

“Bottom line: There’s going to be nothing but more deployments.”

— Maj. Gen. Anthony Cucolo III

Cucolo stresses need for planning, preparation

Gen.: 10,000 people will move here by 2013

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When Maj. Gen. Anthony Cucolo III spoke to members of the Liberty County community during Wednesday’s Progress Through People Luncheon at the Econo Lodge in Hinesville, he didn’t mince words.

The commanding general of Fort Stewart and the 3rd Infantry Division spoke matter-of-factly about the impending arrival of the 5th Brigade on Fort Stewart.

“Between now and 2013, at least 10,000 more people will be pouring in here. It’s real. It’s going to happen,” Cucolo said. “A brigade that does not exist yet is already on the deployment chart. This is critical to the Army that this 5th Brigade be built.”

The addition of the light infantry brigade combat team won’t be the first time Cucolo has seen an Army installation through a period of intense growth. As deputy commanding general of the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum, N.Y., Cucolo was present when hordes of soldiers descended on the Thousand Islands Region of northern New York about



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Maj. Gen. Tony Cucolo speaks with Gary Walker, board president of the Liberty County Chamber of Commerce, Wednesday before giving a speech at the Progress Through People Luncheon.

five years ago, straining the base’s resources and making convenient housing virtually nonexistent.

The Fort Drum community, Cucolo explained, had been let down before when scheduled additions and planned installation growth did not pan out.

“I don’t blame them because they had been

burned before,” Cucolo said. “They had been told in the past that things were going to happen, but things change. They had been on a roller coaster for years.”

Although Cucolo said Fort Drum officials appealed to the community in advance for help with preparations, developers and local leaders were skeptical.

“They had an ‘I’ll build it when I see it’ attitude. They just didn’t want to do it until they were absolutely certain it was going to happen,” Cucolo said.

Cucolo’s appeals for assistance now to the Hinesville and Fort Stewart community most likely



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Gen. Cucolo’s luncheon presentation at www.coastalcourier.com

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won't go unheeded.

"I think we've got notification enough that developers and community leaders will accommodate everyone," said Hinesville Mayor Jim Thomas, who attended the luncheon and heard the general's speech.

"Gen. Cucolo is very knowledgeable about what is going on," Thomas said. "It's absolutely amazing. Growth is coming. We'll have to accommodate."

In addition to its absorption of arriving 5th Brigade soldiers, Fort Stewart also will welcome back 3rd Infantry Division troops returning from deployments in the coming months.

"From July to September, everyone will be here," Cucolo said. "But we'll be busy as heck."

Combat teams will again be preparing for upcoming deployments to Iraq.

"Bottom line: There's going to be nothing but more deployments," the general said. "We characterize this as the era of persistent conflict. For the next decade at least, the world is going to demand the use of more foot soldiers."

Luncheon attendee Luis Carreras, president of the Coastal Empire Chapter of the Association of the U.S. Army, said he thinks Liberty County is ready to take on the challenge Cucolo has

presented.

"He's asking us to take a chance and I really believe we have to do that," Carreras said. "This is great for the community and it's going to require a lot of teamwork."

Carreras, who is retired from the military, said Hinesville is a unique setting for an Army base given its multiple modes of transport.

"I spent 22 years at military installations, and I've never seen an installation with a situation like this with air, sea, railways and highways," Carreras said. "We're a power project. You can go anywhere in the world from here."

And, according to Cucolo, Fort Stewart soldiers do come from every corner of the globe, and they need the continued support of the community to do their jobs and thrive in a foreign environment.

"I have soldiers from Guam to Maine, and the last piece of America they saw ... before they got on an airplane to head to combat was you all," Cucolo said. "You have a very important role to play and we appreciate your support."

Liberty County Chamber of Commerce executive director Kenny Smiley, who took the podium after Cucolo's speech, found the general's words inspirational.

"If that doesn't make you want to put your best foot forward and be the best in your community," Smiley said, "I don't know what will."