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ABSTRACT

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The San Francisco Bay Area played a critical role in supporting military activities throughout the twentieth century. Due to its location, the Bay Area served as one of the key military staging grounds for the Pacific campaign of WWII, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. The region benefited from war-related industry, housing the largest shipyard west of the Mississippi and supporting the burgeoning postwar military industrial complex. Its demographics diversified dramatically as soldiers, Vietnam War refugees, and war workers migrated to the region. As part of the Sunbelt, the Bay Area benefited economically from generous military procurement spending. However, over the course of the 1980s, 1990s, and the 2000s, the Bay Area shifted away from having a significant military presence to having practically none. Compared to the approximately thirty military facilities operating in 1980, today all but a handful are either closed or slated for closure.

Residents, experts, and scholars wondered how could a single region in the Sun Belt, which benefitted from significant federal defense investment, lose so much, so quickly? Many locals blamed the region’s “liberal” people and politicians for inciting the military’s wrath. Hence, a popular social narrative evolved. Many contended that the navy and Department of Defense deliberately targeted bases in the Bay Area for closure as a way of punishing the Bay Area for its anti-war intransigence.

This dissertation challenges the narrative that the Bay Area was punished. It examines the causal factors that led to the elimination of the region’s bases. Through
three case studies covering base closures in three Bay Area cities, Alameda (Alameda Naval Air Station), Vallejo (Mare Island Naval Shipyard), and Oakland (Oakland Army Base and Fleet and Industrial Supply Center Oakland), a different explanation for the closures emerges. This project demonstrates that the passage of federal policies and legislation, urban encroachment, the reduction of military need, the advancement of military technologies, the enforcement of environmental policies, and shifts in military procurement processes caused a collective cascading effect, which yielded unintended consequences on the region. Going further, this dissertation likewise investigates the effectiveness and fairness of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC). The BRAC was designed as a way to close bases in an independent, equal, and apolitical manner. Taken together, these factors demonstrate that Bay Area bases closed due to politics, just not the punishment kind.
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Unable to agree on the specifics of balancing the federal budget, Congress and President Barack Obama passed the 2011 Budget Control Act. This act called for across-the-board federal spending cuts, which took effect in January 2013. Yet amid this backdrop of austerity, 173 congressional representatives sought to spend $463 billion dollars on a tank retrofit project that the army neither wanted nor needed. The army publically stated that it did not need to upgrade the technology in 2,400 of its Abrams tanks. More than 4,500 of the army’s existing tanks already possessed the technology upgrades and there was little need for more. These representatives, however, were attempting to save defense-related jobs in their local districts, with no regard for military necessity. The Abrams tank plant, the location where the upgrades were to take place, was the fifth largest employer in its hometown of Lima, OH. Lima sits in Ohio’s 4th Congressional district, which neighbors Speaker of the House John Boehner’s (R-OH) 8th Congressional district. Further, it was estimated that the Abrams tank supply chain employed more than 18,000 people through 560 subcontractors across the U.S. Consequently, cutting the program could create serious political ramifications for lawmakers.¹

  In many regions across the U.S., military jobs are the lifeline sustaining local and state economies. Defense spending has one of the most recession-proof sectors of the U.S. economy, providing a stable source of federal employment and economic support

for local economies. For example, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base (AFB) is the largest employer in the State of Ohio. So when it comes to defense cuts and, particularly, base closures, politics can quickly overshadow military necessity.

Domestic base closures are thus a politically difficult issue for politicians; no politician wants to be tarred with the reputation of losing the economic benefits associated with a military base in his/her district. The threat alone of base closures can instill fear. For instance, in advance of the controversial vote on Health Care Reform Act (commonly referred to as Obamacare) an unfounded rumor emerged. This rumor suggested that the Obama administration threatened Nebraska Senator Ben Nelson (D-Nebraska) with putting Nebraska’s Offutt AFB on the base closure list unless he voted in favor of the legislation. Both the White House and Nelson’s office vehemently denied the allegation. While no proof ever emerged, this episode demonstrated how politically charged base closures can be. In short, the very notion of defense budget cuts can trigger political ramifications that lead even the most fiscally conservative politicians to justify projects that lack military value. Nearly twenty percent of the federal budget thereby goes to defense related expenditures. Today, as Congress and the President struggle to balance the budget it seems inevitable that more defense programs and facilities will be targeted for termination or closure in the near future.

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Historically, political struggles to balance the federal budget have resulted in military base closures. The San Francisco Bay Area (Bay Area), once a strategic military region, offers a case in point. This region lost nearly all of its physical military presence between 1988 and 1995. Most of what remained was eliminated in 2005. Many residents, military experts, and scholars questioned the reasons for the rapid sequence of closures. They wondered how could a Sun Belt region, which benefitted from significant federal defense investment throughout most of the twentieth century, lose so much, so quickly?

Some blamed the anti-military liberal bias in the region. They argued that the moral and civil rights concerns of the citizens of San Francisco, Mayor Art Agnos, and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors caused Bay Area leaders to reject the navy’s 1987 bid to homeport the U.S.S. Missouri battleship group at Hunters Point Naval Shipyard (HPNSY) in South San Francisco. Others blame perceived “liberal” politicians such as Democratic Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer and Representatives Nancy Pelosi (D-CA 12th) and Ronald Dellums (D-CA 9th). Dellums, a longtime member of the House Armed Services Committee, spent his career advocating against defense spending. He successfully limited Department of Defense (DoD) projects such as the B2 bomber, the Star Wars Defense Initiative, and the MX missile system. In 1993, a large number of base closures occurred in or next to his congressional district. Many locals felt that the navy and the DoD punished the Bay Area for its liberal politicians and anti-war intransigence by removing all but a few military bases from the region. However, the narrative that the Bay Area was punished for its liberal political inclinations, while compelling, is not supported by factual evidence.
The research presented in this dissertation suggests a different set of causal factors that led to the elimination of Bay Area bases: urban encroachment, reduced military need, technological advances, changing military procurement processes, increased environmental constraints, and a missed opportunity to secure the navy’s Pacific Fleet anchorage. These closures actually say more about how federal investment and legislation were implemented on a local level than they do about retribution, partisanship, or political persuasion.

Instead, this dissertation identifies different kinds of politics that impacted federal investment. Passage of federal policies and legislation created a cascading effect of unintended consequences. Each consequence weakened the operation, mission, and societal interactions of these bases long before they were designated for closure. As an end result, Bay Area bases closed due to these derivative politics, not because of grand scheme to punish the region. For example, passage of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act of 1987, an effort to move towards a balanced budget, pushed across-the-board federal spending cuts. This in turn forced the navy to extend maintenance cycles, decommission submarines, and remove excess capacity. All three of these factors directly contributed to the closure of the Mare Island Naval Shipyard (MINSY). The City of San Francisco’s rejection of homeporting the USS *Missouri*, designed to make a very political statement about social equality and militarism, affected the utility of other navy bases located in the region. The DoD’s shift to private defense contractors, politically motivated by private industry lobbyists, put public defense industrial facilities, like MINSY, under tremendous cost and productivity pressures. Passage and implementation of federal, state, and local environmental legislation created a nearly impossible situation for DoD facilities to exist
in a high-density area such as the Bay Area. Further, urban encroachment, an example of citizens making a political choice to place economics over defense, diminished NAS Alameda’s military value as an operational base.

This project also highlights the delicate balancing act required of politicians to manage constituent needs against political realities. In this case, when Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer became senators, they had a responsibility to represent the entirety of California, not just the Bay Area. This brought them into direct conflict with the Bay Area during the early 1990s, as the federal government sought to reduce its massive military infrastructure. It was then that the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC), the independent federal commission tasked with deciding which bases should be closed, evaluated MINSY versus the Long Beach Naval Shipyard (LBNSY). Here both Senators chose to lobby on behalf of LBNSY instead of their hometown bases, perhaps a reflection of the need to keep Southern California’s defense related constituency happy. By contrast, Dellums put forth very vocal and public support for Bay Area bases through the 1988, 1991, and 1993 rounds. Yet for the 1995 BRAC, which focused on the bases in the neighborhood where he grew up, inexplicably he was silent. At the same time, Boxer and Feinstein and the rest of the CA congressional delegation put their focus on saving LBNSY and McClellan AFB in Sacramento.

As a regionally-based urban history, this project employs three case studies to examine the political factors determining how federal investments, environmental legislation, and a physical military presence impacted the Bay Area. These case studies examine Alameda Naval Air Station in Alameda, CA, MINSY in Vallejo, CA and the Oakland Army Base (OAB) and navy’s Fleet and Industrial Supply Center (FISC), both
located in Oakland, CA. The studies magnify the relationships between residents, and local, state, federal, and military officials prior to, during, and after the base closure process. What emerges is a complex and more nuanced explanation of the underlying politics for the wide-scale base closures in this single region.

The closing of most Bay Area bases occurred as part of Public Law 101-510, the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990. This law established the process and methods for facilitating domestic base closures and was a marked improvement on the previous process. In 1988, Public Law 100-526 established a one-time base closure commission to make closure recommendations. This commission closed eighty-six bases, but suffered from some key structural deficiencies, including reporting directly to Secretary of Defense and lacking any formal transparency mechanisms. The new legislation authorized the creation of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC). The BRAC convened in 1991, 1993, 1995, and 2005 and closed over 219 major bases.6

BRAC, like other federal commissions, allow presidents and Congress to address volatile issues in an ostensibly politically safe environment. These commissions consisted of experts and well-respected authorities who conduct in-depth research and analysis on the bases with the goal of creating a set of recommendations. These recommendations were non-binding and gave politicians room to maneuver and essentially avoid blame. Politicians could accept the recommendations, safe in the knowledge that they themselves did not make the decision, or when the decision is too

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politically difficult, they could simply dismiss the decision altogether. Naturally, base closures, the elimination of jobs and of federal investment in local communities, were politically volatile issues, so a commission process was the only way to tackle these challenges productively. Prior to BRAC process, attempts at meaningful base closures, from the 1970s through the mid-1980s, became mired in partisan politics. These political roadblocks prevented any meaningful reductions in the number of bases. As a result, before the BRAC process, the DoD ended up supporting bases that were both costly and unnecessary.

BRAC, through use of the independent commission model, was designed to be apolitical. Yet, just about every factor in the base closings had a political aspect to it. For instance, the BRAC charter established cost and military value as its primary criteria for evaluation. Yet, using cost as a measure contained all sorts of biases and hidden agendas. If one region had higher housing or labor costs, as did the Bay Area, then what did that say about the region? If the goal was to move bases to the cheapest possible place, then they were all going to end up in areas where labor and land were cheap, typically certain areas in the South? This created a natural bias against the Northeast, parts of the Midwest, and California, which, not so coincidentally, historically had high concentrations of union labor. More importantly, by using quantitative cost and military value as the primary evaluation criteria, as specified by the law, the true community impact was not adequately considered. A navy base closure in Oakland, CA that employed several thousand people from economically disadvantaged populations had a greater impact on that community than closing a navy base in a city that was

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7 Some high profile military-related commissions include the Roberts Commission (cause of Pearl Harbor), the Gates Commission (ending the draft), the 9/11 Commission, and Women in Combat Commission.
predominantly white with significant economic opportunities. Thus, the BRAC process obscured the significant political questions of race, class, and community that pervaded the decisions.

This dissertation likewise investigates three additional issues. First, it examines the effectiveness and fairness of the modern base closure process. Did the process work as designed? Were there areas for improvement? Second, it describes the roles each military base performed in the neighboring communities. Applying a critical lens of “good neighbor” / “bad neighbor”, this study regards the different ways in which the military and local communities interacted with the bases and identifies key trends that were under way long before the base closure process started. It also establishes a context for relevant local issues related to disaster response, environmental pollution, social justice, and urban encroachment. Last, this dissertation considers the impact of federal policies on local areas with regard to military procurement, base closures, and environmental laws. Legislation and federal investment decisions in Washington DC had different implementations and results in different parts of the country. Hence, this investigation finally examines whether the Bay Area fared better or worse comparatively as a result of federal policymaking.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This dissertation seeks to add to a growing body of literature in urban, military, political, environmental, and policy history. The American West owes its success, if not existence, to the federal government. Donald Worster (Rivers of Empire), Patricia Limerick (The Legacy of Conquest), and others have exposed the significant role of the federal government in turning the West from a barren land into a functional, and
eventually highly profitable, region. The impact of the military in developing the West has become a more popular topic for Western historians over the last two decades. Gerald Nash and Roger Lotchin have produced significant work tracing the role of federal military investment and World War II (WWII) in the transformation of California and the West. This project seeks to describe the next phase in Lotchin’s *Fortress California* by addressing the first phase of demilitarization in California. Chapter five of this project provides a continuation of Robert Self’s *American Babylon*, which provides an urban and civil rights study centered on Oakland. Self concludes in the mid-1980s, whereas this project picks the story up in the 1990s. Also, this work adds to a small but growing set of literature centering on military bases and urban history. As an example, Carol McKibben’s *Racial Beachhead* uses Fort Ord, in Seaside, CA, to trace the evolution of race relations as influenced by military policies and institutions throughout the civil rights era. In other words, as federal military policies at bases like Fort Ord removed barriers for ethnic and racial minorities, this correspondingly helped cities like Seaside become more racially harmonious. Similarly, this dissertation seeks to expand on the historical significance of military bases and local communities.

Finally, this dissertation contributes to a desperately needed cross-domain collaboration of military and environmental history. In military history, the environment is often portrayed as a passive actor, upon which war inflicts damage. Common

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examples include the Western front during World War I (WWI), dropping of the atomic bombs at the conclusion of WWII, or defoliation during Vietnam. Yet, this narrative is only one dimension in a rapidly growing discipline. Recent scholarship blends military and environmental history to explore how the environment has agency and actively dictates tactics, affects regional planning, and influences policymaking. This project sits squarely in the military, environmental, and policymaking nexus by examining how environmental legislation influenced military operations and basing during peacetime. Critical historical examination of how environmental policy affected military bases is particularly relevant for today’s policy makers. Military planners and legislators must struggle with operating and closing existing military bases contaminated with the most toxic chemicals and pollutants known to science. At the same time, they must address environmental sustainability as planning proceeds for a new generation of bases. This project also adds another data point in order to measure the effectiveness of the 1970s environmental legislative agenda.12

Very limited literature about base closures exists. The most prominent is David Sorensen’s *Shutting Down the Cold War*, an examination of the 1991, 1993, and 1995 base closures. Dedicating a chapter to each, Sorensen describes the politics, local reactions, and interesting tidbits of information about the base closures. He also describes the unique situations that occur as a result of base closures, such as historic preservation, environmental problems, and economic challenges.13 Sorensen covers the 2005 BRAC in *Military Base Closure*. Here, as in his previous work, he shines light on

12 For more on new dimensions in military and environmental history see the *Environmental History*, Volume 17, Issue 2, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
the politics and issues that stem from base closures. The perspective of both books is at
the macro level and how the process played out across the nation, zooming in on
individual cases as a way to illustrate the overarching political narrative. As a result, not
all bases get addressed and those that do only receive superficial treatment.14 RAND
published a navy-sponsored study in 2001, titled *The Closing and Reuse of the
Philadelphia Naval Shipyard*. Written by Ron Hess, the study examines the costs and
consequences of shutting down the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard and converting it for
commercial shipbuilding. It brings to light the costs of closing, maintaining, and
restarting the shipyard. The demographic nature of the shipyard workforce is examined
as a way of better understanding the impact on a local population. Finally, his work
makes critical judgments about the policy implications of closing this facility. Hess notes
that this closure did not really save money, nor did the navy conduct this closure in a
manner to be repeated.15 Another RAND study, *Taking Stock of the Army’s Base
Realignment and Closure Selection Process*, by William Hix, analyzes the army’s criteria
for selecting base closures. Using a framework of ten measurement criteria, Hix
evaluates the army’s performance during the 1995 BRAC process. He ultimately
concludes that the army was “somewhat deficient” on six out of the ten proposed criteria.
Two of the six are particularly relevant to this study, “[c]onsiders current and future
requirements” and “[l]eads to improved operations.” The failure to adequately address
these measures contributed to OAB’s closure.16 More importantly, Hix’s analysis is

15 Ronald Wayne Hess et al., *The Closing and Reuse of the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard* (Santa Monica,
16 William M. Hix, *Taking Stock of the Army’s Base Realignment and Closure Selection Process* (Santa
especially relevant because no standard evaluative process exists across the service branches to nominate bases for closure. As two NAS Alameda and Mare Island case studies will demonstrate, the navy did not even have a clear process within its own branch. Lilly J. Goren’s *The Politics of Military Base Closings*, as the title indicates, is an in-depth look at the political chicanery in and around the base closure process. Specifically, it is a look at how Congress abdicated its duty, out of political fear, and transferred its power to third-party commissions. Thus, each congressperson was one step removed from the difficult and unpopular decisions and was less likely to be directly affected by the political fallout. Goren uses the BRAC as the perfect example of this relegation of power. Ultimately this work calls into question the validity, necessity, and efficacy of using commissions, especially for something as important as base closures.¹⁷

Finally, Patrick Eugene Poppert’s *Base Closure Impacts and the General Effects of Military Installations on Local Private Employment* looks at the economic and employment-related impacts of base closures. Using data from the 1988, 1991, 1993, and 1995 base closures, Poppert’s study examines the effects of infrastructure downsizing, economic assistance, and facilities reconversion as way of understanding defense-related employment across all fifty states. Poppert concludes that job losses in total were not nearly as bad as originally feared.¹⁸ However, the Bay Area is an outlier in the statistical analysis, and the regional job losses far outpaced those in all other areas.

As historians of the West have repeatedly pointed out, the region has long been the beneficiary of large federal government investment and owes much of its growth to

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these investments. For example, the National Reclamation Act of 1902 federalized water development in the West and helped what was previously unachieved, to conquer the arid terrain.¹⁹ Yet WWII was a, if not the, seminal moment for Western history. The martial buildup leading up to, during, and after the conflict, forever transformed the physical and economic landscape. This transformation of California and the West was made possible through significant federal investment in support of military efforts. Almost overnight, military bases sprang up, an army of defense contractors appeared, and civilian industries such as shipbuilding and aircraft manufacturing took off. *Fortress California* expands on the martial metropolis theme, explaining how California grew as a result of, and became dependent on, the defense industry, as it traces the massive militarization of California from 1910 through 1961.²⁰ Lotchin’s *The Bad City in the Good War* carries the theme and study of the martial metropolis further, but this time he narrows the timeline to the WWII era. Here Lotchin examines how the city and urban environment contributed to success in WWII, using San Francisco, Los Angeles, Oakland, and San Diego as the foci and highlighting how these individual cities made contributions to the war effort. He explores industrial output, labor, transportation, and even physical structures to tell the story of war’s impact on cities and vice-versa. Gerald Nash’s *The American West Transformed* takes a similar approach by providing a view into how the West, California, and the Bay Area were transformed by WWII. He argues that prior to the middle of the twentieth century California and the West were little more than colonial possessions of

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the Eastern industrial complex, but WWII changed that.\(^{21}\) Among the significant changes was the building, through federal government funding, of an independent industrial economic base. In relation to this dissertation, Nash describes how the influence and extensive presence of military bases developed across the region, noting how Oakland became a major supply depot and port of embarkation. Nash not only explains the development of the vast army and naval facilities, but also the booming shipbuilding centers in South San Francisco, Sausalito, Vallejo, and Richmond, and thoroughly establishes the robust Bay Area military presence that is contrasted by this dissertation.\(^{22}\)

The migration of workers to the West during the war has spawned a number of city-specific studies that explore labor, race relations, housing, and other aspects of social and cultural history. Marilynn S. Johnson’s *The Second Gold Rush* examines WWII’s cultural impact on San Francisco’s East Bay (East Bay) communities.\(^{23}\) Johnson’s study includes Oakland and Alameda, but excludes Vallejo, which is considered part of the San Francisco North Bay Area. Johnson’s work tracks the urban transformation that occurred as large and disparate groups of people migrated to the West. It also studies the changes and challenges associated with race, class, and political representations, the byproduct of all these new people rapidly coming together in a single place. These dynamics set the stage for the social and cultural changes that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. Continuing the cultural study of the East Bay, Shirley Ann Wilson Moore’s *To Place Our Deeds* presents a history of African Americans in Richmond, California from 1910 to 1963.

\(^{21}\) In many ways this is a continuation of Donald Worster’s *Rivers of Empire*. Nash continues Worster’s story by telling how the federal government, after it helped tame the West (privileging the few), built an entire economy privileging an entire region.


This monograph examines the urban development and transformation of Richmond before, during, and after WWII. Moore frames the migration of African Americans to the city, and the issues they encountered employed at the shipyards during the war and after the shipyards closed. The experience of African Americans in Richmond is similar to what occurred to African Americans in Oakland, albeit over a longer time period, and foreshadowed the difficulty Mare Island and Vallejo would experience in the 1990s.24

Two monographs, specific to Oakland, provide historical context for the events leading up to the base closures highlighted in this dissertation. Robert Self’s American Babylon is both an urban and civil rights history centered on Oakland. Self describes the political and social struggles over land taxes and jobs in postwar Oakland from 1945 through the late 1970s. Oakland provides an excellent location for this study because of its large postwar black population in a city caught in urban decline and deindustrialization. The trajectory of African American political action is a central focus of this story tracing the early organizing efforts of C.L. Dellums, A. Philip Randolph, and other community leaders as they fought for civil rights throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Self argues it was these community movements, and the lack of progress they made, that led to the formation of the Black Panthers. Self ends his work in 1978 with the election of the first African American mayor, Lionel Wilson. Wilson’s success was largely the result of twenty-plus years of African American struggles. The Oakland case study of this dissertation continues the story where Self left off. Wilson and his successor, African American Elihu Harris, took power in Oakland exactly when it entered an era of decline. Wilson had to deal with the passage of Proposition 13 and the tax revolt that cut

large amounts of tax revenue. Harris took over right when the decision was made to close the OAB. Another thread that carries through from Self’s work is the role of congressional representative Ron Dellums. Self describes how the efforts of C.L. Dellums and other community leaders paid off in the election of his nephew Ron as the congressional representative from California’s Ninth District, a position he held from 1971 to 1998. This dissertation picks up Dellums's career in the 1990s when he amassed significant success and power in Congress as chairman of the Armed Forces Committee. Yet, the Bay Area was denuded of nearly its entire military presence during the 1990s under Dellums’s watch. Some contend this was deliberate political payback against Dellums for his anti-military view, and while this makes for great political theater, historical precedents tell a different story. Moreover, studying Dellums’s handling of the closures presents a different way to interpret the events. Finally, Chris Rhomberg’s No There There, studies race, class, and urban politics in Oakland through a sociological study. Using three critical moments in the city’s development, he traces the emergence of urban reform, organized labor, corporate machine politics, and Black Power. The events from this study help to establish the complex social and racial boundaries present in modern day Oakland.

In the post-WWII era and spurred by the military industrial complex spending, the West received a massive influx of federal investment. This investment in places such as California, Colorado, and Texas generated a concentration of highly skilled workers and technical expertise, and put billions of dollars into private companies. These defense-

26 Chris Rhomberg, No There There: Race, Class, and Political Community in Oakland (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004), X, 18, 174.
related investments created clusters of industries, such as aerospace firms in Los Angeles, or concentrations of military bases like the ones found in San Diego or Colorado Springs. The Bay Area benefitted from these concentrations of federal investment, especially in Silicon Valley. As Margaret Pugh O’Mara demonstrates, the concentrations of federal investment in private business and research universities created “cities of knowledge” that spurred long-term economic growth and success. 27 The massive federal investment insulated these Sun Belt cities from the ebbs and flows of economic contraction. *Rise of the Gunbelt* is an examination of how defense contracting during the Cold War produced a new economic map, located in the South, the West, and certain coastal portions of the United States. The authors trace how the centers of industry in the Northeast and Midwest became increasingly irrelevant to the growth of the military industrial complex. Thus, as the Rust Belt went into decline, the Gunbelt was disproportionately sustained by defense spending throughout the Cold War. Further, the authors trace the myriad of factors that led to the population migrations West and South. These factors, including the work of local city boosters, politicians, generals and colonels, aerospace entrepreneurs, and universities, are examined in a series of regional case studies covering Los Angeles, Seattle, New England, and Colorado Springs. In short, this work tells the story of economic and industrial progress sponsored by the military and federal government that privileged certain sections of the country. Specifically for this project, the authors note that California was the biggest winner in the Cold War buildup, making it a prime subject to analyze the demilitarization that occurred in the 1990s and 2000s. More importantly, the case study of Colorado Springs is a perfect counterweight to the case studies in this

dissertation. The authors describe how the city of Colorado Springs was based almost entirely on the military and defense-related industries, the result of over forty years of effort to bring the military to Colorado Springs. Prior to WWII, Colorado Springs had a depressed economy based on a flagging tourism industry. The effort to bring in the military industrial complex paid off as Colorado Springs was the recipient of three major military installations during the Cold War, including such jewels as the Air Force Academy and NORAD. This led to a burgeoning growth in the private defense industry, tying the economic health of Colorado Springs to the military. Accordingly, the loss of a military base in Colorado Springs would have far more devastating economic consequences to the local economy than it would in a region like the Bay Area.28

Interestingly, all of this defense investment had opposite effects in Northern and Southern California. In Northern California a new cultural ideology emerged. W.J. Rorabaugh’s Berkeley at War is a foundational work in understanding the cultural shift that enveloped the Bay Area, and especially the East Bay, during the 1960s. Rorabaugh details the free speech, antiwar, black power, feminist, and other related movements as they emanated out from Berkeley during the 1960s. Although schools like U.C. Berkeley and Stanford received significant defense research funding from the government, these connections faded into the background in the shadow of the social movements.29

By contrast, in Southern California defense spending contributed to the emergence of a new political ideology. Lisa McGirr’s Suburban Warriors tells the story of how Southern California changed with the massive defense spending invested in the region. The defense spending beneficiaries, mostly white middle class and well educated

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became part of the rapidly rising conservative and anti-statist movement. Ironically, prior to and during WWII, the Southern California boosters and politicians were exploiting the federal government martial buildup in competition with the Bay Area, while remaining extremely distrustful of the federal government. They railed against the nation-state and made political attacks against the federal government. They warned of influence by "social planners" in Washington. Yet at the exact same time they fully immersed themselves in the nation-state bureaucracy to broker increases in federal defense dollars for military bases, martial industry, and infrastructure projects such as bridges, airports, roads, and harbor improvements. They lobbied for the national government to create a favorable climate for economic investment and lowering of taxes while refusing to accept the federal government in social planning or urban development. Lotchin refers to this as a "city rights-movement" to curb the power of the federal government.

Regionalized defense investment had an indirect, but long-term effect on civil rights. The ongoing federal government-sponsored investment in military procurement and research and development provided a feedback loop of education, employment, and economic prosperity (including home ownership) to a select group of mostly white, middle-class workers. More importantly, as each generation cycled through the loop, more resources and upward mobility came with it. So for forty-five years of the Cold War a select group benefited from education, which brought them jobs, which in turn brought them monetary gains. This led to further education, higher paying jobs, and more monetary gains, all of which transferred to the next generation and gave them a

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head start. Specifically, those who grew up in the suburbs next to the low-density office parks connected to research universities in the Sun Belt, the technically trained and highly educated workers, were able to take advantage of the tech and housing booms in the Bay Area and California, and became the beneficiaries of the federal defense spending. All of this defense investment in the West happened as Northeast industrial America went into decline. It also coincided with the emergence of the civil rights movements in the urban areas as demonstrated by Thomas Sugrue (Detroit), Pugh O’Mara (Philadelphia), Robert Selﬀ (Oakland), Kenneth Durr (Baltimore), and Martha Biondi (New York), among others. What is missing from the traditional civil rights narratives is the establishment and solidiﬁcation of the white middle class as a result of this Cold War defense investment. In other words, while civil rights advocates were battling tactical racial problems such as housing, employment practices, and violence, long-term structural disparity was being created in the shadows. Ethnic and racial minorities were mostly excluded from the hyper-upward mobility feedback loops of advanced education, long-term employment, and sustained economic prosperity.

Education has become the key enabler to participating in the robust Bay Area economic prosperity. The region’s most lucrative jobs centered on professional, scientiﬁc, and technical ﬁelds, all of which required access to advanced education. By comparison, over seventy percent of the ethnic and racial minority community lacks a

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degree past high school. As a result, these populations were not in a position to take advantage of the tech boom of the 1990s and 2000s and have been disproportionately left out. African Americans living in West Oakland in the 1980s and 1990s no longer faced the same overt discrimination they faced in the 1950s and 1960s, though employment opportunities remained slim and the threat of violence from within the community grew. African Americans and disadvantaged populations who once relied on the OAB, FISC Oakland, NAS Alameda or other federal institutions for employment, education, and upward mobility no longer had access to these benefits. Thus, the closure of the OAB and FISC Oakland had devastating short- and long-term effects on the Oakland ethnic and racial minority community. By comparison, when the “dotcom” bubble burst, it only took a couple of years before a whole new technology growth engine emerged around Web 2.0 and social media.

THE UNIQUE BAY AREA

The Bay Area is a unique place to study base closures. It is a region that benefitted significantly from military industrial complex spending throughout the Cold War. It is also a region that has achieved tremendous prosperity. Bay Area wages have gone from being sixteen percent higher than the national average in 1981 to fifty-two percent higher in 2010, dramatically outpacing California and major California cities (see figure 1). Accordingly, by 2010 the Bay Area median household income has grown to $82,500, a staggering forty-one percent higher than the rest of the country and thirty-seven percent higher than California.

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33 The Bay Area A Regional Economic Assessment, A Bay Area Council Economic Institute Report, October 2012, 6, 35.
Real estate prices have followed a similar trajectory, with the median house price rising from over $200,000 in 1996 to nearly $700,000 before the housing market collapse.\textsuperscript{35}

Paradoxically, during this timeframe the entire region was denuded of its physical military presence and with it defense dollars. On top of that, with the base closures local cities received nearly 30,000 acres of primarily waterfront property. With high property

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\caption{Average Wages.\textsuperscript{34}}
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\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{median_home_prices.png}
\caption{Median Home Prices, 1996-2012.\textsuperscript{36}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 3, 5, 46.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
values, high wages, and a housing shortage, reclaiming property from closed military bases was and is a very attractive proposition. For example, the Port of Oakland expanded its operational capacity by taking over the FISC Oakland’s property. The removal of the Treasure Island Naval Station opened up prime residential and office space, and tourist attractions for San Francisco.37

Culturally, the Bay Area provides a unique opportunity to study civil-military relations given its importance in supporting or hosting many key moments in civil rights activism. The Berkeley chapter of the Students for a Democratic Society, the free speech movement, gay pride, and the Black Panthers were highly visible markers of the civil rights movement. These movements became intertwined with the antiwar protests of the Vietnam era, creating an environment hostile to the military. Thus, what emerges by the early 1990s is a region that is economically prosperous and, at a minimum, ambivalent about the presence of the military. These factors manifested themselves in the actions of local politicians and congressional representatives, most notably Ron Dellums who, as stated above, is well known for his anti-military positions.

WHY THE BAY AREA

The Bay Area has a long and storied relationship in support of the nation’s defense. The Presidio of San Francisco became the region’s first major military installation in 1848, after being captured from the Spaniards two years earlier. Mare Island Naval Shipyard (MINSY) became the West Coast’s first shipyard and naval base. Together the Presidio and MINSY provided a steadying and protective federal presence.

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during the tumultuous gold rush era. As the Civil War loomed and eventually broke out, the army added additional coastal fortifications at the western edge of the Bay Area. In the late 1800s, President Grover Cleveland commissioned a board of inquiry, commonly known as the Endicott Board, to study deficiencies in U.S. coastal and seaport security. This report spurred a construction boom of coastal fortifications to provide physical security to key seaports within the continental U.S. The Bay Area benefitted with seven forts constructed on the San Francisco coast and interior Bay.\(^{38}\) It was not a coincidence that this martial buildup correlated with America’s imperial ambitions. Many of America’s territorial acquisitions and strategic interests occurred in Asia and Central and South America, all regions that required a strong military presence on the West coast.

Correspondingly, from the beginning of the twentieth century to the start of WWII, California experienced a military buildup. As a result, California cities bolstered their tenuous urban economies with the stability of government military spending. In the early 1900s, California cities lacked a robust and consistent economic engine. Most of the industry consisted of satellite extensions of East and Midwest companies. Through actively lobbying and boosterism, and in the context of imperial ambitions and in support of economic policies such as the Open Door Policy, military base investment became a key feature of the California landscape. The Bay Area benefitted from this federal investment as the military built one base after another.\(^{39}\) The approach and U.S. involvement in WWII further fueled this buildup throughout the state, but especially the

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Bay Area. By the end of 1941 the Bay Area had twenty-five major operating bases. These bases played a direct support role in supporting what Bruce Cumings termed the “Archipelago of Empire,” the projection of American power throughout Asia to exert territorial control and protect economic interests through the use of the military and its bases. Bay Area military bases, serving as the main shipping and supply hub, played a crucial role in supporting America’s modern Asian presence, both in war and peace.

Throughout the Cold War, the Bay Area, like other regions in the Sun Belt, benefitted from the modern military industrial complex. This included significant federal funding for companies, universities, and the cities that supported the advancement of military technology. These investments resulted in the creation of Silicon Valley, which became a major economic engine for the region and powered the Bay Area economy’s transformation from the defense industry to consumer-oriented technology.

Economically, the Bay Area has positioned itself a key hub, along with other West Coast ports, to the vast trade with Asia that has grown steadily since the 1800s. After enduring two world wars, the Korean War, the First and Second Indochina wars, and decolonization, Asia experienced an significant economic expansion. Starting in the 1980s, the Bay Area took advantage of this boom and experienced one of the many benefits of moving away from a defense economy. Containerized shipping in Oakland, tourism in San Francisco, and hi-tech in Silicon Valley, are three high profile examples of

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40 See Roger Lotchin’s *Fortress California, The Martial Metropolis*, and *The Good City in the Bad War* and Gerald Nash’s *The American West Transformed*.
42 For more on this phenomenon see Margaret Pugh O'Mara, *Cities of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).
the region’s changing economy. In this post-Vietnam era the defense focus shifted east, back to the Soviet Union and Europe, for the final chapter of the Cold War. As the Soviet Union collapsed, the need for a large military footprint dwindled and led to a downsizing and refocusing of U.S. military forces worldwide. The military drawdown is part of a broader trend as the military continues to transition from a super-sized force capable of defeating a huge Soviet military to a more modestly sized force that is engaged in technologically advanced, coalition-based warfare. It is also indicative of a trend of national demilitarization whereby cities and regions once benefiting from military-related spending are now forced to manage with limited or no military presence. In fact, much like globalization has outsourced industrial sector jobs abroad, the military is leaving domestic cities in pursuit of global terrorism. As a result, the U.S. has built a massive international basing structure. Locating military bases abroad allows the military to operate with less direct oversight and has the added advantage of fewer legal restrictions, such as environmental compliance.

DEMILITARIZATION

The regional demilitarization is still a fairly new phenomenon and relatively unexplored. In fact, demilitarization is part of the broader study of regional deindustrialization. As factories and jobs moved from the North to the South in the

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44 For more on deindustrialization see Harrison Bennet and Barry Blustone’s *The Deindustrialization of America*, Thomas Sugrue’s *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, Robert Self’s *American Babylon*, Guian McKee’s *Liberalism, Race, and Deindustrialization in Philadelphia*, and Kenneth Durr’s *Behind the Backlash*. 

1960s and 1970s, and more recently from the South to overseas, cities and regions have been decimated. Yet in post-industrial America, the military remained a core economic engine throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s. As military spending decreased throughout the 1990s, the closing of military bases and defense-related industries caused a second wave of deindustrialization. This second wave, termed demilitarization, has shut down the main sources of federal government spending for cities and towns across the country. In some examples, bases closed altogether, leaving some cities with nothing. In other cases, operations were consolidated within existing bases located in other regions. Domestic base closures have become a politically sensitive issue. Politicians neither want to be tarnished with the legacy of having lost military bases, nor do cities want to lose the economic engine of military spending.

Another key to understanding the wide-scale base closures in the Bay Area is the lack of base diversification. After WWII, the Bay Area became primarily a navy became the region’s primary military inhabitant. The army’s main facilities were the Presidio of San Francisco, OAB, and the small Hamilton Air Field in Marin County. The air force had Travis AFB located in Solano County and in Santa Clara County had Onizuka AFB, a small base focused on space operations. By comparison, the navy had the Alameda Naval Air Station, Moffett Field, Treasure Island Naval Station, Mare Island Naval Shipyard, Hunter’s Point Naval Shipyard, Concord Naval Weapons Station, the Oak Knoll Naval Hospital, and the FISC facilities in Oakland and Alameda, plus numerous other smaller commands jointly located on these bases. Closing these bases with the opportunity to reclaim the highly valuable land has been key to the Bay Area’s ability to move into the demilitarization era. In other words, the base closures, while painful, have
opened up a vast array of opportunities for the region.

The demilitarization of the Bay Area bases marks a growing divergence in civil-military relations. Military bases have been steadily concentrated to certain portions of the country and increasingly isolated from urban centers. No longer can communities depend on direct military spending in these areas. Conversely, the military can no longer expect to attract citizens to serve as easily as they once did. As bases are increasingly isolated from urban centers the number of youths exposed to the military in any form is becoming more rare. This forces the military to make greater efforts and expense to recruit and retain the all-volunteer force.45

SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

This study makes use of a wide collection of primary sources collected from a number of archives, libraries, and museums. Materials were drawn from the African American Museum and Library at Oakland, Alameda Library, Alameda Naval Air Museum, the Clinton Presidential Library and Museum Digital Library, the CSPAN Video Library, the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission Digital Library, Government Accountability Office Archive, National Archives at San Francisco, Naval History and Heritage Command Archive, Oakland Library, Oakland History Room at the Oakland Library, Oakland Museum, Regional Oral History Office at U.C. Berkeley, Surface Deployment and Distribution Command Archive, U.C. Berkeley Library, and Vallejo Naval and Historical Museum.

45 For more on recruiting and retaining the all-volunteer force see Beth Bailey, *America’s Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2009).
The NAS Alameda and MINSY case studies in this project use fifteen years of individual base command histories, on-base newspapers (*The Carrier* for Alameda and *The Grapevine* for Vallejo), and public newspapers (*Alameda Times Star, Alameda Journal*, and *Vallejo Times Herald*). These three sources allow for triangulation of the key issues affecting each base for the fifteen years prior to BRAC’s decision to close it.

The OAB and FISC Oakland case study uses fifteen years of public newspapers (*Oakland Tribune, Oakland Post, The Montclarion, San Francisco Chronicle, and San Francisco Examiner*)-combined with historical materials from the OAB and FISC Oakland, and interviews from the Oakland Army Base Oral History Project conducted by the U.C. Berkeley Regional Oral History Office. The OAB and FISC Oakland command histories were not available. The BRAC portions of this project draw from the commission’s final reports, supplementary materials contained in the BRAC digital library, closure-related environmental reports, GAO reports, and recordings of the BRAC hearings provided by CSPAN. The California Base Closure News provided additional information related to the base closings and issues that were unique to California. Background information was collected from the Assistant Secretary of the Navy’s (Installations and Environment) papers, the Ronald V. Dellums Congressional papers, the 1978 NAS Alameda Air Installation Compatibility Use Zone Study, and data from the U.S. Census. Other materials came from regional Bay Area transportation studies, Salt Water Harvester Mouse and California Clapper Rail research studies, demographic data from the Bay Area Regional Economic Assessment, Time Magazine articles, RAND studies, Works Progress Administration publications, Eugene Poppert’s dissertation about the economic impacts of base closures, and Captain John M. Fomous’s thesis, “Federal Supremacy and
Sovereign Immunity in Environmental Law.” Finally, the author opened a Freedom of Information Act request in March of 2011 with the Clinton Library for materials relating to base closures, but it has not been processed yet.

CONCLUSION

Over the course of a single decade, the Bay Area lost its entire military infrastructure and with it nearly 45,000 direct jobs. Many blamed the region’s “liberal” population and politicians for inducing punishment by the navy. While a compelling dramatic narrative, it falls apart as an argument under critical analysis. The Bay Area lost its military presence due to politics, but not because of punishment. Instead, political factors such as increased environmental legislation, urban encroachment, federal budget policies, and the ending of the Cold War, left the Bay Area vulnerable to base closures. More importantly, these closures occurred as part of independent BRAC process, which attempted to eliminate undue influence and meddling, but brought with it a new set of political considerations. In the end, the commission’s decisions were not designed to punish to the region, but rather punctuated national and regional political trends already underway. These trends are illustrated in the chapters and case studies that follow.

Chapter 2, “Bay Area Politics: Liberals, the Military and the Environment,” establishes the political precedents that eventually made operating in the Bay Area untenable. This chapter covers the Alameda-Vallejo controversy, Reagan’s 600-ship navy, the Missouri controversy, changes in military procurement, environmental legislation, and a brief history of the BRAC commission. Each of these factors provide the foundation for understanding the issues presented in the case studies.
The first case study (Chapter 3), “Good Neighbor, Bad Neighbor, Encroached Neighbor,” examines the benefits and costs that the Alameda NAS provided to the local community. This chapter illustrates the complexity and tension between urban encroachment, regional planning, federal and California environmental legislation, and military operations. In it, I argue that these factors represent a different kind of politics and corresponding repercussions led to the decision to close the base. Choices by residents and regional planning boards put economic growth ahead of accommodating military need. Federal, state, and local environmental agencies forced NAS Alameda to comply with noise, air, water, and waste disposal laws, which made operations more difficult and expensive. The high cost of labor and housing further impinged on the station’s ability to operate efficiently. In sum, these political factors caused the navy to slowly abandon the air station well before the BRAC process.

The second case study (Chapter 4), “Political Toxicity,” studies the Mare Island Naval Shipyard (MINSY) and its role as economic benefactor to the city of Vallejo juxtaposed with its role as significant polluter. This chapter further explores the local impact of federal budget balancing legislation and changing military procurement methods. In doing so, the chapter argues that macro policy decisions made in Washington or Sacramento, designed to be equal, have uneven application and consequences at the local level. Additionally, the politically motivated actions of neighboring cities, as evidenced with the Missouri controversy, can have wide-ranging repercussions. Thus, when it comes to military bases, all the cities in a region are interconnected and need to operate as a single entity versus going it alone.
The final case study (Chapter 5), “There Is No Base There,” focuses on the OAB and FISC Oakland’s relationship to issues of social justice and regional planning. The investigation of these two base closures demonstrates the economic pressures a regional economy can put on supporting a military base. This chapter contends that the BRAC, while apolitical in design, lacked the tools to prevent politics from creeping in. By law, the BRAC process forced commissioners to prescribe a higher value to cost savings and military necessity, when making their decisions. As a result, this minimized consideration of value to community, which for Oakland produced devastating results. Further, I argue that congressional and local politicians failed in their jobs to represent the community by helping to keep the bases open or finding effective ways of transforming the space.

Ultimately, these case studies argue that closing bases is a highly political endeavor, but not based on punishment. Rather, the need for the DoD to adhere to environmental compliance, federal budget balancing, economic factors (such as housing and labor costs), changing procurement policies, and new defense strategies are all dictated by politics. It is these politics that determine what bases will survive and which ones will close. More importantly, I argue that the DoD will continue to experience these same issues in highly urban areas such as, Southern California, Virginia, and Florida. The DoD needs to develop a long-term strategic domestic basing plan, one that includes building new facilities designed for the future, versus holding onto obsolete ones.

When the time comes for additional base closures, the actions of congressional and local politicians are better served planning for reuses than they are fighting the decision. The commission rarely sides with the community and the BRAC process
insulates politicians against political backlash for losing bases in their districts. Clinton went on to win the 1996 presidential election, Feinstein and Boxer went on to serve long terms as senators (which they are still serving), and Dellums retired in 1998 by his own choice. Absent gross negligence by the DoD, bases tagged on the closure list are either going to be closed or realigned. The sooner politicians and communities accept this, and avoid wasting money trying to save bases destined to close, the faster recovery and reuse can begin. Next, the decision to use an independent base closure commission to minimize political influence improved fairness of the four base closing rounds (1991, 1993, 1995, and 2005). However, even this process contained significant flaws because of the inability, dictated by Public Law 101-510, for commissioners to adequately consider the deep relationship between communities and bases in their decision making. As a result, certain states and regions benefitted from base closures, while California and the Bay Area suffered.

To conclude, federal defense investment into local communities can make or break a region. California and the West transformed throughout the early twentieth-century because of the martial buildup. These regions experienced tremendous wealth and opportunity during the Cold War due to the massive influx of spending. This defense spending protected them through recession, deindustrialization, and globalization while at the same time decimating the Northeast and Midwest. Yet, as the West, California, and particularly the Bay Area experienced, defense funding is not forever. Absent a global conflict, supporting a massive military infrastructure is not sustainable and demilitarization is inevitable. The question becomes which regions will lose these
precious sources of federal dollars? The answer is simple, politics will determine the outcome.
CHAPTER II. BAY AREA POLITICS: LIBERALS, THE MILITARY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the politics behind the Bay Area base closings, it is necessary to establish the broader context of the region’s bases and key legislative and policy events. This chapter provides a brief history of the military presence in the region. It goes on to describe both the Alameda-Vallejo and the Missouri controversies and subsequent ramifications. Next it highlights key changes in military procurement processes and the details behind Reagan’s 600-ship navy. A BRAC history is included in order to detail the evolution and politics of base closures. Finally, this chapter describes passage of the key federal and California environmental legislation. It these politically charged events and policies that limited missions, increased operational costs, and generally weakened Bay Area bases.

THE BAY AREA AND ITS MILITARY BASES

Alameda Naval Air Station (NAS), Mare Island Naval Shipyard (MINSY), the Fleet and Industrial Supply Center (FISC) Oakland, and the Oakland Army Base (OAB) are the primary case studies of this dissertation. However, it is necessary to describe the other major Bay Area military bases and their roles in the broader Bay Area military complex. For purposes of this study, the San Francisco Bay Area is defined as the nine counties surrounding San Francisco (see figure 1). In addition to the county of San Francisco, this region covers Sonoma, Marin, and Napa counties to the north. To the east,

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46 The following entities use this definition of the Bay Area, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Bay Area Council Economic Institute, the Bay Area Census, and the Association of Bay Area Governments.
the region consists of Alameda, Solano, and Contra Costa counties. San Mateo and Santa Clara serve as the southernmost boundary. This grouping includes the major metropolitan cities of San Francisco, San Jose, and Oakland, as well as regional hallmarks Silicon Valley and the Napa/Sonoma wine country.

![Figure 3. The San Francisco Bay Area.](image)

The Presidio of San Francisco was perhaps the most well known Bay Area base, owing to its lengthy history and the notoriety of the 1988 film *The Presidio* starring Sean Connery. Located on 1,416 acres of land near the Golden Gate Bridge in the city and county of San Francisco, its origins as an army base traced back to 1846. By 1988, the year it was recommended for closure, the base had largely lost its relevance, supporting only reserve forces and an army medical center. Hunters Point Naval Shipyard was a 934-acre base located on the waterfront between San Francisco Airport (SFO) and downtown San Francisco, in South San Francisco in San Francisco County. Once an active shipyard employing 17,000 workers and a large proportion of ethnic and racial

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47 The Bay Area A Regional Economic Assessment, A Bay Area Council Economic Institute Report, October 2012, 8.
minorities, the shipyard ceased operations in 1974. The location was slotted as a strategic homeport as part of Reagan’s 600-ship navy, for which it would house the famed USS Missouri and become the lightning rod for controversy with San Francisco officials and some citizens. Of particular note, the shipyard left behind a near catastrophic toxic legacy of lead, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), heavy metals, and radioactive material. Treasure Island, a 1,074-acre island sitting in San Francisco Bay, housed the Treasure Island Naval Station. This man-made island, built for the 1939 and 1940 Golden Gate Exposition and slotted for the location of SFO, was seized by the navy in 1942 with the outbreak of WWII. By the early 1990s the naval station had a diminished role providing only housing, training, and support for homeported ships and was recommended for closure by the 1993 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC). Yerba Buena Island adjoins Treasure Island, with the San Francisco Bay Bridge bisecting the two. This island serves as an active coast guard station, a mission it has served since 1872 when the U.S. Lighthouse Service made it an official base.

In the South Bay Area, Moffett Field Naval Air Station, a 3,097-acre base located in Sunnyvale, California in Santa Clara County, was established in 1933. It served as a lighter-than-air or blimp station and evolved to support fixed-wing aircraft. It was responsible for West Coast anti-submarine patrols, but suffered tremendously from urban

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encroachment and astronomical real estate prices from the exploding Silicon Valley. The 1991 BRAC recommended its closure. Onizuka Air Force Base (AFB), also located in Sunnyvale and Santa Clara County, was a twenty-three acre base primarily supporting U.S. Air Force Space Command. Many of its key Space Command activities were realigned in the 1995 BRAC. Then the 2005 BRAC recommended complete closure of the base.

Moving to the East Bay Area, Concord Naval Weapons Station, established in 1942, was a 12,878-acre facility in Concord, California, part of Contra Costa County. It primarily served as a naval ordnance, weapons, and equipment shipping facility. The base was the scene of the WWII Port Chicago disaster that killed 320 people in an explosion and the subsequent Port Chicago Mutiny. By the late 1990s, the station was largely mothballed and the City of Concord requested closure in order to develop the valuable real estate it occupied. The 2005 BRAC formally closed the base except for a small portion that was transferred to the army’s Surface Deployment and Distribution Command. Camp Parks, located in Dublin, California, in Contra Costa County, is an active 2,300-acre reserve base. The Oak Knoll Naval Hospital, a 167-acre health care facility located in Oakland, California, in Alameda County, opened in 1942. It was recommended for closure by the 1993 BRAC because Department of Defense (DoD) policy specifies that hospitals support active duty populations and, with the removal of most active duty commands in the Bay Area, it no longer fulfilled its primary mission. Coast Guard Island is an active duty coast guard station located in the estuary between
Alameda, California, and Oakland, and residing in Alameda County. The 67-acre base is home to a number of coast guard activities, including the Pacific Area Commander.\textsuperscript{50}

In the North Bay Area, Travis (AFB), built in 1942 and formally established in 1943, consists of 6,383 acres in Fairfield, California, in Solano County. It is an active base supporting the air force’s Air Mobility Command. Hamilton AFB originated in 1932 as Hamilton Army Air Field and served a crucial role during WWII. By 1973 the 1,100-acre base had lost it main commands and was mothballed until the 1988 Commission closed it.

**ALAMEDA VERSUS VALLEJO**

It is ironic that in 1993, when NAS Alameda and MINSY ended up on the base closure list, public officials from throughout the region worked to support each other in their respective bids to remain open.\textsuperscript{51} Eighty years earlier, the San Francisco Bay Area lost the opportunity to ensure a perpetual naval presence in the area because of political squabbling between the two cities. In the early 1900s, the navy planned to locate the main Pacific Fleet home base in the San Francisco Bay Area, bringing with it up to $100 million for the local economy and 45,000 naval personnel. The Helm Investigating Commission of 1916 selected Alameda as the most desirable location to house the new Pacific Fleet base. The City of Alameda offered up the potential base site for free. From the navy’s perspective, Alameda provided the ideal location with plenty of land for anchorage, a short distance to the Pacific Ocean, and connection to a significant industrial


\textsuperscript{51} Alisa Y. Kim, “Shipyards has allies,” *Vallejo Times Herald*, April 7, 1993.
However, the City of Vallejo, citizens, and related parties vehemently disagreed and felt the Pacific Fleet home base belonged at MINSY. From the navy’s perspective, MINSY was a terrible choice for a main base. Sitting thirty miles inside the San Francisco Bay, ships traveling to and from the shipyard expended extra time and fuel simply to get to the shipyard. More importantly, the Mare Island strait required continual dredging, which was both expensive and limited accessibility to the site. Further, MINSY possessed too little land and not nearly enough industrial infrastructure and labor to support a large base. The Helm Commission concluded MINSY had outlived its usefulness. Yet these factors did not deter the Vallejo delegation. Lacking a diversified economic engine aside from the shipyard, Vallejoans panicked at the prospect of losing the shipyard and mounted a vigorous campaign for the Pacific Fleet anchorage. This delayed the navy’s plans to proceed with the San Francisco location.

The delay in locating the base in San Francisco opened an opportunity for San Diego to make a play for a greater naval presence. Offering prime waterfront real estate and willing to make the necessary infrastructure investments, San Diego was able to accumulate a number of small but important naval installations, including radio and coaling stations, training facilities, a hospital, a supply depot, and eventually a full-sized naval base. Each year the Bay Area cities remained in political gridlock San Diego accumulated new naval base assets. Ultimately, Alameda and the Bay Area lost out on the main Pacific base and, with it, the guarantee of a perpetual naval presence. This

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53 Ibid., 46-47.
54 Ibid., 28-29, 32-33.
55 Ultimately the fleet anchorage went to Pearl Harbor and the Atlantic. Ibid., 63.
loss presents the first explanation for why there is no military presence in the modern Bay Area.

Though the Bay Area lost out on the main fleet base, it did acquire a number of other installations. The navy installed a new dry dock at Hunter’s Point in South San Francisco to handle ship repairs that MINSY could not. From the early 1930s until 1941, the city of Sunnyvale acquired a dirigible base, Oakland a naval supply depot and hospital, Mountain View an aeronautical research facility, and San Francisco a naval station at Treasure Island. Finally, with the threat of war looming, the navy located a naval base and air station at Alameda. Owing to rapid urbanization, the original Alameda site no longer existed. Instead, the navy acquired a small portion of land at the end of the island, including part of an existing army airfield, and built the NAS Alameda.\textsuperscript{56} The sum total of these bases provided a significant naval presence during WWII, but one that ultimately became unsustainable.

\textbf{KEY MILITARY TRENDS}

Two key, monumental shifts in weapons development and procurement occurred after WWII, both political in nature, directly impacted the relevance of Bay Area military bases. The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki ushered in a new era of nuclear weapons. As such, it sent the U.S. service branches scrambling for control and development of these new weapons. With the creation of the independent air force, a natural competition broke out between the air force and the army. The air force, owners of nuclear bomb capability, sought to expand into rocket-delivered nuclear devices. The army had its own plans for building and controlling rocket-based nuclear weapons. This friction grew to a

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 60-62.
full-blown fight, culminating in the Thor-Jupiter controversy, a political battle in which
the army (Thor) and the air force (Jupiter) sought to claim ownership of intermediate
range ballistic missiles. The air force emerged from the Thor-Jupiter fight with primary
control, through its Strategic Air Command, of America’s nuclear arsenal, essentially
eliminating nuclear weapon responsibility from the army.

Underpinning this army-air force competition was a critical difference in weapons
development practices. The arsenal system, like public shipyards, was a one-stop shop
for government development and procurement of military technology. The army favored
this method because it had full control of the personnel, design, and fabrication of the
weapons. By contrast, the “weapon system manager” approach, favored by the air force,
provided high-level management of the weapon development lifecycle and offloaded
technical design and fabrication to its commercial partners. By 1955, the air force
network of contractors and subcontractors consisted of well over 18,000 scientists and
technicians with an additional 22,000 in tertiary industries. This does not include the
hundreds of thousands of other employees working in these industries. Irrespective of
quality, the weapons system manager had one crucial advantage over the arsenal system;
anytime the air force needed political muscle it could lean on its vast network of suppliers
and contractors to exert the requisite political pressure.\textsuperscript{57} This put the army at a
disadvantage in terms of funding for new systems if there was to be competition with the
air force.

More ominously for public shipyards, the weapons system manager became the
clear winner in military procurement and foreshadowed the pressure to come from private

\textsuperscript{57} Michael H. Armacost, \textit{Politics of Weapons Innovation: The Thor-Jupiter Controversy}, (New York,
military contractors. The upstart air force used its advantage and political clout to further wrest power from the army, assuming full responsibility for all fixed wing (non-navy) aircraft.\textsuperscript{58} The success of the air force and the weapons system manager had another unexpected effect by funneling a disproportionate amount of money into aircraft and aerospace firms, a trend that started during WWII. During WWII, Southern California garnered ninety-nine percent of all California aircraft contracts. By comparison the Bay Area had garnered sixty-five percent of shipbuilding contracts and zero aircraft contracts.\textsuperscript{59} Fast forwarding to 1995, the top defense contractors, accounting for nearly twenty percent of all defense procurement expenditures, were aerospace firms. The Bay Area’s problem was that all of these aerospace firms were located in Southern California, exacerbating the loss of significant federal defense contractor investment tied to local aviation-related military bases.\textsuperscript{60} The Bay Area had few aviation-related bases. Other than Travis AFB, the only air force bases were Onizuka and Hamilton, both of which were minor bordering on obsolete. The navy had NAS Alameda and Moffett NAS, but neither of those had any significant active duty air wings. The sole reliance on shipbuilding, and eventually naval bases, proved severely limiting. Once WWII ended, so too did the shipbuilding industry. Most Bay Area shipbuilding firms quickly went out of business, and those that survived, like MINSY, dramatically reduced their labor and output.\textsuperscript{61} The Bay Area’s key military presence was tied to a declining set of assets.

\textsuperscript{58} This is why the army adopted helicopter (airmobile) strategy going into the 1960s. It was not in conflict with the air force’s mission. Alan R. Millet & Peter Maslowski, \textit{For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America}, (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 559-560.
\textsuperscript{59} Roger Lotchin, \textit{Fortress California}, 156.
\textsuperscript{60} Michael H. Armacost, \textit{Politics of Weapons Innovation}, 91.
\textsuperscript{61} Roger Lotchin, \textit{Fortress California}, 156.
SIX HUNDRED-SHIP NAVY AND STRATEGIC HOMEPORTING

By many accounts, most of the Bay Area bases would have closed in the late 1970s and early 1980s due to reduced missions and lack of investment in the physical structures. However, the 600-ship navy breathed the potential for new life into these declining bases. In 1985, the Reagan Administration, through then Secretary of the Navy John Lehman, proposed a 600-ship navy to combat the perceived threat of a 1,250-ship Soviet navy. The rationale was that three quarters of the world was water and America’s vital interests lay in the ability to conduct global commerce, so protecting the ocean became paramount. To adequately meet this goal required four battleship groups, fifteen aircraft carriers, forty ballistic submarines, and one hundred attack submarines. Taken together the total number of ships approached six hundred.62 This emphasis on expanding naval vessels would have brought significant naval work and capacity to Bay Area bases, especially NAS Alameda, which could berth four of the proposed fifteen carriers, and Mare Island, which would have seen a huge increase in ship repair and potentially ship construction. The 600-ship navy concept relied on the “strategic homeporting” concept, whereby the navy would expand its six bases (three Atlantic and three Pacific) to thirteen. Critics of the program, referring to the program as “home porking,” charged the Secretary and the Reagan Administration of using this as a way to build political support by increasing visible presence and federal investment dollars. Bases were planned for Staten Island, New York; San Francisco, California; Everett, Washington; Ingleside, Texas; Pascagoula, Mississippi; Mobile, Alabama; and Pensacola, Florida. The plan was widely panned by naval commanders who indicated it was not

62 “Navy Secretary outlines reasons or, composition of 600-ship Navy for U.S.” Shipyard Newspaper The Grapevine, April 4, 1986. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
strategic, but instead motivated by political and marketing considerations. The navy invested millions of dollars to start building most of these bases in the mid-1980s, only to have construction halted in 1990 and most of the bases closed in the 1991, 1993, and 1995 BRAC rounds. The San Francisco homeport never got started due to the Missouri controversy. The Everett base construction proceeded in order to provide additional West Coast carrier capacity, setting up the controversy and conflict with NAS Alameda for carrier berthing capacity as the BRAC process played out in the Bay Area.

HISTORY OF THE BRAC

Closing military bases is a difficult and politically volatile endeavor. Military bases are unique entities in an urban environment. Not only do they provide economic, employment, and physical benefits, but oftentimes communities have long-standing emotional connections to the bases themselves. Mare Island and the Benicia Arsenal were founded at nearly the same time as the cities they resided in, Vallejo and Benicia respectively. Local citizens had parents, siblings, or other relatives, with a direct or indirect connection to military bases. The 1993 BRAC Commissioner Peter Bowman married his wife at Mare Island’s St. Peter’s Chapel. Even when the military desired to close bases, as it did in the 1980s to free up money to spend on weapons systems, the political situation could quickly become untenable.

Historically, base closures have been a function of the executive branch. Starting in the early 1960s, the Kennedy Administration, initiated an effort through Secretary of

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64 Sue Lemmon, Closure: The Final Twenty Years of Mare Island Naval Shipyard, 282.
Defense Robert McNamara to reduce the massive WWII and early Cold War Era base structure to a modernized nuclear-centric military. McNamara unilaterally carried out his own program of over six hundred base closures with little consultation from the military, Congress, or local communities. The community of Benicia (Contra Costa County) experienced this first hand when the army hastily announced in March 1961 that the Benicia Arsenal was to be closed. This spawned a flurry of activity to attempt to save the base by local, state, and congressional representatives that was ultimately unsuccessful. To critics, the Kennedy/McNamara base closure process concentrated too much power in the executive branch. Recognizing this, Congress attempted to exert control over the process, but was thwarted by President Johnson in 1965. Congress continued its efforts to wrest some measure of control over base closures, but was unsuccessful until 1977, when it was able to pass legislation controlling base closures. The main tenets of the legislation required the DoD to notify Congress of any planned closure or realignment action, forced adherence to the National Environmental Policy Act, and gave Congress sixty days to respond to potential actions. This legislation throttled base closures. Yet, declining defense budgets and a bloated base infrastructure forced the DoD to take action in the late 1980s. Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci was able to strike a compromise with Congress to get a modified, one-time base closure process, known as the Defense Secretary's Commission on Base Realignment and Closure. This 1988 commission targeted eighty-six bases for closure and fifty-nine for realignment, approximately three percent of domestic bases and an estimated savings of nearly $700 million. Three Bay Area bases, the Presidio of San Francisco, Hamilton Air Field, and Hunters Point Naval

Station, were included in the commission’s closure recommendations.66

The problem with the 1988 commission, as quickly became evident, was its autonomy and lack of adequate congressional oversight. Carlucci’s successor as Secretary of Defense, Richard Cheney, attempted his own unilateral round of closures and realignments. The Bay Area was disproportionately targeted in his list, as later was revealed by Undersecretary of the Navy Daniel Howard.67 Naturally, congressional representatives, led by Ron Dellums (D-CA 9th), vocally opposed Cheney’s attempted closings. This prompted a Democratic Congress to pass the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990. The Act set up the Base Closure and Realignment Commission, an apolitical entity charged with conducting a transparent process to evaluate and decide which bases should be closed or realigned. Each of the service branches would submit its list of bases to close or realign to the Secretary of Defense who would then in turn submit the list to the commission. The commission would add, edit, and delete bases from the secretary’s list. The commission would then hold public hearings, consider testimony from politicians (local, state, and federal), and visit as many of the bases as possible to get a tactical view of the bases in question. Another key oversight mechanism was the requirement to have the General Accounting Office participate in the analysis and recommendations. The commission would hold public deliberations and vote on which actions to take. Once the voting was complete the commission would send its report to the president who had fifteen days to accept or reject

the list, after which time it would go to Congress. Then Congress would have the opportunity to accept or reject the list in its entirety. Strategically, the commission was set to convene in 1991, 1993, and 1995 (and eventually 2005), all non-election years.68 The law specified eight criteria for commissioners to consider when evaluating action on a base: (1) military value, (2) availability and condition of the facility, (3) ability to accommodate contingency forces, (4) cost and manpower implications, (5) projected costs and savings, (6) economic impact on communities, (7) ability of receiving facilities to accommodate proposed activities, and (8) environmental impact.

The 1991 Commission recommended closing twenty-four bases and realigning forty-eight others, reducing the domestic footprint by approximately five percent. These actions were projected to save approximately $3.8 billion. Major Bay Area bases on the list included the Hunter’s Point Naval Annex and Naval Air Station Moffett Field. The 1993 Commission recommended 130 base closures and 45 realignments, representing a six percent reduction in domestic bases. Estimated savings from this round reached $2.3 billion annually. The Bay Area lost NAS Alameda, MINSY, Treasure Island Naval Base, Oak Knoll Naval Hospital, Hunters Point Naval Annex, and Alameda Naval Aviation Depot. The 1995 Commission produced recommendations for 132 closures or realignments, another six percent of the domestic base infrastructure, with an annual projected savings of $1.6 billion. The Bay Area lost the OAB and the FISC Oakland, with the Onizuka AFB realigned. In sum, the four rounds of closures (1988, 1991, 1993, and 1995) reduced the domestic base footprint by twenty-one percent and produced an

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estimated annual savings of $8.4 billion. The Bay Area specifically lost a total of 44,124 jobs, 23,735 military and 20,389 civilian, and only six major bases remained. Two more bases would go in the 2005 BRAC, leaving two coast guard stations, an army reserve base, and Travis AFB as the only active base in the area.

THAT LIBERAL BAY AREA

It is no secret that the Bay Area was a bastion of the New Left. From the free speech movement at U.C. Berkeley to the creation of the Black Panthers in Oakland, the Bay Area took on an almost mythical role in and during the 1960s anti-war protests and counterculture growth. These trends carried through in subsequent years as the City of San Francisco developed a very anti-military posture throughout the 1980s culminating in the USS Missouri controversy. San Francisco Mayor Art Agnos and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, in highly political move, torpedoed an agreement with the navy to house the USS Missouri at Hunters Point Naval Shipyard. The main objections centered on the Missouri’s storage of nuclear warheads and the DoD’s reluctance to formally recognize gay and lesbian soldiers, both of which San Francisco critics opposed on moral grounds. Less importantly, but equally symbolically, the Bay Area Peace Navy demonstrated at the annual Fleet Week activities and San Francisco chose Ho Chi Minh


\[71\] Agnos succeeded Dianne Feinstein as mayor of San Francisco.
City as a sister city. These events occurred as Bay Area residents elected an increasingly liberal set of congressional members. The East San Francisco Bay Area (East Bay) elected Ronald V. Dellums to the U.S. House of Representatives, to represent California’s Ninth Congressional District, thirteen consecutive times from 1971 to 1998. The California Ninth covers Alameda, Oakland, Berkeley, and a good portion of Alameda County. Dellums, about as anti-military as one can get, was vocal in his opposition to what he termed “runaway military spending.” He preferred money to be spent on social programs for people in need instead of on the military. More recently, in 2007, the Marines set out to film a recruiting commercial at iconic locations across the U.S. When the Marines requested a permit for their film shoot in downtown San Francisco and at the Golden Gate Bridge, the San Francisco Film Commission denied the request. Earlier that year, San Francisco Supervisor Chris Daly attempted, and failed, to ban the navy’s Blue Angels aerial acrobatic team from flying over the city. This pitting of liberal politicians and an anti-military region against the military, which seemingly punished the Bay Area for its insolence by closing all the bases, sets up the politics of retribution narrative.

Besides anecdotal evidence, election results over the last three decades demonstrate how politically “liberal” the Bay Area has been. Other than Napa County in 1988, every

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72 Fleet Week is the annual military pride celebration in San Francisco. Throughout the 1980s the Bay Area Peace Navy paraded, in formation, in front of the Navy’s ship procession, displaying anti-military signs and banners.
73 As an example, the Bay Area Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Congressional Districts tilt solidly Democratic. Most of the Bay Area base closures occurred in these districts. None of these districts have elected a Republican representative since the 1970s and some longer than that. For decades now these districts vote lopsidedly Democratic in presidential elections. Notable representatives include former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA, 8th District) and Barbara Lee (D-CA, 9th District). Lee stood alone as the only representative to vote against Operation Enduring Freedom.
Bay Area County has voted a majority for the Democratic candidate in every presidential election since 1988.\textsuperscript{76} San Francisco County in particular has gone from seventy-three percent voting Democratic to eighty-four percent.\textsuperscript{77} The same trend holds true for U.S. Senate voting. Starting in 1986, with only three exceptions—Napa in 1986 and Napa and Contra Costa in 1988—every county has voted a majority for Democratic senators.\textsuperscript{78} Congressional representative elections from 1986 demonstrated similar results. From 1984 to 1998, no more than two Republican representatives have been elected from the sixteen Bay Area congressional districts.\textsuperscript{79} In 1998 that number dropped to one, and starting in 2006 not a single Republican has won an election.\textsuperscript{80} In most districts the margin is typically seventy to eighty percent Democratic.

PUNISHING THE LIBERALS

The 1993 BRAC decisions resulted in over 30,000 Bay Area military-related jobs lost, over forty percent of the total nationwide. By comparison, states like Georgia and Washington were net receivers of realigned jobs. With such unfavorable numbers local people sought to understand why this happened. Two main narratives have emerged to explain why the Bay Area lost all of its bases: it was the fault of the “liberal politician,” or the DoD and navy desired to punish the region for the \textit{Missouri} controversy and its general antiwar sentiment. For example, Vallejo resident Mari Heinmiller blamed the

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
closures on “Ron Dellums, one of the mouthiest proponents of defense cutbacks on record. And there was the memory of the San Francisco politicians (led by Art Agnos) who nixed the homeporting of the USS Missouri back when.” She also thrust blame on the 1993 BRAC, accusing it of being politically manipulated by complying with the navy’s wishes to punish the Bay Area. Dick Hassel charged the commission with placating the public while, “under the surface, a carefully programmed torpedo was heading our way.” Another editorial, describing the Mare Island "Save Our Shipyards" rally, demonstrates the blame-the-politician narrative: “[d]isappointment did prevail when Dianne Feinstein (who was in the Bay Area) and Barbara Boxer (who never really cared anyway) were absent.” An anonymous writer felt betrayed by President Clinton and wondered, “[i]s it too early or too late to consider impeachment?” Another resident claimed the navy and Secretary of Defense Aspin colluded as “payback for the refusal of anti-military liberals to allow homeporting of a battleship task force.” State Senator Quentin Kopp (I-San Francisco) also believed the base closures were the result of local opposition to the Missouri, noting, “[s]ooner or later, what goes around comes around.” This editorial succinctly articulates the payback narrative:

[I]t is hard . . . not to believe that this is payback time for the Navy brass. They taught those dirty liberals Ron Dellums and Barbara Boxer not to criticize the Navy. They showed that peacenik, gay-loving city, SF, not to mess with them.

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82 D. Broder, Vallejo, “Mare Island has a chance,” Vallejo Times Herald, Editorials, March 8, 1993.
From a military perspective, OAB workers shared many of the same views. John Compisi blamed local politicians Art Agnos, Dianne Feinstein, Nancy Pelosi, and Barbara Boxer for the “anti bringing the Missouri to the San Francisco Bay Area” and accused them of creating an “environment at that time that was very dis-inviting [to the military].”

Fred Gowan also pointed to the Missouri protest antics, stating,

I really believe the problem with the Bay Area started when Diane [sic] Feinstein was the mayor and the Navy wanted to move a nuclear powered battleship to homeport in Alameda. . . . But the decision was made at that time, and she, quite frankly, was heading it up. And that was that they wanted no nuclear powered vessels in the San Francisco area at all. So without much complaining, the Navy said fine. Well, it was not too much longer then they started saying, ‘Well, we’re going to close Treasure Island. We’re going to move the Navy from Treasure Island, from Alameda, from all these different areas. Hunter’s Point. We’ll just shut that down. And we will eventually, under the base closing authority, return this property to the civilian community.’ And, as they said, payback was not kind.

Gowan had several of the facts wrong—the homeport was to be San Francisco not Alameda, and Art Agnos not Dianne Feinstein was the mayor at the time of the decision to reject the military—but the sentiment remained the same, that the navy punished the Bay Area because of the Missouri decision. Lee Sandahl blamed politics for the inclusion of the OAB on the closure list:

That was all political. That was all a backlash from the Bush administration on a get even with the folks in California type of thing. Because, if you look around the Bay Area, you’ll see that every military base was close [sic]. Mare Island, Treasure Island, Alameda Naval Air Station, the Oakland Army Base, and the Naval Supply Center. The only thing that was left open was the Concord Naval Supply Center, the

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ammunition area. . . . But they don’t like our liberalism in the Bay Area. They wiped us out! . . . It was a real get-even.89

Paul Janoff offered an almost verbatim critique:
I think that—especially in the Bay Area . . . many of the bases were closed as a result of the Board of Supervisors, I believe in 1988, voting against home porting the Missouri Battle Group. And so my view was that the base realignment and closure, the Secretary—various secretaries of each service shut down military operations in the Bay Area in revenge. I think that's no mystery. That's not an urban legend. I believe that is true.90

Amy Estrada commented,
[T]he antiwar sentiment in the Bay Area was so great and strong. No way can we have USS Missouri here, which is a nuclear war ship. You put two and two together: this might have happened: If the navy cannot get its way, they probably thought, “If we cannot have the nuclear warship here in the Bay Area, as planned, let us pull out all our navy bases, and go to a more welcoming place.” In addition to that, people have always told me that Ron Dellums, he's just being punished for his antiwar stance at that time.91

Charles Snipes had similar critiques of Dellums:
Dellums was anti-military in all of his time in Washington. They wanted to put the battleship Missouri here in San Francisco. He was against that. . . . So when they had the base closures, they took all the things that normally would have came to the Oakland Army Base and assigned it to Washington. . . . Had they had proper political support, that would have never happened. Because not only did they close all the military facilities in Oakland, but in San Francisco and the Bay Area as well.92

Monsa Nitoto commented,
And when Dellums decided to cut out the military processes . . . I think the Congress punished him. They said, ‘Okay, we’ll go to your home, and we’ll shut down Oakland’s army base there first, so then your own constituents will suffer.’ In my opinion. That was just a backlash to him:

you want to get rid of all this military? Let’s get rid of your army base in your area.93

Between the editorials and the interviews with OAB workers, a definitive theme of punishing the anti-military politicians and Bay Area emerged and has ever since been lodged in the collective consciousness. This was clearly represented in the following two editorial cartoons. In the first one, Feinstein, Boxer, and Dellums were depicted standing on a dock watching an ungrateful navy sailing away from the Bay Area. The irony of the cartoon was the messages scrawled on the back of the ship depicting the Bay Area liberalism that pushed the navy away. Messages such as “no nukes,” “cut defense budget,” “end ban on gays,” and the proverbial “make love not war.” The “nukes” and “gays” slogans were references to San Francisco’s rejection of the USS Missouri. The “budget” referenced Dellums outspoken desire to cut defense spending and the “make love” a reference to the left-leaning hippie culture often associated with the Bay Area.94

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http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/projects/oab/nitoto.html.
The next cartoon was an outright condemnation of Dellums and his anti-military stance. The cartoon depicts Dellums being shot by his own cannon of “defense cuts,” while in the background a soldier is trying to warn him. It is a not-so-subtle way of blaming Dellums for the base closures.

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95 Ibid.
KEY FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION

As seen from the editorials, many blame the “liberals” for the navy’s departure, however local implementation of federal environmental laws put more pressure on Bay Area bases than anti-military sentiment. The NAS Alameda and Mare Island case studies in this project, as with other federal military facilities in California, provide an illuminating view into how the federal environmental legislation of the 1970s was implemented in California and the Bay Area, made a difference abating pollution, and influenced military operations at the bases. This lens provides a quantifiable set of data

97 Ibid.
to measure the effectiveness of environmental legislation. Spurred by the burgeoning
environmental movement of the 1960s, federal, state, and local governments legislated a
series of environmental initiatives throughout the 1970s. Congress, in conjunction with
support from Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter passed a series of transformative
environmental legislation that continues to shape (literally and figuratively) the U.S.
This groundbreaking legislative agenda included: the National Environmental Policy Act
of 1969 (NEPA), the Clean Air Act (CAA) of 1970, creation of the Environmental
Protection Agency (EPA) in 1970, the Clean Water Act of 1972 (CWA), The Noise
Control Act of 1972 (NCA), the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (CZMA), the
Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), and the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974
(SDWA). As the federal government put its might behind environmental legislation, it
allowed states and local municipalities to enact or enforce greater controls over hazardous
waste disposal, air emissions, water quality, animal protection, and land preservation.
California and its cities, especially the Bay Area, were already actively engaged on
environmental issues.98

However, there were two critical problems with this legislation. First, the laws
gave the President the power to exempt military installations and equipment if deemed in
the interest of national security.99 Second, the laws specifically required that enforcement
of the federal environmental laws be carried out by individual states. Unfortunately there
was an unforeseen flaw in this approach. Federal supremacy and sovereign immunity,
the ultimate power of the federal government to operate without accountability to

98 California passed a number of environmental air and water quality laws to combat automotive pollution
before passage of the federal Air and water quality acts. For more on this see Tom McCarthy, Auto Mania: Cars, Consumers, and the Environment, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).
individual states, protected federal institutions from enforcement environmental laws. Two landmark legal cases, *Hancock v. Train* and *Environmental Protection Agency v. California* tested the ability of an individual state to compel federal entities into action. 

In *Hancock v. Train* (1976), the State of Kentucky wanted federal facilities and military bases to apply for state emissions permits under the CAA. The same issue of sovereign immunity, applied to the FWPCA, was contested in *Environmental Protection Agency v. California* (1976). In both cases the Supreme Court ruled that Congress had not adequately waived the sovereign immunity requirement when drafting the legislation. In response, Congress passed amendments to the CAA waiving sovereign immunity and empowering states to force compliance through lawsuit, sanction, criminal penalty, or other legal remedy. 100 The laws held up to their first test, *State of Alabama ex rel. Graddick v. Veterans Administration*, in which the State of Alabama sued the Veterans Administration (VA) for improperly removing asbestos from a hospital. The court held the VA liable and indicated that the same result would hold true for the CWA as well. 101

To bring greater compliance of federal institutions for reducing environmental pollution, President Carter issued Executive Order 12088 in October 1978. 102 This order explicitly directed federal agencies to conform to these environmental laws. Shortly thereafter, the navy adopted a new Environmental Natural Resources Protection Manual to address these legislative changes that increased the power of state and local environmental agencies to regulate hazardous waste management, drinking water, and air

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quality. Additionally, passage of the federal Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act of 1980, also known as the hazardous waste Superfund Act, forced the navy to implement the Navy Assessment and Control of Installation Pollutants (NACIP) to comply with the Superfund Act. The NACIP program presented a serious reckoning for the Department of Defense (DoD). Most military bases had been in operation for decades or, as was the case for MINSY, over a century, at times when environmental matters were given little concern and less effort. During these decades, military bases haphazardly dumped hazardous waste into local landfills and waterways with little understanding of the long-term environmental damage. For example, under the federal Resource Conservation Recovery Act of 1980, the EPA determined that the MINSY landfill contained lead, chromium, asbestos, mercury, and industrial chemicals in levels that far exceeded federal standards and forced the shipyard to shut down the landfill. The NACIP site assessments attempted to document what hazardous waste existed and where it might be found so that the proper remediation efforts could be planned. The 1982 survey at MINASY found five major hazardous waste sites. These included the MINSY landfill, a then closed disposal site, an outdoor abrasive blast area, an oil recovery area, and wastewater treatment plant sludge ponds. Finally, the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 (RCRA) dictated changes in the way hazardous waste was handled. The RCRA forced federal agencies to manage

103 Mare Island Naval Shipyard Command History 1983. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
104 Mare Island Naval Shipyard Command History 1982. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
106 Mare Island Naval Shipyard Command History 1982. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
the entire lifecycle of hazardous waste, from generation all the way to disposal.\textsuperscript{107}

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

When it comes to the environment and environmental legislation, no other state does it like California. With iconic, precious natural resources, preservation and conservation are critical to the long-term economic success of the state. Owing to its large population and associated pollution problems, California has long been at the forefront of environmental legislation. Operating or closing a military base in California entails observance of a set of laws and restrictions not typically present in other states. For example, air pollution has been a seemingly intractable problem for both the state and concentrated urban areas such as Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco. It was reported in 1996 that, “[e]very [California] metropolitan area in the state fails to meet attainment standards set by the U.S. EPA.”\textsuperscript{108} The state used the Federal Clean Air Act, The California Clean Air Act, and several related statutes to create a broad framework for enforcing clean air standards. The California Air Resources Board, using EPA approved measures, established implementation mechanisms, pollution tracking, reporting, and oversight of the thirty-four local pollution control boards.\textsuperscript{109} The local pollution control boards had (and have) great latitude in regulating local pollution. For example, when dealing with non-friable asbestos, material containing asbestos that cannot be crumbled or broken with hand pressure, the EPA has minimum federal standards of notification protocols when more than 260 feet of regulated asbestos containing material (RACM) is

\textsuperscript{107} Mare Island Naval Shipyards Command History 1981. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.


\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
present. The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) set a more restrictive threshold at 100 feet. On top of that, the BAAQMD required a building owner to fill out additional paperwork estimating the amount of RACM. If the estimated amount exceeded 100 feet, then the project owner was to submit an asbestos survey from a State of California OSHA-certified company. Therefore any large-scale construction or demolition project involving RACM and occurring in the Bay Area took more time and came at a greater expense.\footnote{“Primer on Treatment of Asbestos-Containing Materials in Demolition Projects,” \textit{California Base Closure News}, October 1998}

In 1969 and 1970, the federal government passed the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This legislation requires public agencies undertaking major construction or demolition projects to prepare reports detailing potential and significant environmental impacts. Unlike air and water standards with measurable limits, NEPA is a reporting program and process designed to inform the public, politicians, and other interested parties. It requires a comment and review process by other agencies and the public. Spurred by NEPA, California passed the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), its supplemental environmental protection law.\footnote{National Environmental Policy Act, accessed January 30, 2013, \url{http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/welcome.html}. “Comparing CEQA and NEPA,” \textit{California Base Closure News}, February 1998. “Frequently Asked Questions About CEQA,” \textit{California Natural Resources Agency}, accessed on January 30, 2013, \url{http://ceres.ca.gov/ceqa/more/faq.html#when}.} NEPA only covers federal agencies, whereas CEQA establishes a regulatory process for state, regional, and local entities and projects. However, any federal project that requires State of California approval is subject to CEQA review. This is particularly relevant to base closure work, where closing a base falls solely under NEPA, but doing additional construction as part of a conversion would trigger CEQA. The CEQA statute contains many of the
procedural elements found in NEPA with some minor variances, but CEQA has more restrictive components. For instance, CEQA has a lower threshold to trigger a review. NEPA requires “substantial evidence” of a potential environmental impact, whereas CEQA only requires a “fair argument.” The effective difference is CEQA requires environmental review much earlier in the process than NEPA. For CEQA, when there is doubt, there is an inclination to side with environmental review.\textsuperscript{112} According to one report, there may be more CEQA-required environmental reports written in California than NEPA reports for all the forty-nine other states combined.\textsuperscript{113} CEQA requires all environmental factors be considered, including air, water, endangered species, historical preservation, and social and economic effects. NEPA only requires consideration of some of these factors. In the case of base closures, not requiring adherence to these factors can create disparity in closure impact. However, the most crucial difference between the two laws is that CEQA has an enforceable provision requiring mitigation of environmental issues, whereas NEPA has no such requirement.\textsuperscript{114} More specifically, CEQA has the ability to legally compel environmental protection, whereas NEPA can only suggest it.

When a base is targeted for closure, a disposal process is initiated. The DoD will offer the property in question to other federal agencies. Property not claimed after six months is then offered to state and local governments. These government entities can acquire sites through a public benefit conveyance, which allows the acquisition for below fair market value in return for projects that will benefit the public good (airports, schools, schools,)

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
parks), or they can pay fair market value through a negotiated sale. Properties not claimed through government agencies are put up for commercial sale to the public. Regardless of disposal method, the DoD is responsible for following the requisite NEPA and CEQA process, as well as environmental remediation. By contrast, when closing bases abroad, the DoD is not required to adhere to such stringent (or in some cases any) environmental compliance. This is one of many reasons that makes overseas basing an attractive option to the DoD.

CONCLUSION

The Bay Area had a long and storied relationship with both the army and the navy. Both entities played significant roles the early days of California’s history and supporting development of the state and the Bay Area. Facilities such as the Presidio of San Francisco and Mare Island pre-dated the Civil War. Yet, a series of political decisions and actions weakened the long-term viability of supporting military bases in the area. The inter-region fighting between Alameda and Vallejo prevented installation of the permanent Pacific navy fleet anchorage. Instead the Bay Area ended up with a variety of different installations, none of which evolved into a strategic asset after WWII. Without any high value bases and owing to changes within the military procurement process, Bay Area bases were well on their way to obsolescence by the end of the 1970s. Without the strategic homeporting initiative, the Bay Area bases likely would have been shuttered long before the BRAC process.

It is ironic that San Francisco’s response to the navy’s decision to homeport the USS *Missouri*, a move critics argued was strategically unnecessary, brought out the anti-military sentiment. San Francisco’s rebuke of the navy came, unfairly, to stigmatize the entire region as “liberal.” More specifically, had it not been for the *Missouri* debacle the Bay Area might have never been cast so dramatically as “liberal” and “anti-military.” However, more impactful than feelings about the military were the changes resulting from the new federal and state environmental legislation. These laws forced the Bay Area base commanders to deal with environmental remediation, increased operating costs, and operational limitations. These efforts, combined with the region’s high cost of living and the increasing obsolescence of bases provide the context for understanding the true politics of base closures in this study.
CHAPTER III. GOOD NEIGHBOR, BAD NEIGHBOR, ENCROACHED NEIGHBOR: CLOSING ALAMEDA NAVAL AIR STATION

INTRODUCTION

Naval Air Station Alameda (NAS Alameda), which served as a port, airfield, and aviation rework facility, was a keystone Bay Area naval installation for fifty-seven years. The 1993 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission’s (BRAC) decision to close the facility, along with most of the other local bases, shocked both the city of Alameda and the broader Bay Area. Given the region’s political proclivities, politicians

and citizens alike cried foul, many believing that the decision to close was political retribution. Yet the decision to close NAS Alameda was less about political punishment and more about the realities of operating a naval base in the midst of a highly urbanized area. The base’s unique location, at the end of an island sandwiched between the growing metropolises of Oakland and San Francisco, the station ultimately became the victim of urban encroachment. This chapter will provide a detailed examination of NAS Alameda and its operational history, with a particular focus on the fifteen years prior to closure. Using the lens of good neighbor versus bad neighbor, this chapter analyzes balancing the station’s role as provider of jobs, economic investment, and disaster response balanced against its role major as an environmental polluter. Through this perspective, it will demonstrate that the naval base was a likely candidate for closure long before the 1993 BRAC convened, thus eliminating the theory of political retribution. Instead, this chapter will demonstrate the unique challenges of operating a military base in dense urban cities including encroachment, high cost of living, and under the constraints of increasingly tightening federal, state, and local environmental regulations. Taken together, these factors represent a different kind of politics; ones that privileged economic growth over military need and forced the DoD/navy to comply with noise, air, water, and waste laws. In addition, with high labor and housing costs, the navy began to limit the station’s mission and slowly abandon the air station well before the BRAC process.

The city of Alameda, officially chartered in 1884, is an island located in San Francisco Bay, adjacent to Oakland and directly across the Bay from San Francisco. Geographically it was a peninsula until 1902 when city officials opened a waterway
between Oakland Harbor and San Leandro Bay. By 1913 the Navy Department was considering Alameda as a top location for a West Coast naval complex. The city presented the navy with a land grant of 5,340 acres in August of 1923. However, navy commanders did not move to accept the land as it was hampered by political forces interested in the nearby Mare Island Naval Shipyard. By 1930, with no movement from the navy, the city donated 1,100 acres to the army in what became Benton Field. Eventually the federal government switched, opting for a naval base instead, and transferred the 1093 acres of Benton Field to the navy. Also, Alameda transferred an additional 929 acres, at the time occupied by Alameda Airport, along with 292 acres of submerged land to be reclaimed by dredging. Construction on NAS Alameda commenced in 1938, and the base was commissioned November 1, 1940.

The outbreak of World War II (WWII) brought significant growth to both the station and the city. Alameda grew from 30,000 to 75,000 people within a short period of time. A majority of those people were employed at the air station. In the postwar era, NAS Alameda expanded its mission to encompass all areas of naval fleet aviation and support. An aircraft overhaul and repair shop, ship berthing, training facilities, and industrial supply combined with the existing air operations to make the station a comprehensive naval station. After the Korean War, the station expanded its runways to accommodate the newly developed jet aircraft. Similarly, to keep pace with the growing ship sizes, the station dredged one million cubic yards of silt every year in order to remain a deep water port. By the end of the 1970s, the station featured the Naval Air

118 Alameda: The Island City. Compiled by Workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in Northern California City of Alameda Co-Sponsor, 1941, 115-116.
119 Ibid., 116-117.
Rework Facility (NARF), homeporting for two major aircraft carriers and various carrier support ships, a regional data automation center, an explosive ordnance detachment, and a variety of Naval Air Reserve units. NAS Alameda received $7.3 million in the early 1980s to complete a major power upgrade to support Nimitz class carriers. This upgrade allowed carriers to completely shut off their nuclear systems while in port. By 1990 the station consisted of 2,800 acres of land (1,734 of land and 1,108 acres underwater) on which were located three hundred buildings, thirty roads, and sixty commands.

Figure 7. Map of Alameda Naval Air Station.

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120 “NAS Alameda-40 Years,” Station Newspaper *The Carrier*, November 14, 1980. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
121 Nimitz class carriers are the most current nuclear powered supercarriers in the fleet today. *Alameda Times Star*, December 13, 1983.
122 “Naval Air Station spends $4.9 million to retrofit piers,” October 4, 1983.
Alameda’s population dropped off after WWII, but steadily increased after that, reaching 74,000 by 1990. Alameda is considered a bedroom community as most residents work off the island. NAS Alameda was the largest single employer of Alameda residents and contributed an estimated $210 million to the local economy. The economic impact of the station’s presence was felt acutely in 1988, when the navy transferred both carriers to different locations at the same time, which hurt local businesses.

NAS Alameda sustained numerous threats to its existence long before the base closure commissions. As early as the late 1970s, in the post-Vietnam era, questions surfaced about the long-term viability of the station’s mission. Facing potential defense cutbacks and consolidations, the station’s future was in doubt. Reagan’s six hundred-ship navy plan put some of those concerns to rest, but warning signs remained. In early 1983, NARF Alameda commander Captain Louis Fisler noted a decreased workload and a grim outlook for future work, citing high labor, utility, and housing costs as the major issues. The navy had identified the NARF as the highest priced naval rework operation in the U.S. and, as a result, limited the work assigned to it. This created a cyclical effect whereby the less work it received, the worse the efficiency rate, thus costing more to complete it. In 1988, as politicians began to seriously debate base closures, the NARF was rumored to be targeted for either closure or reduced workload. Increasing private sector competition put additional pressure on the NARF.

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125 Ibid., III-10-III-II.
By 1987 the station was going through an identity crisis. Future expansion constraints limited NAS Alameda’s long-term prospects. The station, surrounded by water on three sides and a dense urban area other on the other, had little room to grow. Navy planners were already looking at consolidating work and removing commands to make the station leaner and more efficient. Reclaiming more space from the Bay presented economic, environmental, and political roadblocks. Purchasing surrounding land was difficult due to high property values. This constrained growth areas to all but the addition of more homeported surface action groups and a third aircraft carrier, which, given the housing constraints and high cost of living in the Bay Area, seemed a remote possibility at best. On top of those issues, the station’s buildings dated to the WWII era and were considered substandard for modern use. Buildings thrown together during the frenzy of WWII, expected to last a short time, were approaching a half-century of use.129

Further, the high cost and availability of Bay Area housing was a significant issue for the navy during the 1980s. Too little housing was available, and what was available came with a tremendous price tag. To address this disparity, the navy continually spent money remodeling and building new housing wherever possible. A 1984 report noted NAS Alameda alone lacked housing for 4,000 families. The report cited an inadequate supply of military housing, insufficient housing allowances for Bay Area prices, and too few units in the city of Alameda. While the navy spent $6.9 million in 1984 to refurbish 600 housing units on the east side of NAS Alameda, it was not nearly enough.130 Local congressional leaders made a push for increased housing and by 1987 some progress was

Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
made. The DoD and navy spent $16.5 million to build 300 two-bedroom apartments at the army’s former Hamilton Air Field. Construction began on another 126 units of family housing at NAS Moffett Field and the navy planned construction of 144 housing units at Treasure Island Naval Station, 600 units at Naval Weapons Station Concord, and an additional 646 units at NAS Alameda.\textsuperscript{131} Even with all this progress, the demand outstripped the supply, forcing sailors and their families to pay high Bay Area prices on limited navy salaries. Buying a home for most sailors was completely out of the question. A 1990 comparison showed a two-bedroom apartment in Norfolk, VA cost $450 per month, whereas a comparable apartment in Alameda cost $750 (or more).\textsuperscript{132} In 1991, the navy spent $28.2 million for 300 duplexes at the station, which left 450 people still on the waiting list with an estimated wait of eighteen months. Further, the navy sought additional funding to build 200 new homes, accommodating only some of the 780 people on the waiting list.\textsuperscript{133} Despite the millions spent and efforts of navy commanders and local politicians, housing navy families in the Bay Area was an ongoing and seemingly intractable problem.

GOOD NEIGHBOR

Having a military base in a local community brings with it many benefits. This was the case with NAS Alameda, which made many impactful contributions to the surrounding community. The most successful formal effort was the Youth Employment Program (YEP), a joint partnership, funded by the navy, East Bay cities, school districts, and ethnic and racial minority organizations. These organizations collaborated to employ

\textsuperscript{131} “Ground broken for Navy housing in Novato,” Station Newspaper \textit{The Carrier}, September 18, 1987. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
two hundred high school and community college students during the school year and
another three to four hundred during the summer.\textsuperscript{134} This program, though it diminished
in size, continued through 1992.\textsuperscript{135} Additionally, another seventy-five students were put
to work as part of Baymart, an advanced marketing program for high school seniors.
NAS Alameda and NARF won Baymart’s Employer of the Year award in 1981.\textsuperscript{136} The
need to employ youth stemmed from increasing juvenile delinquency during the 1960s.
Local leaders attempted to put as many youth to work as possible in order to keep them
off the streets. The navy responded by providing the largest number of job placements at
its local facilities (NAS Alameda, FISC Oakland, Oakland Naval Hospital, and Military
Sealift Command).\textsuperscript{137} Similarly, the navy provided the Sea Cadet program, a program
designed to give local youth educational opportunities. The program allowed boys and
girls ages nine to seventeen to experience navy life and prepare them for a military career,
if they chose to pursue one. Students learned all sorts of hands-on skills, from putting out
buoys to operating equipment, as well as taking general responsibility.\textsuperscript{138}

Homeported ships and various commands at the station also made a difference in
local schools through the navy’s Partner in Education (PEP) program. The PEP program
paired naval commands and ships’ personnel with local schools, educators, community
leaders, parents, and students in order to provide educational opportunities. Over ninety-

\textsuperscript{134} NAS Alameda Command History, 1979, 10, Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
\textsuperscript{135} NAS Alameda Command History, 1992, 10, Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
\textsuperscript{136} “Employer of the Year Award,” Station Newspaper The Carrier, February 27, 1981. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
\textsuperscript{138} Phil Capodice, “Sea Cadet program readies teens for military career,” Station Newspaper The Carrier, July 7, 1989. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
two different Bay Area commands participated in this program at all levels of K-12 education. Some examples include the USS *Abraham Lincoln*, which adopted Manzanita Elementary School in Oakland. The crew provided tutoring, an athletics program, and funds for library books and athletic equipment.\textsuperscript{139} The Naval Air Reserve, Alameda (NARA) adopted Calvin Simmons Jr. High School in Oakland. Volunteers assisted teachers twice a week in an effort serve the students at a critical time of personal development.\textsuperscript{140} The USS *Carl Vinson* aircraft carrier adopted Westmoor High School in Daly City. Students visited the ship and ship’s personnel visited the school in an effort to highlight different navy careers.\textsuperscript{141} The quality of this relationship was best exemplified when Westmoor High freshman gymnast Cecelia Perkins injured her spinal cord after falling off a balance beam. The *Vinson’s* crew raised money for Perkins and presented her with a framed picture of the ship and cards and well wishes from all the ships’ departments.

The true value of a military base to a local community can be seen in response to natural disasters. Regardless of natural disaster type—hurricane, tornado, tsunami, or earthquake—the ability to organize quickly and efficiently in the wake of disaster is something the military excels at. This was the case on October 17, 1989, when the San Francisco Bay Area was hit by the 7.1 magnitude Loma Prieta earthquake. The epicenter was located just south of the central Bay Area in Santa Cruz County, but damage was

\textsuperscript{139}“USS Abe Lincoln 'adopts' Manzanita School,” Station Newspaper *The Carrier*, March 20, 1992. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.

\textsuperscript{140}Steve Hansen, “NAS Alameda- partners in educational excellence” Station Newspaper *The Carrier*, March 20, 1992. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.

significant throughout the Bay Area. NAS Alameda sustained major damage to its airfield, buildings, and infrastructure. The total repair cost for the station ended up at just over $37 million.

The personnel of NAS Alameda, and other Bay Area Naval bases, stepped up to meet the challenge of earthquake response. NAS air traffic controllers played a pivotal role in the immediate aftermath of the disaster. The earthquake caused a section of the Bay Bridge to collapse. Given NAS Alameda’s location, approximately two miles from the collapsed portion NAS air traffic controllers were well positioned to help. The team worked for seventy-two hours straight, directing and controlling over three hundred aircraft in the area. The Oakland Naval hospital dispatched medical teams and ambulances to help treat those injured by the collapsed freeway. After participating in the initial treatment of victims, Oakland Naval Hospital teams worked with the air force Para Rescue teams to assist the coroner’s office in processing the people killed in the collapse.

Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron Fifteen (HM-15) played a critical role in the post-earthquake response. It airlifted food, clothing, and water into areas isolated due to earthquake damage. This included the Cypress Freeway, Treasure Island Naval Station (TINS), and communities in Santa Cruz County. The day after the earthquake, HM-15 delivered a 20,000-pound backhoe to the collapsed Cypress freeway.

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143 NAS Alameda Command History, 1989, 8, Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.1989 Command History
It delivered three 400-gallon tanks and a massive generator to help the eight hundred resident families stuck at TINS without water, gas or electricity. The communities of Watsonville and Hollister, in Santa Cruz County, needed special attention because the earthquake had severely damaged Highway 17, rendering the main road into and out of town inaccessible. HM-15 crew members responded by reconfiguring their helicopters from anti-mine equipment to airlift support. Once changed over, the helicopters accommodated rolling palettes of supplies from emergency aid organizations. The pallets of supplies were wider than the helicopter openings so the personnel had to construct new pallets and then reload the supplies before delivery. Teams of forty-five members worked sixteen-hour days to do the conversion and load the helicopters. The HM-15 crews delivered over 357,000 pounds of supplies during eight trips to the isolated communities.146 In recognition of their outstanding contributions, 528 personnel from NAS Alameda were awarded the Humanitarian Service Medal.147

As impressive as the response from NAS Alameda’s personnel was, a number of individuals distinguished themselves with acts of bravery. Corporal Guillermo Guillen and Corporal Kevin Coleman, part of NAS Alameda Marine Security Force, were near the Cypress Freeway and immediately offered their help to the emergency responders on scene. Coleman rigged ropes to bring fire hoses to the freeway’s upper deck. Upon hearing cries from the collapsed section of the freeway, they rigged ropes to lower firefighters. Meanwhile Guillen assisted emergency personnel helping two women

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147 NAS Alameda Command History, 1990, 3, Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
trapped under their car’s dashboard. The women, from Nicaragua, did not speak English. Fluent in Spanish, Guillen acted as translator during a nearly four-hour ordeal, as firefighters used the Jaws of Life to literally pull the car apart piece by piece.\textsuperscript{148} Guillen and Coleman joined forces with three of their colleagues from NAS Alameda.

Jerry Crow, Brett Edgley, and James McLloyd, part of the Shore Intermediate Maintenance Activity (SIMA), upon seeing the destruction of the collapsed freeway, immediately provided help. They ran from car to car, searching for and helping injured people. As if out of a Hollywood film, the three soldiers encountered a car with four women and one man teetering on the edge of freeway. They successfully pulled the people from the car and stabilized them until medical attention arrived. The trio spent five hours helping before ending their participation.\textsuperscript{149}


\textsuperscript{149} Steve Hansen, “SIMA divers help rescue Cypress victims,” Station Newspaper \textit{The Carrier}, October 27, 1989. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
Almost two years to the day after the Loma Prieta earthquake, another natural disaster hit the Bay Area. This time the Oakland East Bay Hills were wracked by a severe firestorm. Strong winds and a previously contained grass fire created one of the most destructive fires in U.S. history. The firestorm, lasting from October 19 to 22, 1991, killed twenty-five people, destroyed 3,354 structures, and burned 1,500 acres. The fire spurred what was, at the time, the largest mutual aid effort, including 440 engine companies and 1,500 firefighters. NAS Alameda provided its runway as a staging area for this vast armada of fire trucks. The air station turned its gymnasium into a rest place for firefighters to eat, sleep, and shower. The navy ships homeported at NAS Alameda contributed to the effort. The USS Samuel Gompers, USS Wichita, and USS Mauna Kea

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donated box lunches from their ships’ supplies. Base volunteers made an additional 1,000 box lunches for firefighters. The chaplain from the USS Kansas City volunteered his services, while a petty officer evacuated animals to local shelters. Sailors and corpsmen from the USS Texas volunteered to fight the fire and work with the Red Cross to provide medical aid.152

As with the earthquake response in 1989, NAS Alameda personnel distinguished themselves with acts of bravery and courage. The station deployed two structural engine companies as part of the mutual aid effort, along with Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron Nineteen (HM-19) and Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron 85 (HS-85). The helicopter squadrons initially provided equipment delivery and fire mapping. At one point, the dispatched HS-15 successfully evacuated a group of injured civilians surrounded by fast moving flames.153 Four firefighters from NAS Alameda’s Engine 2 made one of the most daring stands of the fire. Remarkably, in the midst of a swirling wind and fire and with no fire department to back them up, the firefighters chose to fight the fire there. They put the few residents who refused to evacuate to work and, despite low water pressure, they contained the fire to the hills above their location on Alvarado road.154 A letter of thanks from a local resident sums up their effort:

The fire was stopped about 40' from my back door. I have since learned from two independent sources that a fire fighting crew from the Alameda Naval Air Station was at the intersection directly in front of my house. The


fire was stopped where they stood and fought it. In addition to my home they saved more than a dozen fine homes on the uphill side of Alvarado in my block. All of us lucky enough to have our homes on lower Alvarado Rd. owe your crew a huge debt of gratitude.
Sincerely,
Matthew P. Mitchell

Figure 9. Fire engines stage on the NAS Alameda Runway.

One significant benefit of having a large military base nearby was access to an Explosive Ordnance Disposal Detachment (EOD). Navy EOD squadrons, trained to conduct operations on land and in water, are tasked with the safe disposal of explosive devices. EOD technicians are trained to conduct operations on land and in water. NAS Alameda’s EOD team conducted a wide variety of public services for the surrounding Bay Area region. EOD technicians disarmed torpedo warheads and underwater mines caught in local fishing nets, rendering inert eight depth charges and

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five torpedo warheads in 1983 alone.\textsuperscript{158} The team also provided support to local and federal law enforcement agencies. This included assistance to the U.S. Secret Service for Vice President Bush (1987), Pope John Paul (1987), Vice President Quayle (1989), and presidential candidate Bill Clinton’s (1992) respective visits to California.\textsuperscript{159} The Concord Police department asked the EOD detachment for help disarming an improvised explosive device and a pipe bomb.\textsuperscript{160} The Napa Valley College requested EOD help disposing of a container of picric acid in a closet. Picric acid, used as an explosive in WWII, becomes volatile, if not stored properly.\textsuperscript{161} In 1992, a civilian helicopter crashed into the Carquinez Strait and the team conducted dives to help recover the five bodies and the helicopter.\textsuperscript{162}

Search and rescue was not limited to the EOD team. Marine Air Group 42 (MAG-42), based at NAS Alameda, participated in its share of rescues. In November 1983, Marine pilot Timothy Hill crashed into the Sierra Nevada mountain range. Alerted by three mountain climbers who witnessed the crash, MAG-42 received the call because no search and rescue units were available. The team used its CH-53 Sea Stallion helicopter to attempt the rescue. Not an optimal choice for use as a search and rescue helicopter, the CH-53, contained no rescue equipment, such as a hoist, and it created a tremendous downdraft. Nonetheless the team gave it a shot, and braving bad winter

\textsuperscript{158} EOD operations were noted in the 1983, 1984, 1985, 1992 command histories. In 1992, the EOD detachment removed a WWII era MK-13 influence mine. The EOD helped the Lake Tahoe USCG efforts in both 1983 and 1984.


\textsuperscript{160} \textit{NAS Alameda Command History}, 1987, 13, Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.

\textsuperscript{161} “EOD Team Helps Napa Valley College,” Station Newspaper \textit{The Carrier}, February 17, 1984. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.

\textsuperscript{162} \textit{NAS Alameda Command History}, 1992, 11, Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
conditions, landed the helicopter near the downed pilot and performed the rescue.163
Similarly, the HM-19 squadron performed a number of local rescues of recreational
boaters and swimmers.164

Interestingly, in terms of community service, NAS Alameda and the navy were
credited with being part of one of the most successful wildlife preservation programs.165
The California Least Tern, classified as a federally endangered species, is a small seabird
of ten inches originally found on the Southern Californian and Northern Mexican coasts.
Due to urban encroachment, the species became nearly extinct and moved its nesting into
Northern and Central California.166 Nesting Least Terns appeared at NAS Alameda in
approximately 1967. Shockingly, the birds picked the middle of the runway as their
breeding ground. Apparently ignoring the sound and danger from navy jets, the birds
found a spot that provided protection from predators. The birds became officially
recognized as a California Endangered species in 1976, and ten nesting pairs were
recorded at the station. The NAS Alameda staff took proactive measures to protect the
birds. In 1981, the Construction Battalion built a low metal mesh fence around the
nesting area to keep the chicks within a smaller area. Then they built a battery-powered
electric fence to keep predators (cats, rodents, and larger birds) out. These efforts paid
off with one hundred Least Tern chicks surviving, the most successful breeding season to

of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
Scot Fleming, “Two rescues in one day for NAS’s busy HS-85 squadron,” Station Newspaper The Carrier,
September 29, 1989. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National
Archives at San Francisco.
165 Geoff Jones, “They're back-least terns flourish at NAS,” Station Newspaper The Carrier, August 16,
1991. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San
Francisco.
166 California Department of Pesticide Regulation, Endangered Species Project, California Department of
that point in time. Unfortunately, in 1982 hawks and cats drove the terns to prematurely abandon nesting. The Station Commander planned “corrective measures” for the following year. After the calamity of the 1982 breeding season, the navy base took proactive measures each subsequent year, engaging in aggressive vegetation control measures, a feral cat trapping program, fence reconstruction, and coordination of air and ground traffic away from the colony. With the base’s efforts and the help of local biologist Laura Collins, by 1991 the Least Terns had their most successful breeding season to date with 144 chicks hatched from 120 nesting pairs and ensuring the survival of the species.

Figure 10. California Least Tern.


168 *NAS Alameda Command History*, 1982, 9, Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.

169 *NAS Alameda Command History*, 1991, 19, Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.

Finally, NAS Alameda excelled in offering ethnic and racial minority employment and advancement. Dating back to WWII, the station actively provided good paying and upwardly mobile jobs, bringing prosperity to a disadvantaged population at a time when the private workforce lacked the desire to help. By the early 1990s, the station’s civilian workforce consisted of fifty-one percent ethnic and racial minorities. African Americans alone made up roughly thirty percent of the workforce with Hispanics and Asians slightly below ten percent. By 1991, twenty-two percent of the workforce was female and ten percent disabled. These statistics reveal how important the station and its tenant activities were to the economic well-being of the community.

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171 Systems Control, Inc., *Air Installation Compatible Use Zone Study (AICUZ)*, 43.
172 Diversity numbers compiled from 1981-1983 and 1990 Command histories, the only years in which diversity statistics were noted.
BAD NEIGHBOR

For all the positive elements of having a major military base nearby, there were quite a number of negative ones. Each of these negative aspects contributed to the diminished importance of the NAS Alameda as a viable long-term active military base. Noise, pollution, and accidents all contributed to a growing tension with the urban surroundings. For example, ships homeported at NAS Alameda leaked nearly 72,000 gallons of oil into the Bay during an eleven-year period.\(^{173}\) Testing of land-based fuel tanks revealed four leaking tanks contaminated local groundwater. In 1992, the navy admitted that radioactive isotopes were present on the Bay floor, the result of the sandblasting and paint solvents applied to ships that participated in the 1946 Bikini Atoll nuclear tests.\(^{174}\)

Most military bases and corresponding operations prior to the 1980s had little knowledge of and gave little attention to industrial waste. At almost every major military base some form of toxic legacy requires environmental remediation. At NAS Alameda metal plating work, paint stripping, pesticides, leaking fuel, radioactive chemicals and numerous other industrial byproducts created major environmental hazards. These byproducts were either stored in low landfills or emptied straight into the Bay causing untold environmental damage. For example, five fuel tanks leaked 365,000 gallons of fuel into shallow groundwater. Industrial shops leaked alkaline and cyanide into the surrounding soil. Over 300 million gallons of untreated industrial wastewater, including


the radioactive chemical radium, was poured straight into the Bay. By the late 1980s, as the station finished assessing the scope of the problem, twenty major toxic sites were identified for cleanup. Fortunately the station, aware of the growing environmental impact it was creating, started curbing its waste by the late 1970s. For example, the navy paid to have paint stripping waste hauled off station until it finished building an adequate Industrial Waste Treatment Facility. It also started the process of studying and improving waste disposal practices while identifying areas for future remediation.

By the late 1970s, noise became recognized as an environmental pollutant. As such, state and local governments passed noise ordinances for which federal government organizations, including the military, had to comply. Between regular air traffic at the base and NARF engine testing, noise proved to be a difficult problem to manage for the station. The station received 176 noise-related complaints, seventy of which were repeat complaints, in an eighteen-month study period from June 1975 to December 1976. Most of the complaints happened during the evening and came from the east where approaches to Runway 25 occurred. These complaints, combined with data from studies that measured the impact of the air station on the surrounding community, forced the station and its tenant commands to take a series of noise abatement measures. The NARF put strict limitations on when engine run-ups could occur, specifically eliminating run-ups

177 NAS Alameda Command History, 1979, 20, Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
178 NAS Alameda Command History, 1982, 19, Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
179 Systems Control, Inc., Air Installation Compatible Use Zone Study (AICUZ), V-6-V-10.
between midnight and 7:00 a.m. and eliminating non-suppressed run-ups after 5:00 p.m. Additionally, the navy spent nearly $400,000 on sound suppression equipment and baffling to help address the noise problem. Further noise studies in the 1980s revealed that the only effective means of control was installation of an aircraft acoustical enclosure, also known as a “hush house,” in which the station invested.

Of the 176 noise complaints recorded in the study, over half were related to air traffic. As a result, the station routed most traffic to Runway 31, which, running north to south and approached over water via the estuary, was less likely to cause complaints. By comparison, Runway 25 ran east to west and was approached over Oakland. To prevent noise, use of Runway 25 was limited. Of the 75,000 flight operations in 1979, fewer than 1,000 occurred on Runway 25. Yet, for all the effort the station put into noise abatement from the late 1970s until the late 1980s, complaints remained constant. However, the station had been continually monitoring its noise pollution and quantified noise actually decreased. The air station concluded that the noise complaints were due to the rapidly expanding Oakland International Airport.

The growing concern for the environment throughout the 1970s, taking the form of federal environmental legislation, had a tremendous spillover effect on the military. State and local environmental agencies started to take aim at environmental polluters, among whom the military was conspicuous. This trend can be seen in the interactions between NAS Alameda and local environmental agencies. For example, Congress amended the Clean Air Act of 1977 (CAA) to ensure local districts’ jurisdiction could

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180 Systems Control, Inc., *Air Installation Compatible Use Zone Study (AICUZ)*, IV-21-IV-22.
force compliance from federal military facilities. Consequently, this gave the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) authority to require the navy to adhere with its no-visible emissions requirement. The testing of navy jet engines by NARF technicians, released a grey smoke into the air. Navy lawyers filed a legal challenge stating that aircraft engine repair fell under the aircraft exemption of the CAA. The navy lost this challenge and the subsequent appeal and was forced to install measures to prevent the release of smoke.184

Another legislative change, in 1987, allowed the BAAQMD to force the navy to reduce airborne pollutants. Previously the navy had been exempt from curbing airborne pollutants. At the time the district estimated that NARF Alameda released ten tons of industrial pollutants, such as paints and solvents, into the air.185 The BAAQMD cited the navy again in 1990 for not having a permit for three exhaust ventilation units that released hexane vapors. Later that year the California Senate passed AB2588 to combat Air Toxic Hot Spots. This time the navy proactively worked with the BAAQMD to comply with the law and avoid fines.186

The BAAQMD was not alone in issuing citations against NAS Alameda. The East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) issued a cease and desist order against the navy in 1987 for allowing the air station to let three hundred pounds of flammable solvents escape into the sewers and air.187 The EPA and the California department of Health Services issued violation warnings for numerous hazardous waste violations.

186 NAS Alameda Command History, 1990, 12-13, Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
Further, NAS Alameda received three cease and desist orders from EBMUD for out-of-compliance oil/water separators.\textsuperscript{188} The next year the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) issued violation and corrective action orders to the station for hazardous waste violations. Initially the navy claimed sovereign immunity, but eventually worked with DTSC to settle the issue. Shortly thereafter, EBMUD issued another cease and desist order to NAS Alameda for excessive levels of trichloroethylene in wastewater discharge.\textsuperscript{189}

Finally, in 1986, as part of the Superfund legislation, the federal government created and funded the Defense Environmental Restoration Program to facilitate remediating environmental problems at military installations.\textsuperscript{190} The Federal Facility Compliance Act of 1992 held federal agencies to local and state hazardous waste management regulations, and required them to pay fines and undergo EPA inspections. This codified what had been occurring in the Bay Area for nearly a decade.\textsuperscript{191}

The issue of nuclear weapons at NAS Alameda was a sore subject never fully reconciled. The station stored nuclear weapons offloaded from ships while in port. The city, fire officials, and residents felt uneasy about the risks of a nuclear accident so close to an urban area. More importantly, the navy refused to acknowledge or discuss the presence of nuclear weapons on the base, which meant that local disaster response could not properly participate in nuclear disaster preparedness planning. Moreover, navy

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[188] NAS Alameda Command History, 1989, 12, Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
\item[189] NAS Alameda Command History, 1991, 17-18, Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
officials refused to communicate response and evacuation plans to local and fire
department officials. Given the number of nuclear reactors aboard homeported ships and
an average of sixty-two movements of nuclear ordnance on and off ships per year, a high
potential for accident, this was unconscionable behavior by the navy.\textsuperscript{192} Therefore, it was
a huge relief to Alameda residents when President George H. W. Bush ordered all tactical
nuclear weapons be removed from navy ships in 1991.\textsuperscript{193}

**SURROUNDING AREA/ENCROACHMENT**

Urban encroachment became a serious problem for the air station starting in the
1970s. As the Port of Oakland and other local industries were expanding, they put the air
station at a disadvantage. The constraint of air and landing space surrounding NAS
Alameda created operational hazards. Increased population in the area impacted landing
approaches as special noise reducing maneuvers and routes were taken to avoid
disturbing the local population. The encroachment put severe limitations on the long-
term usefulness of the station.

The DoD established the Air Installation Compatible Use Zone Study (AICUZ)
program in 1973 to study the problems of urbanization with regard to interface between
air installations and the surrounding communities. This was in response to increased
growth near these bases. The studies identified potential problems and formulated
proactive responses to ensure compatibility and safety between the air facilities and the
urban environments where they resided. The program’s goal was to achieve long-term

\textsuperscript{192} Classified ordnance movements calculated from the 1979 through 1993 *NAS Alameda Command

suitable use in conjunction with the local communities. Each study identified three zones surrounding each airfield: the Clear Zone, Accident Potential Zone I (APZ I), and Accident Potential Zone II (APZ II). Clear zones lie immediately beyond the end of the runway for 3,000 feet and have the highest probability of accidents. APZ I extends 5,000 feet beyond the Clear Zone has the next highest statistical probability of accidents. APZ II has a lower chance of accidents and extends 7,000 feet beyond APZ I.\footnote{Systems Control, Inc., \textit{Air Installation Compatible Use Zone Study (AICUZ)}, V-17-V18.} The navy conducted its first AICUZ study of NAS Alameda in 1978, the results of this report found a number of serious issues including noise, accident potential, operations, and commercial encroachment.\footnote{Ibid., I-1-I-2 and 11-1-11-2.}

The study identified a number of measures the station had already instituted. This included noise abatement procedures, conducting takeoffs and landings over water, and the diverting of certain activities to other facilities. For example, Field Carrier Landing Practice (FCLP) and Touch-and-go operations had been diverted to other airfields.\footnote{“Station Hosts AICUZ Seminar,” Station Newspaper \textit{The Carrier}, July 3, 1981. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.} FCLP exercises help pilots practice aircraft carrier landings by marking out the dimensions of a carrier landing deck on a land based runway. Touch-and-go exercises train pilots, on ground based runways, to immediately engage their afterburners as soon as they touch down for landing. This technique is essential for landings on a deck carrier deck because if the tailhook fails to catch the arresting gear the plane will not have enough thrust to make it off the deck. Both operations help pilots maintain the proficiency required for operating navy aircraft. Moving these operations to other airfields severely limited the usefulness of the air station. Also noted in the study was a

\footnote{Systems Control, Inc., \textit{Air Installation Compatible Use Zone Study (AICUZ)}, I-13.}
marked decline in annual operations from 139,000 in 1969 to 80,000 by 1976, the result of reassignment of all but one active duty air squadron.\textsuperscript{197} The air station had ceased being an important naval asset.

The AICUZ reported noted that compatible future commercial development along the Inner Harbor should focus on light industrial buildings, warehousing facilities and transportation hubs. However, real estate prices and economic potential made these types of facilities impractical. The area was highly desirable for retail, office, and residential space all of which was either planned or under construction. Ironically the report stated, “[t]he Port of Oakland should consider coordinating its development plans for the Embarcadero Development with the air station to be sure all available measures are taken to reduce noise and safety impacts.”\textsuperscript{198} The Port of Oakland’s World Trade Center development plans a year later demonstrated that they were either not aware of the report or they simply chose to ignore it.\textsuperscript{199}

A telltale sign of the encroachment problems were the changes made for approach landings to Runways 25 and 13. Due to obstructions around the Oakland Inner Harbor (the Bay Bridge, cranes, ships in drydock), the navy increased the weather minimums and the glide slope to avoid them. The glide slope is the angle an aircraft in the process of landing assumes, to ensure the proper touchdown sequence is followed. For example, jets landing on an aircraft carrier need to follow a glide slope that ensures the tailhook hits the deck before the landing gear in order to catch the arresting wire. For NAS Alameda operations the glide slopes were increased from the optimal 2.5-3.0 degrees to a steeper 3.5 degrees. The steeper glide slope caused a faster rate of descent, increasing

\textsuperscript{197} Ibid., IV-2.
\textsuperscript{198} Ibid., I-16.
\textsuperscript{199} Ibid., V-28.
danger, causing harder impact on landing, or leading to overshooting the runway altogether.\footnote{Ibid., IV-8, V3.}

The AICUZ reports made eight recommendations, five for aircraft operations and three for aircraft repair. The aircraft repair recommendations centered on noise abatement and included placing a curfew on test cell run-ups, purchasing more test cells, and replacing acoustical treatment. These were fairly straightforward and not too difficult to implement.\footnote{Ibid., C-24-C28.} However, the aircraft operations recommendations conflicted with the core of the NAS Alameda mission and really foreshadowed the long-term incompatibility of the station. For example, the first recommendation suggested reducing landings at Runway 25 by sixty percent. The second recommendation was to eliminate all landings on Runway 25. The advantages were noise elimination, reduction of APZs, and ease surrounding commercial developments. Implementation of these recommendations would have eliminated sixty-five percent of operations and called into question the necessity of the station.\footnote{Ibid., C-3-C4 and C-8-C-9.} Another recommendation was to create new visual flight rules to follow the Oakland Inner Harbor, reducing the noise levels in Oakland. Unfortunately, this would have encroached into Oakland Airport’s rapidly increasing air traffic and created commercial flight delays.\footnote{Ibid., C-14-C-15.} The other major recommendation was to divert nighttime FCLP trainings to other airfields. Some of these operations had already been implemented, but alternative locations for relocation were
scarce. This dilemma posed another problem for NAS Alameda in that they were sending additional work, and relevance, away to other airfields. 204

 Planned urban development started to seriously encroach on NAS Alameda in 1979. The Port of Oakland proposed a new hotel and business park, called the Oakland World Trade Center, directly across the estuary from the station. The largest building planned for the complex, a twelve-story building designed to house 5,000 people, was located in the APZ of Runway 25. At the time, twenty-five percent of the station’s air operations used Runway 25, and the station operations projected increased usage due to the planned homeporting of two Nimitz class carriers. The proposed new building and existing obstructions forced incoming planes using Runway 25 to conduct “dirty landings.” Dirty landings, occurred when incoming planes were forced to land with landing gear and flaps fully extended, making them less aerodynamic and forcing the engines to operate at full power in order to keep the aircraft aloft. The navy instituted these landing techniques in order to avoid the surrounding obstructions in case of an aborted landing. 205 The project designers and the Port of Oakland refused to modify their plans to accommodate the navy’s safety buffer zones.

 The navy fought the plans to build the World Trade Center West complex. Alameda Mayor Chuck Corica, a bona fide navy supporter, joined in the criticism of the project. The navy appealed to the Alameda County Airport Land Use Commission, but lost on a 4-3 decision with the final vote cast by the commissioner representing the Port of Oakland. NAS Alameda commander Richard Daleke accused the port of using this as an attempt to acquire the station’s land and deep-water port capabilities. In the end, the

204 Ibid., C-18-C19.
Oakland World Trade Center was abandoned, not because of navy or political influence, but rather due to financial issues. However, this was an early warning that commerce and urban encroachment would not take a backseat to navy or military operations.\textsuperscript{206}

Perhaps the biggest urban encroachment challenge for NAS Alameda was the growth of Bay Area commercial aviation. The station’s airfield sat sandwiched between two major commercial airports with Oakland Airport, just six miles to the southeast, and San Francisco Airport four miles to the southwest. Both airports experienced exponential growth during this time. San Francisco Airport activity grew forty-one percent, going from 22 million to 31 million passengers in the years spanning 1980 to 1990. In the same timeframe, Oakland Airport increased its passenger throughput by one-hundred-fifty percent, going from 2.4 million to 5.5 million passengers served.\textsuperscript{207} Regulations stemming from an FAA study in the late 1960s complicated the dense air traffic. The study concluded that ninety-seven percent of mid-air collisions occurred at 8,000 feet or below. It identified the majority of these incidents occurred between commercial and military aircraft.\textsuperscript{208} Thus, a growing density in surrounding aircraft traffic combined with a greater risk of collision severely impinged air operations at NAS Alameda.

\textsuperscript{208}Systems Control, Inc., \textit{Air Installation Compatible Use Zone Study (AICUZ)}, IV-16.
Figure 12. Map of NAS Alameda in relation to San Francisco and Oakland Airports.\textsuperscript{209}

Not surprisingly, a number of airplane accidents occurred in and around the station. The AICUZ study reported that from 1964 to 1978 twenty-five accidents related to NAS Alameda. The most significant accident occurred February 7, 1973 when a navy A7E jet crashed into an apartment complex on nearby Central Avenue, killing the pilot and nine residents.\textsuperscript{210} Another significant, though not as deadly, accident took place when a navy T-33 training aircraft crashed into the Bay Bridge, killing two pilots, the result of the dense Bay Area fog. This accident had potential to be far worse.

Fortunately for the station, eighteen of the twenty-two accidents (eighty-two percent)

occurred on or near the runway, limiting the amount of danger to the surrounding areas. Two of the other four occurred more than five nautical miles away from the station, well out of the danger zones. One of these two crashes, was the aforementioned Bay Bridge collision; the other was an engine failure causing a pilot to crash his plane into the Bay outside the APZs.\textsuperscript{211} Accidents continued to occur in and around the station. A Marine A-4 attack jet skidded into the Oakland Estuary after an aborted takeoff in June 1987; luckily, the pilot survived.\textsuperscript{212} This incident was eerily reminiscent of an incident in 1978, when a Skywarrior jet crashed into the estuary, killing the pilot, after an aborted takeoff. In 1988, eight crewmen were lost when a navy Sea Dragon minesweeper helicopter crashed west of the Golden Gate Bridge. In December of that same year an F-14 sank to the bottom of the estuary after it clipped another fighter; fortunately nobody was injured.\textsuperscript{213} Amazingly there were few fatalities, and even fewer civilian deaths, as a result of this litany of crashes related to NAS Alameda. However, with so much airborne activity and an ever encroaching surrounding environment, it was only a matter of time before disaster struck.

THE 1993 BRAC

By the late 1970s, rumors of closure swirled around NAS Alameda, due to the post-Vietnam military downsizing. The 1979 military budgets as a portion of the national budget had decreased while inflation further reduced the value of the authorized funding. As a result, the number of civilian employees dropped from 12,000 in 1970 to 7,000 in 1979. The number of military personnel assigned dropped from 2,500 to 1,600 during

\textsuperscript{211} Ibid., V-23.
that same time. Also by 1979, the station went from housing six carriers down to two. More significantly, all active duty squadrons were removed from the station. NARF contracts fell off as well. On a trip there in 1978, Chief Naval officer Admiral Thomas Hayward had to declare publically his support for keeping the station open. During the 1980s, the station skirted closure, saved by the increased military spending of the Carter and Reagan administrations. In particular, Reagan’s six-hundred-ship navy plan ensured the need for three West Coast carrier bases. However, by the late 1980s and the end of the Cold War, shrinking military budgets and a renewed effort to close bases put the station at direct risk. Sensing these impending changes, the navy put all non-maintenance military construction projects at NAS Alameda on hold starting in 1990. In fact by 1990, according to an internal navy memo, closing the NAS Alameda port became a serious consideration.

The threat to closing NAS Alameda and other Bay Area bases presented a unique dichotomy for the Bay Area. The region and its politicians, with a perceived slant towards anti-military sentiments, were forced to confront the prospect of losing a significant local employer. Specifically, Democratic Representatives Nancy Pelosi, Barbara Boxer, and Ron Dellums scrambled as bases in their districts became targeted for closure, starting with the 1988 closures. Paradoxically, as soon as the closure process started, a number of people began to argue that the military’s exit would provide a boost to the local economy. Some people looked at Treasure Island as a way to alleviate

Anita Weier, “NAS chief is confident decline will be reversed,” Alameda Times Star, January 2, 1979.
215 NAS Alameda Command History, 1990, 10, Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
housing shortages and NAS Alameda as prime real estate for housing and commercial development or for a civilian airport. A group in Alameda, calling themselves Alamedans for a Civilian Economy, argued publically and at city council meetings that Alameda could thrive in the absence of the military and should lobby the government to remove the base.\footnote{Christopher Hines, “Lowering boom on bases called wise,” \textit{Alameda Times Star}, October 9, 1992.} The Arms Control Research, a liberal defense think tank, suggested that the decreased workload at Alameda created one of the lowest per-acre areas of employment and that Alameda would be better served by embracing closure.\footnote{Christopher Hines, “NAS firefighters lack nuclear arms training,” \textit{Alameda Times Star}, October 3, 1992.} Many predicted that the Bay Front property of the station and other local military bases would be worth billions in redevelopment. The mayor and city council did not share this opinion and continued to fight for the base’s future in Alameda. Most Alameda citizens agreed and took up the fight, accusing then Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney of singling out the Bay Area for political retribution.\footnote{Brad Mohler, “Alamedans fire back,” \textit{Alameda Journal}, September 25, 1990.}

As discussions for the 1991 BRAC commenced in Washington, debate turned to Alameda’s strategic role. Its strength was its ability to house multiple nuclear carriers, owing to upgrades completed during the early 1980s. At the time, San Diego required a $5 million upgrade to match the capabilities NAS Alameda possessed. However, the problem for Alameda was it only had one carrier homeported because the other was undergoing a two-year overhaul.\footnote{Christopher Hines, “NAS nuclear capability may not be strong card,” \textit{Alameda Times Star}, March 14, 1991.} Fortunately for Alameda, the station was taken off the 1991 closure list, but trouble lurked as additional rounds of base closures were planned for 1993 and 1995. Foreshadowing the future trouble for Alameda was the construction of a new nuclear carrier port in Everett, WA. The DoD started spending on
construction for this base in the mid-1980s as part of the strategic homeporting program and its presence threatened the future of NAS Alameda with the Bay Area’s housing shortage and the high cost of doing business.

Sure enough, NAS Alameda was added to the 1993 BRAC list, along with several other high-profile Bay Area Bases including Treasure Island, Mare Island Naval Shipyard, FISC Oakland, and the Oakland Naval Hospital. Local politicians and citizens rallied in support of the local bases, but it was an uphill climb. As predicted, the main argument for saving NAS Alameda revolved around the construction at Everett. Bay Area politicians argued that the millions of dollars being spent to finish construction of a new nuclear facility in Everett, WA could be saved by keeping Alameda open. The argument was compelling enough that BRAC commissioners agreed and added Everett to their list of bases to consider for closure.222 Through extensive deliberations, and a narrow four-to-three vote to close the air station, the commission concluded that the cost of operating Alameda was far greater than the cost of finishing and operating Everett.223 More importantly, the Everett facility had been designed specifically to house nuclear carriers from a land-use and environmental point of view, so its impact on and integration with the local community was in greater harmony than Alameda and other bases that had developed during the run-up to WWII.

After the commission vote, Bay Area leaders accused the navy of “cooking the books” to both punish the Bay Area and to protect the Pacific Northwest, where then Speaker of the House, Thomas Foley, resided. The latter argument is implausible, because Dellums was the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee and was 222 Meredith K. Wadman, “Rival bases added to list,” Oakland Tribune, Front Page, May 1993. 223 “Alameda must get over the shock and move ahead,” Oakland Tribune, June 28, 1993.
arguably more important to the navy than Foley.\textsuperscript{224} Interestingly, the 1993 BRAC voted to close all the Bay Area facilities except for FISC Oakland. BRAC commissioner Harry McPherson made a plea to the other commission members to spare the base for “racial justice,” owing to the decimation of ethnic and racial minority jobs in the area. This action was well intentioned but shortsighted. First, the supply center only employed 3,300 people, of which only half met the “minority” criteria, so the actual number of ethnic and racial minority jobs saved was minimal. Second, FISC facilities are considered followers; they exist to support bigger bases in the area in which they are located. FISC Oakland was a follower facility to NAS Alameda and MINSY, both of which the commission voted to close. This meant that FISC Oakland was going to be shut down sooner or later (1995 as it turns out) because it had lost its primary mission.\textsuperscript{225} In an ironic twist of fate, sparing FISC Oakland may have prevented the creation of jobs. The Port of Oakland actively coveted the FISC property in order to expand port operations by building new railroad and cargo terminals. Closing the FISC could have created immediate commercial value and jobs for Oakland, and the commission ended up keeping it tied up as an under-utilized military facility.\textsuperscript{226} Commissioner McPherson’s attempt at racial balancing actually highlights one of the major flaws of the BRAC process and commission—the inability to factor in racial equality. Among the thousands of Bay Area jobs eliminated by the 1993 BRAC, other than the last minute plea for FISC Oakland, there was no consideration given to what types of jobs were being eliminated. Specifically, ethnic and racial minorities held a high percentage of the Bay Area jobs

\textsuperscript{226} Ibid.
eliminated, and with no empirical study of the consequences of their elimination, the BRAC inadvertently eroded the significant progress these groups had made through the programs instituted by the federal government. In other words, there were plenty of affirmative action laws and protections for the hiring of ethnic and racial minority workers and these efforts paid huge dividends for their financial stability and upward mobility. However, none of these protections came into play when considering the elimination of these jobs. The BRAC failed to adequately consider the adverse effects these closures would have on the ethnic and racial minority populations. The BRAC charter made no accommodation for this factor, and as a result, these groups took a severe hit in the 1995 and 2005 BRAC rounds as well. In the case of NAS Alameda, the commission moved a major military base from an area that was quite diverse in its demographic composition to an area that was ninety-three percent white. While the commission did not appear to be racially motivated, one could question the logic of privileging a predominantly white community over a diverse one. From this perspective, simply looking at cost and military function could be used, deliberately or inadvertently, to punish specific populations of the country, whether of certain race, class, gender, or political affiliation.

**CONCLUSION**

This case study suggests that NAS Alameda’s role in the community was both positive and negative. NAS Alameda made significant contributions to the region, but it wreaked tremendous environmental damage. Operationally, it was limited by the region’s urban density, encroachment, and the high cost of living. While local politicians
created good political theater, the decision to shutter the station had little to do with
punishing liberals, but rather illuminates the politics of federal, state, and local
policymaking. Compliance with environmental legislation, regional planning challenges,
and the declining presence of the navy in the post-Cold War era exemplified how these
policies affected the ability of the air station to operate. Without Reagan’s six-hundred-
ship navy plan, the station likely would have been closed in the early 1980s. Beyond that,
the navy’s decision to build clean, new, and environmentally friendly bases, such as the
one in Everett, made more sense from both a cost and local impact perspective. NAS
Alameda was born out of necessity leading up to the WWII crisis. It adapted and grew in
the subsequent years of its operation, but it was never fully planned or designed to fit
within the geographical area in which it was located. As a result, its utility was
diminished by economic and environmental tensions with local communities. Thus,
closing NAS Alameda was not only logical but inevitable.
CHAPTER IV. POLITICAL TOXICITY:
CLOSING THE MARE ISLAND NAVAL SHIPYARD

Figure 13. Aerial view of the Mare Island Naval Shipyard.227

227 Aerial view of the Mare Island Naval Shipyard, History Subject Files, A, 3, Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
INTRODUCTION

On May 5, 2008, facing a $16 million debt and with no money to cover it, the City of Vallejo filed for bankruptcy protection. At the time, this city of 117,000 residents was the largest California city to file for bankruptcy. A number of bad events have to occur to cause a municipality of this size to declare bankruptcy. By 2008, falling property tax revenues, increased public employee labor costs, lingering debts, and lack of monetary assets created an untenable financial situation from which Vallejo could not recover. Yet a major cause of the city’s financial problems can be traced back to June 26, 1993, when the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) voted to close the Mare Island Naval Shipyard (MINSY). As late as 1988, the first year of a modern base closure process, MINSY was the major employer for both the city of Vallejo and the surrounding cities of Benicia, Fairfield, and Vacaville in Solano County. MINSY generated $533 million in annual revenues, making it the third largest industrial job provider in Northern California. The shipyard employed nearly ten thousand people and pumped an annual payroll of $333 million into the local economy. In fact, MINSY was Vallejo’s main provider of jobs, tax revenue, and general economic stability. Without MINSY, bankruptcy was practically inescapable for a city with no other economic engines of substance.

Yet the MINSY decline and ultimate closure has special significance beyond economic hardships. MINSY’s final journey provides an interesting lens through which

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229 Solano County includes the smaller cities of Dixon, Rio Vista, and Suisun City as well.
230 1988 was the first year the DoD took tangible steps towards reducing the massive Cold War infrastructure. It was also the first year of a formal base closure commission. After 1988, MINSY revenues and employment dropped off significantly. Mare Island Naval Shipyard Command History 1988. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
to understand broader political trends and policy implications. Throughout the 1980s, the federal, state, and local environmental legislation created in the 1970s forced the shipyard to change the way it operated dramatically. Additionally, federal shipbuilding and repair policies, designed to protect private shipbuilders, limited new growth and eroded existing workloads for public naval shipyards by creating a surplus of capacity and making MINSY vulnerable. Similarly, the influence of private sector business techniques such as total quality management, cost efficiencies, and project management on the military procurement process forced a greater focus on MINSY’s bottom line. Federal budget balancing efforts foisted an even greater burden on the shipyard. Also, politically charged actions by San Francisco politicians, had tangible repercussions for the shipyard. Finally, the end of the Cold War and the downsizing of the massive U.S. military infrastructure meant that change and loss were inevitable. Unfortunately for MINSY, these political forces conspired to erode the shipyard’s ability to function efficiently. MINSY was already sinking beyond recovery by the time the Commission held its first hearing in spring 1993.

MINSY HISTORY

MINSY and Vallejo have been intertwined since their respective foundings. Vallejo formally incorporated as a city in 1851, and MINSY followed four years later in 1854. The shipyard opened under the command of David Glasgow Farragut, who achieved distinction for his naval service during the Civil War. MINSY represented the
first West Coast naval base and, in conjunction with local army outposts, provided a strong federal presence in the wild days of the California gold rush.231

MINSY played a crucial role in support of America’s major conflicts. Beginning with the Civil War, the base repaired ships and supported the Pacific Fleet’s role in protecting gold shipments bound for Panama.232 MINSY set the standard for productivity during WWI with its construction of eight destroyers during the war and establishment of a construction speed record by building the destroyer USS Ward in seventeen days.233

From the early 1900s through the interwar years, the shipyard positioned itself at the forefront of naval technology. First, on January 4, 1911, the MINSY modified the USS Pennsylvania (ACR-4) with a wooden platform sitting on a steel frame to serve as a rudimentary flight deck. The ship left two weeks later and anchored in San Francisco Bay. Here the Pennsylvania achieved naval aviation history as the first aircraft carrier when pilot Eugene Ely landed his Curtiss biplane on the deck and, after a short while, took off from the ship and made his way back to land.234 The shipyard also became a pioneer in the development and construction of submarines. MINSY assumed primary responsibility for repairing submarines on the West Coast during WWI and expanded that role to include research, design, and construction of new submarines during the 1920s and beyond. The shipyard played a prominent role during WWII by building nearly four hundred ships, in addition to repairing hundreds of others, including the destroyer USS Shaw, severely damaged during the attack at Pearl Harbor. Shipyard workers

231 Architectural Background, 5,9. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
232 Ibid., 10.
233 Ibid., 20.
rehabilitated the ship and returned it to service five months later.235 At the height of
WWII, the shipyard employed 41,000 workers, including 8,600 women.236 The Cold
War era brought a downsized workforce of approximately 10,000 workers and a leading
role in nuclear submarine development. MINSY, along with three other shipyards,
manufactured and repaired the nuclear-powered ballistic submarines capable of launching
nuclear missiles.237 Private shipbuilders in the early 1970s usurped new ship construction
from public shipyards, which forced MINSY to abandon its submarine construction
program and focus solely on repair and decommissioning, roles it would execute until
closing.

MINSY’s role as a public shipyard provided a salvo in the ongoing tug-of-war
between private and public shipyards, a tension that still exists. Historically, as the U.S.
began to construct a formal navy at the beginning of the 1800s, private shipyards
struggled to meet the demand. This forced the navy to build its own public shipyards
where it could better control the respective shipyard capacity and capability. The
establishment of MINSY gave the navy a West Coast shipbuilding and repair capability.
Prior to MINSY, navy vessels in need of repair had to make the long and treacherous
voyage around Cape Horn to the East Coast or be abandoned in California. MINSY’s
presence provided regional ship repair and shipbuilding capabilities, which gave the navy
the ability to repair its ships more quickly and take delivery of locally built ships much
faster without the near year long wait for ships’ Cape Horn trek. This trend provided the
navy with the advantage of keeping costs in check by forcing competition with private

236 Architectural Background, 34-35. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The
National Archives at San Francisco.
237 Ibid., 38-39.
However, with the advent of steel ships in the late 1800s, private shipyards commandeered the majority of new ship construction, leaving public shipyards with minimal workloads. In the wake of the Spanish-American War and the emergence of America’s blue-water navy, MINSY and other public shipyards received a bigger piece of the shipbuilding pie. This trend persisted through WWII, with the colossal military construction program that fed public and private shipyards alike. Private shipyards entered a period of decline from the end of WWII until the 1970s when all new ship construction was directed to the private industry, the result of navy procurement changes. For MINSY, the increasing size of capital ships in the early to mid-1900s, combined with the narrow and silted waterways of the upper Bay Area, forced the shipyard to focus on smaller ships and predominantly submarine construction. This strategy aligned with the navy’s desire to diversify submarine construction away from a single private shipyard, (at the time, Electric Boat was the single supplier of submarines) and build in supplier redundancy.

Within the first twenty-five years of its existence, MINSY ran into issues that called its long-term viability into question. More than once critics called for the navy to shut the shipyard down. As early as 1878, the buildup of silt in the upper bay channels and straits shrunk the water depth, requiring continual dredging to keep the waterways open. The need for dredging persisted all the way through to MINSY’s closing. Further, the high cost of doing business at MINSY, mostly due to fraud, forced the navy

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239 Ibid., 156.
240 Architectural Background, 18-19, 38.
241 Ibid., 31.
242 Ibid., 14.
to stop sending work to the shipyard. At one point in the late 1800s, the expenditure to repair a ship at MINSY cost more than the original construction itself. By the turn of the century, the silting waterways, combined with the increasing size of naval ships, especially aircraft carriers and battleships, troubled by the narrow strait, conspired to limit MINSY’s effectiveness as a modern shipyard and base.

PUBLIC VERSUS PRIVATE SHIPBUILDING AND REPAIR

There are relatively few technical differences between private and public shipyards. Both entities are federally funded, but the key differentiator between the two lies in the organizational structure. Private shipyards exist to make money for their shareholders, whereas public shipyards exist to serve the navy’s strategic objectives. The distribution of shipbuilding work between the two entities has been fraught with conflict since the formation of the navy. Who gets the work? How much does it cost? Can the private sector handle the responsibility? And, are public shipyards too expensive? These are some of the many questions that have surrounded the public versus private shipyard debate.

While public versus private shipbuilding has been a contentious issue since America started fielding a navy, several key pieces of federal legislation in the twentieth century dramatically altered shipbuilding and, in the process, sealed MINSY’s decline and closure decades before the BRAC ever convened. In March, 1928, the House of Representatives approved $274 million for the construction of sixteen new navy ships. A crucial part of this legislation was the addition of the Dallinger amendment, submitted by

244 Fortress California, 42-43.
Frederick Dallinger (R-MA). The amendment specified that, of the new ships, half would be built in public navy yards and half by the private shipbuilding industry, alternating between the two. The amendment created a certain stability, guaranteeing both public and private shipyards a steady stream of work. The Dallinger amendment was codified in the Vinson-Trammell Act of 1934, a crucial piece of interwar legislation, authorizing the navy to build ninety-six new ships to bring itself up to treaty strength and replace many of the obsolete vessels in the inventory. The size and scope of WWII created a huge spike in activity for both private and public shipyards. After the war, the shipyard industry contracted significantly as demand plummeted. This forced the navy to allocate shipbuilding work to private firms to ensure they remained in business and added to the ongoing tension between public and private shipyards. Then in 1972, the navy shifted all of its new construction work to private shipyards and assigned overhaul work to the public shipyards. This shift resulted from a seminal study on public versus private shipbuilding costs produced by the consulting firm Booz Allen-Hamilton. The study concluded that the cost of new ship construction averaged approximately thirty-five percent higher in public shipyards, with the disparity in cost caused by the higher wages and more expensive benefits paid to workers in public shipyards. Thus, despite time and cost overruns and the fraud plaguing private shipyards during the 1970s and 1980s,

249 Ibid., 2.
250 Ibid., 3, Booz Allen-Hamilton study (13, p. 1-7, Chapter VI).
the navy continued to direct new construction towards the private sector.251 These cost overruns and fraud brought greater scrutiny to private shipyards and, for a short time, held out hope that public shipyards might resume ship construction. This move to and support of private shipbuilding underscores the navy’s adoption of the weapons manager system and the political support derived from defense contractors. Eventually, though, the navy and private industry settled their differences retaining public shipyards for overhaul work. In 1981, at the behest of Congress, the Public Research Institute conducted a study to compare the costs of overhaul work done at private versus public shipyards. This study concluded that costs did not differ significantly between public and private shipyards. However, the study did highlight that public shipyards completed overhauls faster than private shipyards.252 This became an important distinction as the private industry spent the 1980s and early 1990s lobbying for more of the overhaul and repair work.

BUDGET CUTS

As if the steady loss of work to the private sector were not enough of a problem for shipyards like MINSY, military budget cuts dramatically affected shipbuilding and

251 Electric Boat is a division of General Dynamics. General Dynamics was investigated by the Justice Department for cost overruns in 1978. Electric Boat was severely criticized during the early 1980s when structural flaws and falsified inspection records in Los Angeles class submarines surfaced leading to production delays and massive cost overruns. Shortly thereafter General Dynamics was publically charged for defense contracting fraud during the 1980s in the much publicized Sgt. York air defense gun, but ultimately the charges were dropped.


Charles P. Alexander, Christopher P. Redman, and John E. Yang, “General Dynamics Under Fire: The ways of a supplier show the woes of procurement,” Time; April 8, 1985, Vol. 125 Issue 14, p23, 4p


252 Overhaul costs in public and private shipyards: A Case study, Marianne Bowes, 1981, The Public Research Institute, A Division of the Center for Naval Analyses, 22.
repair activities. The landmark 1987 Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act, formally known as the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Reaffirmation Act of 1987, brought a dramatic approach for reducing defense, and all federal, spending levels. This Act called for across-the-board budget cuts if political leaders did not meet targets for reducing the deficit by 1991, in a process called “sequestration.” As it turned out, the Supreme Court declared the sequestration process unconstitutional because it violated the separation of powers clause by putting execution of laws in the legislative branch. The law was revised and passed again in 1987 with a two-year extension to achieve the cuts.\(^{253}\)

The threat of the law wreaked havoc on MINSY as the navy pressured its commands to save money in preparation for $11.5 billion cut in military spending for FY 87-88. This included drafting plans for early retirement packages and targeted furloughs.\(^{254}\) Interestingly, the shipyard used these initiatives not so much for compliance with Gramm-Rudman-Hollings but to grapple with its diminishing workload. Initial estimates showed MINSY losing only $76,000 in spending, but revisions made the outlook steadily bleaker.\(^{255}\) In 1986, the shipyard eliminated the graveyard shift in order to save money, because workers were paid higher wages for that shift.\(^{256}\) In December 1987, MINSY issued a civilian hiring freeze.\(^{257}\) In 1988, the coast guard shut down its station at MINSY as part of its broader twenty-two base closings in response to Gramm-

\(^{253}\) http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/projects/debt/1987grammrudmanhollings.html


\(^{256}\) Michael Gilbert, “Mare Island may end night shift,” Vallejo Times Herald, February 1, 1986.

Rudman-Hollings. Later in 1988, the navy started scaling back its maintenance program, dubbed Extended Submarine Engineered Operating Cycle (ESEOC). This reduced the scope of major overhaul work, with major refueling and repair activities occurring simultaneously instead of as separate work efforts. This severely cut the amount of work done by submarine repair shipyards. Taken together, the ESEOC, reaction to Gramm-Rudman-Hollings, and the USA’s improving relationship with the Soviet Union, caused a shift towards major DoD cost cutting and force reductions.

### BAY AREA POLITICIANS

The 1993 BRAC Commission’s decision to close MINSY, Alameda NAS, Treasure Island Naval Station, and the Oak Knoll Naval Hospital had many Bay Area residents claiming political foul. These, on top of several other high profile closures in previous closure rounds, fueled speculation of political retribution towards the liberally leaning Bay Area and its politicians or, worse, the selling out of Bay Area military installations by local politicians. Yet an examination of local political actors demonstrates that though their policies and views were liberal, and in some cases, anti-military, they advocated for and fought hard to support local military installations. In MINSY’s case especially, federal representatives worked tirelessly on behalf of the shipyard. It provides the clearest example of how the failure of “liberal politicians” to oppose base closings is a false myth.

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258 The station would open again thirteen months later as additional funding was approved to reinstate the station. Garry Chandler, “M.I Coast Guard station to close,” *Vallejo Times Herald*, January 27, 1988. Garry Chandler, “Coast Guard busily preparing for Mare Island reopening,” *Vallejo Times Herald*, March 30, 1989.

259 Sue Lemmon, *Closure: The Final Twenty Years of Mare Island Naval Shipyard Closure*, 162.
The decision to close MINSY elicited a vociferous response from Vallejo and the Solano County areas. The *Vallejo Times-Herald*’s headline ran “TORPEDOED: Closure vote unanimous,” and the *Oakland Tribune*’s “Vallejo takes the news like a torpedo hit.” Citizens voiced significant criticism of local politicians, blaming their “liberal” and “anti-military” stances, as well as the DoD/navy for punishing the Bay Area. The large number of other Bay Area bases closed in this BRAC round reinforced the perception that retribution politics were at play. Barbara Boxer’s (D-CA 6th) reputation unfairly took a beating. For example, Vallejo resident Mari Heinmiller had this to say:

> To the Bay Area’s misfortune, in its corner was Ron Dellums, one of the mouthiest proponents of defense cutbacks on record. And there was the memory of the San Francisco politicians (led by Art Agnos) who nixed the homeporting of the USS *Missouri* back when … and, of course, let’s not forget Barbara! With such a band of n’er-do-wells, we never had a chance.

This lashing out against Boxer, and even Dellums (D-CA 9th), was more of an emotional reaction to bad news than one based in fact. Boxer, along with Vic Fazio (D-CA 3rd and 4th) fiercely defended and supported MINSY during their time in office.

As senator, Boxer continually went out of her way to support the navy’s efforts to co-exist with civilian activity in the Bay Area as the following examples demonstrate. Boxer came to office as a representative in 1983 and immediately went to work securing much needed funding for the shipyard. Among her successes, with help from Vic Fazio (D-CA 3rd) and Ron Dellums (D-CA 9th), were: $7.2 million for an electrical upgrade to the shipyard’s shore power system, $5 million for a maintenance training facility, and $6.6 million for upgraded security lighting, telephone systems, and a sewer system. She also secured $3.9 million for a dry dock refueling complex and $2.4 million for dredging.

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260 “Vallejo takes news like a torpedo hit,” *Oakland Tribune* June 26, 1993
and a new fire station. Fazio secured an additional $2.4 million for expanded housing at the nearby Travis AFB. In particular, acquiring the electrical upgrade demonstrated Boxer’s commitment and effectiveness as a politician. Congress approved the project in 1984, but required the navy to fund the project, which it never did. Each subsequent year legislators castigated the navy for not funding the project, until finally, in 1988, Boxer and Fazio forced the issue by threatening to withhold funds for other navy projects until this project received funding. Under this pressure the navy relented and funded the project.

Boxer stood up for MINSY in opposition to the lobbying of private shipyards. Owing to a sixty-five percent decline in employment between 1962 and 1988, the Navy Shipbuilders Council of America, a lobby for the private shipyard industry, approached Boxer about asking MINSY to change its temporary workforce policy to hire local private shipyard workers instead of borrowing workers from other naval shipyards. Boxer showed no inclination to help the private shipyard workers, citing the private shipyard attempts to steal work away from public shipyards. This showed recognition on Boxer’s part of the larger political forces at play and a fundamental commitment to the workers of MINSY. As downsizing and the BRAC processes got under way in 1990, Boxer demonstrated fierce support for MINSY. When MINSY announced upcoming job


reductions and lost work, she continually met with navy officials on behalf of MINSY workers to ensure fair treatment by the navy. When job reduction numbers did not match up, when critics questioned MINSY’s value, or when she negotiated early retirement benefits for shipyard workers, Boxer positioned herself (along with Fazio) front and center.265 The *Vallejo Times-Herald* described her efforts best when it published this line about her: “Barbara Boxer, Vallejo’s Rep deserves much appreciation for her work in fighting for Mare Island-keeping it off any closure list and, indeed, keeping steady funding for improvements coming in.”266 It is worth noting that both Boxer and Fazio voted against the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings amendment. Perhaps they suspected successful passage would create job losses at the shipyard.267

Boxer and the other local politicians became advocates for the racial, ethnic, and gender minority shipyard workers when the eventual job losses did arrive. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, as the shipyard began reducing its workforce, (RIF) it disproportionately targeted these groups. Women accounted for seventeen percent of the workforce during the 1989 RIF, but sustained twenty-five percent of the layoffs. During the 1991 RIF, African Americans experienced twice as many cuts as white workers. The underlying problem was that most women were relegated to low- and mid-level jobs, which made them susceptible to the RIF. Workers in the high-value jobs, such as nuclear engineering, were insulated from the layoffs but very few of them were women. In response, female workers filed a class action complaint against the shipyard and navy.

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“Mare Island is crucial,” *Vallejo Times Herald*, Editorial, January 28, 1990.
266 “Mare Island is crucial,” *Vallejo Times Herald*, January 28, 1990.
Boxer called for an investigation by the GAO. The GAO confirmed reports that women and African Americans were indeed disproportionately affected by the RIF. Representatives Boxer, Fazio, and Dellums lobbied Secretary of Defense Cheney to rehire the employees.268

Boxer was not alone in her fight for local and California bases. Fazio, Dellums, Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), and Governor Pete Wilson (R) lobbied hard on behalf of local military installations. Feinstein and Wilson spoke in support of local bases at the BRAC public hearing.269 Feinstein argued that California, with a nearly ten percent unemployment rate and suffering from the previous two base closure rounds and from the recession, should be protected from additional base closures.270 However, one incident during the 1993 BRAC public hearings rankled MINSY supporters and could partially explain why locals felt betrayed by Boxer. In addition to MINSY, the Long Beach Naval Shipyard (LBNSY) found its way onto the 1993 BRAC list. During the BRAC public hearing in Southern California, Boxer, now a U.S. Senator, and Wilson testified on behalf of LBNSY. During their testimony, they argued that LBNSY and MINSY were complementary and not in competition. This position was at odds with MINSY supporters who felt that their shipyard stood a better chance of survival when compared side-by-side with other yards. These supporters immediately adopted a “stabbed in the back” attitude towards Boxer and Wilson, a feeling that was surely compounded when


269 Alisa Y. Kim, “State leaders defend bases,” Vallejo Times Herald, April 26, 1993

BRAC Commissioners ultimately voted to close MINSY and keep LBNSY open.\textsuperscript{271} This gives greater context for statements like D. Broder’s editorial, describing the turnout for a Save our Shipyard rally: “Disappointment did prevail when Dianne Feinstein (who was in the Bay Area) and Barbara Boxer (who never really cared anyway) were absent.”\textsuperscript{272} These were harsh and unfair aspersions, especially claiming Boxer “never really cared,” for politicians like Boxer who clearly and quantifiably worked on behalf of her MINSY constituents for many years. Instead these accusations reflect an understandable frustration at losing so much in such a short period of time. At the same time, Feinstein and Boxer’s actions demonstrated their shift from representing local interests (as San Francisco mayor and congressional representative respectively) to those of the broader state. Their actions in support of non-Bay Area facilities brought them into conflict with their previous constituents.

\begin{center}
SERVING THE COMMUNITY
\end{center}

The BRAC process made its closure decisions by reducing each base to a set of quantifiable criteria. This was both logical and necessary, because it ensured all bases were evaluated according to a consistent set of criteria. However, one item the BRAC process did not account for was value to a community. While community value alone was not criterion enough to prevent a base from closing, the role a base played in its local community needed to be better identified and considered in the final decision.

MINSY had a number of high profile community programs, many of which targeted marginalized communities. MINSY, as part of the federal Summer Youth


\textsuperscript{272} D. Broder, Vallejo, “Mare Island has a chance,” \textit{Vallejo Times Herald}, Editorials, March 8, 1993.
Employment Program, frequently put 150 local youths, of all ethnic backgrounds, to work. For many of the participants this was their first paying job. The shipyard sponsored an after-school tutorial program, providing volunteers to help local students succeed in school. MINSY, like the other local naval bases, participated in the navy’s Partnership Program, in which local commands adopt a school and support the education process. Naturally this support took many forms, but MINSY arranged for special presentations to students at their schools. The Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Mobile Unit Nine would bring its equipment to Admiral Farragut Elementary School and do “show-and–tell” with the students. It brought boats, diving equipment, ammunition, supplies, mine dummies and let kids wear the gear, handle the equipment, and climb aboard the boats. This experience surely captured the imagination of students and adults alike. The shipyard also sponsored a program called Expanding Your Horizons, targeted to female students considering pursuing a career in the trades. Interested students were given tours of the shipyard and received demonstrations of women working in the trades. As part of this program, female workers visited local classrooms to give demonstrations and talk about their career choices. The MINSY SeaBees were awarded a letter of appreciation from President George H.W. Bush for their community service, which included helping the Vallejo-Benicia Humane Society, the Vallejo YMCA

and the Boy Scouts, and the East Vallejo Little League. The SeaBees really came through for the Little League by performing $10,000 worth of work grading and leveling a new baseball field, a project for which the league did not have the money. The SeaBees did the work as volunteers and, like so many of their community projects, completed it on their own time.278 Other volunteers worked with high-risk youths, homeless families, blind and deaf students, local churches, and the Make-A-Wish Foundation.279

Bay Area military bases provided critical help to local communities in response to natural disasters. Having access to a set of people trained for dealing with difficult situations proved repeatedly useful to the cities of Vallejo, Napa, and Oakland. For example, in May 1992, MINSY police officers on a routine water patrol rescued a man and an eight-year-old boy who had capsized in their sailboat.280 During the Oakland-Berkeley Hills fire, a team of four MINSY firefighters responded to the disaster, working twenty-six hours over the course of two days.281 Special Boat Unit 11 (SBU-11), part of the navy’s Special Operations riverine warfare capability, based in MINSY, provided assistance to help Humphrey the Humpback Whale, a wayward marine mammal stuck in


the Sacramento River Delta, back through the Golden Gate and into the Pacific. In their most impactful role, MINSY workers and SBU-11 provided assistance during the 1986 Napa floods, when millions of gallons of water from a series of storms flooded local cities including Guerneville. Guerneville residents became completely cut off from the outside world, with all roads flooded and helicopter flights impossible due to storms and darkness. When local officials declared a life-threatening emergency, SBU-11 responded with the necessary skills and capabilities. Using two motorboats and an inflatable raft, the twenty-six member team headed out. They were the first rescuers to make it to the isolated city and worked from midnight to seven thirty in the morning rescuing people and taking them to safety. Shipyard employees and crewmen from the USS Haddock and the USS Hammerhead also lent a hand during the crisis by filling sandbags, evacuating residents, and helping with other rescue operations.

**THE IBM OF SHIPYARDS**

The public versus private shipyard debate had significant impacts beyond simply who built and repaired what. Feeling the pressures of cost, efficiency, and quality techniques coming from private industry, MINSY and other public shipyards started to transform their operations. This was especially important for MINSY because by 1980 its cost was double that of West Coast competitor Puget Sound Naval Shipyard (PSNSY). By the end of the decade, the programs and vernacular around MINSY

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282 Staff, “Mare Island boat unit gets commendation,” *Vallejo Times Herald*, December 22, 1986.
284 Sue Lemmon, *Closure*, 56.
sounded much more like IBM than a shipyard. In fact, MINSY had IBM come to present a management seminar on improving business processes and then sent thirty-eight managers to IBM’s San Jose offices to get a firsthand look at how IBM had profited from making suggested changes.285

By the mid-to-late 1980s, a number of key business-related influences and events had taken place. First, the navy engaged in a pilot program to have public and private shipyards bid against each other for work. The message was clear: to secure more work, shipyards needed to “beat…[their] competitors.”286 MINSY instituted a Quality Improvement Process (QIP) program with the intention of lowering costs and increasing the attention to quality.287 Further, in response to President Reagan’s Executive Order 12552—Productivity Improvement Program for the Federal Government, the navy implemented an across the board formal Total Quality Management (TQM) program.288 The navy’s adoption of TQM in particular was in response to the failures learned from Wang Computers. Wang Computer’s story became a legendary tale of the pitfalls of complacency. Its inability to see the significant shifts occurring in the market took it from market leader to barely surviving. The moral of the story, and the reason for navy and public shipyard adoption of TQM, was (and is) companies must continually improve,

286 “You...have to beat competitors!” Shipyard Newspaper The Grapevine, November 1, 1985. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
change, and adapt in order to stay relevant and in business.\textsuperscript{289} For MINSY and other public shipyards this translated into a greater focus on reducing costs through improved engineering and limiting repairs to what was broken and testing only what was fixed.\textsuperscript{290} These changes came not a moment too soon because in May 1988 the consulting company Coopers and Lybrand produced a study that heavily criticized public shipyards. The report, the culmination of a two-year study, cited excessive repair costs, poor quality work, inaccurate budgets, and even unnecessary work. This gave significant ammunition to private shipyards, then hurting under the strain of Gramm-Rudman-Hollings budget cuts, to wrest more work away from public shipyards.\textsuperscript{291}

ENVIRONMENTAL

The 1970s environmental legislation agenda, which authorized states and municipalities the authority to enact or enforce more extensive controls over environmental issues than the federal government, caused significant problems for MINSY. Under the Superfund Act, the EPA determined that the MINSY landfill contained lead, chromium, asbestos, mercury, and industrial chemicals in levels that far exceeded federal standards and forced the shipyard to shut down the landfill.\textsuperscript{292} The shipyard, as part of Superfund compliance, conducted site assessments and attempted to document what hazardous waste existed on its grounds, so that the proper remediation


efforts could be planned. The 1982 survey at MINSY found five major hazardous waste sites. These included the MINSY landfill, a then closed disposal site, an outdoor abrasive blast area, an oil recovery area, and wastewater treatment plant sludge ponds. The federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 (RCRA) forced MINSY, and other federal agencies, to manage the entire lifecycle of hazardous waste, from generation all the way to disposal. For a shipyard that generated a significant amount of hazardous and chemical waste, this created more operational overhead and increased costs to manage, handle, and dispose of the waste properly.

The delegation of environmental authority to state and local entities created serious obstacles for MINSY and other California military bases. MINSY spent much of its final fifteen years in operation, until closure in 1996, fending off one environmental challenge after another. In 1978, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) forced MINSY to reformulate epoxy and vinyl paints, which had long violated the district’s emission standards. The BAAQMD also required the shipyard to apply for variances in volatile organic compounds (VOC) generation. The district had a lower threshold for VOCs than the navy. The shipyard implemented gasoline nozzle controls as part of California’s Gasoline Vapor Recovery Programs. An audit by the California Regional Water Quality Board (CRWQB) found that oil doughnuts, floating rafts used for oil and water separation, used by the shipyard, violated the Clear Water Act

293 Mare Island Naval Shipyard Command History 1982. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
294 Mare Island Naval Shipyard Command History 1981. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
295 Mare Island Naval Shipyard Command History 1978. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
296 Mare Island Naval Shipyard Command History 1991. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
297 Mare Island Naval Shipyard Command History 1978. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
and had to be discontinued.\textsuperscript{298} In addition to the three hazardous waste permits required by Solano County (for asbestos, flammable wastes, and spent abrasives), the CRWQB required MINSY to secure a permit for waste discharge, and the California Department of Health Services (CDHS) required an additional permit for hazardous waste.\textsuperscript{299} It did not take long before MINSY was swimming in a morass of environmental legislation.

As might be expected, the shipyard struggled to keep pace with environmental compliance; by March, 1985, the California State Attorney and the CDHS prepared for a lawsuit.\textsuperscript{300} MINSY Commander Captain E.J. Scheyder agreed to correct the violations.\textsuperscript{301} The DHS found violations that included lack of employee training for handling hazardous waste, Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB) contamination, improper labeling and storage, lack of maintenance and safety procedures, failure to properly notify local authorities, and over thirty other infractions.\textsuperscript{302} By February, 1986, when the shipyard had failed to correct the deficiencies, the State of California sued MINSY, seeking monetary damages for violations and enforcement costs. The state levied fines of $25,000 a day per violation.\textsuperscript{303} Finally, in May, 1987, the shipyard and the California Attorney General came to a settlement on remediating the environmental deficiencies.\textsuperscript{304}

\textsuperscript{298} Mare Island Naval Shipyards Command History 1991. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
\textsuperscript{299} Mare Island Naval Shipyards Command History 1981. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
\textsuperscript{300} “Mare Island faces toxic waste suit,” Vallejo Times Herald, March 28, 1985.
\textsuperscript{301} Michael Gilbert, “Mare Island promises to correct waste violations,” March 29, 1985.
\textsuperscript{302} Michael Gilbert, “State lists M.I. toxic waste problems,” Vallejo Times Herald, April 3, 1985. Other infractions included hazardous waste were transported from ships to shipyard without the knowledge or control of waste management officials. The shipyard had no way of monitoring its impact on groundwater quality near wastewater treatment ponds, lead cadmium, chromium, zinc and copper. Failed to store finely powdered hazardous waste in a manner to prevent them from being blown by winds. Failed to label unsafe water supplies at hazardous waste storage sites. Old batteries leaking lead oxide in the soil.
\textsuperscript{304} Michael Gilbert, “Mare Island to test for toxic pollution,” Vallejo Times Herald, May 30, 1987.
A settlement with the State of California probably should have put the environmental issue to rest; however, a whistleblower employee publically identified twenty-three additional violations and the lengths to which MINSY had drug its feet with respect to remediating toxic waste violations. This experience demonstrated just how serious compliance with state and federal environmental laws could be. The CRWQB took MINSY to task and forced an even greater level of cleanup and remediation. MINSY faced additional pressure from Citizens for a Better Environment (CBE), an environmental activist group that accused MINSY of polluting the Mare Island Strait.

The group measured bioaccumulated toxins, the absorption of pollutants in living organisms, in local shellfish and found levels that ranked among the highest in the world. As a result, the CBE lobbied the RWQCB for a ban on tributyltin, a chemical found in boat paint. And yet the pressure kept coming. The EPA accused the shipyard of delaying the remediation of MINSY’s highly contaminated landfill and rebuked the management for not taking the issue seriously. Finally, by 1988 Congress started to address proposals to enforce environmental laws at nuclear facilities. Up to that point, radioactive waste on federal installations had been largely exempted from environmental laws. Due to its toxicity and the amount of time it remains dangerous, radioactive pollution was (and is) one of the most harmful pollutants on the planet. Its inclusion in environmental legislation provided a major breakthrough in controlling this hazardous waste, but it also presented the DoD, a significant creator of radioactive pollution, with

significant disclosure and cleanup challenges at all of its nuclear-based facilities, including those at MINSY.³⁰⁹

At the federal level, spurred by a new focus to bring military bases into compliance with Superfund laws, the DoD teamed with the EPA to help military bases address their poisonous legacies and bring them into compliance with Superfund laws. The EPA identified twenty-one toxic sites at MINSY in need of fixing, and the thirty-acre landfill was at the top of the list. The landfill was so bad that the EPA shut it down, forcing the shipyard to haul its hazardous waste offsite at the additional expense of $1 million per year.³¹⁰ As if this were not enough, the state came after MINSY again in 1991, enacting restrictions on sandblasting due to contamination of the local waterways.³¹¹ The state also required MINSY to monitor storm water discharges, which required installation of six storm water-monitoring stations. As an example of just how granular the state environmental controls could be, for each inch of rain twenty-two million inches of storm water runoff would occur. This runoff could contain any number of toxic pollutants, so ensuring storm water runoff was uncontaminated was important.³¹²

Mercifully for MINSY, lest death by one thousand pieces of environmental legislation kill the shipyard, the navy entered into an agreement with the State of California in 1992 to clean up the six Bay Area naval bases (MINSY, Treasure Island, Alameda NAS, CNWS, Fleet and Industrial Supply Center Oakland) and to bring them into both state and federal environmental compliance. This agreement included paying $6.5 million to

³⁰⁹ David Koenig, “Mare Island one of many sites with toxic wastes,” *Vallejo Times Herald*, July 9, 1988.
³¹⁰ Garry Chandler, “Mare Island to go public on toxics,” *Vallejo Times Herald*, June 14, 1989.

Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
the California EPA. In retrospect, this would have been the ideal approach to take from the beginning, but neither the navy nor MINSY had the foresight to chart such a course. At this point it should be quite evident that operating a naval base or a shipyard in California, much less the Bay Area, was an expensive endeavor. Even in the best scenario, adherence to state and local environmental legislation after 1977 was going to be difficult. But for bases built and operated long before environmental consciousness took hold, such as the 139-year-old MINSY, the environmental problems were likely to be endless, creating extra effort and expense to stay in compliance.

As the shipyard was fighting off different environmental attacks for current operations, it suffered one of its worst environmental spills. In 1991, while a contractor was testing diesel fuel lines, one of the lines leaked, dumping 5,000 gallons of fuel into the Mare Island Strait. The shipyard failed to notify the City of Vallejo, which found out about the leak when the Sanitation Department found diesel in its untreated sewage. Not only did MINSY leaders fail to notify local officials, they lied about the actual amount of diesel oil spilled. The shipyard leaders took criticism for testing the line with oil, showing an even greater disregard for the local environment. Ironically, the testing of these fuel lines was done to bring the shipyard into regulatory compliance because they had not been tested in the twenty years since they had been installed. Cleanup of the spill cost over $1.3 million.\(^\text{314}\)


\(^{314}\) Mare Island Naval Shipyard Command History 1991. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.


Jacqueline Ginley, “Shipyard spill has cost $1.3 million,” *Vallejo Times Herald*, June 26, 1991
In a testament to the operational change caused by the environmental legislation, the shipyard solicited public comments and feedback for a proposed removal of sewage tanks in April 1992. The tanks, no longer in use and contaminated with PCBs, were to be removed because of the environmental hazard they posed. It is doubtful that without the threat of lawsuit, much less without public outcry, the shipyard would have taken the initiative to remove the tanks. Another example of its toxic history, legacy buildings constructed decades earlier with no environmental consideration were causing modern environmental problems. The hazardous material warehouse, used to store hazardous and flammable materials, was built in the 1940s on the shipyard’s floodplain, making it susceptible to leaking toxic waste in the event of flood. To correct this, shipyard administrators determined that construction of a new $7.9 million facility was required. This was indicative of the challenges of improving old facilities to keep pace with modern developments, in this case environmental controls, but just as easily technologies. This begs the question: at what inflection point does it become more cost effective to start with a new shipyard rather than continually spend money to rehabilitate old structures?

MINSY made several self-directed attempts at environmental protection, many of which resulted from Representative Boxer’s legislative efforts. From the late 1970s through the early 1990s, the shipyard took a number of significant actions. First, the shipyard instituted programs to improve the handling of PCBs and chlorine gas chemicals. In 1979 and 1980, the shipyard stopped raw sewer emissions from barges and eliminated power plant water discharges from going directly into the Mare Island Strait. Additionally, the shipyard put effort into reducing the amount of wastewater discharged.

315 Staff, “Public asked for tank input,” Vallejo Times Herald, April 24, 1992.
By 1988 the amount discharged dropped from two hundred thousand to eighty thousand gallons per day. The shipyard also erected an environmental fence to control emissions from sandblasting operations. Other improvements included upgrading the sedimentation ponds to prevent leakage, improving surface drainage around an abandoned landfill to prevent toxic seepage from rainwater, testing water fountains for lead contamination, and instituting a dry dock cleanliness program. The shipyard adopted several conservation programs, including electricity savings targets tied to merit pay, purchase of electric cars and bicycles to reduce gas consumption, and elimination of the use of aerosol spray paint cans.

In addition to the steps MINSY took to address environmental pollution and discharges, the shipyard engaged in the protection of two endangered species. The Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse (SWHM) and the California Clapper Rail (CCR), both endangered species, found refuge at MINSY. Both the SWHM and CCR live in and thrive on the saltwater marsh ecosystem, over eighty percent of which has been destroyed over the last two centuries in the Bay Area. Both species were added to the federal endangered species list in 1970. Measuring between thirty-two to forty-seven centimeters, the CCR is a non-migratory bird that uses pickleweed, a pickle-shaped weed that grows in salt or brackish (combination of salt and river) water, as its primary nesting material, and nests in salt water marshes. The SWHM ranges from sixty-nine millimeters to seventy-four

321 U.S. Department of Fish and Game Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse and California Clapper Rail Recovery Plan (14-18).
millimeters in length and weighs approximately ten grams. The SWHM looks similar to
field mice, but tends to be darker and wider, and it can swim.\textsuperscript{322} Estimates for both
populations totaled only a couple thousand. In a 1988 agreement with the U.S. Fish and
Wildlife Service to allow MINSY continued dredging, the navy agreed to establish a
marsh refuge for the SWHM and CCR. MINSY crews excavated thirty-four acres of
land to lower the elevation, allowing tidal waters to create a marsh habitat for the mouse.
This process is known as tidal flushing, and after two years the marsh grew pickleweed.
This effort was part of a relocation plan to move dredge spoil ponds, places where
dredged material is deposited so that the water can return to where it was removed,
leaving the silt behind. After the dredge spoil ponds sat unused for long periods,
pickleweed sprouted and became a habitat for the mice and birds.\textsuperscript{323}

From clean air and water to endangered species protection, MINSY provides an
excellent example of how a federal institution responded to the challenges of
implementing 1970s environmental legislation. Most of these new laws required state
and local enforcement of the federal laws. MINSY struggled to keep up with the
different compliance requirements and legal challenges emanating from the different
agencies. Additionally, the shipyard had to work with the EPA to deal with the toxic past
while initiating new projects to prevent future pollution. Meeting these environmental

\textsuperscript{322} U.S. Department of Fish and Game Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse and California Clapper Rail Recovery
Plan (29-32).
\textsuperscript{323} Mare Island Naval Shipyard Command History 1993.
Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.
Andy Kinane, “Why protecting our habitat is important,” Shipyard Newspaper \textit{The Grapevine}, November
20, 1992. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San
Francisco.
Andy Kinane, “You could be driving on endangered species habitat,” Shipyard Newspaper \textit{The Grapevine},
July 24, 1992. Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San
Francisco.
requirements took significant effort for an old shipyard and came at high cost in dollars and time.

PATH TO CLOSURE

Environmental issues notwithstanding, at the beginning of 1985 officials and workers had little to be concerned about, buoyed by a strong pipeline of work and the results of ongoing efficiency improvements. MINSY had significant repair work, with fourteen nuclear submarines under or scheduled to undergo repair. Productivity improvements and cost reduction efforts at the shipyard were starting to pay off, with an estimated $3.3 million in savings. However, the shipyard’s luck began to turn. Navy officials decided they wanted to spend more money on weapons systems and reduce the amount of money spent on building and maintaining ships. To achieve these savings, the navy planned to reduce federal shipyard employees by almost seven percent, from 78,100 to 73,000. This translated to a projected 600-worker reduction in force (RIF) for MINSY. The underlying fear for public shipyards was that this would open the door for private shipyards to snatch additional work from the public yards, under the guise of cost savings. To stave this off, again showing her commitment to the shipyard, Boxer organized an informal taskforce of congressional lawmakers to press navy officials not to acquiesce to this pressure.

By 1986, another risk quickly emerged, as the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings amendment threatened layoffs, hiring freezes, and reduced ship repair workloads.

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324 Michael Gilbert, Mare Island saves nearly $3.3 million, Vallejo Times Herald, August 17, 1985. Kathleen Buckley, Mare Island stands to lose 600 jobs, Vallejo Times Herald, March 1, 1985.
325 Ibid., March 1, 1985.
326 Kathleen Buckley, Shipyard leaders meet to discuss loss of employees, Vallejo Times Herald, March 5, 1985.
Gramm-Rudman-Hollings called for across-the-board spending cuts, including defense budgets. It also sent the navy scrambling to find ways to cut costs. In turn, individual bases and shipyards were forced to come up with cost savings.\textsuperscript{327} Cost cutting, still in its early phases, even forced the Mare Island Ferry Company to stop its service to the shipyard. The ferry, in operation for 132 years, stopped because the shipyard could no longer afford the maintenance and repairs for the ferry dock.\textsuperscript{328} In this cost-cutting environment, the navy started to formalize programs to reduce the frequency ships underwent maintenance and overhaul work. Called the Extended Submarine Engineered Operating Cycle (ESEOC), this program shrunk the time and frequency of Los Angeles class submarine repair by combining major overhauls with nuclear refuelings. The navy projected an approximate savings of $1 billion between 1989 and 1992, but for public shipyards this portended a diminished workload and future cutbacks. For MINSY, this started with 650 jobs eliminated, 50 more than originally planned, and a civilian job hiring freeze, putting on hold the hiring of 400 new workers.\textsuperscript{329} The coast guard, feeling the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings pinch, decided to close its coast guard station at MINSY.\textsuperscript{330} The navy’s ESEOC program and Gramm-Rudman-Hollings coincided with another tectonic shift in international politics, as the Soviet Union went into turmoil in the late 1980s and started its historic collapse. A decline in overall defense spending

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{327} Diane Mann, Time to bite the bullet: Solano cities brace for Gramm-Rudman-Hollings cuts, \textit{Vallejo Times Herald}, January 27, 1986.
\item \textsuperscript{328} Michael Gilbert, Service to Mare Island ends, \textit{Vallejo Times Herald}, August 30, 1986.
\item \textsuperscript{329} Clyde Weiss, “Mare Island to lose 650 civilian jobs by fall of 1988,” \textit{Vallejo Times Herald}, February 19, 1987.
\item \textsuperscript{330} Garry Chandler, “M.I Coast Guard station to close, \textit{Vallejo Times Herald},” January 27, 1988. The coast guard station did reopen thirteen months later as some of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings-Hollings cuts were rolled back, Garry Chandler, “Coast Guard busily preparing for Mare Island reopening,” \textit{Vallejo Times Herald}, March 30, 1989.
\end{itemize}
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followed, which, for the navy, translated into a deactivation of ships on top of the ESEOC program. By mid-1989, the shipyard faced another nine-hundred-person RIF. This created a perfect storm effect to weaken MINSY’s value and reduce its workforce at the crucial time when the formal base closure program began.

In the late 1980s, MINSY officials and workers became hopeful about their collective future, when the DoD sought to place the U.S.S. Missouri battle group in San Francisco. Besides the economic windfall, an estimated $20 million influx, the additional ships would have secured a solid pipeline of work for the shipyard that could have lasted well into the twenty-first century. However, San Francisco Supervisors and Mayor Art Agnos, in a highly political move, rejected the navy’s proposal and, in the process, weakened MINSY’s long-term prospects to remain an active shipyard. While it would have been impossible to predict at the time, given the rapid shipbuilding going on in support of the six-hundred-ship navy, this decision, combined with the ongoing environmental constraints, signaled the start of MINSY’s final decline.

MINSY was considered for the 1991 base closure recommendations, but escaped the final list submitted to the 1993 BRAC. BRAC only recommended Moffet Field and the Hunter’s Point Naval Annex for closure. Unfortunately, the shipyard got hammered with layoffs of over 1600 civilian workers due to the navy’s decommissioning of the nuclear submarine USS Queenfish, designated for overhaul at MINSY, lightening

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331 Nationally overhauls of all classes of ships dropped from a high of 90 in 1977 to 13 in 1991. Sue Lemmon, Closure, 192.
332 Clyde Weiss, “Navy may cut 900 Mare Island Workers,” Vallejo Times Herald, June 1, 1989.
the shipyard’s workload.\footnote{Roxanne Barber, M.I. to cut 1,600 by September,” \textit{Vallejo Times Herald}, March 14, 1990} By the end of 1990, the MINSY workforce dropped from 9,200 to 7,300. The decommissioning of the USS \textit{Guitarro}, instead of overhaul at MINSY, resulted in another round of layoffs, bringing another eighteen percent RIF and reducing the total workforce to 6,000.\footnote{Jacqueline Ginley, “More MI layoffs in sight,” \textit{Vallejo Times Herald}, March 29, 1991. Jacqueline Ginley, “MI gets word: 950 jobs axed,” \textit{Vallejo Times Herald}, June 12, 1991. Clyde Weiss, “NAVELEX named to relocate,” \textit{Vallejo Times Herald}, July 1, 1991. Betty Kwong, “Council moves forward on MI preservation,” \textit{Vallejo Times Herald}, October 16, 1991.} While MINSY as a whole was left off the 1991 BRAC list, the navy’s Naval Electronic Systems Command (NAVELEX), the group responsible for naval electronic systems and communications equipment and a longtime navy program at MINSY, did end up on the list. The commission voted to move NAVELEX to San Diego in an attempt to consolidate research and development and engineering activities. Navy officials termed this a “corporate restructuring.” This language reflects how corporate business practices and terminology continued to make their way into navy planning. Unfortunately for Vallejo, the NAVELEX relocation eliminated 314 jobs and $12 million in local payroll.\footnote{Clyde Weiss, “NAVELEX named to relocate,” \textit{Vallejo Times Herald}, July 1, 1991.}

After the loss of NAVELEX, for which city officials took tremendous criticism, city officials decided to proactively move to protect MINSY. Officials voted to conduct a regional impact study, create a regional task force, and, most importantly, hire a DC lobbyist to lobby on behalf of the city and the shipyard.\footnote{Betty Kwong, “Council moves forward on MI preservation,” \textit{Vallejo Times Herald}, October 16, 1991.} These activities forced the city and shipyard officials to take a realistic look at the long-term viability of MINSY. The combination of the navy’s shrinking budget, a decreasing number of ships, and MINSY’s ranking as one of the most expensive shipyards to operate, due to the extremely high cost of living, environmental costs, and the need to dredge the channel, painted a less than bright future. Even though MINSY survived the 1991 BRAC, two more immediate
rounds of base closures still loomed (1993 and 1995). The regional impact painted a grimmer picture. An economic report conducted by the Solano Economic Develop Corporation determined that the shipyard was the largest employer in Solano County, employing 4,860 residents with a payroll of $186 million, of which 2,573 workers lived in Vallejo. The potential loss of the direct tax revenue from the workers, indirect tax revenue from local merchants who served the workers, and a potential decline in housing values threatened the economic viability of the North Bay region. The report also presciently warned of a domino effect for local bases: if the commission closed one base it would likely close all of them.

MINSY limped to the end of 1992 with a temporary shutdown of the shipyard over the end-of-year holidays and another RIF. The New Year hardly started any better as the navy deactivated the nuclear submarine USS Russell, instead of conducting the planned overhaul at MINSY. Thus, the shipyard was in a severe state of decline with poor future prospects as the 1993 BRAC got underway. In March, when the DoD presented its recommended list of closures to the BRAC, MINSY found itself on the list. Even more distressing to local workers and officials was that the navy and DoD ranked MINSY as the lowest value of the eight public shipyards. As if that news were not bad enough, in April the shipyard lost another refueling and overhaul job as the navy decommissioned the nuclear submarine USS Baton Rouge.

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343 Alisa Y. Kim, “Mare Island loses another sub job” Vallejo Times Herald, April 8, 1993.
MINSY supporters mounted an earnest and stout defense of the shipyard. They started a “Support our Shipyard,” or SOS, campaign with yellow t-shirts, ribbons, and signs. The local community sent over two thousand letters in support of the shipyard to the commission. The SOS group even printed small stickers that it applied to money, to visually reinforce the financial impact on the local economy. When the BRAC visited the base and attended the local public hearing, supporters showed up donned in yellow SOS clothing and holding signs to demonstrate the community’s support of the shipyard. Meanwhile, shipyard defenders put together a plan to point out faulty logic in the navy’s decision to place MINSY on the closure list. For example, shipyard supporters noted that MINSY ended fiscal year 1992 $2.1 million under budget. By comparison Puget Sound overspent by $177 million and Pearl Harbor by $49 million; both were West Coast shipyards competing against MINSY. However, shipyard advocates placed most of their effort on finding fault with the navy’s analysis of the shipyard’s military value. Military value was considered the most important of the BRAC criteria. In assessing military value navy officials used a 150-question data collection survey, filled out by each shipyard, and ran an analysis against the collected data. MINSY supporters argued that navy analysts incorrectly evaluated nearly twenty percent of MINSY’s answers, which they argued led to the low ranking value. The supporters contended that if corrected MINSY would move up to the third most valuable shipyard. Among the errors pointed out, MINSY was not credited for having a significant ocean engineering project, ability to do non-nuclear work, and simultaneous

344 Sue Lemmon, Closure, 281.
345 Betty Kwong, “Vallejo goes to bat for Mare Island: Shipyard boasts many defenders at public hearing,” Vallejo Times Herald, April 16, 1993.
dry-docking of mid-sized surface ships. More disconcerting to supporters, LBNSY received credit for having a nuclear license to do repairs on nuclear ships, when in fact it did not. Finally, as with almost all supporters of local military bases, they argued that the navy’s cost to close was severely underestimated. Supporters delivered these messages to BRAC commissioners, who were convinced that more research was required, at the local hearing.\textsuperscript{347}

Unfortunately for MINSY and its supporters, both congressional evaluators and an independent review largely validated the navy’s conclusions. Upon additional review, the navy did admit to making math and transcription errors, as well as not crediting the shipyard for dual dry docking capability. The navy also agreed that LBNSY should not have received credit for nuclear shipyard capability. However, these corrections did not alter the rankings. Further, MINSY claimed to have carrier repair capability, but the navy disputed this, because MINSY carrier repair was dependent on doing the work at Alameda NAS, which was on the closure list as well. In the end, the navy attributed these errors in the data collection process and allowed that better direction to shipyard commanders on how to fill them out would have been desirable, but considered this a lesson learned for the future. The commission did not correct these errors, viewing them as insignificant in scope, and voted for closure with the faulty data.\textsuperscript{348}

The biggest argument for MINSY’s continued operation, that the navy underestimated the cost to clean up MINSY, fell apart under additional scrutiny as well. The navy claimed closing MINSY would cost $280 million. Shipyard advocates claimed


that number was nearly $900 million due to the vast amount of toxic contamination cleanup required. This argument, made by numerous communities and not just MINSY supporters, was weak due to a lack of understanding of base closing costs. The navy did not calculate environmental remediation in its cost to close because it considered that a sunk cost, as the remediation had to be done eventually and regardless of closure. Thus, the “costs to close were underestimated” argument did not hold. The GAO evaluated the navy’s costs to close and estimated them to be $290 million rather than $280 million, but that did nothing to make a compelling case to prevent MINSY’s closure. 349 Ultimately the problem came down to the navy having forty-seven percent excess nuclear capacity in direct labor man days (DLMD). DLMDs were the measure of work throughput in a given timeframe. MINSY had the third largest DLMD capacity of all eight shipyards, thus there was no logical scenario in which the navy could reduce its excess capacity without closing MINSY. 350

Finally, the end came. On June 25, 1993, BRAC commissioners voted unanimously, six to zero, to close MINSY along with Charleston Naval Shipyard. In retrospect, warning signs appeared along the way that predicted MINSY would be shuttered. However, a number of inconsistencies left a particularly bitter taste for MINSY supporters. Aside from the perception of the navy’s errors in data collection, there were a number of instances where LBNSY received preferential treatment. When the military made its initial recommendations to President Clinton for his approval to send to BRAC, he removed McClellan AFB, the Foreign Language School in Monterrey,

and LBNSY. His rationale was a fear of losing California in the 1996 election by causing too much economic hardship for the state. Curiously, and to the dismay of many local residents, none of the Bay Area bases were removed from the list. However, BRAC Commissioners, in a vote of six to one and through the urging of the Bay Area congressional delegation and MINSY supporters, put LBNSY on the list for consideration. The lone dissenting vote: BRAC Commissioner Rebecca Cox, wife of Representative Christopher Cox, R-Newport Beach, whose district was next to LBNSY. Naturally this opened all sorts of speculation about conflict of interest, as MINSY supporters claimed Cox was too biased to make a fair decision and should abstain from voting. Cox did not abstain and BRAC attorneys cleared her participation because LBNSY was not located in her husband’s district.\textsuperscript{351} In the end, LBNSY was spared from closure in 1993 by a vote of four to three. That was a dangerously narrow margin considering one of the commissioners had a vested, if indirect interest in the outcome.\textsuperscript{352} Future BRAC rules would benefit from a more thorough exclusion of commissioners within a five-hundred-mile radius from a potential base closure.\textsuperscript{353}

After the BRAC’s decision to close MINSY, city officials and shipyard supporters turned their focus to reuse. A number of federal agencies including the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Department of Energy, Department of the Interior, the army, the coast Guard, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and Travis AFB, lined up to secure pieces of real estate. The U.S. Forest Service

\textsuperscript{351} Lee Rennert, “Clinton shows military who's the boss,” \textit{Vallejo Times Herald}, March 13, 1993.
\textsuperscript{353} Alisa Y. Kim, Mare Island claims base closure bias: Officials say commissioner favors Long Beach shipyard,” \textit{Vallejo Times Herald}, June 6, 1993.
\textsuperscript{353} Clyde Weiss, “MINSY buzzards are shooed away,” \textit{Vallejo Times Herald}, May 21, 1993.

\section*{CONCLUSION}

In the end, MINSY, like the other closed Bay Area bases, suffered from the high cost of doing business in the Bay Area and California. Despite efforts to transform the shipyard into an efficient operation, the MINSY’s location, high wages, and skyrocketing real estate costs created a losing proposition for the shipyard. MINSY had to pay, literally and figuratively, for decades of environmental contamination. The passage of
the 1970s environmental legislative agenda opened the floodgates for the State of California, Bay Area air and water districts, and the City of Vallejo to hold the shipyard accountable for past, present, and future pollution.\textsuperscript{358} Policy changes in Washington further impinged on the shipyard’s ability to operate effectively. The navy’s move towards private shipbuilding and repair, part of its adoption of the weapons system manager approach to systems development, limited the workload for public shipyards. Also, the political repercussions of Gramm-Rudman-Hollings deficit reduction efforts forced the navy to adopt longer maintenance cycles, further reducing the MINSY workload. These events forced the shipyard to reduce its workforce dramatically between 1985 and 1992. Further, as the post-Cold War era began, the DoD had to start downsizing its massive infrastructure and force structure. The sum of all these changes left the shipyard in a very weak position going into the 1993 BRAC cycle. Despite the best efforts of the shipyard workers, the community, and politicians, keeping MINSY open did not make logical sense. Ultimately, the 1993 BRAC did what was required of it. It held hearings, analyzed data, and made independent recommendations. In this case, as with the other Bay Area bases, closing the shipyard was an inevitable consequence of shrinking budgets, reducing excess capacity, and dealing with regional constraints. These factors demonstrated how different kinds of politics affect decisions to close military bases.

MINSY had a long a storied history in Vallejo and the Bay Area. The shipyard and its workers impacted the community in many ways, some positive and others negative. However, MINSY’s closure represented one of the necessary, and often painful, changes that emerged in the post-Cold War era.

CHAPTER V. THERE IS NO BASE THERE: CLOSING BASES IN OAKLAND

INTRODUCTION

1995 proved a momentous year for Oakland, California. The new Oakland Ice Rink opened, and the National Football League franchise Raiders made their triumphant return from Los Angeles, after leaving Oakland just over a decade earlier. City and County politicians bent over backwards and made dramatic concession to woo the

Figure 14. Aerial view of the Fleet and Industrial Supply Center Oakland.\textsuperscript{359}

\textsuperscript{359} Aerial view of the Fleet and Industrial Supply Center Oakland. History Subject Files, Box 5, Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments (RG 181), The National Archives at San Francisco.

\textsuperscript{360} The Ice Rink was built downtown as part of an Oakland urban redevelopment plan. Panned by many as a bad investment, the ice rink struggled mightily until 2007 when new ownership took over and has turned it into a success. The Oakland Raiders left Oakland for Los Angeles in 1982.
Raiders back. The City of Oakland and Alameda County spent $220 million in stadium renovations, and added a variety of other incentives including minimal rent of $500,000 per year. Unfortunately for Oakland, however, the same day that the Raiders agreed to return, the 1995 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission announced its decision to close both the Oakland Army Base (OAB) and the navy’s Fleet and Industrial Supply Center Oakland (FISC Oakland). The decision to close both facilities was both contentious and seemingly unexpected as neither the army nor the navy, nor the Secretary of Defense had nominated these bases for closure. Yet, in one blow, over 4,000 local residents lost their jobs. These jobs were not just any jobs, nor were these facilities just any facilities. The location and nature of the closures and the political process that determined them, all provide a historical window through which one can assess the BRAC Commission’s actions, the impact of federal policies in regional economies, and the role military institutions play in local communities. By tracing the OAB and FISC Oakland closings, this chapter will argue that the OAB and FISC Oakland were engines of social justice for an extremely marginalized population, proving just how valuable military bases can be to a local community. Further, the BRAC process, while reasonably impartial, contained structural political biases that failed to properly account for the social justice and true community value of these bases. Finally, congressional and local politicians failed in their jobs to represent the community by helping to keep the bases open or finding effective ways of transforming the space. Thus, the Commission’s decision to close the facilities had more to do with issues of urban encroachment, changing military priorities, political ineptitude, rather than punishing the Bay Area.
THE OAKLAND ARMY BASE

The OAB played an especially important military role in the 20th century. This facility, and others like it, provided the backbone of the army’s supply chain, delivering materials in a timely fashion. Army ports handle equipment (helicopters, tanks, jeeps, personnel carriers, rifles, artillery, etc...), uniforms, supplies, ammunition, food, and even corpses. To accommodate the large-scale transfer of materials army ports have large staging areas with reinforced concrete to support the heavy weight of equipment. Additionally, there are heavy duty cranes to handle lifting on and lifting off (LOLO) large pieces of equipment. Army port docks also contain level places to match sections of cargo ships allowing wheeled or tracked vehicles to roll on or roll off (RORO) ships. Coordinating all of these activates are transportation engineering, management, and terminal operations.

Construction on the OAB began in January 1941 under the threat of impending war and official commissioning took place on December 8, 1941. It consisted of 422 acres abutting the Fleet and Industrial Supply Center Oakland (FISC) on one side and the eastern edge of the San Francisco Bay Bridge on the other. The rear of the facility adjoined the West Oakland neighborhood. The base contained ninety-three buildings, twenty-six miles of railroad track, 112 apartments, a commissary, post-exchange, bowling alley, and softball field. Through these facilities, the OAB shipped 8.5 million measurement tons (mtons) of cargo, equipment, and troops to the Pacific theater.

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361 Through the Korean War Army ports handled the shipping of troops. However, the wide-scale adoption of troop transport aircraft largely eliminated that role from ports.
363 Oakland Army Base Fact Sheet, Military Traffic Management Command.
during WWII. During the Korean War, the OAB loaded and shipped 7.2 million mt tons of cargo and equipment. For the Vietnam conflict, the OAB increased its output five-fold, sending 37 million mt tons of cargo and equipment to Vietnam from 1965-1973. However, for the First Gulf War, given the smaller nature of the conflict, OAB activity decreased to only 149,144 mt tons of cargo. OAB productivity fell precipitously after the Gulf War (1990-1991), a particularly bad time given that BRAC started closing major army installations in the West at that same time.

The army addressed its ports as part of the 1995 BRAC process. Army planners selected three ports for study, Oakland, CA, Bayonne, NJ, and Sunny Point, NC. Army analysts selected both Oakland and Bayonne because they believed that those bases’ primary shipping capabilities could be duplicated by commercial facilities. They evaluated the three ports against a model that factored potential missions, readiness, facilities, ability to mobilize quickly mobilization capability, contingency planning, and manpower costs. The resulting model ranked Bayonne the most important followed by Oakland and then Sunny Point. Sunny Point, however, handled live ammunition, which is excluded from commercial ports, so the analysts removed it from consideration. This left the army to evaluate Oakland and Bayonne for closure, which it did with great care.

The army had good reason to proceed cautiously in determining which ports to close. Coming off the Gulf War experience in 1991, the army found the shipping of materials to be one of its greatest challenges. The haphazard build-up for operation Desert Shield resulted from insufficient port facilities to handle the mass of break-bulk

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and RORO equipment.\textsuperscript{365} Moreover, insufficient shipping capacity forced significant numbers of army divisions and equipment to embark from ports not designed for that purpose or from facilities too old and lacking sufficient capacity. In the post-Gulf War era, the army invested in a $500 million infrastructure improvement initiative to bolster its ability to respond to crises quickly and efficiently. The initiative included significant upgrades to ports, railheads, and expanding the number of RORO ships from seventeen to twenty-nine by 1994.\textsuperscript{366}

While the army upgraded its shipping capabilities, military strategists updated operational planning (OPLAN) estimates. This is the process by which military strategists project the size and nature of potential threats and conflicts. These projections provide the rationale and strategy for troops, equipment, and bases. The 1995 OPLAN projected a significant cargo to ship through Oakland within the first twenty-three days of a rapid deployment military response. As part of the BRAC planning process, army planners met with the Port of Oakland twice to determine if the port could handle the army’s requirements if the OAB closed. The port visits provided discouraging results due to existing commercial workload and ongoing space problems. Between the experiences of Desert Storm and the OPLAN process, army officials wholeheartedly supported keeping the OAB open. The Bayonne analysis showed nearly the same results, but noting that other army ports existed on the East Coast, the army selected it for closure.\textsuperscript{367} Secretary of the Army Togo West approved these recommendations and


\textsuperscript{366} Richard W. Stewart ed., \textit{American Military History Volume 2}. 424-425

\textsuperscript{367} Army planners projected 1.2 million mt tons of cargo to route through Oakland within requirement of 2.5 million feet of staging area and space for nine ships to be simultaneously loaded. The planners discovered that the port required at least two weeks in order to clear the required staging space. More importantly,
forwarded them to the Secretary of Defense William Perry who concurred with this assessment. Perry then submitted his final recommendations, with the OAB off the list, to the BRAC Commission.

THE FLEET AND INDUSTRIAL SUPPLY CENTER OAKLAND

FISC Oakland traces its origins to September 1936 when the navy requested the transfer of 390 acres on which to build a supply depot to support naval operations in the Pacific. Oakland voters approved this request. Shortly thereafter, construction began on the $12 million project. Fleet and Industrial Supply Centers primarily provide supply and logistics support to land and sea navy facilities. This included requisitions, contracting, food, housing, and fuel. FISC Oakland consisted of industrial warehouses, railroad tracks, and piers for docking ships, and occupied 524 acres of land between the Port of Oakland and OAB. As with the OAB, the FISC Oakland backed up against the West Oakland neighborhood. FISC Oakland also included 169 acres on Alameda Island and the Pt. Molate refueling station ten miles north in the city of Richmond.

Throughout WWII, the Korean War, and the Vietnam conflict, the FISC Oakland loaded thousands of ships with cargo destined for locations in the Pacific. After Vietnam, FISC Oakland’s workload diminished greatly. By the early 1990s, with the preponderance of naval base closures in the Bay Area, FISC Oakland became simply a landlord of space provided to other small naval commands and defense activities. In many of the commercial berths could not handle the Army’s RORO cargo. The Army projected these limitations to cause delays longer than the OPLANs specified time to complete the entire mission. DoD “Analyses and Recommendations,” Department of the Army, Base Closure and Realignment Report to the Commission, 1995, 71-72, 135-139.

368 Port of Oakland, 60 Years: A Chronicle of Progress (Oakland: Oakland Board of Port Commissioners, 1987), 11.
369 The other eight FISCs were located in San Diego, Jacksonville, Guam, Pearl Harbor, Charleston, Norfolk, Cheatham Annex, and Puget Sound, (N-1).
1994, to make more effective use of the property, the navy entered into a fifty-year lease with the Port of Oakland allowing it to make use of FISC Oakland land to support its expanding operations.\footnote{The lease was accomplished through with help from Congressional Representative Ron Dellums and was achieved through Public Law 103-160: as part of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 1994.}

By 1995, nine FISCs operated in the Continental U.S. and territories. The navy’s preliminary BRAC analysis concluded that the FISCs Oakland, Charleston, and Guam should be closed. Additionally, the navy’s analysis showed an immediate return on investment (ROI) by closing FISC Oakland, making it an attractive closure candidate. ROI is one of the eight criteria for considering a base closure. Most base closures take years to achieve an ROI, so the FISC Oakland’s ability to provide an immediate savings raised its profile for closure. However, the Secretary of the Navy John H. Dalton removed FISC Oakland from consideration because of his concern over the cumulative Bay Area job loss from previous BRAC rounds.\footnote{DoD Base Closure and Realignment Report to the Commission, Department of the Navy, Analyses and Recommendations, March 1995, N-4.} The 1991 BRAC Commission closed the Hunters Point Naval Annex in San Francisco and Moffet Field Naval Air Station in Mountain View. Two years later, the 1993 BRAC Commission voted to close the Mare Island Naval Shipyard, Treasure Island Naval Station, Oak Knoll Naval Hospital, and Oakland Naval Public Works Center. These closures combined eliminated over 15,000 navy jobs alone, in the Bay Area.\footnote{These closures are explored further in other chapters. David S. Sorenson, \textit{Military Base Closure} (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2007), 180-182.}
THE PORT OF OAKLAND

The Port of Oakland long occupied a prominent place in the Bay area economy. In 1874, with the assistance of the federal government, the channel was dredged to create a deep water port. During the mid-1930s the federal government, through the Public Works Administration, made another investment in the Port of Oakland. This project added wharves, berthing areas, railroads, and a transit shed. With the start of American involvement in WWII, the port transferred sections of land to the army and navy, which created the OAB and FISC Oakland. Additionally, the military made substantial improvements to the surrounding port facilities. These improvements included adding two additional transit sheds, three warehouses, and more berthing space. These improvements helped to position the port for future growth. Yet until the 1960s, San Francisco remained the undisputed king of shipping in the Bay Area.

A disruptive technological change occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s that reversed that trend. The advent of containerized shipping forever changed the way goods traveled from manufacturing centers to destinations. Containers are standardized metal boxes, usually 20’, 48’, or 53’ in length, that hold cargo. These containers are stackable and ride on specially designed cargo ships. When these ships berth, specialized cranes quickly and efficiently unload cargo for distribution by rail and truck. Oakland quickly shifted focus to invest in this emerging technology. The first containerized ship left the Port of Oakland in 1962, foreshadowing the future of shipping and the Port of Oakland.

374 The formal organization known as the Port of Oakland was created in 1927.
In this same year, the federal government made another investment to dredge the channel to ensure the port could accommodate the new container ships.\textsuperscript{376}

The Port of Oakland benefitted from location, timing, and preparation. The port had the advantage of being located where three transcontinental railroads terminated. In addition, the port benefitted from having easy access to two major freeways, Interstate 80, which runs east-west across the length of the country, and the Eastshore Freeway, a six-lane freeway that connects to Interstate 5, which goes all the way to the U.S.-Mexican border. More importantly, through early investments, the Port of Oakland possessed the space and crane infrastructure required to handle large-scale container operations. By comparison, San Francisco’s older finger piers could hold neither the weight of the cranes nor did they have the space for staging large numbers of containers.\textsuperscript{377}  San Francisco’s lack of intermodal transportation required extra overhead on incoming shipments as cargo shipped to San Francisco traveled south to rail lines before it could be loaded for its final destination. This marked the transfer of shipping operations from the famed port of San Francisco to the up-and-coming Port of Oakland.

In 1964, through generous federal funding, the Port of Oakland built the Seventh Street Marine Terminal, the largest container terminal on the West Coast. This propelled the Port of Oakland to become the second largest container port by tonnage within just five years. These infrastructure improvements came at a perfect time, as Japan started to establish itself as a force in the manufacturing industry. Japan quadrupled its industrial exports between 1960 and 1973. Japan’s adoption of containerized shipping, helped by


\textsuperscript{377} Finger piers run perpendicular to the shoreline and provides dual-side berthing of ships. These piers are designed to handle LOLO and RORO cargo, but are unsuited for containerized cargo. Gregory P. Tsinker, \textit{Port engineering: planning, construction, maintenance, and security}, (Wiley, 2004), 87-89.
the Port of Oakland, enabled industrial success. This ensured the Port of Oakland remained a key destination for delivery of imported goods from Japan and, eventually, the rest of Asia, setting it on a trajectory of further investment and expansion. To keep up with these maritime developments and competition, the port received federal assistance in 1986 (and again in 1998) to dredge the channel to accommodate larger marine traffic. The port, locked in fierce competition to remain a prime West Coast destination for shipping, sought to build an intermodal terminal to seamlessly connect rail and trucking to its wharf operations. This explains why the port, in the early 1990s, had its eye on garnering more space from its OAB and FISC Oakland neighbors as the city finalized a transition from an economy based on limited and increasingly obsolete manufacturing to one of distribution.

WEST OAKLAND

The neighborhoods and city surrounding the OAB and FISC Oakland provide a unique dichotomy in which to understand the relationship between the military and urban communities. The West Oakland neighborhood and more broadly Oakland served as key battlegrounds during the Civil Rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s. The Black Panthers emerged as the most famous civil rights group in Oakland. However, the work of C.L. Dellums and other Oakland African-American activists led to significant civil rights progress as well, most notably passage of California’s fair employment legislation and enforcement commission. Other activist efforts led to the election of Oakland’s first African American mayor Lionel Wilson in 1977. The struggle for equality and civil

379 Ibid., 196.
rights in West Oakland happened in the shadow of the OAB and FISC Oakland. These institutions sat physically adjacent to the West Oakland neighborhood, and in many other ways, they significantly impacted the surrounding neighborhood.

West Oakland has historically been an ethnic and racial minority neighborhood both by choice and by exclusion. Pre and post-WWII redlining ensured African Americans remained physically segregated from white communities. This forced African Americans into West Oakland. Interestingly, a majority of the jobs available to African Americans, including much of Oakland’s manufacturing industry, rail yards, and dock jobs, were located in and adjacent to the West Oakland neighborhood. These industries offered African Americans employment and aided in the emergence of a stable African-American working class. The outbreak of WWII brought a massive influx of African Americans from the South, to work at the manufacturing jobs opened up by the war thanks to federal anti-discrimination laws. With stable employment, a thriving African American community evolved, including a predominantly African American owned shopping and entertainment district. This created a “city within a city” feeling.\(^{380}\)

The post-WWII era brought significant downsizing in Oakland’s industry and relocation of manufacturing centers to the surrounding suburbs. Passenger train ridership declined dramatically, decreasing from forty trains a day down to just three. These developments had a catastrophic effect on the jobs available to African Americans and led to high levels of unemployment and poverty. To combat these problems, the City of Oakland, like many other cities at the time, undertook a series of redevelopment projects. City planners and politicians conceived of redevelopment projects to bring employment,\(^{380}\)

business, and prosperity to struggling, largely ethnic and racial minority communities. More often than not these redevelopment projects benefitted the privileged and did little for communities in need.381

Oakland’s three major “redevelopment” projects; the creation of three interstate freeways, the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) extension, and the Port of Oakland’s terminal expansion, occurred in West Oakland. These federally funded projects, designed to bring jobs and economic prosperity to the residents of West Oakland, did little of either. Instead, all three projects left the West Oakland community economically disadvantaged while at the same time imposing deleterious effects on the community. The new freeways and the BART extension ran straight through West Oakland, displacing thousands of African American homeowners with little or no compensation and diminishing the value of property in the entire community. The promised jobs never appeared as city officials and employers danced around or outright ignored the promise to provide jobs to ethnic and racial minorities. Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society Economic Development Administration (EDA) funded the Port of Oakland airport expansion and construction of a second containerized terminal project. With the promise of jobs for the ethnic and racial minorities, the city, state, and port received 23 million dollars to revitalize the neighborhood. Instead, EDA funds transformed the Port of Oakland into a world class container port and gave little or nothing back to the ethnic and racial minority community in desperate need. At the same time the port’s investment in containerized shipping, commonly known in the shipping industry as mechanization and modernization, eliminated jobs. The mechanization of loading and unloading cargo required far fewer

381 For more on re-development being coopted see Thomas Sugrue’s Origins of the Urban Crisis, Matthew J. Countryman’s Up South, Kenneth Durr’s Behind the Backlash, and Robert Self’s American Babylon.
people working on the docks. This made dock work even harder to come by. By the mid-1960s, with the loss over 10,000 manufacturing jobs, the sunset of passenger railroads and the thousands of jobs soon to be eliminated from the port, the federal government designated Oakland a depressed area.382

While the federal government spending programs of the 1960s failed to provide jobs and prosperity for ethnic and racial minorities in West Oakland, other government institutions did. Regional institutions including the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), Alameda County, and the City of Oakland provided a bevy of stable jobs for these groups. Federal institutions such as the OAB, FISC Oakland, Oak Knoll Naval Hospital, Post Office, and Alameda Naval Air Station provided secure and large number of jobs to ethnic and racial minorities. The Alameda NAS contributed 10,000 jobs alone. These institutions combined offered over 34,000 jobs to the Oakland area, and African Americans and other minority groups were employed in great numbers.383 More importantly, these military institutions continued employing ethnic and racial minorities long after the war. For those workers, this staved off the boom and bust employment cycle experienced by those in the shipbuilding and war related manufacturing. More importantly, these federal jobs provided upward mobility and financial stability to these groups, as Oakland moved from a manufacturing center to a services oriented economy in the post war years. West Oakland resident Monsa Nitoto describes the OAB, FISC Oakland, other local bases, the port, and post office as, “the livelihood of West Oakland in particular, and Oakland in general… that was the real economic engine for West

382 Robert Self, American Babylon, 157, 159, 170, 206.
383 Ibid., 171-172.
Oakland during these times.” Further, entrenched and subtle racism slowed ethnic and racial minority worker entry into Oakland’s retail and commercial services. Thus, these military bases, intentionally or not, served as bastions of economic and civil equality at a time when private businesses had neither the will nor the desire to provide either.

The bond between these military institutions and the community grew tighter over the years. West Oakland quite literally fed off of the base, as kids living in the local projects were provided meals by the OAB. As soon as the soldiers finished going through the chow line, kids were permitted to go through and eat. OAB employees adopted the Ralph Bunche School for mentally challenged children, providing the school with support throughout the year. Each December, OAB employees brought the students to the base and treated them to a holiday party and showered them with gifts. The OAB developed internship programs with the local high schools allowing students to get on the job training. OAB employee Jim Johnson and OUSD developed a unique and clever educational partnership. Many OAB employees lacked a high school diploma or GED. To help these employees advance in their careers, the OAB instituted a GED requirement. This forced employees lacking a GED to enroll in a class. To ensure employees could take part in the program, the base commander put Johnson in charge of creating a

program on the base. Instead of hiring teachers, for which the base lacked money, Johnson reached out to Oakland Technical High School and offered to house the OUSD GED program free of charge. In return, the OUSD provided the teachers and accreditation. This brought civilians from the community and military personnel together to achieve their GEDs.\(^{387}\) The OAB encouraged and subsidized education and training, hallmarks of upward mobility, for its employees.

Many former ethnic and racial minority employees credit the OAB for providing a path to upward mobility. Students coming out of high school, but not continuing on to college, used the OAB and FISC Oakland as entry points for jobs.\(^{388}\) The OAB employed a highly diverse workforce. Women, ethnic, and racial minorities accounted for fifty to sixty percent of both civilian and military workforce.\(^{389}\) This included African Americans, Asians, and eventually Hispanics.\(^{390}\) As an example, the OAB 1975 supervisor training program featured thirty-three participants. Women represented fifty-eight percent and racial minorities forty-two percent. The post-Vietnam generation experienced a tremendous shift in opportunities for these populations at the OAB. This group, the sons and daughters of ethnic and racial minorities who worked there in the forties and fifties, benefitted from their parents’ experience and entered directly into midlevel and management positions within the army.\(^{391}\) Women and African Americans


served in any and all jobs throughout the base including the military police, supervisors, and managers. Not only did the army provide education, it also recognized experience when it came to promotions. For those unable to attend college, the recognition of experience allowed for career growth.\textsuperscript{392} Former OAB African American employees recall showing up at the OAB in the late 1960s and being hired right on the spot. Non-government entities rarely if ever hired on the spot.\textsuperscript{393} West Oakland resident and former OAB worker Monsa Nitoto, speaking about the closure of OAB and FISC Oakland, best summarizes their importance to the West Oakland Community,

And so that was the beginning of a whole lot of us losing toehold in West Oakland, in particular. I think, though, it is fair to say that when I worked on the base, it was full of workers from West Oakland—you could see people out there from the community working. The crime and stuff in West Oakland wasn’t so bad. I mean people had jobs. I say, yeah, the kids are bad now, but they get worse when they can’t work—when there’s no economy, and they had to build their own underground economy, you know? You can’t even rob somebody from your neighborhood cause there all brook [sic]. There’s nobody to rob unless you’re taking a TV or something, so when the jobs left, man, it really hurt West Oakland—I can’t blame that all on the city council, because it is a country trend, but it was just sad to see the economic engine leave from West Oakland.\textsuperscript{394}

Education as a path towards upward mobility has become a critical differentiator for those who participate in the vast success of the Bay Area economy and those who do not. By 2010 the most lucrative jobs are in the professional, scientific, and technical services industry, which puts a premium on highly educated employees. By comparison, nearly seventy

\textsuperscript{392} Santos, \textit{Oakland Army Base Oral History Project}, 14.
\textsuperscript{394} Monsa Nitoto, \textit{Oakland Army Base Oral History Project}, 16-17.
percent of ethnic and racial minority households have no college degrees. This demonstrates how sharp the employment and future job prospect disparity is.  

**BRAC PROCESS AND THE DECISION TO CLOSE**

The BRAC commission deliberated and made its final decisions on June 22\textsuperscript{nd} and 23\textsuperscript{rd}, 1995. This culminated the effort of ten hearings in Washington, sixteen regional hearings, seventy-five military base visits, and countless hours of research and analysis. Through this process and deliberations the commission recommended twenty-eight major base closures, twenty-two major base realignments, and fifty-eight small base closures or realignments. The Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990 specified eight criteria for determining a potential base closure: operational readiness, condition of land, contingency accommodation, cost implications, return on investment, economic impact, community infrastructure, and environmental impact. The first day of deliberations focused on air force bases. The second day the commission considered army and navy bases. Commissioners produced unanimous decisions in ninety percent of the cases presented. 

Just prior to the deliberations, the commission held two days of hearings with members of congress whose states or districts could be affected by the decisions. Over two hundred congressional members took advantage of the opportunity to plead their case to the commission. Of the two hundred plus speakers, California produced thirteen, 

\(^{395}\) Bay Area Economic Report, 6, 35.  
\(^{396}\) Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, *Open Meeting Transcript*, June 12, 1995, 5  
\(^{398}\) Unanimous calculation includes votes of 8-0, 7-0, and 7-1.
including Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein along with representatives Vic Fazio (D-CA, 3rd district), Robert Matsui (D-CA, 5th district), John Doolittle (R-CA, 4th district), Richard Pombo (R-CA, 11th district), Wally Herger (R-CA, 2nd district), Sam Farr (D-CA, 17th district), Andrea Seastrand (R-CA, 22nd district), Tony Beilenson (D-CA, 23rd and 24th district), Walter Tucker (D-CA, 37th district), Ken Calvert (R-CA, 44th district), and Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA, 46th district). The commission allocated five minutes to each speaker and permitted entry of longer texts into the record. Senator Boxer led off the California speakers. She noted how the proposed base closures projected to eliminate nearly “200,000 jobs and $7 billion in economic activity.” She urged, “in the strongest possible terms” to keep McClellan AFB open and “to consider the cumulative impact in the Sacramento area.” For reasons of national defense she stated her “serious reservations about the closing of the Long Beach Naval Shipyard.” Further, she questioned the logic of removing Onizuka, a satellite control facility in Mountain View, leaving the military with a strategic vulnerability by only having a single satellite control facility. She made two final pitches, citing the study of the Sierra Army Depot as faulty and noting discrepancies with projected cost savings by closing Point Mugu Naval Air Warfare Center. Finally, she noted that the state of California had an unemployment rate two percent over the national average and that while the base closures were hurting California, Californians remained proud of their participation in national defense.\footnote{Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, \textit{Open Meeting Transcript}, June 12, 1995, 78-82}

Senator Feinstein followed with comments focused on cumulative impact and the two largest bases McClellan and Long Beach. She noted that as of 1995 California had lost 250,000 jobs in defense downsizing and current estimates predicted loss of another
250,000 more. She pointed out California’s almost nine percent unemployment rate and the job losses from BRAC could lead to another state wide recession. She spent time championing both McClellan AFB and the Long Beach bases. She concluded by reminding the commission that over fifty percent of job losses from the first three bases closures came from California.\textsuperscript{400}

Representatives Vic Fazio, Robert Matsui, John Doolittle, and Richard Pombo combined to make a joint-plea in support of McClellan AFB. These four represented Sacramento and the surrounding areas North, East, and West. They presented a united voice in their support of McClellan. Fazio highlighted the capabilities of McClellan while Matsui focused on the strength of the base. Doolittle addressed the cost of operations versus cost effectiveness and productivity, while Pombo argued that McClellan would be best positioned to serve as a joint DoD location for repair of electronics and communications. Fazio closed on behalf of the group by highlighting discrepancies in the closure cost estimates.\textsuperscript{401}

Representative Herger spent his time discussing the Sierra Army Depot located in the Sierra foothills. He highlighted the base’s value as cost and operational effectiveness, long-term capabilities, and the commission’s under-estimated costs of closing the facility.\textsuperscript{402} Representative Farr argued against the realignment of the army’s Training and Doctrine Test and Experimentation Command (TEXCOM) from Fort Hunter-Liggett in Southern California to Fort Bliss, TX. He cited the few physical restrictions, terrain, and cost estimates as reasons to keep TEXCOM at Hunter-Liggett.\textsuperscript{403} Representative

\textsuperscript{400} Ibid., 84-89.  
\textsuperscript{401} Ibid., 91, 93, 97, 100, 102.  
\textsuperscript{402} Ibid., 108-109.  
\textsuperscript{403} Ibid., 113-114.
Seastrand also spoke about the value of TEXCOM at Fort Hunter Liggett. She highlighted the Fort's contribution to military technology development and faulty assumptions in the commission’s cost analysis. Representative Beilenson came to speak about Point Mugu NAS north of Los Angeles. He argued that Point Mugu had high military value and suggested analysts overestimated the savings from closure. Representative Tucker made a case for saving the Long Beach Naval Shipyard. His main argument focused on the local economic impact its closure would cause. Representative Rohrabacher also lobbied in support of the Long Beach Naval Shipyard. He believed the shipyard should be realigned so that the navy could convert the shipyard to repair facility allowing significant cost savings. Representative Calvert spoke on behalf of Naval Warfare Assessment Division in Corona Southern California. He noted that the detachment’s location in Corona provided a strategic asset. Shockingly, for all the lobbying by California’s congressional delegation, the Commission voted to close McClellan AFB and LBNSY, as well as realigning the Sierra Army Depot.

What was notable about the California Congressional delegation’s appeal was the lack of discussion about the Bay Area military bases. Neither Boxer nor Feinstein mentioned OAB, FISC Oakland, or the smaller commands in San Bruno and San Francisco, also on the BRAC list. Boxer provided the closest attempt in her brief discussion of Onizuka. This was a curious omission for two senators who hailed from the Bay Area and were intimately familiar with the legacy of base closures there. Even more
shocking, Ron Dellums did not speak to the commission at all. Not only did Dellums represent the California 9th (covering Oakland, Alameda, and Berkeley), but he was chair of the House Armed Services. Dellums was a very vocal opponent to Bay Area base closures during the 1991 and 1993 rounds, so it is puzzling that he went silent. Perhaps he knew the closures were inevitable or maybe he simply lost interest. Whatever the reason, no explanation for his high profile absence emerged. If anybody had the credibility to influence the commission, it was Dellums. Dellums grew up in West Oakland and was probably the most knowledge person to speak to the importance of OAB and FISC Oakland for the local community. Moreover, because Representative Pombo’s district covered the eastern parts of Alameda County, had Dellums chosen to make a plea on behalf of OAB or FISC Oakland, it is likely Pombo would have spoken on their behalf as well. So the Bay Area closures, aside from Onizuka, faced the commission with no vocal congressional support.

The Commission unanimously adopted the motion to close the FISC Oakland by a vote of eight-to-zero. However, legal complications, which turned out to be informative about the validity of the process, precluded this from being a straightforward decision. A recent lease between the navy and the Port of Oakland complicated the BRAC decision making. This lease granted the port use of 195 acres of FISC Oakland land for $1/year to a new intermodal transportation facility. Both the City and Port of Oakland feared a BRAC decision to close FISC Oakland could threaten the project and potentially cause investors to pull out.410 This point caused a series of confused exchanges between the commissioners as they attempted to understand whether closing the base would affect the existing lease between the navy and the Port of Oakland. Complicating the issue,

commissioners simultaneously tried to reconcile the Alameda and Richmond locations while wrestling with the legalities of the Oakland lease. Finally, Chairman Dixon requested the commission’s legal counsel to address the lease issue.411

After an hour or so and several other closure decisions, the commission once again took up the issue of FISC Oakland. Legal counsel affirmed that closure of the base by BRAC would have no impact on the leases signed or underway. Finally, the commission broke up FISC Oakland into two motions. The first motion called for the closing of the Alameda Supply Annex and Point Molate Naval Refueling Station. Both Alameda and Richmond desired to take ownership of their respective property for future development opportunities. The second motion called for the closing of the FISC Oakland facility and relocating the tenants (Defense Finance and Accounting Service and Military Sealift Command) to government owned facilities. Both measures passed unanimously; FISC Oakland was slotted for closure.412

It is important to flag two elements from the FISC Oakland deliberations. First the commissioners and the chair Alan Dixon ensured the closure decisions were clear, fair, and did not inadvertently break any existing laws. This demonstrated that the commission evaluated base closures in good faith, not simply rubber stamping predetermined decisions. Moreover, Chairman Dixon made special recognition of the exceptional burden California experienced in the closures. As a result, he wanted to ensure that he could do everything in his power to avoid future problems for the city and Port of Oakland so that they could make effective use of the property for creating jobs. Ultimately, the navy’s supply centers support active regional naval operations, with no

411 Ibid., 242.
412 Ibid., 240-244.
other naval facilities in the area, operating FISC Oakland made no logical sense. Further, with the Port of Oakland’s desire for additional land for expansion, closing the FISC Oakland and turning it over to the port made economic sense for all parties involved.

The commission considered the Bayonne and OAB closure decisions jointly. The discussion surrounding OAB and Bayonne centered on force deployment strategy. During the Bayonne discussion, Commissioner Robles interjected, “Don’t get mesmerized that we’re going to deploy everything on the East Coast, because our forces aren’t on the East Coast…they are in the central part of the United States.” He asked army analyst Rick Brown to show how a ten-division force would deploy. Brown described heavy divisions mobilizing through the Gulf of Mexico, air assault divisions out of Florida, and the mechanized heavy divisions deploying from Georgia. Robles explained that these movement scenarios did not include prepositioning forces, the strategic stationing of supplies and equipment in regional proximity to potential conflicts. The development and strategy of prepositioning equipment in certain theaters had been a significant strategic development by the army logistical command throughout the early 1990s. Robles concluded his point by suggesting that the port analysis should reflect the current strategic situation rather than using a “World War II” model. Commissioner Steele, looking at the chart, then made the observation that Oakland, like Bayonne, had no units nearby. This started the discussion about Oakland.

Brown started the Oakland discussion by suggesting that the army’s computer simulation was based on an obsolete force structure. The older force structure presumed

413 Ibid., 566.
414 Ibid., 567.
415 Ibid., 568.
416 The discussion flip-flopped between Oakland and Bayonne.
a mechanized division from Colorado and one from Fort Riley Kansas going West to Oakland for deployment. Brown also reported a one-time cost of $36.2 million to close the facility and projected return of investment within three years with an annual savings of $15.9 million.\(^{417}\) He noted that in 1993 the OAB only handled twenty-one ships, in 1994 it handled sixteen ships, and through six months in 1995 handled twelve ships.

Factoring two days to unload a ship and two days to load it, this suggested severe OAB underutilization with only twenty-three percent capacity in use in 1993, eighteen percent in 1994, and seven percent to date in 1995.\(^{418}\) Commissioner Kling asked Mr. Brown to address the strategic deployment situation on the West Coast if Oakland closed, specifically asking, “[t]he other facilities would be very, very limited, and they would not have the capacity to handle an emergency type of operation?”\(^{419}\) Brown responded that two military facilities, Port Hueneme and Concord Naval Weapons station, still existed on the West Coast, and though not ideal, he surmised they could handle the load.\(^{420}\)

At this point Commissioner Robles, rather forcefully, interjected a series of comments. First, he explained, based on the army’s division breakdown map, no military units resided in the western half of the U.S., meaning none would deploy out of Oakland. He noted, “it doesn’t matter how many contingencies you have, there are no forces that are deployed.” He then suggested “divisions that are in the central part of the United States to a Pacific contingency, they’ll still load out of the Gulf ports because that’s the shortest route to their equipment…they’ll come around, and they’ll go [through the

\(^{418}\) Ibid., 577.
\(^{419}\) Ibid., 578.
\(^{420}\) Ibid., 578.
Panama Canal].\textsuperscript{421} Commissioner Cornella asked about the potential long-term risk of dependency on the Panama Canal as a critical path to get troops to the Pacific. Robles acknowledged there a slight risk existed, but “it’s way out there in the tails of a normal distribution.”\textsuperscript{422} Unfortunately, both Robles and Cornella missed a more thorough understanding of intermodal transportation. Robles presumed the fastest way to move supplies and equipment occurred by the shortest land distance to a port. However, that is not the case. A longer rail trip to a port closer to the shipping destination more than offsets short rail trip with a longer sea route. In the case of an emergency in Southeast Asia, it is far faster to send equipment from the Central U.S. to a Western port for a shorter voyage across the Pacific than it is to rely on a short rail trip and longer voyage through the Panama Canal. This concept, known in transportation parlance as a “land bridge,” was completely lost on the commissioners and staff.\textsuperscript{423}

When it came time to vote, the commission voted to close Bayonne by a six-to-two vote. Then the commission put the OAB up for a vote. Adding a last minute bit of drama to the proceedings, Commissioner Cox made a comment before the OAB vote stating, “The Army feels very strongly that it should not have been added and that it should not be closed.”\textsuperscript{424} She pointed out that whereas the navy supported closing the FISC Oakland facility, but removed it because of cumulative job losses, the army leadership believed in keeping the OAB for “strategic reasons” and encouraged the Commissioners to “give the Secretary and the Army the presumption of the doubt, and I

\textsuperscript{421} Ibid., 579.
\textsuperscript{422} Ibid., 581-582.
\textsuperscript{423} Military Traffic Management Command Western Area, “Fiscal Year 1995 Annual Historical Review, MTMC Western Area Public Affairs Office, April, 1995, p. 10, 13-14
\textsuperscript{424} Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, Open Meeting transcript, June 23, 1995, 586
would urge that we vote no."\textsuperscript{425} The commission accepted the motion to close OAB by the margin of five-to-three. It is important to note that both the army, Secretary of Defense and three commissioners believed the OAB should be left open, partially disproving the notion of punishing the Bay Area.

PUBLIC REACTION

Public reaction to the potential and actual closure of the OAB and FISC Oakland ranged from ambivalence to frustration with local politicians. More significantly, from February to the end of June, 1995 only five citizens wrote letters to the editor in all of the local newspapers combined.\textsuperscript{426} By comparison letters to the editor about the Raiders potential move back flooded in daily. Perhaps Bay Area residents had been through base closures too many times already, but no discernable movement emerged to save the bases. Letters to the editor and interviews fell into one or more of three categories; blaming overly liberal politicians (often citing the Missouri debacle), the navy/military is punishing the Bay Area (for liberal politicians), or resigned acknowledgement. San Francisco resident David R. Dawdy’s letter to the editor pointed out how powerful congressional supporters of the military had their bases protected, regardless of rationale in supporting in national defense, but that Bay Area liberal politicians had their strategically important bases closed.\textsuperscript{427} David Heekin of San Ramon, CA (an East Bay suburb), covered both the liberal politician and military punishment categories, in his

\textsuperscript{425} Ibid., 586.
\textsuperscript{426} This included the San Francisco Chronicle, San Francisco Examiner, Oakland Tribune, Oakland Post, and The Montclairion. Tracking the papers for five days after an article about the closure or potential closure, there were forty-seven days in which no editorial emerged.
letter to the editor. He blamed certain Californians for treating the military, “like a bastard child showing up at a wedding.” But his accusation was more broadly aimed at those who stood by and let the vocal minority literally and figuratively spit on the military. He believed it was no coincidence that California had double the base closures of any other state. He concluded with this very telling line, “senator/governor/congressman. Quit crying about the outcome,” and implied this was the bed that California made and now it had to sleep in it.\footnote{David Heekin, “Don’t come whining to me about California base closures,” \textit{Oakland Tribune}, Opinion section, June 29, 1995.} Similarly, Martha Gaydish of Vallejo blamed Northern Californians for continually electing the most “anti-defense, anti-military bunch of legislators in Congress.” She called out Senators Boxer and Feinstein, Representatives George Miller (D-CA, 7th district), and Vic Fazio (D-CA, 3rd district), thus taking the “liberal politicians are to blame route.” She wrote, “Those in this area who support local military bases should realize that we have no representation in Congress, and expect to bear the consequences until we can get rid of this bunch.” She concluded by blaming the voters, “[w]e ask for it when we elect this bunch over and over.”\footnote{Martha Baydish, “Base closings are our own fault,” \textit{Oakland Tribune}, Opinion section, June 30, 1995.}

In a more practical and less accusatory tone, Robert F. MacDonald of Oakland wrote that, “the layout and equipment are obsolete.” Moreover, making the assumption that the Port of Oakland would take over management of the OAB, he believed the decision presented a challenge for the port to make “efficient and economical” use of the land. Kenneth D. Fredericks of Alameda supported the closure and urged politicians to take advantage of the opportunity to expand the Port of Oakland. Finally, the editorial column “Base Closing-Enough is Enough” described how California was still reeling
from previous closures and that additional closures could extend and expand the recession.430 Perhaps the best description of base closures and their corresponding political impacts come from two editorial cartoons that ran in June of 1995. The first one, “We’re on California’s Base Closure List,” represented the BRAC Commission as seeking to remove every military base and related facility no matter how small.431

![Figure 15. Editorial cartoon.](image)

The second cartoon highlighted the potential political repercussions of base closures in California. The cartoon represented each base closure as a nuclear missile explosion with concentric rings showing the collateral damage from politically radioactive fallout. The

430 “Base Closing- Enough is Enough,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Opinion section, June 26, 1995
432 Ibid.
letters to the editor and interviews above demonstrate how much hostility and distrust the public can harbor towards politicians for their action and inaction on sensitive issues such as base closures.\textsuperscript{433}

Figure 16. Editorial cartoon.\textsuperscript{434}

CLINTON AND WILSON

The BRAC decisions setup some good Presidential political drama. By 1995, California was still in play for the 1996 presidential election. Owing to the significant

\textsuperscript{433} Editorial Cartoon, June 9, 1995.
\textsuperscript{434} Ibid.
bases closures and job losses California suffered in the 1988, 1991, and 1993 BRAC rounds, President Bill Clinton could not take California for granted. Republican presidential challengers saw this as an opportunity to attack Clinton. The day after the BRAC announced its decisions, with a large portion of California bases accepted for closure, Republican California Governor Pete Wilson called on Clinton to reject the commission report. Wilson, campaigning in New Hampshire for the 1996 Republican presidential nomination, pointedly commented that Clinton telling Congress not to make further defense cuts was akin to “Madonna advocating modesty—a welcome voice, just not a very credible one.” Wilson further charged that, “giving the base closing commission marching orders to achieve dangerously low levels for spending by making unwise reductions in our military capability…undermining our credibility and inviting dangerous miscalculations by the Saddam Husseins of a still dangerous world.”

President Clinton, in California for the fifty-year anniversary of the United Nations, responded to Wilson’s criticism stating that, “before I became President I thought that [previous base closures] was more than enough, and the law provides for economic impact to be considered.” The question Clinton did not address at the time was what constituted enough of a reason to reject the Commission’s report in its entirety. Clinton defended his policies explaining;

Governor Wilson is just wrong about what he said about defense. Basically, my defense numbers have been about the same as the Republicans of Congress have recommended and what the

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Pentagon has asked for…it's just not true to say that inadequate budgets have led to the closing of more bases than were necessary. That's just absolutely untrue.

Three weeks later, Clinton had similar tough words as he called the base closure list an “outrage” and pounded his fist in anger saying, “[e]conomic impact was supposed to be taken into account, and as nearly as I can determine, it wasn’t anywhere.” After expressing that sentiment he signed BRAC Commission report.\(^{437}\) Clinton, though empathetic to California and the Bay Area’s plight, did not exercise his power to reject the report.

**PLANS FOR REUSE**

As the dust settled and rhetoric subsided, the question of what to do with all the land emerged. The port immediately took over the FISC Oakland facility and continued work on its new intermodal transportation center. The port also received the western half of the OAB in which it further expanded its operations. OAB’s eastern half went to the City of Oakland. Potential developers anxiously waited to get their hands on what they termed one of the “most valuable chunks of industrial real estate in the East Bay.” Citing the waterfront location, at the crossroads of two major freeways and located in the geographic center of the Bay Area, this land promised to be veritable gold mine.\(^{438}\) Quickly residents, developers, and politicians threw out a variety of different proposals. The Oakland City Council favored an Eco-Park industrial complex proposal, an environmentally friendly combination of park, retail, and light industrial businesses. However, other proposals included an expanded wholesale flower market, a homeless

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shelter, light industrial or mixed industrial space, a truck stop/tractor-trailer parking lot, a maritime distribution center, a public park, office buildings, retail stores, and an upscale business hotel.439 Mayor Jerry Brown supported the most interesting proposal, the “Las Vegas on the Estuary.” This proposal, sponsored by May Brown and the Muwekma Ohlones, a San Jose-based Native American tribe, sought to build a hotel and casino on the waterfront with a conference center, family entertainment center, and Indian museum.440

The OAB officially closed its doors in September 1999. The eastern portion of OAB has been ensnared in a series of legal challenges and failed attempts at redevelopment. Gridlock and slow movement is standard on base redevelopment projects. This is due to legal, environmental, and regulatory compliance issues. However, homeless advocates put a small portion of the former OAB to good use, at least for four years. In January 2000, the former OAB bowling alley was converted into a 100 bed winter homeless shelter. As most residential areas are hostile to the presence of homeless shelters, the former OAB property provided the ideal location. It provided a large space, isolated from neighborhoods yet easily accessible, and cost nothing to rent.441 Unfortunately this arrangement did not to last due to redevelopment plans that called for the demolition of the building; a suitable replacement is still in the works.442

West Oakland residents desired to get portions of the OAB converted into a full-service truck stop for the numerous trucks coming in and out of the Port of Oakland.

Residents complained that trucks waiting for pickups at the port illegally parked, dropped unattended trailers overnight, and polluted the neighborhood with diesel fumes while idling. Residents desired to have truck parking moved onto the OAB property, providing truck drivers with restaurants, showers, and plentiful parking. This vision could have simultaneously added jobs for the area, increased tax revenue, and solved an environmental problem.443

Beyond the pollution problem, West Oakland residents really needed and wanted jobs. By 1995 the area was once again categorized as economically depressed. Residents wanted the base turned into an asset to help give the local community a lift.444 In fact adding jobs to the West Oakland area became paramount by 1996 as the Republican sponsored, and Clinton approved, welfare reform became law. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996, a key plank in the “Contract with America,” ended welfare as an entitlement program. The law required welfare recipients to begin working within two years of receiving benefits and placed a cap of five years on benefits.445 This legislation forced an estimated 15,000 people desperately dependent on welfare and living in the West Oakland area, to find employment at exactly the time the same federal government eliminated over four thousand jobs in the West Oakland neighborhood.446 Even worse for the community, besides undermining federal social justice programs, conservative activists attacked state programs as well. In 1995, the

University of California Regents took aim at affirmative action for college admissions. They passed resolutions that eliminated race, religion, sex, color, ethnicity, and national origin as factors in the admissions decision process. Thus, in a region that had migrated to a mostly white collar service industry, dependent on education for upward mobility, with welfare options exceedingly constrained, and the departure of the OAB and FISC Oakland, practically nothing remained to help West Oakland and its residents.

CONCLUSION

The 1995 BRAC continued a trend of removing the physical military presence from the Bay Area. Only two small commands in the Bay Area, the Engineering Field Activity West in San Bruno and Supervisor of Shipbuilding, San Francisco survived the BRAC commission. While the major economic damage done to the Bay Area occurred in the earlier BRAC rounds, the 1995 decisions had a negative effect on the smaller area of West Oakland. OAB and FISC Oakland provided a fixture of upward mobility and social justice to a disadvantaged ethnic and racial minority population for nearly five decades.

More importantly, understanding the spatial relationship between the OAB and FISC Oakland to West Oakland and the impact and influence both of these facilities had on the community illuminates a gap in the BRAC methodology. At no time did the 1995 BRAC commission, its staff or even local political representatives address the issue of who worked at the base or what those jobs meant to neighborhood where the bases sat. The bases employed a predominance of minorities, who benefitted greatly from having

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federal government jobs. The OAB and FISC Oakland made a real difference in West Oakland, a place where jobs, education, and prosperity struggled to take hold. As noted above, jobs became doubly important in the context of welfare reform and the abandonment of affirmative action programs. The commission failed to consider these critical points in its decision to close these bases. By law the commission is required to consider economic impact as a specific criteria for closure. Herein lies the problem, the “economic measures” consisted of quantitative numbers of jobs lost, unemployment rates, and income percentages. Quantitative measures inadequately, or underrepresented the broader contextual implications in a place such as West Oakland. More specifically, for base closures in areas with large ethnic and racial minority populations, future BRACs need to include qualitative measures so that commissioners have all the facts before making their decisions.

Governor Wilson, Senators Feinstein and Boxer, and Representative Dellums completely failed to work on behalf of the West Oakland residents. Even if the ultimate decision was to close the bases, supported by prudent military and political objectives, someone should have flagged the issue of ethnic and racial minority job and economic displacement. By highlighting this issue, lawmakers could have taken extra steps to ameliorate the unfair burden placed on those who live on society’s margins. One solution, as has been done with environmental and homeless issues, could have been to pass federal legislation requiring portions of land and/or jobs to be dedicated to ethnic and racial minority workers. This would have been similar in concept to the Base Closure Community Redevelopment and Homeless Assistance Act, which requires local reuse commissions and homeless advocates to determine the feasibility of using abandoned
military facilities to serve the homeless. The redevelopment of military bases is a lengthy and complex process. As such, local, state, and federal political actors will change. The BRAC is only authorized for a short period of time, after that it ceases to exist. Yet, the neighborhoods surrounding these bases have to live and deal with the repercussions of base closures. Therefore, it is important to get fundamental objectives, such as ethnic and racial minority help, embedded into the BRAC process to ensure fairness over the long-term. Finally, while significant political drama unfolded around the BRAC process, there is little evidence that the OAB and FISC Oakland closings were political retribution. The army and Secretary of Defense desired to keep the OAB open. The navy recognized the FISC Oakland held no value, but opted to leave it open to spare jobs for the Bay Area. BRAC Commissioners were mindful of the damage they caused. In the end, the Bay Area and California lost again in the 1995 BRAC process. Yet, it was the politics of the BRAC charter that forced the commission to privilege cost savings and military value over social justice and equality concerns. As a result, the ethnic and racial minority residents of the West Oakland community lost the most from the OAB and FISC Oakland closures. Once again governmental structures and politicians, regardless of motivation, failed to support a community in need.

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CHAPTER VI. CONCLUSION

Figure 17. Editorial cartoon. 450

This dissertation study has provided three windows into the ways in which the San Francisco Bay Area, once a thriving hub of military activity, lost its entire military infrastructure over the course of a single decade. The loss resulted in the elimination of nearly 45,000 jobs in the area. Many blamed the region’s “liberal” population and politicians for inducing punishment by the navy. If the Department of Defense (DoD) and navy intended to punish the Bay Area for embracing liberal political perspectives, there is no available evidence for it. That is not to say it did not happen, but this researcher could find no substantive evidence to support these claims. While the punishment narrative makes for a compelling story, critical analysis of the events

demonstrate that the Bay Area lost its military presence due to a different kind of politics. Instead, political factors such as increased environmental legislation, urban encroachment, federal budget policies, and the ending of the Cold War, left the Bay Area vulnerable to base closures. Also, these closures occurred as part of modern base closure process, one designed to remove political chicanery. Thus, when the commissions voted to dismantle Bay Area bases, the decisions were not designed to punish to the region, but rather punctuated larger national and regional political trends already underway.

The first case study (Chapter 3), “Good Neighbor, Bad Neighbor, Encroached Neighbor,” examined the benefits and costs Alameda Naval Air Station (Alameda NAS) provided to the local community. Alameda NAS was a good neighbor to the region as the station and its homeported ships supported a range of local educational and employment programs. The base was a leading employer of women and minorities. Air station personnel supported local law enforcement and rescue workers in a variety of public safety and search and rescue missions. Almost inconceivably, this military base participated in one of the most successful endangered species protection and restoration programs with its preservation of the California Least Tern.

Yet for all the good efforts Alameda NAS put forth, the air station undermined the well-being of the local community by producing high levels of environmental pollution. Alameda NAS commands generated significant noise and air pollution, and discharged highly toxic chemicals into the bay and sewers. The station housed nuclear weapons, which caused considerable anxiety for local residents. Finally, air operations in such a highly urbanized area led increased accidents and encroachment of flight patterns. To deal with these challenges, the navy increasingly moved operations to other bases, which
limited the long-term usefulness of the base. Had it not been for Reagan’s 600-ship navy concept, Alameda would likely have been closed in the 1980s without any intervention from the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC). Nevertheless, the Alameda NAS closure hurt the large ethnic and racial minority populations employed by the air station. More importantly, these jobs, ones that provided stability and upward mobility to a group in need, went to a homogenous community that was over ninety-percent white.

In truth, long before the BRAC ever met, the air station suffered from a number of political issues. Not only were the facilities old, built to fight World War II (WWII), and in constant need of upgrading, there was no room for expansion as the base was surrounded by water on three sides and abutted by a highly dense urban area. Moreover, the construction and proposed development projects in Alameda and Oakland privileged economics over national defense interests. Further, the Bay Area’s high cost of living and lack of available housing units, proved an intractable problem. Throughout the 1970s, questions of the base’s strategic viability continually emerged, especially as all but one of the active units were removed from the base.

The second case study (Chapter 4), “Political Toxicity,” studied the Mare Island Naval Shipyard (MINSY) and its presence in the city of Vallejo. The closing of the Mare Island Naval Shipyard (MINSY) should have surprised nobody. Arguments for closing the shipyard dated back to 1878 and outside factors continually threatened its operations.451 The shipyard often found itself in political battles with navy leaders, local cities, and federal policy makers. Additionally, higher regional housing and labor costs made running the shipyard more expensive.

Like Alameda NAS and other navy bases in the area, MINSY was both a good neighbor and a bad neighbor. Shipyard employees participated in a wide range of community and educational programs. MINSY personnel rescued civilians and provided critical support in response to disasters. The shipyard went to great lengths to protect two animals on the federal endangered species list. Yet, MINSY produced tremendous environmental pollution and damage, including designation as a superfund site. Consequently federal, state, and local environmental agencies continually compelled the shipyard, through legal means, to curb and remediate its contamination. The end of the Cold War and the corresponding reductions in fleet strength presented the navy with excess shipyard capacity. Both the navy and BRAC determined that closing MINSY helped to alleviate the capacity problem. Sadly however, closing the shipyard had a long lasting detrimental effect on the city of Vallejo.

The final case study (Chapter 5), “There Is No Base There,” focused on the Oakland Army Base (OAB) and the navy’s Fleet and Industrial Supply Center (FISC) Oakland’s relationship to issues of social justice and regional planning. These closures removed critical jobs and community support programs necessary to the health and survival of residents in the West Oakland neighborhood. This chapter demonstrated several fundamental flaws in the BRAC criteria that allowed politics to emerge in the base closing process.

Militarily, by the 1990s, both facilities had long since lost their strategic value. At this time, both bases operated at a fraction of their capacity, a reflection that both army and navy units had long moved out of the region. At the same time, the Port of Oakland was expanding its operations and sought to acquire FISC Oakland and OAB property.
Oakland politicians, developers, and some locals coveted the opportunity to develop the former bases. Yet, with all this attention, almost no effort was directed to help the West Oakland community transition. As a result, the community has been abandoned and left to suffer as crime and drugs have overtaken legitimate jobs in the area.452

Finally, this dissertation provides a tangible example of the impact and success the 1970s federal environmental laws had. It demonstrates that federal environmental statutes, which established an overarching guide, yet left measurement and enforcement to state and local agencies, produced meaningful results. The Bay Area bases, especially Alameda NAS and MINSY, curbed their pollution and made efforts to address their legacy issues while preventing future ones. Local Bay Area environmental agencies developed solutions that were relevant for enforcing the laws in the unique geographic, economic, and political location. Evidence of this success can be seen by the recent return of porpoises to Bay Area waterways. Once a common sight prior to WWII, the porpoises abandoned the region once war broke out. It is likely the torpedo net strung across the Golden Gate to prevent enemy submarines from entering the Bay and subsequently increased levels of pollution generated during the Cold War kept the marine mammals away.453 Scientists do not have a conclusive answer to explain the return, but

they hypothesize that the navy’s departure and passage of the Clean Water Act (CWA) were responsible. It is unclear whether the researchers realize the connection between the two, that the navy was the biggest polluter of the Bay and that passage of the CWA and subsequent enforcement of it by local agencies helped to push the navy out of the region.454

**IMPLICATIONS**

The study of base closures offers insight to contemporary federal decisions about military spending. With the US high deficits, entitlement programs, and massive military expenses, more planned or unplanned base closures are likely to occur as contemporary federal budget initiatives cut military spending. Since the automatic across-the-board federal spending cuts, a provision of the 2011 Budget Control Act, took effect in January 2013, the federal government has cut budgets, furloughed workers, and continued to look for cost-saving measures. In April 2013, the DoD reported possession of a twenty-four percent excess military base capacity and was eager to unload the unnecessary facilities.455 Consequently, for the 2014 fiscal budget, President Obama requested authorization for a 2015 BRAC.456 Yet, defying logic, forty-three congressional members successfully lobbied the House and Senate Armed Service committees to reject

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the request proving once again how politics overrides military necessity. Regardless, at some point additional BRAC rounds will occur to deal with this and future excess capacity.

In this project, I have argued that the BRAC process was designed to be independent, fair, and apolitical. On the whole, the process achieved most of its objectives, yet the case studies reveal a number of areas for improvement. First, there was a lack of consistency in the data collection process across the service branches. The lack of uniformity in data collection seemed to create confusion for the commissioners. Further, the BRAC analysis for MINSY contained a series of errors. There was neither the time nor inclination by the commission to correct them. Finally, and most importantly, the BRAC process placed a primacy on cost savings and military value on its decisions. On the surface this made sense, but as the OAB and FISC Oakland closings demonstrated, not all base closures are equal. Simply looking at the numbers, absent the historical and cultural context, creates a disproportionate effect on those in need. The federal government has put a massive apparatus in place to prevent discrimination in the employment of cultural and ethnic minorities. Federal facilities have been instrumental in providing opportunities for helping these groups. However, when it comes to closing military bases, no such protections exist, and in the case of the Bay Area these actions unraveled decades of progress for these communities in need. Therefore, it is imperative that the BRAC criteria be changed to make special accommodations towards displacement of ethnic and racial minority populations, otherwise it defeats the purpose.

of affirmative action programs. Sadly, demilitarization, much like deindustrialization, impacts minorities, especially older urban minorities, more acutely.

How and why military bases are placed in a city is as important as any city planning activity. The DoD built most of the Bay Area bases between the turn of the twentieth century and 1943, with most coming together quickly for what was impending entry into WWII. These bases were built to meet a short-term, critical need, not for long-term growth and sustainability. With changing defense needs, technological advances, and the growth of urban centers, bases have over time come into increasing conflict with their surrounding areas, as happened in the Bay Area. Also, the Bay Area closure process and subsequent clean up efforts demonstrated just how toxic these military base sites are, not only in the amount of pollution generated, but also the legacy pollution introduced before environmental controls were in place. As the DoD looks at building or expanding existing military bases, there is a plethora of data from the BRAC process to help with future regional planning for military bases in urban environments. As this study demonstrates, officials must consider, cost of living, value of real estate, location to other military facilities, and environmental concerns (noise, pollution, species protection), to name a few. Finally, the decision to close Alameda NAS and finish construction at the new base in Everett, WA demonstrated that spending money for a newly designed and environmentally friendly installation brings long-term cost savings. Given this data, the DoD could consider doing more new base construction rather than rehabilitating bases approaching the century mark in age.

In looking toward the future of California’s remaining military bases, I cannot help but ask, “Will San Diego be the next city the BRAC visits?” San Diego is
predominantly a navy town, but it too is suffering from urban encroachment, a high cost of living, noise and environmental pollution, and is subject to California’s strict environmental laws. These were all issues that contributed directly or indirectly to the closures in the Bay Area. If one projects out, San Diego is going to have the same problems within the next ten years (and arguably has them now). It is almost unimaginable that the DoD will shutter large portions of its naval presence in San Diego anytime soon, but that is probably how the Bay Area looked in the 1960s. Will the DoD take proactive steps now, and even if they do, will it be enough?

Technological advancements, missed opportunities, and macro trends forced Bay Area bases into obsolescence. The first bases and batteries located in the region were positioned at the outer edges of San Francisco and Marin to provide physical protection against the threat of ships entering the Bay. As air and submarine technology advanced, bases moved inward towards South San Francisco, Oakland, and Alameda to spread out the increasing number of ships and soldiers to protect the region. However, the emergence of satellites, intelligent electronic sensors, advanced missile systems, jet fighters, and the nuclear arsenal eradicated the need for a physical military presence on the coasts. In other words, with all this technology no foreign nation is going to come sailing into the San Francisco Bay unannounced or undetected, as was the threat for most of the twentieth century.

Lacking a major threat that requires a massive physical military presence, will these large-scale martial investment opportunities come again? The Bay Area missed its opportunity to secure such an opportunity in the early 1900s because of the conflicts between with the North Bay’s MINSY and myopically focused politicians. These efforts
stymied existing efforts and allowed San Diego to emerge as the navy’s primary West Coast location. As a result, the Bay Area’s naval presence was slower to develop and, had it not been for WWII, may never have truly matured. Yet, even if future military expansion is necessary, the experiences and highlighted throughout this dissertation suggest that the Bay Area and DoD might be better without one another. Even if both entities worked collaboratively, macro political trends could create an untenable environment.

MINSY suffered from macro politics well out of its control. It lost its shipbuilding component as the navy and DoD adopted the “weapons manager system.” This new procurement system became the backbone of the military industrial complex with a vast array of outsourced defense contractors. This change in defense procurement put public shipyards in direct competition with private defense contractors, which then turned it into a political issue. Understanding these events provides a critical context to the current trend of outsourcing in-theater military work (food service, security, etc.) to companies like Haliburton, Blackwater, Bechtel, and the like. The more the DoD outsources to defense firms, the more it will diminish the traditional roles and activities handled on military bases.

California and the Bay Area landscape changed dramatically through WWII and the Cold War. Now in the post-Cold War era, the urban environments are changing again. While defense dollars may still flow to defense firms, the physical military presence continues to fade. Not only did this occur in the Bay Area, but Sacramento, less than one

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458 This same transition funded the rise of conservatism and perceptions of the so-called “free market,” all the result of the federal government is pouring billions of dollars into defense contracting. Either “all the result of the federal government pouring billions…” or “all while the federal government was pouring billions…”
hundred miles northeast, and Monterrey, slightly over one hundred miles south, lost most of their military bases throughout the BRAC process as well. So these regions, and likely Southern California eventually, are going to have to write new histories, ones not anchored by a physical military presence. California citizens will see fewer and fewer overt reminders of the national defense infrastructure and have less and less contact with those serving in the armed forces.

Removing these large numbers of military bases from California creates both challenges and opportunities for land reuse. Unfortunately, land reuse comes with political issues. This project adds to the emerging discussion around the politics of empty space. The utter collapse of the auto industry has left vast amounts of empty space in Detroit. Reclaiming that space and using it effectively has been a practical and political challenge. By contrast in the Bay Area, the empty space resulting from the base closures was (and is) highly valued, and there was no shortage of people seeking to develop it or simply to voice an opinion about how to reclaim the space. The nearly 30,000 acres of prime waterfront property and high real estate prices has helped with the successful transition of the Bay Area to a new post-military era.

Removing military bases also eliminated large numbers of people and resources that can be used in crisis situations. The Alameda NAS and MINSY case studies demonstrated the critical role Bay Area military bases and personnel played in disaster response and recovery efforts. When properly leveraged, these resources can provide a very positive, political impact. By contrast, the George W. Bush administration took tremendous criticism for its botched response to Hurricane Katrina. By comparison, Bay Area residents continually praised the efforts of military personnel from region’s bases
during natural disasters, creating a tangible connection between citizens and those who serve to protect and help them.

AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH

This study focused on how base closures and the BRAC impacted a single region in the unique geographical and political constraints of California and the Bay Area. As previously noted, there are unique and significant environmental constraints to operating or converting a base in California, and the Bay Area is economically unlike other regions exponential growth over the last three decades. There are ample opportunities to expand this research to study other regions and do comparative analyses. For example, how does demilitarization affect a smaller region or state, such as Charleston, SC, or Blytheville, AR? Are there differences in closing air force bases or army bases versus navy bases? Most navy bases are located on or near the water, which greatly affect environmental impact, real estate prices, cost of living, and political inclinations. How does closing an army base in Arkansas compare with an air force base in Michigan? More importantly, what is the impact on ethnic and racial minorities with these closures? As more bases close it will be important to visualize geographically where military resources are concentrated. Though beyond the scope of this project, anecdotal evidence suggests that military bases are consolidating in southern states.

Property value, urban encroachment, and environmental compliance were critical factors in the decisions to close the Bay Area military bases. However, these problems exist in other highly urbanized areas with military bases. Places like San Diego, CA, Pensacola, FL, and Virginia Beach, VA all have a high cost of living, valuable land, and an encroaching civilian population. Urban encroachment is a particularly acute issue for
the navy, which by necessity requires its bases to be on the coast, but many navy facilities sit squarely on top of highly valuable land. This limits future expansion opportunities and creates hazards for those living nearby. The 2012 crash of a F/A-18 jet into an apartment complex in Virginia Beach, VA, reminiscent of similar incidents at Alameda NAS, provided a sharp reminder of the problems of military bases in urban areas.459

More importantly, environmental law compliance created many issues for the bases in this study. Will future environmental legislation impact existing facilities, especially ones in high tourist areas such as Southern California or Florida?

Another critical area of future study needs to be on overseas base closures. Not only does the U.S. have a massive existing international base presence, but it is growing. Starting with the explosion of bases in support of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. is now rapidly expanding bases throughout Africa.460 By contrast, there have been five rounds of domestic base closures with more being discussed. During the 1993 and 1995 BRAC rounds, Bay Area residents repeatedly questioned why overseas bases were not slotted for closure. As a practical matter, the BRAC was only charged with closing bases in the continental U.S. and territories. However, there has been little effort to legislate overseas base closures, and doing so brings forth a whole host of issues with regard to international law, treaties, the United Nations, NATO, as well as the host country. Though one fact about domestic and international bases is the same. No matter where the base is located, the same issues of environmental pollution, urban


encroachment, and civil-military relations continually crop up. An emerging set of scholarship is centers on the role of U.S. base closures in the Philippines, Japan, and Germany, all legacies of the Cold War Era. But what is lacking is a comprehensive understanding or even advocacy for an overseas base closure process.

Finally, the emergence of demilitarization in the West brings forth a new set of questions for consideration. Michael Sherry’s *In the Shadow of War* traces how militarization changed the U.S. from the 1930s to the early 1990s. Sherry argues that the country has subtly transitioned to a militarized nation and he leaves the reader with an optimistic view that America can split from its ever-encroaching militarization. Unfortunately 9/11, a decade of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the emergence of a domestic security program of epic proportions has rendered Sherry’s predictions moot.\(^{461}\)

Andrew Bacevich’s *The New American Militarism*, presents a counter argument to Sherry, lamenting America’s full-out embrace of a militarized society. He cites evidence of an increasing romanticization of the military and militarization of foreign policy. Bacevich even lays out ten principles toward a demilitarized society. This study of Bay Area military base closures adds a third perspective to this discussion.\(^{462}\) The nearly complete removal of the bases from the Bay Area has left this region virtually demilitarized. While there is still a modest DoD investment in Bay Area companies, 5.7 billion as of 2004, there are no bases, soldiers, or visible military presence anymore.\(^{463}\) This creates a new


\(^{463}\) While 5.7 billion is a large sum of money, the year on year defense investment in the region has not kept pace with other regions in the U.S. The Bay Area’s role in supporting the defense industry is primarily in research and development and as a subcontractor to firms based in other areas of the country.

Todd Wallack, “MILITARY INC. / Bay Area defense contractors serve as research powerhouse for the
set of implications. It puts a greater distance between Bay Area citizens and the military. The absence of a tangible civil-military connection puts recruiting and long-term public support of the military in jeopardy. Secretary of the Navy Lehman and the Reagan administration understood this problem and attempted to solve it with their strategic homeporting initiative by adding bases to boost support for the military. While a single demilitarized region such as the “liberal” Bay Area will not have a huge impact, what happens if more regions become demilitarized in favor of regional concentrations of military resources? As the 1995 BRAC deliberations demonstrated, there are no major army divisions on or near the West Coast. Moreover, the DoD continues to build new bases overseas, which conveniently have less oversight, and overtime leaves fewer domestic bases.

The federal government reshaped the West, first with its basic infrastructure investment (water, electricity, roads) and then with a century of martial investment. This federal investment helped propel California and the Bay Area to become regions of wealth. As the military shrinks and the defense dollars ebb from California, will a new federalism emerge and, if this happens, what will it look like? More specifically, does the federal government owe anything to the West, and do citizens in the West believe the federal government owes them, especially after so many years of federal subsidies disguised as military spending? It can be argued that the federal government has already done enough, just as it can be argued that investment in the West produced a huge return, so additional money would be well spent.
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