

Army colonel offers timeline for BRAC

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U.S. Army Col. Mike Wadsworth, the deputy commandant of the Armor School, has beaten the tanks to Columbus. But for those who doubt the troops are soon to follow, Wadsworth issues the following warning.

“I am tangible evidence we are coming down,” Wadsworth said Tuesday afternoon at a Base Realignment and Closure briefing for military and civilian personnel at the National Infantry Museum and Soldier Center at Patriot Park.

The colonel presented a timeline that will bring more than 11,000 troops, civilian employees and defense contractors to Fort Benning over the next 17 months. About 28,000 people including spouses and children are expected to move into the Chattahoochee Valley as the Armor School relocates from its long-time home at Fort Knox, about 35 miles from Louisville, Ky.

The timeline is as follows:

-- July — The Armor School commandant will be assigned to Fort Benning. He will move between Columbus and Fort Knox, overseeing the movement of the troops. Advance parties for the two brigades assigned to Fort Benning — the 194th Armor brigade and the 316th Cavalry brigade — will begin arriving and begin to set up operations at Harmony Church on post in new facilities under construction.

--September — The Patton Museum will be shut down at Fort Knox. The artifacts will be packed for shipping to Fort Benning, where they will be stored until a facility can be constructed here.

-- January 2011 – The first armor training will begin on Harmony Church at Fort Benning. Mechanics for the tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles will be the first trained here.

-- Spring and summer 2011 — Training echelons will complete their work at Fort Knox and move to Fort Benning.

-- Sept. 15, 2011 — The BRAC process has to be complete.

Last week, the Army and Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce held an information fair at Fort Knox for troops and civilians facing the move to Georgia. There were about 250 people from the Columbus area offering information on housing, schools and local communities.

It was helpful for the more than 1,600 people who attended, Wadsworth said.

“The community was nothing short of gracious,” Wadsworth said. “That helps break down some of the apprehension. We really pressed hard to get soldiers and civilians to attend. And that was precisely the type of information they need to make informed decisions.”