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Military Base Closure and Community Transformation: The Case of England Air Force Base in Central Louisiana

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Military Base Closure and Community Transformation:
The Case of England Air Force Base in Central Louisiana

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Science
In
Urban Studies
Concentration in Management

by

Phyllis E. Mayo

B.S. Louisiana State University, 1988

December 2008

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Phyllis E. Mayo

Acknowledgements

This is what captures my interest and imagination: politics, culture and change. Politics because it is the exercise and distribution of power; culture because it is people and place; and change, most compelling of all, because it is the unpredictable catalyst that heralds transformation – growth and life or decay and death. Producing this thesis provided opportunity for me to experience each of these subjects in meaningful and personal ways.

I am especially grateful to those who've taken many journeys of scholarship and now help others find their way. These include: LSU Alumni Professor Cecil L. Eubanks, Ph.D., who first introduced me to contemporary political theory and taught that there is no cheap grace; and, UNO Associate Professor David L. Gladstone, Ph.D., who served as my Graduate Committee Chairman and guided me calmly and expertly over, under, around and through obstacles that seemed ever present during this work. I also thank members of my Graduate Committee, UNO Assistant Professors John L. Renne, Ph.D. and John J. Kiefer, Ph.D.

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Preface

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) recommended England Air Force Base (AFB) in Alexandria, Louisiana, for closure in 1991. In spite of an aggressive and well executed defense to save the base, all aircraft were removed by July 1992. Military personnel were reassigned by the end of that same year and at ceremonies held on December 15, 1992, England AFB was officially closed. Col. Dick Lemon, England's last base commander, noted at closing ceremonies:

The jets are gone. The work spaces are dark. There are no families enjoying dinner. It's been great, Louisiana. There are ghosts here. You need to listen to them. You need to respect them (Jim Leggett, "England AFB officially closed," *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, December 16, 1992).

This thesis honors those ghosts and the longstanding relationship of England AFB to the twin cities of Alexandria / Pineville and central Louisiana. It focuses on the community's successful conversion of England AFB from military to civilian use following an initial response to the threat of base closure which was to resist change.

Abstract

Closing England Air Force Base (AFB) emerged as a possibility following the first Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) round in 1988. The central Louisiana community responded with a dual strategy: defense, implemented by a highly visible group of mostly elected officials who fought to save the base; and offense, implemented by a small group of professionals working in the background to develop a contingency plan. Together, they managed both sides of the change equation, political and technical, and produced a military to civilian conversion. This thesis focuses on policy issues of base closure and ingredients for success and failure among communities affected by such disruption. The main research question is: Was the military to civilian conversion of England AFB successful; and if so, how and why? In answering this question, hopefully, the work also illuminates how success is defined and identifies some of the strategies adopted to produce a successful conversion.

Keywords: England Air Force Base, England Airpark and Community, Central Louisiana Community, Base Closure, Base Development and Reuse, Military to Civilian Conversion

Introduction

The relationships between American communities and military installations have been part of our country's history from the earliest days. Forts were established near colonial cities to protect them or along connecting trails and roads to provide safe passage for travelers and secure routes for commerce and trade. The U.S. Navy located shipyards in the East and South as much for the supply of natural resources as for the labor to build and maintain its fleet. These self-contained operations impacted settlements nearby and those that sometimes grew up around them. The most significant impact was economic, but also carried over to the personal, the environmental, and the social (Sorenson 1998:9).

These three – economic, environmental and social – have also been described as the three spheres of sustainability. They are often depicted as overlapping and their interrelatedness described as tension or conflict that requires resolution. The spheres also give rise to different sets of priorities and eventually, different perspectives or lenses through which individuals or individual interests view the world. Those who view through an economic development (growth / efficiency) lens, see a place of production, consumption, distribution and innovation that competes for markets and new industries. Those who view through an environmental (conservation / preservation / protection) lens, see the consumption of resources and production of wastes. Viewed through the social (social justice / economic opportunity / income equality) lens, the community is an arena of conflict over the distribution of resources, services and opportunities (Wheeler 1998).

Mid-to-late 20th Century Military Installations and Local Communities

World War II changed the American landscape in many ways, but one of the most permanent changes was an increase in the number of military installations from coast to coast. By the mid-to-late 20th century, bases were no longer located near or in major metropolitan areas. Rural America offered so much more room to maneuver and fly; make noise with sonic booms, artillery or bombing practice; train for survival or conduct secret operations. All these things required space and privacy. Rural America had plenty of both and provided them readily. In exchange, military installations contributed economic prosperity and became an important part of many communities nearby.

Bases are one of the most common sources of defense dollars for a state or district. As an example of what this can mean to a local area, the *England AFB 1990 Economic Resource Impact Statement* produced by the 23rd Tactical Fighter Wing Cost Analysis Branch (1991) calculated the annual impact of one single mission, 2,400-acre facility in central Louisiana at \$143,420,322. This came mostly from the salaries of military and civilian employees. An additional \$26,209,259 in direct dollars was spent locally for goods and services. When analysts calculated the overall economic impact of England AFB on this community, they used a multiplier of four (the number of times a dollar originating with England AFB “turned over” in the local economy) to emphasize the base’s significant role in the local economy and therefore, how significant the negative economic impact to the community if it were to close (England AFB Contingency Plan: 1991).

The base commander is in many ways like the mayor of a municipality. He or she presides over the installation and personnel assigned there and is also the chief administrative officer whose responsibility includes safety (fire and police), housing, utilities, food and supplies

(commissary and base exchange), educational and religious activities (schools and churches), and recreation (parks, swimming pools, bowling alleys, gyms and golf courses). The planning and design, construction and upkeep of these military assets provide lucrative contracts for professionals in the local community.

Businesses develop to meet the demand for goods and services of a base and the people who work and live there. Military installations also demonstrate to political constituencies whether or not a particular member of Congress is able to deliver “services” effectively and therefore deserves to be re-elected. Because of its widespread impact throughout a community, Sorenson (1998) suggests that military money may be the most effective way of channeling resources to districts and states.

However self-contained, military installations are not isolated from the communities nearby. Civilians are employed on base. Spouses of service members may work at area businesses, hospitals and clinics, or contract with local school boards. Many military families live off-base in the same neighborhoods as those with much deeper roots. Their children attend local schools. Military retirees often settle in communities where bases are located in order to continue drawing privileges from them following active duty. These retirees are especially valuable assets to communities as they usually have lifetime pensions and benefits, are civic-minded and engaged citizens, and if they do not begin a second career following retirement, are some of a community’s ablest volunteers.

But military installations open and close as the winds of war blow first one way, then another. Base closures are not new or recent; they followed each major war and often happened quickly and under authority of the individual branches of service. Military base closures that began in 1988 were the first in more than a decade and signaled Department of Defense

restructuring over several years to produce 25% defense budget reductions required by federal executive and legislative branches.

Communities managed these closures in numerous ways. Using the three spheres of sustainability to guide evaluation, successful military to civilian conversion may be determined based on a variety of considerations rather than one single measure, the econometric one used traditionally: jobs replacement. Within this larger framework, we can begin to know if a conversion is successful in much the same way we know what kind of a person someone is. We know, for example, that the fact of a person's height and weight or even financial worth is not sufficient in itself to determine someone's character and personality. Similarly, while we can know certain econometric facts about base closure and reuse, alone they do not produce what might be described as a successful military to civilian conversion.

Traditionally, the success of a military to civilian conversion (reuse) is calculated by comparing the number of civilian jobs at the date of base closure to the number at some date following conversion. If the number following conversion is less than the number at the date of base closure, the conversion is not generally characterized as "successful." If, however, the number is equal to or greater, the military to civilian conversion or reuse and redevelopment of the military installation is described as "successful." The literature describes a number of considerations to take into account before characterizing a military to civilian conversion as "successful" (Garcia 1996, Goren 2003, Burgess 2005, Yahn 2005, Thanner 2006). So do the individuals who may have participated in such a process, as evidenced by the interviews that were conducted as part of the research for this case study.

In reviewing case studies of military to civilian conversions and in researching the particular case of England AFB, I believe the three spheres of sustainability provide an important

evaluation framework. These spheres (economic, environmental and social) have also been described as overlapping where the area common to all three is a “sweet spot” for development and use (or redevelopment and reuse), that ideal place where growth and preservation harmonize with social justice and fairness for all. If we can determine that all three of these spheres have been addressed and that consideration has been given to the natural or inevitable conflict among them in order to achieve or at least approach the ideal, we will find, as we have with the case of the central Louisiana community and England AFB, a military to civilian conversion that we know is successful.

Background on the Economics and Politics of Base Closings

Some members of Congress believe the communities they represent depend on military installations for survival and that their political fortunes are tied to the continued operation of these installations in their districts. Such beliefs and a general distrust of decision-making to close military installations, whether by the Department of Defense or the White House, led Congress to a unique closure process that began in 1988 under the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission. The BRAC process had its origins in the 1960s when President Kennedy directed Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara to reduce the base structure. The Department of Defense controlled the entire process. McNamara’s “cost effectiveness” criteria were developed and final closure decisions made without input from either Congress or the military services (BRAC Commission Report 1995, Sorenson 1998).

Congress chafed at this exclusion which also fueled some members’ perception that certain bases were targeted to punish political enemies (Goren 2003:4). In 1965, the House Armed Services Committee amended the military construction authorization bill requiring the

Department of Defense to report any base closure programs, but President Lyndon B. Johnson vetoed the bill and closures continued through the 1960s without Congressional oversight.

In 1973, Secretary of Defense Elliot Richardson, as part of the general drawdown of forces following the Vietnam War, proposed to close or realign 274 bases, a list seen as extremely partisan by Congress. Members resisted but were unsuccessful in halting closure rounds in 1974-1975. Congress tried again to insert itself into the process when the Secretary of Defense recommended another round of closures. It passed legislation that was approved in August 1977 by President Jimmy Carter as Public Law 95.82. This law required the Department of Defense to notify Congress when a base was being considered for reduction or closure. It also mandated studies on the strategic, environmental and local economic consequences of such an action and a 60-day wait for Congress to respond. This legislation, along with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), gave Congress a lock on the process, effectively halting military base closures for over a decade.

In 1983, the President's Private Sector Survey on Cost Control, better known as the Grace Commission,¹ reported possible cost savings and recommended a nonpartisan, independent commission to study base realignment and closure. This recommendation mirrored a trend in divorcing politics from public policy problems by turning them over to independent commissions. Similarly, commissions were created to consider options for solvency when a deficit loomed large in the Social Security Fund; focus on pornography (the Meese Commission); and scrutinize postal rates (Sorenson 1998, Goren 2003). These independent

¹ In 1982, President Ronald Reagan requested an investigation into waste and inefficiency in the federal government by initiating a Private Sector Survey on Cost Control, or PSSCC, generally known as The Grace Commission. The Grace Commission Report was presented to Congress in January 1984, claiming that if its recommendations were followed, \$424 billion could be saved in three years, rising to \$1.9 trillion per year by the year 2000. The Report also said that one-third of all income taxes is consumed by waste and inefficiency in the Federal Government, and another one-third escapes collection due to the underground economy.

commissions, according to Lilly Goren (1998), are examples of evasive delegation, and Congress has produced enough of them to establish a pattern of behavior that she describes as de-distributed policy. Using dedistributed policy, Congress transfers painful decision making and avoids political risk, although it must cede power in order to do so (Goren 1998). Congress' unique creation, the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission, is an example of this policy. It managed late 20th century base closings in predictable waves – in 1988, 1991, 1993, and 1995 – and recommended closure of 330 military installations and realignment of another 173 (Sorenson 1998).²

Closing England Air Force Base (AFB) in Alexandria, Louisiana, emerged as a possibility following the first BRAC round in 1988. At the time, the 23rd Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) hosted three squadrons there, operating the Fairchild Republic A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft. The Air Force had chosen fast and sleek fighter jets like the F-15 and F-16 for its force structure, and “The Warthog,” the A-10’s nickname, did not fit the force structure. The Air Force planned initially for consolidating the various fighter wings and eventually, phasing this aircraft out of inventory.

Myrtle Beach AFB, South Carolina, also hosted an A-10 configuration. Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney nominated it for closure which required the Air Force to conduct alternative studies. England AFB in Alexandria, Louisiana and Davis-Monthan AFB in Tucson, Arizona were identified as bases of comparable size and mission, and the Air Force completed feasibility studies to determine closure impacts on these communities. The three bases, Myrtle Beach, England and Davis-Monthan, were the only Air Force bases in the continental United

² This study considers only BRAC closure rounds from 1988 – 1995. The 2005 round is not included even though it operated generally under a continuation of the BRAC process. However, there are distinct differences between it and the closure rounds from 1988 – 1995, including new enabling legislation. The 2005 closure round was the first in the 21st century and the only BRAC round to take place during war time. Ten years passed between it and those first four rounds that seemed at times to be one single set of continuous closings that occurred over an eight-year period.

States that were home to A-10 Thunderbolt II wings on active duty (Jim Leggett, “Over 2,000 attend base hearing in Arizona,” *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, May 23, 1990).

Communities’ Response to Base Closure

Following the 1988 BRAC closure round, Secretary of Defense Cheney began a second round almost immediately, but prior to revisions Congress made in late 1990. Congress’ revisions were promulgated during the 1991 BRAC closure round, and Cheney’s efforts “in between” are sometimes referred to as the 1990 closure round, although such a round never officially existed. Even with these changes and the uncertainty that accompanied them, communities were already drawing lessons from previous closures and adopted a number of defense tactics.

In those early BRAC rounds, local communities struggled to understand how best to participate in base closure processes that held such sway over their futures. The 1988 closure round operated “without much ‘sunshine,’ holding most of its meetings and deliberations behind closed doors, inaccessible to the media, the public, organized interests, and other potential advocates or interested observers” (Goren 2003:65). In the midst of this ambiguity and uncertainty, the central Louisiana community adopted an unusual dual track strategy in response to indications that England AFB was being considered for closure.

The first track, defense, was implemented by a highly visible group of mostly elected officials and concerned citizens who called itself “the A Team,” whose primary objective was to “Save the Base.” The second track, offense, was implemented by a different group, one that worked in the background to develop a contingency plan. This group eventually became known as “the B Team.” Front and center, the A Team educated and organized the local community, lobbied state officials in Baton Rouge and Louisiana’s Congressional delegation in Washington, met with representatives of the Air Force and Secretary of Defense, and developed a strong case

it presented formally to the BRAC Commission. Meanwhile, the B Team, a small group of professionals and the local Chamber of Commerce executive, researched how communities dealt previously with base closure and identified critical success factors for transition from military to civilian use.

The general public was well aware of the A Team, but knew nothing about efforts of the B Team. Each team knew about and respected the other. Both were committed to the community's survival and understood well the importance of responding wisely to the threat of such disruption. Working cooperatively during a critical and sensitive time, these teams managed both sides of this "change equation," the political and the technical. In so doing, the central Louisiana community was able to set aside its fractious tradition of infighting. It learned to act as one body, speak with one voice, and manage change in such a way that what might have been disastrous, as predicted initially by the experts and feared greatly by the community, proved an important opportunity for growth and development.

There are several case studies on communities where bases closed; there are none so far on central Louisiana and its conversion of England AFB. Many studies focus on logistics and detail closure processes and project management. They also document success or failure, using mostly quantitative measures such as jobs and revenue replacement. A few feature a particular aspect such as community involvement or intergovernmental cooperation. In some ways, these case studies are the same; however, each one is also different because each community is unique and its experiences vary. These experiences occur over time, always changing. They are subject to rules of the game, dynamic processes and procedures, and shifts in the political and economic landscape. This is a fitting analogy: one cannot step twice into the same river.

To differentiate this case from others and in support of the main issues of this thesis, I will provide background on the twin cities of Alexandria / Pineville and central Louisiana including its relationship to England AFB, and discuss why base closure was perceived as such a threat. I will identify key players and the strategies they adopted to defend against closure as well as produce a successful conversion to civilian use. I will discuss how success is generally defined and identify some of its ingredients regarding a military to civilian conversion. I will also show how these were demonstrated in the conversion of England AFB. In the process, I hope to render a larger context that illuminates policy issues of base closures and how communities respond to change.

Every case study on military base closure extends our understanding of how communities respond to change and in particular, how they respond to closing a military installation. I believe this work shows how communities can survive and grow; and in the case of central Louisiana and England AFB, how one community responded to military base closure in such a way that disruption and change resulted in transformation rather than death.

Methods

Case studies are used extensively in social science research – in traditional disciplines such as psychology, sociology, political science and economics – and in more practice-oriented fields such as urban planning, public administration, public policy and management. This is also the method used frequently in thesis and dissertation research in these areas. Case studies are preferred when the research is attempting to address questions such as the ones posed in this study and when the focus of the study is on contemporary events within a real-life context over which the investigator has little or no control. Thus, according to Yin (2003:6), “if you wanted to know how a community successfully overcame the negative impact of the closing of its largest employer – a military base you . . . might be better off doing a history or a case study.”

This thesis provides a descriptive case study and uses some of the same techniques as a conventional historical study. It also includes direct and participant observation of the events under study. The evidence for this case study comes from documents, archival records and observations. The research includes interviews with individuals who participated in the community’s response strategies, print and broadcast journalists who reported on these events and others with understanding and insight regarding the military to civilian conversion. Documents in this study have been used mostly to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources. They include memoranda and other communiqués; agendas, announcements and meeting minutes; progress reports and other internal records, all located in the archives of the England Authority’s administrative offices, and newspaper clippings from vertical files housed in the Rapides Parish Library in Alexandria, Louisiana. Archival records were also used and

include personal records, diaries and calendars. Direct and participant observations were also used as evidence in this study.

Participant observation is a special mode of observation where the investigator may assume a variety of roles within the case study situation and even participate in the events being studied. My role as participant observer includes the following: I was born in Alexandria and lived there when my fighter pilot father was stationed at England AFB on three occasions (1958-1960, 1964-1966, and 1970-1972). I lived in Alexandria as an adult from 1981-2000, was elected to its City Council (1988-1992) and served on the defense team to save England AFB. I participated in numerous meetings and discussions in Washington, D.C., central Louisiana and other locations, regarding base closure and testified in opposition before the 1991 BRAC Commission at its regional meeting in Houston, Texas. I returned to the area during development of this study (February to August 2008) for direct observations and to collect data. None of this, in my view, has compromised my ability to analyze the important ingredients in the success of this case, nor has it compromised the integrity of the research process.

I am relying heavily on Yin's (2003) advice and commentary to produce this case study.³ The central question in this study is: Was the military to civilian conversion of England AFB successful; and if so, how and why? In the process of answering this question, I hope to illuminate how success is defined as well as identify some of the strategies that communities adopt in order to produce successful military to civilian conversions.

³ Good case studies are hard to do and the skills for doing them have not been defined (Yin 2003:11). Unlike other research strategies, a comprehensive "catalog" of research designs for case studies has not yet been developed and unfortunately, case study research designs have not been codified (Yin 2003:19-20).

Literature Review

Hart (1998) suggests several mapping ideas to help organize and analyze information located in a review of the literature. The subject of base closure can be approached from a variety of disciplines: political science, economics, public administration, community development, planning and urban studies, sociology, community psychology, military history, management, and more. Research on base closure may be vast as it involves national defense, force structure, the Department of Defense and all branches of military service; the political institutions of the Congress and presidency; a unique creation of the Congress, the independent and bipartisan Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission; hundreds of local communities and even more local political subdivisions in a number of states throughout America all of which are impacted, both negatively and positively.

The literature in this review includes three books: two by Sorenson; one by Goren. The first by Sorenson (1998) provides an introduction to military base closure and an important framework with which to approach rather than be overwhelmed by the topic. Sorenson delivers the important historical backdrop and describes dynamic relationships among the players including the military services and Department of Defense, White House, Congress and its grassroots constituents, and local communities that ultimately bear responsibility for planning the conversion from military-to-civilian use. He also introduces his *learning over time* theory that posits:

If policy making is to improve, it must be assumed that lessons from the past are somehow worked into policy making for the present and the future. Both individuals and organizations struggle with process and the military in particular requires direct experience. For bureaucrats and anyone who works in 'regularized political processes,' learning over time is about personal and organizational survival and growth (Sorenson 1998:35-36).

Sorenson (1998) includes brief sketches of select military installations impacted by the various closure rounds. In this way he makes real and personal the changes taking place in local communities and coaxes additional study on a variety of issues and/or individual cases. Many of the theses, dissertations and other works of scholarship on contemporary military base closures cite Sorenson in their references.

A review by Edwin Burgess (1998) best expresses my opinion of Sorenson's work, which describes "the unbelievably complex processes and motivations that Congress, local politicians, military establishments, veterans, environmentalists, preservations, and other stakeholders went through in base closings. The analysis is not simple but should be read closely in all communities that have military facilities" (Burgess: 1998:115). In a book review published by the *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies: The Electronic Journal of the Centre for Military and Strategic Studie*, Sorenson's work is acknowledged as "an important and groundbreaking study . . . (that) makes an important contribution to our understanding of the national and localized issues concomitant with base closures" (Lackenbauer 2000/2001: Main Page). However, the author, Lackenbauer, criticizes Sorenson for superficial case studies and claims Lilly Goren (1998) did a better job describing how perceived shortcomings led to more sophisticated closure rounds.⁴ I agree with Lackenbauer's characterization of Sorenson's case studies as "superficial." In fact, they seem not to be case studies at all but brief sketches, which is how I've described them above. As to Goren (1998) producing a better job, perhaps this is a matter of personal preference. However, I believe Sorenson's *learning over time* theory is most important and addresses adequately the notion of improved (more sophisticated) closure rounds, that is, 1991 participants

⁴ In her later research, Goren (2003) does a superior job of describing the early BRAC closure rounds and distinguishing the 1988 round from each of those that occurred in 1991, 1993 and 1995.

learning from experiences and outcomes of 1988 participants; 1993 participants learning from experiences and outcomes of both 1988 and 1991 participants, and so on. Further, I believe that Sorenson's theory of learning over time is a particularly valuable contribution in understanding the impacts of base closure on all those involved in its processes as they unfolded.

Sorenson (2007) repeats a great deal of content in his second book which includes updates on the 2005 closure round and closing overseas military installations. He again features select military installations, but of particular help to researchers interested in the whole as well as the interrelatedness of the parts, are the appendices, that include: major active military bases by state, major base closures by state and year, listings of major base closures by year, civilian job impacts of the first four closure rounds, and a BRAC 2005 chronology of events.

Goren (2003) uses base closure as an example of how Congress aimed to get politics out of decision making through *evasive delegation* and *dedistributive* policymaking. Goren differentiates the 1988 BRAC closure round from the second, third and fourth rounds that followed. She explains how Congress' actions were designed to protect members from blame for difficult but necessary decisions that produce hurtful consequences, real or perceived, to certain constituencies. The BRAC Commission made decisions that Congress was unwilling or unable to make, and Goren contends that the current political landscape contributes to similar policymaking, regardless of the issue. She identifies six characteristics or obstacles to Congressional decision making, all of which were present during the closure rounds from 1988 to 1995; many of which are present today. Such obstacles not only block Congressional decision making, but also produce gridlock in state houses and local municipalities. They include: a general lack of consensus among decision makers; high partisanship within and among the houses; divided government, that is, high partisanship between the legislative and executive

branches; constraints imposed by a large deficit; turf protection; and the culture of blame avoidance (Goren 2003:3).

Goren's analysis of the political landscape also helps in understanding how the "NIMBY" (Not In My Back Yard) syndrome was more or less inverted in terms of base closure. Members of Congress demanded the defense budget reductions, knew that pain would result and that it was necessary for everyone to endure it. Enduring the pain leads to a forced consensus among parties that would otherwise disagree (Goren 2003: 5). Based on the foregoing analysis, Goren believes it is no accident that BRAC closure recommendations in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995 were not overturned by the President of the United States or Congress.

In their Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report for Congress, Lockwood and Siehl (2004) summarize legislative efforts to break the deadlock of military base closures and highlight Public Law 100-526, enacted October 24, 1988, authorizing the first BRAC Commission. Public Law 101-510, enacted November 5, 1990 provided new authority for additional base closure recommendations in 1991, 1993 and 1995. The procedures provided by the 1990 law were substantially more complicated than those of its predecessor and included Congress' revisions that specified criteria for decision making, provision for public input and composition of staff. Of special note for this case study, the report details actions taken by Louisiana's U.S. Senators to help support the central Louisiana community's objective of receiving all military assets at England AFB upon closure.

The Senate 1992 Defense Authorization bill, S. 1507, contained several provisions that would have facilitated transfers of real property at closing bases to local communities. These provisions were contained in the Johnston-Breaux amendment, which the Senate had adopted after its introduction on the floor. The amendment would have made two major changes in existing law: (1) it would have provided that if a community near a closed base was significantly harmed, local governments would have first priority in obtaining excess property located there, although for the past forty years other federal agencies have been given this priority by statute; (2) it would have provided that these

recipients would be offered the property at no cost, although in the past such transfers have generally been made on a reimbursable basis (Lockwood and Siehl 2004:9).

These provisions were removed in conference, but the central Louisiana community was convinced that the Johnston-Breaux amendment advanced its interests and better positioned it to receive the military assets at England AFB (Jim Leggett, “Base property plan advanced,” *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, September 27, 1991).

The military services did not automatically transfer their assets to a community when a base closed.

There was a long line of agencies in front of us and we needed to change that. From the very beginning we insisted on getting those military assets. We were not having great success at the time, and I remember (U.S. Senators) Johnson and Breaux and (U.S. Representative) Clyde Holloway were all willing to put everything on the line for us (Garland R. Lawrence, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, July 8, 2008).

There was never any question that the BRAC Commission’s final decisions would be very unpopular among the affected communities. The closure process worked because: legislative consensus and public support favored eliminating excess military installations; the BRAC Commission provided political cover for members of Congress whose districts would suffer economic harm; decision-making employed rational criteria; no one branch of government or federal agency held excessive influence in the process; and the BRAC Commission’s authority was limited, narrow and specific (Koven 1992, Sorenson 1998, Mayer 1995).

The base closure process has been through several iterations or “rounds” with remarkable results (Mayer 1995:393-394). The first four BRAC Commissions (1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995) generated 499 military installation recommendations that included 97 major base closures.

Thanner (2006:57) described the military landscape in the United States as having been changed forever when the fourth BRAC round ended in 1995. Her case study on Fort Ritchie Army Garrison and Cascade, Maryland reveals how circumstances prevented successful reuse of

this military installation and describes a community that has yet to benefit. Hers is a disheartening work that brings up for consideration Mills' "power elite" model as well as an understanding of closure impacts that are not just economic but social and psychological. In her review, Thanner found that "the literature on military base closures consists only of government and econometric reports assessing financial impacts of a base on an area and then estimates of impacts when a base closes" (Thanner 2006:147). She concludes that while "the decisions as to which bases close are argued and decided in Washington, those in the hinterlands feel their consequences most heavily" (Thanner 2006:166). Thanner's research also raises serious concerns about whether the Department of Defense, and in the case of Ritchie, the U.S. Army, "did not provide the guidance it should have and did not take a strong enough stand when it was clear that actions of the leadership of the local recovery authority appeared contradictory to what was in the best interest of the community (Thanner 2006:179)."

In its report, *Military Bases: Reuse Plans for Selected Bases Closed in 1988 and 1991*, the U.S. GAO (1994) reflected property disposal plans at thirty seven of the 120 installations closed by the 1988 and 1990 legislation including England AFB. It also reported revenues as far less than anticipated and revised estimates from the Department of Defense because so much of the property would be retained or transferred to other federal agencies, states and localities at no cost. The appendices of this GAO report were especially helpful in comparing and contrasting those military installations closed in 1988 and 1991 BRAC closure rounds with regard to planned property disposals; planned property disposals to homeless assistance providers; and cash grants given to facilitate reuse plans.

Publications from the Association of Defense Communities (ADC), formerly the National Association of Installation Developers (NAID), are also part of this literature review.

This organization supports communities with active, closed and closing defense installations. Its 1,200 members and 150 member companies include representatives from local communities, the private sector and the military services. ADC's *September 2007 State of Base Redevelopment Report* was especially helpful in analyzing successful conversions from the 1991 BRAC closure round. In its long term project to track and report the success and challenges of base redevelopment projects around the country, the 2007 ADC report summarizes the process from the perspective of communities involved in five closure rounds to date (1988, 1991, 1993, 1995 and 2005) and reports that eleven of the 24 legacy communities, (those in the first four closure rounds) have fully replaced the civilian job losses associated with their closures and six have created more jobs than the combined losses of military and civilian positions. It also reports on a number of legacy communities where job replacement has not equaled the number of jobs lost and where work is hindered by environmental contamination.

Communities' Response to Base Closure Announcements

Local communities anticipate disruption when a military base leaves the area and they respond to the disruption in a variety of ways, both positive and negative. However, at least one scholar believes research on the effects on local communities is scant compared to similar events such as plant (factory) and mine closings and is limited because it focuses primarily on econometrics (job and revenue replacement).

Meredith Hill Thanner (2006) believes:

When a military base leaves an area, especially one that has served as a major community employer, disruptions within the community, particularly to societal institutions (social, economic, political) and interpersonal relationships (familial, social), are anticipated . . . and the nature and extent of these disruptions and responses have not been examined in the literature (Thanner 2006:16).

Military base closure announcements stimulate an industry of cataclysmic prognostications that are not always supported by good research, but designed as political arguments to “save the base” or justify compensation to the local community in the event of closure. While these announcements generate predictions of dire consequence, they also motivate and inspire communities to rise to the challenge by forming new alliances and strengthening their own organizational capabilities (Bradshaw 1999).

The predominant public perception is that a military installation brings economic advantages to the community in which it is located – civilian jobs, tax revenue and increased personal and household incomes; a more robust real estate / housing market; new dollars in the local economy spent by military personnel and their families; and on-base services for veterans and retirees in the region including health care, recreation, base exchange and commissary privileges. The threat of losing what is perceived as vital to the community activates political leaders as well as a concerned public to prevent base closure (Thanner 2006:23). Even with analysts’ strong arguments that former military bases can be redeveloped, communities remain skeptical and political opposition to base closures remains virulent (Hill 1998).

Base closures are not necessarily catastrophic. A growing body of research literature shows that in both the short and longer term reuse and development of these assets can provide an unprecedented opportunity for economic development and public benefit. It also shows that the results are not positive for every community, conversion is not always easy nor does it always happen quickly, and in some places, closure leads to particularly severe problems (Bradshaw 1999).

The Politics of Base Closure

Independent commissions are created to develop non-partisan common sense recommendations on complex policy issues and to find acceptable solutions to contentious and difficult problems, especially during periods of gridlock. Commissions also provide expertise that Congress may not have and reduce the workload of its members; and, commissions may become a convenient scapegoat and deflect blame from an electorate that would otherwise target the executive or legislative branch of government (Schwalbe 2003).

In creating the BRAC Commission, Congress was satisfied on two basic points: first, that the base closing process was not arbitrary and jurisdiction was specific and narrow; and, second, that legislators had insulated themselves from BRAC Commission actions thereby reducing their individual political risk (Mayer 1995:393-394).

Even so, scholars maintain that the two – administration and politics – are inextricably linked and, as an example, say that although there may not be a Republican way to build a road, there is certainly a Republican way to decide whether the road is needed, a Republican way to choose the road's location, a Republican way to relocate those living in the road's path, and a Republican way to award contracts (Koven 1992:526). Congress insisted on being included in the military base closure process even if only at arms length and through this independent commission. Its institutional memory recalled that, as far back as 1961, the Department of Defense "had lied . . . withheld information . . . stonewalled when members asked for data . . . failed to give adequate notification, and even resorted to overtly political closure decisions" (Mayer 1995:398). Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney proposed 55 bases for closure or partial closure through reductions (realignments) in 1991. Democrats noted that of the 35 bases he proposed to close completely, 83% were in Democratic districts; and, of those identified for

realignment, 99% of civilian job losses were in Democratic districts while 87% of civilian job gains were in Republican districts (Mayer 1995:399).

Congress reestablished and reauthorized the BRAC Commission in 1990, correcting what it perceived as flaws in the 1988 closure process. It implemented procedural controls requiring the BRAC Commission to justify its decision using recognizable and unambiguous standards and required that all relevant data be disclosed. It also placed a second set of controls on BRAC Commission staff, limiting the number of staff from the Department of Defense, a move designed to minimize this agency's political influence. While it defined the Commission's decision making to a narrow policy area, it also gave it authority to add or remove installations to the list of bases submitted by the services for possible closure – a sort of check against the military services withholding bases from the list.

Even so with these steps to de-politicize the process, Hansen and Krejci claim that:

Attempts to separate politics from administration are designed to stop collective irrationality by politicians. But these rule changes often have the unintended consequences of restructuring the behavior of certain actors and increasing the access of others. Rather than removing politics from administration, the changes in the rules determine who is allowed to play in the game, and often who wins or loses. The base closure process is one such instance in which these elements can be observed (Hansen & Krejci 2000:170).

They use three examples – Meridian, Mississippi; Lubbock, Texas; and Jacksonville, Florida – to illustrate their point.

Meridian, Mississippi was on both the 1991 and 1993 closure lists and survived. It held huge public rallies where attendance topped 10,000, but it also had two members of Congress advocating aggressively to prevent closure of this military installation: Representative Sonny Montgomery, third in seniority on the House Armed Services Committee, and Jamie Whitten, chairman of the powerful House Appropriations Committee. In contrast, the community of

Lubbock, Texas produced a public demonstration of similar size, but its Congressional advocates, Representative Larry Combest and Senators Phil Gramm and Kay Bailey Hutchison, did not hold seats on such influential committees and besides, were stretched thin because of so many military installations located in that state. Hansen & Krejci also suggest that image may have something to do with a community's successful defense against closure and in the case of Lubbock, where leaders failed to address and correct outsiders' perception of it as an unenlightened cultural backwater, image may have contributed to the final decision to close Reese AFB in 1991.

Compared to Lubbock, Jacksonville, Florida is different in many ways, but it also lost a base to BRAC in spite of a strong closure defense. The Naval Air Station (NAS) at Jacksonville (Jax) was on the Navy's closure list in 1988 and 1991, but was removed from the final list both times. One reason for this may be that the Navy's criteria for closure are more subjective than the other branches. Another is a well placed Congressional advocate: Representative Charlie Bennett, second in seniority, served on the House Armed Services Committee until 1992. In 1995, when its closure was considered guaranteed, NAS Jax received a last minute reprieve, by all accounts the result of leaning heavily on its close relationship with the Navy and particularly, the base commander. NAS Jax was not closed; however, NAS Cecil Field, also located in Jacksonville, may have been sacrificed in its stead (Hansen & Krejci 2000:176).

Robert Derring (1996) produced a host of anecdotal evidence to show that the armed services engineered the decision process to make political choices appear nonpolitical. A statistical analysis confirmed the central hypothesis of his dissertation, "The politics of military base closures, 1988-1995," and showed that House Armed Services Committee members' voting

records made a meaningful difference in four BRAC Commission decisions: doves were several times more likely to lose military installations in their districts than hawks.

In his IUSB Faculty Research Grant Final Report, Parker (2006) summarizes research conducted to evaluate whether political factors explain or override decisions to realign and close military bases between 1991 and 2005. Parker found that politics does matter, but not in the way congressional scholars anticipated.

The key expectation of congressional scholars, that partisan majorities can develop structures producing favorable outcomes, is not demonstrated. In fact, bases with two senators in the majority party are more likely to face closure – the opposite of what the delegation literature suggests. We contended that public administration scholars provide a better general explanation of the base closing process with one exception: the more conservative a district, the less likely commissioners recommend a base in that district for closing (Parker 2005:1).

Successful Closure (Recovery)

In earlier periods of base closings, “success” had a simple definition – number of civilian jobs on base at the time of closing compared to number of jobs within the same geography at some later date. This measure focused exclusively on the land and infrastructure that was formerly the military base (Glassberg 1995).

In its long term project to track and report the successes and challenges of base redevelopment projects around the country, the Association of Defense Communities (ADC) regularly summarizes the progress of local communities involved in military-to-civilian conversion using these indicators:

- Job loss and extent of replacement jobs
- Closure dates
- Local redevelopment authority organization including budget, staff and funding sources
- Activities of federal, state and local screening and anticipated amount of surplus acreage

- Anticipated economic impact of the closure
- Base environmental conditions

Job loss and replacement is the only measure used to determine “recovery” in the final summary of this September 2007 report, but there has been a gradual recognition that this measure alone fails to capture the reality of conversion and that “success” involves more. As important or more so is a broadly defined impact on the local community – which may desire to forego using facilities for jobs creation and use them instead for another purpose (Glassberg 1995).

Garcia (1996) considers Webster’s definition of success⁵ in her case study of Gentile Air Force Station (AFS) in Kettering, Ohio. She proposes that a successful reuse project would be a project that meets the desired outcome (of the local community) and notes how communities affected by base closure react differently depending on the circumstances (Garcia 1996:56).

Garcia interviewed three mayors where bases closed, including Alexandria’s Mayor Randolph, asking what each believed to be successful reuse. Two mayors defined successful reuse with the traditional jobs replacement measure. One said jobs replacement was only one factor for consideration; successful reuse was the complete integration of the installation into the community (Garcia 1996:56).

The U.S. General Accounting Office (now the Government Accountability Office) Report No. 95-139 includes jobs replacement in its list of successful reuse efforts and extends the list to include certain kinds of conversion that “are yielding successful results. Military airfields are being converted to civilian airports. New educational institutions are being established in former military facilities and wildlife habitats are being created” (US GAO 1995:1). These descriptions also seem to support a broader definition of what is considered successful.

⁵ The Webster’s Third New International Dictionary defines successful as “resulting or terminating in success: having the desired effect” (Garcia 1996:55).

Sorenson claims the most significant impact a military base has on civilian society is economic, but “it also carries over to the personal, the environmental and the social” (Sorenson 1998:9). He provides studies from the 1991, 1993 and 1995 closure rounds (England AFB was not included) and recounts how geography, community, base infrastructure and use, politics and players all counted in successful recovery from base closure. Projects can also be evaluated in terms of the pace of development and whether social goals were attained (Hill 1998).

Webster examined bases closed since 1988 and focuses on geographic patterns, statistical attributes, environmental restoration and reuse. His comparative case studies highlight rural versus urban location and success versus failure where measures of success are jobs creation, politics, conflict and local versus national goals. Regarding the pace of development, his findings suggest that over time the base closure processes are becoming more efficient (Webster 2004).

Producing Successful Military to Civilian Conversions

Successful reuse and development of a closed military installation requires two key elements: the first is to listen to the site, the market and the community; the second is to create a flexible development plan. Development plans also need to be realistic. Community involvement is both the start and end point of this process (Burgess 2005; Thomas, Spillane and Kaye 1999:51-52). Community involvement has been defined as “a process in which individuals take part in decision making in the institutions, programs and environments that affect them” (Floris & Wandersman 1990:43).

In the case of a military base closing, the local community is affected by decisions made by those in the higher power elite circles as well as by decisions of local power brokers. This “power elite” model, attributed to C. Wright Mills, argues that power resides in the political, the economic, and the military domains of American society, and that those in power shape and

make decisions that have consequences on ordinary people. The power these public decision makers have in shaping the closure and conversion process, including whether or not to provide opportunities for public participation and to what level and degree, can impact the community response and thus, its long-term viability (Thanner 2006).⁶

Successful base reuse planning begins before closure. Communities with strong leadership and organizational capacity minimize the panic sometimes associated with base closure and also position it for a stronger response. Base closure generally places extraordinary demands on local governments, community organizations and economic development programs; however, it also stimulates and strengthens a community's organizational capacity and its ability to work collaboratively and in innovative ways (Bradshaw 1999).

In his article, "Surviving BRAC – Communities point the way to successful transformation," Richard Burgess tells how the Naval Training Center (NTC) in Orlando, Florida, was closed, but economic devastation that many feared never materialized. This former navy base is now Baldwin Park – home to 3,000 residential units, 350,000 square feet of retail space and one million square feet of office space along with parks, lakes and wetlands.

The difference between success and failure in attracting new businesses and creating communities on the site of former military facilities lies in the foresight and willingness of local interest groups to compromise. The communities destined for success are those able to create a plan for the future and develop a political network to support it" (Burgess 2005:53).

⁶ It should be noted that when central Louisiana civic leaders adopted their high profile strategy to communicate significant negative economic impacts of base closure, they focused and engaged public attention. Their dire projections and the unfamiliar base closure processes were news that was often repeated and amplified by area media. The more the public learned about the issue, the more concerned it became; and, political leaders active in the unfolding of events encouraged high levels of community involvement and participation to shore up their closure defense. In a relatively short time, community involvement and participation became normative behavior – or at least a very real expectation – that transferred easily from the issue of closure to that of conversion. This is addressed in the *Community Involvement* section of this thesis.

Another key to successful transition is largely predetermined – bases within a single jurisdiction, typically a city, generally experience smoother transitions. Multiple jurisdictions may become competing jurisdictions bringing conflict and delay. The Marine Air Station at El Toro in southern California, for example, was fought over by Orange County and the City of Irvine, both of which formed their own local recovery authorities – Orange County favoring reuse as an international airport; Irvine officials preferring a mixed-use plan that included open space for a park and recreational use. The battle was not settled until 2002, when voter referendum zoned the base for non-aviation use, finally clearing the way for development (Burgess 2005: 54).

Base closure presents an opportunity to each “class,” the group of communities involved in a particular closure round, to learn lessons from the one before, both in fighting closure selections and in managing conversion to civilian use. Base closure policy includes the notion of “lesson-drawing” over time – how policy makers learn and adjust from past experiences (Sorenson 1998).

Community Involvement

Local communities affected by the 1988 and 1991 closure decisions operated in an environment very different from that of previous base closings which occurred in the 1970’s (Lauzon 1999). Following these early rounds, communities were left to their own devices to engage the public in planning for reuse. It was not until passage of the Base Closure Community Redevelopment and Homeless Assistance Act of 1994 that a community-based reuse planning process was formalized and initiated upon final selection of a military installation for closure or realignment (Office of Economic Adjustment 1995).

Military base closure and conversion processes produce significant opportunities for citizen involvement and there is enormous demand by citizens to be involved (Yahn 2005:2). If communities are able to understand the impacts of base closure, not just economically, but socially and psychologically as well, then they can help themselves transition from a military to a civilian community (Thanner 2006:64). The single most important factor is early community involvement (Murphy 1993). Community involvement in the “overall process of the base closure phase is not well documented. However, more has been written about the reuse phase through small case studies” (Yahn 2005:42).

There are various kinds and types of community involvement as well as levels or degrees of participation. Sherry Arnstein (1969) uses the analogy of a ladder to describe citizen participation where rungs represent the level or degree from lowest to highest and include: manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power and citizen control. *Manipulation* and *therapy* are non-participation levels. *Informing* and *consulting* are participation levels where citizens hear and are heard. In the case of Fort Ritchie Army Garrison, examples of these levels are provided by local residents who responded to the closure announcement: “Some residents immediately took an active stance to fight the closure list, whereas others seemed immediately resigned to the fact that Ritchie would close and they could not do anything (and thus did not do anything) about it” (Thanner 2006:88). *Placation* is the level where “have not” citizens advise but do not decide. Public hearings held by the BRAC Commission provide the arena in which examples of this participation level occur. There, local officials and concerned citizens testify on the impacts of base closure. They may provide studies and analyses, complex computer models, general advice and counsel – all in support of saving their base. But only the Commission decides whether or not bases close. *Partnership* enables

“have not” citizens to negotiate and trade. With *delegated power* and *citizen control*, “have not” citizens obtain the majority of decision-making seats (Arnstein 1969:217). These highest rungs on the ladder may provide the greatest opportunity for successful and innovative military to civilian conversion.

In her 2005 dissertation, Nancy Stiles Yahn examined community involvement in major U.S. military base closures and realignments from 1988 to 2001. She sent questionnaires to 107 closed bases. Fifty one local redevelopment representatives responded. Based on these responses, she found that community satisfaction depended on the type and amount of community involvement. She identified a number of community elements (task forces, short conferences, public hearings, town meetings, public information programs and other) as opportunities for community participation, then measured how many, how much and how often. Yahn’s work suggests a positive correlation where the higher the score as relates to community elements, the higher the level of satisfaction within the community (Yahn 2005:103).

England AFB was one of fifty one respondents participating in Yahn’s study. Its scores show high overall rankings in the categories of public participation and community involvement as well as overall community satisfaction. In one category, England AFB provided the highest number of community elements (public hearings, community and small group meetings, newsletters, bulletins, task forces and other) for public participation and, when compared to other communities in the study, also received the highest possible score for community satisfaction. Yahn’s research showed the central Louisiana community scoring in the top ten for community involvement and producing one of four highest possible community satisfaction scores in that category (Yahn 2005, Appendix B: 154-178). Yahn’s work reveals a certain continuity regarding

citizen involvement as well as an important relationship between citizen involvement and overall community satisfaction with the base reuse and redevelopment process.

Citizen involvement in military base closings was evident in both the closure and the reuse phase. Citizens fought to keep the bases open. Once it was clear that the base would be closed and reused, citizens became interested in the new development coming to their community and wanted to take part in its establishment (Yahn 2005:54).

The Dual Track Strategy

Conventional wisdom has it that local communities confronted by the possibility of military base closure engage in a dual track strategy, simultaneously fighting hard against base closure to preserve economic and other benefits a military installation provides; while panning for conversion if they lose their fight to “save the base.” While the case of England AFB supports this conventional wisdom, the data do not bear this out (Hansen 2003:323).

Hansen’s study provides a statistical analysis of discursive behavior in local military base redevelopment efforts. He sent questionnaires to 115 cases (military installations targeted in four rounds – 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995 – by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission). He received forty four (38%) usable responses (not identified individually) that were provided by local recovery directors or other community representatives. These findings show:

- Only about a third of the communities targeted for closure or realignment organized rallies during BRAC visits or during the time closure lists were being developed.
- Of communities that did organize public demonstrations, only a small percentage of the population participated.
- About 40% of the communities invested in base retention activities such as hiring a lobbyist or consultant to help prepare and/or plead their case to the services, elected officials and BRAC Commission.

- Only a third of the respondents indicated that conversion plans were discussed prior to the closure decision. As to the number of individuals involved in conversion plans, this was generally reported to be a very small number (Hansen 2003:324-325).

Hansen reported what he calls the “good news / bad news” of local administrative discourse which he defines as high level discussion about what to do next and how to do it (Hansen 2003:316). The good news is that during military to civilian conversions, local administrative discourse included strong efforts to include the public. The bad news is that decision makers generally were not chosen by the public and that top-down rather than bottom-up rules and procedures prevailed (Hansen 2003).

Local Government Capacity and Intergovernmental Cooperation

Base conversion is as much a political as it is a technical problem. In her 1998 dissertation, Catherine Hill examined the political economy of the redevelopment process to determine why some projects are successful. Her work includes case studies of four former U.S. Navy facilities that closed in 1974, years before Congress created the BRAC Commission, and evaluates these projects in terms of jobs creation, housing, taxes, public amenities, the pace of development and whether or not social goals were attained. Hill examined local government capacity, intergovernmental cooperation, private sector involvement and investment, federal cooperation and investment, site conditions and real estate markets over a 24-year period. One of her findings is surprising: local governmental capacity rather than citizen participation proved to be the key factor for the incorporation of social goals; and, intergovernmental cooperation, expected as a prerequisite for successful reuse, did not prove to be important in the cases she studied.

Hill’s findings may be a result of the times. The bases she studied were closed in the 1970s. Since then, there have been numerous and dramatic changes in the economic climate and

in the guidelines for how bases are redeveloped for civilian use. Although data is available on the success or failure of redevelopment efforts in communities where bases closed in the 1960s and 1970s, the passing of time seems to have made these “lessons learned” less important (Cliatt & Stanley 1994).

Summary of Literature Review

Communities react in a variety of ways to the threat of base closure because of the predominant perception that a military installation brings economic advantages. Although there are often predictions of dire economic consequences, communities also rise to the challenge by strengthening their organizational capability and increasing overall capacity for growth and development (Bradshaw 1999). Successful military to civilian conversions have been determined traditionally by a single measure where the number of jobs at some reasonable time following closure is equal to or greater than the number of (civilian only or civilian and military) jobs at the military installation at the time of closure. Sorenson (1998) suggests a comprehensive framework – economic, social and environmental – within which to consider additional success indicators. Thanner (2006) concludes that local communities most feel the consequences of Washington’s decisions to close military installations and if communities understand the social and psychological impacts, as well as the economic impacts of base closure, then they can better help themselves transition from a military to a civilian conversion. Military installation reuse and redevelopment require numerous and complex processes that demand technical and political expertise. Burgess (2005) predicts communities that are able to create a plan for the future and develop a political network to support it are destined for success. The quality and pace of redevelopment as well as the community’s social goals should be taken into account when determining if a conversion is successful (Hill 1998). Military base closure and conversion

processes present significant opportunities for citizen involvement. Murphy (1993) states that the single most important factor regarding successful conversion is early community involvement. Yahn (2005) suggests that community involvement may have a positive correlation to overall community satisfaction. Lessons communities learn from one another and over time help produce successful military to civilian conversions (Sorenson 1998, Goren 2003).

Military Base Closure: The Case of England Air Force Base

The Place

The City of Alexandria is located in Rapides Parish (County), Louisiana. The parish took its name from the rapids located on the river hundreds of years ago when an outpost, *Post du Rapides*, was located there. More recently, the City and surrounding area has been called “the crossroads” because it is located at the intersection of an “x” of old highways running northwest-southeast from Shreveport to New Orleans and northeast-southwest from Monroe to Lake Charles; “the heart,” because it’s in the middle of the state; or “Cenla,” short for central Louisiana.

In 1986, Alexandria elected a reform mayor, Edward G. “Ned” Randolph, who, with support from a reform-minded majority on the City Council, worked to stabilize finances and return some degree of respectability to City Hall. The administration of former mayor John K. Snyder had left the City in dire straits financially. Records went ill-kept or missing altogether. A city payroll was funded at the last minute by an emergency state loan. Some of the former mayor’s peculiar antics grabbed national headlines, especially his widely reported and failed initiative of stocking the municipal swimming pool with catfish.

Voters turned Snyder out of office and elected Randolph, a native son, Princeton graduate, attorney at law and former legislator. In the third year of Randolph’s first term as mayor, when things were beginning to stabilize and the city’s future seemed most promising, Alexandria learned that the Air Force was studying small, single mission Tactical Air Command (TAC) bases like England AFB for possible closure.

In the early 1990s, Alexandria's population was about 50,000 and its twin, the smaller City of Pineville, reported a population of about 15,000. Pineville is located to the northeast of Alexandria on the opposite side of the Red River. As metropolitan center to a mostly rural region, Alexandria provides retail shopping and health care services to a larger population of about 130,000 in a region of central Louisiana that extends out in a radius of about 50 miles.

The city and region's longstanding relationship to the military not only includes its outpost founding, but its destruction during the Civil War when a retreating Union Army burned it to the ground. Both World Wars I and II brought construction to the area. Prior to World War II, massive training maneuvers were held there, and during that time, the federal government operated four major infantry camps and two airfields. When these closed, Alexandria's economy declined. The community remembered and believed strongly in the direct relationship between the military's presence in the area and prosperity (Grafton & Funderburk 1993).

The Base

England AFB was conceived originally as Alexandria Municipal Airport. In 1939, city officials saw the need for a modern municipal airport to handle commercial air traffic and began a site search. They settled on McNutt Plantation plus parts of two other plantations that together comprised a total of 1,339 acres. Work on the airport began in May 1942 and was completed about a year later.

To support military efforts during World War II, the City of Alexandria leased the airport to the Army Air Corps for one dollar a year for the duration of the war plus six months. So it was that the Alexandria Municipal Airport became Alexandria Army Air Base in October 1942, which the Corps activated on February 12, 1943. Until the end of the war, Alexandria Army Air

Base was the training base for B-17 pilots and later, B-29 combat crews. After the war ended, the base was returned to the City and began civilian operations including commercial airline service.

At the beginning of the Korean War in 1950, the base was reactivated as Alexandria AFB and assigned to the Tactical Air Command (TAC) to train fighter units. When the Air Force decided to build a permanent air base in Alexandria in 1954, the City donated the bulk of the acreage, located about five miles west of downtown.

In June 1955, the base's name changed to England AFB to honor Lt. Col. John B. England, former commander of the 389th Fighter Bomber Squadron and celebrated pilot whose record during the Korean War and World War II as a P-51 ace shows 108 missions and 19 aerial victories. When the base reopened in 1950, the primary aircraft was the F-84, but other aircraft assigned over the years included the F-80, T-33, F-86, F-100 and A-7.

The Times Past and Present

In 1947, the military services became unified under a Secretary of Defense and were bound by law to a new process. Following closure of any military installation, the assets were transferred to a War Assets Administration which determined their final disposition in accordance with a set of rules and priorities: first, to other government agencies – federal or state, then to veterans groups, and finally to non-profit organizations.

Particularly in the days following the great military expansions of World War II and the Korean War, many bases were acquired by universities and local communities which helped solve housing shortages where they were located. These bases were temporary or had not been in place for very long, so when they closed, communities did not feel great disruptions or suffer serious economic setbacks (Goren 2003).

By 1988, members of Congress as well as the general public were well aware of certain examples of military spending that was not essential to national security. These examples included Fort Douglas, an army post established in 1862 to protect Pony Express mail routes which sat in the middle of the University of Utah campus; and on Lake Michigan north of Chicago, Fort Sheridan, whose reputation was one of the best military golf courses in the United States (Mayer 1995:396).

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC)

The times were finally ripe for Congressional action on earlier recommendations of the Grace Commission to create an independent commission. Public Law 100-526 was enacted, providing a non-permanent, independent and bipartisan Commission with a powerful hammer that required Congress to accept or reject *all* its recommendations. Supported by President George H.W. Bush, Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci chartered the first BRAC Commission in May 1988, which issued a report recommending closure of 86 installations, partial closure of five, and realignment of 54 others.

The 1988 BRAC Commission was composed of twelve volunteer members who evaluated and deliberated behind closed doors. Commissioners were asked to engage the best process for identifying bases to be closed or realigned. The BRAC Commission report to Congress stated that realignment and closure recommendations were based on “cost saving factors with the preeminent factor listed as ‘military value of a base’” (Pentagon 1988, 1988 BRAC Report). The report never defined or gave any explanation of what was meant by “military value of a base.”

There was relatively little public involvement in the 1988 BRAC Commission. Witnesses were technical experts, not local elected officials, community leaders or even military and

civilian staff employed at the bases under consideration. The 1988 Commission made 44 base site visits and attempts to persuade Commissioners to reconsider were unsuccessful. In the end, the 1988 Commission targeted 16 bases for closure and fortunately for President Bush, the 1988 BRAC closure list appeared in December 1988, a month after he defeated Michael Dukakis (Sorenson 1998:96).

It took considerable political struggle to finally complete the closure round in 1988. Congress was dissatisfied as the BRAC Commission's professional staff was comprised mostly of Department of Defense officials; there was no provision for public input; meetings were secret; and information obtained to help determine individual closures was unavailable for review by members of Congress.

In April 1989, the Bush administration submitted a defense budget then revised it downward by \$167 billion in January 1990 (Sorenson 1998:95). In response, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney released an early closure announcement prior to Congress' 1990 legislation that revised closure processes and re-established the 1991 BRAC Commission. Push and pull between the Department of Defense and Congress continued just as the closure process continued. Secretary Cheney produced his list of recommendations for closure and although England AFB was not on Cheney's list, it was identified by the Air Force, along with Davis-Monthan AFB, for "alternative studies." The listing required that a special panel hear testimony from local communities on why the bases that had been identified (England and David-Monthan) should not be closed.

England AFB and others that eventually landed on the 1991 closure list were caught in currents of change that ran between the 1988 and 1991 commissions. When Congress reenacted BRAC Commission legislation in 1990, it made revisions as a result of its dissatisfaction with

the 1988 commission. It also implemented procedural controls that required the commission to justify decisions using recognizable and unambiguous standards and to disclose data supporting its decisions. A second set of controls was designed to minimize political influence, especially that of the Department of Defense, and set strict boundaries by establishing explicit criteria on justification. These criteria limited BRAC Commission decision-making to a narrow policy area. It had no authority to make decisions about broader military policy, defense spending or force levels. However, Congress also gave the BRAC Commission authority to add or remove installations to the list of bases submitted by the military services for possible closure as a sort of check against the military services withholding bases from the list.

While there was no doubt that final BRAC Commission decisions would be very unpopular, members of Congress were satisfied that they would be protected from blame by voters. They had designed a legitimate and fair process, and could join shoulder-to-shoulder with constituents, acting as advocates in appeals to save a base, and later, as allies to help secure resources for its successful reuse. Quoting *Roll Call*, Mayer (1995:408) emphasizes the success of this political cover as, “not one of the four incumbent Senators or 43 House Members who lost re-election in 1992 did so because the 1991-1992 round of base closings.”

Response to the Threat of Closure

In May 1990, citizens in Alexandria, Louisiana and Tucson, Arizona showed up for public hearings hundreds of miles apart for “alternative studies” conducted by the Air Force. According to an article from the May 25, 1990 issue of the local newspaper, the *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, over 2,000 attended the base hearing in Arizona where the crowd heard Republican Sen. John McCain reiterate the importance of Davis-Monthan’s role in Tucson and southern Arizona. At the Alexandria hearing, the fire marshal allowed only 1,500 people inside the convention hall.

Outside in the lobby and filling the streets around City Hall, the actual crowd swelled to 5,759, according to an official count of those who signed cards and petitions. Louisiana's Republican Governor Buddy Roemer told the Air Force panel he was committed to whatever it takes to keep England AFB open. He stressed the important relationship of England AFB to U.S. Army Fort Polk in nearby Leesville, and promised to four-lane the highway connecting them. Other speakers stressed military history and strong community ties. Almost everyone who spoke addressed the economic importance of England AFB to central Louisiana and the devastation base closure would cause. This packed convention hall meeting lasted over 5 hours (Jim Leggett, "Hearing today" and "Over 2,000 attend base hearing in Arizona," *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, May 23, 1990).

"We knew how serious it was when they held that hearing at City Hall" (Jon W. Grafton, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, July 8, 2008). Grafton was Alexandria's City Clerk at the time of the hearing. He worked with Air Force representatives to help make meeting arrangements and also provided them with information about the community. Grafton described his recollections of the community's initial response to the threat of base closure.

I guess the first word that comes to mind is 'shock.' Everybody wanted to do something. The City took the lead in organizing the reaction. This was a completely new experience for us and we weren't sure how to do it. This was a real threat to the future of the community – the Air Force came to town and held a public hearing – and it was a real threat all the way down to the guy who ran the gas station" (Jon W. Grafton, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, July 8, 2008).

Not long after the May public hearing, a 16-member central Louisiana delegation of civic and business leaders traveled to Washington to lobby on behalf of England AFB. They leveraged personal and professional contacts to get appointments with Pentagon officials and members of Congress. They insisted on a meeting with Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, which actually took place at the Pentagon on August 2, 1990, the day Iraq invaded Kuwait. Even so, when

officials returned to central Louisiana, they predicted a new “hit list” might include England AFB. “England is a target,” State Senator William J. “Joe” McPherson said bluntly, “and if further budget cuts are ordered, England will get a close look” (Jim Leggett, “EAFB fate still uncertain,” *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, August 4, 1991).

Alexandria Mayor Randolph said the whole question of base closure would be in the political arena, and that the Alexandria lobbying group’s trip made Louisiana’s Congressional delegation “very sensitive” to the plight of England AFB. He went on to explain England AFB was “in the loop with the wrong iron” which he said was lingo for the fact that England AFB was studied as an alternative to closure of Myrtle AFB, putting it ‘in the loop;’ and, the Air Force is phasing out A-10 Thunderbolt II jets from its inventory, meaning England AFB has ‘the wrong iron’ (Jim Leggett, “In the loop with the wrong iron,” *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, August 5, 1990). Those who traveled to Washington did not hold out much hope that England could avoid being placed on a closure “hit list,” if not this time, in one of the upcoming rounds. Frank conversations with Air Force officials were not encouraging because of mandated 25% budget cuts in defense spending.

In late August, the Air Force released its preliminary version of the “alternative study.” The *Alexandria Daily Town Talk* published a story on August 17, 1991, and in it reported the Air Force’s conclusion that closing England AFB would have very little negative effect, and possibly some positive effects, on the physical environment of central Louisiana. This infuriated the community as the Air Force report seemed to have ignored completely the hours of testimony and the 200-page document detailing negative economic impacts resulting from closure that experts and community leaders delivered to the Air Force Panel at its public hearing.

U.S. Representative Clyde Holloway (R-La) complained that the “long, drawn-out (base closure) process is killing to a community” (Jim Leggett, “Base closure would hurt say officials,” *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, August 17, 1990). He blamed Congress for the time-consuming review and promised to work with others to adopt a speedier process for future base closures. Holloway said it would be better for a community that was going to lose a base to find out quickly and challenged the Air Force to compare England to any other base in the country, saying he was confident England would come out on top.

Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait produced Desert Storm which delayed base closure but did not stop it. November 5, 1990, Congress passed the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990, which included the General Accounting Office (GAO) to insure objectivity in the process review and directed the Department of Defense to consider the following specific criteria:

- The military mission of the base and its impact on operational readiness;
- The availability of land and other resources at both existing and alternative bases;
- The ability to absorb contingency mobilizations;
- The cost and manpower implications;
- The extent and timing of potential costs and savings from closure or realignment;
- The economic impact on communities; and
- The ability of communities’ infrastructure to support forces and mission.

Base closure processes were revised by Congress’ 1990 legislation and implemented with the 1991 BRAC Commission. Congress introduced these controls such as the criteria listed above in an attempt to remove what politics it thought remained after 1988 and Secretary Cheney’s initial 1990 efforts. These new procedures also removed the Secretary of Defense as an approving official. Instead, the secretary nominated bases submitted by each service. Even as the

1991 closure list was being published for the first time, BRAC 1993 was already in the early planning stages (Sorenson 1998:128-129). Still there existed a politics versus administration dichotomy within BRAC that Congress attempted to eliminate.

Steven G. Koven (1992) addressed the topic in *Public Administration Review*, attributing to Woodrow Wilson the notion that skills learned, implemented and essential for “good government” can be separated from the tumult and pressures of political life and influence. This view grew out of the scientific management perspective that the private sector adopted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Wrong, say those who contend the two are inseparable. We need only look to the Reagan years when, whatever balance or separation between administration and political influence existed, was stood on its head as Reagan appointed directors who were openly hostile to the purposes of their agencies demonstrating that elected leaders can certainly influence bureaucratic organizations to implement policy in the direction of their values and politics (Koven 1992:526).

One military scholar contends administrators really have the last word, concluding in his online article, “We have now come full circle – what began with the Secretary of Defense later included Congress and an independent commission that still relies on the only one qualified to oversee consolidations and closures based on joint criteria, the Secretary of Defense” (Schwalbe 2003: No Page Number).

As effective as it has been with respect to base closure, the BRAC Commission model cannot be replicated across all issue domains because it is not suitable (Mayer 1995). It works successfully because it works within a narrow, one-dimensional policy domain. This is consistent with the reluctance within American institutional structure to grant unaccountable authority to administrative agents (Mayer 1995:410). Congress granted this authority because a majority of

its members were satisfied that it had produced “pretty good government” that included as well as limited its own ability to influence final decisions; and that it had narrowed and limited the ability of its administrative creature, the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, in order to achieve unpopular but necessary solutions to the difficult problem of military base closure.

Dual Strategy – The A Team

Louisiana’s political culture is different from other states and its reputation for spectacular politics casts a long shadow. It is a culture of volatility, instability, and constant competition; and, although Louisianans do not vote more than citizens in other states, politics is personal and participatory (Parent 2004).

When the community first learned that its military installation was under consideration for possible closure, a group of civic and business leaders organized to save the base. This group, called the A Team, believed completely in the possibility of saving England AFB from closure. In the alternative, it believed completely in the possibility of delaying its closure. The A Team communicated the significant negative economic impacts to the general public and prepared to make its appeal point by point to any and all who might listen, but particularly the decision makers who could prevent the closure of the central Louisiana military installation.

In Louisiana, a small state of about four million people, no one group dominates political culture. The pursuit of power is ruthless and the victors consolidate position until the next competitive, tumultuous election (Parent 2004:21). Central Louisiana’s civic and business leaders believed they had every right to challenge whatever power was making decisions about their future because they believed that power could be made to tilt. The thought of a personal appeal direct to Pentagon officials, members of the BRAC Commission, U.S. Congress or the President himself, was neither intimidating nor farfetched to these central Louisianans who were confident in their case to remove England AFB from the closure list. They had read and studied the criteria; they trusted in a fair process; they believed the real challenge was securing time with

decision makers who had authority to do something. If the A Team had a weakness, it was in not appreciating at the time how politically stacked the deck was against it. The Department of Defense in those early rounds selected easy targets such as England (a small single mission base, less than 2,400 acres, whose aircraft was being phased out of inventory) for closure and Congress had crafted the BRAC Commission for just such compelling and persuasive appeals against these painfully unpopular decisions.

“Louisianans apparently believe everything is political,” wrote Joan I. Duffy for the Scripps Howard News Service, and “if anyone dodges a bullet, it could be England AFB” (Joan Duffy, “State officials playing hardball to keep EAFB,” *Scripps Howard News Service, Little Rock*, May 22, 1991). Duffy was reporting the A Team’s presentation to the BRAC Commission in Fort Worth, Texas. She wasn’t the only one impressed by the presentation. “It was a virtuoso performance by the Alexandrians who hit all the right notes,” bragged one editorial:

Not a moment was wasted on politics or sentimentality; rather, the group pounded home point after point building a strong case for a second look at the recommendation by Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney to close the base. It was not hard to be at least slightly optimistic (*Alexandria Daily Town Talk* editorial, May 15, 1991).

When the A Team returned home from testifying in Fort Worth, one of its members, Mayor Randolph, told reporters, “We probably stirred up a hornet’s nest, but that’s good” (Jim Leggett, “Mayor: city opened base panel’s eyes,” *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, May 19, 1991). He was referring to a computer model devised by City Clerk Jon Grafton who used Air Force ratings of Tactical Air Command (TAC) bases to show that England AFB should not receive low ratings under *any* objective system.

The A Team kept the pressure on during the weeks following its presentation to the BRAC Commission. Theirs was a high powered offensive that pointedly questioned the accuracy and legitimacy of criteria used by the Defense Department and whether military service branches

communicated with one another. Using official criteria, it showed where three bases that ranked below England had escaped closure. The A Team shifted its efforts to the Congress and President of the United States – who could only reject or accept BRAC recommendations and not revise them in any way. This was an important feature of the design all along, and when the A Team finally realized that it was no longer fighting for its military base alone, but for defeating the entire 1991 closure round, it took its bows and welcomed the B Team to the front and center.

Dual Strategy – The B Team

Essentially, individual and organizational self-interest drives all forms of behavior: Legislators want to avoid punishment for perceived income losses from base closure; military organizations want to reduce overhead expenses while avoiding suffering an unfair loss; commission members want to maintain the objectivity that is the primary reason for their existence; and all want to minimize loss by absorbing lessons from past experiences” (Sorenson 1998:40).

Alexandria engineer, James A. “Jim” Meyer, was a key player on both the defensive and offensive teams and emerged eventually as leader and champion of the reuse and redevelopment effort. Meyer had just finished a term as president of the local Chamber of Commerce. In his interview with Edward A. Gargan that was published by *The New York Times* on November 28, 1994, he recalled walking around a base that closed in the 1960s (Chenault AFB in Lake Charles, Louisiana). To him it was a sad sight, and learning it could happen in his home town, Meyer was determined to make a contingency plan.

The intent was supported by LSU economics professor, Loren C. Scott, who warned civic and business leaders, “If you don’t do anything, you’re going to lose a decade’s worth of employment” (Gargan 1994). Scott’s presentation to the central Louisiana community made an important impression on leaders. Several individuals who were interviewed as part of this thesis research referred to it in their response to questions concerning their recollection of the community’s response to the initial threat of base closure. A central Louisiana executive and one

of the first ten members of the England Economic and Industrial Development District (EEIDD, also referred to as The England Authority and The Authority) said,

I can recall Loren Scott's report trying to predict economic consequences of base closure. His finding was that the area would lose ten years of growth which would have been devastating. Then he said it doesn't have to be that way" (Garland R. Lawrence, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, July 8, 2008).

Scott's dire predictions shocked as well as challenged the community. Deborah Randolph was a news reporter for KALB-TV 5, the local NBC affiliate, at the time. She was assigned to the military affairs beat which was renamed the base closure beat when the issue took on such a high profile in the community. "I always thought from the very beginning that this community was not going to settle for Lauren Scott's predictions" (Deborah B. Randolph, interview by author, Baton Rouge, LA, June 18, 2008).

Jim Leggett, now retired from the *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, was a reporter for the central Louisiana newspaper most of his professional life. Leggett's regular beats included military affairs (England AFB and U.S. Army Fort Polk in Leesville, Louisiana) and local government. He was also the political and legislative reporter for the newspaper and covered the threat of base closure as well as the military to civilian conversion.

That public hearing focused our attention. He (Scott) suggested we develop a plan and I think that's what happened. Elected officials mostly worked on Plan A – save the base – which got tremendous support from the community who felt we had our eye on the ball – the same ball. That's what the people demanded. Then there was Plan B, which no one really knew about at the time although it emerged later (Jim Leggett, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, July 8, 2008).

Keeping Plan B in the background was an important part of the overall strategy. Jim Meyer told Gargan, "We kept it secret (to the public) so that the Air Force didn't get the wrong idea, and that we wanted the base to close" (Gargan 1994). While Meyer worked with elected

officials to help prepare the community's case to save England AFB, he also participated in developing the contingency plan.

The B Team approached its contingency plan as an engineer would a design problem or an investor would undertake due diligence before committing resources. Its members included Meyer, an engineer, who acted as chairman; Henry Kinberger, president of a local bank, responsible for governance; Grant Ringle, sales and marketing manager for an electric utility, responsible for identifying funding resources; John Stroud, Chamber executive, responsible for research on other communities; an architect, Joe Brocato, Sr., responsible for planning and development; and two attorneys, Albin Provosty and Ricky Sooter, responsible for legal issues.

This was an elite power group who met most mornings for coffee to report findings and discuss what next. In short order, they produced their "Blue Book," a step-by-step plan to position the community optimally to receive, reuse and develop valuable military assets. Not all communities approach base closure in this way.

Contingency efforts were no secret to the A Team, but the community was unaware that the B Team operated on the assumption that the decision to close England AFB had already been made. As the A Team was preparing in earnest to defend against closure, the B Team developed recommendations in its contingency plan that took into account the special characteristics surrounding England AFB. The plan described its priorities and emphasized the importance of the state legislature creating an independent authority to obtain and control all military assets as well as have responsibility for economic development of the region.

The military services did not just automatically transfer their assets to a community when a base closed. There was a long line of agencies in front of us and we needed to change that. From the very beginning, we insisted on getting those assets. We were not having great success at the time, and I remember (U.S. Senators) Johnston and Breaux and (U.S. Representative) Clyde Holloway were all willing to put everything on the line for us. The senators finally got the Air Force's attention by adding an amendment to the defense

appropriations bill and we got those assets. They removed the amendment, but Senator Breaux assured me, if it came down to it, he had the votes to get it passed. I think the Air Force knew that because they were more attentive after that and took us much more seriously (Garland R. Lawrence, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, July 8, 2008).

B Team attorneys studied property conveyances to England AFB. They made a high level case that land was transferred or sold for the express purpose of creating a permanent military installation. There were several donation deeds, including the City's, but none included a clause providing the land would revert to its original owners if the base closed. The B Team, hoping to strengthen its case for obtaining military assets, argued the federal government had a moral obligation to return the property to original donors whether or not the clause was included.

The B Team recruited central Louisiana state legislators, Senator Joe McPherson and Representative Charlie DeWitt, to its cause and secured their support and assistance. These legislators filed bills creating a local reuse and redevelopment authority. In explaining the bill, Representative DeWitt told fellow legislators plainly, "What we're doing here is – if England AFB closes, we're setting up an England Economic and Industrial Development District to get the land back" (Robert Morgan, "Louisiana House endorses board to manage EAFB properties," *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, June 20, 1991).

"None of this could have happened without having things in place in Baton Rouge" (Senator William J. "Joe" McPherson, interview by author, Lafayette, LA, July 16, 2008). McPherson was a native son who returned to Alexandria after graduating from Northwestern State University in Natchitoches and started several businesses. He was first elected to the Louisiana Senate in 1983 and served until 1995. He was elected again in 2000.

When it became clear that the President would accept the 1991 BRAC Commission's recommendations and that Congress would not pass a resolution to block implementation of those recommendations, the B Team proposed a formal Transition Team, authorized by

intergovernmental agreement between the Alexandria City Council and Rapides Parish Policy Jury, until the Louisiana Legislature created the local development authority.

Planners on the B Team used the *England AFB 1990 Economic Resource Impact Statement* and *Commander's Long Range Facility Improvement Plan* to draft a narrative for civilian reuse. They drew a “key dates” action plan that garnered formal support for a Transition Committee from political subdivisions including the City of Alexandria and other municipalities in Central Louisiana as well as the Rapides Parish Police Jury.

In effect, The B Team morphed into the Transition Team that was more representative of the community. Some of the original B Team members migrated to this new team; others did not. New individuals were added. They represented the City of Alexandria (businessmen John Brewer and Gene Cotton; educator George Thompson); Rapides Parish Police Jury (administrators Barry Hines and Jack DeWitt, and insurance executive Myron Lawson); and Central Louisiana Chamber of Commerce (attorney Hank Bruser and utility executive Garland Lawrence). A number of present and former elected officials from the area were also named as ex-officio members.

The Transition Team existed only a short time – from late April to June 1991 – and several of its members were also identified with the B Team. In fact, I use the terms “B Team” and “Transition Team” interchangeably, as did most in the community at the time as well as the local news media. The major difference between the two, in addition to membership, was that the Transition Team was “open,” unlike its “closed” predecessor, the B Team. The Transition Team was a formally constituted public entity, a kind of preview of the local development authority that would result from state legislation. In fact, most of the members of the Transition Team would later be appointed as the first members of The England Authority. Unlike the B Team, the

Transition Team did not work in the background; its members were known and meetings were open to the public. The Transition Team's legacy however was pure B Team, and its actions followed nearly to the letter the B Team's "Blue Book" contingency plan.

Having put into play its plan to create the local development authority via Louisiana statute, the B Team developed detailed property lists for U.S. Senators Johnston and Breaux to to acquire movables located on the air base. A local newspaper story nominated those assets by category, including: aeronautical, safety and security, transportation, munitions facilities, general communications, administration and support facilities, civil engineering, supply and warehousing operations, infrastructure, medical facility, housing, education facility, service facilities, recreation facilities, chapel facility; and further: all equipment, gear, fixtures, systems, controls; all fleets, supporting software, furniture, lighting, electrical. To emphasize how determined community leaders were in acquiring the assets, the story's sub-headline read: "And that does mean all" (Jim Leggett, "Committee wants all EAFB assets," *Town Talk*, August 13, 1991).

The B Team embraced opportunities that come with military base closure – concepts not well developed or widely disseminated to those impacted by closure until after the 2nd and 3rd rounds of 1993 and 1995. Many of the same positions held by decision and policy makers in later years were also held by the B Team, namely that base closing can offer unprecedented opportunities for a community's economic health and industrial development. Lauzon (1999) cited these and other opportunities that encouraged long term growth and examined steps for base closure. He also developed a model for property reuse and investigated the political economy of military base closure – the federal and local public policy process and how it impacts economic efficiency of public resource allocation. Years before Lauzon's work was published, the B Team had identified these areas as critical as well. The B Team also held

Lawzon's belief that the final responsibility for land use planning and for securing the optimum use of the former base facilities to serve local needs and objectives rests with the local community leadership (Lauzon 1999).

The Transition Team provided an important means for the community to manage change. Studies of other base closures revealed, unless a community unites to confront the closure bureaucracy, events control it. The community had lost its fight to save the base, an effort judged outstanding. Even so, "There was not one complaint about the efforts to save the base. No one pointed a finger or looked for the sacrificial lamb" (Grafton & Funderburk 1993:9). This time was identified as especially sensitive as it was here that political power struggles were most likely to be fought. However, the mutual trust and respect that resulted from efforts to save the base as well as plan for contingency, power sharing action, prevailed. When the B Team emerged and transferred its power (the contingency plan) to the Transition Team, the community was also able to move quickly and within one week's time participated with the Transition Team in moving toward an aggressive proactive strategy for mixed use redevelopment of England AFB.

Inclusion emerged as an important attribute in the process. Early on, it extended to the general public. When consultants were hired to determine whether it was feasible to relocate commercial and general aviation from Alexandria Esler Regional Airport to the base, public hearings were held and "anyone who has an idea on what to do with England AFB can make it known" (Jim Leggett, "Public base hearing – officials seek input," *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, March 1992). The consultant, Greiner, Inc., leased a space connected to one of Alexandria's downtown hotels. There it arranged chairs around a large conference table and outfitted it as a

“war room” where the public could come in to review studies, look at maps and drawings, and write comments on a huge writing pad mounted on an easel.⁷

However, it was not only the strong community involvement that was cited as an important strategy for successful conversion. It was also regional representation.

The base was so important to Alexandria, but not just the city, the entire region. That’s why I knew from the beginning that we had to provide regional representation – Alexandria and also Pineville; the parish and the smaller municipalities nearby. It just wasn’t going to work if it was only the City, although there were strong advocates for doing just that (E. Randolph, interview by author, Baton Rouge, LA, June 18, 2008).

Senator McPherson agreed with the importance of regional representation to the overall success and also cited a willingness among local officials to work together for common purpose.

The community really came together, particularly the political community. There was a cohesion that I’d never experienced and it was remarkable. Consider that I was a state senator who had defeated Alexandria’s mayor (in a 1983 legislative race) and at the time, I was running against (U.S. Representative) Clyde Holloway for his seat in the Congress. So there were people at the same table who had been political enemies. But none of that mattered as we all put aside our political, social and economic differences to ensure the survival of a community” (William J. “Joe” McPherson, interview by author, Lafayette, LA, July 16, 2008).

Others who were interviewed regarding the development and reuse of England AFB agreed with McPherson. A Chamber of Commerce leader who also served as one of the first members of the England Authority said in his interview that central Louisiana experienced a remarkable and consistent level of consensus among community leaders and through them, the community at large, throughout its conversion of England AFB from military to civilian use (Garland R. Lawrence, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, July 8, 2008).

Early environmental impact studies called for the base to be used for commercial,

⁷ About the same time, the City of Alexandria concluded a two-year project called *Alexandria 2010* that outlined a 20-year growth and development strategy. This process included extensive community involvement and contributed to the public’s understanding of comprehensive planning and master land use. *Alexandria 2010* was formally adopted in March 1992.

general, air cargo, aircraft maintenance and military aviation, and recreation and tourism. These were preliminary efforts in an extensive planning process that was done by Greiner, Inc. both thoroughly and quickly.

Initially, we created a strategy for reuse and airport feasibility. This was called the Base Reuse Plan and was adopted in 1994. Its primary purpose was to show the Air Force and FAA that our community had a purpose for the property and a plan on how to use it.

The Airport Master Plan was adopted in 1988 as a 20-year plan that was completed in about nine years. It met all FAA requirements and was ‘airfield’ heavy, which is one of two components of our staying power. The other is ‘landside,’ which will be the focus of our Airport Master Plan Update (2008). This will include uniform design codes, bike paths, walking trails – all more associated with the ‘landside’ rather than the ‘airfield.’ Each of these professional plans cost about \$6 – 700,000, so they’re not inexpensive processes and each took anywhere from 12 to 18 months to complete” (Jon W. Grafton, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, July 8, 2008).

The initial Base Reuse Plan that was formally adopted by the England Authority in 1994 divided the base into nine areas including: schools and health (27 acres); parks and recreation (192 acres); public safety (3 acres); utilities (6 acres); historic and preservation (4 acres); residential (146 acres); aeronautic development (935 acres); revenue producing – including agricultural and buildings available for rent (800 acres); and environmentally sensitive (121 acres). The plan helped people begin to develop a sense of what the base might look like without the military.

May 1992 was an important month for the central Louisiana community: federal funding finally came through; indicators showed economic outlooks were not as bad as had been predicted; and officials from other parts of the country began coming to England to learn how to manage military to civilian conversion. The England Authority was finally awarded two study grants to pay for work it had already undertaken. The FAA awarded \$149,850 to determine if England AFB might be used as a commercial airport and if the regional airport located in a mostly rural area about 20 miles away from the twin cities of Alexandria / Pineville should be

relocated. The Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA) awarded \$250,000 to complete a general base reuse study which by now was nearly complete. The local newspaper reported a jobs survey that found the impact of England AFB closure might be less than earlier believed and that “LSU economist Lauren Scott and others had predicted a 0.89 percent growth in Cenla for 1991 but actual growth was 1.2” (Rich Ryan, “Jobs survey,” *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, May 1, 1992). Toward month’s end, the newspaper also reported a visit by Ft. Worth area officials who came to central Louisiana to learn about legislation creating the England Authority and how the organization was managing local reuse. These officials were on site because Carswell AFB, was scheduled to close in October 1993, and they wanted to take advantage of lessons learned and discover strategies that produced central Louisiana’s emerging reputation as having produced a successful military to civilian conversion.

On June 25, 1993, the New Orleans *Times Picayune* published an editorial that was picked up on the wire service and republished in the *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*. Entitled *The Alexandria Miracle*, it claimed communities could take a lesson or two from the resourceful central Louisiana city that turned the closing of a military base to its advantage because local leaders were ready with a Plan B when initial efforts to save the base from closing were unsuccessful. Several months after that editorial appeared, John C. “Mac” McCarthy, one of 70 nationwide Base Transition Coordinators, said

The England Authority, recognized nationwide as a leader in how to accomplish base reuse, has faced a bureaucratic maze in trying to reuse the base, especially in getting temporary leases from the Air Force so that properties can be subleased (Jim Leggett, “McCarthy to cut red tape,” *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, September 28, 1993).

At the end of the year, Dr. Dorothy Robyn, Special Assistant to the President (Bill Clinton) for Economic Policy told the central Louisiana community: “You have been a model to many other bases” (Jim Leggett, “One year since closure,” *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*,

December 16, 1993). Six months later, Alexandria was named an All American City, in large part for helping manage the successful conversion of England AFB (D. Randolph, interview by author, Baton Rouge, LA, June 18, 2008).

That September, the twin cities of Alexandria and Pineville won the National League of Cities (NLC) award for work to recover from the closure of England AFB. The cities' completed application, entitled "The England Approach: A Survival Guide for Base Closure," was cited by judges of the competition as being the most comprehensive approach for dealing with base closure and awarded the *1994 Innovation Award for the Most Innovative Approach to Formulating and Implementing an Economic Adjustment Strategy*. The judges went on to say:

Not all communities have to address this type of change; however, of all the entrants, this approach had the clearest implementation strategy, the most comprehensive approach and the most measurable successful results" (Jim Leggett, "Base reuse plan garners honors," *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, September 25, 1994).

Findings

Yahn (2003) argues that the case study's unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artifacts, interviews, and observation – beyond what might be available in a conventional historical study. My own research, particularly the interviews that were conducted with those who were active participants in this unique event, provides rich information and insight into the lengthy process of closure, reuse and redevelopment of England AFB. Even so, there is a common concern that case studies do not provide sufficient basis for scientific generalization. As a result of this concern, I have undertaken in this section an attempt to expand and generalize theories first identified in the literature review and supported by findings in my research, particularly the interviews. Some of these analytic generalizations populate the framework described initially as the spheres of sustainability and encompass the economic, environmental and social. Some of these findings support the importance of key indicators, perhaps even predictors, of success and include such things as feasibility planning, leadership and community involvement.

There are a full range of theories that might be relevant to this study. The findings in this case study feature *group theories*, particularly informal groups and work teams; *organization theories*, particularly theories of bureaucracies, excellence in organizational performance and interorganizational partnerships; and *societal theories*, particularly cultural institutions and marketplace functions.

The findings of the case study of the successful military to civilian conversion of England AFB support many of these theories, including those that follow:

Closure impacts are not just economic but social and psychological (Thanner 2006; Sorenson 1998).

I always saw England (Air Force Base) as a place with good people who helped grow a community. On the street where I grew up, about a third of my neighbors were active or retired military and it seemed like most of their spouses were educators. I figured if the base closed, about half my street would be gone (Myron K. Lawson, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, August 14, 2008).

This view demonstrates the extent to which those connected to the central Louisiana military installation had also connected to the local community. It also helps explain the shock so many felt when they first learned of the possibility of base closure.

England AFB was well integrated into the community. Folks stationed at the base were members of civic and service organizations. They belonged to area churches. Hearing about closing the base was a little like a family hearing that one of its members had been diagnosed with a terminal illness” (Jon W. Grafton, interview by author, Alexandria, La, July 8, 2008).

It seems that leaders in the central Louisiana community understood very well that closure impacts would be social and psychological as well as economic.

Closure announcements generate predictions of dire consequences, and also motivate and inspire communities to rise to the challenge by forming new alliances and strengthening organizational capabilities (Bradshaw 1999).

“You might say the key to our success was fear – fear of what might happen when this (England AFB) goes away” (Garland R. Lawrence, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, July 8, 2008). It is possible Lawrence was reflecting solely on the negative economic impact since he represented business interests in the community, but his response is one that several others repeated as alarm, fear and shock. Indeed, one economist’s predictions about losing economic gains of the previous decade may have challenged the business community in particular to embrace the disruption and manage its consequences in a carefully managed way. If Lawrence is

correct, fear motivated them all against this common threat. Political subdivisions that historically fought one another and bickered about individual interests set traditional behavior aside, supported contingency planning by a small group of professionals and acted more on behalf of the community than usual.

Number one and most important, we generally worked together. We put our self interest aside. In my 30+ years working in government relations and economic development, I can tell you that most communities do not want to disturb the status quo because individuals within the community are afraid they would lose something. When the Transition Committee was formed, it was dominated by those who cared for the best interest of the community, not getting re-elected (Garland R. Lawrence, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, July 8, 2008).

Myron Lawson was tapped by the Rapides Parish Police Jury as one of its three representatives to the England Authority when it first organized. He emphasized how significant cooperation was among decision and policy makers during those start-up years. He also linked this cooperation among political leaders directly to community satisfaction.

We had unity at its best – even with challenging issues like relocating commercial air service. But that didn't mean everybody thought exactly the same way. There was also diversity which made us stronger overall.

The community trusted and supported us because it perceived that we were acting for the common good and not out of personal political gain. We wanted the community to understand and see what we were doing. We were open to the media, transparent is the word everyone uses nowadays, because we had an important story to tell and the media helped us tell our story.

The local enthusiasm was contagious and spread to the state and eventually, the nation (Myron K. Lawson, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, August 14, 2008).

Military base closure and conversion processes produce significant opportunities for citizen involvement and there is enormous demand by citizens to be involved (Yahn 2005).

The “alternative studies” hearing conducted by the U.S. Air Force seized the community’s attention before the decision to close England AFB was enacted. The widespread

interest it aroused was perceived by local media who invested resources and air time in amplifying the issue of base closure.

This community was always involved, always interested. That's why the local television station was all over it. People wanted to know about 'their base.' There was structure in place to provide for this involvement: town hall meetings, presentations to local groups and civic organizations, a place to go and say what was important to them. We reported on all this, so even if you weren't at a meeting, you knew what happened there (Deborah B. Randolph, interview by author, Baton Rouge, LA, June 18, 2008).

Certainly there was concern for the possible negative economic impact, but there was more involved. England AFB had also worked its way into the fabric of the civilian community. It was well integrated and perceived as an integral aspect of central Louisiana's sustainability, touching every sphere – economic, social and environmental. Base facilities, planes overhead, people stationed there, activities conducted on base and many more that were conducted in its support – all these combined touched a community nerve and citizens responded by rising to the occasion as well as the challenge of leadership.

One such person was Jim Meyer who was called a champion and visionary by several of those interviewed as part of this research. According to one "he was the most dedicated and best-suited leader we could have had for this time" (Henry B. "Hank" Bruser, III, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, August 14, 2008). Another remembered very well "that a champion emerged, Jim Meyer, who saw that all the people were muttering and realized with an engineer's clarity that we had better cut to the chase" (Babs Zimmerman Leggett, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, July 9, 2008). However, Meyer was not alone in his leadership commitment to develop and reuse this closed military installation.

That very first England Authority was a real working group and very active. Everybody had work to do and they were held accountable for doing it. We had what I would consider a very effective group" (Garland R. Lawrence, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, July 8, 2008).

There has been a gradual recognition that the single measure of jobs replacement fails to capture the reality of conversion and that “success” involves more (Glassberg 1995). A successful reuse project meets desired outcomes of the local community and communities affected by base closure react differently depending on the circumstances (Garcia 1996).

Success will depend on the community. In communities like central Louisiana, the most important factor is replacing economic activity that was generated by the base with new entities creating comparable wealth. I do not mean just jobs, but economic activity (Henry B. “Hank” Bruser, III, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, August 14, 2008).

In an August 2008 report prepared by Loren C. Scott & Associates entitled *The Economic Impacts on the Central Louisiana Economy of the England Economic and Industrial Development District* the combined impacts from both investment spending and on-going operations of firms connected to the district are summarized:

- From 1992 through 2007 total investment and operational revenues generated over \$7.3 billion in additional business sales within the central Louisiana economy.
- During this same period over \$1.8 billion in additional household earnings was produced for residents in the area.
- As of 2007, the district and those firms connected to it support 7,437 permanent and temporary jobs within the region. These new jobs have average annual earnings per job of about \$36,457.

Scott’s report indicates that the military to civilian conversion of England AFB was successful in generating economic activity – not just jobs – sufficient to replace the activity lost by closing the military installation. But when asked to explain how it was the community came to be regarded as “successful,” others expressed comments outside the traditional economic sphere that included the social and environmental.

“We were successful because our entire community’s quality of life improved” (Deborah B. Randolph, interview by author, Baton Rouge, LA, June 18, 2008). “Today England Airpark is a vital community – people working, living, playing – and an important part of our overall economy” (Garland R. Lawrence, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, July 8, 2008).

The airport was probably the best thing that happened. Before commercial service was moved from Esler (Regional Airport), folks had to drive 20 or so miles and they complained about it all the time. First, they built a temporary terminal for about five years. Even it was better than the one we had (at Esler). Always, the plan was for a permanent terminal at England which was finally completed in the last year or so. Now, look at it – a beautiful airport, just beautiful! (Edward G. “Ned” Randolph, interview by author, Baton Rouge, LA, June 18, 2008).

The original reuse plan for England AFB called for private and commercial aviation. As events unfolded, it became apparent that the military still had need for air services at the new England Airpark and Community. England AFB had been a staging area for troops at nearby U.S. Army Ft. Polk in Leesville, LA. Thousands of soldiers were trained there each year and had to be transported into and out of central Louisiana from locations throughout the country by the U.S. Army. The small community of Leesville, where Ft. Polk was located, could not provide the runways that England AFB could in order to support military aircraft. “That was one of the reasons we used to argue why the base should stay open” (Edward G. Randolph, interview by author, Baton Rouge, LA, June 18, 2008). In addition to the air transport demands to support regular training, U.S. armed forces were now engaged on two fronts in the Middle East, and a separate multi-million dollar military terminal has been constructed to serve troops being deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. England Airpark is also the first stop for many soldiers coming home. This new military terminal establishes it as a permanent military staging base and allows the community’s relationship of longstanding with the military to continue.

Senator McPherson described the community's actions in obtaining the military assets of England AFB as though it were receiving an inheritance.

Yes, we wanted this inheritance from the federal government and we wanted it in good condition because generally, if you inherit a business you will do better and make more progress than if you have a startup. We prepared to manage this business as though it were out inheritance (Senator William J. "Joe" McPherson, interview by author, Lafayette, LA, July 16, 2008).

Successful transition may be largely predetermined – bases within a single jurisdiction, typically a city, generally experience smoother transitions. Multiple jurisdictions may become competing jurisdictions bringing conflict and delay (Burgess 2005).

The conversion of England AFB might not have gone quite as well if policy makers had failed to create a new governmental entity.

The wisdom of Jim Meyer's plan was that it was community wide. He knew a new governmental entity needed to be created that represented all these areas as well as the business community. This new regional entity represented all the area political subdivisions and represented both public and private interests (Henry B. "Hank" Bruser, III, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, August 14, 2008).

Any professional economic developer knows that no business wants to depend on a government entity that is ever changing when making decisions about the future of its business. So, we encouraged the appointing authorities to choose considering the big picture and appoint primarily from the business / private sector. The principal concept in establishing The Authority was and is to encourage development, facilitate development and create a facility and business climate conducive to economic development (Garland R. Lawrence, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, July 8, 2008).

By creating a single jurisdiction with just the right balance of public and private interests in the partnership and by setting its work on a foundation of careful master planning, the England Authority was able to speak with one voice and act on behalf of the entire central Louisiana community, ultimately producing a smoother and for the most part, predictable transition.

Unified community response that avoids provincial bickering and jealousy over the assets; unified response with a plan for reuse that's agreed upon by all the primaries – that's what allowed us to proceed as rapidly as we did (Henry B. "Hank" Bruser, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, August 14, 2008).

Successful base reuse planning begins before closure (Bradshaw 1999).

The majority of individuals who were interviewed for this research identified central Louisiana's "dual strategy" as the community's initial response to the threat of base closure. Many indicated this strategy was ultimately responsible for the successful conversion of England AFB. Former members of the England Authority in particular indicated that early planning was critical as it identified two "must have" goals: creating the new governmental entity and receiving / controlling the military assets from the federal government.

Overall, our strategy was precedent – this was the first time a community, any community, was successful getting the base, all the assets, in its entirety. That idea, getting the assets, and then actually implementing the strategy, was unique. Where land would otherwise sit vacant or as happened in many communities, was parsed out among numerous parties, we kept it whole. This was the most important strategy of all and probably an idea that fundamentally changed the method of disposal of base property (Henry B. "Hank" Bruser, III, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, August 14, 2008).

Conclusion

Not every community in America is faced with the possibility of military base closure or will confront the challenge of a military to civilian conversion. Base closings represent change, disruptive change. Communities, like individual organisms, respond to change in a variety of ways that produce results we label success or failure. Sometimes when disruptive change occurs, a community's response fails and in a worst case scenario, it ceases to be. Sometimes it survives and transforms into something more than it once was, something better. I believe central Louisiana was such a community.

When closing England AFB emerged as a possibility in 1988, the community perceived this as a threat and responded with a dual strategy: defense, implemented by a highly visible group of mostly elected officials who fought to save the base; and offense, implemented by a small group of professionals working in the background to develop a contingency plan. In this way, the community managed both sides of the change equation, political and technical, and when the base closed in 1992, it produced a civilian conversion.

David Sorenson (1998) discusses how military installations have environmental, social and economic impacts on the communities in which they are located. This framework has similarly been described as spheres of sustainability (Wheeler 1998). To me this integrated approach to planning and development is a superior way of considering whether a military to civilian conversion is successful because it provides a broader framework within which various criteria, taken together, produces a better calculation than the more traditional economic measure of jobs replacement.

Using this general framework – a construct of environmental, social and economic considerations – I began populating it with indicators (criteria) identified in the literature as well as revealed by the case of England AFB. It was also important to me to tell central Louisiana’s story and connect it to a larger context that includes military budget impacts, national defense policies, and the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission, which was Congress’ way of making painful but necessary decisions in order to implement its policies. I believe my thesis accomplishes this.

There are several points I wish to emphasize in concluding this work. The first is just how “cutting edge” the central Louisiana community was in its approach to base closure and reuse. It is difficult to imagine the fearfulness of communities in those early closure rounds. The atmosphere of uncertainty and ambiguity within which they struggled should not be underestimated. These were pioneer communities. With additional closure rounds and lessons learned from them, others adapted more easily to the process – because now there *was* one. In 1991, when England AFB was selected for closure, federal law was still being promulgated. Central Louisiana and other communities, as a result, were engaging in closure, development and reuse processes that in many cases were not developed or defined clearly.

Second, I wish to emphasize the significance of the dual track strategy, simultaneous defense and offense, and along with it, the important role of leadership in central Louisiana’s successful conversion of England AFB. As a participant in those early responses, I recall clearly being impressed at the time how we were operating under two seemingly conflicted and mutually exclusive modes; and, how the A Team, defense, and the B Team, offense, were convinced that “theirs” was the right track.

At the time, I thought that this was a very sophisticated strategy, but not without risk, particularly if it were “discovered” by the community at large. My fear was that community leaders would be perceived as sending a “mixed message,” telling Washington decision makers they wanted to keep the base open while working on reuse plans as though it were already closed. I believed this would fragment the community and undermine its ability to act in one accord and speak with one voice. I also thought it would destroy any chance either of the teams had at succeeding.

Third, I believe the B Team identified correctly the two goals that for the central Louisiana community were essential for its successful conversion: the first was a new and independent legal authority whose members represented the right balance of public and private regional interests; and second was obtaining the military assets of England AFB upon closure. The first had been done before by other communities and there were a sufficient number of models that could be studied and replicated. The second was precedent and the result of a bold, focused, relentless push by leaders at the local, state and federal levels.

The central Louisiana community succeeded in its efforts to produce a military to civilian conversion because of several important decisions local leaders made or steps they took along the way. They worked together effectively in spite of disagreements and differences to ensure the community’s survival. They fought hard against the threat of closure and at the same time, planned in detail for contingency. They provided for robust public involvement and input that resulted in high levels of community satisfaction overall. They created an oversight authority that represented all stakeholders in the region and facilitated development that would not compete with or cannibalize existing enterprise. They secured valuable military assets and other government funds necessary for maintenance and operations as well as capital improvements.

They engaged competent professionals with particular expertise in converting installations from military to civilian use in order to help manage difficult and complex challenges. They persevered in the face of unknown or ambiguous policies and in spite of onerous bureaucracies and procedures.

I also believe the central Louisiana community succeeded because it embraced and underwent a design process that allowed these considerations to emerge as possibilities in the first place. In spite of initial resistance, the community accepted change that continues today in a continuous loop of creative problem solving. This process includes: analysis and definition, generating ideas and possibilities, selecting the best way to go, implementing a plan, evaluating it, identifying possibilities for improvement, implementing revisions and so on. Trust in the process and trust in individuals who manage it for the common good seems to me to be the overarching reason for this community's successful reuse and development of the closed military installation. Because the process works and produces successful results, it is no accident that the England Authority is currently involved in a master plan update that will take a year to eighteen months to complete at a cost of more than \$500,000.

"It's up to others to say if we're 'successful,'" was Jon Grafton's diplomatic response to the question put to him in a July 8, 2008 interview at the England Authority's administrative offices. In response to the same question, others named England as *the* model for success, reminding me of numerous articles that said as much in the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *USA Today* and *Fortune Magazine*. Their statements were also supported by a comment that "the Defense Department wouldn't have asked Ned (Randolph) to speak all over the world if they didn't believe this was a successful conversion, and he spoke many times – in Germany,

Indonesia, plus numerous briefings in Washington and at the Pentagon” (Deborah B. Randolph, interview by author, Baton Rouge, LA, June 18, 2008).

Success comes one bite at a time. You have to add them up and when you do, I certainly think there are enough successes to call it ‘successful.’ England Airpark is fully funded and sustains itself. This is so important. While it may not be 100% occupied, it is occupied, not abandoned, and it is operational. I think it’s a success because it was the acknowledged leader for many years (Jim Leggett, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, July 19, 2008).

I think to define success you must satisfy a niche in the surrounding community. It’s creating jobs, of course, but it’s also enhancing the quality of life in a community as well as producing opportunities for the community to grow small and emerging businesses. I think we were successful because we adopted and respected protocol. We didn’t second guess our leaders or ourselves. We had a plan and we followed it (Myron K. Lawson, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, August 14, 2008).

I would probably use England AFB to define success. I believe any base that can do what took place here will be successful. People came from all over the United States, from all over the world, to see our work. Today, England Airpark is a vital community – people working, living, playing – an important part of our overall economy (Garland R. Lawrence, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, July 8, 2008).

There was one comment made during the interviews to remind us all that success is not a destination but a journey. It suggests the jury may still be out. This is a more critical and down-to-earth appraisal, and corroborates another comment that was made taking into account a longer term view with an eye toward a much broader horizon:

I suppose the long and the short of it (success) is the economic benefit to the community. After some reasonable time the benefit should be equal to or greater than when the military installation was present and operating. Such a conversion could take 10 to 15 years. What we’ve done so far is show that we’re viable and there’s great potential, but I believe we’re really just getting started with the heavy lifting (Jon W. Grafton, interview by author, Alexandria, LA, July 8, 2008).

My own experience supports the notion that England Airpark and Community represents a most successful civilian conversion. Certainly, there are present the many quantitative and qualitative success indicators (stakeholder representation within a local authority, control of military assets, technical and political expertise necessary for comprehensive planning and

implementation, jobs replacement and economic activity, public involvement and community satisfaction, quality of life issues determined by the community, pace and quality of development). These are nominated in the literature and repeated in interviews with individuals who participated in the military to civilian conversion of England AFB.

Beyond that, however, is the feeling that comes over me when I pass through what were once the gates of England AFB. There military ghosts still occupy small keeps and salute smartly or motion to pass. It seems the rule of law and order prevails. Grass is cut short and edges trimmed neatly. Litter is non-existent. Such spit and polish! Whatever civilian development has occurred has done so respectful of the place's military legacy.

Visitors cannot avoid passing Heritage Park where fighter aircraft are installed permanently and equidistant around a pavilion whose careful landscape provides the perfect venue for ceremony and photo opportunities. A public golf course, part of Louisiana's Audubon Golf Trail, and club house are nearby. So are an active hospital, elementary school, retirement community and additional housing for people who work at the airpark. A new multi-million dollar commercial air terminal opened last year, and a second new multi-million dollar military air terminal hosts men and women in the armed forces who are leaving for or returning from duty overseas in all parts of the world. In addition to both of these, private air facilities are also located nearby. American flags fly everywhere and the England Airpark and Community feels alive and vital.

I began this thesis by asking if central Louisiana produced a successful military to civilian conversion of England AFB; and if so, how and why. In answering this question, I also hoped my work would illuminate how success is defined and identify some of the strategies that were adopted to produce a successful conversion. I believe my review of the literature and the

research produced from personal interviews provides ample evidence to demonstrate that the military to civilian conversion of England AFB was indeed a success. In analyzing what occurred from the late 1980s to the present day, 2008, time and again this central Louisiana community hit the economic, social and environmental marks laid out for measuring success; and, it was recognized as having done so by those who live in the area as well as others around the country and globe. I also believe that my efforts help to better define success in this context and that the identified strategies adopted by this one community can also be used by other communities to produce a successful conversion.

Four years after the Air Force left England AFB, on March 18, 1996, President Bill Clinton came to Alexandria, Louisiana to personally deliver the deed for 165 acres of property to Jim Meyer, Chairman of the England Economic and Industrial Development District. The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. at the England Airpark. He said:

I want to talk just a minute, very briefly, about what you have done here with England Air Force Base and why that's a model of what I hope we'll see more of all across America. You know, when the cold war ended and we were moving into this global economy the first thing that happened that scared a lot of Americans was the need to downsize the military and the plain need that the country had to reduce the size of our bases. A lot of people were afraid, but you people were not afraid. You worked together, and you were determined to make some good things happen here.

And I have to tell you that I have been all over this country looking at military bases. I have worked with communities all over America, personally, to help them start their communities up and to use these bases as economic assets. There is no place in the entire United States that has done a better job than Alexandria has.

In early 2008, Mayor Edward G. "Ned" Randolph was elected to Louisiana's Political Hall of Fame. His wife, Deborah, said his definitive legacy came from his steering the community through the England AFB closure in the early 1990s (David Dismore, "Former Mayor Randolph joins Hall of Fame," *Town Talk*, February 3, 2008).

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Appendix A – Timeline

Closing England AFB was *the* major issue in central Louisiana for several years beginning in 1990. Central Louisiana Chamber of Commerce staff filled two large 3-ring binders entitled *News Articles / Transition from England AFB to England Industrial Airpark and Community*. These are now located in the England Authority’s administrative offices. The Rapides Parish Library staff collected what they call “vertical files” of news clippings, all labeled “England.” Unfortunately, most do not include dates or publication identity. However, it is assumed that most if not all of the articles were clipped from the *Alexandria Daily Town Talk (Town Talk)*, unless otherwise indicated; and, that the articles were written by Jim Leggett, whether or not they carried his byline. Leggett covered the paper’s political and military beats for many years including all those referenced in this work. The *Town Talk* is central Louisiana’s metropolitan daily newspaper. Some microfilm copies of the newspaper were also reviewed. They are located in the library as the newspaper does not grant the public access to its “hard copy” archives.

This timeline was constructed using all these resources plus personal records, diaries and calendars. It covers nearly eighteen years beginning December 29, 1989, when rumors were first reported regarding possible closure of the base and ending February 3, 2008, when Edward G. “Ned” Randolph, former mayor of the City of Alexandria, was inducted into Louisiana’s Political Hall of Fame.

1989	
December	Rumors fly that England AFB is on closure list; local officials say they will work to keep base open.
1990	
May	Nearly 6,000 concerned citizens show support for England AFB. Only 1,500 are allowed into public hearing by fire marshal. Louisiana Governor Roemer, other officials testify before Air Force panel on significant negative economic impacts of base closure.
July	Local officials and concerned citizens travel to Washington DC to lobby for England AFB. Iraq invades Kuwait the day after the delegation meets with Defense Secretary Dick Cheney.
September	England 2000 Intergovernmental Committee is created to save England AFB.
1991	
March	Governor Roemer warns England AFB at risk for closure.
April	Local officials and concerned citizens travel to Washington DC in effort to keep England AFB off 1991 BRAC closure list.
	Base closure list announced – England AFB and Ft. Polk in Leesville included.
May	BRAC Commissioner James Smith II visits England AFB.
	Legislation creating England Authority on City Council agenda for approval.
	Alexandria citizens testify before BRAC at regional meeting in Houston, play hardball to keep England AFB; continue efforts to save the base by shifting focus to Congress and President.
June	State Legislature passes bill creating England Authority to manage base properties.
July	Economists at Louisiana Tech University predict central Louisiana’s population could drop by an estimated 7,000 if England AFB closes.
August	Authority demands all military assets at England AFB when it closes.
1992	
March	Greiner, Inc. studies if commercial & general aviation should be relocated to England AFB; officials seek public input.
	Jim Holderread hired as England Authority’s first executive director; Greiner, Inc. hired to produce strategic reuse plan for England AFB to become England Industrial Airpark & Community
	Louisiana Governor Edwin Edwards commits state funding to England Authority for reuse development
	Authority Chairman lobbies Washington officials to locate Ft. Polk’s Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) Intermediate Staging Base (ISB) at England; Authority receives preliminary reuse plan describing 9 areas; federal environmental impact study calls for base to be used for commercial, general, air cargo, aircraft maintenance & military aviation and recreation & tourism.

April	Council approves City of Alexandria Master Plan, <i>Alexandria 2010</i> , outlining strategy for 20-year growth & development
May	Jobs survey shows central Louisiana performing better than expected; actual growth for 1991 was 1.2% or .31% greater than predicted
	Authority awarded 2 study grants: \$149,850 from FAA for airport relocation feasibility; \$250,000 from DOD / OEA for planned reuse and development
	Ft. Worth area officials visit to research closure including legislation creating England Authority anticipating closure of Carswell AFB
June	Competition begins for JRTC ISB and includes England AFB, Chenault Industrial Airpark in Lake Charles, Barksdale AFB in Bossier City
July	First request is made for England AFB space: unidentified company described as a precision measurement lab
	Public hearing targeting Esler Regional Airport “users” to discuss possible relocation to England AFB
	FAA tells about 60 mostly private pilots that quality of air traffic control service will not be adversely affected with closure
	U.S. Senator John Breaux meets with Col. Dick Lemon and Authority members expressing optimism about transfer of military assets to local community
	Factions split over relocating commercial airport to England AFB
September	FAA inspection reveals England AFB needs improvements, temporary operating permit, major studies, new terminal
	Governor Edwards welcomes J.B. Hunt Transport Services, Inc. to England AFB, where it will locate the largest company-owned truck driver training center in U.S. and employ 150 initially, and 250 additional in 3 years.
	Jim Meyer is re-elected Chairman of the England Authority
November	“Plan B” revealed in local news media as primary source for action and planning reuse of England AFB, including techniques used by communities that successfully reused closed bases and redevelopment authority headed by key regional interests.
	Authority receives a Louisiana Department of Transportation & Development (DOTD) certificate of registration for a general aviation airport at England AFB
December	Over 3,000 military retirees reported living in central Louisiana with \$44 million annual retirement income
	England AFB officially closes. Base still technically belongs to Air Force but real job of maintaining base property passes to England Authority.
1993	
January	England Airpark declared the best of 3 sites to serve as ISB for Ft. Polk’s JRTC.
February	England Authority executes a \$1.45 million contract with to locate Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) Intermediate Staging Base (ISB) at England Airpark.
March	Authority requests \$2.2 million from state to relocate J.B. Hunt truck driver training center to accommodate JRTC Intermediate Staging Base.
	Military installations proposed for closure as part of 1993 BRAC closure round

April	Lessons from the first big base to go dark prove costly and contentious (<i>Business Week</i> , April 5, 1993).
	Five international visitors studying military base conversion arrive at England Airpark as part of month-long program on regional security issues.
	Community mulls name change for the airport; “England” said to be confusing.
May	South Carolina base closing described as “nightmare” by Washington reporter referring to Myrtle Beach
June	Front page <i>Wall Street Journal</i> article, “Peace in the bayous,” touts central Louisiana community’s successful conversion of closed military base
	Interim lease for airfield at England Airpark signed; ISB construction begins. Legal indemnification exposure from environmental problems delays final approval of 4 additional interim leases and 16 long term leases for all remaining assets.
	Major metropolitan dailies pick up <i>Wall Street Journal</i> article; <i>Times Picayune</i> editorial calls it <i>The Alexandria Miracle</i> .
July	Base closure’s impact receding; area employment levels now believed to surpass those prior to England AFB closure.
August	U.S. Senator J. Bennett Johnston pleasantly surprised by success; predicts commercial aviation service will relocate when alternative use decided.
September	John C. “Mac” McCarthy, new Base Transition Coordinator, one of 70 nationwide to assist as part of President Clinton’s 5-point program to speed up economic recovery from base closure
October	Authority’s first executive director resigns; 120 submit applications for position that pays \$62,000 annually plus benefits.
November	Authority sits as a committee of the whole to review resumes, interview applicants.
December	Jon W. Grafton named new executive director of England Authority.
	One-year anniversary of England AFB closure; Opening ceremony for JRTC – ISB features Dr. Dorothy Robyn, Special Assistant to President Clinton
1994	
June	Alexandria named <i>All America City</i> . Successful conversion of England AFB cited as main reason for selection.
July	Authority and Parish Airport Authority “clear the runway” for rerouting commercial aviation from Esler to Alexandria International Airport.
	Five new leases signed; 300 new jobs added at Airpark.
	Authority announces December 1996 projected date that Airpark title transfers, environmental sites to close. Estimated costs for environmental cleanup in 1994 are \$13 million; \$4 million in 1995.
August	England Authority approves leases for hospital, school and residential housing.

September	Alexandria submits <i>The England Approach: A Survival Guide for Base Closure</i> , to the National League of Cities; honored with <i>1994 Innovation Award</i> for the most innovative approach to formulating and implementing an economic adjustment strategy.
October	Authority receives \$5.2 million grant from U.S. Department of Commerce for construction of roads, runways, electrical, rail security & terminal facilities.
November	<i>New York Times</i> reports central Louisiana succeeded in turning base closing around.
1995	
January	<i>Times Picayune</i> reports that Alexandria takes off even though its air base closed
February	Authority Chairman Meyer announces “record of decision,” attesting final clearance of hurdles to long term lease and eventual outright ownership of about 2,600 acres plus almost all the assets of the former England AFB.
	Local newspaper reports more national attention for successful reuse of former England AFB citing <i>USA Today</i> and previous articles in <i>Wall Street Journal</i> , <i>New York Times</i> , <i>Times Picayune</i> and <i>Fortune Magazine</i> . Also recalled other honors.
	Authority gets first look at the temporary (5-year) airport terminal design created using former 75 th Fighter Squadron Building. Temporary terminal to eventually be replaced with new permanent construction.
March	Alexandria Mayor Edward G. “Ned” Randolph and Rantoul, Illinois Mayor Katy Podagrosi appear at Defense Department briefing with hopeful messages to communities facing base closure. Officials say complicated base closing processes begun in 1988 streamlined by Pentagon and Congress; time from announcement to closure reduced by half; time for reuse planning decreased from 2 years to 1. Mayors agree “some communities have fared better than others” and “it’ll be easier for those coming after us.”
	Kazakhstan delegation tours England Airpark seeking conversion ideas. With dissolution of the Soviet empire, Kazakhstan plants no longer needed to support defense. Communities face plant closure and need to plan for reuse.
	President Clinton arrives at England Airpark to hand-deliver property deed to England Authority Chairman Jim Meyer.
2008	
February	Former Mayor Randolph joins Louisiana Political Hall of Fame; wife Deborah says England redevelopment his most important legacy.

Appendix B – IRB # 02Jue08

From: Candace Deann Thorn
Sent: Fri 5/30/2008 2:55 PM
To: David L Gladstone; phyllis.mayo@cox.net
Subject: IRB# 02June08

University Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research University of New Orleans

Campus Correspondence

Principal Investigator: David Gladstone
Co-Investigator: Phyllis E. Mayo
Date: May 28, 2008
Protocol Title: "Interviews regarding the conversion of England Air Force Base (AFB) in Alexandria, Louisiana from military to civilian use"
IRB#: 02Jue08

The IRB has deemed that the research and procedures described in this protocol application are exempt from federal regulations under 45 CFR 46.101 category 2 and 3, due to fact that any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Exempt protocols do not have an expiration date; however, if there are any changes made to this protocol that may cause it to be no longer exempt from CFR 46, the IRB requires another standard application from the investigator(s) which should provide the same information that is in this application with changes that may have changed the exempt status.

If an adverse, unforeseen event occurs (e.g., physical, social, or emotional harm), you are required to inform the IRB as soon as possible after the event.

Best wishes on your project.
Sincerely,

Robert D. Laird, Chair
UNO Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

Vita

Phyllis Mayo is a 6th generation Louisianan who went to kindergarten in Morocco, junior high in Japan, and graduated from high school in Honolulu, Hawaii. This Air Force “brat” holds a Bachelor’s of General Studies with a concentration in the social sciences from Louisiana State University and is a member of The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, University of New Orleans Chapter. Phyllis has a broad career background that includes the public, private and nonprofit sectors. She was the first woman elected to the Alexandria, Louisiana City Council (1988-1992) and was one of ten mayors and council members nationwide selected by the National League of Cities (NLC) to facilitate conflict resolution within public bodies. She has also developed new telecom and internet businesses, directed a contemporary arts center, produced award winning media campaigns and spearheaded numerous special projects in state government. From 2004 to 2008, she served as a senior policy advisor to Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco and now consults with private companies, public agencies and non-profit organizations in business and organization development, strategic planning, project management and implementation.