



Chapter 9

Considerations That Must Be Balanced Against the Adverse Environmental Effects

9.0 NATIONAL DEFENSE CONSIDERATIONS THAT MUST BE
BALANCED AGAINST THE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF
THE PROPOSED ACTION

It is the position of the U.S. Army that large National Training Centers should be developed which would be capable of physically supporting the Army's combined arms tactical unit training while simultaneously integrating similar exercises with the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps in one location. The Fort Irwin environment is envisioned as such a center.

9.1 BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

9.1.1 Time and Space Requirements

All of the Army's present division stations were designed to accommodate World War II type divisions. Today the Army faces a significantly different problem. The evolution of warfare techniques and weapons systems represents quantum leaps in range, accuracy and lethality as well as increased speeds at which ground and air mobile units can move about the battle area. As a result of this technical evolution, battle formations can be expanded and dispersed over greater areas.

Direct fire weapons systems, such as missiles, tanks and attack helicopters can fire accurately at ranges of 3,000 meters. Modern artillery is nearly twice as effective in range and lethality than its predecessors of 30 years ago. Air defense weapons can cover 36 times the volume of air-space as they did in 1945. Close air support aircraft can carry 30 times the ordinance, fly twice as far to the target and loiter in the target area twice as long. Mobility of land forces has also increased with vast improvements in self-propelled artillery, tanks, amphibious personnel carriers and helicopters. Bridging that once took hours to span gaps and rivers can now be emplaced in minutes. Infantry units with formidable anti-tank weapons can move at 20 times the speed of their foot-mobile counterparts of World War II.

As these modern systems have altered the character and acreage requirements of ground warfare, the Army's ability to train fully effective battalions and brigades has been increasingly restricted within the boundaries of its installations and close-by training areas.

New weapons systems employed under conditions of fullest capability require more space than the Army controls at most

of its installations. Encroachment by civilian activities, crowded and tightly controlled airspace and magnified commercial and private use of the electromagnetic spectrum have all combined to constrain the full use of a majority of Army owned training land. For example, electronic warfare measures can be employed only at lower power and in a limited frequency spectrum, while close air support training missions in most cases cannot be carried out under realistic conditions because of restricted altitudes and approach and exit corridors, and concern over noise pollution.

9.1.2 Terrain Requirements

In addition to problems in training armored and mechanized units at home station is a lack of maneuverable terrain in sufficient acreage and orientation to allow combined arms training under live fire conditions. Battalion commanders and their staffs are seldom able to integrate full fire support capability into the maneuver of their units. When they are able to do so, it is under highly restrictive and unrealistic conditions.

9.1.3 Realizing Objectives

The primary benefit of establishing a National Training Center is the gain of the ability to train, as realistically as possible, all armored and mechanized forces in peacetime as they will have to fight in wartime against the most likely adversary. U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) has been using Fort Irwin to train selected armor and mechanized battalions on a small scale during the recent past. Convinced that the training opportunities available at Fort Irwin are unparalleled at any divisional station, Forces Command plans to continue the exercises at the level of two or three brigades per year using equipment stored in California National Guard Mobilization and Training Equipment Pool (MATES) at Fort Irwin. At this rate, only four of the 60 armored and mechanized battalions in the United States will receive this experiential training in any year. Compounding this problem is the fact that units receiving the training will undergo a 100% turnover within two years. Ideally, 46 battalions could be trained at a National Training Center each year. This would allow the Army to give this training to each battalion once over 18 months. This rate matches the command tour time for a battalion commander and approximates the turnover rate of other personnel. The ideal through put could be reduced to 40 battalions per year by eliminating armored cavalry squadrons from the rotation, as is proposed for the Fort Irwin National Training Center.

9.2 BENEFITS OF ALTERNATIVES

9.2.1 The "No Action" Alternative

This alternative would not achieve the national defense objective of training all armored and mechanical forces in full-scale warfare.

9.2.2 Alternatives Which Utilize Fort Irwin

The number of troops trained would be the same as in the proposed action, and, therefore, national defense benefits would be the same.

9.2.3 Alternatives at Locations Other Than Fort Irwin

At Twenty-Nine Palms Marine Base and at Yuma Proving Ground, the benefits described for the Fort Irwin site would be achievable. At Yuma Proving Ground, however, the area available for maneuvers is smaller, and therefore some degradation of real time-distance factor training could be expected.

Interoperability with the U.S. Air Force would also be more difficult because of greater support distances from air bases.