decisions about ET&D infrastructure. Representatives from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) (OUSD [P&R]) will have a formal role in the 2005 BRAC round as part of a joint cross-service group focused on education.

There are at least four powerful contributions system-level stakeholders can make to decisions about ET&D infrastructure:

- **System-level ET&D advocates can work to balance considerations of quality and efficiency in decisions about ET&D infrastructure.** By facilitating communication, providing guidelines for decisionmaking, and acting as arbiters, offices at the system level are uniquely positioned to play a coordinating role among different sponsors with interests in the same institution.
- **Decisionmakers at the system level can set guidelines for the roles institutional leaders and sponsors play in the infrastructure change process.** There is currently a high degree of variability in the type and extent of stakeholder involvement in decisions about ET&D infrastructure. Expanded formal guidelines could clarify the roles of sponsors other than resource sponsors and address the appropriate role of institutional leaders in the process.
- **High-level decisionmakers can provide visibility for customers of ET&D who might otherwise be left out of the decisionmaking process.** Capturing the customer perspective is essential if ET&D demand considerations are to be incorporated in decisions about ET&D infrastructure. Decisionmakers at the system level are positioned to advocate inclusion of the customer perspective in decisionmaking when appropriate.

- **Efficiency improvement efforts initiated at high levels in the DoD can reconfigure ET&D infrastructure and improve support of ET&D missions.** System-level stakeholders are in a position to consider overarching ET&D system needs in the context of BRAC and other efficiency improvement initiatives. A system-level ET&D advocate could potentially use DoD-level efforts to eliminate gaps or overlaps in ET&D offerings and otherwise enhance the quality and efficiency of the services provided to DoD personnel.