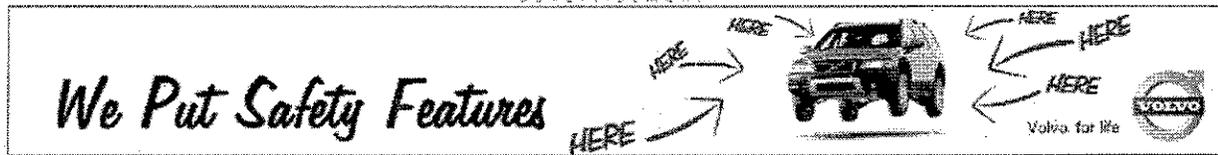



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From the Baltimore Sun

Md. leaders meet for semi-annual BRAC 'summit'

State officials face financial gaps in preparing for influx of people, jobs

By Larry Carson
Sun Reporter

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Despite facing huge financial gaps in preparing for the influx of new people and jobs brought by the federal Base Realignment and Closing, Maryland is using the changes "to do regional planning we should do anyway," a Maryland congressman told about 175 people gathered for a semi-annual BRAC "summit" today in Crownsville.

"BRAC has become a very useful vehicle," said Democratic U.S. Rep. John Sarbanes. "It's teaching us how to cooperate across regional, political and administrative lines" and it "jumps the state forward," the freshman congressman said. "I'm doing a lot of learning and listening."

That was a common theme at the Maryland Military Installation Council meeting, the first held since last fall's elections brought new leadership to federal, state and local governments -- a fact readily acknowledged yesterday by retired Marine Brig. Gen. Michael Hayes, who directs the group for the department of Business and Economic Development.

Hayes said nearly 80 percent of Maryland officials planning for the BRAC changes are different since the group's last meeting in September, but he added no momentum has been lost.

"I don't think we've missed a beat. Nothing has been lost in my mind," he said, because key staff members are still in place.

All key Maryland department heads are new, as are Gov. Martin O'Malley and Lt. Gov. Anthony Brown -- who chaired the meeting at state housing department headquarters -- the mayor of Baltimore, and the county executives of Anne Arundel, Montgomery and Howard counties.

"For all the years of experience in this room, I've been on the job 100 days," said David Edgerley, O'Malley's secretary of Business and Economic Development.

The lack of federal money for infrastructure improvements was another topic.

Transportation secretary John Porcari said the state needs about \$16.2 billion for transportation improvements needed for BRAC, and about \$40 billion for backlogged transportation projects statewide.

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