

Fort Bliss Army Growth and Force Structure Realignment



Record of Decision



June 2010



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RECORD OF DECISION FOR THE FORT BLISS ARMY GROWTH AND FORCE STRUCTURE REALIGNMENT

This is the Record of Decision (ROD) for the *Fort Bliss Army Growth and Force Structure Realignment Final Environmental Impact Statement* (GFS FEIS), which is incorporated by reference as part of this decision. The GFS FEIS was filed with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) on 30 April 2010. The Notice of Availability (NOA) for the FEIS was published in the Federal Register on 07 May 2010.

The U.S. Army (Army) will choose one alternative from each of the following categories: Stationing and Training Alternatives 1 through 4, Land Use Alternatives 1 through 5, and Training Infrastructure Improvements Alternatives 1 through 4. The Army has decided to implement Stationing and Training Alternative 4 (ST-4), Land Use Alternative 5, with slight modifications in Training Area (TA) 33, and Training Infrastructure Improvements Alternative 4 (TI-4). The GFS FEIS assessed the potential environmental consequences of the preferred alternatives on the physical, biological, cultural, and socioeconomic environment in their respective Regions of Influence (ROI) of Fort Bliss.

The selection of the preferred alternatives was based on national security, mission requirements and environmental impact considerations, as described in this ROD. The GFS FEIS and this ROD comply with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA); the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA, 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Parts 1500–1508; and the Environmental Analysis of Army Actions (32 CFR, Part 651), the Army's regulations for implementing NEPA. Summaries of these alternatives are provided in this ROD and are described in detail in Chapter 2 of the GFS FEIS.

1.0 BACKGROUND

In April 2007, the Army signed the ROD for the Fort Bliss, Texas and New Mexico Mission and Master Plan Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (2007 SEIS). The 2007 SEIS sought to more fully realize the training opportunities at Fort Bliss through land use changes and range construction to support the stationing of six Heavy Brigade Combat Teams (HBCTs) at Fort Bliss based on the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) and the Global Defense Posture Realignment (GDPR) decisions.

In December 2007, the Army signed the ROD for the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Army Growth and Force Structure Realignment (also known as the Grow the Army PEIS or GTA PEIS). The GTA PEIS ROD directed the stationing of four HBCTs and two Infantry BCTs (IBCTs). Under a change to the GTA PEIS ROD signed on 14 May 2010, one of the HBCTs will undergo conversion to a Stryker BCT (SBCT). These GTA stationing decisions in combination with current Army Transformation, BRAC, National Defense Strategy, National Security Strategy, Quadrennial Defense Review, Army Campaign Plan, and GDPR decisions, and other national defense policy documents, expanded the known missions at Fort Bliss that require different types of terrain, additional training infrastructure facilities, and training facilities improvements. As a result, Fort Bliss needs to modify the land use designations and the training infrastructure improvements adopted by the 2007 SEIS ROD to support the evolving operations, infrastructure, training, and testing requirements of the Army.

The Fort Bliss GFS FEIS is tiered to both the 2007 SEIS and the GTA PEIS and this ROD outlines the decision making process used to select the preferred alternatives for each category. Each alternative must support the continuing mobilization mission, the continued pre-deployment training mission, and the anticipated future stationing and military training decisions at Fort Bliss.

2.0 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to allow for reasonably foreseeable future stationing actions, land use changes, and training and infrastructure improvements that take advantage of Fort Bliss' varied terrain; full suite of training ranges; collocation of heavy, light, and aviation combat units; and collocation of various support units. Three categories of alternatives were identified as critical elements of the Proposed Action, including the following:

- Stationing and Training
- Land Use Changes
- Training Infrastructure Improvements

Each of the three categories of alternatives analyzed contained a No Action Alternative and several action alternatives. A “cafeteria” approach was used and allows the decision maker to select one alternative from each of the three categories. These categories and associated alternatives are necessary components of action for meeting the Army’s requirements for use of stationing and training capacity, implementation of land use changes, and execution of training infrastructure improvements at Fort Bliss.

2.1 Category 1: Stationing and Training

Category 1: The Stationing and Training category includes four alternatives. All alternatives are additive. That means the actions described in Alternative 2 are in addition to the actions described in Alternative 1, the actions described in Alternative 3 are in addition to the actions described in Alternatives 1 and in Alternative 2, while Alternative 4 includes the actions described in Alternative 3, in addition to the actions of all the previous alternatives. A comparison of the units associated with each stationing and training alternative is available at the end of the Stationing and Training Section (Table 1).

2.1.1 Alternative 1 (ST-1) - The No Action Alternative

The ROD for the 2007 GTA PEIS included the stationing of four HBCTs and two IBCTs at Fort Bliss. Under ST-1, four HBCTs and two IBCTs would train at Fort Bliss each year. Under the Army's force generation (ARFORGEN) model, one-third of the four HBCTs and two IBCTs stationed at Fort Bliss would be deployed each year of a three-year deployment cycle. Under these deployment parameters, in one of the three years training up to three of the four HBCTs and both IBCTs would train at the Fort Bliss Training Complex (FBTC). This alternative assumes the level of deployment would continue through the foreseeable future. One BCT would also train at Fort Bliss each year on a Temporary Duty (TDY) or visiting basis. The GFS FEIS environmental impact analysis assumed that the TDY or visiting BCT would be an HBCT. However, the TDY or visiting BCT could be of other types, such as IBCT or SBCT. The GFS FEIS indicates that one IBCT or one SBCT have less environmental impacts than one HBCT. An estimated 40,500 Soldiers would train at the FBTC annually under ST-1.

The number of Soldiers stationed and training at Fort Bliss under this alternative would be approximately 40,500 and the overall stationed population of Fort Bliss (including military families) would be approximately 119,500 people. No additional development of the Cantonment or renovation of existing structures would be required. The on-going development of the Cantonment and renovation of existing structures to accommodate the future number of Soldiers stationed at Fort Bliss was previously analyzed in the 2007 SEIS.

2.1.2 Alternative 2 (ST-2)

Under Stationing and Training Alternative 2 (ST-2), the number of BCTs stationed at Fort Bliss would remain the same as ST-1. However, there is no BCT deployment meaning all stationed units would be present and training at Fort Bliss under ST-2. As a result, seven BCTs would train within the FBTC each year. These seven BCTs include the six BCTs stationed (four HBCTs and two IBCTs) at Fort Bliss, and one TDY or visiting HBCT. The number of Soldiers stationed at Fort Bliss and associated Cantonment development would be the same as for ST-1. The number of soldiers training would increase by one HBCT (the HBCT that otherwise would be deployed) to approximately 44,300 Soldiers.

2.1.3 Alternative 3 (ST-3)

Stationing and Training Alternative 3 (ST-3) adds one SBCT to the number of military units stationed at Fort Bliss. Under this alternative, the stationed BCTs would increase from six to seven and would include four HBCTs, two IBCTs, and one SBCT. Eight BCTs would train at the FBTC each year, including four HBCTs, two IBCTs, one SBCT stationed at Fort Bliss, and one TDY or visiting HBCT. This would result in approximately 48,400 Soldiers training annually at the FBTC.

The number of Soldiers stationed at Fort Bliss under this alternative would increase to approximately 44,600 and the overall stationed population of Fort Bliss (including military families) would be approximately 131,600 people. Redevelopment in the Cantonment is necessary to meet the requirements for garrison operations and quality of life facilities for the Soldiers and their Families. This would not result in expansion of the existing Cantonment footprint, but would require redevelopment within the existing Cantonment.

2.1.4 Alternative 4 (ST-4) - The Preferred Stationing and Training Alternative

Stationing and Training Alternative 4 (ST-4), adds a second SBCT to the number of units stationed at Fort Bliss. ST-4 is the preferred solution because it adds reasonably foreseeable future stationing actions that may affect Fort Bliss. Under this alternative, the stationed BCTs would increase from six to eight and would include four HBCTs, two IBCTs, and two SBCTs. With the addition of the second SBCT, the other units would increase by one Fires Brigade and three SBEs stationed at Fort Bliss. ST-4 would also add a second TDY or visiting HBCT training. This would result in 10 BCTs training at the FBTC each year, including the four HBCTs, two IBCTs, and two SBCTs stationed at Fort Bliss, and the two TDY or visiting HBCTs. This would result in approximately 59,400 Soldiers training annually at the FBTC. As with ST-3, ST-4 would not result in expansion of the existing Cantonment footprint, but would require redevelopment within the existing Cantonment.

Table 1. Comparison of Stationed and Training Alternatives.

Alternative	Stationed Units				Training Units			
	HBCT	IBCT	SBCT	Other Units	HBCT	IBCT	SBCT	Other Units
ST-1	4	2	0	*	4 ^b	2	0	*
ST-2	4	2	0	*	5 ^c	2	0	*
ST-3	4	2	1	*	5 ^c	2	1	*
ST-4 ^a	4	2	2	**	6 ^d	2	2	**

* Collection of support units that include one Fires brigade, six SBEs, two CABs, and other combat service and support units at Fort Bliss.

** Adds one Fires brigade and three SBEs to the collection of Other Units at Fort Bliss.

a. The preferred stationing and training alternative for the PFEIS.

b. Training HBCTs = 4 Bliss + 1 TDY minus 1 deployed.

c. Training HBCTs = 4 Bliss + 1 TDY.

d. Training HBCTs = 4 Bliss + 2 TDY.

2.2 Category 2: Land Use Changes

This category includes five alternatives. Like Category 1, the actions described for each alternative in Category 2 are additive to the actions described in the previous alternative.

2.2.1 Land Use Changes Alternative 1 (LU-1) - The No Action Alternative

Land Use Changes Alternative 1 (LU-1) is the No Action Alternative and does not propose any land use changes. Authorized training activities will continue in the FBTC under this alternative. Off-road vehicle maneuver training would continue on approximately 2,934 square kilometers of the South Training Areas, North Training Areas, Tularosa Basin of McGregor Range, and Southeast McGregor Range. Under LU-1, no fixed sites and off-road vehicle maneuver training would be allowed in the Northeast McGregor Range North of Highway 506. As a result, IBCTs or other light infantry units would not be able to take advantage of training within this varied terrain that replicates terrain conditions in other parts of the world, such as the Middle and Far East, where units may have to deploy and operate.

2.2.2 Land Use Changes Alternative 2 (LU-2)

Land Use Changes Alternative 2 (LU-2) includes changes in land use designations in two primary areas of the FBTC. First, the Army would allow four square kilometers of fixed sites in the Southeast McGregor Range by removing the Grassland Limited Use Area (LUA) restriction in those four square kilometers areas. These fixed sites would be within 1,000 meters of a road and predominantly on slopes of less than 30 percent. The GFS FEIS presented conceptual locations for the fixed sites in the Southeast McGregor Range. Fixed sites would also be allowed in the Sacramento Mountains of the Northeast McGregor Range North of Highway 506 (no changes to the Culp Canyon Wilderness Study Area [WSA]) by removing the Grassland LUA restriction in this area. This alternative would provide for more equitable distribution of training impacts, lessening direct impacts of military land uses on the FBTC.

2.2.3 Land Use Changes Alternative 3 (LU-3)

Land Use Changes Alternative 3 (LU-3) includes the actions described in LU-2 in addition to introducing Land Use Category C in all of Northeast McGregor Range North of Highway 506. This change allows the establishment of Controlled Field Training Exercise (FTX), Mission Support Facilities, and Live-Fire military uses in the Northeast McGregor Range North of Highway 506. No changes are anticipated for the Culp Canyon WSA or the Black Grama Grassland Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). This alternative would also establish five square kilometers of Controlled FTX sites on the Northeast McGregor Range North of Highway 506. The Controlled FTX areas would be within 500 meters of existing roads and on slopes of less than 30 percent (15 degrees). In addition, to the removing the Grassland LUA restriction in LU-2, a Controlled FTX zone would be established in the Sacramento Mountains portion of the Northeast McGregor Range, North of Highway 506, on all areas within 500 meters of a road on slopes of less than 30 percent (15 degrees). This alternative would be beneficial to the training mission at Fort Bliss. Both Southeast McGregor Range (under LU-2) and Northeast McGregor Range North of Highway 506 have terrain and environment that differ from the existing training environment in the North and South Training Areas and the Tularosa Basin of McGregor Range. They both also replicate various terrain conditions in other parts of the world where units may have to deploy and operate.

2.2.4 Land Use Changes Alternative 4 (LU-4)

Land Use Change Alternative 4 (LU-4) includes the changes proposed in LU-3 and LU-2, and adds Off-Road Vehicle Maneuver: light military use within limited areas in the Northeast McGregor Range North of Highway 506. Off-Road Vehicle Maneuver of light-wheeled vehicles (e.g., HMMWV vehicles) would be permitted within 500 meters of an existing road on slopes of less than 30 percent in Northeast McGregor Range North of Highway 506. Opportunities for conducting both FTX and off-road maneuvering in Northeast McGregor Range North of Highway 506 would beneficially affect IBCTs training at the FBTC. Soldiers would have opportunities to train in a forested, mountainous environment, providing additional experience in environments where Army units may deploy.

2.2.5 Land Use Changes Alternative 5 (LU-5) - The Preferred Land Use Alternative

Land Use Changes Alternative 5 (LU-5) includes all previous land use alternatives in addition to allowing three square kilometers of Controlled FTX sites on the Otero Mesa South of Highway 506 by removing the Grassland LUA limitations in these areas. These sites would be located adjacent to existing roads. Under LU-5, there would be an increased level of demarcation of land uses on the FBTC. The North and South Training Areas and the southern portion of Tularosa Basin would predominantly support HBCT activities. Military use of the Northeast McGregor Range North of Highway 506 would be dominated by IBCT activities, with the controlled FTXs on Otero Mesa South of Highway 506 providing support to the IBCTs' training.

Figure 1 presents the implementation of LU-5. The amount of Controlled FTX and Off-Road Vehicle Maneuver Light activity is reduced in TA 33 compared to the activities shown in Figure 2-7 for LU-5 in Chapter 2 of the GTA FEIS. On U.S. Forest Service (USFS) owned land in TA 33, FBTC Land Use Category F applies, which restricts vehicles to existing roads. Three specifically designated Controlled FTX sites would be established with cooperative input on location from the USFS, and within 300 feet of the existing roads to allow vehicles to leave roads and establish fixed sites. Any other fixed sites on the

USFS owned land in TA 33 within the FBTC Land Use Category F area would be limited to Dismounted Maneuver military use, which was analyzed in LU-2 through LU-5 in the GTA EIS.

The three Controlled FTX site locations (Figure 1) are only conceptual locations. This is an approximately 90 percent reduction in area used for Controlled FTX use in TA 33 compared to that analyzed in Alternative LU-3 through Alternative LU-5 in the GTA EIS. FBTC Land Use Category F does not allow live-fire activity or create mission support facilities. FBTC Land Use Category B applies on Army Fee-owned lands in TA 33 (Figure 1). This reduces Off-Road Vehicle Maneuver-Light military use in TA 33 by approximately 77 percent compared to that analyzed in Alternative LU-4 in the GTA EIS, and allows Controlled FTX use by vehicles.

2.3 Category 3: Training Infrastructure Improvements

This category includes four alternatives. Like Categories 1 and 2, the actions described in each alternative are additive to the actions described in the previous alternatives under the training infrastructure improvements category.

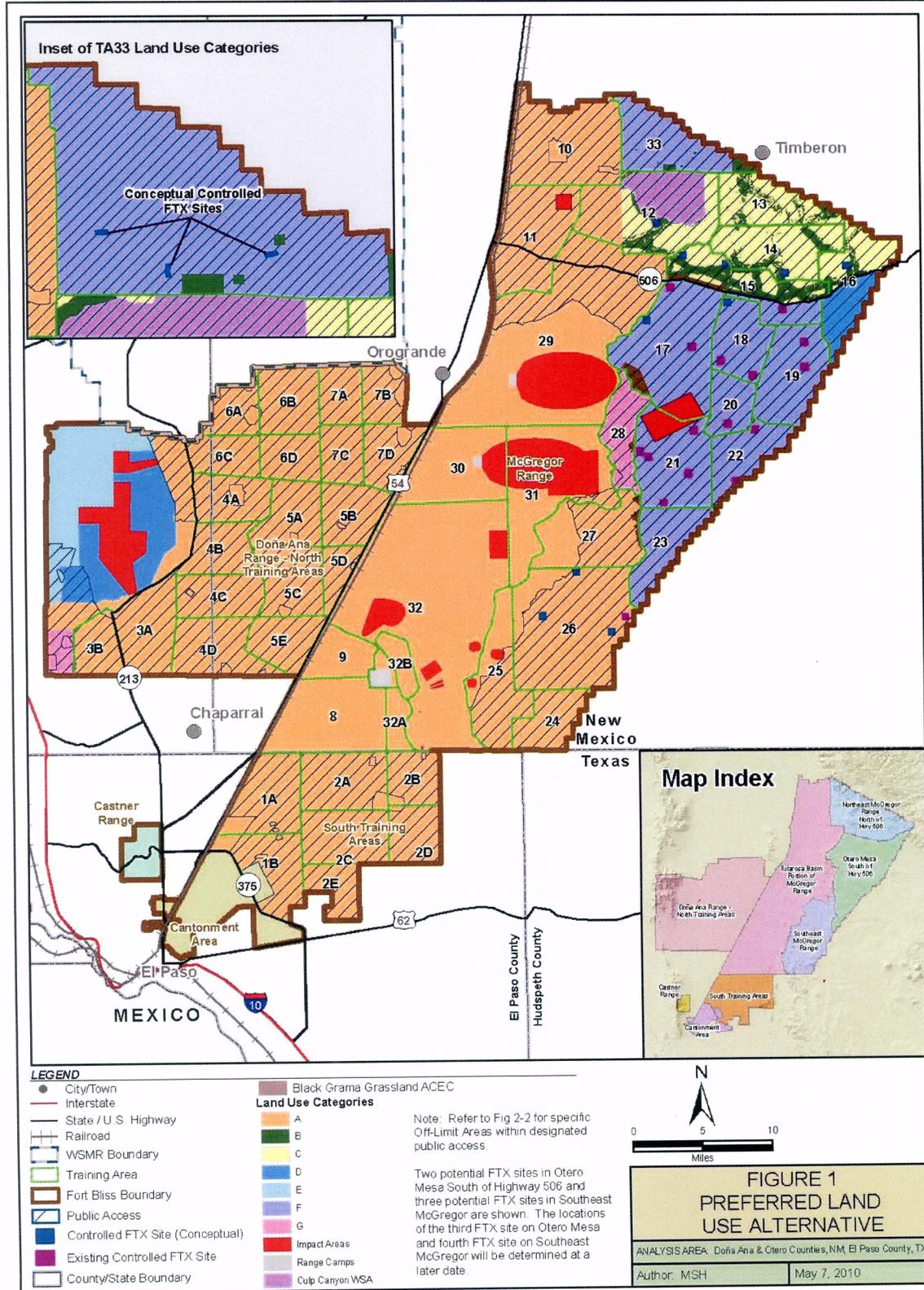
2.3.1 Training Infrastructure Improvements Alternative 1 (TI-1) - The No Action Alternative

Training Infrastructure Improvements Alternative 1 (TI-1) is the No Action Alternative and does not propose any additional improvements to training infrastructure other than that described for ranges analyzed in previous NEPA documents.

2.3.2 Training Infrastructure Improvements Alternative 2 (TI-2)

Training Infrastructure Improvements Alternative 2 (TI-2) analyzes the construction of additional ranges to support the ROD for the 2007 GTA PEIS. Army doctrine requires stationing locations to contain modernized and standardized inventory of ranges available to support modular BCTs. This standardization emphasizes the availability of a suite of modular BCT training ranges to ensure that all BCTs have access to critical training infrastructure and can meet requirements for pre-deployment training certification. The different training objectives of HBCTs and IBCTs result in requirements for additional ranges. Construction of these ranges would use a phased approach, with the first phase including approximately 27 ranges constructed in the FY2010 to 2016 period, with additional ranges constructed, as funds are available. The ranges would be located in close proximity to the existing three range camps to provide units an operating forward position. These facilities would improve training efficiencies by enhancing opportunities for sharing common support facilities, such as latrines, instruction buildings and parking areas. These facilities would minimize the use of fuel and travel while maximizing efficiencies by providing Soldiers temporary housing in close proximity to range training sites.

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2.3.3 Training Infrastructure Improvements Alternative 3 (TI-3)

Training Infrastructure Improvements Alternative 3 (TI-3) includes TI-2 and the expansion of existing range camps and construction of Contingency Operating Locations (COLs), similar to Forward Operating Bases, in the FBTC. The FBTC already includes three Range Camps (McGregor Range Camp, Doña Ana Range Camp, and Orogrande Range Camp) and a variety of miscellaneous facilities. Range Camps are defined as built environment providing limited administrative, living, quality of life, and other support services in closer proximity to training locations to support the Soldiers (e.g., billet space or living quarters). COLs are temporary facilities with minimal engineering placed in austere locations along unimproved surface roads. COL construction is analyzed at the programmatic level, with total and per-instance acreage and possible general locations indicated in the GFS FEIS. The expansion of the existing range camps and establishment of COLs in the South Training Area, Tularosa Basin and Doña Ana–North Training Area would benefit the training experience of the troops. By providing mission support services, the expanded range camps would enable units to conduct realistic training operations while in more remote locations on Fort Bliss. The COLs are encampments with defensive berms that more closely simulate conditions found in current military operations in Southwest Asia.

2.3.4 Training Infrastructure Improvements Alternative 4 (TI-4) - The Preferred Alternative

Training Infrastructure Improvements Alternative 4 (TI-4) includes all previous training, infrastructure, and improvement alternatives and adds a rail line connecting the Fort Bliss Cantonment to the FBTC. The rail line would run from the Fort Bliss Cantonment generally north-northeast parallel to US Highway 54 and the existing railroad line to a location north of the Orogrande Range Complex. This alternative was identified and described in concept in the GFS FEIS. The selection of this alternative would expand the existing rail deployment capabilities by providing rail access to McGregor Range Camp and Orogrande Range Complex and would improve the efficiency of moving soldiers and equipment to training areas.

3.0 BASIS OF THE ARMY'S DECISION

In selecting the preferred alternatives for implementation, the Army considered three main factors: (1) mission requirements posed by Army Transformation, BRAC, and GTA including the need to provide adequate training; (2) the need to provide a sustainable training complex; and (3) the environmental effects of each alternative and public comment regarding those environmental effects.

The selection of ST-4, LU-5, and TI-4 from each category will further enable Fort Bliss to meet mission requirements. Together, the preferred alternatives provide required capability to train soldiers to doctrinal standards. Quality of training (i.e., training that meets doctrinal standards) better prepares soldiers to fight and survive and enhances their effectiveness on the battlefield.

The Army selected ST-4 as the preferred Stationing and Training Alternative. Because of the Army's substantial investment in firing ranges and training facilities at Fort Bliss (primarily due to the 2005 BRAC decisions analyzed in the 2007 SEIS), Fort Bliss has the ability to train different numbers and types of military units. ST-4 provides the Army with greater flexibility in future stationing decisions. This alternative increases the training load to two visiting or TDY HBCT equivalents, increasing the ability of Fort Bliss to fulfill its role as one of the Army's Power Projection Platforms. ST-4 also adds an Artillery Brigade (Fires), and three Support Battalion Equivalents (SBEs). The FBTC contains sufficient maneuver training space for the military units in ST-4 to train and meet mission requirements. Under the preferred land use alternative the maneuver training space requirement for ST-4 would be distributed throughout the FBTC according to training and BCT terrain preferences

The Army selected LU-5 as the preferred Land Use Alternative. LU-5 offers the most realistic training scenarios for IBCTs by providing different terrain and environmental conditions that replicate different areas of the world where IBCTs may have to deploy and operate. LU-5 allows for three square kilometers of Controlled FTX sites in northern portion of Otero Mesa to provide logistical support for the IBCTs training in the areas north of Highway 506. By allowing IBCT support units to position closer to the varying terrain north of Highway 506, LU-5 provides more realistic support scenarios. LU-5 also includes making select areas within the Northeast McGregor Range North of Highway 506 available for FTX activities and off-road vehicle maneuver by light-wheeled vehicles; allowing IBCTs more flexibility to accommodate evolving training requirements and future mission needs. The Army has modified the way in which LU-5 would be implemented on USFS lands in TA 33, compared to the description of LU-5 in the GFS FEIS. This modification complies with USFS road travel management plan requirements in TA 33.

The Army selected TI-4 as the preferred Training and Infrastructure Alternative. TI-4 provides infrastructure improvements of TI-3 for realistic training of the BCTs stationed at Fort Bliss, and provides an Army-built railway for transportation of Soldiers and equipment from the Cantonment to the FBTC training areas. This would increase the ability of BCTs to train to doctrine more effectively, while decreasing vehicle emissions and both vehicle and road maintenance. It may be more efficient for the Army to contract with commercial carriers, depending on economic conditions at the time of implementation. However, by choosing TI-4 as the preferred alternative the Army reduces planning time and paperwork if an Army-owned rail line is needed to achieve the training advantages of TI-4.

Impacts pertaining to land use, earth resources, natural resources, cultural resources, air quality, water resources, facilities, transportation and traffic, air space, energy demand, solid waste and hazardous materials waste, noise, and socioeconomics resources are germane to the selection among alternatives and were considered in the decision. The Army considered the magnitude and severity of the effects and the degree to which they can be effectively managed and mitigated. The resource impacts can be effectively managed or do not significantly vary among the alternatives. Although locally important, those impacts are less significant when considered in a regional or national context, and do not outweigh the benefits of the selected alternatives in supporting the Army mission at Fort Bliss.

4.0 MITIGATION AND MONITORING MEASURES

Incorporated within all the alternatives are a number of measures to mitigate potential adverse environmental effects in defining the alternatives considered in the GFS FEIS. These measures include maximizing the use of existing facilities and infrastructure, consolidating functions and maximizing functional relationships in siting new facilities, and locating proposed facilities and off-road vehicle maneuver training away from the installation's more sensitive ecological areas on Otero Mesa and most of the foothills of the Sacramento Mountains. New and expanded live-fire ranges have been sited in accordance with applicable safety criteria to contain all surface danger zones within Fort Bliss boundaries. Any future live-fire ranges developed at Fort Bliss will also be sited to preclude off-post safety impacts. The Army is adopting all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm by (1) implementing specific mitigation measures; (2) using monitoring and adaptive management to better manage and mitigate the effects of military training on the environment and adjust its activities to address those effects; and/or (3) working with other entities and agencies to help them reduce impacts in their areas of jurisdiction.

The selected alternatives are not expected to appreciably affect airspace, noise, or hazardous materials and items of special concern beyond current levels. Coordination of airspace management and scheduling procedures will be used to minimize adverse impacts associated with increased air operations. Fort Bliss will update existing planning and compliance procedures as necessary, including

the Waste Analysis Plan; Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasures (SPCC) Plan; and hazardous materials and waste management procedures. Fort Bliss will continue an aggressive inspection and maintenance program to avoid releases of hazardous materials and waste and comply with all regulatory requirements in the event of a release. Fort Bliss will also continue participating in public outreach and the continued use of noise complaint hotline.

The mitigation measures adopted by the Army address three main categories of impacts: construction-related impacts, training land-related impacts, and personnel-related impacts.

4.1 Mitigation of Construction-Related Impacts

Measures to reduce impacts from construction activities will be implemented primarily through terms and conditions incorporated in contracts between the Army and firms performing the construction. Contracts will for the most part be issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers under Fort Bliss review. All contracts involving ground disturbance will contain at a minimum the following requirements:

- Specifications that control both the purchase amounts and the use of hazardous materials, and require compliance with Federal, state, and local requirements and with installation policy on hazardous materials.
- Use of Best Management Practices to minimize erosion, including implementing erosion and sedimentation controls, storm water management measures, dust suppression, and compliance with Storm Water Pollution Prevention regulations.
- Stipulations to stop ground disturbing activities if previously unrecorded archaeological deposits are uncovered and consult with the Fort Bliss Historic Preservation Officer concerning the potential for avoiding the area or implementing data recovery.

Any construction or renovation that affects historic properties will follow the requirements and standard operating procedures in the Programmatic Agreement between Fort Bliss, the Texas and New Mexico State Historic Officers (SHPOs), and the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation. Facility sites that have not been previously surveyed or assessed will be surveyed for archaeological resources prior to construction. If any resources potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places are identified, the Army will follow the procedures specified in the Programmatic Agreement.

4.2 Mitigation of Training Land-Related Impacts

The different types of military training activities on FBTC could affect land use; natural resources; cultural resources; water resources; facilities; and transportation and traffic. The Army will adopt the following mitigation measures to reduce those impacts:

- **Land Use.** Continue to coordinate with Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and USFS to ensure they have the opportunity to accomplish their resource management obligations on the FBTC.
- **Natural Resources.** Impacts would be reduced by integrating training needs with natural resource management. Modifications in the Integrated Training Area Management (ITAM) and Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) may be necessary so that the flora and fauna as well as the sensitive species are minimally affected. The Army will locate Controlled FTX sites at least 300 meters away from the water sources to allow access for wildlife and livestock. The Army will also provide for appropriate (concurrent or exclusive) access to training lands to ensure that land

management activities, maintenance, and repair of infrastructure can be accomplished to sustain training.

- **Cultural Resources.** Fort Bliss will use programmatic approaches to mitigate adverse effects to areas known to contain archaeological sites with good integrity and are eligible for listing on the National Register. These programmatic approaches include the following measures: increased monitoring of existing Off-Limit Areas (OLAs), Limited Use Areas (LUAs), and known National Register sites after completion of training exercises and use of the options in SOP 7 of the Fort Bliss Programmatic Agreement to resolve potential adverse effects; establishing new OLAs when multiple sites eligible for the National Register are identified in a concentrated area and those occupation types are underrepresented in the current OLAs; identification of unique treatment measures such as sampling strategies for specific classes of sites; and scheduling for access to TCPs or sacred sites. All potential mitigation and treatment measures will be completed in consultation with applicable federally recognized tribes, the SHPOs, and other parties. During the NEPA process for siting of new FTX sites, COLs, ranges, or other construction in the FBTC, avoidance of sites eligible for the National Register will be the preferred alternative. If the site cannot be avoided, data recovery will be used to mitigate the impacts of these actions.
- **Water Resources.** Fort Bliss will program improvements to wastewater treatment facilities at range camps as necessary to address capacity shortfalls.
- **Facilities/Transportation and Traffic.** Units crossing Highway 506 with heavy equipment will provide traffic control and space vehicle crossings limiting civilian traffic delays to 15 minutes or less in most cases. Fort Bliss will notify the Las Cruces District of the Bureau of Land Management and the Otero County Administrator of planned closures of Highway 506 on McGregor Range. These measures are expected to reduce adverse impacts to Highway 506 to non-significant levels.

The Army will rely on adaptive management as an important component of its mitigation strategy. To that end, the Fort Bliss ITAM program will continue to monitor the effects of training on installation lands. Land Rehabilitation and Maintenance (LRAM) projects will be identified through this monitoring effort as needed to sustain the training base. These measures could include use restrictions and/or rehabilitation projects to protect, repair, or stabilize lands and ecological conditions, including designation of additional restricted and limited-use areas.

These mitigation measures are expected to effectively reduce the adverse impacts of training activities in the FBTC. Despite this, some impacts will be unavoidable. Soil erosion, habitat loss, wildlife mortality, and loss of some archaeological resources cannot be practicably avoided. Use of chemical and physical erosion and dust control measures throughout off-road vehicle maneuver lands is not considered practicable because of the vast extent of those lands. Similarly, the size of this area renders conducting 100 percent surveys for historic resources impracticable.

4.3 Mitigation of Personnel-Related Impacts

El Paso Water Utilities (EPWU) will furnish potable water and wastewater treatment for the increased population on Fort Bliss. Fort Bliss has already collaborated with EPWU to increase the potable water supply in the region by providing an easement to construct and operate a brackish water desalination plant and supporting facilities on Fort Bliss land. Fort Bliss will work with EPWU to increase use of reclaimed water for landscaping on the installation. As new buildings are constructed for the increase in personnel, the use of energy efficient building and support facilities designs will reduce fuel consumption as well as reduce the associated air pollutant emissions. Fort Bliss access gates will be sized to mitigate back-ups and increase the level of safety on highway ingress and egress points to the installation. Fort

Bliss will continue providing the media with information regarding anticipated high traffic events and other actions that could adversely affect traffic when consistent with security concerns. Additional solid waste generated on post will be sent to the existing Fort Bliss landfill or transported to licensed, off-post disposal facilities. Fort Bliss will continue quarterly meetings with realtors and apartment associations to ensure they have the best available planning information, and will work with the privatized housing partner at Fort Bliss to consider the advisability of constructing more housing on the Installation.

4.4 Cooperation with Other Agencies and Entities

The Army will cooperate with the appropriate entities and furnish information to assist them in addressing increases in demand for utilities, water resources, and socioeconomic resources. Relevant providers, including EPWU (water supply and wastewater treatment), the electric and gas companies that serve communities in the region of influence, local government agencies (law enforcement, fire protection, schools), and private entities (housing and medical services) will determine requirements necessary to meet these demands. The El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization will need to incorporate considerations of increased traffic in plans for roadway improvements and conformance with National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Portions of El Paso, Doña Ana, and Otero Counties will be exposed to elevated noise levels from large-caliber weapons firing on Doña Ana and McGregor Ranges. Land use controls are recommended in those areas to prevent incompatible future development.

4.5 Monitoring

Fort Bliss will monitor the implementation of all mitigation measures listed in this ROD through the installation Environmental Management System and report on the status of each measure to the Garrison Commander quarterly. Other monitoring activities that will be conducted at Fort Bliss include the following:

- Changes in vegetation and land cover will be monitored using remote sensing, augmented with field surveys, to provide input into adaptive management strategies and to monitor the effectiveness of mitigation measures.
- Monitoring projects included in the Fort Bliss INRMP and the ITAM Range and Training Land Assessment (RTLTA) program described in the GFS FEIS.
- Periodic surveys of the known Grey Vireo nesting areas will be conducted to monitor impacts to habitat and populations and ensure impacts stated in document are correct.
- Comparative monitoring of soil erosion in areas that are known to contain prehistoric sites with good integrity and the potential to be eligible for the National Register.
- Inventory and evaluation will be conducted to establish a baseline and periodic monitoring of impacts to rock art sites that are sacred sites and/or eligible for the National Register.
- Fort Bliss will monitor firebreaks at Fort Bliss and program appropriate maintenance and repair actions as conditions warrant.

5.0 ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVES

The environmentally preferable alternative in each of the three categories is not a straightforward matter. One alternative might affect some resources more and others less than another alternative, so there are trade-offs between the nature and severity of impacts and the resources affected. In general, the No Action Alternative in each of the three categories can be considered the environmentally preferable alternative. However, as discussed below, the No Action Alternative in each category do not support the purpose and need of the Army's initiatives and mission at Fort Bliss.

The environmentally preferred Stationing and Training Alternative is ST-1 (No Action). Both ST-1 and ST-2 would have fewer impacts; however, they do not support the Army's continued mobilization and pre-deployment training mission nor reasonably foreseeable future stationing and military training decisions at Fort Bliss. The impacts related to the expansion of stationed Soldiers under ST-3 would be contained within the existing Cantonment footprint. ST-3 lacks the additional visiting or TDY BCT, Fires Brigade, and three SBEs contained in ST-4, the Army's preferred alternative. Under the selected Land Use Category alternative (LU-5), ST-3 would require 75 percent of the square kilometer day training space requirement of ST-4, and would have 81 percent of the off-road ground contact by military vehicles but not meet the GTA requirements of ST-4 (the preferred alternative).

The environmentally preferred Land Use Alternative is LU-1(No Action). The selection of LU-1, the No Action Alternative, LU-2, LU-3, and LU-4 would avoid or reduce the impacts related to expanding FTX military activities in the northern and eastern portions of the FBTC and off-road vehicle maneuvers in select areas of the Northeast McGregor Range North of Highway 506. However, alternatives LU-1 through LU-4 would not meet the Army's need to provide adequate FTX sites or off-road vehicle Maneuver space for light IBCTs training north of Highway 506. The difference between LU-4 and the selected Land Use Category alternative (LU-5) is that LU-5 allows IBCT support units to position themselves closer to the varying terrain north of Highway 506, providing more realistic training support scenarios.

The environmentally preferred Training and Infrastructure Alternative is TI-1 (No Action). Both TI-1 and TI-2 would be environmentally preferable, but neither provides sufficient range infrastructure for the BCTs training at Fort Bliss. TI-3 provides the ranges and COLs necessary to train BCTs adequately, and locates those BCTs with the most equipment to move to train the least distance from the Cantonment. The impact differences between TI-3 and TI-4 (the selected Training Infrastructure Category alternative) points out the tradeoff involved in stating an environmentally preferred alternative. Among the advantages of TI-4 are the short and long-term air quality effects from avoidance of some vehicle emissions and dust generation associated with transport of military equipment and units to the FBTC. Reduced vehicle maintenance and wear and tear will result since fewer miles will be driven to and from the training areas. However, under TI-4, over 2,000 acres of existing desert habitat would be converted into a railway corridor, and cultural resources would have to be mitigated along this railway corridor. The Army will negotiate contractual agreements with the existing railway, thereby achieving potential environmental benefits of TI-4 without having to build a new railway parallel to the existing commercial railway. The Army-owned railway will be constructed only if optimal capacities require it.

Record of Decision

The FEIS, Record of Decision, and other supporting environmental documents are available on the Fort Bliss website (<https://www.bliss.army.mil/>). For further information, please contact: Mr. John F. Barrera, Fort Bliss NEPA Program Manager; IMWE-BLS-PWE, Bldg 624 Taylor Rd, Fort Bliss, TX 79916-6812; e-mail: bliss.eis@conus.army.mil.

Approved by:



JOHN B. NERGER
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U.S. Army Installation Management Command

8 June 2010

Date