

**Opening Remarks by Senator Charles E. Grassley
BRAC Regional Hearing in St. Louis
June 20, 2005**

Mr. Chairman and commissioners, as the senior senator from Iowa, it's my responsibility to open the Iowa portion of this joint Illinois-Iowa presentation. Joining me on the panel are Senator Tom Harkin and Governor Tom Vilsack. The only issues listed under Iowa in the BRAC list from the Department of Defense refer to the National Guard and Reserve. I'm generally pleased with those recommendations.

However, while the Rock Island Arsenal is technically considered part of Illinois, it's actually located on an island between Iowa and mainland Illinois. At least half of the employees live in the Iowa portion of the Quad Cities. For all practical purposes, I consider the Rock Island Arsenal to be as much an Iowa facility as an Illinois facility. I think I speak for the entire Iowa delegation when I say that the Rock Island Arsenal is the number one concern for Iowa in this BRAC round. That's also why I requested that the time allocated to Iowa at this hearing be combined with Illinois. I would ask that you keep this bi-state interest in mind throughout your deliberations on the Rock Island Arsenal.

Throughout my time in Congress, I have worked to eliminate government waste of taxpayer dollars, particularly in the Department of Defense. That's why I have always supported the BRAC process. In fact, I would like to thank you for undertaking what is often a thankless task. Your work will help ensure that the people's money is used more efficiently.

Along those lines, I would ask that you take a good hard look at some of DoD's proposals for the Rock Island Arsenal that just don't make economic sense. No community wants to lose jobs, much less their friends and neighbors. Still, if it's determined that an organization would be more efficient and less expensive somewhere else, then I can live with that. However, I don't think that's the case with a number of the recommendations from the Department of Defense.

For instance, the Department of Defense has proposed to move about one-thousand TACOM employees from the Rock Island Arsenal to Detroit Arsenal. I understand that Detroit Arsenal has a much lower military value rating than the Rock Island Arsenal. It would require huge up-front costs to construct new office space and parking garages at an already cramped facility. You would then have to pay the employees more because of the higher cost of living in that area. Not only would this move not save money, but it would cost the taxpayers significantly more in the long term.

The Department of Defense has also proposed moving and consolidating the Regional Personnel Office currently at the Rock Island Arsenal. I understand that this is the number one rated Human Resource Organization in DoD. It's not at all clear that this consolidation would save any money. It also just doesn't make sense to move the largest and most cost effective regional personnel office. These proposals not only violate DoD's own BRAC criteria, but they also defy common sense.

The Rock Island Arsenal has many features that make it a very valuable military facility. Its location on an island gives it unique security advantages. It has existing buildings that can accommodate growth. It also has an outstanding workforce in a low-cost federal pay area. The Rock Island Arsenal truly represents value for money. We should be making maximum use of everything the Rock Island Arsenal has to offer. In fact, the Department of Defense should have considered consolidating some of these organizations to the Rock Island Arsenal instead of moving them away. I would simply ask that you carefully review the information that will be presented by representatives from the Quad Cities and make the appropriate adjustments to your final BRAC report to the President.

**Closing Remarks by Senator Charles E. Grassley
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Mr. Chairman and commissioners, I would like to thank you for your diligent attention during the Illinois-Iowa presentation. Your job isn't easy, but it's important. Your ability to provide an independent analysis of the Department of Defense's BRAC recommendations is an essential part of this process. Your efforts help ensure that the final report will result in more efficient use of defense dollars and a more effective national defense infrastructure.

You have heard today about some of the organizations on the Rock Island Arsenal that provide vital contributions to our national defense. I'm convinced that some of the proposed realignments unnecessarily disrupt already efficient organizations and actually waste taxpayer money. I know you won't just take my word for it. You will go back and double check the facts with your fellow commissioners. In the end, I'm confident that you will do the right thing for the Rock Island Arsenal, the American taxpayers, and our national defense.