

Remington Breaks Ground On AR Plant Expansion

Andrew DeMillo, Associated Press

LONOKE, Ark. (AP) — Remington Arms Company broke ground Thursday on an expansion to its ammunition plant in Arkansas, adding between 50 and 100 jobs in a project that the company says will help meet a growing demand by gun owners around the country.

Officials with the North Carolina-based firm said they expected to complete work by June 2014 on the 35,000-square-foot building adjacent to its existing plant in Lonoke, located about 20 miles east of Little Rock. The company currently employs about 1,300 workers at the plant, which has been open since 1969.

George Kollitides, chief executive officer of Remington's parent company the Freedom Group, said he believed Arkansas' history fits well with the gun maker. Kollitides noted that the state was the birthplace of the Bowie knife and Gen. Douglas MacArthur.

"There is no better place for Remington to be expanding, period," Kollitides said at the groundbreaking ceremony.

The company declined to provide specifics on the type of work that would be performed in the new building. The company said in a news release that the expansion will help meet demand "at a time when sportsmen and gun owners are struggling to find supply."

Plant Manager Jim Grahlmann said the plant produces between 2 billion and 3 billion rounds of ammunition a year. He described the new positions as "relatively high skill" and said current employees at the plant could apply for them.

The Arkansas Economic Development Commission said the company is receiving \$465,250 from a state incentive fund to go toward a concrete slab and block wall for the new building. In addition, Remington will also receive income and sales tax credits for the project.

Gov. Mike Beebe said the expansion showed the value of the state encouraging expansion among its existing businesses at the same time it's trying to attract new firms.

"It is so much more loyal to remember your friends who have invested with you over the years than to ignore them as you try to chase some new suitor," Beebe said.

The expansion was announced after a session where Arkansas lawmakers pushed for fewer restrictions on firearms while other states looked at new gun control measures in the wake of the Connecticut school shooting that left 20 children and

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six teachers dead last year. The measures approved in Arkansas included laws permitting churches and colleges to decide whether to allow concealed handguns.

The groundbreaking event also featured U.S. Sen. Mark Pryor, a Democrat who has faced criticism from gun control advocates for opposing a measure to expand background checks for firearms purchases. Pryor faces a tough re-election fight against Republican U.S. Rep. Tom Cotton.

"I'm looking forward to the next expansion," Pryor said. "I'm looking forward to the day Remington says 'Arkansas is such a good place and it's time for us to invest again. Let's do it in Arkansas.'"

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