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Governor Walker Says Fight to Keep Army Troops in Alaska Is Not Over

July 8, 2015 ANCHORAGE – Governor Bill Walker today expressed his disappointment and concern over the U.S. Army’s decision to remove 2,600 troops from Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson and 75 troops from Fort Wainwright, but said he will not stop fighting to keep those soldiers in Alaska. This reduction is a part of the U.S. Army’s larger effort to eliminate 40,000 troops nationwide.

“The decision to eliminate thousands of soldiers from JBER and Fort Wainwright will have harmful impacts on Alaska and the entire United States,” said Governor Walker. “I am by no means done fighting to keep these troops here. The military plays an integral role in Alaska’s safety and economic stability, and I will do whatever I can to make sure that doesn’t change.”

Troops being eliminated from JBER are part of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, commonly known as the 4-25th. The group is the only Arctic-capable airborne brigade combat team and the only airborne brigade combat team stationed in the Pacific theater. Governor Walker is concerned that this decision does not recognize the military’s national security requirements in the Pacific, or the acknowledgement by senior Army officials that it would take “months” to train and prepare a force to operate in the Arctic if starting from scratch.

“By limiting the number of soldiers stationed in Alaska, we are reducing our nation’s capabilities when responding to matters in Asia and the Arctic,” Governor Walker said. “We should be bolstering our military presence in Alaska right now, not making significant cuts to it.”

In February, Governor Walker and Alaska National Guard Adjutant General Laurie Hummel traveled to the Pentagon to meet with General Raymond T. Odierno, the 38th Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, to discuss the important presence of the brigades, soldiers and their families in Alaska. Additionally, Governor Walker and Lieutenant Governor Mallott attended and spoke at community listening sessions in Fairbanks and Anchorage advocating against troop reductions in Alaska.

“I will continue to reach out to Army officials and the Department of Defense to stress the importance of keeping these soldiers at JBER and Fort Wainwright,” Governor Walker said. “It’s good for Alaska and good for our country.”

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