

- ❖ Impacts to recreational opportunities to include off-road vehicle use, rock hounding; horseback riding; land-sailing; camping; wildlife and vegetation observation;
- ❖ Impacts to air quality;
- ❖ Impacts to socio-economics;
- ❖ Cumulative impacts to the desert ecosystem;
- ❖ Impacts to adjacent Wilderness areas and Wilderness Study Areas;
- ❖ Use of NAWS China Lake or Leach Lake Bombing range for Army training in the alternative to acquiring more land;
- ❖ Concern over the federal government taking more public land for restricted use.

#### **1.10.1.1 Public Hearings**

A 90-day public review process will begin with the publication of a NOA of the SDEIS in the *Federal Register*. The NOA will also be posted on the Internet at <http://www.fortirwinlandexpansion.com>. The public review process will include public hearings at various locations throughout Southern California as deemed necessary and appropriate.

The Army will request comments on the SDEIS from government agencies, private organizations, tribal governments and the public. These comments will be addressed in the Final EIS.

## **1.2 Fort Irwin and the National Training Center (NTC)**

### **1.2.1 Overview and History of the NTC**

In 1940 President Roosevelt established the Mojave Anti-Aircraft Range—a military reservation of 1,000 square miles in the area of present day Fort Irwin. In 1942 the post was renamed Camp Irwin in honor of Major General G. Leroy Irwin, a World War I commander of the 57th Field Artillery Brigade. The post was deactivated in 1944 and reactivated in 1951 as a training center for combat units during the Korean War.

The Army designated Fort Irwin as a fully operational, active duty installation in August 1961. During the Vietnam buildup, many units, primarily artillery and engineering, were trained and deployed to Southeast Asia directly from the post. In January of 1971 the Army again deactivated

the post and placed it in maintenance status under the control of Fort McArthur, California. Despite deactivation, the post continued to serve as a training site for National Guard and Army Reserve units.

In the late 1970s, during the post-Vietnam forces drawdown, the Army pioneered a training concept designed to teach and sharpen the skills of its units, leaders, and soldiers. The concept was taken from proven Navy and Air Force programs (Top Gun and Red Flag, respectively), which honed the combat skills of pilots and aircrews and prepared them for the “first ten missions of the next war.” The ambitious Army training concept was to take Army units, up to brigade size (approximately 5,000 soldiers), and put them into a training environment with simulated rigorous combat conditions using weapons simulators and actual live-fire, against a creditable enemy, with expert trainers to help improve their combat skills and field performance. The stress and demanding conditions of this environment would sharpen the skills of soldiers and leaders, demonstrating how they must fight to win in actual combat.

In 1979, Fort Irwin, California was selected from among 11 other locations to become the NTC. Structured to conduct training to defeat Cold War threats, the first training exercise (known as a rotation) occurred with a battalion-sized force (about 800 soldiers) in 1982, and progressively grew to brigade-sized units by 1986. The proof-of-principle for the NTC training concept came during the 1991 Gulf War, when the Army and its joint partners, took only 100 hours to defeat the Iraqi Army in ground combat in the Persian Gulf.

Since the Gulf War (even before the events of September 11, 2001), the world has become a much different place. The Army has changed to meet new, emerging threats (refer to Section 1.2.4, *Operational Environment*). Fort Irwin and the NTC, with its continuing mission to train the Army for the next war, has also changed to keep its training relevant to new battles and new tactics.

### **1.2.2 The U.S. Army’s Mission at the NTC**

Since its inception, the NTC’s mission has been to provide challenging, realistic, combined arms and joint training under conditions that our forces are likely to face in actual combat. Exercises at the NTC identify unit-training deficiencies and provide the necessary feedback to improve the force. The training goal is to develop competent soldiers and leaders that are prepared to win on the modern battlefield. To perform this mission successfully, Fort Irwin must keep pace with the U.S. Army Transformation (see Section 1.3.1.1), while improving the quality-of-life for soldiers, civilian employees, and family members.

### **1.2.3 Maneuver Mission**

Fort Irwin, for its size, is the busiest installation in the Army today. Its primary mission is to train 10 Army brigades per year. In addition the NTC conducts other training activities with the Army Reserve, National Guard and other agencies, including some foreign military services. All of the installation's energy and resources, from logistics to operations, are focused on this training mission. Every other installation mission is secondary to the training mission. Up to 75,000 DoD personnel and foreign soldiers, both active Army and reserve components, train at the NTC annually.

An Army brigade typically consists of 3,000 to 5,000 soldiers and support units. A brigade consists of 3 maneuver battalions, which depending on the organizational structure are formed by a combination of armor, mechanized infantry, and light infantry, along with maintenance and logistical support.

Fort Irwin, with its brigade training mission, is a unique installation within the U.S. Army. Its size, remoteness, and training infrastructure make it the only place, worldwide, where the Army has the capability to conduct instrumented, live training with actual vehicles and tactical systems for a full brigade and all of its supporting arms and units.

### **1.2.4 Operational Environment**

Training at the NTC is designed to prepare Army leaders, soldiers, and units for whatever mission they may be called upon to execute. The operational environment is the world in which the Army must execute those missions. It is an environment of shifting forces and characters. Since the end of the Cold War, there are few major threats and many more regional ones, creating the potential for multiple theaters of conflict. The operational environment is complex and demands a force that is lethal, agile, and very adaptable to changing situations.

The Army currently conducts a 14-day rotational training schedule, with 10 rotations per year. Before each training exercise, a Battalion Support Area (base camp) is established over a five-day period in the vicinity of the rotational activity. By establishing the base camp in the vicinity of the rotational activity instead of the cantonment area, repeated trips to the cantonment area are eliminated. The Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and Integration (RSOI), represent the base camp activity on Days 1 through 5. Training activities include tracked & wheeled vehicles, and armored & mechanized forces. Each rotation includes three units: BLUEFOR, OPFOR and OPSGRP. BLUEFOR identifies the unit trained. OPFOR represents the "enemy" during training exercises. OPSGRP identifies the soldiers that observe and control the training exercise. Both

BLUEFOR and OPFOR units comprise a maneuver and a support group. The maneuver group consists of vehicles actively involved in engaging the opposing unit. The support group consists of vehicles required to sustain soldiers in the maneuver group (i.e., move personnel, ammunitions, repair parts, etc.).

There are two types of training rotations: a light rotation, which uses fewer vehicles and more soldiers on foot; and a heavy rotation, which uses the most vehicles. A light 14-day rotation training with a five day RSOI would produce an estimated amount of 127,559; 357,702; and 271,284 vehicle miles traveled (VMT) for OPFOR, BLUFOR, and OPSGRP groups, respectively (756,546 estimated vehicle miles total). A heavy 14-day rotation training with a five day RSOI would produce an estimated amount of 130,473; 608,625; and 271,284 VMT for OPFOR, BLUFOR, and OPSGRP groups, respectively (1,010,382 estimated VMT total). Typical heavy rotation training involves a total of 2,236 tracked and wheeled vehicles. Typical light rotation training involves a total of 1,766 tracked and wheeled vehicles. Additionally, approximately 140 aircraft are involved in all rotations. Currently, the NTC performs eight heavy rotations, and two light rotations per year. Annually, this proportion of ten rotations generates an estimated 1,298,902 VMT for OPFOR, 5,584,414 VMT for BLUFOR, and 2,712,824 VMT for OPSGRP for a total estimate of 9,596,140 VMT.

Each NTC rotation is a capstone-training event for an Army brigade, the most rigorous training it will undergo short of war. Each rotation is structured to replicate a deployment to an overseas forward operating theater, performance of combat operations within that theater, and redeployment to the unit's home station. Each rotation is a four month operation for the brigade, with three months of home station training preceding each rotation. The basic sequence for the rotation is:

*Day 1 to Day 9—Deployment and Initial Staging:* The brigade moves from its home station to Fort Irwin by rail, sea, and/or air and conducts entry and preparation-for-combat operations.

*Day 10 to Day 24—Combat Training:* The brigade moves to the field and conducts field training, with missions that simulate actual combat. A continuous scenario treats the brigade as if it were in a combat area and gives the brigade missions that stress it for 24-hours per day for the entire exercise. The training missions are composed of two types: force-on-force and live-fire. Force-on-force training is conducted against the Opposing Force (OPFOR), using eye-safe laser systems to replicate weapons effects. The rotational training unit enters the training area as it would when deployed to an area of conflict.

The OPFOR opposes them in the training scenario as if they were the enemy forces or civilians in the deployment area. Live-fire training uses the actual weapons and munitions that the brigade would employ in combat, used against target arrays concentrating on the application of live-fire training from the squad sized unit to the larger brigade sized unit. Observer-controllers and a sophisticated instrumentation system monitor all training to provide feedback and enhance brigade learning.

*Day 25 to Day 35—Recovery and Redeployment:* The brigade returns from the field, conducts recovery and maintenance operations, and then redeploys back to its home station by rail, sea, and/or air.

Based on current trends, domestic factors, and worldwide potential for various forms of conflict, the US can expect to remain heavily engaged militarily on a global basis. The US will likely have to respond to serious threats to its national interests from failing foreign states, regional or state-centered threats, transitional entities, and several potential major military competitors. Today, the proliferation of information and weapons technologies coupled with asymmetric application of conventional and non-military capabilities may enable even regional adversaries to oppose effectively U.S. interests and military forces. The U.S. must be prepared to respond to a wide variety of potential threats. A major theater war (MTW) represents the most serious conventional military scenario the Army may face. Although current assessments project MTW as the least likely to occur, there are current regional hot spots that could pose a substantial challenge to the US, possibly with little warning (e.g., North Korea and the Middle East). Conflicts in these areas would likely begin as a major regional contingency (MRC) and could grow rapidly into an MTW. However, small-scale contingencies (SSC) the numerous local and regional conflicts among lesser military forces are more likely to occur.

Given the spreading influence of regional and global powers, SSC can escalate quickly into MRCs or an MTW. In general, SSC present a set of conditions that require combat operations or the presence of combat forces to stabilize and contain a crisis. However, stabilization tends to be linked to the speed at which effective combat forces arrive in the area of concern, the slower the response, the more difficult it may be to defuse a crisis quickly.

The international security environment that these forces could anticipate encountering is characterized by:

- ❖ Extreme fluidity, with continually changing coalitions, and the rise of new actors appearing and disappearing from the scene;

- ❖ The proliferation of advanced war-fighting capabilities;
- ❖ The growing presence of influential private, non-governmental, and international organizations within conflict areas, each with their own unique set of interests and objectives, complicating the security environment;
- ❖ Complex terrain and urban environments comprising the areas where decisive action must be taken to resolve crises;
- ❖ The global flow of information technologies and interdependent infrastructure creating a fruitful environment for all facets of information-based warfare; and
- ❖ Cultural and demographic factors that transcend borders making conflict resolution a complicated and lengthy process.

### **1.3 Purpose and Need for Expanded Maneuverable Training Land**

#### **1.3.1 Statement of Purpose and Need**

The proposed action satisfies the need to train soldiers in the most realistic environment possible. The purpose of the proposed action is to provide an expanded battle-space (land and airspace) environment for training Army brigade-sized ground and air units according to the Army's training and combat operations doctrines. The training doctrine calls for training to be conducted in as realistic a battle-space environment as possible. To accomplish this mission, additional maneuverable training land and airspace changes are needed in locations, sizes, and configurations that not only support current and future training requirements, but also integrate with the current battle-space configuration and infrastructure on Fort Irwin. The expanded maneuverable training land and airspace must have optimum training value based on the training goals, equipment capabilities, and Army requirements. In addition, the land must consist of suitable soils and terrain features, and the airspace must be configured in type and altitude to enable the Army to make full use of the expanded maneuverable training lands and airspace.

Not all land within a specific training area has the same maneuver training value, nor does it present the same training opportunities. The acquisition of a given quantity of land in any location, without consideration of its training value, will not meet the purpose and need of the proposed action. The land acquired must complement the remainder of the installation and the existing battle corridors, and it must enable the Army to conduct training in the most realistic environment and conditions possible.