

## **Col. Tom Macdonald, known as Fort Benning's mayor, leaves for new assignment overseas**

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Col. Tom Macdonald, the garrison commander at Fort Benning, will say goodbye during a change of command ceremony at 8 a.m. Tuesday at Ridgway Hall.

Over the last three years, Macdonald has been considered by some residents and employees as the post's mayor. He will turn over the day-to-day operations to Col. Jeffrey Fletcher.

Macdonald's new assignment is with the NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan. His family will remain in the Columbus area while he is deployed. He was not available for comment Thursday.

Gary Jones, vice president of Military Affairs at the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce and Fort Benning's garrison commander in 1992, said Macdonald did an outstanding job.

"He is actively involved in both the community and the bi-state region," Jones said. "Tom's focus was really to ensure that soldiers and their families had a wholesome, supportive environment both on and off post."

Former Columbus Mayor and retired Army Col. Bob Poydasheff said Macdonald not only understands the needs of Fort Benning but also of the Chattahoochee Valley.

"He has been working very, very closely with people in the region, with the leadership," Poydasheff said.

The former mayor said Macdonald also is accessible and returns phone calls.

"Truly and truly, Columbus has been blessed with his leadership," Poydasheff said. "I hope and pray that he will come back to Columbus and Fort Benning."

Fletcher is no stranger to Fort Benning. He served as the executive officer for 1st Battalion, 50th Infantry Regiment and as commander of B Company, 30th Adjutant General Battalion from June 1991 to June 1995. He was garrison commander of U.S. Army Garrison in Mannheim, Germany, from June 2006 to August 2009.

Fletcher's most recent assignment was serving as a student at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pa.

As garrison commander, Fletcher will oversee base operations, public works and family support programs for soldiers and their families. Among those services are morale, welfare and recreation, education services, residential housing, religious support and emergency services.

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A major function of the job is overseeing the execution of the Base Realignment and Closure process that moved the U.S. Armor School from Fort Knox, Ky., to Fort Benning.

As part of the Installation Management Command's southeast region, the garrison at Fort Benning employs more than 15,000 employees across the Southeast and manages an annual operating budget of \$2.2 billion.

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