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IT'S OFFICIAL: FT. RILEY EXPANSION ON HOLD

WASHINGTON -- LAND ACQUISITION AT FORT RILEY WAS OFFICIALLY PUT ON HOLD BY THE PENTAGON TODAY FOLLOWING A MEETING IN SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER BOB DOLE'S OFFICE.

SENATOR DOLE GOT THE NEWS DURING A FACE-TO-FACE MEETING WITH THE NUMBER TWO MAN AT THE PENTAGON, DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE DONALD ATWOOD. ADDITIONALLY, ATWOOD TOLD THE SENATOR THAT FORT RILEY'S 'ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES STUDY' THAT IS PENDING CONTRACT AWARD IS ALSO ON OFFICIAL HOLD.

DOLE CALLED DEPUTY SECRETARY ATWOOD TO HIS OFFICE TO CLEAR UP CONFUSION SURROUNDING A RECENT PENTAGON MEMO THAT REPORTEDLY PLACED A MORATORIUM ON ALL LAND ACQUISITION BY THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PENDING A REVIEW BY MR. ATWOOD AND SECRETARY CHENEY.

"IT'S LESS LIKELY NOW THAT FORT RILEY WILL BE ADDING KANSAS LAND TO ITS BOUNDARIES. THERE WAS A LOT OF CONFUSION WHETHER THE MEMO WOULD HAVE ANY IMPACT AT ALL ON FORT RILEY EXPANSION. THAT'S WHY I CALLED MR. ATWOOD TO MY OFFICE TO GET SOME ANSWERS. NOT ONLY IS IT ON HOLD, BUT I WAS TOLD TODAY THAT EVEN SO-CALLED URGENT LAND ACQUISITION WOULD ALSO GET THE SAME SLOWDOWN TREATMENT," DOLE SAID.

ATWOOD TOLD SENATOR DOLE THAT THE SERVICES WILL NOW HAVE TO SET PRIORITIES--DECIDE WHAT LAND ACQUISITION IS URGENT AND WHAT IS NOT. THE APPROACH THE DEPARTMENT IS TAKING IS SIMILAR TO THE APPROACH THEY HAVE TAKEN ON THE MILITARY CONSTRUCTION MORATORIUM: THAT WHICH THE SERVICES CONSIDER URGENT WILL HAVE TO BE SENT TO MR. ATWOOD FOR A WAIVER. WITHOUT ATWOOD'S APPROVAL, EVEN "URGENT" LAND ACQUISITION CANNOT MOVE FORWARD.

"I WELCOME THIS DECISION BY THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE. WE ARE FACED WITH A SEVERE BUDGET DEFICIT AND U.S. FORCE STRUCTURE IS BEING GRADUALLY REDUCED, SO WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE THAT EVERY PROGRAM IS SCRUTINIZED AND THAT EVERY ACRE OF LAND THAT IS REQUESTED IS FULLY JUSTIFIED. IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO DEMONSTRATE THAT A MILITARY REQUIREMENT IS TODAY'S REQUIREMENT, BUT THAT IT IS TOMORROW'S REQUIREMENT AS WELL. AND, WE HAVE TO BE ABLE TO AFFORD IT. THIS MORATORIUM AND REVIEW ARE NECESSARY FIRST STEPS IN THE LARGER PROCESS OF READJUSTING OUR DEFENSE POLICY FOR THE FUTURE."

SENATOR DOLE MET WITH DEPUTY SECRETARY ATWOOD FOR ABOUT 30 MINUTES. ATWOOD DID NOT INDICATE HOW LONG THE MORATORIUM WOULD LAST OR WHEN THE REVIEW WOULD BEGIN. HOWEVER, DOLE ADDED, "THIS NEW OFFICIAL POSITION MEANS NOTHING WILL BE HAPPENING VERY QUICKLY".

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