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## The Effects of Troop Reductions on Readiness

Ken Jackson

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

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SGM Lucero

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## ABSTRACT

Even though troop reductions save the government money, it has a negative impact on the readiness and effectiveness of our Army because reductions in force also mean deactivation of units which causes instability for personnel creating a morale problem and when the Army goes through a reduction in force many knowledgeable and qualified personnel are separated leaving behind a force that is less educated and more importantly less experienced. This research paper examines a few of the effects of Troop reductions on the readiness of our armed forces. You will see that beyond the costs are more serious affects that, if not managed properly, could leave the United States less capable of reacting to a crises at home or abroad.

### The Effects of Troop Reductions on Readiness

Even though troop reductions save the government money, it has a negative impact on the readiness and effectiveness of our Army because reductions in force also mean deactivation of units. This causes instability for personnel, which creates a morale problem. When the Army goes through a reduction in force many knowledgeable and qualified personnel are separated leaving behind a force that is less educated and more importantly less experienced.

A major Troop reduction will affect many aspects of our Armed Services, to include readiness. Readiness will be affected in many ways. Three major areas of concern are Base Realignment and Closing (BRAC), unit deactivations, and professional development. Each one of these is a major concern by itself, but trying to maintain professional development while closing and realigning bases, and deactivating units requires a lot of attention to detail, forward thinking and coordination to maintain a formidable fighting force during the process of conducting these necessary evils.

Base Realignment and Closing is a huge undertaking itself. Senior military leaders and government officials must take many factors into consideration. These factors include the economic effects on a local economy and the strategic importance of each base. The strategic importance and military value are the top priority. These are only two of the factors that challenge the decision makers in the BRAC process. The importance of strategic and military value is best summed up in the 2005 BRAC Policy Memorandum which states “*The Department has determined that ...military value is the primary consideration in making closure and realignment recommendations...*”

The groups had to apply their professional military judgment against seven principles when determining which bases to realign, which to close and which to leave alone. Those

principles are recruit and train; quality of life; organize; equip; supply, service and maintain; deploy and employ; and intelligence. “Recruit and train” entails attracting, developing, and retaining military personnel as well as civilians who are skilled, educated and experienced. This is to ensure that the military has the best personnel in the right places to anticipate and adapt to advances in technology, and respond to changes in service doctrine and tactics. Providing a better “Quality of Life” in both living and working conditions will support recruiting, training, and enhance retention of quality personnel. To “Organize” alludes to strategically placing personnel, equipment, units and other organizations to best support the National Military Strategy, and opportunities for joint basing. “Equip” refers to effectively and efficiently placing superior technology in the hands of our warfighters. In order to do this we need the best possible research, development, acquisition, test and evaluation capabilities focused on current and future threats. In order to ensure the best support to our forces through the “Supply, Service and Maintain” concept we need logistical and industrial capabilities integrated into a cost efficient industrial base that is flexible and can provide responsive support to operational forces. “Deploy and employ” refers to our need to maintain secure bases which are best located to support any mission, domestic or abroad. This includes rapid deployment, sustainment, surges and redundancy. Supporting the National Military Strategy requires “Intelligence”. Decision makers and operational forces need predictive analysis, crises warning, and surveillance of targets with integrated networks and databases.

This portion of BRAC alone causes a huge deficit in readiness because of the personnel and resources tied up in the planning and decision making process that will not be available for immediate use in a national or global emergency. This puts the United States in a vulnerable

state because once these decisions are made and plans put into affect it would be very cumbersome and nearly impossible to redirect resources in the event of an emergency

The affects of a BRAC are very taxing on the family as well as the individual Soldier or DOD civilian involved. The administrative and logistical nightmare of closing or relocating a base require everyone involved to work long hours under stressful conditions, which in turn puts a strain on the families, and ultimately affects individual soldier readiness. This is not to mention the stress of knowing that at some point in the closing or location of that base the family will have to relocate.

Much like BRAC, unit deactivations will cause a strain on the family and ultimately affect soldier readiness. But in addition to the long hours, and stressful work conditions imposed on the individual soldiers during the BRAC, deactivating units causes remaining units to realign and/or reorganize in order to cover down on the same amount of national commitments with fewer units and fewer members. Then there is the problem of determining what to do with the equipment and other resources that unit has. This includes everything from office furniture to the actual buildings themselves, and from the vehicles in the motor pool (both fully mission capable and non-mission capable) to the tools used to repair them. Then in addition to the disposition of the MTOE equipment and other property book items is the unit's historical memorabilia, like the unit colors, streamers, commissioned paintings, and other memorabilia that is part of that unit's history, and the recording of the unit's history itself. All of this has to be handled appropriately so the unit's history is never lost and is available in the event the unit is ever activated again. The planning part of the deactivation process alone takes up a tremendous amount of manpower and resources. Once a unit is officially notified of the deactivation everyone assigned to that unit is affected in one manner or another. Not only are the service

members affected the so are the families. The service member works long hours either planning and coordinating the disposition of assets and resources, or they are tied up in the physical labor of making these coordinations occur. This is where unit deactivations cause the biggest loss to the Army. You have an entire unit consumed with the deactivation process and everything it entails. This creates a huge loss of manpower and resources during that period. As soon as the deactivation process starts for a unit that unit is deemed combat ineffective and is no longer of use to military leaders when considering courses of action for emergencies or combat operations. Not only do you have a unit that is not mission capable, but you also have all of its assigned equipment and personnel that cannot be committed to other activities until the deactivation is complete.

Professional development is a huge concern during a time of Troop reductions. Programs are put into effect to allow individuals to separate from the service prior to the end of their current contractual commitment, and many are allowed to retire early. This includes granting exceptions to policy for individuals who've been trained in a specific area, but have not served the service remaining obligation. This alone causes a deficit in military education and experience with the amount of individuals who separate from the military, because the individuals with the training and experience separate faster than others can be trained or gain the experience that is being lost. Individuals who are assigned to unit's that are deactivating are usually not allowed to attend schools, which causes an even greater deficit in training and experience across the military. Even if the military is able to fill all class seats for each class it would still take the military an extended period to catch up on the institutional training alone. That would be in a perfect scenario, the reality is that many individuals who are selected to attend courses also end up deciding to separate from the military, or they are in units which are

deactivating and cannot attend for one reason or another so many class seats go unfilled. In addition to the backlog in military schooling and education there is a tremendous amount of experience that is lost, and many times is never recovered. Individuals who separate early do not get to pass their knowledge and experience on to others and it is lost forever. This is a detrimental issue when the Troop reductions occur shortly after a military engagement or large deployment. That combat or deployment experience is lost when returning Soldiers decide to separate from the Army. This is invaluable experience that needs to be passed on to younger Soldiers to ensure the future success of our armed forces.

## References

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