



THE MEMPHIS DEPOT TENNESSEE

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SECTION B

Demolition at defense depot paves the way for road construction

Stubborn smokestacks will be toppled as site prepared for tenants

By Pamela Perkins
The Commercial Appeal

Things got a bit anticlimactic Monday with what was supposed to be a booming symbol of the booming redevelopment of the dormant Defense Distribution Depot Memphis.

About 50 onlookers, including the city and county mayors, U.S. Rep. Harold Ford Jr. and other state and local officials, gathered to recognize the progression of the depot's transformation from a deserted military facility to a bustling leasing community of warehouses, manufacturers and light industrial businesses.

Today we're here to witness a new birth in this facility," said city Mayor Willie Herenton. That was before he and the others watched as blasts of dynamite failed to level two 75-foot smokestacks to inaugurate a nearly \$4.2 million road-building project headed by the Depot Redevelopment Corp.

Apparently, one smokestack was damaged enough to be pulled down. The other, still standing because of a faulty detonator, was marked

for another round of dynamite, perhaps today, said Gene Burr, DRC's project manager.

The DRC has overseen filling the depot's 5.5 million square feet of warehouse space with businesses since the military supply base closed in September 1997.

The announcement of a new tenant, Premiere Packaging, raised the number to eight. The company will lease 40,000 square feet and employ 17 people.

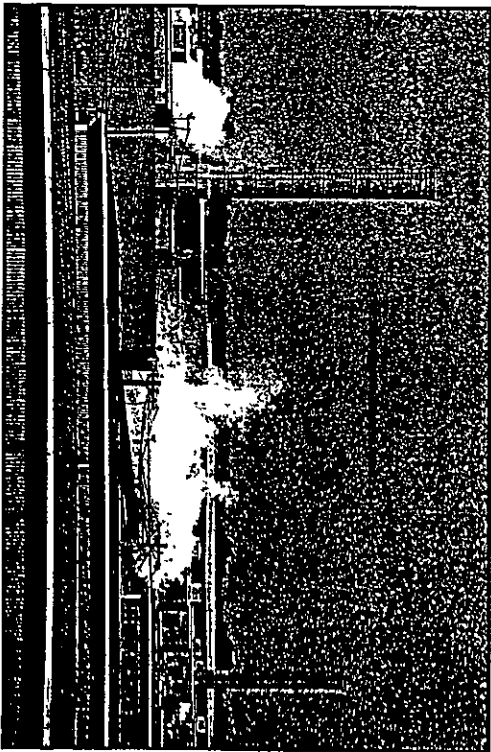
Although none of us wanted the government to leave, we will probably surpass, in another year, what the government did here," said Mike Ritz, chairman of the DRC board of directors.

The depot employed about 1,570 people at the time it closed. The current tenants bring more than 400 workers to the site. Typical salaries are \$16 to \$17 an hour, Ritz said.

Jim Covington, DRC president, said the DRC is ahead of its schedule to fill 500,000 square feet a year.

About 800,000 square feet of the depot now houses regular tenants. Another 250,000 square feet are occupied by special tenants, such as the Memphis Police Department's Southeast Precinct and the Memphis Leadership Foundation, which pay only maintenance and security fees.

"Sometimes good things come out of dark days," said county Mayor Jim Rout of the depot's closing. Rout likened his successful redevelopment to that of the Memphis Naval Air Station at Millington, and said it could poten-



By Lance Murphy

City and county luminaries gathered at the depot to watch the smokestacks go up in smoke, making way for a road. Thanks to a dud of a detonator, it didn't happen quite that smoothly.

Initially have the same positive impact on the surrounding community.

At 2163 Airways, just north of Interstate 240, the depot's border communities include Charlevoix, Castalia Heights, Orchard Homes and Killington Heights.

Ford said that details are being worked out between the House and Senate versions of President Clinton's proposal to transfer military facilities, such as the depot, to their communities for free.

The DRC is demolishing buildings to make way for a road from a new main entrance off Airways, and for room to park and maneuver trucks.

The road will end two-thirds of the way into the complex, branch out into a "T" and stretch to entrances on Dunn and Ball.

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