

# Construction in double time

## WORK AT FORT CARSON PICKS UP SPEED AS ARRIVAL OF 4TH INFANTRY DIVISION NEARS

By TOM ROEDER THE GAZETTE

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More than 400 construction workers are swarming Fort Carson this month, and more will arrive as the pace of building picks up in anticipation of the arrival of the 4th Infantry Division.

Workers have broken ground for a new brigade complex that will house 3,900 soldiers and will include barracks, offices and motor pools. Workers also are hammering away at two training ranges where soldiers' actions will be digitally recorded by dozens of video cameras for later review.

With other building sectors recently buffeted, and a plunge in the number of new home starts, the steady federal paychecks are good news for the region's economy.

"It provides a significant economic stimulus for the economy," said Brian Binn, who oversees military issues for the Greater Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce. "Every project out there is a positive sign."

The 4th Division is returning to Fort Carson from Fort Hood, Texas, after a 10-year hiatus. Fort Carson, which in 2005 was home to 15,000 soldiers, will house 25,000 or more in the coming years. The post has all the structures that fit the division back in 1995, but the unit has grown to include a fourth 3,900-soldier combat brigade and has picked up other supporting units.

The post will need dozens of buildings to hold the new units, and planners also are preparing to start work on a new division headquarters building, because another command that's now taking up that space at Fort Carson isn't budging.

Post planners are battling the clock.

The first new soldiers from the division are expected to come to Colorado Springs before the end of the year, and the biggest influx of soldiers is expected next summer.

Ed Whitcraft, Fort Carson's director of public works, said one of the toughest jobs on the post has been figuring out where all the newcomers and the soldiers who are staying will wind up when the cubicles stop spinning.

"It's a bit of a shell game," he said.

Another challenge for Whitcraft will be to upgrade the post's road network to accommodate thousands of extra cars. Planners predict that hundreds of additional drivers will come to Fort Carson from the southern part of the county, including the communities of Fountain and Security.

Whitcraft said workers have begun to widen roads that connect the post to Highway 16, which runs to Fountain. Local and federal officials have targeted a stretch of Highway 16 beyond the post's fence for \$60 million worth of improvements, including widening it from two to four lanes.

Although construction workers are speeding along in their tasks, they won't be finished anytime soon, Whitcraft said. Projects at the post are planned through 2009.

## WHAT'S TO COME

Here's a summary of changes residents can expect. **Soon:** The post's 7th Infantry Division, which oversees the training of National Guard troops, will change its name later this month to 1st Army Division West. The change signifies the command's new role in training nearly 200,000 Guard and Reserve troops in the western United States. **This fall:** The post's 3,700-soldier 2nd Brigade Combat Team is expected to leave for a year in Iraq. The post's 3,900-soldier 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team is expected home from Iraq.

**This winter:** The first top commanders from the 4th Infantry Division are expected to move to Fort Carson from Fort Hood, Texas.

The 43rd Area Support Group leaves for Afghanistan.

**Spring 2007:** The first big influx of new soldiers arrives at Fort Carson, and more arrive into the summer. The post will be home to 25,000 soldiers by 2008, an increase of 10,000 soldiers over three years.

Fort Carson's four new National Guard training buildings are to be completed by early November, said Matthew Purcell, project manager.



**PHOTOS BY CAROL LAWRENCE, THE GAZETTE** - Workers cleaned a room Wednesday in one of the four National Guard training buildings under construction on Fort Carson. Fort Carson, which in 2005 was home to 15,000 soldiers, will house 25,000 or more in the coming years.



**CAROL LAWRENCE, THE GAZETTE** - National Guard training buildings are under construction at Fort Carson. Ed Whitcraft, Fort Carson's director of public works, said projects at the post are planned through 2009.