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General says fourth of personnel in BRAC move already at Bragg

By Henry Cuningham

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PINEHURST - About 740 people have arrived at Fort Bragg from Atlanta for the BRAC move, a Forces Command official told a statewide business audience Tuesday.

That represents more than a fourth of the 2,800 people who will be coming from Fort McPherson. Those workers are mostly higher-level civilian and military personnel.

More people will move in May, and "we'll finish up in August," said Brig. Gen. Kenneth C. Roberts, director of mobilization for Forces Command. Each command has about 370 people in place at Fort Bragg, Roberts said.

The top commanders will move in June and July, he said.

Roberts, an armor officer who went through airborne school four years ago at age 49, spoke to an audience of about 300 at the luncheon of the North Carolina Defense Business Association Symposium and Exposition at the Pinehurst Resort.

Initially about 90 percent of workers indicated they might make the move, which was above expectations, Roberts said. A year ago, about 70 percent indicated they planned to move, he said. An estimated 45 to 50 percent probably will move, he said. The depressed Atlanta housing market means people selling houses will take a "big hit," he said.

Forces Command is in charge of preparing soldiers and units for overseas deployment. The four-star command holds quarterly conferences with representatives from throughout the Army to synchronize those activities, he said.

Roberts filled in for Lt. Gen. Howard Bromberg, the Forces Command deputy commanding general, who had been scheduled to speak.

About 50 vendors set up booths at the symposium and exposition, which concludes today, said Joy Thrash, executive director.

The association's purpose is to provide information on contracting with the federal government and allow business people to make contacts and build relationships, Thrash said.

Today's schedule includes a video greeting from Lt. Gen. Frank G. Helmick from Iraq and a luncheon speech by Ronna Garrett.

Helmick is commander of Fort Bragg and the 18th Airborne Corps and is serving as deputy commanding general for operations of U.S. Forces-Iraq through December. Garrett is Forscom's officer in charge at Fort Bragg.

The 2005 Base Realignment and Closure law directs that Forces Command and U.S. Army Reserve Command relocate to Fort Bragg no later than Sept. 15.

Forces Command is the Army's largest command.

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