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STUDY PROJECT

AN EXAMINATION OF CONGRESSIONAL MOTIVES FOR IMPACTING ON MILITARY STRATEGY

BY

COLONEL WILLIAM E. LEWELLYN
United States Army

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Colonel (Ret) Eugene H. Grayson
Project Advisor

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ABSTRACT

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The Congress through its power of the purse has a great impact on military strategy. In recent years this impact has determined the weapons systems and the size of the armed forces our Nation has to secure its objectives. By examining the Base Closure Act of 1988, this paper explores what motivates the Congress in determining the resources available to the Nation's armed forces. It concludes with recommendations for the proper placement of responsibility for military strategy.

INTRODUCTION

In a lecture at the U.S. Army War College in 1960, Colonel Arthur F. Lykke defined military strategy as:

"The art and science of employing the armed forces of a nation to secure the objectives of national policy by the application of force or the threat of force."

Colonel Lykke went on to describe the elements that impact on military strategy. Those elements included; technology, policy, ethics, doctrine, public support, the threat, economics and politics. It is the last of these forces, politics, that will be examined in this paper. The scope of the examination will be much narrower than the all pervasive political climate intended by Colonel Lykke. Specifically, this paper will attempt to evaluate Congress's ability to positively influence military strategy. The Congress appropriates the military's funds for weapon systems, research and development, facilities and sets manpower levels for both civilian and military personnel. Recent history has witnessed the Congress "killing" individual weapons systems and only allowing others to be produced in severely restricted numbers. Military appropriations have been on the decline since 1985 when measured in 1985 dollars. This has caused steadily declining force end strengths and reduced the dollars for research and development. This power of the purse has a powerful impact on the nation's armed forces and thus the ability to use the armed forces to secure national objectives. There is no doubt that

Congress has a powerful impact on military strategy. But is this impact negative or positive? What motivates the Congress to fund some weapons systems and cancel others? Are congressional decisions driven by the merits of the weapon systems and the perceived threat? Are members of Congress driven by concern for the national security and concern for the national debt? There is no doubt that these noble concerns do influence our senators and representatives. However, there are more base and less noble motivations for our legislators as well.

The thesis of this paper is that Congress, because of constituent service and parochialism, fails to make a positive impact on military strategy. To make the thesis clearer, members of Congress will act in their own self interest and support pork barrel legislation regardless of its impact on military strategy. To support this thesis an examination of the Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1988 will be made. This Act was chosen because, on the surface at least, the legislation was clearly in the national interest and should have been easy for the Congress to support. When the Act came before the Legislature in 1988, the Congress, and perhaps the American people, were demanding reduced Department of Defense spending. The Base Closure and Realignment Act was designed to exactly meet this requirement. Yet despite huge budget deficits, the perception of a reduced threat, and strong congressional pressure for reduced Defense Department spending, the Base Closure and Realignment Act very nearly did not pass in the Congress. This near failure took place despite the fact that the Act was actively supported by the Department of

Defense in an effort to meet budgetary requirements. The reason for the near failure of the Act was the "pork barrel" political concerns of the members of Congress. A detailed examination of the passage of the Act demonstrates the difficulty Congress had in implementing a program that was clearly perceived to be in the best interest of the Nation.

THE BASE CLOSURE COMMISSION

On 29 December 1988, the Commission on Base Closure and Realignment recommended that 86 military bases be closed down. This was an exceptional event in several ways. First, it was remarkable that such a recommendation was allowed to be made at all. The Department of Defense had not been allowed to close a military base for over a decade.¹ Second, the Congress had greatly reduced its own power and authority to overturn the Commission's recommendation. In affect, the Congress could only disapprove the whole list of bases to be closed. They could not piecemeal the list by picking only those bases they wanted closed. Nor could they do nothing and thereby cause the whole list to be canceled. If they did nothing, forty-five days after the Secretary of Defense approved the list, it would become an approved document. Third, the recommendation had been allowed without first doing a series of detailed, time consuming environmental studies. In the past, environmental impact statements had been the traditional way that Congress discouraged or caused base closures to be canceled.² Finally, the Commission itself was unusual from two standpoints. First, it was bipartisan, consisting of twelve retired

Congressmen and Department of Defense officials. Second, the Commission worked for the Secretary of Defense, a member of the Executive Branch. At first glance this may not seem significant. However, at least since 1975, a military base closure had required Legislative Branch approval. This was a fact of life that may have been justified for constitutional reasons.³ Some thought that by accepting the Commission's recommendations that the Legislature had abrogated its authority to deal with a fiscal matter. At the time, closing the 86 bases was designed to produce an annual savings of two to five billion dollars. Secretary of Defense, Frank C. Carlucci appointed the members of the Commission. He would also be the first decision maker to act on the Commission's recommendations. Congress had no input to the Commission. It could only, by a majority vote, reject the entire list of proposed base closures. The closures could still be undertaken if the President chose to veto the Congress's rejection resolution.

Why had Congress put itself in such a weak position? Had Congress become altruistic, concerned only with the good of the Nation? Had the national welfare become paramount at the possible expense of home districts or home states? Had the national deficit become such a totally consuming problem that it forced the Congress to act in an altruistic manner? Had the Legislative Branch finally realized that it could not achieve a consensus on how to decrease the Department of Defense spending therefore giving its authority to the Executive Branch? Had the Congress concluded that the Defense Department was

the best judge of the military installations required to facilitate the national defense?

This paper will use the saga of the Base Closure and Realignment Act to answer the above questions. A central theme of the paper is that politics have a crucial impact on military strategy. Politics had denied the Defense Department from closing obsolete, unneeded bases for over a decade. It was because huge annual deficits, born during the Reagan Administration, were such a serious problem that the Legislature was pushed beyond "pork barrel" considerations. The Congress finally did something about base closures. It took itself out of the process so that politics would not interfere with the closure program.

BACKGROUND

It was not always difficult to close military bases. "Between 1961 and 1977, the Pentagon disposed of hundreds of military bases by executive fiat."⁴ However in 1975, the Air Force raised the ire of Maine's Representative William Cohen by proposing to close Loring Air Force Base in northern Maine. Loring had become a military liability because it was susceptible to attack by submarine launched missiles. It was an isolated base that was expensive to maintain because of the additional personnel required to clear a yearly average of ten feet of snow from its runways. Congressman Cohen was interested only in the detrimental impact that closing Loring would have on the community that had sprung up around the base. He approached House Majority Leader Tip O'Neil to block the closure. The result was a requirement

for the Pentagon to submit costly and time consuming environmental studies before any military base could be closed. Loring was saved and the routine closures of unneeded military bases by the Executive Branch had ended. As will be seen below, there is little doubt that from 1975 until 1987, "pork barrel" politics was more important to the Congress than was saving money by closing unneeded military bases. Members of Congress placed priority on jobs and federal payrolls in their home states and home districts. In essence, the local politics of individual legislators took priority over national concerns about Department of Defense spending.

In 1976, President Gerald Ford made a proposal to close or reduce employment at 160 military bases. Congress rebelled at the proposal and a virtual moratorium on large scale base closures went into effect.⁵ President Jimmy Carter maintained a base closure list but no productive action was taken on base closures during his administration. Early in Ronald Reagan's first term, a commission headed by J. Peter Grace, recommended disposal of unnecessary military bases as a long-term solution for cutting government waste.⁶ Base closures was also a favorite subject of Senator Barry Goldwater when he headed the Senate Armed Services Committee in 1985-1986.⁷ However, no action was taken until late in the Reagan Administration. Actually, the final decision to close bases did not occur until after George Bush had become President. Critics say that "pork barrel" considerations were not the only reason that bases were not closed during the Reagan years. It is argued that the Reagan Administration thought it politically unwise to ask for base closures at a time when military

expenditures were expanding at a record pace.⁸ To retain support for these huge military expenditures, it was thought best to leave the "pork" in Congress and let the sleeping dog of base closures continue to lie. For either or both of the above reasons, the notion of closing unneeded military bases did not gain support until 1987. In that year, Texas Republican house member, Dick Armey introduced a new bill to close bases. More correctly, the Bill would facilitate the closing of bases. Although the Bill was contested, sometimes bitterly, it made steady progress and a version of the Bill was passed in October 1988. The culmination of this effort was the Base Closure Commission's proposed list of 86 bases to be closed. What had happened between 1975 and 1987 which caused Congress to overcome their aversion to base closures? I believe the answer is concern for the national debt. The national debt had more than tripled during Ronald Reagan's Presidency. It had grown from 914.3 billion in 1980 to an estimated 2.85 trillion for Fiscal Year (FY) 1989.⁹ This tremendous growth in the national debt led to demands for decreases in the Defense budget. This in turn made closing military bases desirable and perhaps more palatable to Congress. The call for reduced Defense spending was the key issue in breaking the status quo on base closures. How and why the demand for reduced military spending came about will be discussed below.

THE CALL FOR REDUCED MILITARY SPENDING

President Reagan considered his huge election victory in 1980 to be a mandate by the Nation to set his campaign promises into motion.¹⁰

Congress, at first at least, thought so as well. A conservative coalition of Republicans and Democrats started putting the new President's policies into affect. The President's prerogatives of lower taxes, higher defense spending and reduced government size (New Federalism) were initiated in 1981. These changes and the embracement of supply side economic policy had a dramatic impact on the fiscal policy of the United States. Supply side economic policy holds that the biggest impediment to investment and growth of the economy (Gross National Product) is taxes. Reducing taxes will produce increased investment and growth of the economy and this growth will more than replace the revenue that was lost due to the tax reduction. The Reagan Administration deduced that the revenues produced by the additional growth of the economy, combined with a reduction in domestic spending, would offset the increased Defense budget. The table below reflects the expected changes in national expenditures over the Reagan years expressed as a percent of the budget.¹¹

<u>Year</u>	<u>Defense</u>	<u>Net Interest</u>	<u>Direct Benefit</u>		<u>Grants to</u>	<u>Other</u>
			<u>Pmts. for Ind.</u>	<u>State & Local</u>	<u>Federal</u>	<u>Opns</u>
1981	24%	9%	43%	15%		9%
1982	25%	10%	42%	13%		9%
1983	29%	13%	43%	11%		4%
1984	29%	12%	42%	11%		6%
1985	29%	13%	42%	11%		5%
1986	29%	15%	41%	10%		5%
1987	28%	15%	41%	10%		6%

<u>Year</u>	<u>Defense</u>	<u>Net Interest</u>	Direct Benefit	Grants to	Other
			<u>Pmts. for Ind.</u>	<u>State & Local</u>	<u>Federal Opns</u>
1988	29%	14%	42%	10%	5%
1989	27%	14%	43%	11%	5%
1990	26%	15%	43%	11%	5%

In the first five years of his Presidency, Ronald Reagan used the Nation's budget as a sharp political instrument. The table above reflects how the President used the budget to meet his policy objectives. Focusing on the fiscal year 1986 budget, Defense spending had increased by four percent; social payments had been reduced by two percent and the cost of government reduced by a combined nine percent. Expressed in another manner, Defense spending grew from 5.4 percent of the Gross National Product (GNP) in 1981 to 6.4 percent of GNP in 1987. The table also reflects the failure of Reaganomics. Net interest shows a steady incline reaching 15 percent in 1986, a six percent increase. The increase in net interest was the increase in the dollars to be paid on the national debt. Supply side economics did produce increased growth in the economy. However, it failed to produce enough revenue to replace the tax dollars lost by the Income Tax Act of 1981. This was further complicated by Reagan not being able to reduce domestic spending by enough to offset the Defense increases. The bottom line was that the annual deficit went from 73.8 billion in 1980 to a range of 150 to 210 billion during the Reagan Presidency.¹² The Reagan Administration was locked into defense

spending increases and fiercely opposed to new taxes, especially new income taxes. The result was a great shortage of revenues and an out-of-control annual deficit. Reagan had promised to balance the budget by 1984, instead he piled up the greatest deficits in history. By 1985 it had become clear that something must be done to control the deficit. Congress in frustration passed the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act, "A bad idea who's time had come."¹³ The concern for the deficit had actually been translated into action prior to the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act. Starting with fiscal year 1985, Congress had appropriated annual increases in the Defense budget that fell short of the inflation rate.¹⁴ Real growth in Defense spending ended in 1984 and as the deficit grew the demand for reduced Defense spending grew as well. Hence, despite the desires of the Reagan Administration, Defense spending leveled off in fiscal year 1985 and headed south beginning with the fiscal year 1989 budget. The budget for President Reagan had become an exercise in making ends meet rather than the sharp political instrument it had been in the early years of his administration.¹⁵

The Democrats were having their problems in this time frame as well. Although they had successfully curbed the expansion of the Defense budget, the deficit precluded them from initiating their own programs. Those interested in new or increased domestic programs were limited by the deficit. There was also the threat that the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act would kick in. The Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act shows no selectivity as it cuts good programs as much as it cuts bad programs. Thus there was the potential for a new or expanded

program to actually damage existing highly desirable domestic programs.

BASE CLOSURE GAINS ACCEPTANCE

It was into an almost desperate fiscal atmosphere that Representative Armey introduced his base closing bill in 1987. "Armey came within seven votes of having the idea attached to the 1988 House Defense Appropriation Bill."¹⁶ While the Bill failed in 1987, the idea was born. It gathered support from powerful leaders of the Legislature and the Executive Branch. In 1988 the idea was supported by: Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Les Aspin; Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Sam Nunn and Secretary of Defense, Frank C. Carlucci. The estimates, at the time, were that about 30 of the United States' 312 major domestic bases were unneeded.¹⁷ These installations were to be closed by 30 September 1995 and save the Defense Department up to 5 billion dollars per year. Given the advertised savings and the turmoil over the projected trillion dollar national debt, one would assume that closing military bases would be a popular notion throughout the Legislature. This proved to be far from the truth. "Pork Barrel" politics threatened to overcome the Defense Department's efforts to meet congressional demands for reduced spending by closing military bases.

THE BASE CLOSURE BATTLE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The base closure battle raged in the House of Representatives throughout the summer and fall of 1988. The Senate version passed

rather quickly but for a good reason. Senators have a broader base of support than do representatives. A senator might lose the vote of a locality because of a base closure, but he would likely have enough support from the rest of the state to be reelected. A base closure in a representative's district could be the kiss of death for reelection. The Senate's Base Closure Bill was attached to the fiscal year 1989 Defense Authorization Bill. It was hoped that the House could pass a version of the Base Closure Bill in time for it to go forward with the Authorization Bill. This was not to be because there was too much "pork" left in the House. There were two House versions of the Base Closure Bill and both had so diluted Armey's original bill that the likelihood of a base being closed as the result of either was remote. Armey's original bill provided the following:¹⁸

- A. A bipartisan committee was to be appointed to make recommendations for base closures to the Secretary of Defense.
- B. No congressional approval or disapproval of the Committee's recommendations was required.
- C. The Executive Branch could not add to or subtract from the list.
- D. It provided 300 million dollars annually to pay for base closings.
- E. Overseas bases were not to be included in the Committee's recommendations.
- F. There was no cost savings limit placed on the recommendations.
- G. There was no environmental clean-up required by the Bill.

Armey's Bill became House Resolution 4481. It was referred to the House Armed Services Committee, the House Government Operations Committee and the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee. It was not referred to a committee in the Senate, except for the Conference Committee. Although it was not referred to the House Rules Committee, it was reviewed by that committee on 6 July 1988.

THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Hearings were held by the House Armed Services Committee's Military Installations and Facilities Subcommittee on 18 and 19 May 1988. The Bill was considered by the full Armed Services Committee on 8 June 1988. Secretary of Defense, Frank C. Carlucci appeared before the subcommittee in support of the Bill. Other witnesses included Representative Patricia Schroeder, D-Colorado, Representative Richard Armey, R-Texas, former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Installations and Logistics, Robert Pierce, and the Director of the Defense Department's Office of Economic Adjustment, Robert M. Rouner. All favored the Bill except Representative Schroeder who wanted to amend the Bill to add overseas bases to the military base closure list. There were no interest groups that testified before the subcommittee unless one counts the members of the House of Representative's as an interest group. Not far fetched in this case, the Bill's primary opposition came from "pork barrel" issues. The Armed Services Committee recommended passage of House Resolution 4481, the Defense Savings Act on 28 June 1988. The Committee report made an amendment in the nature of a substitute bill for House Resolution

4481. This substitute bill changed the Defense Savings Act to the Base Closure and Realignment Act. The Armed Services Committee made the following major changes to the Bill: A. Congress could reject the closure list; B. It authorized no money to finance the closures; C. It required overseas bases to be considered; D. It required a closure to save the Government money within six years; and E. It required the Government to clean-up pollution on a base before it could dispose of the property. The Bill, as amended, was agreed to by voice vote by the Armed Services Committee on 8 June 1988. The Bill was agreed to because the Substitute Bill put the power to decide which bases would be closed back in the House of Representatives. This was the very thing the original bill had tried to avoid. The Armed Services Committee's intent was to allow their fellow members to continue to protect "pork barrel" considerations.

THE HOUSE GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

The House Government Operations Committee called no witnesses. On 9 June 1988, it passed a substitute amendment for House Resolution 4481 by voice vote. The Committee made the following major change to the original bill. It required a joint resolution of Congress approving the Commissions' recommendations prior to Department of Defense implementation of the recommendations. The amendment passed the Government Operations Committee for the same reasons cited above for the Armed Services Committee.

THE HOUSE MERCHANT MARINE AND FISHERIES COMMITTEE

The House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee called no witnesses. It considered House Resolution 4481 only from the standpoint of it being exempt from the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Bill passed by voice vote on 29 June with one significant change. The Department of Defense would have to conform to the NEPA when it implemented base closures. The Committee was guarding "pork barrel" considerations. Often it was too expensive to close a base because of the environmental clean-up that would be required.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DISCUSSION AND DEBATE

The debate in the House of Representatives began on 7 July 1988. Representative David E. Bonior, D-Michigan began by reciting the rules that would apply to the debate. Representative Delbert L. Lotta, R-Ohio, stated that the Base Closure Bill had been amended to the point that it did not resemble Representative Armey's original bill. Representative Lotta proposed that a new substitute resembling the original bill should be submitted. Representative Armey then gave a clarification on the funding for the new substitute bill that he would propose. Representative John E. Porter, R-Illinois, then defended the closing of Fort Sheridan and the Great Lakes Naval Station and stated he would offer two new amendments. Representative John R. Kasich, R-Ohio defended the Armed Services Committee's Bill and proposed two more amendments. His amendment was key because it changed from the House approving the base closure list to disapproving the list. Given

that arguments up to this point tended to make passage of the Bill more difficult. It appears that the members did not understand the amendment on which they were voting. The Kasich amendment passed 388-2.

The general debate started in the House on 12 July 1988. Representative Curt Weldon, R-Pennsylvania proposed an amendment to give special consideration to bases that had community support. The amendment was supported by Representative Dickinson of Alabama, Representative Matthew G. Martinez, D-California, Representative Aspin of Wisconsin and Representative Armey of Texas. The amendment was agreed to by voice vote. Representative Porter proposed an amendment to increase the members of the Base Closure Commission from 12 to 15 members. The Porter amendment was supported by Representative Lane Evans, D-Illinois, and Representative Henry J. Hyde, R-Illinois. It was opposed by Representatives Aspin, Dickinson and Armey and the amendment failed. An amendment was proposed by Representative Davis of Illinois who proposed to include certain members of the House on the Base Closure Commission. It was opposed by Representatives Aspin and Dickinson. It was rejected. Representative Porter offered a second amendment to exclude members of the Department of Defense from the Base Closure Commission. It was supported by Representative Evans and opposed by Representatives Aspin and Dickinson. It failed. The above series of proposed amendments were aimed at giving the House of Representatives a power base in the Base Closure Commission and tried to minimize the power base of the Department of Defense.

Representative Jim Kolbe, R-Arizona proposed an amendment to exclude overseas bases for consideration for closure. Overseas bases had been added as an amendment when the Bill went to the Armed Services Committee. The amendment was supported by Representatives Jon Kyle, R-Arizona and Representative Armey. It was opposed by Representatives Pat Schroeder, D-Colorado; Sonny Montgomery, D-Mississippi; and Representatives Aspin, and Dickinson. It was rejected.

By the time the Base Closure Bill came to a vote in the House on 12 July 1988, it had been reported out by four committees and had dozens of amendments.¹⁹ Most of the amendments were intended to "kill" the Bill in order to protect jobs and government payrolls in home districts. A few examples of the amendments follow:²⁰

- A. Representative Herbert H. Bateman, Republican of Virginia, wanted the cost of closing unneeded bases to include the cost of "historic preservation" as well as the cost to remove any toxic waste. This amendment was designed to protect the 1812 vintage, moated, Fort Monroe.
- B. Representative Barbara Boxer, Democrat of California, added environmental protection provisions to the Bill. Judging from the outcome of the Committee's report, she should have fought harder. California lost two major air bases.
- C. Representative Pat Schroeder, Democrat of Colorado, had the Bill expanded to include foreign bases. This in effect made the Bill unworkable at least for the near term. Schroeder's

action was probably to protect Fitzsimmons Medical Center which had been on a previous base closure list.

- D. Representative Dennis M. Hertel, Democrat of Michigan, added the requirement that socio-economic impact statements be done before any funds could be approved to close down a base. He also added in provisions for economic adjustment assistance for affected communities. His efforts were probably to protect the tank line in Detroit.
- E. Representative Allen Dixon, Democrat of Illinois, added a provision to require broad geographic composition for the Commission. Dixon's intent was to protect Fort Sheridan, the Great Lakes Naval Station and Chanute Air Base.
- F. Representative Jack Davis, Republican of Illinois, proposed that any foreign bases identified for closure be eliminated prior to any U.S. base being closed. Davis's motivation was the same as Representative Dixon's.

According to the Pentagon, the net effect of the amendments was to make base closures more difficult under the proposed expedited procedures than under the current law.²¹ In the tug-of-war between fealty to their districts and saving money by paring down obsolete bases, it appeared that fealty to the home district was winning.

Those favoring base closures did not want the amended versions because they were a step backwards. Finally on 12 July 1988, Representative Armey emerged as the Pentagon's champion. He proposed a substitute bill that replaced the entire text of House Resolution (HR) 4481, the Base Closure Bill. The Substitute Bill was very nearly

the same bill he had originally submitted. The Substitute Bill was supported and opposed as listed below:

Supported

Dick Armey, R-Texas	Cass Ballenger, R-North Carolina
Phillip Sharp, D-Indiana	Ronard Packard, R-California
Chalmers Wylie, R-Ohio	Douglas Bereuter, R-Nebraska
Jim Kolbe, R-Arizona	Joself Brennan, D-Maine
Toby Roth, R-Wisconsin	Robert Lagomarsino, R-California
Les Aucoin, D-Oregon	Fred Upton, R-Michigan
Clarence Miller, R-Ohio	Alex McMillan, R-North Carolina
Jon Kyle, R-Arizona	Don Ritter, R-Pennsylvania
Joel Hefley, R-Colorado	Armory Houghton, R-New York
Bill Frenzel, R-Minnesota	James Lightfoot, R-Iowa
Norman Shumway, R-California	

Opposed

Les Aspin, D-Wisconsin	Thomas Fogbetter, D-Pennsylvania
Dennis Hertel, D-Michigan	Jack Brooks, D-Texas
Sonny Montgomery, D-Mississippi	Herbert Bateman, R-Virginia
William Dickinson, R-Alabama	Olympia Snowe, R-Maine

The main arguments on Armey's substitute amendment evolved around continuing to do business as usual, not close bases, or to accept the Armey amendment. Environmental concerns were expressed as well as impact on local communities. The amendment passed 223-186.²² The

voting was in general on whether the representative's home district contained a military base. Usually, if the district had a base, the representative voted against the amendment.

The debate on the new substitute bill began. Arguments for and against were made in the preceding argument on the substitute amendment. The only further argument was made against the Bill by Representative Brian J. Donnelly, D-Massachusetts. The Bill passed by a vote of 374-39. The crucial vote had been the previous vote on the substitute amendment. Once it was determined that military bases would be closed, everyone jumped on the band wagon.

In the Senate, House Resolution 4481 was included in the Defense Authorization Bill (S2749). It was introduced and passed by voice vote on 11 August 1988. There was no debate on the amendment to the Senate Bill. It was reported out of the Senate-House Conference on 5 October 1988 virtually unchanged.²³

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BASE CLOSURE AND REALIGNMENT ACT

Several of the provisions of the Base Closure and Realignment Act and the significance of its passage are worthy of note.

- A. First, the members of the House of Representatives seemed to recognize that the only way they could overcome political "pork barrel" issues was to tie their own hands. In essence, to protect themselves against themselves. That is what the Base Closure and Realignment Act did. Before the first military installation had been nominated for closure, Congress

limited its own involvement in the issue. They could not change the recommended list. They could not decide to not forward the list. They could only vote to reject the whole list. Representative Arney and others calculated correctly that it would be more difficult to justify rejection of the entire list than it would have been to reject individual bases.

- B. The Bill provided for an independent, bipartisan commission to select the bases to be closed. This measure was purely to protect the members of Congress. If a base in their state or district was chosen, they could blame it on the Commission. The members of Congress could come out against the closure, as many of them did, to protect themselves from a voter backlash. The provision for the independent Commission was purely an effort to depoliticize base closures.
- C. The "auto pilot" feature of the Act put it on the fast track.²¹ The Bill was passed by Congress on 5 October 1988. It gave the Commission until the end of December 1988 to produce the list of recommended base closures. It gave the Secretary of Defense until the 16th of January 1989 to approve or reject the list. Finally, it gave the Congress 45 legislative days beginning on 1 March 1989 to adopt a joint resolution to reject the entire list. If they did nothing, the Bill became law. These expedited time frames gave the Bill the momentum to have the political pain of base closures over quickly.

- D. The provisions of the Bill were politically astute. Once the closure list was published, it became very difficult for Congress to overcome its inertia and pass a rejection resolution. Those members who would have lost bases would be in the minority. It became in the self-interest of those who had not lost a base to do nothing. They did not want to reject the current list of closures to find their base on a future closure list. The thinking at the time was that their bases would probably be safe for another decade if they were not on the current closure list.²⁵
- E. The Act put the prerogative to close bases almost exclusively in the hands of the Executive Branch. Not only because of the "auto pilot" feature of the Bill, but also because the President could veto a rejection resolution. This was a significant departure from legislative involvement and a return to the efficiencies of base closures at the direction of the Executive Branch.
- F. The two most significant things about the Base Closure and Realignment Act were not found in its provisions. First, the Congress really did put the national welfare above local politics and "pork barrel" considerations. It did not do it in a "pretty", statesmanly manner, but it did do it. It voted to protect against itself so that base closure could proceed. It did rise to the occasion and find a way to protect itself from the self-interest of its own members. Second, the rising national debt was the catalyst that caused the Congress to do

the right thing. The fact that Congress was able to overcome its propensity for "pork barrel" politics points to the magnitude of the national debt problem, not to the Congress's concern for a logical defense policy.

AFTERMATH OF THE PASSAGE OF THE BASE CLOSURE AND REALIGNMENT ACT

The Commission on Base Closure and Realignment published the list of installations to be closed on the 29th of December 1988. Secretary of Defense, Frank C. Carlucci approved the list of 5 January 1989. A great cry went up from those members of Congress whose jurisdictions had been tabbed to lose bases. Over the next few months, the wisdom of Congress protecting the Closure Act from its members became increasingly clear. About two dozen members of the House were affected by the base closures. More than a hundred members breathed a sigh of relief after the closure list was published.²⁶ Those opposing the closures complained that over 58,000 jobs would be lost as a result of the closures.²⁷ Further, the annual savings to be realized had disintegrated from 2 to 5 billion dollars to 696 million dollars. Other complaints included:²⁸ A. Not one of the 1500 bases overseas was being shut down; B. The economic impact on the affected communities would amount to hundreds of millions of dollars; C. Canceling of home bases for the Navy made the U.S. fleet more vulnerable; D. There were flaws in the Commission's reasoning; E. There were delays in providing the Commission's justification for selecting the bases to be closed; F. Inadequate provisions were made for cleaning-up the bases that were to be closed; and G. The cost to

close the bases was very much underestimated to the tax payers. All these complaints fell on deaf ears. It was now in the self-interest of those who had bases in their districts that were not closed, to see that the list went forward. They thought it put their installations on safe footing for the next decade. Although bills to reject the Base Closure List were introduced in both the House and Senate in April 1989, they both failed by large margins. The Bill became law on the 18th of April 1989. The "pork barrelers" were still not ready to give up. As late as August 1989, efforts were made to hold the closings up through not funding them in the appropriations process. Representative Dixon of Illinois turned to litigation to save Chanute Air Force Base in Rantoul, Illinois. The Illinois Attorney General filed a suit in Federal District Court to have the Base Closure and Realignment Act declared unconstitutional. The basis for the suit was that "Congress delegated executive and legislative powers to a nonelective commission."²⁹ Both the attack on the appropriation and the suit failed to stop base closures from going forward. In this case, a very reluctant Congress had managed to cast aside parochialism and the "pork barrel."

NEW BASE CLOSURES

Much to do was made in this paper about legislators acting in their self-interest. The Executive Branch is not immune to this practice. An argument can be made that when the Executive Branch shows self-interest it still acts on behalf of the Nation. This argument is at best questionable and at worst a Nixon Era anathema.

Recent developments in world events may indicate that the Defense Department is using the threat of base closures as a political tool. The events in Europe in 1989, culminating with the fall of the Berlin Wall and liberalization of several Warsaw Block countries, have reduced the perceived Soviet threat to the United States. This has brought consideration for a new round of military base closures and demands for substantial reductions in Defense expenditures. Members of Congress were initially very anxious to spend the so called "peace dividend" resulting from the reduced threat.³⁰ That is until a kind of reverse "pork barrel" got in their way. They found that spending the "peace dividend" might result in a military base in their home district being closed. Headlines like "Lawmakers Scurrying to Protect Home Bases",³¹ "Threatened Bases a Budget Ruse"³² and "Pentagon has Political Hit List. . ." made the news.³³ Many accusations were leveled at Secretary of Defense, Dick Cheney. Most implied that Congressmen who favored huge defense budget cuts, were more likely to get a base in their area closed down. Representative Vic Fazio of California, said that base closures "make people very ambivalent because the peace dividend becomes a much more distant and perhaps fleeting goal."³⁴

It seems that the base closure issue has come full circle. The Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1989 resulted from a legitimate effort by the Pentagon to save dollars and reduce the budget. Now base closures may have become the Pentagon's political tool to gain support for the defense budget. One thing has been consistent

throughout the continuing saga, Legislators will do most anything to protect their "pork."

CONCLUSION

The saga of the Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1989 demonstrated much of what is wrong with Congressional involvement in Defense policy and military strategy. Individual members of Congress will, almost without fail, act in their own self-interest. This statement is not intended to mean that they will act in illegal or immoral ways to promote their own benefit. Although recent history indicates that has happened often enough.³⁵ Rather, that they will act to try to assure their sustainment, their reelection. Consequently they support policies and programs that benefit their district and state often at the price of the national good. As Sam Rayburn said, "All politics is local."³⁶ This parochialism prevented unneeded military bases from being closed for over a decade at the cost of several billion dollars to the Federal Government. It took the impending disaster of the national debt and out-of-control deficit spending to shock the Congress into taking action. The deficits piled up by the Reagan Administration were the catalyst for action. Not even the motivation of the rapidly increasing national debt could drive the Congress to trust itself to act in the national interest. It protected itself against its own parochialism by tying its own hands. The Base Closure and Realignment Act made it almost impossible for Congress to stop base closures.

The saga may also point to actions that need to be taken to have a coherent defense policy. In the time frame prior to 1976, base closures were strictly the province of the Executive Branch. They occurred routinely up until that time. When the Legislative Branch got involved in 1976, closures ended until the Legislature virtually returned the prerogative to the Executive Branch with the Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1989. Over the history of our Nation, there has been a tug of war between the Executive and Legislative Branches on defense prerogative. The saga of the Base Closure and Realignment Act certainly demonstrates, at least partially, why that has happened. Might it also suggest that for an efficient defense policy, even more control by the Executive Branch is required? In this light, the Act provided that the final word on base closures would be the President's. He could veto any rejection resolution framed by the Congress to assure that base closures went forward. Should not the final word on weapon systems and military manpower, within a budgetary framework, be the President's also?

ENDNOTES

1. Sources were not clear as to when the last base closure occurred. Some went all the way back to the World War II era, most put the time in the early to mid 1970's. Clearly there were none after 1976.
2. Mike Mills, "1976 Law Poses Key Hurdle to Closing Bases," Congressional Quarterly Weekly, 2 July 1988, p. 1817.
3. Some legislators argued that base closures by the Executive violated the separation of powers intended by the Constitution. They argued that Article I, Section 7 implied that the legislature should approve base closures because they were in essence a revenue producing activity. This was not a strong argument.
4. "Biting the Bullet," Time, 25 July 1988, p. 34.
5. Pat Powell, "Conferees Accept Bill to Ease Closing of Old Military Bases," Congressional Quarterly Weekly, 8 October 1988, p. 2808.
6. Ibid.
7. Powell, p. 2808.
8. Mike Mills, "Members Go on the Offensive to Defend Bases," Congressional Quarterly Weekly, 2 July 1988, p. 1816.
9. David Rapp, "Deficit Limits Reagan's Options in 1989 Budget," Congressional Quarterly Weekly, 20 February 1988, p. 330.
10. Ibid.
11. The table was compiled from a review of Budget of the U.S. Government In Brief for the years 1981 through 1990. It reflects projections for each year rather than actual expenditures.
12. Rapp, p. 330.
13. Ronald W. Johnson and Robert D. Lee, Public Budgeting Systems, p. 173.
14. "Major Proposals in Reagan's Fiscal 1989 Budget," Congressional Quarterly Weekly, 20 February 1988, p. 343.
15. Rapp, p. 330.
16. Phil Kuntz, "House Panels Differ Over Base-Closing Bill," Congressional Quarterly Weekly, 11 June 1988, p. 1619.

17. Ibid. A "major" base was defined as one which had more than 300 civilian employees.

18. Kuntz, p. 1620.

19. Christine Lawrence, "House Modifies, Passes Base Closing Bill," Congressional Quarterly Weekly, 16 July 1988, p. 1976.

20. Mills, pp. 1815-1817.

21. Mills, p. 1816.

22. Lawrence, p. 1976.

23. Powell, p. 2808.

24. The auto pilot feature was that no action was required of Congress. The Bill would become law "unless" they stopped it.

25. Mike Mills, "Base-Closings, The Political Pain, is Limited," Congressional Quarterly Weekly, 31 December 1988, p. 3625.

26. Ibid.

27. Mills, "Base Closings", p. 3628.

28. Mike Mills, "A Dogged, if Futile, Trench War is Planned by Some on the Hill," Congressional Quarterly Weekly, 25 March 1989, pp. 660-662.

29. Laurie Goering, "Suit Seeks Halt to Base Closings," Chicago Tribune, 12 May 1989, Sec. 2C. p. 7.

30. Melissa Healy and Paul Houston, "Threatened Bases a Budget Ruse, Lawmakers Charge." Los Angeles Times, 28 January 1990, p. 27.

31. Andrew Rosenthal, "Lawmakers Scurrying to Protect Home Bases." New York Times, 27 January 90, p. 13.

32. Healy, p. 27.

33. "Pentagon Has Political Hit List." Los Angeles Times, 26 January 1990, p. A26.

34. Rosenthal, p. 13.

35. In another paper I researched, there were 38 newsworthy items relating to unethical conduct by members of the Legislature and Executive Branch in an 18 month period starting in September 1987.

36. I don't have a source for this other than having a professor attribute the quote to Sam Rayburn.

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