



NEWS RELEASE

LOUISIANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Members urge reversal of Ft. Polk downgrade; area prepared for more troops

Members of the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, using testimony from state and local leaders on the impact of a troop reduction at Fort Polk, is urging the Department of Defense to change its plans.

The defense department has announced a possible reduction of approximately 5,300 soldiers and Army civilians from the loss of the 4th Brigade of the 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry). This number doesn't include contractors, support personnel and dependents. However, an alternate plan would station an additional 1,000 troops at Fort Polk.

“The state, parish and local businesses have invested heavily in a future to accommodate new troops. This is real money, real time and real effort; real lives investing in a future that has been taken away,” said State Rep. James Armes, D-Leesville, in a statement issued prior to today's hearing. “I urge them to re-evaluate that decision; to take a serious look at what we have already offered, and in what we still have to offer the fighting men and women of our nation.

Mike Reese, President of Fort Polk Progress, told the committee such a reduction of force at Fort Polk would have a tremendous negative impact on the state's economy, since Fort Polk is the largest employer in the state.

Maj. Gen. Glenn H. Curtis, head of the Louisiana National Guard, suggested growing a brigade combat team and to promote Fort Polk as the premier training site in the country.

Leesville Mayor C. Robert Rose said that Fort Polk can be the premier training site in the country, since training is year around. He asked the panel to help fight the battle and convince the Pentagon that Fort Polk makes economic sense.

“Not only would the people of southwest Louisiana be hit hard if Fort Polk lost over 5,000 troops, but our committee believes a better course of action for everyone concerned would be to allow the 4th Brigade of the 10th Mountain Division to remain at Fort Polk,” Committee Chairman Nick Lorusso, R- New Orleans, said. “Doing so would require an additional battalion of approximately 1,000 Soldiers to be assigned to the 4-10 Brigade Combat Team. Fort Polk already has the infrastructure to support those troops. As a result, no additional Federal military construction dollars would be required to build barracks or training facilities. It just makes good fiscal sense have the 4-10 Brigade Combat Team remained garrisoned at Fort Polk. As a result, the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs has sent a letter to Army leadership advising of the facts of Louisiana’s investment and urging them to grow Ft. Polk, not reduce it.”

Lorusso has served at Fort Polk while on active duty with the Army and is also a former member of the 10th Mountain Division.

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