MAYOR REX RICHARDSON
CITY OF LONG BEACH

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Office of the City Manager
411 West Ocean Boulevard, 10th Floor Long Beach, CA 90802
(562) 570-6711 FAX (562) 570-7650

June 11, 2026

Lieutenant General Lawrence G. Ferguson
United States Army Special Operations Command
4700 Knox Street
Fort Liberty, NC 28310

RE: Opposition to U.S. Military Training Exercises in Dense Urban Areas

Dear Lieutenant General Ferguson,

On behalf of the City of Long Beach (City), the City has serious concerns regarding the recent U.S. Military (military) exercises conducted within and surrounding Long Beach. While the City recognizes the importance of relevant and timely training exercises for the military, the manner in which these exercises were carried out caused significant and unnecessary disruption to the City's residents, businesses, and public safety operations.

The military has conducted training exercises and activities in and around Long Beach for many years without incident. However, the recent activity strayed dramatically from the traditional extent and impact of these types of exercises. The City was given limited notice prior to the exercises and was prohibited from sharing relevant details as they arose to ensure the security of the operation. This limited notice period did not allow sufficient time for appropriate community outreach, operational planning, or public communication to help residents and businesses understand what was going to take place, and what they might expect. As a result, City departments experienced an increase in calls for service, including many from residents who were unaware of the exercises and feared an actual emergency. Despite efforts, once publicly available details were made available, residents and businesses felt it was far too little time to plan and react.

The location of the activity was also adjacent to several critical resources, including the VA Medical Center, power stations, a senior community, businesses, and ecologically sensitive wetlands. Several species of threatened and sensitive species rely on the Los Cerritos Wetlands for survival, including the non-migratory, Belding’s savannah sparrow, of which there are less than 3,000 pairs remaining in California. Low-flying helicopter activity associated with the exercises generated debris and other disturbances, forcing both small and large businesses to halt operations to address cleanup and safety concerns. The use of controlled explosions and simulated weapons fire kept residents awake late into the night, including young children and seniors. These impacts were avoidable with proper planning and notice and contributed to confusion and distress among community members.

The City understands the necessity of training exercises designed to prepare for a wide range of emergencies and operational scenarios. However, such activities must be balanced with the well-being and safety of the communities in which they occur. Conducting simulated “urban warfare” operations in close proximity to densely populated neighborhoods and commercial corridors created substantial logistical and safety challenges for numerous City departments and City safety providers, especially when they come with little to no notice and very limited public information to share.

The confusion, fear, and operational strain generated by the recent activities further erode the public’s trust and confidence in any local and federal cooperation. The City respectfully requests the U.S. Military's improved coordination, earlier notification, direct community engagement, and more comprehensive communication protocols and planning to avoid sensitive residential, environmental, and commercial areas for any future training activities. If you have any questions, please contact Sarah Patterson, Manager of Strategic Partnerships and Government Affairs at sarah.patterson@longbeach.gov.

Sincerely,

Rex Richardson
Mayor of Long Beach

Thomas B. Modica
City Manager