

WRITTEN QUESTION E-5794/08

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Subject: Building of military complex in the vicinity of Dal Molin airport (VI) and failure to conduct an EIA

In 2007 the Italian Ministry of Defence received a request from ACAT RCO ITALY to build support facilities for the US 173rd Airborne Brigade in the area adjacent to Dal Molin airport (Province of Vicenza) for the US 173rd Airborne Brigade, providing 700 000 cubic metres of built space on an area of approximately 54 hectares, much of which would to be concreted over.

The area lies between the Bacchiglione river (to the north and west), the airstrip (east) and private farm land (south). Below it is the largest water-bearing stratum in northern Italy and the area coincides with SCI IT32220040 and the 'Bosco di Dueville' SPA IT320013 of Community interest.

On 7 December 2008 an environmental impact study by Bioprogram s.c., commissioned by ACA RCO Italy, which has asked the Ministry of Defence for development consent, was submitted to the Veneto Region authorities. The study merely examines the project's possible environmental implications, in accordance with Article 6(3) of Directive 92/43/EEC¹.

Although the development project, given its size, comes under paragraph 10 of Annex II to Directive 97/11/EC² and therefore requires an environmental impact assessment, whose findings must be made available to the public, the Veneto Region's decision DGRV No 4231 of 18 December 2007 only approved the study pursuant to Directive 92/43/EEC, did not call for the application of Directives 85/337/EEC³ and 97/11/EC and did not provide reasons for exempting the area from an EIA. Neither do the plans for this area to be granted under a concession to the US army 'serve national defence purposes', as stipulated by Article 1(4) of Directive 85/337/EEC, since they are intended for the exclusive deployment of foreign military personnel who are not assigned to carry out the Italian army's national defence tasks.

The communities concerned have therefore been given no opportunity to express themselves on the subject. They have not been asked for their opinion on the screening assessment drawn up under Directive 92/43/EEC, and certainly not on any EIA under Directive 97/11/EC, since none has been carried out. The people of Vicenza have only been able to state their views in a self-organised consultation held on 5 October 2008, in which 24 094 people took part and 95.5% voted against the building of the US base.

Does the Commission not consider that the Veneto Region's decisions constitute an unacceptable breach of Directives 85/337/EEC, 97/11/EC and, above all, 2003/4/EC⁴, since it has failed to duly inform the general public, and will it therefore approach the Italian Government to ensure that the Ministry of Defence refuses to grant any authorisation until a favourable EIA is issued in line with Community legislation?

¹ OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7.

² OJ L 73, 4.3.1997, p. 5.

³ OJ L 175, 5.7.1985, p. 40.

⁴ OJ L 41, 14.2.2003, p. 26.