



Fort Stewart ready to grow – The base to receive \$199M for projects

By Hank Rowland – The Brunswick News, Brunswick Georgia

Fort Stewart's economic value to Coastal Georgia may be going up after all, even after the Pentagon canceled an additional brigade this past June that had been planned for the base. If all goes well, millions of federal dollars will be headed to the fort to fund several major construction projects. Senate passage of the 2010 Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act Tuesday included \$199 million in new construction at the Liberty County base. The bill will have to be reconciled with a House version, but its content is not expected to change much. All is in preparation for quartering more troops at the base, say two supporters of the spending plan, Sens. Johnny Isakson and Saxby Chambliss, Georgia's two Republican senators. Fort Stewart, the largest base of its kind east of the Mississippi River with 280,000 acres touching five counties, is expected to grow from 20,512 to 24,970 troops in the foreseeable future, the Army estimates. There is push by Georgia's delegation to Congress to get the Army to consider the Hinesville fort as a new home for combat teams that will be removed in the years ahead from Europe after the military canceled a fifth brigade for the base. The new brigade would have brought in as many as 4,000 troops and their families. Language included in the bill Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs supporting future expansion at Fort Stewart made the measure even more attractive to Georgia's senators. "This bill is a significant expression of support and acknowledgement of the tremendous value of Fort Stewart," Chambliss said. "I am grateful for the committee's recognition of the impact that moving one or more brigade combat teams out of Europe would have on an installation such as Fort Stewart. "I can think of no better place to position a brigade. It is strategically located and positioned for future growth, thanks in part to the support shown by Congress in this bill, and by the people of Hinesville, Liberty County and communities." The bill includes \$80 million for barracks and dining, \$49 million for a brigade complex, \$49 million for a warrior in transition complex and \$22 million for a health and dental clinic. Other Army bases in Georgia also are slated to receive major funding totaling about \$838 million. The figure includes \$199 million for the coastal Georgia fort. Fort Stewart, about 60 miles north of Brunswick, and Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah together generate federal expenditures totaling some \$1.2 billion yearly on the coast, authorities estimate. The Brunswick-Golden Isles Chamber of Commerce says residents here are employed at the base. It says soldiers and their families live or shop here too.