

COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS?



Any questions or comments regarding the proposed DMPRC should be directed to:

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COMMENTS

More information on not only potential noise and safety, but also other environmental impacts can be found in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. This document will be available to the public upon completion.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING: All interested parties are invited to public meetings tentatively set at Columbus State University on March 2, 2004 and in Buena Vista on March 4, 2004, exact locations and times to be determined. The purpose of the meeting is to provide the public with more information on the proposed DMPRC and receive comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) that will be available for public review in February 2004. For more information or a copy of the DEIS online, please visit <http://www.benning.army.mil/EMD/dmprcLegal&PublicNotices.htm>.

If you would like to be placed on the DMPRC mailing list and receive future notices and information, please contact Rich McDowell at (706) 545-2211.

DIGITAL MULTI-PURPOSE RANGE COMPLEX

TO:



FORT BENNING DIGITAL MULTI-PURPOSE RANGE COMPLEX



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Introduction

Fort Benning proposes to construct, operate, and maintain a Digital Multipurpose Range Complex (DMPRC) for tank and Bradley Fighting Vehicle crews (BFV). The proposed range would offer technologically advanced and realistic training on a modern range complex, allowing Soldiers to be challenged by both static and moving targets. Training on a few other ranges would shift to incorporate the DMPRC into the training configuration.

Concerns about range safety and noise issues were raised during the first round of public meetings for the proposed DMPRC in February 2002. This newsletter provides a summary of additional and updated information. Those interested in obtaining more detailed information about range safety and noise should refer to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), which is being finalized for public review and comment.



A convoy of Bradley Fighting Vehicles (BFV) on patrol in Iraq. Continued training, at facilities such as those located at Fort Benning, is vital to the safety and success of United States Army service personnel. Photo courtesy DOD.

SAFETY

Every military training operation must take safety into account, and the proposed DMPRC is no exception. Safety is being considered for the design, location and operation of the proposed range. The Installation's primary goal is to create a state of the art DMPRC that ensures the safety of soldiers and the nearby communities. This includes establishing a safety buffer around the range and prohibiting access by unauthorized persons while the range is in use. DMPRC planning also involves ensuring all ordnance stays well within the designated boundaries on Fort Benning. Trained personnel respond to emergency calls involving military ordnance to further protect Fort Benning and nearby communities.

NOISE

Realistic training will produce noise. The noise from the existing ranges occasionally bothers communities near the north and eastern boundaries of Fort Benning. In planning for the proposed DMPRC, noise studies were performed to identify potential noise impacts for each DMPRC Alternative in the DEIS; the findings assisted in choosing potential locations for the range.

Safety: A Critical Component of DMPRC Planning

Planning for any range must include an assessment of safety. The initial planning for the proposed DMPRC incorporates such safety measures. One measure is using a safety buffer, also known as a surface danger zone (SDZ). All unauthorized persons (i.e. anyone not training, operating or maintaining the range) are prohibited from entering the safety buffer area during range use. This safety buffer includes an ordnance dispersion area where most of the rounds are expected to land, a ricochet area, and an additional buffer area to ensure no one is in an area where there is even the slightest chance that rounds may impact.

Initially, to determine possible placement of the proposed DMPRC on Fort Benning, a standard SDZ with safety area dimensions for Abrams tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles was used. This planning step helped to ensure the proposed locations for the DMPRC (Alternative II and III) would avoid non-training areas on and off Post.

Once a specific range design is projected, the proposed locations for targets and firing positions allow range experts to analyze the distance artillery may travel and determine a specific SDZ. An initial SDZ has been prepared for Alternative III (Fig. 3), the preferred alternative; that SDZ shows the worst-case scenario and may be reduced from continued efforts to improve safety and reduce environmental impacts. Because Alternative I (Fig. 1) is the current operations at Hastings Range, that SDZ had previously been determined. For Alternative II (Fig. 2), the standard SDZ is shown. Studies indicate that the safety buffers for the proposed DMPRC are within the Installation's boundaries and away from non-training land areas for all DMPRC alternatives.

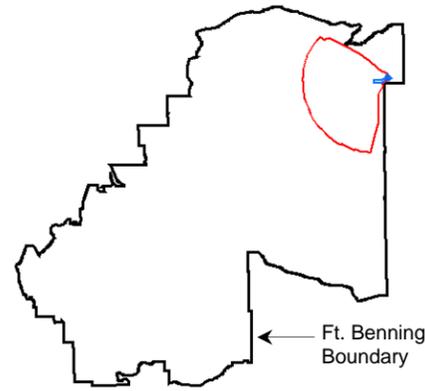


Fig. 1—Surface danger zone Alternative I

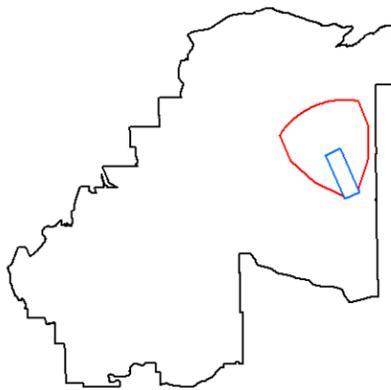


Fig. 2—Surface danger zone Alternative II

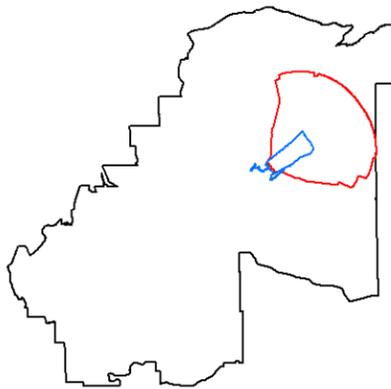


Fig. 3—Surface danger zone Alternative III

NOISE

The Army uses noise modeling to generate planning maps showing noise contours that indicate noise levels and generally acceptable land uses. A school or a hospital is considered a sensitive noise receptor and an activity that generates high levels of noise generally would be incompatible, whereas an agricultural activity may be fine with higher noise levels. Standard noise contours were used for DMPRC planning until noise modeling can be completed.

Standard noise contours helped identify the best locations for the range. The contours are specific to the type of artillery that would be used on the range; for instance, large tank and BFV weaponry would be used on the proposed DMPRC. Not only is the noise from the blast taken into consideration, but also the vibration it generates. Some potential locations for the proposed DMPRC were eliminated from consideration because standard noise contours indicated unacceptable noise concerns.



A common source of noise, an Abrams tank conducts range exercises. Photo courtesy DOD.

Noise testing conducted by the Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (CHPPM) indicates that both Alternative II and III will move the range noise further away from the northeastern Installation boundary because most of the advanced gunnery training on Hastings Range would shift to the proposed DMPRC location. Therefore, either Alternative II or III would reduce the negative noise impacts off the Installation. Future improvements planned for Hastings Range would reintroduce some tank and BFV operations and associated noise; however, modeling shows that noise levels off Post would be lower than the current condition.

