

Notes from Fort Carson Helicopter Meeting
Thursday, June 9, 2011, 6-7 pm
Victor, CO

A very professional, informative slide briefing was presented by Colonel McLaughlin, the Garrison Commander of Fort Carson. There were five Fort Carson personnel at the meeting and notes were made of all comments. It was a very good meeting and well received by all. Many people thanked the military men for their service and for their eagerness to work out any problems.

Colonel McLaughlin began by listing all the positive benefits of having about 27,000 people at Fort Carson. It would be listed as Colorado's 14th largest town if it was a city. It is a sought-after assignment for Army personnel because it is in Colorado, with all our many attractions: camping, winter sports, mountain scenery, etc. It even spills over into Teller and Park Counties when Army personnel and their families have time off to enjoy motorcycling, hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, gambling, or just a Sunday ride. There are benefits for all of us because of the military in Colorado Springs.

increasing to 30,000

Because of Colorado and nearby Fort Carson, it is the only place in the lower 48 states where helicopter training can take place in mountain altitude like Afghanistan. They have to be able to practice handling helicopters in wind currents, air pockets, nighttime/night vision, sudden drops, take-offs and landings. They are the life blood in Afghanistan, rescuing the injured, dropping supplies, and firing on enemies who have trapped our forces. We need to keep in perspective that our military is the reason we are able to hold a meeting such as this one and enjoy our freedoms. You are all making a contribution to this country by tolerating reasonable helicopter maneuvers.

(In the Bin Laden mission, one of the helicopters suddenly dropped unexpectedly in the altitude of Abbottabad and crashed into the compound's cement wall. Fortunately, another larger helicopter was able to land and pick up all of the Seals.) This is a prime example of why we need to practice at high altitudes.

The guidelines for helicopter maneuvers in Teller and Park Counties include:

- Helicopters must fly at 500 ft or higher.
- They try to fly mostly over BLM land, and practice take-offs and landings on BLM land.
- If they are flying lower than 500 ft at night and shaking your house, or shining lights into your house, please call Fort Carson Operations Center (open 24 hours so you can call at night if this happens), 719-526-5500, and ask for the Public Affairs Officer on-call. Fort Carson does not want you to endure this kind of problem and wants to know the locations the helicopters need to avoid. Colonel McLaughlin said that many of these pilots are young and do break the rules sometimes, but they will only know if you call and report it.

Three people did report that the helicopters had flown over their houses at night so low that it shook the house, scared their cattle out onto the highway, and one helicopter had even hovered over a house at 2 a.m. for 15 minutes and shined a spotlight into their windows. Fort Carson will be working with each of these people to remedy their concerns.

There appeared to be no Guffey representatives, except Carol Todd, at the meeting.