



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 10, 2004

news

CONTACTS:

Cheryle Jackson	312/814.3158 (office)
Abby Ottenhoff	312/814.3158 (office)
Rebecca Rausch	217/782.7355 (office)
Andrew Ross	312/636.1747 (Opp. Returns)

GOVERNOR CONTINUES FIGHT TO SAVE THE ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod Blagojevich is continuing his comprehensive campaign to protect the Rock Island Arsenal from closing. Through *Opportunity Returns*, his extensive 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 the Rock Island Arsenal, and three other Illinois bases, from ending up on the Defense Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) list that will be announced next year. The Governor traveled to Washington, DC just last week to make Illinois' case for why the Arsenal, Scott Air Force Base, and the Air National Guard Bases in Peoria and Springfield should remain open. The Rock Island Arsenal contributes almost **\$900 million** to the local economy and supports **18,000 jobs**.

The PMA Group, the military affairs firm that the Governor recently hired to assist in the efforts to protect the Arsenal, conducted a meeting in Rock Island today with elected officials and business leaders. The Governor's Deputy Chief of Staff Julie Curry and Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Director Jack Lavin represented the Governor at the meeting.

"The Rock Island Arsenal is an absolutely vital part of our national security, in addition to its enormous economic impact. Working together, we will continue making the very compelling case for why none of Illinois' bases should close. This is another important step in ensuring that the Arsenal will continue serving our country with distinction. We will not rest until our mission is accomplished," Governor Blagojevich 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.

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

(more)

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.

The PMA Group is a Washington, DC-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 *Opportunity Returns* regional economic development plan is the most aggressive, comprehensive approach to creating jobs in Illinois' history. Since a one-size-fits-all approach to economic development just doesn't work, the Governor has divided the state into 10 regions – finding areas with common economic strengths and needs, and developing a plan with specific actions for each region. This grassroots effort is a product of significant outreach over several months with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. *Opportunity Returns* contains tangible actions to make each region more accessible, more marketable, more entrepreneurial and more attractive to business.

#####