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U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter gestures as he responds to a reporter's question regarding BRAC Wednesday at Letterkenny Army Depot in Chambersburg, Pa. (Credit: Joe Crocetta / Staff Photographer)



Dr. John R. Gray, left, Deputy Commander at Letterkenny Army Depot, poses for a picture with U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter, right, Wednesday afternoon during Specter's visit to the depot. (Credit: Joe Crocetta / Staff Photographer)

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U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter, D-Pa., visited Letterkenny Army Depot north of

07/01/2009

Specter praises Letterkenny during visit

By JENNIFER FITCH
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CHAMBERSBURG, Pa. — U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter visited Franklin County, Pa., on Wednesday and praised Letterkenny Army Depot for positioning itself for the future, including its negotiations for new missile contracts.

Depot Commander Col. Steven Shapiro said Letterkenny currently manufactures the delivery components of Patriot surface-to-air missiles, but not the missiles themselves. He said the depot is negotiating contracts that would allow it to manufacture or repair missiles.

Specter, D-Pa., said a pending agreement with Raytheon Integrated Systems could establish Letterkenny as the subcontractor for Patriot missile systems to be sold to the United Arab Emirates.

"I'm impressed with what's happening with Raytheon and the possibility of constructing missiles here," Specter said. "That's very encouraging."

Part of the depot tour was designed to "make sure I know enough to keep you here if someone tries to take you away," Specter said, referring to the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process that last threatened Letterkenny in 2005.

Specter promised some of Letterkenny's uniformed personnel he will do his job in Washington, D.C.

"I worry from time to time about BRAC, the base closing commission," Specter said. "We were (touring) some buildings that had been turned back, as the colonel explained to me, to the local community, but they're busy now with construction of (armored) vehicles."

The vehicles to which he was referring, the Panther medium mine-protected vehicle, served as the subject of one of several jokes cracked by Specter.

"You have to come to some place like Letterkenny or Iraq to see a vehicle like that," he said.

Specter's visit was his first to Franklin County since announcing in April he would switch from the Republican to Democratic Party. The

Chambersburg, Pa., on Wednesday.
 Filmed 7-1-09. **(Credit: Jennifer Fitch / Staff Writer)**

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U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter, D-Pa., offered some lighthearted moments during Wednesday's visit to Letterkenny Army Depot in Chambersburg, Pa. He often cracked jokes and watched soldiers in the back of the room for their reaction. Filmed 7-1-09. **(Credit: Jennifer Fitch / Staff Writer)**

79-year-old took time Wednesday to meet with Democratic leaders in the county to shore up support prior to next spring's primary election.

The five-term senator brushed off polls concerning his job approval rating (reportedly down to 34 percent in June), and instead touted his seniority in Congress, position on the appropriations committee and backing by the president and vice president.

"I feel very comfortable as a Democrat," Specter said, saying he has voted independently. "I don't have to look over my right shoulder anymore."

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<p>From: local Wed 01 Jul 2009 07:47:50 PM EDT</p>	<p>I don't have much respect for Specter. Seems to me he's more in love with keeping his position than doing what his constituents want him to do. Politicians like that are the very root of our nations most serious problems.</p>
<p>From: hdenof Thu 02 Jul 2009 06:49:27 AM EDT</p>	<p>If there ever was a reason to vote out the "old guard" regardless of party, here it is!</p>

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