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House of Representatives
Washington, DC
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Commissioner Anthony Principi
Chairman, Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission
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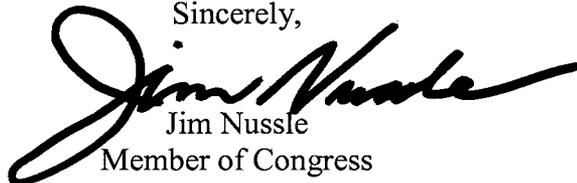
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Dear Chairman Principi,

Please find enclosed a copy of testimony I am submitting in conjunction with the June 20, 2005 field hearing in St. Louis, Missouri.

Thank you for your attention and hard work in support of our nation's defense.

Sincerely,


Jim Nussle
Member of Congress

Mr. Chairman and members of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission, thank you for the opportunity to offer this written testimony. No one can dispute the important role the Rock Island Arsenal (RIA) has played in our nation's defense and security for more than 100 years. From its early beginnings during the Civil War, RIA has evolved into the largest government-owned weapons manufacturing arsenal in the western world.

As American troops continue to fight the war on terror abroad, the incredible work of the men and women of the Rock Island Arsenal is perhaps more clear today than ever. The Arsenal has an ability to respond to the security needs of our country with both speed and agility. Just recently, when armored humvee kits were needed in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Rock Island Arsenal was chosen over any other private or public sector entity to provide this vital service. RIA is known world-wide for their extraordinary ability to produce a myriad of weaponry for our armed forces.

I am concerned that some of the changes proposed by the Commission in an effort to reduce costs and increase efficiencies do not accomplish this goal and instead deconstruct a beneficial and successful component of the Department of Defense (DOD) on Rock Island - the Tank Automotive and Armament Command (TACOM). Our group's presentation will demonstrate that the proposed changes in TACOM will actually lead to financial losses for the Army. Moving this command will result in DOD spending millions of dollars more each year for new training, construction and equipment. The net loss of military value in this case is one clear example of the Pentagon substantially deviating from the BRAC selection criteria.

Moreover, according to DOD's own system for assigning military value, some of RIA's effected agencies rank quite high when compared to the same organizations across the nation. Additionally, given the heightened emphasis on the security of any planned or existing facility in our post-September 11th world (which DOD has stressed themselves), it is important to note that the Arsenal is one of the most secure facilities in the nation. The Arsenal is situated on an island and has few points of access. It also has available high-quality land and facilities in a central location which make it ripe for future growth and expansion. In short, RIA has it all: quality space, quality buildings, and security; and these are certainly priorities in any DOD facility.

As you are well aware, and most agree, major changes need to occur in our nation's overall defense structure; but these changes should not come at an overall loss in existing military value. We should focus on improving the coordination and flexibility of our manufacturing capacity to produce less expensive and more efficient operations. As chairman of the House Budget Committee, I support this kind of flexibility and the financial savings it would bring.

In closing, I ask that you keep a few things in mind during these proceedings: the many American lives which have undoubtedly been saved thanks to the work done at the Arsenal; the role the Arsenal continues to play in promoting freedom around the world as it aids our soldiers fighting the war on terror; the tremendous economic impact of the Arsenal on surrounding communities; and the incredible military value it adds to our nation's armed services.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Commission, I am confident that after you hear the case for the Rock Island Arsenal today and view the evidence I have discussed above, you will have no doubt that moving jobs from the Arsenal simply does not meet the overall goal of improving military strength, value and efficiencies.