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GETTING A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Promoting Virginia as a leading business destination requires a passport. For years, passports held by Virginia governors have worn the stamps of faraway places from Germany to Japan to India and beyond.

Governor Kaine's passport is no exception. His has been inked in the name of economic development five times during his term as Governor. Trips to Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Ireland, and Poland have led to countless corporate meetings, hundreds of handshakes and a robust list of new corporate partners for the Commonwealth.

The most recent international itinerary included stops in Israel, Morocco and Dubai.

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BRAC a Boon for Greater Charlottesville Region

When you think of Albemarle and neighboring Greene counties, do thoughts of small town charm, rural beauty, historic landmarks and wine tastings cross your mind? How about night vision equipment, top secret military intelligence and land mine detection equipment?

While history and homeland security may seem an unlikely match, the pairing is proving successful for defense-related companies that are moving to the Greater Charlottesville region. In 2005, a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) legislation was issued stipulating that the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) relocate 800 employees performing select intelligence analysis functions from Bolling Air Force Base and other locations in the national capital region to Rivanna Station in Albemarle County, home of the U.S. Army's National Ground Intelligence Center. The National Ground Intelligence Center (NGIC) also performs ground forces intelligence and is the center of excellence for ground force production. The workforce, a combination of military, civilian and on-site defense contractors, will relocate existing DIA operations.

Since the BRAC legislation was passed, activity has bustled on and behind the scenes in Albemarle County. The new Joint-Use Intelligence Analysis Facility is under construction, scheduled for completion in 2010. The University of Virginia Research Park recently completed another building to accommodate the growing needs of Northrop Grumman, a global aerospace and defense company. Defense-related companies including SAIC, CACI, Mitre, Battelle, Booz Allen Hamilton, Pragmatics and Shine Systems & Technologies have also located operations in the Greater Charlottesville region. All of the companies have business relationships with the DIA and NGIC or other federal defense agencies. The Department of Defense estimates that this BRAC action will generate more than 600 new, long-term indirect jobs in the Greater Charlottesville region.

Michael Harvey, President of the Thomas Jefferson Partnership for Economic Development, attributes the region's success to a number of factors. "We've been able to leverage a number of our location advantages to grow the defense cluster here in the Greater Charlottesville region. Our proximity to the nation's capital, one of the most educated workforces in the country and a world-class university in UVA are the key factors driving that growth."

The most recent addition to the region's growing defense industry is Ashbury International Group, a government and defense contractor that produces and manufactures laser range finders, combat equipment, night vision devices and other small arms weapons for the military and homeland defense. Because of the company's recent growth, Ashbury is expanding into a new facility in the Greene County Business and Technology Park. The company expects to hire at least 15 new employees.

Rendition by Baker and Associates.



Above is an artist rendition of the Joint-Use Intelligence Analysis Facility, the new U.S. government building under construction at Rivanna Station.

NIITEK, which develops landmine detection equipment for frontline military defense, has also announced its relocation to Albemarle County. Both Ashbury and NIITEK started in Northern Virginia and have chosen to grow their success in the Greater Charlottesville region.

Richard Hall, Ashbury's Vice President of Business Development, pointed to the Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport, U.S. routes 29 and 33 and an excellent quality of life as some of the reasons for choosing the region. "Ashbury's defense and government contract operations are also well served at the new facility," he said. "Greene County is an ideal location to support our company's future growth. We have received unparalleled cooperation from county government as well as superb local contractor support, access to an educated workforce and the proximity of several leading universities."

In 2005 when the BRAC directive came down, the economic development community formed a task force to work with the DIA and NGIC to prepare for what would be a tremendous impact on the community. State, regional and local economic developers teamed up with the University of Virginia, the Virginia Community College System, residential brokers, and others to better understand and assist the needs of the region's growing population.

"Each BRAC situation is unique but one feature is the same: the impact it has on our employees, their families, and the surrounding community," said Laura L. Donnelly, Defense Intelligence Agency Public Affairs Officer. "The talented members of the Rivanna Station Advisory Working Group have been exceptional with supporting DIA families relocating to the Greater Charlottesville region. The group met with employees and their spouses at two community relocation fairs held in the National Capital Region, providing important information on housing, schools, healthcare, child care, and county resources and activities available in Charlottesville and in the surrounding jurisdictions. The group also has developed a robust newcomers public Web site so that DIA's relocating employees have the most comprehensive and up-to-date information about community resources in the area." ■