

Strategy Research Project

The Complex Leadership Challenges of Joint Basing

by

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United States Army War College
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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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In 2005 the Base Realignment and Closure Commission's Recommendation (BRAC) 146, recommended 26 bases, from the four Services, to consolidate and realign into 12 separate joint bases. In a bold move by the Department of Defense (DoD), joint basing became the test bed for synergizing the Services under one joint environment for installation support operations. This paper examines how the Secretary of Defense's vision shaped the DoD into a transformation that led the U.S. military to a more 'joint', inter service, organization, with one of its by-products being joint basing. This research project also examines the joint base's leader's vision and the role subordinate leaders play in facilitating the vision, understanding the joint base's organizational culture and finally, the importance of teambuilding that ultimately results in installation support mission accomplishment.

The Complex Leadership Challenges of Joint Basing

Integration and synergy that true 'jointness' brings is the most powerful transformation concept.

—Retired Air Force Gen. James McCarthy¹

In 2005 the Base Realignment and Closure Commission's Recommendation (BRAC) 146, recommended 26 bases, from the four Services, to consolidate and realign into 12 separate joint bases. Each joint base would have a single military service branch that was over all in charge of the installation. An efficiency and cost saving initiative, this program was designated to consolidate manpower and resources, to standardize the joint base operations for all tenant Services, and most of all, continue to provide service members, civilians and family members a quality of life commensurate with the quality of their service. Leaders on joint bases have a unique, complex challenge as they manage an organization that has a very diversified, cross military service and civilian employee background. An integrated Air Force and Army or Navy organizational structure provides the basis for joint work efficiencies and also a complex work environment.

Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld's, vision led the Department of Defense (DoD) into an unprecedented organizational transformation that made the U.S. military a more 'joint', inter service, institute. This research projects looks at the Secretary of Defense's strategic vision of transformation, through the lens of the BRAC's recommendation to institute the concept of joint basing. We will also examine the importance of the joint base leader's vision and its importance to meet the needs of the installation support mission and the roles that subordinate leaders play in, not only facilitating the leader's vision, but in the role of shaping the organizational culture of a

joint base and building the team needed in a diverse organization to achieve installation support mission accomplishment.

The Road to 'Jointness'

In 1986, the most significant change to the U.S. Department of Defense was the introduction of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act. This act was sponsored by U.S. Senator Barry Goldwater and U.S. Representative Bill Nichols and called for the most significant reorganization the DoD had undergone since the National Security Act of 1947. The purpose of the Act was to correct the imbalance and deficiencies in the operational and procurement procedures within the military services. The Service Chiefs were no longer the holders of operational authority, but it was now centralized through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. The Act also placed an emphasis on strengthening civilian authority and improving military advice to the President through the Secretary of Defense and the National Security Counsel.² The Goldwater-Nichols Act also provided the framework for operational teamwork. The legislation did not suggest the Services merge into one force, but rather conduct themselves in a more multiservice approach to gain efficiencies of resources and cross service personnel, employment and training be undertaken. When viewed in a tactical sense, it is the integration of the Services' capabilities, to bolster the combatant commander's capabilities in gaining the lethal advantage. The concept of 'jointness' is the embodiment of increased synergism of the military forces complementary to one and another to build the key force.³

Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) and the Creation of Joint Basing

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal-Year 2002 authorized DoD to pursue one BRAC round in 2005. BRAC is the process that the DoD uses to more

efficiently and effectively support forces, increase operational readiness and facilitate new ways of doing business and to reduce infrastructure inventory.⁴

BRAC has been used since 1988; however the 2005 BRAC was the first time that the Secretary of Defense directed the commission to strongly review the implementation of the transfer of installation management functions at selected installations. Consolidated installation management functions were to be run by a designated lead Service. The premise for this action was to capture significant savings through consolidation thus freeing resources for other priorities. Joint basing would allow flexibility to consider the best business practices and ensure that war-fighting capabilities are preserved or enhanced.⁵ Ultimately, the independent commission made its recommendation to the President and it was approved in November 2005.

Leader's Vision and BRAC

Vision is defined as a specific end state or intent, typically tied to a moment in time.⁶ Many refer to vision as the “to be” in contrast to the “as is”.⁷ A shared vision is one of the most important components of a strategy. When people are familiar with the vision and have trust in the vision, they can both align with the vision and commit themselves. They work independently on their parts of the initiative and they can do so with the confidence that their efforts are good investments of their time and energy.

When Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld wanted to transform the DoD, he imparted his vision to transform the military by reducing excess infrastructure and by fostering ‘jointness’ among the Services. Secretary Rumsfeld was using his vision as a leader to communicate how the U.S. Military will change its organizational structure. The vision of an organization, in this case the DoD, is to portray a “shared picture of the future that fosters genuine commitment and enrollment rather than compliance”.⁸ Secretary

Rumsfeld's vision was to transform the DoD and his primary goal for the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process was to help facilitate this military transformation.

In contrast to previous BRAC rounds, where the primarily focused on achieving savings by reducing excess infrastructure, the Secretary of Defense identified three goals for BRAC 2005: Transform the military, foster 'jointness', and reduce excess infrastructure to produce savings.⁹ "Jointness" is not a noun, but rather a thought process that facilitates the joint use of infrastructure assets to the overall good of the DoD and the nation. There are numerous installations, active and reserve components that have multiple Services within the same fence boundaries or are relatively close to each other. The importance of ridding inefficiencies at installations through manpower reductions and facilities closures has always been a BRAC goal, but the 2005 BRAC Commission went beyond a business model analysis of DoD's recommendations and gave more weighed overview of the strategic environment which highlighted clear recommendations to be implemented on their effect on DoD's transformational goals.¹⁰

The transformational vision from Secretary Rumsfeld was derived from a larger strategy review that began in 1997. The Joint Vision 2010, the Quadrennial Defense Review, and the National Defense Panel (NDP) all placed an increased emphasis on joint Service operations and infrastructure requirements. The NDP found that increasing the joint Service use of some installations, through restructuring opportunities, would permit DoD to operate more efficiently by eliminating the excess capacity by creating joint Service installations.¹¹

The recommendations announced by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld on May 13, 2005 comprised, by the Commission's count, 190 separate DoD recommendations that would produce as many as 837 distinct and identifiable recommended BRAC "close" or "realign" actions.¹² The joint basing program, established by a recommendation of the 2005 BRAC Commission, represented the department's efforts to enhance the effectiveness and efficiencies in the delivery of installation support across the Services. 12 joint bases were created out of 26 Service installations that were in close proximity of each other or shared a boundary.¹³

The amount of dedicated effort that the BRAC Commission committed to assist Secretary Rumsfeld achieve his vision was exhaustive. Perhaps it was command compliance and not true commitment, for the Commission showed that most of the DoD's proposed consolidations and reorganizations were within the Military Departments, not across the Services as intended. The Commission pointed out that "collocation" is not synonymous with "integration", and "transformation" is not synonymous with 'jointness'. It was concluded by the 2005 BRAC Commission that while the Secretary's recommendations for closure and consolidation would not move the 'ball' across the 'jointness' goal line, BRAC Commission's decisions did help move the 'ball' down the field.¹⁴

Joint Base Vision Statement Nesting

How the leader sees the organization, where the organization needs to be, and which direction the organization needs to go to aid growth, are all part of the leader's vision.¹⁵ The vision should not be confused with a mission objective. A mission objective is specific in nature and is facilitated in part by the vision of the leader.

BRAC 2005 was designed to reconfigure the current basing infrastructure into one in which operational capacity maximized both war fighting capability and efficiencies. Creating joint organizational and basing solutions, DoD facilitated a multi-service mission for reducing waste, saving money.¹⁶ This initiative freed up resources by recruiting quality people, modernizing equipment and infrastructure through consolidating all these efforts. The Secretary's vision to transform the DoD to a leaner joint construct was clear and it yielded the desired results from the organization and subordinates.

The leader's vision identifies what the leader deems important and can include a myriad of things such as the expected levels of training and proficiency, family readiness and equipment status. There are three essential tenets of a joint base: first, is to maintain or enhance operational capabilities, second, is to ensure successful and effective integration, and third is to harvest efficiencies.¹⁷

Each joint base has developed a vision statement that reflects not only the base's end state, but also matches the desired end state of the DoD. Each joint base stresses that mission readiness and the highest quality installation services, facility support and quality of life programs are at the forefront. All joint bases nest their vision statements within DoD's vision statement. Army led joint bases will nest the DoD's and Installation Management Command's vision statements. They all have common themes in their quest for efficiency and mission readiness for facilities, service members, families and DoD civilians.

Joint basing brings together the best practices of the tenant Services on a joint base to demonstrate efficiencies in providing enhanced installation support of

operational capabilities and mission readiness. Think about that concept, having the best innovative cross-service staffs, “to develop common definitions by working with one and another”, where the “best solutions often bridge across Service lines.”¹⁸ This was a key initiative to develop the joint base concept for the Department of Defense. By sharing a common boundary, or within joint bases themselves, creates the conditions for more consistent and effective delivery of installation support.

The vision of the leader is the framework of the organization that prepares the organization to be ready for any potential mission.¹⁹ A classic example of preparing for any mission comes from Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey. Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst’s mission is installation support for a diverse population of 44,000 Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Civilians. Their vision is to be America's premier joint war-fighting installation and air mobility center of excellence.²⁰ In October of 2012 Hurricane Sandy put to test the responsiveness of the joint base to come together as a collaborative team of tenant sub commands, and as a host of intergovernmental agencies, to respond to a natural disaster.

Hurricane Sandy, a late-season post-tropical cyclone, swept through the Caribbean and up the East Coast of the United States. Sandy made landfall in the United States about 8 p.m. eastern daylight time on October 29th, striking near Atlantic City, N.J., with winds of 80 mph. A full moon made high tides 20 percent higher than normal and amplified Sandy's storm surge.²¹ Streets were flooded, trees and power lines knocked down and the city's famed boardwalk was ripped apart. Along the Jersey shore, people were left stranded in their homes and waited for rescue teams in boats to rescue them.

Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst units began early preparations for the potential arrival of Hurricane Sandy and the base's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was activated for the hurricane's arrival on the 26th of October. The EOC is the command and control section for the joint base. Steve Robertson is Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst's Emergency Management Office Flight Chief and he is responsible for the EOC's coordinating activities and efforts for this crisis and educating the base's planners on the hurricane's potential to impact the joint base.²²

While the subordinate tenant commands of Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst prepared their units and families for the oncoming hurricane, the joint base began to receive outside agencies, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other Title 10 authorities that wanted to use the joint base and its EOC as a focal point for command and control. Colonel John Wood of Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst stated that the collaborative effort for joint base personnel and FEMA were executed in a professional manner. Each commander retained the command and control of their respective units, but there was a unity of effort amongst the collective group that resulted in "less confusion, quicker response and better support to the situation."²³ The collaboration success of all of the entities, internal and external, coming together at a time of crisis, was a direct result of the joint base's vision committed to excellence and shows how powerful a professional organization can be behind a shared vision.²⁴

Vision statements define the organization's purpose and direction for the future. Vision statements express the organizations sense of identity, purpose and direction. The vision statement gives the organizations internal beliefs and intentions and it starts

with the organization's senior leadership. It is the leader's vision that ignites the passion of subordinates to fulfill the vision of an organization.

Joint Basing and Preserving Service Culture

In the military, each of the Services has a strong culture. The Service culture is deep-seated in Service personnel at the beginning of their careers. Everyone begins life in the military, whether active or reserve component, with some type of initial or basic training. Regardless of how someone enters the service, service members spend their time at initial training immersed in their Service lifestyle and culture. Service members learn about the history of their service, its customs and courtesies, proper wear of the uniform, etc. They are instilled with military bearing, military values and ethics, and other information that is critical to their success in their service. Initial training teaches discipline, focus, and control. Service members are expected to be disciplined in their actions and words. Along with discipline and control comes focus. Focus is important to mission success, and the Services teach young recruits how to focus in challenging situations. Learning to stay focused, in control, and disciplined in all situations are skills that service members will use throughout their military careers especially when they are faced with uncertain, and at times, dangerous situations.²⁵

One of the challenges leaders face on joint bases is in regards to bridging Services' cultures without denigrating mission accomplishment or customer support. Joint bases give service members a unique opportunity to get acquainted with other military services and their cultures. For leaders, it can be a daunting, but rewarding task. Breaking down cultural barriers starts with the leader. Leaders must familiarize themselves with the different Services and tenants that reside on their base. They must immerse themselves into a whole new set of military traditions and norms that, at first,

will seem foreign. By being familiar with the cultural nuances of the other Services on the joint base, leaders will be able to facilitate building and integrating their newly developed teams.

Culture is the set of beliefs that guide the members of the group in knowing what to do and what not to do, including practices, values, and assumptions about their missions.²⁶ In his book entitled *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, Edgar H. Schein, Professor Emeritus in the Sloan School of Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, offered a definition of Organizational Culture as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.”²⁷

An organization's culture comes into being over a period of time. Each Service on a joint base comes to the base with their distinct culture. A newly formed group has no culture. Joint basing is a fairly new concept, roughly three years old, and has not formed a pattern of traditions to form its culture. Only a mature organization has had time for a set of widely shared understandings and behaviors to develop. An established culture cannot be changed rapidly for it takes time to evolve. Leaders on joint bases should not want to change a service member's service affiliation, but rather leaders should encourage the discovering of each other's Service cultures and heritages. “We have to protect unit heritage, service heritage and continue to honor that there are unique service needs that have to be met for Airmen and the Air Force Mission just as much for

the Soldiers and the Army Mission that exists here,” Colonel Thomas Brittain, U.S. Army, Joint Base Lewis McCord.²⁸

Heritage plays an important part in the military. In fact, the Joint Base Implementation Guidance (JBIG), a document that establishes the framework on how Services are to partner to accomplish the installation support missions, specifically outlines that the integrated Air Force and Army or Navy organizational structure provides an environment that enhances installation support in a joint environment. Joint bases promote options for efficient, effective installation support and collaborate to develop best-practice solutions for the joint bases. The JBIG points out that joint bases, and more importantly, the lead component command, are not to impact “heritage, heraldry or operating activity of the affected components” of the joint base tenant units.²⁹

Leaders on joint bases have to broaden their understanding of other Services while keeping in mind that the bottom line must be focus on mission accomplishment, regardless of the military customers’ service background. It is not a new concept, especially in the mission support arena, but the introduction of joint basing has made it clear that there is a concern on joint bases that Services will lose their identities. The first step is for service members to embrace working in a cross service environment. It is up to leaders to communicate and encourage the discovery of working in a diverse working environment with their subordinates. “The Services’ installation support organizations all do a superb job within their own service; the challenge is to form a joint team that consistently meets the joint standards and meets the expectations of the commanders and communities they support.” Air Force Colonel Mickey Addison, former Department of Defense deputy director for joint basing.³⁰

Unexpected and Unintended Consequences of Joint Basing

One of the unexpected and unintended consequences of joint basing concerns the DoD civilian population on the bases. Before joint basing came to be, DoD Civilians on an installation, let's say an Army post, worked a lengthy career, conversant in Army regulations and procedures. With the joint base concept, the Army civilians that now work on a joint base; let's say the Air Force Service lead, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, now must become familiar with the instruction, manuals and procedures of the Air Force to accomplish their mission. To reshape the thinking of a civilian employee that has been one-Service oriented to understanding another Service takes time, training and, above all, a resilient civil servant. Each joint base has developed training that aids in the transition for civilian worker to understand the regulations, procedures and guidelines of the lead Service on each joint base. U.S. Army Colonel, Thomas Wetherington, of Joint Base Langley-Eustis, stated the training that the civilians get truly helped in the change over from one Service's procedures to another. Through time, patience and dedication, the supported customer never sees a difference in the excellent support.³¹

Another interesting challenge with joint basing deals with cross compatibility of position descriptions. Service heritages differed when it came to positions with common names, but with different descriptions when it came to execution. For example, an Air Force Executive Officer or 'Exec' has more of an aide de camp role for senior officers, while the Navy's and Army's Executive Officer is considered second in charge to the commander. The complimentary role for a Navy or Army Executive Officer, when referring to an Air Force Officer, is Operations Officer or 'OPs Officer'.³²

Other issues involve the idiosyncrasies in the different naming conventions of work entities within the different Services. When a lead component is placed in charge

of a joint base, they bring their naming conventions of support service structures or subordinate units too. For example, the Army has Military Police (MP) Stations, while the Air Force has Base Defense Operating Centers (BDOCs). Both perform the same function, but to an Army service member newly assigned on a joint base, he knows what a MP and MP Station connotes, however he might not know that an Air Force Security Forces officer or a BDOC, or the Navy's Master at Arms and Navy Police has the same significance. Many of these issues seem trite, but it takes leaders to communicate and educate new arrivals to the joint environment. The solution to this problem, which actually happened on most joint bases, was relatively simple: the bases adopted building signs that incorporated each of the Service terminologies. Although names vary from Service to Service, most of the support functions are the same. Highly trained human services professionals and volunteers staff all Service centers and they are there to help guide newly assigned service and family members to become better acquainted to life on a joint base.

Culture is socially learned and passed on to new members of the group; it provides the rules for behavior within organizations.³³ To mitigate the potential losses of cultural heritage and to better communicate with their service members, families and civilians; joint bases have developed a campaign to educate their tenants on each of the Services' histories, heritages and cultures. "At first there was a lot of concern that there would be a loss of service identity." Stated Air Force Colonel Jerry K. Weldon, the Garrison Commander at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, "You cannot erase an existing service culture or identity, as those are important to mission commanders, service members and family members, but they must be culturally literate and develop cultural

expertise in their Sister Services."³⁴ The intent behind military culture education is to help joint base Service members and family members, and civilians to become more aware of the backgrounds of the Sister Services cultures and to be more cognizant of their surroundings at the work place. It is about team building and creating team balance. Joint basing has been a reality for about three years, and it will take time for the Services to get adjusted to the concept of multi-service bases, but it is up to leaders to facilitate the growing process.

Joint Basing and Building Teams from Cross Services

The creation of a joint base is complex to say the least. Leaders must be able to unite Service specific systems, management structures and staffs, and bundle them by distinct procedures, so as to, with the essence of 'jointness', manage functions under the umbrella of installation support. Complex is the key word, and it takes teamwork to accomplish merging this diverse group of individuals, practices and cultures together. Developing and implementing a team, in the broadest sense, is a result of feeling part of something larger than you, and as a senior leader on a joint base, it has a lot to do with the understanding of leading and team leadership.³⁵ In a team-oriented environment, you contribute to the overall success of the organization by working with fellow members of the organization to produce the results. Even though you have a specific job function and belong to a specific department, being part of a team means that you are unified with other organizational members to accomplish the overall objectives.

On a joint base, the installation support mission takes leaders from across the Services, and forms a tightly knit team of cross Service subordinates and civilian professionals, to perform the functions that maintain a base facility operating at its premium. The unique premise in establishing joint bases by the DoD was to leverage

the expertise of the collective Services, rooting out the redundancies, to perform functions more effectively and efficiently. It is a team building success when your team can accomplish something much bigger and work more effectively than a group of the same individuals working on their own. The outcome is that you have a strong synergy of individual contributions.

There are two critical factors in building a high performance team. The first factor in team effectiveness is the diversity of skills and personalities.³⁶ This is when people use their strengths in full, but also can compensate for each other's weaknesses and results in different personality types balancing and complementing each other. Joint bases draw from not only the Services that are stationed on the base, but the incredible pool of talents within the DoD civilian sector. These DoD civilians normally come to an organization with vast experience and strong historical subject matter expertise. It is the leader's job to develop this diversified unit into a productive team and pull the strengths together to compensate for weak areas.

The other critical element of teamwork success is that all the team efforts are directed towards the same clear goals, the team goals.³⁷ This relies heavily on good communication in the team and the harmony in member relationships. Colonel John Wood of the 87th Air Base Wing at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst highlighted that communication and collaboration establishes the relationship needed to forge teams on joint bases. "It doesn't matter which Service provides the support we 'check our egos at the door' and work together as a team to accomplish the mission."³⁸

Team building in an organization fosters proficiency and open communication between team members and between the subordinates and the leadership.³⁹ It goes a

long way in improving professional relations, understanding, and cooperation, and this resultant cohesion is reflected in the quality of work. Team building in an organization significantly contributes towards motivating subordinates and building trust among the members, thereby ensuring better productivity. A productive team environment contains an atmosphere of trust, and its members are completely accountable for the group's success as a whole. Its individual team members invest in the team through their actions and attitudes to include being respectful, caring, and cooperative. These high functioning teams are the mechanism by which organizations can unlock world-class results.

Conclusion

From the 1947 National Security Act to the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's Department of Defense Transformation, the quest for a more joint military structure has been evolving to a reality. The 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission made a huge stride in the development and implementation of joint basing. Clearly, only three years into this bold move, there is a lot of improvements to be made and understanding to take place. Services can work together; it has been shown over the past ten plus years during the war on terror. The combat zone showed that service members were not categorized as a 'Service'; they were categorized as a service member in need of immediate support to execute their wartime mission. That same team mentality in combat must be brought back to the home joint bases to make 'jointness' in peacetime as real as in combat.

Perhaps the most extraordinary organizational aspect of joint basing is the relationship between the joint organization and the service components. While in all other joint organizations the service components support the joint commander, the

opposite is true of joint basing. The joint installation support organization of a joint base combines military service members, Department of Defense civilians and contractors into a single team, which provides installation support to all service component units on the base.⁴⁰

Team building is the process that will bring together all these groups. It starts with a clear, unifying vision. The vision sets the direction for the subordinates to follow. It is what leaders must establish when they are introduced into a complex, diverse situation, of which joint bases are a prime example. A clear, unifying vision gives the team a reason for being and brings individual members together with a common purpose. Visions also provide a sense of direction and a reference point from which to measure their progress against and set goals to mark the way ahead. When strong unified behavior, values and beliefs have been developed, a strong organizational culture emerges. Leaders on joint bases, as well in every Service, have to appreciate their function in maintaining an organization's culture. This will in return ensure consistent behavior between members of the organization, the leadership and mission accomplishment.

Endnotes

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