

Kelly suffering leadership gap

In her Nov. 19 column, Lynnell Burkett said that "San Antonio is well ahead of the curve in planning Kelly's future." I believe that statement is true. In fact it is too-true.

No doubt, a lot of planning has gone on. For six months there have been meetings and study groups all contributing to the planning. We have done nothing except plan, so of course we are way ahead in planning.

The trouble is we are doing nothing. We are, to use the vernacular, all talk and no walk.

Burkett mentioned that the Initial Base Adjustment Strategy Committee, or IBASC, office "is" putting together data from other areas with closed bases. That should have been done months ago when the announcement was made. The data are readily available from the Defense Department.

She also mentioned that the Pentagon has conferences on this topic and that one was held here recently. True, but the advice was ignored. Their expert said that there were two keys to success: leadership and speed. We have neither. Here are our problems:

● The wrong people are in charge. Remember what the city's response was when the announcement was made about Kelly AFB? It was to start a campaign to save Kelly.

What nonsense. Never before has any significant decision of the Base

Comment

By J. Ronald Carey

sion, or BRAC, been changed.

The city fathers were then in one of two positions: Either they did not know that any effort to change the commission's decision was doomed (and anyone who had spent more than a nanosecond following BRACs would have known that); or they did know it (and played a cruel hoax on the good Kelly people by getting them to demonstrate with no hope of success).

So the people in charge were either dumb or deceitful. And now the same people who were in charge of saving Kelly are in charge of the IBASC.

● No leadership. Any city associated with the military should know that if you want to get a mission accomplished, you put one person in charge. It is called unity of command.

It is what went wrong with the Iranian hostage rescue attempt, and it is what went wrong here.

The Dec. 10 Express-News had a front-page article on the competition to gain membership on the Kelly reuse board. We don't need a board; we don't need an IBASC; we need a leader.

Think of it this way: If you

would you want a Lee Iacocca or would you want a committee?

● Missed opportunities. When President Clinton was here, we failed to get him to do what could help us most.

The airport is crowded and has a new terminal that is a disaster of

aesthetics and efficiency. The long-range aviation future of the city is joint use of Randolph AFB where concurrent instrument landings are safe.

We should have had Clinton issue an executive order to begin that transfer when he was here.

● Neither vision nor hindsight. One would have thought that by taking so long with Kelly the city would have looked around to examine other possible closings. That has not happened.

For example, Fort Sam Houston is in danger. It is the headquarters of the 5th Army, whose major mission is to command Army Reserve units in its area. A new organization has been formed in Atlanta to do the same thing.

The likelihood of the 5th Army being here in the next century is remote. The computer system which serves its mission has already been

moved to Georgia. A city looking forward would see that the Quadrangle will be available and put an institution like UTSA at Fort Sam.

● Wrong mission. Much has been aimed at continuing the Air Force mission here in what has been called privatizing. The trouble is that the defense budget is declining.

We should be looking instead only at private enterprise. A Band-Aid won't stop this kind of bleeding.

● Ignoring advice. In early December the

mayor went on a well-publicized trip to the Alliance Airport near Fort Worth and proclaimed that perhaps some of the ideas there could be used here. What took him so long?

The suggestion that the city should model Kelly after Alliance was published on these pages June 4.

To summarize: Get one hard charger to lead the effort with one basic mission, to bring in business. Quit all this extended planning and get on with it.

We need an antidote to our "paralysis by analysis" illness.

J. Ronald Carey is an associate professor of marketing at Our Lady of the Lake University.

"The trouble is we are doing nothing. We are, to use the vernacular, all talk and no walk."