

Member Day Testimony
Rep. Richard Hudson (NC-08)
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Chairwoman Wasserman Schultz, Ranking Member Carter, and Members of the Subcommittee – thank you for the opportunity to be here today to discuss two critical Military Construction needs at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

My name is Richard Hudson, and I have the distinct privilege of representing Fort Bragg and North Carolina’s Eighth Congressional District.

As many of you know, Fort Bragg is the home of the 82nd Airborne Division that makes up our nation’s Immediate Response Force, as well as the XVIII Airborne Corps, the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), the Joint Special Operations Command, and U.S. Army Forces Command.

If you think of any major military operation in the last century, there is a good chance that a unit or command from Fort Bragg was involved.

In fact, just in the last 3 years, the 82nd Airborne’s Immediate Response Force has received four no-notice deployments.

First - On New Year’s Day in 2020 when the American embassy was under attack in Baghdad.

Second - In August of last year, during the drawdown in Afghanistan and subsequent evacuation mission out of H-KIA (Hamid Karzai International Airport).

The third and fourth were in February and March of this year, to support NATO allies in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Simply put, these commands and their units are the tip of the spear when it comes to defending our nation and our allies.

In my previous appearances before this subcommittee, I’ve discussed key investments needed across the installation and highlighted the lack of attention conventional forces have received.

This year, I’d like to advocate for two projects that will benefit conventional forces, military families, and their children.

The first is construction of a Multipurpose Training Range (MPTR), which is found in the President’s FY23 Budget Request.

Currently, Fort Bragg has a requirement for four Multipurpose Training Range’s, but has zero on hand.

As a result, deploying units must travel to off-post or out-of-state locations to complete required training for areas such as mounted gunnery and mobile protective firepower.

This means a lack of training on certain weapons systems that are critical to unit readiness.

Especially now as we train Ukrainian soldiers and NATO allies on key systems being used to defend against the Russian invasion, we cannot have our soldiers unfamiliar with the operation of these platforms.

The construction of a Multipurpose Training Range would enable these units to maximize their training time, instead of wasting time in transit to off-post locations.

This could potentially save lives by preventing vehicle accidents such as a rollover, which often occur in transit.

It will also save fuel cost as well as maintenance dollars by decreasing wear and tear on their unit vehicles.

I implore you to see what is at stake here, as Fort Bragg needs this investment to be able to respond to the next global crisis.

The second project I'd like to advocate for is the construction of a new Child Development Center - a project that can be found on the Army's latest FYDP.

I think we can all agree that the last thing members of our military should be concerned about is being able to provide childcare while a spouse is working or the servicemember is deployed.

Chairwoman Wasserman-Schultz, you alluded to this need in your testimony during last week's Quality of Life hearing. I certainly appreciate the attention you have given to this issue and hope the Department of Defense will do the same.

According to military families I've spoken with, Fort Bragg's Child Development Centers have a waiting list that can span several months and even up to a year.

This is because of the sheer volume of personnel stationed at the installation, as well as special requirements, including high operation tempo.

As you may know, Fort Bragg's Child Development facilities and personnel are one of the few in the Army that are capable and qualified to provide childcare for special needs children.

Because of this, many soldiers with children who have special needs are stationed at Fort Bragg, creating an even greater need for on-post childcare spaces.

I believe our military's recruitment, retention and overall readiness are harmed when a military family can't find quality childcare for their children. The conversations I've had with families at Fort Bragg, over the last two years especially have only reinforced this.

The existing deficit of childcare spaces creates an unnecessary hardship on soldiers and civilians at Fort Bragg.

The last thing we want to do is force families to use unauthorized childcare facilities, seek off-post facilities, or end their service.

I understand we do not have unlimited resources to provide our men and women in uniform.

Additionally, I do not envy any member of this committee who is faced with making these tough decisions.

However, I implore you to consider funding these two projects as you begin to craft the FY23 MilCon/VA bill. Supporting our troops' readiness, and their families, is critical.

Again, I'd like to thank Chairwoman Wasserman Shultz and Ranking Member Carter for allowing me to testify today, and I stand ready to answer any questions you may have.