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January 22, 2008

Maj. Gen. Mark Graham
Commander, Division West, First Army and Fort Carson
6101 Wetzel Avenue
Building 1430
Fort Carson, CO 80913

Dear General Graham:

In light of the Army's decision to add a fifth combat brigade and additional support units to Fort Carson, I write to respectfully request that, as you plan the expansion of Fort Carson to accommodate the needs of incoming service-members and their families, you consider modernizing Gate 19 to permit full access to and from communities south of the Mountain Post.

Since taking office in 2004, I have enjoyed working with Fort Carson's leadership to ensure that your construction and infrastructure priorities are met in the federal budget. I am proud of our joint work on a wide range of projects, including our swift progress – in partnership with local and state governments - toward upgrading the interchange near Gate 20. With additional traffic coming on post, this interchange was in dire need of expansion. I will continue to fight to ensure that this project is completed in a prompt and efficient manner.

In addition to Gate 20, I have long advocated for the modernization of Gate 19, located south of Butts Army Airfield along I-25. If made operational, Gate 19's proximity to Pueblo and areas south of Fountain would make it a vital link between the Mountain Post and the communities on its southern boundary.

Last year, I encouraged General Mixon, the commander of Fort Carson at the time, to begin the scoping and planning process for modernizing Gate 19. As I understand it, that work has been completed. General Mixon reported in a letter dated April 23, 2007, that he believed the construction of Gate 19 ought to proceed "as a related and parallel project" should Fort Carson undertake other expansion projects to support an additional Combat Brigade.

I share that view and believe it is time to proceed with the modernization of Gate 19. The influx of some 4,900 additional soldiers and their families to Fort Carson presents a great opportunity for the local community, but practical challenges such as transportation infrastructure and housing remain.

As I understand it, there may be an opportunity to site the brigade complex for the new brigade near Wilderness Road, south of the current cantonment area at Fort Carson. This would, in my view, be an ideal location, given that location's proximity to both Gates 19 and 20, Butts Army Airfield, and the communities of Fountain, Colorado Springs, and Pueblo. I would suggest that if you indeed determine this to be the best location for Fort Carson's fifth brigade, that you also explore the possibility of expanding access to State Highway 115 along the western boundary of the post. This would further broaden housing options for soldiers and their families who may want to consider living in Fremont or Custer counties.

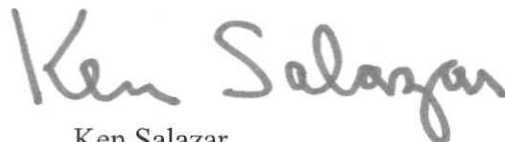
Modernizing Gate 19 and improving access to the Mountain Post from SH 115 would be, in my view, an important step toward reducing congestion on the roads surrounding Fort Carson and expanding the housing options for military families as they get settled in the region. In addition, these projects would bolster Fort Carson's relationship with communities south of the post by allowing the economic benefits of the Army's presence at Fort Carson to reach a broader range of communities in the region. These relationships are important not just to these communities, but also to helping Fort Carson meet its needs, from ensuring that soldiers and families are enjoying a high quality of life to advancing the Mountain Post's efforts to curb encroachment near its fenceline.

As you proceed with your planning for accommodating a fifth brigade at Fort Carson, I ask that you keep me informed of your military construction and infrastructure priorities, so that I can continue to advance these priorities in Congress. Specifically, I would respectfully ask that you keep me updated on the progress of work near Gate 20, on your plans for Gate 19, and other opportunities for strengthening Fort Carson's ties with Pueblo, Fountain, Colorado Springs, and other nearby communities.

I appreciate your consideration of my request, and I look forward to our continued work and collaboration to prepare the Mountain Post for the soldiers and families coming to the Pikes Peak region and southern Colorado.

Thank you for your service to our country.

Sincerely,

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

Ken Salazar
United States Senator