

MILITARY COMPANY BRINGS JOB

By Tom Embrey, Staff Writer

A new textile business has parachuted into Moore County.

BRS Fabrication, a subsidiary of Ballistic Recovery Systems, Inc. (BRS) of South Saint Paul, Minn., is a cut-and-sew business located in 40,000 square feet of the former Ellery building on U.S. 1 in Pinebluff.

BRS Fabrication's main products are personnel and cargo parachutes for the military.

"Our intent is to do most of our work for the Department of Defense," said Norman Girdwood, general manager of BRS Fabrication.

Girdwood said Moore County's proximity to Fort Bragg is a big plus for a company with a primary focus on military products. Availability of a skilled workforce is another plus.

"There is a labor pool we can draw from," Girdwood said. "Our products require skilled precision. We strive for quality output, not quantity, because most of our products have a safety-critical nature to them."

The business began training workers before Christmas and is currently operating with about 15 employees. Girdwood said he expects the work force to double in two to three months.

According to information from Partners in Progress, Moore County's economic development organization, BRS Fabrication made an initial investment of \$1 million in its operation here and anticipates growing to about 45 employees and investing an additional \$600,000 in the next three years.

Ray Ogden, executive director of Partners in Progress, said the business is a welcome addition to Moore County.

"We are thrilled to have them," Ogden said. "It brings jobs to a part of the county that needs them. It is definitely a good business for the county."

Established in 1980, the parent company, BRS, Inc. designs, manufactures and distributes aircraft emergency parachute systems for general aviation and recreational aircraft.

According to the company's Web site, the aviation recovery parachutes have saved 208 lives.

BRS Fabrication will also be involved in the manufacturing of personal protective equipment through Advanced Tactical Fabrication (ATF), which is a joint venture with

Head Lites Corp., a leading producer of reflective, high-visibility personal safety products, often used by police and fire departments.

Head Lites will continue to design reflective vests, headgear and other accessories for both civilian and defense-related applications, with sales handled by ATF. Manufacturing will take place at either BRS Fabrication in Pinebluff or BRS de Mexico in Tijuana, Mexico.

To meet Department of Defense requirements that all of its equipment be "Made in USA" compliant, BRS Fabrication will handle the manufacturing for all military contracts, whether for parachutes, protective gear or other products.

To learn more about the business, visit them online at www.brsparachutes.com.