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BRAC money to train civilians

By Henry Cuningham
Military editor

The U.S. Department of Labor will award a \$5 million grant to help train civilian workers for high-tech jobs created around Fort Bragg by base realignment.

“This important funding will help the region prepare and seize the economic opportunities coming with this military shift,” said Rep. Robin Hayes, a Republican from Concord.

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“The expansion of Fort Bragg resulting from the BRAC round not only solidifies the base’s status as a critical component of our national security, but it also presents tremendous economic prospects for the surrounding region,” said Sen. Elizabeth Dole, a Republican from Salisbury.

The BRAC mandates include the move of the Army’s Forces Command headquarters from Atlanta to Fort Bragg. The four-star headquarters is expected to bring higher-paying military and civilian jobs and lure contractors specializing in defense and homeland security.

“Today’s award will allow workers from Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base to prepare for rewarding careers in emerging technology-based industries,” said Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao. “Strategies and programs implemented with the help of these funds will become national models for BRAC-related work-force realignment.”

The Dislocated Worker Demonstration Grant will go to the N.C. Department of Commerce for the Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base BRAC Regional Task Force.

“We are very pleased,” said Paul Dordal, executive director of the task force that provides a liaison between the military and the 11 surrounding counties.

The news of the grant comes less than two weeks after the Department of Labor rejected the task force’s application for a \$5 million, three-year Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development grant to promote economic transformation.

“We were concerned when we didn’t receive the WIRED grant from the Department of Labor,” Dordal said. “With the support of our congressional delegation, especially Congressman Robin Hayes, they were able to fund this through a demonstration program.”

The military moves will create opportunities in information technology, communications, military equipment, biotechnology and other areas, Dordal said.

“It’s an excellent opportunity to transform our economies and to train our work force for the jobs associated with emerging industry that are related to defense and homeland security,” Dordal said.

The task force will work with educational institutions and economic development commissions to develop programs to help train workers, Dordal said.

About \$2.2 billion of construction will take place at Fort Bragg during the next five years to support growth and reorganization.

“We expect to see an increase in requirements for health care and educational professional and service-related jobs and skilled labor for the construction requirements at Fort Bragg,” Dordal said.

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