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Think Tanks Urge Another Round of BRAC

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Experts from more than 30 think tanks have written an [open letter](#) to Congress urging lawmakers to approve another round of base realignment and closure (BRAC). The letter says DOD will have 22 percent excess capacity by 2019, but it does not offer an estimate of potential savings from a new round of BRAC.

Organizations supporting the letter include the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Cato Institute, the Center for a New American Security, the Brookings Institution, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Center for American Progress.

The letter cites a recent Pentagon review finding the Air Force alone will have 32 percent excess capacity in 2019, while the Army will have 33 percent, and the Navy and Marine Corps combined will have seven percent. The letter also claims that “the first four BRAC rounds together are producing annual recurring savings of around \$7 billion.”

Without a measured reduction in capacity, the DOD would be facing “cuts at all installations, without regard to military value,” Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Work has said, according to the letter. Because Congress has been unwilling to close bases, the letter states, “the military has been forced to allocate resources away from the training and equipping” of troops in order to pay for unnecessary facilities.

BRAC has been hotly debated in Congress this year. Senate Armed Services Committee chair John McCain (R-Ariz.) and ranking member Sen. Jack Reed (D-R.I.) have said they are [willing to consider BRAC](#), and McCain said it would be “an act of cowardice” if Congress failed to do so out of a sense of protection for home-district economies that would be affected by base closures. House Armed Services ranking member Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.) [introduced BRAC legislation](#) just two days later.

Others are not so sure. In February, Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.) [expressed concern](#) that BRAC savings are often slow to materialize and that BRAC actually costs the Department money in the first few years.

President Donald Trump’s [fiscal year 2018 budget request](#) includes funding for a study that would explore another round of BRAC. Acting DOD comptroller John Roth has said that under

this proposal, a new BRAC would not begin until 2021, and he has estimated the department could eventually save as much as \$2 billion per year.

USAF Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Stephen Wilson has [said](#) the Air Force currently has 25 percent excess capacity, and he estimated potential total savings at \$25 billion.