

August 1, 2006

Francis J. Harvey  
Secretary of the United States Army  
101 Army Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20310-0101

Dear Secretary Harvey:

R-CALF USA (Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, United Stockgrowers of America) strongly opposes military expansion of the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site (PCMS) in southeast Colorado.

This proposed expansion by the U.S. Army is part of Fort Carson's efforts to bring in more troops and increase the military's land holdings in Colorado. Neither Fort Carson nor Department of Defense representatives have quantified the exact number of acres involved in the planned expansion, nor have they provided information regarding the number of existing small businesses and families that likely would be displaced by the expansion.

Currently, the maneuver site is located in Las Animas County, which not only is the largest county in the state, but also is the most productive county, in terms of cattle-production enterprises, having the largest population of breeding cattle. There is speculation the proposed expansion could involve 418,000 acres to 2.5 million acres. Hundreds of small businesses, consisting of independent ranching and farming operations – some of which have been family owned and operated for several generations – could be completely or partially eliminated as a result of the expansion, causing potentially severe economic impacts, as well as adverse social impacts, to rural communities throughout the region.

In February, R-CALF USA representatives met with members of Congress to discuss their concerns about, and opposition to, expansion of the maneuver site. We understand that PCMS currently is the second largest Defense Department training site in the nation. PCMS was completed in 1983 at an approximate cost of \$26 million and consists of 245,000 acres. The Defense Department manages about 25 million acres nationwide.

R-CALF USA believes the Defense Department was ill-advised to proceed with its proposal, given the expansion's likelihood of eliminating productive agricultural land and numerous small business enterprises, which will result in

the displacement of families, the communities they now support, and a loss of the county's tax base.

R-CALF USA further believes the Defense Department was remiss when, on Dec. 14, 2000, it entered into a formal Memorandum of Understanding between The Nature Conservancy, the U.S. Army, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, an agreement presumably based on a belief that The Nature Conservancy represented the land-holding interests within the affected region. We are concerned that The Nature Conservancy continues to misrepresent the interests of the affected region.

R-CALF USA understands the importance of maintaining a strong military. However, the elimination of a productive component of our nation's food-production industry, along with the involved small businesses, families, and communities to achieve that objective, appears counterproductive. We respectfully request an opportunity to meet with you for the purpose of exploring alternatives to the Defense Department's proposal to expand the PCMS in southern Colorado.

Sincerely,

Chuck Kiker  
R-CALF USA President and Region V Director

cc: U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives Armed Services Committee