

City to host D.C. reception



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Officials to celebrate Fort Stewart's Army Community Excellence Award

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City officials flew to Washington, D.C., Tuesday to host a banquet honoring Fort Stewart for recently receiving

the Army Community Excellence Award, as well as to continue lobbying the city's case for the expansion of troops.

"It's good to know we've got the best Army installation in the world," said Mayor Jim Thomas, who is on his

second lobbying trip in two weeks. "It's good for the whole community."

City officials invited lawmakers, Army officials and representatives from surrounding cities such as Savannah and Brunswick to a steak-dinner reception Wednesday night at a Ruth Chris' Steakhouse where guests will recognize the efforts of those who make Fort Stewart a successful installation as well as learn more about the post.

"This is the fourth time they've received the award, but not in a row," the mayor said of Fort Stewart receiving the excellence award this year. "They received it three years in a row and then had to wait until they were eligible again [installations can only win three years in a row]. The first time they were eligible again, they got it."

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As part of the award, Fort Stewart also receives \$1 million for improvements.

Thomas is hoping the reception will highlight the importance of Fort Stewart, as well as keep the instal-

lation in the minds of those making decisions in Washington.

He said as of now, the city hasn't heard any more details about the possible influx of troops. Two years ago the Army announced plans to add a fifth brigade to the 3rd Infantry Division and to station it at Fort Stewart. Recent budget proposals, how-

ever, had fueled speculation that might not happen.

That's when area officials mounted the lobbying effort.

"If you're not seen, you're not heard," the mayor said.

While he can't guarantee a concrete answer, he hopes to get a feeling for how things are looking for the installation which he said is a

vital economic organ for the city.

"We haven't heard a thing," he said before leaving on the trip. "I hope to hear something there."

Officials on the trip include City Manager Billy Edwards, who could not be reached for information about costs of the trip and reception.