

United States Congress

The Illinois Delegation

Washington, D.C. 20510

April 12, 1984



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The Honorable Casper W. Weinberger
 Secretary of Defense
 The Pentagon
 Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Illinois Congressional Delegation requests your assistance in reactivating the Joliet Army Ammunition Plant (JAAP), one of the Nation's largest producers of munitions during World War II and the Korean and Vietnam conflicts.

This 23,500 acre facility, 60 miles south of downtown Chicago, has been on inactive status since 1976. It is located in an area where unemployment has continued at abnormally high rates despite economic recovery elsewhere. Joliet's unemployment rate peaked at 26.6% in February, 1983, and was still 14.4% in February, 1984, compared with the 7.8% national rate and Illinois' average rate of 9.5%.

Secretary of the Army John O. Marsh met with the Illinois Congressional Delegation on February 23, at our request, for a discussion of possibilities for fuller utilization of JAAP, including a proposal by Senator Charles Percy for using it as a site for the Army's new light infantry division.

On March 22 Secretary Marsh visited the plant with Senator Percy and Representatives Edward R. Madigan and George M. O'Brien. They inspected the facilities, on the ground and from the air, and met with local officials and business leaders who expressed strong support for the Percy plan.

Secretary Marsh indicated, however, that lack of troop facilities and space for field training would put JAAP at a competitive disadvantage with various Army posts being considered for the light infantry division. Most of the sites being considered have in excess of 100,000 acres available for training purposes as well as barracks and other troop facilities.

Although disappointed by this assessment, we were encouraged by Secretary Marsh's assurance that consideration would be given to other options that could put people back to work and give the Army a better return on its investment in a facility that has a replacement value of almost \$1.8 billion. He suggested the possibility of future ammunition contracts for JAAP, and particularly its potential for producing new and more powerful explosives, such as RDX-HMX.

The Joliet Plant has excellent facilities for loading conventional ammunition such as artillery projectiles, land mines or aerial bombs. Perhaps it could be arranged at this time to schedule these Joliet production units for some of the Improved Conventional Munitions (ICM) that are currently a part of the military procurement program. Such action would be consonant with Secretary Marsh's comments on the desirability of "work-loading" the Joliet plant.

The Army has modernization plans for JAAP calling for construction work costing more than \$303 million beginning in fiscal 1989. These plans were disclosed in an Army briefing during Secretary Marsh's visit. We hope that these plans can be advanced, and perhaps modified if necessary, to equip the plant to handle RDX-HMX and other ammunition contracts that may be coming up in the not too distant future.

It is our understanding that the Department of Defense is the final authority in ammunition procurement matters because such facilities as JAAP produce for all the armed services, not just the Army. For this reason, Mr. Secretary, we urge you to heed our plea and assist us in our effort to bring JAAP into production again.

Our delegation is concerned that for years Illinois has been getting the short end of the federal spending stick. Enclosed is a copy of an article from the April 6 issue of the Chicago Tribune showing that in 1982 Illinois once again ranked last among the 50 states in the amount of federal taxes it gets back from Washington. We need and deserve a better break, Mr. Secretary.

Sincerely,

Charles H. Percy, U.S.S.

Alan J. Dixon, U.S.S.

George M. O'Brien, M.C.

Edward R. Madigan, M.C.

Paul Simon, M.C.

Frank Annunzio, M.C.

Cardiss Collins, M.C.

Tom Corcoran, M.C.

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Augustus Savage, M.C.

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