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United States Environmental Protection Agency



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 6
1445 ROSS AVENUE, SUITE 1200
DALLAS, TX 75202-2733

FEB 1 1999

January 29, 1999

Dr. Andrew Vliet
Program Manager
McGregor Renewal
U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery Center and Fort Bliss
P.O. Box 6020
Fort Bliss, Texas 79906

Dear Dr. Vliet:

In accordance with our responsibilities under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing NEPA, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 office in Dallas, Texas has completed its review of the Department of the Army (DOA) legislative Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the renewal of the withdrawal of public lands at McGregor Range for military purposes.

This DEIS has been prepared in support of an application by the United States (U.S.) Army to renew the withdrawal of McGregor Range which is critical to our nation's military readiness. The Military Lands Withdrawal Act (MLWA) provides that the Army may seek renewal of the McGregor Range withdrawal. In connection with the application for renewal, the MLWA specifies that the Secretary of the Army will publish a DEIS, consistent with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), if there is a continuing requirement for military use of this range. Since this action is a proposal for legislation, the Army and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have mutually agreed to use the DEIS process, pursuant to 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1506.8, to comply with the requirements of Public Law (PL) 99-606. This EIS is being prepared in cooperation with BLM and local government. Therefore, pursuant to the EIS process, the Army has decided to prepare a Final EIS, and a Notice of Availability of the Final EIS will be published in the Federal Register. However, there will not be a Record of Decision (ROD) because the decision to renew the withdrawal is made by the U.S. Congress and signed into law by the President.

McGregor Range, located in Otero County, New Mexico, has supported the military mission of the U.S. Army at Fort Bliss from the 1940s to the present. McGregor Range is comprised of public lands, which are lands owned by the Federal Government and administered by the Department of the Interior (DOI) through BLM pursuant to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) (PL 94-579) and other public land laws. At McGregor Range, the

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public lands have been withdrawn from the provisions of various public land laws for military use. Public lands comprising the range were subsequently withdrawn through Public Land Order (PLO) 1470 in 1957 for a period of twenty years. At that time, the public lands were interspersed with private ranch holdings that were purchased by the Army and are now owned in fee by the Army. Portions of McGregor Range were first leased by ranchers to the Army during the 1940s. The PLO withdrawing McGregor Range expired in 1977, but the legislation required by the Engle Act of 1958 (43 United States Code [USC] 155) to continue the withdrawal was not passed until 1986 when Congress enacted the PL 99-606. Throughout the intervening period, the Army continued its mission on McGregor Range. PL 99-606 renewed the withdrawal for a period of 15 years, through 2001.

We now offer the following comments for your consideration and in preparation of the Final EIS. These comments are offered to strengthen the Final EIS and to assist Congress in the legislative renewal process.

Comments:

EPA recognizes and appreciates the critical role which the McGregor Range plays in the Army's mission. Fort Bliss administers, trains and deploys active duty U.S. Army, Army National Guard, Army Reserves, and other service personnel and units. Periodic exercises involve units from other installations, and from other services and allied nations. Units are organized, trained, and equipped for national emergency or crisis and overseas deployment. However, we also acknowledge the need for the Department of Defense and the Army to manage the lands withdrawn for military purposes in an environmentally sensitive manner. The potential and realized impacts of human intervention in an area requires management procedures that adapt to changing conditions, evolving regulations, and new information obtained from monitoring and other sources. Regular coordination with other agencies and the public is one means to help achieve an effective adaptive management strategy. However within the framework of the 50 year renewal, it is unclear how this can be effectively achieved. Without regular disclosure of the scope of activities taking place and public would be precluded from actively participating in protecting the environment on the range.

Six alternatives have been identified for analysis in the DEIS. These include options for renewal of the withdrawal for all, part, or none of the existing withdrawn land area. The Army proposes to apply for a renewal of the lands currently comprising the MacGregor Range (Alternative 1) for a 50 year period from 2001 to 2051. We are concerned that the proposed 50 year withdrawal period could effectively eliminate public involvement in future environmental decision making on the Range. Based on the potential for long-term and significant impact within the recommended withdrawal of 50 years, we believe that an alternative with a shorter renewal period, preferably ten years, be evaluated in the Final EIS.

EPA rates the Draft EIS as EC-2, (Environmental Concerns and Need for Additional Information.) We propose that an alternative with a shorter, preferably ten years, be evaluated in

1. The Army employs various planning cycles for different aspects of its mission. For example, the Army uses a 6-year programming cycle for operational activities with facility planning over a 20-year horizon. Doctrinal and equipment life cycle planning can extend over a period of 40 years or more. The proposed 50-year withdrawal period encompasses each of these periods and enables long-term national security plans to rely on a stable land resource.

Different (shorter or longer) withdrawal periods would not substantially change the environmental impacts of a land allocation decision. Continuing stewardship and compliance activities would be required regardless of duration. Public and/or agency participation in ongoing environmental management activities on McGregor Range is assured through existing laws, regulations, and policies as listed in Table 1.6-1. The Army is committed to continuing public participation under the *National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)* as major new actions that could significantly affect the environment are proposed for the installation. The McGregor Range *Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA)*, jointly prepared by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Army provides for continuing public participation. The annual *Resource Management Plan (RMP)* update informs the public of the progress made in implementing the RMPA. The Army's *Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP)* and *Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan (ICRMP)* contain provisions for agency coordination and revision as necessary every 5 years. Together, these regulatory requirements, policies, and procedures will ensure opportunities for both public and agency input into the future.

2. A shorter withdrawal period would not substantially change the environmental impacts of the proposal. Continuing stewardship and compliance activities would be required regardless of the duration of the withdrawal.

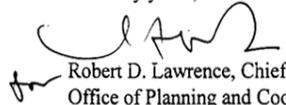
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the EIS. Our classification will be published in the Federal Register according to our responsibility under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, to inform the public of our views on proposed Federal actions.

We appreciate the opportunity to review the DEIS. We request that you send our office two (2) copies of the Final EIS at the same time that it is sent to the Office of Federal Activities, EPA, 401 M Street S.W., Washington, D.C. 20460.

Sincerely yours,



Robert D. Lawrence, Chief
Office of Planning and Coordination
Compliance Assurance and Enforcement Division

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United States Department of the Interior



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance
Post Office Box 649
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103

JAN 30 1999

IN REPLY REFER TO:

January 28, 1999

ER 98/700

Dr. Andrew Vliet
Program Manager, McGregor Renewal
U. S. Army Air Defense Artillery Center and Fort Bliss
P. O. Box 6020
Fort Bliss, Texas 79906

Dear Dr. Vliet:

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) has reviewed the Draft McGregor Range, New Mexico Land Withdrawal Renewal Legislative Environmental Impact Statement (LDEIS), United States Army, October 1998. In this regard, the following comments are provided for your consideration.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

A network for monitoring PM₁₀ emissions similar to the one at Ft. Irwin should be established on the Range. This network would provide useful current baseline data. If the Heavy Division Training Center (HDTC) is developed with its greater potential for dust production, these baseline data can provide the information needed to measure the effects of any mitigation efforts.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has worked with Fort Bliss to develop five pre-scoping alternatives. Public input provided an additional reasonable alternative to designate the Otero Mesa and the Mountain Foothills as a National Conservation Area (NCA). The designation of Otero Mesa and the Foothills as an NCA would provide much needed long-term protection while still allowing for traditional uses. This alternative was considered in the LDEIS, however, only in conjunction with Alternatives 3, 4, or 5. Alternative 6 should be considered in conjunction with all alternatives. A NCA can be compatible with military use, particularly if the area is used mainly as it is now, as a buffer zone and field training exercise area.

For alternatives 2 thru 6, where relinquishment of the withdrawal is envisioned, analysis is based on the premise the Army will retain their fee-owned in-holdings. The range of alternatives should consider the equally viable scenario in which Army fee-owned in-holdings

3. The Army will consider your suggestion relative to opportunities for use of the installations' capabilities to support new missions and relative to its current and future funding constraints.
4. Under Alternatives 1 and 2, the Army has the responsibility to close the area when public safety is potentially endangered. Should the area be designated a National Conservation Area (NCA), the current use as a buffer zone and field training exercise (FTX) area would be incompatible with the public's expressed desire for access to the area.
5. The Army has continuing training requirements that can be met through the use of its fee-owned lands. Management of the Army fee-owned lands is proposed to continue under the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the BLM, therefore, no significant environmental impacts are expected relative to fee-owned lands under any scenario including a congressional decision to transfer the lands. The Army proposes to provide water to support the activities under the existing MOU with the BLM under each alternative.

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would be Congressionally transferred to BLM along with water rights sufficient to support grazing and wildlife uses. On lands returned to public ownership, a water right sufficient to support the existing grazing operation and wildlife must be conveyed to BLM.

6

In order to accurately assess the impacts of each alternative addressed in the LDEIS, BLM requested that Fort Bliss develop a scenario for each alternative that describes military uses likely to occur under that alternative. Future military missions on Fort Bliss are being addressed in the Mission and Master Plan EIS (MMPEIS), which is incorporated to a certain extent into the Withdrawal LDEIS. However, the alternatives in the LDEIS do not clearly delineate the types of military uses which would be allowed to take place or, conversely, the types of uses which would be restricted from occurring on the Otero Mesa and Mountain Foothills. This must be remedied in the final document and carried through to legislation.

7

Alternative 3 is most compatible with the resource values and public use interests. Under Alternative 3, Otero Mesa and the Mountain Foothills would be returned to public land status and would be available for unrestricted public use. If Congress selects another alternative, rewithdrawn land on the Otero Mesa and Mountain Foothills must be available for public use. Because of the uniqueness of Otero Mesa and the Foothills, this valuable area must be protected. Hard military use such as track vehicles and other heavy military equipment would unduly harm the area's unique values and should never be considered as an option. This area must not be allowed to become contaminated with unexploded ordnance. The area off the Otero Mesa, known as the "Tularosa Basin," must be utilized as the primarily military use area. The withdrawal legislation must restrict the types of military missions which would be allowable on the Otero Mesa and Mountain Foothills.

8

The U.S. Air Force has issued their record of decision to establish a bombing range on Otero Mesa. This LDEIS does not contain a discussion of this situation or how it affects Congress' decision-making latitude. This LDEIS must contain a description of how the two DOD agencies will share use of the range and how that combined use will affect public access and use and other natural resource values.

9

BLM also requested that the LDEIS alternatives address the utilization of the adjacent White Sands Missile Range for some of the military activities that cannot be accommodated entirely within the Tularosa Basin portion of McGregor Range. More efficient utilization of the White Sands/McGregor Range complex is necessary. This is not addressed in the LDEIS directly, nor indirectly through incorporation of the MMPEIS, which also does not address the utilization of other military ranges to accommodate mission requirements.

6. Alternative 1 of the *Draft McGregor Range Legislative Environmental Impact Statement (LEIS)* is based upon the mission capabilities of McGregor Range. The installation is in the process of refining its facility planning in the training complex including McGregor Range. Military uses are illustrated on Figure 2.1-1 relative to specific training areas and described in Table 2.1-1. The uses include Surface Impact, surface danger zone (SDZ)/Safety Footprint, On-road Vehicle Maneuver, Controlled Access FTX, Dismounted Training, Aircraft Operations, Conservation, and Public Access. Off-road use of tracked vehicles is limited to Training Area (TA) 8 in the southern portion of the Tularosa Basin.
7. Congress could direct through legislation that the Tularosa Basin be utilized as the primary military use area on McGregor Range and place limits on military use of the Otero Mesa. Additionally, Congress may select other periods of withdrawal or transfer jurisdiction of specified areas from the Secretary of Interior to the Secretary of the Army. These land management options would not affect the environmental impacts of the land allocation decision before Congress.
8. The Record of Decision (ROD) for the *Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the Proposed Expansion of German Air Force (GAF) Operations at Holloman Air Force Base (AFB), New Mexico*, states that training activities on the tactical target complex will require that portions of the areas south of New Mexico Highway 506 be closed to the public for approximately 60 hours per week. The MOU between the BLM and the U.S. Air Force (USAF) provides that routine public access to the USAF tactical target complex will be from 1:00 p.m. Friday through Sunday at 9:00 p.m. Use by the USAF would generally be Monday through Friday morning. The scheduling for the target complex, as well as for Army training, will be controlled by the Fort Bliss Range Scheduling Office in a manner that generally allows the

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10 | The LDEIS indicates management will continue as per the BLM's Resource Management Plan for the area and in accordance with the 1990 Memorandum of Understanding between the BLM and Army. This also must be carried through from the LDEIS into proposed legislation. It should be given the weight of law to ensure continued public access and natural resource management by the BLM. Incorporation of the MOU into the legislation would clearly delineate management responsibility.

11 | Each alternative assumes a withdrawal term of 50 years. Justification for such a protracted withdrawal is not included in this LDEIS, but should be provided. The withdrawal term should be commensurate with the foreseeable uses of the Range. Fort Bliss' MMPEIS indicates the military planning horizon is usually 20 years. If there is a withdrawal renewal, it should be commensurate with the military's planning horizon.

12 | This document attempts to consider the impact that return of presently withdrawn lands to the public domain would have on land use management under the public land laws. This reaches beyond the decision scope of the LDEIS and requires speculation on the part of DOD as to how Congress will act and how DOI would manage the resources. Attempting to perform such analysis in this document is inappropriate. In the event portions of McGregor Range are not rewithdrawn, DOI will proceed with the actual planning, public participation, and environmental analysis which would result in land use decisions.

13 | The LDEIS also attempts impact analysis of how the BLM may authorize grazing on lands returned to the public domain. This is speculative and not appropriate. It is not relevant to the decision to be made and distracts the reader from the primary issue. The grazing authorization system would be the current bid system and/or one prescribed by Congressional guidance. Analysis beyond this general scenario is beyond the purpose and scope of the LDEIS. Grazing authorization is outside of the jurisdiction of the DOD and would be administered by the DOI, BLM. BLM would authorize grazing under the legal mechanisms available, following appropriate additional planning and environmental analysis. As such, grazing should be approached consistent with the approach taken in the LDEIS concerning NCA analysis:

"The establishment of an NCA by Congress is outside the jurisdiction of the DoD and would be administered by the DOI. This LEIS, the purpose of which is to address the application for military withdrawal, does not address the impacts of wilderness and NCA designation in detail."

SPECIFIC COMMENTS:

14 | Pages ES-12 and I-3: Wording has been included concerning the spatial requirements of a concept or plan referred to as "Army force XXI and Army after next." There is no explanation

8. Continued

USAF use of the target complex and Army use of the training areas. Concurrent use is planned to meet most of the demand of both missions.

9. Under Department of Defense (DoD) policy for the use of major range and test facilities such as White Sands Missile Range (WSMR), evaluation of routine use for training such as conducted at McGregor Range is not permitted. Joint use is hindered by the different missions and associated scheduling philosophies. There are different installation support requirements and different operating tempos.

10. The agency comment was considered during preparation of the final LEIS and has become a part of this public comment response document for congressional review.

11. The Army employs various planning cycles for different aspects of its mission. For example, the Army uses a 6-year programming cycle for operational activities with facility planning over a 20-year horizon. Doctrinal and equipment life-cycle planning can extend over a period of 40 years or more. The proposed 50-year withdrawal period encompasses each of these periods and enables long-term national security plans to rely on a stable land resource.

12. The LEIS presents the possible conflicts between the proposed action and alternatives and the objectives of federal, regional, state, and local land use plans, policies, and controls for the area concerned (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 1502.16 [C]). The potential conflicts that arise from adopting other than Alternative 1 are discussed in Section 2.2.3. That congressional designation of the current method of grazing administration as specified in the RMPA would serve to solidify the legal aspects of the issue was recognized in this discussion. The agency comment was considered during preparation of the final LEIS and has become a part of this public comment response document for congressional review.

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13. The LEIS presents the possible conflicts between the proposed action and alternatives and the objectives of federal, regional, state, and local land use plans, policies, and controls for the area concerned (40 CFR Part 1502.16 [C]). The potential conflicts that arise from adopting other than Alternative 1 are discussed in Section 2.2.3. That congressional designation of the current method of grazing administration as specified in the RMPA would serve to solidify the legal aspects of the issue was recognized in this discussion. The agency comment was considered during preparation of the final LEIS and has become a part of this public comment response document for congressional review.
14. The following text has been added to Section 1.2 and the terms defined in the glossary. "The Army has a long history of developing innovative approaches to future warfighting challenges. The future Army Force XXI and its follow-on, Army-After-Next, is being designed with organizations and capabilities that will allow it to be rapidly tailored, strategically deployable, and effectively employable in joint and multinational operations. Army Force XXI provides rapid and effective response to the changing situations and local conditions. Mission planning and rehearsal will be conducted simultaneously with the build-up of decisive forces, as automated systems and simulations, capable of operating from ships and aircraft, provide the capability to plan, coordinate, and war game possible courses of action while forces are en route. Vastly improved capabilities of long-range missiles with smart submunitions, precision weapons delivered throughout the battlespace, and attack helicopters capable of operations deep within enemy forces, integrated with an air campaign, are critical to ensuring that national objectives are met. Army Force XXI operations must be fully integrated as the land force commander draws from a suite of complementary capabilities of the other services, our

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- 14 cont. of what "Army force XXI" or "Army after next" are. If these topics are brought up, especially as a reason for needing certain attention, they should be explained and described.
- 15 Page 2-1, 2.0: Include launch facility in TA 10 in the list of "Future training needs could affect the level of use . . ."
- 16 Page 2-12, Table 2.1-4: Additional FTX sites are listed among the efforts with NEPA Documentation On-Going or Completed. Is there an ongoing environmental assessment of the proposed FTX sites other than the MMPEIS? The FTX should be listed as one of the activities "Under Consideration." On page 2-13, it is stated the 13.5 square miles are being "evaluated in separate NEPA documentation . . ." Is this other than the MMPEIS? These relationships must be described in detail in order to facilitate public understanding.
- 17 Page 3.1-3, 3.1.1.2: Omit or reword the last two sentences of this section: "As required under AR 200-3 . . . These plans will apply ecosystem management and biodiversity principals, and comparative property significance criteria, respectively, to prioritize Army management actions on McGregor Range." This is incorrect. The MMPEIS correctly states: "On McGregor Range, the INRMP applies to Army fee-owned land and managing impact of military missions on withdrawn public land, as specified in the BLM/Army MOU (Appendix D). The BLM retains management for public access uses on withdrawn and Army fee-owned land as enumerated in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), PL 99-606, and the McGregor Range RMPA (BLM, 1990)." (Page 5.2-6 section 5.2.1.2 of the MMPEIS.)
- 18 Page 3.1-5, Figure 3.1-1: Label the ATACM impact area in TA 25, and depict the proposed launch facility in TA 10. This will assist with impact analysis.
- 19 Page 3.1-6, 3.1.2.2: Add to the U.S. Border Patrol paragraph a description of their drag roads and fully assess the impacts resultant from this operation.
- 20 Page 3.1-7, 3.1.2.2, Water Use: Poor placement of last sentence implies the residents of Oro Grande are obtaining water from earthen tanks.
- 21 Page 3.1-19, 3.1.3.2, Grazing: Change to Phillips 1998. In the final, use the exact number on the grazing permit: 1,725 head of sheep.
- 22 Page 3.1-22, 3.1.4, Land Use Compatibility: Should include a discussion of and subsequent analysis of resultant impacts from the bombing range on Otero Mesa.
- 23 Page 3.2-1, 3.2: In the paragraph reading "The ROI considered . . .", clarify whether the analysis region of influence for airspace includes the airspace to be used in conjunction with the USAF bombing range on Otero Mesa.

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- allies, and other government and nongovernment organizations. The training and test activities conducted on McGregor Range are critical to achieving the expectations set for Army Force XXI and its follow-on in the preparedness planning the Army-After-Next."
15. The text will be modified as follows: "...helicopter training complex, establishment of a launch facility for a tactical ballistic missile (TBM) target for Patriot training, and..."
16. An *Environmental Assessment (EA)* will be prepared by Fort Bliss for any additional FTX sites on McGregor Range, should Alternative 2 or 3 of the *Fort Bliss Mission and Master Plan Programmatic EIS (PEIS)* be adopted.
17. The text has been revised as recommended.
18. The potential Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) impact area in TA 25 is depicted as a small circle with the horizontal hatching designating an impact area and its envisioned size. The specific location of a potential launch facility in TA 10 for Patriot targets is undetermined at this time.
19. The text has been revised to include appropriate available information from the *Construction of Drag Roads Near the U.S. Highway 54 Border Control Checkpoint, Otero County, New Mexico Environmental Assessment Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)* dated 8/18/93.
20. The sentences within the paragraph have been reorganized.
21. The text has been revised as recommended.
22. The land use for the USAF tactical target complex is summarized in Section 4.1.1.2, subsections *Military Use* and *Nonmilitary Use*. Additional information on land use effects relative to the tactical target complex is presented in Chapter 4, Section 4.3, *Land Use of the Proposed Expansion of GAF Operations at Holloman AFB, New Mexico EIS* prepared by the USAF in April 1998.

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- 24 Page 3.3-1, 3.3.1: Include Border Patrol Drag Roads. The drag roads were established in approximately 1995 near the 506 and 54 intersection. See *Hart, Jeanie (Aug 1994) Arch Survey for US Border Patrol Drag Roads, Prepared for the US Army Corp of Eng, JTF6, Ft. Bliss, TX*. According to that report, 586 acres were surveyed on McGregor Range.
- 25 Page 3.8-14, 3.8.3.4, Northern Aplomado Falcon: Omit the parenthetical statement "(e.g. grassland habitat converted to shrubland due to livestock grazing.)" This statement makes a sweeping generalization about the effects of livestock grazing without acknowledging that the causes of vegetation change are often very complex and controversial.
- 26 Page 3.9-3, 3.9.3: Historic Landscapes are appropriate for inclusion in this section. They are a class of cultural resources on McGregor Range along with Prehistoric and Historic Archaeological and Architectural Resources.
- 27 Page 3.9-8, 3.9.4.3: The information in this section is incomplete. Replace "BLM has conducted preliminary research . . ." with the following wording and cite Hart 1997: "The Bureau of Land Management recently completed a rural historic landscape National Register evaluation for a landscape based on Oliver Lee's historic sphere of influence (Hart 1997). The potential boundary of the historic landscape encompasses McGregor Range."
- Hart, Jeanie (November 1997) A Cultural Resources Inventory of Particular Fence Lines, Pipelines, and Trap Fences on McGregor Range, and Rural Historic Landscape Nation Register Evaluation. U.S.D.I. BLM Cultural Report 030-97-65.
- 28 Page 3.12-2, 3.12.1, Noise: Add information about the overall noise anticipated from the use of the Otero Mesa target complex.
- 29 Page 4.1-1, 4.1: Considering the "effect that return of lands to the public domain would have on land use management under the public land laws" reaches beyond the decision scope of this document and requires speculation on the part of DOD as to how DOI would manage the resources. It is our opinion that attempting to perform such analysis in this document is inappropriate. In the event portions of McGregor Range are not rewithdrawn, DOI will proceed with the actual planning, public participation, and environmental analysis which would result in land use decisions.
- 30 Page 4.1-3, 4.1.1.2: Add wording in parenthesis: "See Access and Realty and Livestock Grazing below."
- 31 Page 4.1-3, 4.1.1.2, Access and Realty: Include information on restricted access up to 60 hours per week south of 506 on the Mesa due to the USAF target complex.
- 32 Page 4.1-6, 4.1.2.1, BLM: Rework: "BLM will continue to use the existing RMPA . . ." Strike "Alternatively." The CRMP is a document tiered to the RMP, not a substitute plan.

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23. The Region of Influence (ROI) (Figure 3.2-1) considered for the McGregor Range LEIS is the airspace that is affected by training activities on McGregor Range and Doña Ana Range–North Training Areas and aviation activities at the Biggs Army Air Field (AAF).
24. Reference to Border Patrol drag roads has been included in the text.
25. The parenthetical information has been deleted.
26. Historic landscapes are defined as a type of cultural resource in Section 3.9.1 and the potential for historic military and rural landscapes on McGregor Range is discussed in Section 3.9.4.3. Currently, both a rural and military historic landscape are being reviewed, there are no designated historic landscapes on McGregor Range.
27. The text has been revised as recommended.
28. Section 3.12 describes noise in the existing environment of McGregor Range. Information regarding the overall noise level anticipated from the use of the Otero Mesa tactical target complex is found in Section 4.12.1 of the LEIS and in the USAF's *Proposed Expansion of GAF Operations at Holloman AFB, New Mexico, Final EIS* dated April 1998.
29. The agency comment was considered during preparation of the final LEIS and has become a part of this public comment response document for congressional review.
30. The text has been revised as recommended.
31. The last sentence in the paragraph states, "Use of the GAF target complex is expected to reduce access of 60,000 acres on Otero Mesa for up to 60 hours per week." No text change is required.
32. The text has been revised as recommended.

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- 33 | Page 4.1-7 and 4.1-8, 4.1.2.2, Livestock Grazing: Most of this analysis is beyond the scope of this document and should be deleted for the reasons stated above.
- 34 | Page 4.1-8, line 44: Add wording on beneficial results of management actions including fire: "Specific actions are not defined, but are likely to benefit grazing, soil cover, watershed, and wildlife habitat."
- 35 | Page 4.1-11, 4.1.3.2, Livestock Grazing: Most of this analysis is beyond the scope of this document and should be deleted for the reasons stated above.
- 36 | 4.1-18, 4.1.6.2, line 2: Add wording and reword: "Other traditional uses of the land, such as grazing, will also be included. The NCA has the potential to be managed as a grazing management showcase."
- 37 | Page 4.5-2, Table 4.5-1, Predicted Soil Loss: The units for the soil loss are unclear. However, if the units of the Fuller equation (Appendix H) are tons/acre/year, then the predicted wind erosion for the Pintura-Doña Ana complex, the predominant soil type for the off-road area (TA8), is 143 tons/acre/year on the maximum disturbed areas. This is more than 28 times the sustainability value of 5 tons/acre/year for the soil type. With these amounts, soil loss needs to be included in Section 4.5.9, Irreversible and Irrecoverable Commitment of Resources.
- 38 | Page 4.5-9, Section 4.5.7.2, Soils: Coppice dunes, which show up as vegetative elements in remote sensing monitoring, are actually signs of extreme desertification and loss of soil productivity. Mention should be made of the impact on soils of coppice dune areas on the Range.
- 39 | Page 4.6-2, Roving Sands Field Training Exercises: Data are needed to substantiate the conclusion that fugitive dust (PM_{10}) emissions are localized and of a short-term duration. PM_{10} dust travels great distances under certain wind conditions. The city of El Paso, south of the Base, is a moderate nonattainment area for PM_{10} emissions and the prevailing wind direction for five months of the year is from the north, possibly adding emissions from the McGregor Range to the city of El Paso area.
- 40 | Page 4.6-3, Heavy Division Training Center: Data are needed to support comparisons between the fugitive dust data at Ft. Irwin and any fugitive dust emissions at the envisioned HDTC at McGregor Range. The soil surfaces, wind regimes, and vegetation are totally different for the two areas. Therefore, the conclusion of "insignificant air quality impacts" based on Ft. Irwin data is not sufficient.
- 41 | Page 4.6-5, Section 4.6.8, Mitigation: The assumption that the impact of dust production only occurs during training exercises is limited. The loss of vegetative cover (Figure G-3) and the continual disturbance of the soils cause the surface to become more vulnerable to PM_{10} dust

33. The LEIS presents the possible conflicts between the proposed action and alternatives and the objectives of federal, regional, state, and local land use plans, policies, and controls for the area concerned (40 CFR Part 1502.16 [C]). The potential conflicts that arise from adopting other than Alternative 1 are discussed in Section 2.2.3. That congressional designation of the current method of grazing administration as specified in the RMPA would serve to solidify the legal aspects of the issue was recognized in this discussion. The agency comment was considered during preparation of the final LEIS and has become a part of this public comment response document for congressional review.
34. The text has been revised as recommended.
35. The LEIS presents the possible conflicts between the proposed action and alternatives and the objectives of federal, regional, state, and local land use plans, policies, and controls for the area concerned (40 CFR Part 1502.16 [C]). The potential conflicts that arise from adopting other than Alternative 1 are discussed in Section 2.2.3.
36. The text has been revised as recommended.
37. The units for soil loss (tons/acre/year) have been added to the footnotes of Table 4.5-1. The undisturbed scenario assumes current conditions with little disturbance to vegetation or soil from military or nonmilitary actions. The moderate impact scenario assumes a 50 percent reduction in vegetative cover and 50 percent disturbance to the soil surface from military or nonmilitary activities. The maximum impact assumes 100 percent removal of vegetation and 100 percent disturbance to the soil surface from military or nonmilitary activities. The Fort Bliss comprehensive monitoring program described in Section 4.8.7.1 illustrates that from the 1986 image to the 1996 image, reductions in vegetative cover from all natural and noninduced sources were in the lower range of the moderate soil disturbance

Continued on Next Page

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37. Continued

category. The soil loss from wind on undisturbed land in the Pintura-Doña Ana complex, the predominant soil type for the off-road area (TA 8), under undisturbed conditions is 21.73 tons/acre/year or over 4 times the acceptable soil loss. Under moderate use assumptions, wind erosion could increase this to 54.7 tons/acre/year or 2.5 times the natural loss on undisturbed lands. Section 4.5.9 was modified to read "The impact of military activity has exposed soils in TA 8 to increased gully erosion and irretrievable loss of soil by wind. These impacts would likely continue regardless of which withdrawal configuration alternative is selected. By following installation management practices and avoiding highly erodible soils, these impacts can be minimized."

38. Soils in the coppice dunes area of the Tularosa Basin portion of McGregor Range are discussed in Section 3.5.2 while impacts are discussed in Section 4.5.2.
39. More detailed air quality evaluations supporting this conclusion may be found in *the Final PEIS for the Joint Training Exercise Roving Sands at Fort Bliss, Texas and New Mexico and White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico*, published in February 1994, and the *Supplemental EA for Joint Training Exercise Roving Sands 97*, published in February 1997.
40. The potential for air quality effects resulting from activities of a Heavy Division Training Center would be evaluated in additional NEPA documentation on the proposal to establish a center. Most of the activities associated with the capability of the Fort Bliss Training Complex to support potential activities such as a Heavy Division Training Center would occur outside of McGregor Range since the capabilities on this withdrawn land occur primarily in TA 8, Meyer Range, and the McGregor Range Camp. The discussion was presented in a programmatic sense using the best available data to illustrate potential use of Fort Bliss capabilities that could effect the use of McGregor Range.

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cont.

production (and wind erosion) whenever the wind blows. Mitigation for fugitive dust production should be addressed in each project-specific National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document.

42

Page 4.8-19, 4.8.5, lines 13-14: Omit sentence "If grazing were instituted . . ." This statement conflicts with an earlier more realistic statement indicating cattle grazing could be restricted due to UXO contamination.

43

Page 4.8-23, Table 4.8-4: The conclusion to be drawn from the text is that pending further study, the effect of grazing on Aplomado falcon potential habitat should be "unknown" rather than "negative."

44

Page 4.9-24, line 25: Omit "Management responsibility for archaeological resources on the returned lands would be assumed by the BLM." BLM already has management responsibility for cultural resources as per the FLPMA.

Appendix G, Page G-8, Section G.5, Comprehensive Landscape Monitoring: Overall, the description of the use of remotely sensed satellite image data to monitor vegetation and land impact changes in the Fort Bliss area is sound. The following are some comments and suggestions on the monitoring method:

45

The Advance Very High Resolution Radiometer (AVHRR) data, with less than 1 km resolution, is more of a global tool—as is mentioned—and therefore not as useful for monitoring such a localized area, even on a daily basis. A reference on the methodology of using AVHRR data for soil moisture mapping is needed because there is not yet a known good satellite image tool to do this on a regional or local scale.

46

Normalized vegetation index type products usually do not work well in low vegetation density desert environments (as stated on page G-11). Using calibrated visible bands to do some of the vegetation change detection, as described in Chavez and MacKinnon, reference following, should prove to be more successful.

47

The use of two Landsat Thematic Mapper (TM) images (1986 vs 1996) to generate a preliminary change image map is a good start, but it is unclear how often a TM image will be used to monitor changes in the area. At least one or two per year (seasonally spaced) would provide the best monitoring results.

Continued

41. The Army agrees with the agency comment and is committed to continuing evaluation under NEPA as major new actions that could significantly affect the environment are proposed for the withdrawn area.

42. The sentence has been deleted as recommended.

43. Results of existing studies indicate that grazing may have resulted in a reduced capacity for the Otero Mesa grasslands to support breeding Aplomado falcon (see Section 3.8.3.4). In addition, grazing may have been a factor that lead to the extirpation of this species from the United States (see Section D.4.4 in Appendix D). Therefore, the table was not changed, although a footnote was added indicating that the assessment of the impacts of grazing on potential Aplomado falcon habitat on Fort Bliss are preliminary.

44. The text has been revised to read "...would be solely by the BLM."

45. The Army will consider the agency suggestion in the future development of the monitoring system as funding resources permit.

46. The Army will consider the agency suggestion in the future development of the monitoring system as funding resources permit.

47. The Army agrees with the agency comment. The following qualifications may be found in Section 4.8.7.1. "The results from this analysis must be interpreted with some qualifications. The model was generated from plot data in grassland and desert shrub communities where vegetation cover ranged from 15 percent to 53 percent of the total covered area. Extrapolation of the model to other vegetation

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The methodology presented for change detection is to classify the TM images into land cover types for the given date and then to use these results to do the change detection. This method could result in errors in the classification process of each date (usually less than 90 percent classification accuracy for desert vegetation), showing up as changes on the ground. Using the actual calibrated images to do change detection and then using these results as a guide for detailed field investigations could be a better monitoring method.

References:

Chavez, Pat S., Jr., and MacKinnon, David J., Automatic detection of vegetation changes in the Southwestern United States using remotely sensed images, Photogrammetric Engineering & Remote Sensing, Vol. 60, No. 5, May 1994, pp. 571-583.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this LDEIS. We trust the above comments will be of assistance as you prepare subsequent documentation.

Sincerely,



Glenn B. Sekavec
Regional Environmental Officer

47. Continued

types or to vegetation cover outside of the range of the model cannot be evaluated for accuracy. Therefore, comparisons made in other vegetation types or outside of the model's range should be viewed as preliminary comparisons. The images used in the analysis represent a snapshot view of conditions for 2 days 10 years apart, and do not represent trends in vegetation cover. The number of observations over time correlates to the reliability of the trend analysis."

48. The monitoring program that uses National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) LANDSAT Thematic Imagery is under development and will be used to monitor the entire landscape of Fort Bliss at high spatial resolution to capture variability in land cover on training areas. Validation will occur through the on the ground use of Land Condition Trend Analysis (LCTA) and other field investigations /observations. This capability will allow positioning of monitoring plots to provide an accurate sample of impacts on the training landscape. Additional post sampling analysis using plot data, monitoring data, and Geographic Information System (GIS) themes will allow analysts to map the extent and impact of training activities on a landscape scale. The analysis presented in the LEIS reflects the early stages of the process being implemented at Fort Bliss to evaluate cumulative impacts of military training, grazing, and natural events on training lands.

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DEC 04 1998



United States Department of the Interior

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IN REPLY REFER TO:
1780 (930)

December 04, 1998

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and Fort Bliss
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Dear Dr. Vliet:

The New Mexico Resource Advisory Council, during it's meeting on November 20, 1998, discussed and approved the enclosed letter (Enclosure 1). The letter concerns the Draft Legislative Environmental Impact Statement for the McGregor Range, New Mexico Land Withdrawal Renewal, October 1998, prepared by the United States Army. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Acting Deputy State Director
Division of Resource
Planning, Use and Protection

2 Enclosures
1- Letter (4 pp)
2- cc List

Federal Government
United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

REC 14 REC'D

Dr. Andrew Vliet
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Dear Dr. Vliet:

The New Mexico Resource Advisory Council (RAC) is a 15 member New Mexico citizens advisory council appointed to provide advice and recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior through the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), New Mexico State Office. In previous correspondence to you dated January 9, 1998, we provided scoping comments for review and consideration during preparation of the Draft Legislative Environmental Impact Statement (LEIS) for the renewal of the McGregor Range military withdrawal.

We recommended the Army consider six alternatives in the LEIS: Five boundary alternatives and a sixth alternative to establish a National Conservation Area (NCA) for the Otero Mesa and Foothills. During this process, we have been disappointed in the actions and methods of the military in this process and selection of the proposed action. By making a case only for the proposed action, the military has devalued the other alternatives, public support for those alternatives and the entire process.

Regardless of which alternative is chosen, we wish to emphasize the importance of continued public access to public land. People have a right to use public land, and this right must not be hampered.

The RAC's guiding tenets for McGregor Range were first articulated in a letter dated August 5, 1997, in response to the Air Force's proposal to establish a bombing range on Otero Mesa:

1. The public has historically used Otero Mesa and the Mountain Foothills for multiple-use. Otero Mesa holds some of New Mexico's finest examples of native grasslands and finest antelope herds.
2. The area west of Otero Mesa, known as the "Tularosa Basin" is an appropriate location for the continued military use including a bombing range. This area is currently used as an impact area for military munitions for Fort Bliss.

Enclosure 1-1

49. Based on recommendations received from the public through the NEPA scoping process, the McGregor Range LEIS analyzes five boundary alternatives and a sixth alternative to establish a NCA for Otero Mesa and the Sacramento Mountain foothills. As required by NEPA, the environmental impacts of each alternative were presented in comparative form with substantial treatment of each alternative.

49

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These two tenets continue to guide RAC positions for McGregor Range issues. Concerning the withdrawal renewal, the RAC supports Alternative 3, which would return the area known as "Otero Mesa and the Mountain Foothills" to non-withdrawn public land status. The area west of the Otero Mesa, known as the "Tularosa Basin" portion of McGregor Range, would continue to be withdrawn for military use. The Otero Mesa and Mountains Foothills have traditionally been used for Army troop training and as an impact buffer area. The Otero Mesa is not an appropriate location for the Air Force's bombing range or any future hard military use or impact areas. By contrast, the Tularosa Basin is much better suited for such use as it historically has been an impact area with unexploded ordnance and closed to public use.

50 | It is our understanding that the Withdrawal renewal decision will be made by Congress. As such, the RAC asserts that for whatever alternative selected by Congress, the resultant legislation must ensure the historic use pattern of McGregor Range, including guaranteed substantive public use and protection of the natural landscape of the Otero Mesa and Mountain Foothills.

51 | The LEIS states that all re-withdrawn lands would continue under management as per the White Sands Resource Area Resource Management Plan (RMP) and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). To ensure this happens, the essential parts of the RMP and MOU should be incorporated into renewal legislation. The legislation should clearly delineate management responsibility as per the RMP and MOU. The legislation should use the RMP and MOU as a template, and should address Land Use; Minerals; Soil, Water, and Air; Vegetation; Livestock Grazing; Wildlife; Recreation; Visual Resources; Wilderness; Cultural Resources; and Fire Management.

52 | In addition, part of the military responsibility is to act as good land stewards. Part of that responsibility is to cleanup debris as a result of military activity. It is imperative that such items be cleaned up as it occurs rather than waiting for years of accumulation. The military should develop a 15-year aggressive cleanup plan for McGregor Range.

Enclosure 1-2

50. The Army's proposed action, described in Section 2.1, allows for the continuation of the substantive public use of the range, subject to risks to public safety and national security requirements.

51. The Army's proposed action would continue management under the White Sands Resource Area RMP as amended for McGregor Range for the 50 years to provide a stable land base for military training and planning. However, Congress could reinforce this proposed action through legislation that the existing MOU govern the future management of McGregor Range. Congress could further specify other periods of withdrawal and allowable activities on different portions of McGregor Range. For example, Congress could specify a 35-year period of withdrawal and that the Tularosa Basin be utilized as the primary military use area on McGregor Range, and place limits on military use of the Otero Mesa.

52. The Army has an on-going evaluation of the ordnance and explosive hazards on McGregor Range and will continue with studies and pursue clean-up actions to the extent resources are available.

As described in Section 3.13.3, an archive search report documented areas of potential ordnance and explosive hazards. Additional physical surveys are being conducted to evaluate the extent of the potential ordnance and explosive hazards. Potential hazards to public safety associated with the granting of public access in portions of McGregor Range such as the Tularosa Basin may preclude return of this area to the public domain necessitating transfer of that land to the Secretary of the Army for future clean-up.

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53

We are concerned about the 50-year withdrawal renewal timeframe proposed by the Army, and believe that is too long. The current withdrawal was for 15 years. Extending the withdrawal for over three times that duration is excessive. The withdrawal certainly should not exceed the foreseeable uses by the military. The draft Fort Bliss Mission and Master Plan Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement indicates the military planning horizon is usually 20 years, but that even the period beyond 6 years is highly speculative. If there is a withdrawal renewal, it should be for 15 years.

In summary, the RAC supports Alternative 3 because it unequivocally ensures continued public use of the Otero Mesa/Mountain Foothills while providing the Army with an exclusive use area to fulfill its training mission requirements. If Congress selects a different alternative, the legislation should be specific and used as a mechanism to fulfill these objectives and delineate management responsibilities.

Sincerely,

Approved on 11/20/98 at the New Mexico Resource Advisory Council meeting in Las Cruces, New Mexico by all current members present as follows:

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Joe Romero
Buddy Shaw
Marvin Lee Watts

Group 2**

Gregory Green
Phyllenore Howard
Bob Nordstrum
Sanford Schemnitz
Steve West

Group 3***

Danny Charlie
Celestino Gachupin
Kenneth Heil
Dan Lopez

Enclosure 1-3

53. The Army employs various planning cycles for different aspects of its mission. For example, the Army uses a 6-year programming cycle for operational activities with facility planning over a 20-year horizon. Doctrinal and equipment life-cycle planning can extend over a period of 40 years or more. The proposed 50-year withdrawal period encompasses each of these periods and enables long-term national security plans to rely on a stable land resource.

Different (shorter or longer) withdrawal periods would not substantially change the environmental impacts of a land allocation decision. Continuing stewardship and compliance activities would be required regardless of duration. Public and/or agency participation in ongoing environmental management activities on McGregor Range is assured through existing laws, regulations, and policies as listed in Table 1.6-1. The Army is committed to continuing public participation under NEPA as major new actions that could significantly affect the environment are proposed for the installation. The McGregor Range RMPA, jointly prepared by the BLM and the Army provides for continuing public participation. The annual RMP update informs the public of the progress made in implementing the RMPA. The Army's INRMP and ICRMP contain provisions for agency coordination and revision as necessary every 5 years. Together, these regulatory requirements, policies, and procedures will ensure opportunities for both public and agency input into the future.

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** Group 2.

national/regional environmental organization, resource conservation group, dispersed recreational activity, archeological or historical interest, national/regional wild horse/burro groups; and

*** Group 3.

holder of state/county/local elected office, State agency employee in field of natural resource/land/water, Indian tribes, academicians of natural resource/science, public-at-large.

Enclosure 1-4

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Enclosure 2-5

Federal Government
United States Air Force



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC

Office Of The Assistant Secretary

5 FEB 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR DASA(ESOH)

FROM: SAF/MIQ

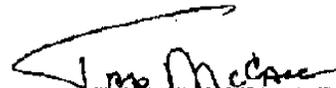
SUBJECT: Air Force Comments on McGregor Range LEIS

We have reviewed the draft Legislative Environmental Impact Statements (LEIS) on renewal of the withdrawal of McGregor Range. This range is vital to USAF and German Air Force (GAF) training and combat readiness.

Based on our review of the document, it appears that alternatives three through six have significant adverse impacts to the USAF and GAF, as Otera Mesa (located within McGregor Range) would return to the public. However, the LEIS does not adequately reflect these potential impacts.

The Record of Decision (ROD) for the GAF EIS identifies Otera Mesa as the site for construction of a new target complex for air-to-ground training. Otera Mesa will support the tactical training for a total of 42 GAF Tornado aircraft, a politically and economically important initiative. Returning Otera Mesa to the public will seriously impact our training, combat readiness, and German/US relations. Our detailed comments are attached.

If you have any questions on our comments, my point of contact is Maj Jim Mills, DSN: 223-7548; e-mail: JamesW.Mills@pentagon.af.mil


THOMAS W. MCCALL, JR.
Deputy Assistant Secretary
of the Air Force
(Environment, Safety and
Occupational Health)

Attachments:
Detailed Comments

54. Table ES-3 illustrates that under Alternatives 3 through 6, the capability for training that requires air-to-ground surface impact areas is totally eliminated; therefore, the mission could not be accomplished. This loss would totally eliminate the benefits to the USAF and GAF expressed in the purpose and need section of the USAF's *Proposed Expansion of GAF at Holloman AFB, New Mexico, Final EIS*, dated April 1998. As stated in the LEIS Section 1.5.3, *Other Environmental Analyses and Decisions Relevant to the Action*, the USAF EIS was incorporated by reference into this LEIS. Details of the operational and environmental impacts of the LEIS Alternatives 3 through 6 may be found in the USAF document.

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AIR FORCE COMMENTS

ON

MCGREGOR RANGE
LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (LEIS)

- 55 | 1. General comment: The LEIS does not list any permanent German personnel assigned to Fort Bliss. The German Air Force (GAF) has three detachments that have been in place at Fort Bliss for several decades. The first is the German Armed Forces Command for USA/Canada. This unit is commanded by a GAF Brigadier General. The second unit is the GAF missile school. The third is the GAF Patriot Office. The total number of GAF personnel permanently assigned to Fort Bliss is 240. The LEIS only refers to foreign contingents performing temporary duty at Fort Bliss.
- 56 | 2. Page 2-1, line 40. Replace "...the USAF is proposing to expand GAF operations at HAFB, New Mexico." with "...the USAF is expanding GAF operations at HAFB, New Mexico."
- 57 | 3. Page 2-12, Table 2.1-4, First Bullet. Delete bullet and replace with, "Construction of a tactical target complex on Otero Mesa."
- 58 | 4. Page 4-3, line 38-39. This section states that military activities at HAFB have the potential for causing cumulative effects on McGregor Range without referencing the reasoning. Recommend deleting the statement unless a clear explanation can be provided.
- 59 | 5. Page 4.6-2, lines 38-42. This is an obsolete paragraph. We are expanding the GAF operations at Holloman. We suggest the paragraph be replaced with: "USAF Expansion of GAF Operations at HAFB. The expansion of GAF operations at HAFB, NM, through the beddown of an additional 30 Tornado aircraft, is one of the most significant future mission activities with a potential to impact air quality at McGregor Range. The expansion includes the establishment of a new air-to-ground tactical target complex on McGregor Range to be used for training by USAF and GAF aircrews."
- 60 | 6. Page 4.12-1, lines 44-45. Delete first sentence. We are already expanding GAF operations at Holloman.
- 61 | 7. Page 6-1, line 9. Shouldn't the USAF be listed in this section?
- 62 | 8. Page ES-7, lines 12-13. The initial statement of this paragraph is somewhat incomplete, in that not only would Alternative 1 allow the Army to continue its current air defense training, it would also allow the USAF and GAF to continue the military training associated with the new target complex (NTC) to be constructed on West Otera Mesa.

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55. These units are included in the total *Army Stationing and Installations Plan (ASIP)* data presented in Table 1.2-2. The LEIS pertains to the McGregor Range portion of Fort Bliss. The discussion of unit stationing at Fort Bliss Section 1.2.2.1 was limited to those units that typically perform much of their mission on McGregor Range. All units, both U.S. and allied, stationed at Fort Bliss, or elsewhere, that use McGregor Range on an infrequent basis were considered in the total training use of McGregor Range.
56. The text has been changed to read, "...the USAF is expanding GAF operations at Holloman AFB (HAFB), New Mexico."
57. The first bullet has been revised as "Construction of an air-to-ground tactical target complex."
58. The text was revised to read: "Military activities at HAFB, other than the USAF construction of a new air-to-ground tactical target complex, such as the deactivation of units such as the 435th Fighter Squadron that reduced flight operations over McGregor Range, have the potential to contribute to the cumulative effects on McGregor Range."
59. The text has been revised as requested.
60. The first sentence has been deleted as requested.
61. The U.S. Department of the Air Force has been added to the list of agencies notified or contacted.
62. The sentence has been revised to read, "...the full renewal of the withdrawn land would allow the U.S. Army to continue its current air defense mission, allow continued military training for other U.S. services and allied forces, and would provide flexibility."

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- 63 9. Page ES-7 lines 36-37. The statement "Alternatives 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 would not affect airspace use or management in the Region of Influence (ROI)" does not appear to be correct with respect to airspace use. If Alternatives 3, 4, 5, or 6 were selected, the USAF and GAF would not have access to West Otera Mesa, would not be able to build the NTC, and would be prohibited from training on the Mesa.
- 64 10. Page ES-12 Military Mission Consequences. This discussion totally ignores the military mission consequences of the proposed action and alternatives on the USAF and GAF. We recognize this is an Army range and environmental analysis; nevertheless, the impacts of the proposed action and alternatives apply to all military users of the range. The document should accurately and completely reflect those impacts. This comment applies not only to the Executive Summary, but to the entire document.
- 65 11. Page 1-9 and 1-10. Reference to joint training and allied units using the range is made, but no mention of USAF and GAF use of the NTC and West Otera Mesa is made. Although the NTC is yet to be built, its development will occur in the near future; such omissions do not present an accurate picture of the use of the range.
- 66 12. Page 4.1-7, para 4.1.2.2. No mention is made of the USAF and GAF use of the West Otera Mesa in this discussion. The concern is that an incomplete and inaccurate description is presented.
- 67 13. Page 4.1-10, para 4.1.3.2. (also para 4.1.4.2. - 4.1.6.2.) All the "Effects on Land Use and Land Users of McGregor Range" paragraphs in chapter 4 need to give an accurate portrayal of the real impacts to the USAF and GAF. Simply stating that operations by the USAF on Otera Mesa would not occur does not provide the decision-maker the real impact.
- 68 14. Page 4.1-19, para 4.1.7., Cumulative Impacts, Lines 20-22. This sentence is inaccurate. For alternatives 3-6, it would appear the effect on land use and land users would be substantially different than under alternative 1 or 2. The USAF and GAF training missions (land users of McGregor Range) would be substantially curtailed, for example, under alternatives 3-6, and under alternatives 5 and 6, land use would be drastically different than under any of the other alternatives for virtually any land user. This sentence does not agree with table 2-7-2.
- 69 15. Pages 4.2-1 and 4.2-2, para 4.2.2. - 4.2.6. (Airspace -- Alternatives 3-6). The comments in each of these discussions (that the alternative would not affect airspace use) appears to be inaccurate, as the USAF and GAF use of the airspace would be drastically curtailed if the USAF and GAF could not use the NTC on the Otera Mesa.
- 70 16. Page 4.2-2, para 4.2.7, Cumulative Impacts, lines 35-39. The Taiwanese Air Force Training Program at Holloman AFB was deactivated several years ago, so this information is outdated, and should be removed.
- 71 17. Pages 6-2 - 6-5, para 6.4, Persons Consulted. This list appears to be missing USAF contacts made. Surely more than one telephone call to an Air Force contractor was made (Mr. William Wuest).

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63. The text has been revised to read, "Alternatives 1 and 2 would not affect airspace use or management in the ROI. Alternatives 3, 4, and 6 would not affect airspace use or management in the ROI. However, the return of Otero Mesa and other areas of the existing McGregor Range to the public domain would preclude development of the USAF tactical target complex on Otero Mesa, potentially reducing the level of activity within Restricted Area 5103."
64. Table ES-3 illustrates that under Alternatives 3 through 6, the capability for training that requires air-to-ground surface impact areas is totally eliminated, therefore the mission could not be accomplished. This loss would totally eliminate the benefits to the USAF and GAF expressed in the purpose and need section of the USAF's *Proposed Expansion of GAF Operations at Holloman AFB, New Mexico, Final EIS*, dated April 1998. As stated in the LEIS Section 1.5.3, *Other Environmental Analyses and Decisions Relevant to the Action*, the USAF EIS was incorporated by reference into this LEIS. The operational and environmental impacts of the LEIS Alternatives 3 through 6 may be found in the resource area discussions in Chapter 4 of the LEIS.
65. While the Army's principal requirement for McGregor Range is to support Air Defense Artillery (ADA) missile training, other activities such as the USAF tactical target complex are discussed throughout the document. Table ES-3 in the Executive Summary illustrates the capability for training that requires air-to-ground surface impact areas such as the Otero Mesa site. This refers to the USAF target complex. As stated in the LEIS Section 1.5.3, *Other Environmental Analyses and Decisions Relevant to the Action*, the USAF EIS was incorporated by reference into this LEIS. In general, the tactical target complex is discussed under each resource evaluation of Alternative 1 in this LEIS. However, details of the operational and environmental impacts of the tactical target complex may be found in the USAF document.

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66. This section describes differences in military use for Alternative 2 from those described for Alternative 1. The tactical target complex is discussed briefly in Section 4.1.1.2. Under Section 4.1.2.2, the tactical target complex is considered one of the potential expanded missions.
67. As stated in the LEIS Section 1.5.3, *Other Environmental Analyses and Decisions Relevant to the Action*, the USAF EIS was incorporated by reference into this LEIS. In general, the tactical target complex is discussed under each resource evaluation of Alternative 1 in this LEIS. However, details of the operational and environmental impacts of the tactical target complex may be found in the USAF document.
68. Curtailment of the Army's Patriot training mission as well as the USAF and GAF training missions (land users of McGregor Range) would occur under Alternatives 3 through 6. These are addressed under each alternative as direct impacts. Section 4.1.7 addresses cumulative impacts that add to these direct impacts from activities other than the Army missions on McGregor Range. In this context, no additional impacts are expected to occur.
69. Section 4.2.2, *Alternative 2*, discusses airspace use and management under conditions that still allow USAF construction of the tactical target complex. Section 4.2.3, *Alternative 3*, addresses the reduced level of activity from returning the Otero Mesa to the public domain. Section 4.2.4, *Alternative 4*, includes a statement that incorporates the effects of Alternative 3. Section 4.2.5, *Alternative 5*, recognizes that while air activity would remain, air-to-ground activity would cease. Section 4.2.6 recognizes that the establishment of an NCA could also contain undetermined changes that affect airspace use and management.
70. The text has been revised as recommended.
71. Mr. William Wuest was not listed as a person contacted in Section 6.4. *Persons Consulted* records were reviewed and additional USAF persons contacted were added as appropriate.

Federal Government
White Sands Missile Agency

From: Andreoli, Robert
Sent: Wednesday, February 10, 1999 7:46 AM
To: 'VlietA'
Subject: FW: Response to McGregor Land Withdrawal LEIS

Andy- This is our only comment. Bob

1. Reference: MCGREGOR RANGE, NEW MEXICO LAND WITHDRAWAL RENEWAL LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (LEIS); Section 4.13, Safety; Subparagraph 4.13.1 Alternative 1; Second paragraph page 4.13-2.
2. With regard to the statement made, Reference paragraph 1 above, the need to comment on the ATACMS firing, from Ft. Wingate, NM is pertinent with regard to establishing an ATACMS impact area on McGregor Range, NM. However, since WSMR is the lead range for conducting ATACMS firings from Ft. Wingate, NM, and has the responsibility for ensuring the safety of the public for overflights from Ft. Wingate, NM, your comment regarding major safety concerns, is inappropriate and irrelevant. To quote from the Reference paragraph 1 above "One initiative by WSMR with the potential to create major safety concerns, involves the proposal to launch an ATACMS from Fort Wingate, New Mexico, to impact on McGregor Range." ATACMS firings from Ft. Wingate, NM were addressed in the WSMR Extended Range EIS and approved by a Record of Decision (ROD), 1994. ATACMS safety issues were appropriately addressed in this EIS, and since, ATACMS has safely and successfully conducted firings from Ft. Wingate, NM onto WSMR. Please note that the WSMR Extended Range EIS ROD, ATACMS safety approval, and safe conduct of an ATACMS firing from Ft. Wingate, NM, all occurred prior to the publication of your LEIS.

72. The existing text has been replaced with the following text. "An initiative by WSMR with safety implications involves the proposal to launch an ATACMS from Fort Wingate, New Mexico, to impact on McGregor Range. WSMR currently conducts such launches that terminate in impact areas on WSMR. The safety implications of these activities were assessed in the *Theater Missile Defense Extended Test Range EIS* completed in November 1994. When the launch occurs, coordination is effected with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), landowners potentially impacted are notified, and some residents are evacuated."