

KEN SALAZAR
COLORADO



United States Senate
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20510 - 3903

June 20, 2007

The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Over the last several months, the Army has been examining the possibility of completing a 400,000 acre-plus expansion of the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site in southeastern Colorado. This training facility already encompasses 235,000 acres. The Army's expansion proposal has caused great concern among local landowners and residents who fear that an expansion of the site will devastate the agricultural economy of the region. This is a concern that I share and one that will lead me to oppose the expansion unless it provides significant economic benefits to southeastern Colorado. I firmly believe that any expansion of the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site must offer a win-win solution for the Army and for the residents of the area.

In a recent meeting with Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations and Environment Keith Eastin, I shared my vision for how the Army might construct a win-win solution. Specifically, I asked him to examine the possibility of permanently stationing a brigade at the maneuver site in a Fort Carson Annex. This arrangement could provide benefits to the Army, which is looking to expand by six brigades, and benefits to local communities, which would finally see a long-term benefit from the Army's presence in southeastern Colorado.

When the Army established the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site in the early 1980's, residents were assured that the site would create jobs and revenue for nearby communities. Unfortunately, the Army has made minimal investments in infrastructure on the site and has refrained from permanently stationing soldiers there. As a result, the economic benefits come primarily to Colorado Springs and the Pikes Peak region, where soldiers have their homes. Towns like Trinidad, Walsenburg, Kim, Model, and Tyrone see few positive impacts from the Army's training on the 235,000 acre site. One need only look at examples of other training ranges where the military has not invested in the local economy to see the long-term costs of failing to integrate a training area with local communities.

Stationing a brigade at the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site would be a significant step toward creating a relationship of mutual benefit to the Army and the communities of southeastern Colorado. Construction of a brigade complex at the site would create jobs in construction, range management, and in the service sector. Army families living in the local communities would buy homes, patronize local businesses, restore county tax revenues and put down roots. The stationing of a brigade at Pinon Canyon would also benefit the Army by providing a home to one of the new brigades that the Army is standing up, by keeping soldiers near their training areas,

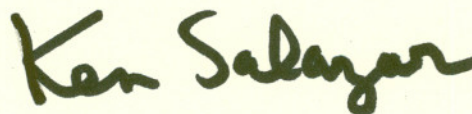
and by providing Army families the high quality of life they would enjoy in southeastern Colorado.

This is one of the many ideas that the Army should explore if it intends to continue to develop its plans for expansion. An economic win-win for southeastern Colorado might also include: the creation of an economic development fund that will sustain growth and new investments in southeastern Colorado; the establishment of an office to help local businesses navigate the DOD procurement process and bid on contracts; the continued grazing of lands that the Army acquires for training; the leasing of land from private landowners for training at certain times of the year; minimizing tax impacts on citizens who choose to sell land to the Army; and allowing continued public access to historic and cultural sites. At no point should the Army take land from residents who do not wish to sell their property.

It is important that the Army craft a proposal that represents a win-win for southeastern Colorado as soon as possible. As it stands today, the proposal is vague and inadequately justified. Public opposition is growing, and the uncertainty about the future of Pinon Canyon is already having a detrimental impact on land values and communities in the area. It is not sufficient, in my view, to simply defer questions about the expansion to the start of the NEPA process, as the Army has largely done; before entering the environmental impact statement process, the Army needs to present a sound, defensible plan for expansion that articulates how it will provide real economic benefits to the affected communities.

I would like to work with you and with the Army's leadership to find a solution that helps Fort Carson meet its training needs while protecting the livelihood, property rights, and way of life of the residents of southeastern Colorado. To this end, I ask that you evaluate my suggestions and provide a thorough response to me within 30 days. This information will be of assistance to me and my colleagues as we consider the Department of Defense budget request for Fiscal Year 2008.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Salazar". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ken Salazar
United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable Pete Geren, Acting Secretary of the Army
General George W. Casey, Chief of Staff of the Army
General Richard Cody, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army
Mr. Keith Eastin, Acting Secretary of the Army for Installations and Environment
Major General Robert W. Mixon Jr., Commander, Division West, 1st Army and Fort Carson
The Honorable Carl Levin, Chairman, Senate Armed Services Committee
(ctd.)

The Honorable John McCain, Ranking Member, Senate Armed Services Committee
The Honorable Wayne Allard, United States Senator
The Honorable Bill Ritter, Governor of Colorado
The Honorable Diana DeGette, United States Congresswoman
The Honorable Mark Udall, United States Congressman
The Honorable John Salazar, United States Congressman
The Honorable Marilyn Musgrave, United States Congresswoman
The Honorable Doug Lamborn, United States Congressman
The Honorable Tom Tancredo, United States Congressman
The Honorable Ed Perlmutter, United States Congressman