



Highlights of [GAO-09-171](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

In 2007, the Army announced that the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) had approved its request to expand its Piñon Canyon Maneuver Site, Colorado, by acquiring up to an additional 418,577 acres. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 required the Army to address 29 provisions related to the expansion in a report to Congress. In July 2008, the Army reported that, although it had revalidated the requirement for at least 418,577 additional acres at the maneuver site, in response to community, cost, and other concerns it now proposed to limit the acquisition of additional training land to 100,000 acres.

The act also required GAO to review the Army's report and the justification for the proposed expansion. This report examines the extent to which the Army's report (1) addresses the provisions of the mandate and (2) explains the selection of the 100,000-acre site. GAO compared the mandate requirements with the responses in the Army's report, met with Army officials to discuss the expansion, and visited the Piñon Canyon Maneuver Site and Fort Carson.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Army provide Congress with additional information explaining (1) six of the responses to the mandate and (2) the rationale for selecting the 100,000 acres for the proposed expansion. DOD partially agreed with the recommendations.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-09-171](#). For more information, contact Brian J. Lepore at (202) 512-4523 or [leporeb@gao.gov](mailto:leporeb@gao.gov).

## DEFENSE INFRASTRUCTURE

### Additional Information Is Needed to Better Explain the Proposed 100,000-Acre Expansion of the Piñon Canyon Maneuver Site

## What GAO Found

While the Army's 2008 report on the Piñon Canyon Maneuver Site generally addresses the provisions of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008, the report is lacking certain information that would help clarify six of the Army's responses to the mandate. For example, the Army provided a list of all the training activities that occurred at Piñon Canyon from May 2007 to April 2008, but this information does not indicate how much of the training area was used, nor does it indicate whether any of these exercises were performed simultaneously. Therefore, the report is not clear regarding how much of the maneuver site was used for training in a given month or annually and whether the units could train simultaneously. It is also unclear how this information was used to support the required analysis of the maximum annual training load without the proposed expansion of the site. Without additional information on the mandated provisions, it is difficult for Congress and the public to fully understand six of the Army's responses to the mandated provisions.

The Army's report does not fully explain the current selection of the 100,000-acre site. Following are examples of specific issues not addressed in the Army's report:

- The Army reported that it has reduced the amount of land it intends to purchase from 418,577 to 100,000 acres but did not explain its basis for selecting fewer acres or the specific site.
- The estimated cost per acre used for internal planning to acquire additional land at the maneuver site has increased since 2007 but the Army's report does not discuss this increase.
- The Army completed the required analyses when requesting OSD's approval for the up to 418,577-acre expansion, but has not completed an analysis for the current 100,000-acre proposal that would help to understand, among other items, how much of the 100,000 acres would actually be used for training, what type of training can be conducted, and what are the estimated costs to maintain the 100,000 acres.

Army officials said that these questions and others would be difficult to address without the analysis required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Although the Army issued the mandated report, Army officials stated that, to date, the Army has voluntarily declined to spend other appropriated funds to begin the National Environmental Policy Act process due to congressional concerns about the potential effects of the proposed expansion. The officials further stated that uncertainty over congressional support for the potential expansion made a delay in expending funds to start the National Environmental Policy Act process appear to be prudent. Without the benefit of the analyses and information on how the Army identified the 100,000 acres currently being proposed for acquisition, especially in light of the growth in the estimated price per acre, it is difficult for Congress and the public to evaluate the full benefits and costs associated with the proposed 100,000-acre expansion.