

**DRAFT**

**Finding of No Significant Impact  
Privatization of Army Lodging Program  
Fort Bliss, Texas**

Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations (Title 40 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* [CFR] Parts 1500–1508) for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (Title 42 of the *United States Code* 4321 *et seq.*) and 32 CFR Part 651 (Environmental Analysis of Army Actions), Fort Bliss, Texas, conducted an environmental assessment (EA) of the potential environmental and socioeconomic effects associated with executing a lease at Fort Bliss under the Army’s Privatization of Army Lodging (PAL) program.

**Proposed Action**

The Army proposes to transfer ownership and operation of its transient lodging facilities to a private-sector development company. Under the proposed action, the Army would execute a lease and supporting agreements negotiated with and approved by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations and Environment. The Army would convey specified lodging facilities and lease the underlying land to its selected development partner, Actus Lend Lease (Actus). Actus has formed a special-purpose entity, Rest Easy, LLC (Rest Easy) to execute the lease with Army as lessor and Rest Easy as lessee. Actus would redevelop the lodging facilities, and InterContinental Hotels Group, its contracted hotelier, would manage the lodging operations. The Army would grant a 50-year lease of the land underlying the existing facilities and other land for constructing new lodging facilities. Rest Easy would be expected to meet Fort Bliss’s lodging requirements through operating and maintaining the existing facilities and by renovating inadequate facilities and constructing new ones.

Implementing the PAL program at Fort Bliss would result in the conveyance of as many as 13 existing lodging facilities to Rest Easy for renovation for either short- or long-term use, as well as construction of new hotels. These actions would occur over about a 5-year development period beginning in 2011 and provide a final inventory of about 475 lodging units. The proposed action would improve the quality of life for Soldiers, their families, and other personnel eligible to use Army transient lodging.

It should be noted that the Army considered conveying 4 historic lodging structures (B205, B206, B213, and B243) on three parcels of land (Parcels A, B, and C) in the Environmental Assessment. However, under this decision document, those parcels and structures will not be conveyed to Rest Easy, and are no longer part of the proposed action. The numbers of buildings and parcels identified in the EA are therefore greater than what will be included in the lease.

**Purpose and Need**

The purpose of the proposed action is to transfer ownership and operation of transient lodging to the private sector. The proposed action is needed to provide affordable, quality transient lodging facilities to Soldiers and their families through a combination of new facilities and improvements to existing facilities to ensure that they meet current commercial standards for mid-scale hotels.

**Alternatives Considered**

The alternative to the proposed action that was considered is reliance on the off-post hotel market. In lieu of privatizing the function, the Army could exit the lodging business, resulting in patrons’ reliance on off-post hotels and motels for similar services. The use of off-post lodging, however, would lengthen Soldiers’ workdays because of commuting and increased transportation costs. In some instances, Soldiers would encounter shortages of lodging in adjacent communities. Terminating the Army’s lodging

program at Fort Bliss would result in abandoning 17 buildings. The combination of the buildings standing idle until alternative uses could be determined and the time needed to achieve such uses would contravene the Army's policy to manage its resources to their optimal potential. For those reasons, the off-post hotel market alternative is not feasible and is not evaluated in detail in this EA. As prescribed by the CEQ regulations, the EA also evaluates the No Action Alternative, which would consist of the Army's not implementing the PAL program at Fort Bliss.

### **Factors Considered in Determining that No Environmental Impact Statement is Required**

The EA, which is attached hereto and incorporated by reference into this Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI), examines the potential effects of the proposed action and the No Action Alternative on resource areas and areas of environmental and socioeconomic concern: land use, aesthetic and visual resources, air quality, noise, geology and soils, water resources, biological resources, cultural resources, socioeconomics (including environmental justice and protection of children), transportation, utilities, and hazardous and toxic materials.

Implementing the proposed action would result in a combination of short- and long-term minor adverse and short- and long-term minor beneficial effects. Short-term minor adverse effects on aesthetics and visual resources, air quality, noise, soils, socioeconomics, and transportation would be expected, primarily associated with construction and renovation activities. Short-term minor beneficial effects on the local economy would be expected from expenditures and employment associated with lodging renovation and construction. Long-term minor beneficial effects on socioeconomics (quality of life) would be expected from the overall improved quality of the lodging facilities. The EA does not identify the need for any mitigation measures.

### **Public Review**

The final EA and draft FNSI are available for review and comment for 30 days, beginning upon publication of a notice of availability in *Fort Bliss Monitor* (Fort Bliss) and the *El Paso Times* (El Paso, Texas). Copies of the EA and Draft FNSI are available for review and comment at the following local libraries: El Paso Main Public Library, El Paso, Texas; Irving Schwartz Branch Library, El Paso, Texas; Mickelson Library, Fort Bliss, Texas; and Westside Branch Library, El Paso, Texas. They are also online at <https://www.bliss.army.mil/DPW/Environmental/EISDocuments.html>. Comments on the EA and draft FNSI should be submitted to Mr. John Barrera, Directorate of Public Works – Environmental Division, B624 Pleasonton Avenue, Attention: IMWE–BLS–PWE, (barreraj), Fort Bliss, TX 79916-6812, or by e-mail to [john.f.barrera@us.army.mil](mailto:john.f.barrera@us.army.mil). Comments on the EA and draft FNSI should be submitted to Mr. Barrera at the above mailing or e-mail addresses no later than the end of the 30-day review period.

### **Conclusions**

On the basis of the EA, it has been determined that implementing the proposed action would have no significant adverse effects on the quality of human life or the natural environment. Preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required before implementing the proposed action.

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Colonel, U.S. Army  
Commanding

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Date