

Study Session
Selah City Council
September 13, 2005

Mayor Pro Tem Allen Schmid introduced Lieutenant Colonel Rick Nohmer, Commander of the Yakima Training Center. The Mayor Pro Tem stated he and the Commander had a previous discussion about City activities, and the Commander offered to make a presentation about what's going on at the Yakima Training Center. He stated he titled the Commander's speech "Yakima Training Center - Today, Tomorrow and the Future."

The Lieutenant Colonel Nohmer began by noting the City of Selah and the Yakima Training Center have a special relationship, an economic connection, but also a feeling of great support from the residents. He stated the importance of a continuing dialogue between the Training Center and City officials to keep apprised of the direction the YTC is taking. He introduced Steve Kruger, YTC Public Works Director, and stated Me. Kruger will walk the Council through the Master Plan for the Training Center.

Members of the Council and audience introduced themselves to the Lieutenant Colonel. He introduced the YTC Mission Statement: *The Yakima Training Center supports tough, realistic, combined arms, joint and coalition forces training for US and allied military units in order to enhance unit readiness by maintaining maneuver areas and range complexes capable of meeting all of today's and all future training requirements. Supports mobilization and post mobilization training for Reserve Component forces.* He stated the YTC used to be a "firing center" but now is a full-blown "training center" providing firing and much more for every branch of the service, the National Guard, resident units, reserve units, and local law enforcement units as well as Japanese and Canadian troops. He discussed the structure of the YTC and praised the relationship they have with local law enforcement, emergency services and the Selah Fire Department.

He stated the Yakima Training Center consists of 327,000 acres, 305,000 of which can be used for maneuvers and 22,000 of which is an impact area. It includes 1635 miles of roads, 25 established range complexes including a multi-purpose range complex and a multi-purpose training range, and 2 new urban training centers that replicate what it's like to fight within a city. He stated they are developing "Yakistan" to replicate terrain conditions in Afghanistan.

He stated the YTC is unique because it can train weapons systems that are actually being used at the range at which they are designed to be used. He stated the YTC has an airstrip that is compatible with C-130 landings, and sometime in the future it may be modified to handle bigger planes. The YTC has fixed helicopter landing sites and 4 large drop zones for paratroop drops. It also has a fully deployed Medivac helicopter.

Lieutenant Colonel Nohmer stated the Yakima Training Center can handle up to 11,000 troops at a time. He noted they have a new Emergency Operations Center and invited those involved with Emergency Management to visit that new Operations Center. He stated that while they are upgrading, most barracks are still made of Korean war wood.

In the area there are about 7500 retired military families. He stated he estimates that the YTC likely has a \$40million impact on local communities. He stated there are contracts for individuals and local companies with the building on the Center, one of several ways the Training center is connected with communities.

Councilman Herb Schmidt noted he took grandson out on the Training Center today.

The Lieutenant Colonel stated they have a Kiddie Pond available for free fishing, the John Wayne Trail is used by horse groups, hikers, bikers. He stated the Audubon Society schedules bird-watching in the area.

YTC Public Works Director Steve Kruger defined the "cantonment area" as the Training Center's "city." He stated the Master Plan update is centered on the cantonment. He noted unit sizes are larger, creating the need for larger facilities. He stated that while the Yakima Training Center is used to handling 2500 people, but now they are starting to get as many as 4500. He stated the need to plan for mobilization, land use to provide support and training for troops that have been called up.

Mr. Kruger suggested Council Members think of zoning when he speaks of "Master Plan." He referred to the 1990's when units were positioned back in the United States and referred to the changes to facilities necessitated by that repositioning. He stated most of the existing cantonment area is located near the entrance to the YTC. He noted the first thing needed was to look at where the support needs to be, what kinds of facility changes should be made to better protect and house forces. He projected the need to build 7- 500-people compounds, where soldiers can sleep, eat and fill their basic needs. He emphasized there is no permanent family housing on the Yakima Training Center at present. He noted they will demolish facilities to replace them with up-to-date ones.

Mr. Kruger broached the topic of the "Yakima Option" or what if the YTC needed to accommodate family housing for resident troops.

Colonel Nohmer remarked that he would hate to call on Friday notifying the City of Selah it would double in size by Monday.

Public Works Director Kruger said they need to look at what would it take to station a brigade of 7000+ at the Yakima Training Center (roughly the size of Selah) noting they would need to be separate from transient population. He expressed a concern about informing cities in the adjoining area of this potential. He projected Fort Lewis will increase by approximately 3500 in the next few years and will grow from 25,000 to approximately 33,000.

The Lieutenant Colonel stated Army housing has been privatized at many installations; a company comes offering to build residences for an agreed amount. They then contract with buyers directly.

Joe Henne asked if the Yakima Training Center would build schools on the base.

Lieutenant Colonel Nohmer stated there is a Department of Defense school in Leavenworth KS designed to meet the need of 4500 dependents. He stated the Yakima Training Center will look at all the options. He stated he would like to investigate going into a community and working with a contractor to develop housing for which soldiers would receive a direct housing allowance. He assured Council Members the Army does not want to build little fortresses.

Councilman Keith Larson asked if the mission of the YTC would change from training to permanent posting in that eventuality.

Lieutenant Colonel Nohmer said the Yakima Training center would need to change somewhat if a brigade were to be moved in to be permanently stationed here.

The Mayor Pro Tem thanked the Lieutenant Colonel Nohmer and Public Works Director Kruger for coming.

Lieutenant Colonel Nohmer expressed his thanks to the Council, noting he would like to schedule regular meetings to keep communication lines open.

