

FACT SHEET

Western Training Area



Fort Hood is the premier training installation for the United States Army. Fort Hood has 199,541 acres of training area, including a 63,000-acre impact area for live-fire training and a 134,600 acre maneuver area capable of accommodating a combat-heavy brigade consisting of 300 tracked and 900 wheeled vehicles. Fort Hood also operates the 15,900 square mile West Texas Training Area designated for aviation training.

Most aviation training is conducted in a 15,900 square-mile area, the Western Training Area. There are 114 no-fly zones around Fort Hood , and the majority of them are located in the Western Training Area. All published no-fly areas were established as a result of over-flight complaints regarding claims of damage to livestock, fences, homes, barns, hay fields, or personal injury.

These no-fly zones affect both individual aviator training and unit collective training. Aviation routes and missions are planned around no-fly areas, which constrain realistic combat-scenario development. For example, during a training exercise, an attack helicopter battalion was forced to fly to its attack position at an altitude of 500 feet to avoid no-fly areas in the vicinity of their engagement area. Tactics, techniques, and procedures of attack helicopter units generally require attack helicopters to fly the last three to five kilometers at an altitude of 50 feet. As a direct result of the numerous no-fly areas, aviators had to fly at an altitude ten times the standard. Aviators need to rehearse nap-of-the-earth, contour, and low-level flights. Additionally, aviators spend hours keeping their digital and paper maps updated with current no-fly areas.

A review of Western Training Area maps with no-fly areas posted clearly depicts the high density of no-fly areas (27) located in a north to south belt about 50 kilometers west of Fort Hood. To avoid these no-fly areas and "fly friendly," many units fly at an altitude of 1000 feet above ground level until they arrive in the vicinity of the town of San Saba , which is about 90 kilometers west of Fort Hood . Once clear of the belt of no-fly areas, units descend to terrain flight altitude to perform tactical training. While this procedure prevents noise complaints, it requires additional flight time, increases Army airspace command and control requirements, and complicates expeditious refueling of aircraft. As the density of the no-fly belt increases, aviators continue to move their training further west. Increases in flight restrictions also reduce the amount of space available to aviators for training.

The Western Training Area also encompasses the area bounded by several cities and towns including Gatesville, Comanche, Ballinger, San Angelo , Fredericksburg, and Copperas Cove, Texas. This area was established to provide airspace dedicated to military low-level maneuver training and was developed in consultation with the Federal Aviation Administration. Flight restrictions are gradually diminishing the training and operational value of this area.