

FACT SHEET

Military Readiness: The Training and Testing Connection

"From an operational perspective, my team's ability to train for this war was far from ideal. Range encroachment issues affected nearly every aspect of this mission's profile."
—Captain Jason Amerine (*Special Forces team that supported Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan*)

Readiness Requires Preparation

The U. S. Armed Services fight as they train. Analysis of WWI and WWII combat data reveal that the probability of battlefield survival increases almost exponentially if one survived the first five engagements where shots were fired. The purpose of training is to replicate those first five engagements in safe training areas, not in combat.

The United States Armed Forces train to conduct military operations in all terrain and weather conditions to defend our interests. They are the best at what they do. They are the best because they “train as they will fight” and their equipment is rigorously tested under realistic conditions. High quality training and testing requires access to appropriate land, air and water ranges.

For many years the Department of Defense (DoD) enjoyed ample access to ranges; however, as our nation has grown, so has urban development around our ranges. External factors stemming from urban development can prohibit, limit, or constrain testing and training activities on military installations and ranges.

DoD seeks to maintain readiness while remaining environmentally responsible. But the defense of our nation is an imperative; other national goals cannot be achieved without it. This brief overview discusses the training and testing side of the balance between readiness and stewardship.

Training

Modern warfare requires specialized ranges where military personnel can learn, through practical hands-on experience, the skills necessary to assure victory and to survive in combat. The use of live ammunition and the ability to train in complex and realistic scenarios are fundamental requirements. DoD ranges support such training, from basic warfare skills to highly advanced integrated operational maneuver training.

The Army’s National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California is a 1,000 square mile range in the Mojave Desert. The success of the Army in Desert Storm has been attributed to the specialized prior training armored, mechanized and air units received at Fort Irwin.

Navy battle groups, with their onboard Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU), use water ranges and operating areas to sharpen offensive and defensive skills, including anti-submarine and carrier air operations. The Marines’ projection of power from the sea to take control of airstrips in the vicinity of Kandahar during the war in Afghanistan exemplifies the results of such training.

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All services conduct military aviation training requiring large areas of airspace to prepare fighter, bomber and transport aircrews for combat. Airspace is also required over artillery ranges.

Testing

The testing of military weapons and equipment requires similar ranges. In order to ensure that our forces are armed with weapons systems that operate under all conditions on the battlefield, they must be rigorously tested. Some testing is done in laboratories, while some require ranges. Several of these ranges are very large, such as the 1,700 square mile Naval Air Warfare Center in China Lake, California, which is used to test aircraft, guided missiles and precision guided munitions (PGMs).

The readiness of our Armed Forces depends on the continued availability of realistic testing and training. We owe our men and women in uniform nothing less.

Commonly Asked Questions:

Can simulators provide the same experience as realistic training and testing?

DoD is the world's leader in using simulations and simulators for training its people. However, the best simulators, now and in the foreseeable future, can only replicate parts of the real combat environment. Whenever possible, training has been and will continue to be shifted into an electronic environment. However, much of military training will need to continue to be conducted in a live environment using DoD's excellent ranges.

What are the issues most affecting the military's training and testing facilities?

Eight major areas of encroachment that most affect our training and testing activities today are:

- Endangered species and critical habitat issues that limit access to training lands
- Management of unexploded ordnance and ordnance constituents on operational ranges
- Radio frequency spectrum encroachment
- Maritime issues such as use of sonar and protection of marine mammals
- National airspace redesign considerations
- Air quality issues within areas where new units are relocated
- Airborne noise that creates issue with neighboring communities
- Urban growth and incompatible development near our ranges

The effect on ranges varies from location to location and service to service. Urban growth and development around ranges is a root cause in many instances, which in turn, exacerbates environmental restrictions, noise concerns, over flight issues, frequency interference and other regulatory issues and community concerns.

Each range is unique; its geography and environment are unique as are its mission and encroachment concerns. If the military services cannot meet their training and testing requirements, they must relocate facilities or send trainees to other locations increasing expense and travel time. A particularly adverse impact is the increase in time away from their families, which adversely impacts retention.