STATE OF NEW YORK
EXECUTIVE CHAMBER
ALBANY 12224

ANDREW M. CUOMO
GOVERNOR

August 11, 2014

Honorable John M. McHugh
Secretary of the Army
101 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0101

General Raymond T. Odierno
Chief of Staff, U.S. Army
200 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0200

Dear Secretary McHugh and General Odierno:

The State of New York strongly supports Fort Drum. Any additional cuts to Fort Drum personnel will negatively impact Army preparedness, and the economy of New York's North Country. The State is a proud partner of the Army and wishes for that partnership to continue to be strengthened so that soldiers and families of the 10th Mountain Division are provided the best of training, employment opportunities and quality of life.

The Army derives great value from several unique aspects of Fort Drum including the absence of a need to operate or sustain an Army school and Army hospital on-base. A partnership between the Army, New York State, and the local community has established a new model for soldier readiness and family support while allowing the Army to focus entirely on what it does best, defending the United States of America and supporting our allies abroad.. The interdependence between the Army and the community surrounding Fort Drum means that reductions of the magnitude considered by the Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Assessment (SPEA) would undermine that partnership and devastate northern New York's regional economy, while providing limited cost savings to the Army. Unlike at other posts, troop reductions do not lead to additional overhead savings at Fort Drum.

New York State understands the budgetary challenges facing the Army. However, the SPEA maximum cut would affect an additional 24,288 spouses and children of those soldiers, resulting in a direct loss of thirty-three percent of the total population from within the Fort's "region of influence" and more than thirty-five percent of the region's existing jobs. Of the twenty-nine other facilities assessed by the Army in the SPEA, none is projected to suffer such steep losses of population and jobs as a result of potential cuts. Hollowing out Fort Drum's mission-critical capabilities would harm Army readiness. In addition, because of the unique relationship between the North Country and Fort Drum, remobilizing after this decimating blow would be practically impossible.

Fort Drum is the only power projection platform in the northeastern United States. It has excellent training facilities and is capable of deploying within twenty-four to thirty-six hours. As the Army concluded in its initial 2013 Programmatic Environmental Assessment, "The regional assets, supporting facilities, infrastructure, airspaces, and equipment make Fort Drum and Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield one of the best training area locations in the Army and possibly the DoD." New York State's continued support of the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program and the regional transportation system have enhanced these capabilities. The State's enacted budget for fiscal year 2014-2015 includes an additional $1 million for the ACUB program – double the 2013 amount and expected to leverage acquisition of an additional 2,500 acres.

As noted in the SPEA, construction of the new $57 million Fort Drum Connector (Interstate 781) between Interstate 81 and the North Gate of Fort Drum provided needed capacity improvements. Additionally, construction of a new $1.9 million access road at the Port of Ogdensburg, completed in October 2013, has increased the region's ability to accommodate large format cargo. These projects, along with construction by the State of two 4,000-foot rail sidings at Fort Drum in 2006, have greatly increased the ability of units at Fort Drum to deploy quickly.

By the Army's own estimates, more than forty-eight percent of Fort Drum's soldier and civilian population lives off-base in the surrounding community. State, local and private investments has greatly expanded housing stock within the community surrounding Fort Drum, and eliminated a housing shortage at the installation that existed as recently as 2011. Within the last year, New York State has committed an additional $14 million in housing aid and tax credits through the NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal, for a total of more than $91 million since 2005. Projects funded by these investments have resulted in more than 1,000 additional units of housing in the community.

The decision by the Army not to establish an on-base school system or hospital on-base was made in 1985. As a result of this unique arrangement, the Army leverages substantial annual cost savings – none of which could have occurred without significant State and local investment that has increased the Fort's healthcare and educational capacity far beyond what would otherwise exist. Consequently, the Army will not realize any additional cost savings from reduced demand driven by any force reductions at Fort Drum as it would at other installations. Instead, as the SPEA correctly notes, that decreased demand "would result in hospital and other clinic closures and loss of access to specialty services", "the termination of teachers, professional staff, and support staff" and force schools "to close or consolidate." This would not only destroy the past investments by the State and local community, but the present capacity of those institutions would no longer be available to support future force structure adjustments.

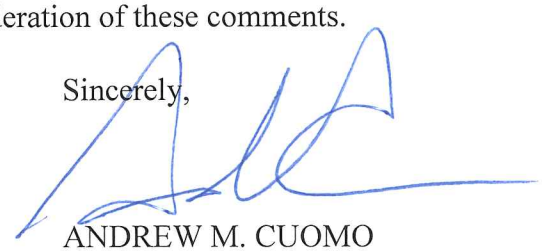
As noted in the SPEA, more than twenty percent of the region's civilian labor force is employed in the educational services, health care and social assistance sector. Children of military families comprise approximately forty percent of total enrollment in the three area school districts. Furthermore, thirty-eight percent of students at Jefferson Community College are soldiers, family members or veterans. Since 2007, state and local partners have invested approximately $19 million in technology infrastructure upgrades, and an additional $4 million

for recruitment of health care professionals, with a particular emphasis on mental health professionals. Within the region ninety-seven percent of local physicians are TRICARE credentialed.

The Army already eliminated a Brigade Combat Team from Fort Drum in its 2013 force structure adjustment. While the State knows the Army faces difficult decisions, Fort Drum simply leverages too many capabilities, cost savings and Total Force benefits from the existing partnerships with the State and local community to risk crippling the region's economy with any further reductions. Instead, the State of New York looks forward to strengthening those ties for the mutual benefit of the soldiers and families at Fort Drum and all the residents of the North Country.

Thank you in advance for consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



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