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ARMY GENERAL TELLS DEHCHO LEADER NO PRESSURE INTENDED



FORT SIMPSON, NT – April 16, 2007 – Grand Chief Herb Norwegian was the first person that Brig-General Chris Whitecross, officer commanding Joint Task Force North, met when she arrived in Fort Simpson today . She drove directly from Fort Simpson's federal airport to the Dehcho First Nations office here to try a “clear up these misunderstandings largely fed by the media.”

Norwegian and the camouflage-uniformed officer met alone in his office for about 30 minutes in mid-afternoon. They did not issue a joint statement. Afterwards Norwegian

said that however cordial the meeting was, “we still feel the pressure of Canada, the psychological pressure of their presence on our territory.

“Canada needs to understand that we have outstanding issues such as our land claims and our land use plan. To have this pressure on as we head for negotiations next week means we will have to have protocols for such exercises worked out in advance on a government-to-government basis.”

Whitecross was clearly unhappy that the issue had been “overblown”. Earlier in the day, she told reporters at Yellowknife that the exercise in Fort Simpson “was basically with the airfield on the airport side, so it doesn’t have as much impact on the local community.”

Earlier reports by a spokesperson for Operation Narwhal, which started Monday and runs until April 27, had said communities were consulted appear to be incorrect. Chief Keyna Norwegian of the Liidlii Kue First Nation in Fort Simpson said she was not consulted by the army.

About 40 soldiers have secured the perimeter of the airport today and will remain based there during the mock anti-terrorism exercise.

Ends

For further information please call Grand Chief Herb Norwegian