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Vitter, McCrery, Alexander Announce Key Additions to Fort Polk

(Washington, D.C) – U.S. Sen. David Vitter and U.S. Reps. Jim McCrery and Rodney Alexander announced this morning that Fort Polk will become home to a new Battlefield Surveillance Brigade. The new brigade is scheduled to add approximately 1,300 soldiers to the post near Leesville by fiscal year 2013. An element of the brigade will be involved in military intelligence, including the operation of drone surveillance aircraft.

“This is great news for Fort Polk and for the entire region of Central Louisiana,” said Vitter. “Fort Polk has a significant economic impact that reaches throughout the area, and the addition of more than 1,300 soldiers will only increase that impact.”

U.S. Rep. Jim McCrery also applauded the Army’s announcement of the assignment of the additional soldiers to Fort Polk.

“This is yet another indication of the importance of Fort Polk to our nation’s overall defense strategy,” McCrery said. “Closer to home, Fort Polk is extremely important to the state and local economy.”

U.S. Rep. Rodney Alexander, a member of the U.S. House Appropriations Committee, worked closely with McCrery to secure the funding in the House version of the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies spending bill. Alexander said he agrees the new brigade will reap economic benefits throughout the state.

“With Fort Polk’s location so close to the 5th District, a new brigade means more jobs for residents in Central Louisiana,” Alexander said. “Jim, David and I realize the importance of Fort Polk and its efforts in the Global War on Terrorism and we will continue to preserve this installation for years to come.”

Coordination with and assistance from civilians surrounding Fort Polk played a critical role in securing the new brigade. Vitter, McCrery and Alexander met with Secretary

of the Army Pete Geren on September 20 of this year to discuss Fort Polk as a site for a new potential brigade.

In the recent spending bill that was approved by Congress, Vitter, McCrery and Alexander secured \$9.8 million for Fort Polk that will go toward the construction of a new headquarters for the Fourth Brigade/10th Mountain Division. This unit was activated in January 2005, and since that time the brigade combat team has operated out of a 30-year-old facility. As part of the brigade's transformation to a Brigade Combat Team of Action, a new state-of-the-art headquarters facility is essential to support the brigade's enhanced mission capabilities.

Vitter, McCrery and Alexander also secured additional funding to help improve child care and living conditions at Fort Polk in the recent spending bill.

"I worked hard to secure additional funding for child care and living condition improvements for Fort Polk in the most recent spending bill passed by the Senate," added Vitter. "This additional funding will continue to make Fort Polk a thriving and vital center for our national defense."

The timing of this announcement meshes well with the fact that the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development has been given the green light to use \$15 million in surplus state funds for the widening of the second of three sections of La. Highway 28. The contract for the 4.4-mile section from La. 465 in Vernon Parish to the Rapides Parish line is expected to be let by LADOTD in 2008.

"Jim and I worked tirelessly to secure critical transportation funds in the last highway bill that dedicated funding for improvements to Highway 28. This corridor is a vital artery for Fort Polk, and these additional funds will go a long way in helping improve transportation in and around Fort Polk."

"Improvements on La. 28 increase Fort Polk's standing as a power projection platform," McCrery said. "It enables units there to deploy even quicker to a hotspot anywhere in the world."

Fort Polk is a 198,555-acre facility in Vernon Parish with an annual economic impact estimated at nearly \$1.4 billion and a current active duty population of more than 8,000.

"A lot of work went into this," McCrery said. "The CENTLA delegation of local business and civil leaders who traveled to Washington this fall to show support for Fort Polk played an important role in the process."

Fort Polk is currently home to the Operations Group of the Joint Readiness Training Center, the 4th Brigade of the 10th Mountain Division, and the 1st Combat support brigade.

Both the 4/10 and the 1st CSB are currently deployed in support of the Global War on Terror.