

Summary

SUMMARY

Status: Final Environmental Impact Statement
Name of Action: National Training Center, Fort Irwin Site
Type of Action: Administrative
Contact for Inquiries: Commander, Headquarters,
United States Army Forces Command
(DCSOPS), Fort McPherson,
Georgia 30330
Telephone: (404) 752-3196
Final EIS Filing Date: January 12, 1979

Correspondence and Comments

The following is a list of individuals, organizations and government agencies who commented in writing on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Reports of these comments and the Army's responses are included in the Comments and Responses section of the Final Environmental Impact Statement. Oral comments received at the three public hearings held at Yuma, Arizona, Twenty-Nine Palms, California and Barstow, California have been extracted from transcripts, paraphrased and answered in the Comments and Responses section.

Federal Agencies:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Soil Conservation Service

U.S. Department of the Air Force
Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

U.S. Department of the Interior
Department of the Secretary, Pacific Southwest Region

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration, Region IX

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Region IX

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration

U.S. Department of the Navy
United States Marine Corps

State Agencies and Clearinghouses:

Arizona

- Arizona State Museum
- Arizona State University
Center for Public Affairs
- Arizona Commission of
Agriculture & Horticulture
- Division of Emergency Services
- Arizona Game and Fish Department
- Mineral Resources Department

California

- Air Resources Board
- Department of Conservation
Special Services for Resource Protection
- Department of Economic and Business Development
- Department of Fish and Game
- Department of Housing and Community Development
- Department of Transportation
Division of Transportation Planning
- Governor's Office
Office of Planning and Research
- Regional Water Quality Control Board
Lahontan Region
- Solid Waste Management Board
- The Resources Agency
Office of the Secretary

Local Governments:

- Barstow Heights Community Services District
- County of San Bernardino
Economic Development Department
- County of San Bernardino
Environmental Improvement Agency

Other Parties:

- Barstow Chamber of Commerce
- Corder, Alex B., Twenty-Nine Palms, California
- Fordham, Louise, Twenty-Nine Palms, California
- Hi-Desert Tract Owners Association, Inc.,
Twenty-Nine Palms, California
- Moore, Susan L., Twenty-Nine Palms, California
- Pinney, B. B., USN Retired, Joshua Tree, California
- San Bernardino County Museum
- Sierra Club Mojave Group
- Society for California Archaeology
- Strather, Bertha, Twenty-Nine Palms, California
- Thatcher, Bob, Twenty-Nine Palms, California
- Twenty-Nine Palms Board of Realtors

- Twenty-Nine Palms Community Council
- University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada
- University of Redlands

General Description of the Proposed Location and Proposed Program:

Fort Irwin is located in the High Mojave Desert approximately one-half way between Los Angeles and Las Vegas and 37 miles northeast of the City of Barstow. The proposed action is the establishment of a National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California. The purpose is to provide simulated full-scale combat situations to support the Army's combined arms tactical unit training and to integrate similar exercises with the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps.

A permanently stationed combat force, trained in the military tactics of potential adversaries of the United States, would reside at Fort Irwin. Twenty-one U.S. Army combat brigades, of 3,500 people each, would rotate through the Fort annually for approximately one week sessions. Other Armed Services divisions, California National Guard, and Army Reserves would also use the Fort.

The proposed program would involve reopening post facilities, with construction and rehabilitation preceding operations. Permanent post population and employment would increase dramatically. Operational control would shift from the State of California to the United States Army Forces Command.

Fort Irwin was selected as the preferred site for the National Training Center from a list of eleven alternative sites analyzed by the Army.

Environmental Impact

- o The Reservation - The mountains of Fort Irwin are the remnant roots of a great buried intrusive granitic batholith. The wind and rain uncovered the batholith and formed the valleys and playas lying among them. The establishment of a National Training Center at Fort Irwin, however, does not involve the use of unaltered desert lands which could otherwise be considered for their wilderness or undisturbed ecological potential. The use of Fort Irwin as a training facility since 1940 has narrowed the reservation's potential for other uses. The proposed change of mission for the Fort would increase the level of field use by approximately 75 percent, which would increase the pace of change in the desert ecology of Fort Irwin. Most of the training

activity and all vehicular traffic will occur in the flat to gently rolling corridors and basins. The hills and mountains comprising approximately 38 percent of the reservation, while they may be military objectives, will be bypassed in training maneuvers. The bulk of the fauna live in these hills and mountains, not in the flats and playas. The proposed use would compact the soil in the flats and playas and in these areas reduce vegetative cover, destroy wildlife habitat, and generate fugitive dust. A long-term decrease in the variety of plant and animal species in the flats and playas could be expected.

Some archaeological and historical sites would most likely be destroyed or displaced as a result of military training exercises. The visual character of the area would continue to be modified, mostly with linear marks left by tracked vehicles.

- o The Cantonment Area - In general, the physical and social character of the cantonment would be improved under the proposed change of mission for the Fort, in accordance with a new Master Plan. Included would be an exact accounting and evaluation of existing facilities, a detailed analysis of future requirements, upgrading of identified buildings to current Army standards, establishment of aircraft regulations and buffer zones to control the noise environment, and an additional environmental assessment to accompany the Master Plan.

The increase in base personnel would increase the use on the finite water supplies currently available, with groundwater supplies mined at approximately twice the rate of natural replenishment. The water table would, thus, decline steadily over time until the underground aquifers are emptied or until water quality became intolerable. Greater energy requirements to pump water would result as pumping lifts increased. With water mining, settling in the sand and gravel aquifers would occur, potentially causing subsidence in the main cantonment area and in the area around wells of Bicycle Lake.

- o The Barstow Area - The major Barstow area impacts from developing Fort Irwin into a National Training Center would occur as a result of primary and secondary employment concerned with the operations of the base. There would also be increased employment from primary and secondary effects of the construction and rehabilitation of the base and of the new homes in the Barstow area required by operations employees.

Operations impacts may be summarized as follows:

	<u>On-Post</u>	<u>Off-Post</u>	<u>Total</u>
Population	3,378	3,246	6,624
Employment (primary and secondary)	2,692	745	3,437
Housing Units	1,596	964	2,560
Elementary School Pupils	396	492	888
High School Pupils		444	444

The total population increase related to the proposal would be 18.2 percent over the Barstow market area's 1975 population of 36,373. Employment in the area would increase by 33.8 percent, and income by 37.7 percent by 1984. The change of mission at Fort Irwin would be expected to generate \$6.66 million per year in local sales by 1984, which is an increase of 8.5 percent over Barstow's 1976 sales levels.

Increase government expenditures would be required to service the new population. Except for water supply, these should be mostly offset by increases in economic activity and property values.

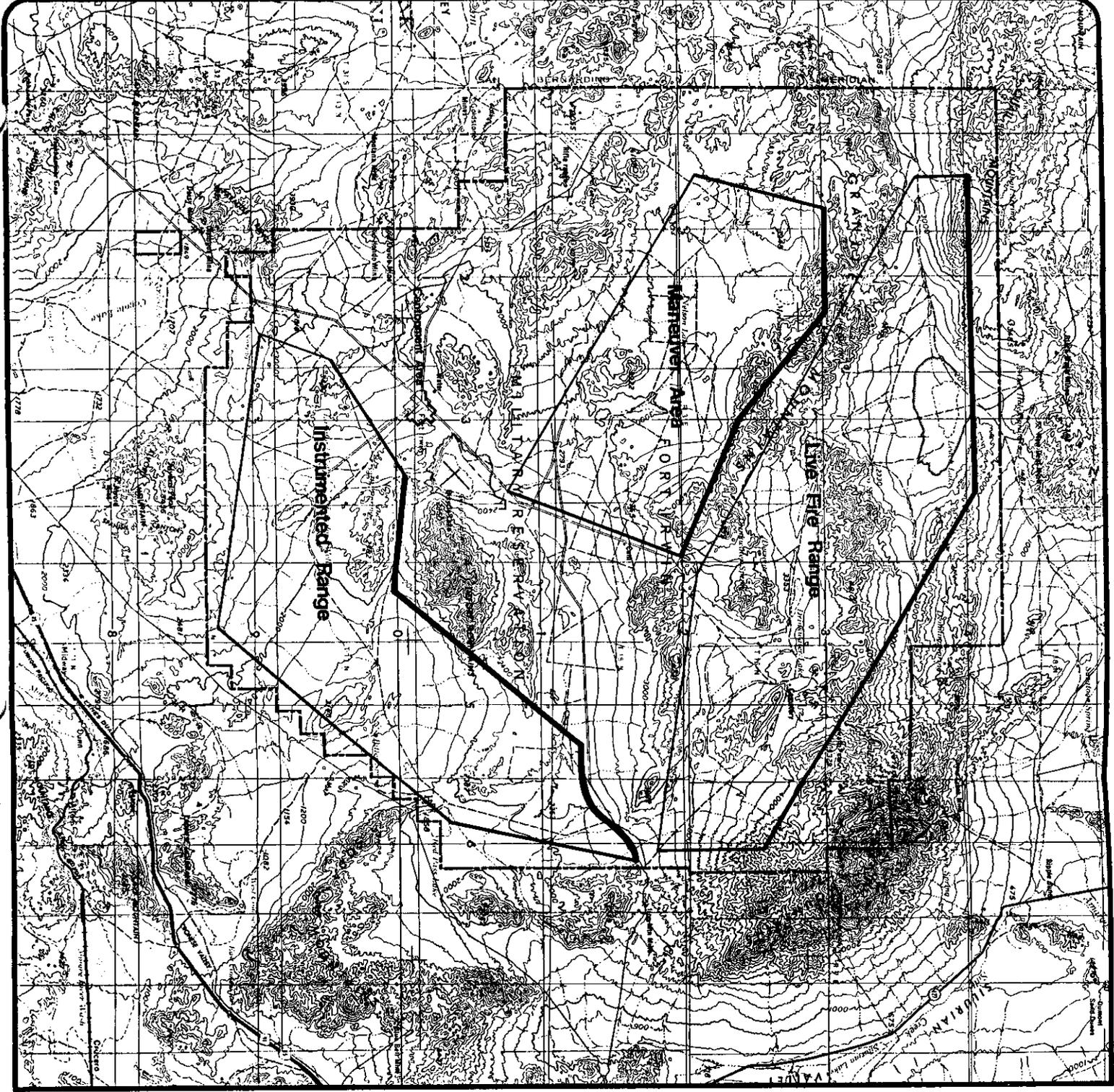
The increase in population related to the Fort Irwin proposal would require 2,560 permanent housing units, including 1,596 on-post units and 964 off-post units. These 964 off-post units represent 6.8 percent of the present supply. Major concerns would be increased production requirements and an appropriate mix of affordable housing for the new off-post population.

The proposal is expected to generate 1,332 school pupils, or 16.3 percent more than the Barstow Unified School District's 1977 levels. Of these pupils, 396 would be on-post and 936 off-post.

Off-post population related to the proposed National Training Center would increase the present overdraft water demand of the Barstow area by 13 percent.

Alternatives Considered:

- o No Action - which would eliminate the National Training Center as a mechanism for training.



**Proposed Ranges
and Maneuver Area**
(see text for explanation)

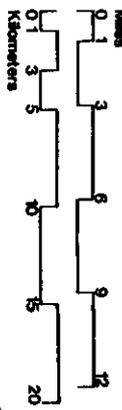
FIGURE 2

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**National Training Center
Fort Irwin Site**
EIS
Sacramento District
United States Army Corps of Engineers

EDAW/INC

Miles



o Alternatives Which Use Locations Other Than Fort Irwin

- Fort Bliss, Texas
- Dugway Proving Ground, Utah
- Naval Weapons Center, China Lake California
- Pueblo Army Depot, Colorado
- Twenty-Nine Palms Marine Base, California
- Yuma Proving Ground, Arizona
- Suffield, Alberta, Canada
- Shilo, Manitoba, Canada
- Fort Hood, Texas
- Fort Drum, New York

o Alternatives Utilizing Fort Irwin

- Option 1 - Eliminate from the preferred program those combat units to be permanently stationed at the base (the "opposing force") and substitute for them a contractor-supplied force of 300 civilians to act the part of the Army's opposing force.
- Option 2 - Eliminate from the preferred program those combat units permanently stationed at the base. Rotating brigades would supply their own opposing force.
- Continue control of the installation by the State of California National Guard. A brigade-sized package of equipment belonging to the active Army would be positioned for use by rotating brigades. A support agreement with the California National Guard would provide maintenance for this equipment pool. Approximately 140 additional maintenance personnel would be added to the current work force.