2.13 Warrior Forward Operating Base

USAG-AK has proposed to construct a forward operating base (FOB), to be called 'Warrior,' in Training Area 114 at Fort Wainwright (Figure 19). The location of the proposed project has been used as an equipment staging area, a target area and parking area, among other uses, at various times in the past. The area is also open to and used by all-terrain vehicle drivers. The proposed improvements will be used in troop training exercises to simulate a forward operating base in a field situation. Troops will eat, sleep, participate in guard duty, and carry out activities like equipment repair at the proposed forward operating base. The activities and structures to be used during training at the forward operating base are all temporary and only in place during specific training activities, such as camping in tents, guard duty in plywood watch stations and the temporary placement of trash dumpsters.

Construction activities will include upgrading an approximately 7 acre area of existing pads and roads by placing six inches of capping fill material. Access to the forward operating base will also be upgraded to improve year round access. The undertaking will require substantial vegetation clearing and earthwork. This project is located on map quadrangle FAI D2, T. 1 S., R. 1 E., Sections 9 and 16.

Survey and Inventory

In July 2005 the proposed forward operating base location and surrounding area was pedestrian surveyed by a crew of five archaeologists employed by the Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands (CEMML, Colorado State University).

Parallel pedestrian transects spaced at 20 meters or less were walked in all areas that were not deemed too wet or too steep (>40°) to contain cultural material. Systematic sub-surface testing was undertaken in areas determined to be high probability (e.g., lake margins, ridges, benches adjacent to steeper slopes) during initial review of the proposed project area, and as determined by the supervising archaeologist and field crew leader based on survey findings. In addition to pedestrian transects, 40cm x 40cm shovel tests were excavated in the project area. None of the shovel tests excavated contained any cultural material.

Cultural Resources

Historical records indicate that the Weist homestead may have been located in the survey area, but military uses have left no signs of preexisting structures or other evidence of homesteading (Price 2002). The project area and a portion of the survey area are located on "Approach Hill." This is a small hill (less than 170 meters in height) that is located within several hundred meters of the Chena River and offers views of the surrounding terrain. This hill is a likely location for the discovery of prehistoric archaeological sites. However, previous disturbance of the area seems to have erased any evidence of previous prehistoric or homestead era occupation or uses of the area.

In addition to modern trash and some concrete 'footings,' a firing-in butt is located within the project area, on the south side of Approach Hill (Figure 20). The firing-in butt was used to stop rounds fired from the opposite side of the Chena River. The firing-in butt was excavated into the side of the hill and then covered with boards to make a firing target. It is no longer in use and likely dates to around 1958, based on available maps and construction plans. The firing-in butt is less than 50 years old, will not be physically

impacted by the proposed project, and was not evaluated for National Register of Historic Places eligibility.

Results

No historic properties were identified through visual inspection or shovel testing within the project area. The majority of the project area has been previously disturbed and cleared. Additionally, all other known historic properties located on the Fort Wainwright main post are located outside of the project area. There are no known historic properties located within the area of potential effect for this project. USAG-AK determined that no historic properties will be affected by the proposed project.

Figure 19. Area surveyed for Warrior FOB construction

Figure 20. "Firing-in Butt" wall on south side of Approach Hill