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Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 20, 2004

news

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GOVERNOR BLAGOJEVICH HIRES MILITARY AFFAIRS FIRM TO JOIN THE FIGHT TO SAVE ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASES IN PEORIA AND SPRINGFIELD

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod Blagojevich announced today that the state has hired The PMA Group to assist in efforts to protect the Rock Island Arsenal and Air National Guard Bases in Peoria and Springfield. Through *Opportunity Returns*, his comprehensive plan to promote economic growth and create more jobs throughout the state, the Governor is leading a coordinated effort with the Illinois Congressional Delegation, other elected officials and local leaders to prevent these three bases from ending up on the Defense Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) list. The Rock Island Arsenal and both Air National Guard Bases contribute almost **\$1 billion** to the state's economy every year and support more than **20,000 jobs**.

“The Rock Island Arsenal and the Air National Guard Bases in Peoria and Springfield all play critical roles in ensuring the safety and security of our country, while making enormous contributions to our state’s economy,” said Governor Blagojevich. “Thousands and thousands of people throughout Illinois are employed either at these bases or provide important support services to them. These men and women are working hard, many of them defending America every day. We owe it to them to do everything humanly possible to keep these crucial military institutions open. I am convinced that this united effort will convince Congress to let all of Illinois’ bases continue serving our country with distinction.”

“It is essential that we keep the Rock Island Arsenal, Scott Air Force Base and the Air National Guard Bases in Peoria and Springfield off the BRAC list. We’ve seen so many Illinois military installations close in recent years. Our message now is simple: the facilities we have left are essential for national security and Illinois’ economy. I am doing everything I can, along with Governor Blagojevich and the entire Illinois Congressional delegation, to keep these Illinois bases open,” U.S. Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL) said.

“The Rock Island Arsenal, Scott Air Force Base and the Air National Guard Bases in Peoria and Springfield are vital to our state. We will do everything possible, both here in Illinois and in Washington, D.C., to keep these bases open,” U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Yorkville) said.

Under BRAC, an independent commission evaluates the Pentagon’s closure recommendations and then develops a final list of bases to be closed. Congress then has the option to approve or reject the list as submitted without changes. In the past round of closings, 85% of bases that were placed on the list were eventually shut down. The next round of closings is scheduled to be announced in 2005.

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Rock Island Arsenal employs nearly 6,000 people, making it the second largest employer in the Northwest region, supports another 12,000 additional jobs and pumps more than **\$855 million** a year into the local economy. The Arsenal is a center for logistics and sustainment excellence for the Department of Defense (DOD). It is the home to four major U.S. Army headquarters organizations that have regional and global responsibilities to soldiers - ranging from Army munitions management to regional installation management. The Arsenal also houses more than 50 other DOD organizations and provides infrastructure support to all the organizations on the island. The Army's Joint Manufacturing and Technology Center - Rock Island (JTMC-RI) has the technical expertise and equipment to provide full-service design and prototyping, manufacturing, and testing/simulation for a wide variety of products from rapid response to warfighter requirements for all of the Armed Services. These state-of-the-art facilities house DOD's only vertically integrated metal manufacturing complex. The Arsenal is one of the world's largest weapons manufacturing facilities. Products include gun mounts and recoil mechanisms for artillery, spare parts, and tools, sets, kits and outfits that support military equipment in the field. This manufacturing mission has been called on to support short-notice, critical items for soldiers in the field, including armored door kits for Humvees, weapons pedestals and electronic night sights for our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. The installation has a state of the art fiber-optic network that has the capacity to double the number of users and the ability to handle twice its current amount of traffic. Through new business avenues, the Arsenal is also partnering with some non-military entities to assist and advance manufacturing technologies in the private sector.

"This fight to save the Rock Island Arsenal and all of Illinois' bases goes beyond political ideology. That is why elected officials throughout Illinois are working together for this important cause," Congressman Lane Evans (D-Rock Island) said.

The Peoria Air National Guard Base, which contributes more than **\$50 million** into the local economy and is located at Greater Peoria Regional Airport, provides exceptional support to the U.S. Air Force, the Department of Defense and our allies. With a 57-year history of diversity in operations, the 182nd Airlift Wing has demonstrated a pivotal response to joint/multinational requirements, including its current involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. The unit's experience and performance in on-going airlift operations, its past experience in fighter operations, and its in-depth expertise in management and control of tactical air assets graphically reflect the reasons for the organization's successes and the frequent recognition received by its members. A major thrust of the 182nd's mission is to provide world-class training and readiness opportunities, not only for its own members, but for those of other organizations and other service departments as well. Superior existing facilities, expansion capability, and recruiting and retention history enable the 182nd to easily accommodate support of operations and training for contingency, mobilization and increased future total force requirements should the Department of Defense deem that appropriate.

"I know firsthand how important the Peoria Air National Guard Base is to this community. For 57 years, it has provided both direct and support jobs to the greater Peoria area, and now contributes more than \$50 million a year to our economy. Simply put, our base is irreplaceable," Peoria Mayor David Ransburg said.

The Springfield Air National Guard Base, which contributes more than **\$60 million** into the local economy, is located at the Springfield Capitol Airport and provides critical support to the U.S. Air Force, Department of Defense and our allies related to its flying military missions, including air to air, air to ground, air support, and search and rescue teams. The unit also has several other crucial missions from engineer and communication teams to many other one, two or 20 person teams related to different military support missions, security police and chaplains of several denominations. This unit also has firefighters with a support agreement where the U.S. Air Force provides 100% of the airport's crash fire protection for both the commercial airport and the

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air guard. Homeland defense is also an important part of its portfolio because it serves as a back up for protecting civilian commercial aircraft for Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City and Indianapolis. This unit is ready for the next generation of Air Force aircraft because the base has extra ramp space available. The 183rd Fighter Wing has the desire, capability and the work ethic to handle any future missions with full community support for a seamless transition when called upon to meet any joint fighting, training and readiness requirement.

“Springfield’s Air National Guard Base already provides key services within the nation’s defense structure, and, unlike many other bases, it is primed to expand operations in the future. I will fight to protect the Springfield base, as well as all of Illinois’ essential military bases,” Congressman John Shimkus (R-Collinsville) said.

“I look forward to working with Governor Blagojevich, Speaker Hastert and Illinois’ entire Congressional delegation on this important effort. Our Air National Guard base in Springfield creates more than \$60 million for the local economy, and I am glad to have all of these allies joining us to keep the base open,” Springfield Mayor Timothy Davlin said.

The PMA Group is a Washington, D.C.-based, government relations firm founded in 1989. With an initial focus on defense, its expertise has expanded to include domestic areas of the federal budget. PMA has enjoyed successful growth by building a reputation for integrity, credibility and discretion. PMA is comprised of 41 professionals and support staff drawn from backgrounds as senior level Congressional committee staff, and operational and command experience from all branches of the military. PMA has 21 former/retired military officers who provide a wide spectrum of experience and knowledge in understanding and working with the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process. The PMA Group will earn \$140,000 for its 12-month contract with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

“We are fortunate to have this additional help in the fight to save the Rock Island Arsenal and our two Air National Guard Bases in Peoria and Springfield. This will help us make a very powerful case that Illinois depends on the arsenal and bases to keep our nation secure and our economy strong,” said Jack Lavin, Director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

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