

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q & A)
For the Proposed Battle Area Course (BAX) and
Combined Arms Collective Training Facility
U.S. Army Alaska

The following questions and answers are proposed to accompany the draft press release.

Q-1. What range construction projects are being proposed?

A-1. U.S. Army Alaska (USARAK) is proposing to construct and operate training range facilities in Alaska by constructing a Battle Area Complex (BAX) and a Combined Arms Collective Training Facility (CACTF). Each range facility has standardized design requirements, as set forth in Department of Army Training Circular (TC) 25-8, that were developed to enable soldiers and units to meet doctrinal training requirements (as outlined by Field Manual (FM) 7-0) for collective live-fire training on a large, complex range.

Q-2. Why are the proposed range projects taking place?

A-2. USARAK does not currently provide assigned, tenant, and visiting units with fully automated, standardized ranges on which to conduct company or greater-sized unit collective live-fire training. With existing resources, company live fire training exercises require excessive personnel, time, and materiel. Construction of a BAX would provide up to company combat teams and other combat units a state-of-the-art training facility.

USARAK does not have adequate facilities to provide tenant and visiting units the opportunity to operate in and transition between urban and rural environments. As a result, training requirements are not being met. The combined arms collective training facility located in a major training area will provide this training opportunity under simulated combat conditions. Construction of a CACTF will provide a training facility to accommodate a battalion combat team on the skills necessary to conduct operations in an urban setting.

Q-3. What type of training will occur on the proposed range facilities?

A-3. The BAX would be used to train company combat teams with individual and vehicle mounted weapons. The CACTF is designed to train the skills and unit cohesiveness necessary to conduct clearing, breaching, offensive and defensive operations in an urban setting. Battalion combat teams would be able to train at the CACTF.

Q-4. Where will units train while the proposed range projects are under construction?

A-4. A temporary Collective Training Range (CTR) was constructed to fulfill collective live fire training requirements during the interim to bridge the training gap. A smaller

scaled CACTF located on the Ft. Wainwright cantonment area will train small units until the battalion-sized CACTF is complete.

Q-5. Why not use the current facilities for future training?

A-5. The CTR is not a fully automated standard Army range. The smaller scale Ft. Wainwright CACTF lacks sufficient capabilities to train battalion combat teams and urban operations.

Q-6. Why is an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) being prepared?

A-6. An EIS is being prepared to inform Army decision makers and the public of potential environmental effects associated with the proposed range projects within U.S. Army training lands in Alaska. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 U.S.C. § 4321 et seq.) and 32 CFR, Part 651 require the Army to consider the environmental impacts of their actions and alternatives, and to solicit the views of the public, before they make a final decision to proceed.

Q-7. What alternatives will be considered in the Environmental Impact Statement?

A-7. Possible alternative that will be considered include:

- 1) No Action (maintain existing range infrastructure)
- 2) Construction of range projects within Black Rapids Training Area
- 3) Construction within Donnelly Drop Zone
- 4) Construction within Eddy Drop Zone
- 5) Construction within Fort Richardson
- 6) Construction within Gerstle River Training Area
- 7) Construction within North Texas Range
- 8) Construction within Tanana Flats Training Area
- 9) Construction within West Donnelly Training Area
- 10) Construction within Yukon Training Area

Q-8. What properties are involved in the proposed range projects?

A-8. The properties to be evaluated are within the U.S. Army training lands in Alaska.

Q-9. What environmental resources may be affected by the proposed action?

A-9. The public identified four primary issues of concern during the course of preparing a previous environmental assessment. Any additional issues of concern will be identified during the scoping process and addressed in the EIS.

Q-10. Will the public be involved in the EIS process?

A-10. The public is being notified of the Army's preparation of the EIS through a Notice of Intent (NOI), which will be published in the *Federal Register*. The public, Tribes, Federal, State, and local agencies, will be invited to participate in the scoping process. Scoping meetings will be held in Delta Junction and Fairbanks, Alaska, to inform the public of the proposed action and to help identify possible alternatives, potential environmental impacts, and key issues of concern relating to the proposed action. Notification of specific time and location for the public meeting will be published in local newspapers. Written scoping comments on the EIS will be accepted within 30 days of publication of the NOI in the *Federal Register*. USARAK will continue to accept public and tribal comments throughout the NEPA process until the publication of the final EIS.

Q-11. Will copies of the Draft EIS be available to interested parties?

A-11. Copies of the Draft EIS will be made available to the public, Tribes, Federal, State, and local agencies. Copies of the Draft EIS will also be available for review at local libraries. Meetings with the public, Tribes, Federal, State, and local agencies will be held to obtain input for finalization of the EIS.

Q-12. What is the schedule for completion of the EIS?

A-12. The process to complete this EIS will start with the publication of the NOI in the *Federal Register*. Scoping meetings will follow in Delta Junction and Fairbanks. It is expected the Draft EIS will be published in Summer 2004. Informational meetings will be held in Delta Junction and Fairbanks to accept comments on the Draft EIS. Responses and resulting changes will be incorporated in the Final EIS. It is expected the Final EIS will be published by the end of calendar year 2004. The Army will complete the EIS process by issuing a Record of Decision no sooner than 30 days following EPA's notice, in the *Federal Register*, that the Final EIS was filed.