

acres, approximately 103,740 acres are the withdrawn land and 23,220 acres of Fort Irwin land in the UTM90 area that cannot be used for training if the no action alternative is selected.

## **2.4 Alternatives No Longer Under Consideration**

Alternatives considered in the 1996 DEIS are illustrated in Figure 2.4-1. These alternatives have not been carried forward for further review in this document, as they are no longer considered to be feasible alternatives.

### **2.4.1 Summary of Justification to Remove from Further Consideration**

**Modified Avawatz-Silurian Alternative (preferred alternative in 1996 draft):** this alternative encompassed approximately 270,030 acres to the north and east of Fort Irwin in the Denning Springs area, between the northern boundary of Fort Irwin to the southern boundary of Death Valley National Park. This alternative included the Avawatz and south Avawatz Wilderness Study Areas (WSA). It also impacted Dumont Dunes, a popular recreation area. T&E species are known to exist in this area. This alternative did not expand the battle corridor, but did allow the locating of a staging area in the Avawatz Mountains WSA and in the Silurian Valley. The benefit to the NTC's training mission when weighed against the impacts to all resources makes this alternative unreasonable.

**Modified Coyote Basin Alternative:** this alternative encompassed approximately 259,470 acres to the east, south, and west of Fort Irwin, and included the southern part of the Avawatz and the South Avawatz WSAs. This alternative incorporated a large amount of desert tortoise critical habitat. In addition, Lane Mountain milk-vetch has since been identified as an endangered plant in the abbreviated western portion just south of Goldstone. This alternative also required crossing two power corridors for training activities. The above considerations of this alternative made it infeasible for further consideration.

**Superior Valley Alternative:** this alternative encompassed approximately 284,890 acres to the east, south, and west of Fort Irwin, and included the southern part of the Avawatz and the South Avawatz WSAs. This alternative incorporated a large amount of desert tortoise critical habitat. In addition, Lane Mountain milk-vetch has since been identified as an endangered plant in the abbreviated western portion just south of Goldstone. This alternative also required crossing two power corridors for training activities. These considerations and the receipt of a

Draft Jeopardy Opinion from the USFWS, made this alternative infeasible for further consideration.

**Avawatz Alternative:** this alternative encompassed approximately 185,500 acres to the south and east of Fort Irwin, and included the southern part of the Avawatz and the South Avawatz WSAs. This alternative incorporated a large amount of desert tortoise critical habitat. In addition, Lane Mountain milk-vetch has since been identified as an endangered plant in the abbreviated western portion just south of Goldstone. This alternative also required crossing two power corridors for training activities. These considerations made this alternative unreasonable for further consideration.

**Alvord Alternative:** this alternative encompassed approximately 210,800 acres to the east, south, and west of Fort Irwin. This alternative was very similar to the Modified Coyote Basin Alternative, except that it was smaller by approximately 50,000 acres. This alternative incorporated a large amount of desert tortoise critical habitat. In addition, Lane Mountain milk-vetch has since been identified as an endangered plant in the abbreviated western portion just south of Goldstone. This alternative also required crossing two power corridors for training activities. This alternative was unreasonable for the reasons stated above.

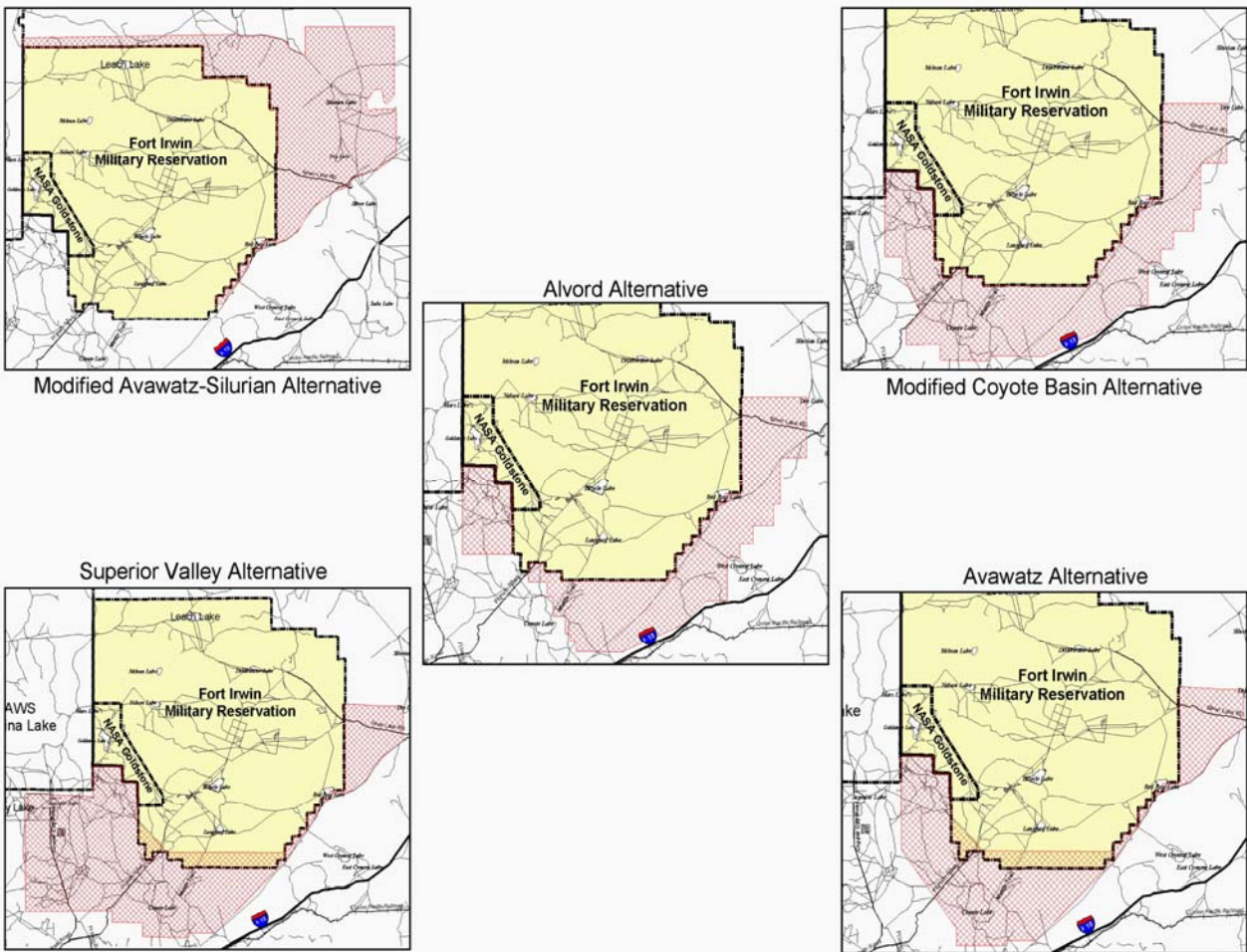


Figure 2.4-1: Alternatives Considered in the 1996 DEIS

## 2.4.2 Other Considered but Rejected Alternatives

### 2.4.2.1 Use of Leach Lake Impact Area

The Leach Lake Impact Area comprises approximately 92,000 acres within the current Fort Irwin boundaries. It has been used since 1981 for live-fire exercises by the Army and as a live ordnance bombing range for the Air Force. Fort Irwin considered the use of Leach Lake to help meet its additional training land needs; however, the following factors make the use of the area infeasible:

- ❖ **Training Value:** Leach Lake is an essential component of the Air Force's Air Warrior Program. The use of Leach Lake provides Air Warrior with realistic live fire training for their aircrews. During a scenario, the NTC incorporates all the various facets required to realistically reproduce actual battle conditions. Such realism includes incorporation of Air Force sorties in support of training units (BLUFOR) and the opposing forces (OPFOR) to simulate air cover and attack. When Air Warrior complete their live-fire mission, they then support the Army's training by flying simulated attack missions against the rotational training forces. Air Warrior allows both Army and Air Force units to train together in the same way they would fight together in actual combat.
- ❖ **Training Compatibility:** If Leach Lake were not available for Air Warrior pilots to drop live ordnance, they would be forced to use bombing ranges at the Nevada Test and Training Range (NTTR) north of Nellis AFB. Using valuable training time to access the NTTR would greatly reduce the time available to fly to Fort Irwin for Air Warrior combat support missions. Leach Lake is also used as an emergency jettison range for live ordnance to ensure aircrew safety during Air Warrior exercises.
- ❖ **Geography:** Leach Lake is separated from the central training corridor by a mountain range making it impractical to use as an extension to that corridor. It is also too narrow to be used as a brigade maneuver corridor.

### 2.4.2.2 Co-Use of Other Military Facilities—Naval Air Weapons Center (NAWC) China Lake

Beginning in March 1989, Fort Irwin began coordination with NAWC on the potential co-use of portions of China Lake. These discussions continued through December 1992. At the Army's

request, the Navy commissioned a *Mission Compatibility Study of the National Training Center's Proposal for NTC Armored Maneuver Training at NAWCWPNS* (NAWC 1993) to determine the compatibility of the NTC and China Lake NAWC missions. The study included: rotational schedules, radio frequency interference from jamming, airspace interference between rotations and on-going missions. The 1993 study concluded that shared use was not feasible. This study was again revisited in formal discussions with NAWC in May – July 1997, May – July 1999, January 2002, and February 2003. In each of these discussions, the same conclusion was reached; the missions could not be made compatible.

#### **2.4.2.3 Moving the NTC**

Moving the NTC to another Army/DoD installation was also reviewed, as noted in the 1996 DEIS. No suitable existing installation could support the land, infrastructure, and training requirements necessary to execute this option without severe reduction in that installation's current mission, this decision has not changed.