

# Cucolo: 5th brigade will bring service, jobs

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In a little more than a year, the 3rd Infantry Division is expected to grow by almost a 20 percent of Fort Stewart's current troop strength.

The first soldiers of the 5th Brigade Combat Team will begin arriving at the post by April of 2010, and by mid-December 2010, 4,000 soldiers, accompanied by an estimated 6,000 family members and civilian support staff, will make Liberty County and Fort Stewart their official home away from home.

On Thursday, Maj. Gen. Antho-

ny Cucolo said the new brigade will bring challenges, but also plenty of opportunities for Liberty County.

"We've got roughly 23,000 soldiers total between Stewart and Hunter and the number is going to go to 27,000 in the next few years," the general said. "Where we'll need help is in family housing. We need family housing for all ranks."

There are expansion plans in the works for the post and construction for the 5th BCT's operations area is scheduled to begin in just a few weeks.

As part of the expansion, the 5th

BCT will be getting its own quadron built in the back gates of Fort Stewart, between Highway 144 and Midcoast Regional Airport.

Cucolo said the construction plans for the brigade include new family housing, a 5th BCT brigade complex and headquarters building, brigade barracks, new fitness center and a new child development center.

Still, Cucolo said housing for the infantry brigade will continue to be a concern for him and the division.

"I think I can only house 20 percent of my strength," the general

said.

Because of that small percentage, Cucolo said he will be dependent on the city and the county to provide some of his soldiers' housing needs.

The commander said he will also need help from the county fulfilling healthcare and other support needs for the new soldiers.

"You can imagine that when you add 5,000 new people, healthcare is an issue," he said. "There are going to be job opportunities both at Winn Army Community Hospital

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and in civilian healthcare off post."

Specifically, Cucolo said the division will need health specialists to help with mental health needs and may have to go beyond the borders of Liberty County to find the help.

"We're short now, but we're definitely going to need it, and we continue to look for behavioral health assistance," he said.

According to the two-star general, jobs will also be available in construction, childcare, education and civil service as the soldiers and their families get settled in.

"Fort Stewart is a growth

but I don't know."

For now, the general said his focus will remain on maintaining a working relationship with Hinesville and Liberty County to get the help and services his soldiers will need.

And when the 5th BCT arrives he will expect them to also provide a service to those who will support them.

"Fifth brigade will be another group of leaders and soldiers who will want to support their local town, county with sponsorships," he said.

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