

McGregor Range, New Mexico Land Withdrawal Renewal Legislative Environmental Impact Statement



McGregor Range Mission



McGregor Range Provides Opportunities for Tough, Realistic Field Exercises

The primary mission of Fort Bliss is to protect both civilians and soldiers by maintaining the operational readiness of U.S. troops. McGregor Range, which is a part of Fort Bliss, is the nation's principal training facility for air defense systems such as the Patriot, Avenger, Stinger, and other advanced weapons systems. It is the Army's only training range where Patriot missiles are live-fired.

Shrinking resources, increased range of weapon systems, and the growing diversity of threats increase our reliance on training battlefields. Most training exercises are field operations on a range, with combat elements arranged on a simulated battlefield, such as McGregor Range. Training on the range includes limited troop and equipment maneuvers, air defense training and air-to-ground training for active Army, Navy, Marine, and Air Force units; Reserve units; National Guard; and allied forces. The skills of the military forces trained here are verified through exercises conducted periodically on McGregor Range.

Support for Patriot

At this time, the Patriot is the primary weapons system deployed by the U.S. Army for defense against both manned aircraft and missiles such as the SCUD. McGregor Range is currently the only range in the world where Patriot missiles are fired for training and testing, and the only range capable of supporting Patriot missile firing in a tactical scenario.

Support for Other Air Defense Systems

McGregor Range is also the premier training facility for the Stinger missile. This versatile, short-range system can be shoulder fired by soldiers on the ground or can be mounted on a high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle (HMMWV), on a Bradley Fighting Vehicle (Linebacker), or on a helicopter.

Operational Testing

The U.S. Army Test and Experimentation Command and U.S. Army Missile Command conduct test operations on McGregor Range and within its restricted airspace. Several tests of various equipment systems were conducted during 1996. One was the Force Development Test and Experimentation for the Patriot Advanced Capabilities configuration. Another test supported White Sands Missile Range by firing seven Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) missiles from McGregor Range into White Sands Missile Range. McGregor, in combination with White Sands Missile Range, provides testing capability unduplicated in the world.

McGregor Range plays a substantial role in the development of the Theater High Altitude Area Defense System (THAAD). The THAAD program is currently in the demonstration and validation phase of development. Fort Bliss is the only installation, when combined with White Sands Missile Range land and airspace, that can support ATACMS and THAAD firings.

Training Our Nation's Military

The U.S. military strategy requires strong armed forces that are well trained, equipped, and ready to defend our nation's interests. The Department of the Army force structure realignment co-located all Air Defense Artillery Brigades in the continental United States at Fort Bliss. This realignment established Fort Bliss as the Army's Air Defense Artillery Center of Excellence. McGregor Range supports training of the relocated units, and other units because of its high-quality and unique training capabilities.

Supporting Our National Military Strategy

Each year, joint training exercises are held at Fort Bliss. The most notable of these is the annual Roving Sands exercise. This joint training exercise is the only exercise that actually plans and executes multi-service, air defense operations that involve the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps. Two weeks of field training and exercises are conducted on McGregor Range, as well as other sites at Fort Bliss and throughout southern New Mexico.

Annual Service Practices of U.S. and Allied Air Defense Artillery Units

Danish, Belgian, German, Japanese, and other allied air defense units have conducted Annual Service Practices on the Fort Bliss range complex during the past 30 years. The German and Japanese air

defense forces use the firing ranges on McGregor Range for Hawk and Patriot missile training.

McGregor Range Land Withdrawal

McGregor Range, which comprises more than half of the Fort Bliss installation land area, was originally set aside for military use, and has been withdrawn since 1957. Most recently, Public Law 99-606, also known as the *Military Lands Withdrawal Act of 1986*, requires that all of the military land withdrawals it governs, including McGregor Range, terminate on November 6, 2001, unless renewed by an Act of Congress. To continue military activities on McGregor Range beyond 2001, the Army applied to renew the withdrawal during October 1998. Part of the renewal requirement includes completion of a *Legislative Environmental Impact Statement (LEIS)* that addresses the environmental consequences of renewing the withdrawal. The Draft LEIS was provided to elected officials, federal, state, and local government agencies; organizations, and individual citizens in late October 1998. Congress is the

decision maker for the land withdrawal and will issues its decision through legislation.

For More Information

Further information on the renewal may be obtained by calling 915-568-6708 or toll-free 1-888-248-8329, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., mountain time. At other times, leave a message and your call will be returned. The Fort Bliss public affairs staff (915-568-4505) and Fort Bliss Web site (www.bliss.army.mil) can provide additional information, or write to Fort Bliss Public Affairs Office, U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery Center and Fort Bliss, Building 15, Fort Bliss, Texas 79916.

Comments on the Draft LEIS should be received by February 9, 1999. Please direct comments to Dr. Andy Vliet, Program Manager, McGregor Range Military Land Withdrawal Renewal, U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery Center and Fort Bliss, Attn: ATZC-CSA, P.O. Box 6020, Fort Bliss, Texas 79906, or send e-mail to: mcmgregor@emh10.bliss.army.mil.
