CHAPTER 1
PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

U.S. Army Alaska (USARAK) proposes to construct and to operate two state-of-the-art, fully automated and instrumented combat training facilities on U.S. Army training lands in Alaska. This involves the construction and operation of a Battle Area Complex (BAX) and a Combined Arms Collective Training Facility (CACTF). These facilities would support training that involves a wide range of training exercises. These facilities would support training under realistic rural (BAX) and urban (CACTF) combat conditions for up to 1,000 personnel and 165 combat vehicles per training event. The BAX would support the use of live ammunition ranging from individual Soldier weapons (5.56mm rounds) up to 105mm rounds fired from the Stryker Mobile Gun System or other direct-fire weapons that could be deployed to the BAX. The CACTF would support the use of training ammunition including blanks (no ball or tracer rounds), Short Range Training Ammunition, lasers and simunitions (paint ball-like ammunition). The two ranges would be located in proximity to one another to allow for more closely integrated and synergistic training.

The BAX requires approximately 3,500 acres and the CACTF requires 1,100 acres of land suitable for the construction and operation of these ranges. In addition, a 7.5-mile surface danger zone is associated with the BAX, and 2,300-foot surface danger zone is associated with the CACTF.

While these ranges can be used separately to train specific skills, their ability to be used together to provide the flexible training required to prepare USARAK's forces for diverse combat missions is vital to wartime preparedness. During wartime situations, battles will transition between rural and urban environments. Therefore, it is necessary to provide a range complex where all of these skills can be practiced in a demanding and realistic environment.

The Army is currently undergoing a major organizational transformation that includes most aspects of the Army's doctrine, training, leader development, organizations, installations, materiel, and Soldiers. As a result, an increase in military activity in Alaska is inevitable. This increase will reflect the type and the level of training that the Army must have as it transforms and prepares to respond to new challenges in support of National Defense in Alaska (USARAK 2004a). For additional information, see *Final Environmental Impact Statement for Transformation of U.S. Army Alaska, Vol. 1-2* at http://www.usarak.army.mil/conservation.

The Department of the Army issued a Record of Decision (ROD) in May 2004 to transform USARAK forces to help meet the nation's security requirements of the 21st century. Towards this purpose, the 172nd Infantry Brigade (Separate) at Forts Wainwright (FWA) and Richardson (FRA), Alaska, began transformation into a Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT), and the 1-501st Parachute Infantry Regiment (1-501st PIR) began expanding to the 4-25th Airborne Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) in June 2005. The 172nd SBCT and 4-25th ABCT are presently stationed at FWA and FRA, with additional major training facilities at Donnelly Training Area (DTA) (formerly Fort Greely). USARAK's transformation is a necessary step to fill a current shortfall as

the Army develops its future force and combat systems over the next 30 years. Various activities on USARAK's military training lands would be altered to provide a baseline capability and foundation to support Army transformation requirements.

In the five years prior to 2004, use of Alaskan military lands was significantly less than in previous decades, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. Recent Operations Tempo (the activity rate at which a command/unit trains and deploys to conduct military operations) has increased due to the Army's focus on worldwide deployment. The current build-up focus is on home station training and increased deployment capability. However, the projected Operations Tempo will be less than that experienced by Alaska in the 1970s and 1980s.

USARAK can trace its history back to the Army's arrival as an occupation force following the purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867, through its emergence as a modern mechanized force during the mid-1950s. From 1956 through the late 1970s, USARAK was comprised of combat units that consisted of tracked combat vehicles. During this time frame, the total number of USARAK personnel reached a peak of 15,000 individuals. This exceeds the projected peak of approximately 10,800 individuals in 2010 that will result from USARAK transformation (USARAK 2004a) and the standup of a new airborne BCT.

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

The purpose of the proposed action is to provide year-round, fully automated, comprehensive and realistic training and range facilities, which in combination would support company (200 Soldiers) through battalion (800 Soldiers) combat team training events. Current training facilities do not provide the same high level of training realism and effectiveness required to sustain a high level of combat readiness for USARAK Soldiers. The proposed action involves the construction and operation of BAX and CACTF facilities necessary to support the required higher levels of realistic training in both urban and rural environments. These facilities would incorporate state-of-the-art technology to support all phases of training, from ground maneuver and target engagements to the After Action Review (AAR) (training feedback) phase.

USARAK requires a training facility in Alaska that allows military units to conduct live-fire combat training to raise and sustain their war-fighting skills to higher levels. These combat skills must be raised for military units to effectively conduct operations in the current Global War on Terrorism, to support other worldwide contingency operations, and to be prepared for future global combat operations. These skills cannot be achieved using current facilities. The design of the BAX and CACTF has taken into account the nature of modern warfare and its increased emphasis on realistic training for combat.

The Army is obligated to ensure that Soldiers go into battle with the best possible assurance of success and survival. Rigorous and realistic training on facilities such as the BAX and CACTF would fulfill this obligation. An Army fighting force that emphasizes training first and foremost would be a much more capable response force when required to deploy for battle from its home station. This higher level of training readiness would support the more rapid deployment of USARAK combat forces to a particular area of operation.

The BAX provides a tactical collective live-fire training facility for Brigade Combat Teams, mounted (by vehicle) or dismounted (on foot), to test their ability to detect, identify, engage and defeat stationary or moving combined arms targets in both open and urban terrain environments. Operations on the BAX would utilize an area of approximately 3,500 acres. The complex also supports tactical live-fire operations independently of, or simultaneously with, support vehicles in free maneuver. The BAX would include mounted qualification lanes to train and test section gunnery skills. The BAX would also support individual and crew gunnery qualification. Approximately 200 Soldiers and up to 25 vehicles would utilize the BAX during training events. The BAX is primarily designed for offensive operations using support vehicles. The range would utilize an automated counter-attacking force, requiring a unit to quickly transition to defensive operations. The unit may also conduct joint operations allowing training exercises or operations with other Department of Defense (DOD) organizations.

The CACTF is an urban combat training facility designed to provide a high level of urban combat training realism and effectiveness to sustain a high level of combat readiness for Soldiers. This facility would support mounted (by vehicle) and dismounted (on foot) training operations using blank ammunition, SRTA rounds, and simulated munitions in an urban environment during a training event. This training facility would support the combat teams and train them using the skills required for effective street-to-street and building-to-building fighting on today's battlefield. Approximately 800 Soldiers and up to 140 vehicles would utilize the CACTF during training events.

1.2.1 Army Training Overview

Army training doctrine requires Soldiers to practice combined arms teamwork (infantry, artillery and aviation) and synchronization to prepare units for wartime operations. Combined arms proficiency is gained through the regular practice of combat missions and tasks in a realistic situation. This process starts with the development of individual skills which, when combined and practiced, build unit proficiency from crew level (two Soldiers) through brigade task forces (3,000 to 5,000 Soldiers). These units train to standard based on the requirements of a precise and specific mission, and, in the process, they develop a foundation in combat skills. These skills are continually refined, based on the requirements of subsequent training missions.

Effective, realistic training is the cornerstone of operational success. The performance of critical tasks, at the level of individuals, crews, platoons and companies, is dependent on the availability and capability of live-fire ranges and maneuver areas. While the continued improvement of live-fire ranges and facilities has historically enabled development of required go-to-war skills, these live-fire ranges and facilities will become even more important in the future, as units must be able to deploy into a combat zone and be operational within 96 hours.

Army training ranges enable the development and improvement of Soldier and team proficiency and competence in the use of sophisticated weaponry. These ranges provide individual Soldier proficiency and collective training, realistically portraying combat conditions and molding the team into an effective fighting unit.

Units assigned to USARAK are no longer confined to a specific regional area (i.e., the Pacific region), but are now an integral part of a worldwide deployable force. USARAK has been designated as a home installation for an SBCT and an Airborne BCT with the means to rapidly

deploy in response to Army force requirements. Once in theatre, these brigades have the mobility to rapidly redeploy within the operational area and to move to critical battlefield locations with sufficient force to execute and sustain its assigned missions.

1.2.2 Training Objectives

Army training teaches, sustains, and maintains individual and collective skills. Ranges and training areas are grouped progressively by level of training: from individual Soldier qualification skills, through integrated live-fire and maneuver unit training, to large-scale force-on-force exercises using training weapons. The proposed range project would accommodate these training requirements on co-located ranges designed in accordance with the standards set out in the Army's Training Circular (TC) 25-8, *Training Ranges* (Table 1.a). The USARAK Range Development Program and the Army's TC 25-1, *Training Land*, requires that ranges be designed and constructed to offer a possible year-round training opportunity. This possible year-round capability would necessitate closure of these ranges to the public when they are in use or undergoing maintenance. Closure would also be necessary to accommodate employee holidays and unforeseen events.

Table 1.a BAX and CACTF Training Objectives as Stated in Training Circular 25-8, *Training Ranges*, and Definition of Terms Used.

Training Objectives from TC 25-8, *Training Ranges*	Training Objective Definition
1. Provide multi-echelon training in a combined arms element allowing joint training opportunities.	Different units (e.g., infantry, aviation, engineers, etc.) working and training together as a group. Training exercises or operations can also be conducted with multiple services. An example of a "joint operation" would be Army ground forces supported by Air Force fixed-wing assets.
2. Provide multi-echelon task-organized situations.	Units focus on individual requirements while training as a group.
3. Provide multi-echelon situations across the full spectrum of warfare.	Describes the countless situations Soldiers can encounter in battle.
4. Support battle-focused training by allowing units to train as a joint combined arms team.	Different units (e.g., infantry, aviation, engineers, etc.) working and training together as a group. Training exercises or operations can also be conducted with multiple military services.
5. Support battle-focused training by allowing units to train for combat proficiency (realistic conditions and performance orientation).	Units can train in situations similar to what they would encounter in battle, including operation of vehicles while engaging targets and firing of weapons with other Soldiers.
6. Allow units to train to standard.	Units can train on all of their skills and prove that they are proficient (received the required score or met all the training objectives).

Training Objectives from TC 25-8, *Training Ranges*	Training Objective Definition
7. Allow units to adapt.	Different training scenarios, particularly vehicle training lanes, are developed to provide situational variety and to force Soldiers to adapt to change.
8. Support battle-focused training by allowing units to maintain and sustain.	Soldiers need to continually practice their skills to maintain proficiency.
9. Support battle-focused training by allowing units to use multi-echelon techniques.	Used to train Soldiers how to fight as a group. Following training as a squad, Soldiers train as a platoon, then as a company, and finally as a battalion.
10. Allow units to sustain proficiency.	Soldiers need to continually practice their skills to maintain proficiency.
11. Allow units to develop leadership.	Ranges allow leaders to practice their skills.
12. Provide mounted and dismounted operations.	Units train in both mounted (in a vehicle) and dismounted (out of a vehicle) operations and engage targets either way.
13. Maximize training efficiencies and synergies.	Close siting of individual ranges to allow for simultaneous or independent training events on both facilities.
14. Provide realistic training.	These facilities can be used either independently or in a combined scenario. These facilities enable combat teams to train in rural (BAX) or urban (CACTF) settings either independently, combined, or in transition from one to the other.

Current training and USARAK Commanding General guidance requires squad, platoon and some company training events to be conducted at FRA and FWA, and remaining company, battalion and brigade training events to be conducted at DTA.

1.2.3 Range Design Criteria

Range design criteria are based on range design standards set forth in TC 25-8. These standards allow for the most comprehensive level of training for Soldiers in a collective training environment, as set forth by the Army in Field Manual (FM) 7-0, *Training the Force*. In addition, these standards provide units with the greatest flexibility in training scenarios while still meeting current requirements.

1.2.3.1 Battle Area Complex

USARAK cannot currently provide tenant and visiting company-level combat teams or other combat units with a fully automated and standardized range for live-fire training. In addition, units stationed in Alaska must currently travel out of state to develop and execute the required

larger unit training scenarios with mission-essential equipment and train on large, complex live-fire ranges. This requires excessive personnel and time commitments for both Range Control and training units. Current training opportunities at USARAK only partially meet Army training standards.

BAX design requirements include the following:

- Maximum scenario flexibility and maneuver space to allow Soldiers to train as they would fight in battle. These flexibilities include: topographical variation, variation in vegetative overhead protection, adequate line of sight, maximum distance between Soldier and target, safety, and live-fire capability, with sufficient space to ensure surface danger zones are within installation boundaries. Surface danger zones are designated areas where the effects of weapons firing are safely contained during live-fire exercises.
- Capability to train under realistic scenarios for up to 200 Soldiers at a time.
- Capability to stage preliminary and concurrent training for battalion or smaller sized combat teams.
- Capability to incorporate all Battlefield Operating Systems. These include those units and their associated equipment that participate in combat operations, logistically support the participating units, and/or conduct additional critical activities such as intelligence gathering and distribution.
- Approximately 3,500 acres of area suitable for range infrastructure and operation (construction footprint and maneuver area).
- Surface danger zone that accommodates all weapon distance requirements up to approximately seven and a half miles in accordance with Department of Army (DA) Pamphlet (PAM) 385-63, *Range Safety*, and Army Regulation (AR) 210-21, *Army Ranges and Training Land Programs.*
- Full automation with computer-operated target scenarios and scoring. Targets should be capable of receiving and transmitting digital data from the Range Operations Center.
- Capability to provide audio and video feedback for immediate AAR.
- Digital connectivity with a virtual training environment to support multi-level training.

1.2.3.2 Combined Arms Collective Training Facility

Existing USARAK facilities are insufficient to support the full spectrum of combat requirements, specifically to transition a combat team from a rural to an urban environment and back. Units need to refine the skills and unit cohesiveness necessary to conduct clearing, breaching, and offensive and defensive operations as they transition to an urban setting.

The design requirements of the CACTF include:

- Location in an area near the BAX to promote training efficiencies and effectiveness.
- Maneuver training capability to accommodate, at a minimum, a battalion combat team, mounted in combat vehicles or dismounted.
- Capability to train under realistic scenarios for up to 800 Soldiers at a time.
- Capability to stage preliminary and concurrent training for a brigade or smaller sized combat team.
- Capability to incorporate all Battlefield Operating Systems. These include those units and their associated equipment that participate in combat operations, logistically support participating units, and/or conduct additional critical activities such as intelligence gathering and distribution.

- Sufficient area to realistically portray a complex urban setting (range construction footprint and maneuver area) (approximately 1,100 acres).
- Surface danger zone that accommodates SRTA rounds up to approximately 2,300 feet in accordance with DA PAM 385-63, *Range Safety*, and AR 210-21, *Army Ranges and Training Land Programs*.
- Sufficient area for the safe use of simulated training munitions, SRTA, pyrotechnics, smoke, hand grenades and artillery simulators, and to conduct force-on-force laser engagements. Pyrotechnics includes any number of devices such as flash bangs, whistling devices, star cluster signal devices, parachute flares, pen flares, ground flares, smoke hand grenades, hand grenades and artillery simulators.
- Full automation with computer-operated target scenarios and scoring. Targets should be capable of receiving and transmitting digital data with the Range Operations Center.
- Capability to provide audio and video feedback for immediate AAR.
- Digital connectivity with a virtual training environment to support multi-level training.

1.2.4 Range Siting Criteria

Range design standards allow for the most comprehensive level of Soldier training in a collective training environment. In addition, these standards provide units with the greatest flexibility in training scenarios while still meeting current requirements. USARAK, with guidance from the Major Command at U.S. Army Pacific and in concert with the Army Training Support Center, determined this set of criteria based on the general parameters outlined in TC 25-8. Other technical and economic criteria were derived cooperatively with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Range siting, operational, environmental and constructability criteria include:

Site Features

- Meet minimum size and shape of the range construction footprint, maneuver area, and surface danger zone requirements.
- Allow for adjacent or co-location of ranges to provide training synergism.
- Provide a staging area sufficient to support preparatory and concurrent training activities.
- Provide varying degrees of natural overhead protection and concealment (trees/bushes) for maneuvers. Overhead protection provides safety from both direct and indirect fires, while concealment provides protection from enemy detection.
- Provide natural topographic variance (e.g., forested upland and wetlands).

Access/Trafficability/Constructability

- Provide favorable terrain for structure construction (low occurrence of wetlands and permafrost).
- Use, as much as possible, existing roads and trails to support construction and tactical equipment while minimizing the need for construction of new roads and trails. Maximum use of existing roads or hardened trails would guarantee year-round ground access for construction of facilities and the routing of power and communications.
- Require minimal vegetation clearing.
- Provide year-round land access for emergency medical evacuation during periods of inclement weather, which often precludes aeromedical evacuation.
- Range must be available substantially year-round.

Employment Pool
- Provide a community, within commuting distance, for full and part-time range employees.

Power/Communications
- Provide adequate electrical power to conduct range operations, within a reasonable distance.
- Provide adequate telephone communications to conduct range operations, within a reasonable distance.
- Provide minimum communications interference on government frequencies.

Unexploded Ordnance
- Ensure low likelihood of encountering unexploded ordnance during construction.

Borrow Material
- Provide adequate gravel sources for range construction, within a reasonable distance.

Construction Period
- Site offers conditions that allow completion of BAX and CACTF range projects within two arctic construction seasons (typically mid-April to mid-October) following final approval to proceed with the project.

1.3 SCOPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

This Final EIS evaluates the construction and operation of two range projects (BAX and CACTF) and considers the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the proposed action and alternatives. It was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 [42 USC 4321 *et seq*.], the President's Council on Environmental Quality Regulations [40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 1500-1508], and the Army's implementation regulation for NEPA, *Environmental Analysis of Army Actions* [32 CFR Part 651].

The Final EIS focuses on the proposed construction and operation of combat training facilities on Army lands in Alaska. The scope includes the potential impacts of the proposed action on environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic resources. The following resource categories are analyzed for the proposed action and alternatives:
- Soil Resources
- Surface Water
- Fire Management
- Noise
- Human Health and Safety
- Wildlife and Fisheries
- Cultural Resources
- Airspace
- Air Quality
- Groundwater
- Wetlands
- Vegetation
- Threatened or Endangered Species and Species of Concern

- Socioeconomics
- Subsistence
- Public Access and Recreation
- Environmental Justice
- Cumulative Effects

The Final EIS focuses primarily on those resource areas and associated issues that were identified as major concerns in the scoping and public comment processes during the development of the original Environmental Assessment (EA), the initial Draft EIS, and the Supplemental Draft EIS. It also addresses community concerns as expressed in the litigation that prompted this EIS. The primary resources include: soil resources, surface water, fire management, noise, human health and safety, wildlife and fisheries, cultural resources, and airspace use. While this document focuses on those issues identified through public participation, the remaining resource categories are also included in the Final EIS: air quality, groundwater, wetlands, vegetation, threatened or endangered species and species of concern, socioeconomics, subsistence, public access and recreation, environmental justice, and cumulative effects analysis. The division between "primary" and "secondary" resources is based on public input and not ecological importance.

This analysis addresses the environmental impacts of the proposed action and a full range of reasonable alternatives, any adverse environmental effects which cannot be avoided (including direct, indirect, long-term, and short-term impacts), and any irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources. Existing and proposed mitigations are also included in the discussion. All of the evaluated alternatives are located within USARAK boundaries.

1.3.1 Resource Areas Not Included in the Scope of Environmental Analysis

Initial scoping indicated that neither the proposed action nor its alternatives would have any effects on geologic resources. Thus, a discussion of impacts on geology is excluded from this document.

1.4 DECISION TO BE MADE

This Final EIS will provide decision-makers with the information necessary to evaluate the environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts of the proposed action and a full range of reasonable alternatives, as required by NEPA. These environmental evaluations will be considered with the other technical, economic, and mission evaluations to produce the best decision, which will be documented in a ROD. The ROD will explain these decisions. The decision for Army officials is whether or not to construct and operate two fully automated collective training facilities – a BAX and a CACTF – at one of the site alternatives being considered. The selected alternative will be based on the environmental analyses in this document, including technical, economic, geo-political, and social issues, and the ability to meet objectives of the USARAK mission within the overall Army goal. Chapter 2 describes the alternatives considered in this analysis. In addition to deciding a particular course of action, the decision-makers may also identify mitigation measures that could be undertaken to lessen environmental or social impacts.

1.5 COOPERATING AGENCY

USARAK invited the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Alaska District Regulatory Branch to be a cooperating agency in the continuing development of this EIS. USARAK and USACE entered into a formal cooperating agency relationship by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on March 31, 2005. The MOU addresses the development and incorporation of information into subsequent versions of the EIS in accordance with NEPA Regulations (40 CFR 1501.6), including information needed for a decision on a Clean Water Act, Section 404 permit application within the statutory jurisdiction of USACE, Alaska District Regulatory Branch. Wetland delineation and general functional assessment information presented in this EIS is supported by the USACE, Alaska District Regulatory Branch.

1.6 INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

Chapter 7 lists those agencies, organizations, Alaska Native tribes, and individuals who were consulted in the EIS process. Because the Final EIS, however, analyzes a project covered in a prior EA, the parties involved in the original EA are also listed. The following is a brief description of interagency consultation topics.

USARAK notified the State of Alaska of its intent to construct and operate new combat training facilities in Alaska. The Army has worked directly with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) to define potential impacts on wildlife and fisheries (see Sections 3.2.6 and 4.2.6).

USARAK notified the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) of its intent to prepare an EIS for the construction and use of a new combat training facility in Alaska to determine potential impacts of the proposed action on threatened, endangered, and proposed threatened or endangered (sensitive) species found on Army lands (see Sections 3.3.5 and 4.3.5). However, there are no listed species on USARAK lands, and consultation pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act was not required.

The Alaska State Historic Preservation Office has been contacted regarding potential impacts of the proposed action on cultural resources and possible compliance requirements per Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (see Sections 3.2.7 and 4.2.7).

Since 1980, native and non-native subsistence uses on federal public lands in Alaska have been regulated by Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) (Public Law 96-487). Title VIII addresses the rights of customary and traditional subsistence users by giving rural Alaskans, those who depend upon subsistence uses, preference in the take of fish and wildlife on federal lands (Public Law 96-487, Sec. 801, Sec. 802).

USARAK actively cooperates with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Alaska Fire Service (AFS) in planning and implementing wildfire management measures on Army managed lands. The State of Alaska Division of Forestry was also consulted during planning phases of wildfire management projects and has participated in project site visits (see Sections 3.2.3 and 4.2.3).

In addition, USARAK consults with the BLM regarding timber harvesting on military withdrawn lands. The BLM has retained timber rights on certain portions of USARAK lands and is consulted on the use of forest products prior to any tree-clearing activities.

The Salcha-Delta Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), a state agency, participated in agency scoping meetings regarding potential impacts of the proposed action. This agency was consulted for development of soil erosion best management practices for construction and operation of the proposed combat training facility (see Sections 3.2.1 and 4.2.1).

The Tanana Chiefs Conference, Inc. was consulted during the scoping period. This is a non-profit organization that works as an advocate on behalf of several interior Native Alaska tribes. While they are not granted the same political relationship with the federal government as an individual Native Alaska tribe, their comments have been incorporated into the development of this document.

The city of Delta Junction has been actively involved with USARAK regarding the proposed range improvement projects. City officials met with USARAK representatives on several occasions, provided substantial supporting documentation, and actively participated in scoping efforts relating to the proposed action.

1.7 SCOPING AND PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS

NEPA implementing regulations define scoping as *"an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying significant issues related to a proposed action"* (40 CFR 1501.7). These issues are used to develop alternative actions, including mitigation measures, and to evaluate the environmental consequences of proposed actions.

The following section provides a brief procedural history of the BAX/CACTF project in Delta Junction, beginning in 1998 when the original range concept was developed through the current release of this Final EIS in June 2006. The following is a brief timeline of events:

- **1998** – USARAK identified the need for a large-size collective training range.
- **2001** – USARAK submitted construction request for a CACTF.
- **2002** – USARAK submitted construction request for a BAX.
- **2003 (February)** – USARAK released an EA and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) and received public comments during the public comment period for the construction and use of a BAX and CACTF at the Eddy Drop Zone area of DTA East.
- **2003 (June)** – USARAK released the Final FNSI for the construction and use of a BAX and CACTF.
- **2003 (July)** – In response to litigation by the city of Delta Junction, USARAK agreed to suspend BAX and CACTF development activities and undertake additional environmental analysis, addressing issues identified by Delta Junction.
- **2004 (June)** – USARAK published Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a Draft EIS.
- **2004 (November)** – USARAK published Notice of Availability (NOA) of a Draft EIS.
- **2006 (March)** – USARAK published NOA of a Supplemental Draft EIS to include an additional range siting alternative, identification of a preferred alternative and additional information resulting from field investigations.
- **2006 (June)** – USARAK publishes Notice of Availability (NOA) of a Final EIS.

1.7.1 Army Planning

USARAK originally identified the need for a large-size collective training range in 1998. While the first fully-automated USARAK ranges were constructed at FRA in 2003 and were operational in January 2005, these ranges do not allow for required large-size collective training operations. A construction request, submitted in 1998, originally identified the BAX as a Multi-Purpose Range Complex (Light) to provide fully automated and standardized platoon level live-fire exercises. However, this type of range provided minimal support for larger unit live-fire exercises. Subsequently, the BAX was re-designed in 2002 to fulfill the Army's need for company-level mounted and dismounted live-fire exercises. A separate construction request was submitted for the proposed CACTF in 2001. These training facility requirements were therefore identified prior to Army-wide development of transformation and the SBCT concept.

USARAK created an interdisciplinary team to discuss issues and concerns regarding the construction and the operation of training and range facilities, including a BAX and CACTF. Concurrently, a project planning team was assembled to initiate the analysis required by NEPA. This NEPA planning effort continues to identify topics and areas of potential impact from the proposed action. Participants in this planning included U.S. Army Garrison, Alaska (USAG-AK), and USARAK Environmental, Legal, Training, and Public Affairs staff members.

Important issues were identified, discussed, and analyzed in a previous EA and EIS for the construction and use of a BAX and CACTF, and these issues are reflected in the section headings of Chapters 3 and 4 of this Final EIS. Issues identified by the public through the scoping process are listed in Section 1.9, *Issues Identified During the Scoping and Public Review Process,* and addressed within the appropriate sections in Chapters 3 and 4.

1.7.2 Public Participation

USARAK reviewed its administrative record to identify pertinent issues related to the proposed action. Several documents relevant to public concern, which pre-dated USARAK's NOI to prepare an EIS for the construction and operation of a BAX and CACTF, are summarized below.

1.7.2.1 USARAK Transformation EIS

An initial public meeting, regarding the transformation of the 172nd Infantry Brigade (Separate) into an SBCT, was held at the Delta Junction Community Center in February of 2002. Many individuals attended the transformation scoping meetings to express their concern over the possibility of adding new firing ranges at DTA. The primary public issues of concern were increased fire danger, additional noise production, and reduced public access to affected sites. Public testimony and written comments were accepted regarding potential range developments in the Delta Junction area, even though these comments were not applicable to the transformation of the 172nd Infantry Brigade (Separate) (the original purpose of the meeting). The transformation to an SBCT is independent of this proposed action. New firing ranges were considered as ongoing, independent USARAK activities and were not included as part of the SBCT analysis. These enhanced training ranges would be needed regardless of the configuration of units training within USARAK lands.

1.7.2.2 Draft EA for Range Expansion Projects at Donnelly Training Area, Alaska

The environmental effects associated with the proposed combat training range facilities were discussed in the *Draft Environmental Assessment for Range Expansion Projects at Donnelly Training Area, Alaska,* released February 2003. USARAK announced public meetings in the *Fairbanks Daily-News Miner* and notices were posted on public bulletin boards in Delta Junction. USARAK solicited comments on the Draft EA at an open house public meeting in Delta Junction on February 6, 2003. Approximately 200 individuals attended the eight-hour open house. A 30-day public comment period on the Draft EA began February 9, 2003, and extended through March 12, 2003.

Delta Junction has demonstrated considerable interest in USARAK's proposed DTA range projects. The public comment process resulted in 131 separate comments on the Draft EA. This high level of interest is also reflected in numerous comments received from local, state, and federal governmental entities. These comments have been carefully considered, and many have helped USARAK identify and further evaluate potential environmental impacts of the proposed projects. Of the public comments received, the most frequently voiced concerns included wildfire hazard, noise hazard, safety issues, permafrost, groundwater and seasonal flooding issues. These topics have been incorporated into this EIS.

In June 2003, USARAK published the EA for the range facilities and an FNSI. In July 2003, USARAK conducted another series of meetings with concerned citizens of Delta Junction. City Council members and citizens were provided a helicopter over-flight of the sites, including areas of concern to the community. In addition, detailed discussions were held to address any additional community questions or concerns, and to clarify any unresolved issues.

1.7.2.3 City of Delta Junction Litigation

The city of Delta Junction challenged the Army's findings in regard to the EA and initiated litigation in federal court to halt the action. As a consequence, USARAK agreed to suspend range development activities with regard to the BAX and CACTF, and undertake additional analysis of the potential environmental impacts. To carry out the additional analysis, USARAK elected to prepare an EIS.

1.7.2.4 Public Scoping

A NOI to prepare the initial Draft EIS for the range facilities was published in the *Federal Register* on June 1, 2004. A 30-day public scoping comment period regarding the proposed action began that same day and extended through July 2, 2004. Public scoping meetings were held in Delta Junction on June 10, 2004, and in Fairbanks on June 16, 2004. USARAK announced the public meetings in the *Fairbanks Daily-News Miner,* and notices were posted on public bulletin boards in Delta Junction and on the community website. Approximately 40 individuals attended the open house in Delta Junction, and approximately 15 individuals attended the open house in Fairbanks. Agency scoping meetings were held in Fairbanks and Delta Junction on June 10, 2004, and June 17, 2004, respectively.

Following the initial public and agency scoping meetings, all relevant comments and concerns were incorporated into subsequent analysis and documentation. Some issues that fell outside

the scope of the proposed action were eliminated from further review. (See Section 1.9, *Issues Identified During the Scoping and Public Review Process,* for additional discussion of issues.)

1.7.2.5 Announcement, Availability, and Public Comment on the Initial Draft EIS

A NOA for the initial Draft EIS was published in the *Federal Register* on November 5, 2004. A 45-day comment period began on the same day and extended through December 19, 2004. Public meetings were held in Anchorage on November 23, 2004, in Fairbanks on December 1, 2004, and in Delta Junction on December 2, 2004. USARAK announced the public meetings in the *Anchorage Daily News* and the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner,* posted meeting notices on public bulletin boards in Delta Junction and on the Delta News Web, a community website. Copies of the initial Draft EIS were made available for review at Anchorage libraries, Noel Wien Public Library in Fairbanks, and at Delta Junction Community Library and City Hall. Additional copies of the draft were also available at FRA, FWA, DTA Environmental Resource Departments, and on the USARAK conservation website (http://www.usarak. army.mil/conservation). In response to individual requests, the public comment period for the initial Draft EIS was extended for an additional 20 days to allow for continued comment until January 8, 2005. Notices of the extension were published in local newspapers. (See Section 1.9, *Issues Identified During the Scoping and Public Review Process,* for a brief discussion of specific issues raised during the initial Draft EIS public comment period.)

1.7.2.6 Release of Supplemental Draft EIS

USARAK's review of comments received for the initial BAX and CACTF Draft EIS released in 2004 resulted in the decision by the Army to prepare a Supplemental Draft EIS. The USACE, Alaska District Regulatory Branch was invited by the Army to be a cooperating agency in the continued preparation of the Supplemental Draft EIS. Additional consultations also occurred with the ADF&G, the U.S. Air Force (USAF) and the Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer. Results from further environmental and cultural resources field studies were also included. Finally, the Supplemental Draft EIS evaluated an additional siting alternative for the BAX and CACTF in DTA East.

1.7.2.7 Announcement, Availability, and Public Comment on the Supplemental Draft EIS

A NOA for the Supplemental Draft EIS was published in the *Federal Register* on March 17, 2006, beginning a 45-day comment period, and was scheduled to extend through May 1, 2006. Public meetings were held in Fairbanks on April 5, 2006, and in Delta Junction on April 6, 2006. USARAK announced the public meetings in the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner,* locally posted meeting notices and utilized Delta News Web, a community website. Copies of the Supplemental Draft EIS were made available for review at local Anchorage, Fairbanks and Delta Junction libraries and the Delta Junction City Hall. Additional copies of the draft were also available at FRA, FWA, DTA Environmental Resource Departments, and on the USARAK Conservation website (http://www.usarak. army.mil/conservation). In response to public comment from the people of Fairbanks and Delta Junction, the comment period for the Supplemental Draft EIS was extended for an additional 17 days to allow for continued comment until May 18, 2006. (See Section 1.9, *Issues Identified During the Scoping and Public Review Process,* for a brief discussion of specific issues raised during the Supplemental Draft EIS public comment period.)

1.8 GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

American Indian and Alaska Native federally recognized tribes enjoy a unique political relationship with the federal government, one that is based on the United States Constitution, treaties, and statutes. Native American tribes have been recognized as "domestic dependent nations" and retain a substantial degree of sovereignty over their own affairs. When federal actions have the potential to significantly affect tribal interests, consultation with tribal governments must be undertaken on a "government-to-government" basis. Tribal consultation must be considered separately from the public participation process mandated by statutes such as NEPA.

In accordance with USARAK responsibilities under NEPA, Executive Order 13175, *Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments,* DOD *American Indian and Alaska Native Policy,* DOD *American Indian and Alaska Native Policy Alaska Implementation Guidance,* and AR 200-4, *Cultural Resources Management,* government-to-government consultation regarding this EIS has been initiated with five Alaska Native tribal governments, which are listed in Chapter 7. USARAK has solicited input from these interested tribes in order to evaluate the potential effects of the proposed action on tribal resources, rights and interests. A Native liaison with USARAK has been designated to work directly with tribal representatives.

1.8.1 Tribal Consultation

In accordance with applicable executive orders and policies, USARAK notified five federally recognized Alaska Native tribes of the release of the earlier Draft EA and the opportunity for involvement. These tribes included the Dot Lake Village Council, Healy Lake Traditional Council, Northway Traditional Council, Native Village of Tanacross, and Native Village of Tetlin. Tribal representatives were provided copies of the *Draft Environmental Assessment for Range Expansion Projects at Donnelly Training Area, Alaska, 2003* and invited to attend a meeting focused on tribal concerns, held in Delta Junction in February 2003.

As part of the initial EIS process, USARAK again extended invitations to the five federally recognized tribes (mentioned above) to attend an information meeting on May 5, 2004, in Fairbanks, Alaska. Attendees included tribal representatives from Dot Lake, Healy Lake, Northway, and Tanacross. Concerns and comments voiced at the meeting included the effects of proposed range projects on seasonal moose movement, springtime migratory bird and waterfowl migration, location of cultural/historical/grave sites at DTA, and the impacts of large convoys traveling on local highways. (See Section 1.9, *Issues Identified During the Scoping and Public Review Process,* for a brief discussion of specific issues included in this Final EIS.) Following the May 5, 2004 meeting, a summary was sent to the tribes detailing the meeting proceedings. During the summer of 2004, Upper Tanana tribes were also contacted for review of tribal community information (Section 3.3.7, *Subsistence*). USARAK's *Quarterly Update to Alaska Native Tribes* provides updates to sixty federally recognized tribes, including those involved in the Final EIS consultations, on the status of the EIS process, with two editions published in 2004, three in 2005 and one in 2006.

Several additional meetings with the Upper Tanana tribes were conducted towards the end of 2004. USARAK staff visited Dot Lake Village, Native Village of Tanacross, Northway Village,

and Native Village of Tetlin during the week of November 15-19, 2004 to discuss the initial Draft EIS. Information was provided to assist tribes with preparation of comments for follow-up meetings.

Representatives from Dot Lake Village, Native Village of Eagle, Healy Lake Village, Northway Village, and Native Village of Tanacross attended a government-to-government meeting on December 17, 2004, in Fairbanks, Alaska. Five tribal representatives and several Army personnel attended the meeting. Several questions regarding the proposed action were answered, and additional non-project related concerns were noted. USARAK received two sets of written comments from tribal members prior to the meeting, and one set of written comments following the meeting. These comments can be viewed at http:/www.usarak.army.mil/conservation.

A tribal consultation meeting was held on April 5, 2006, to provide tribes from the Upper Tanana region with information and to request tribal comments on the SDEIS. The meeting was held in Fairbanks and attended by representatives from Dot Lake Village, Healy Lake Village, Northway Village and Native Village of Tanacross. A general overview of the proposed action and alternatives was presented along with specific information on potential impacts to a cultural resource site within the Eddy Drop Zone alternative. Tribes were also invited to participate in the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 consultation process. A summary of comments and corresponding responses is located in Volume 2 within Chapter 9, *Summary of Comments and Responses*.

USARAK will continue to solicit tribal comments throughout the EIS process.

1.9 ISSUES IDENTIFIED DURING THE SCOPING AND PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS

1.9.1 Scoping (1998 to 2003)

Verbal and written comments were received from Alaska Native tribes, the public, and agencies as part of the issue scoping process for the EIS. The input was used to help identify specific issues of concern and to frame the analysis of the EIS. Potential issues were addressed in the EIS if they (1) fell within the scope of the proposed action, (2) suggested different actions or mitigations, or (3) influenced the decision regarding the proposed action.

Comments received on the Draft EA (previously obtained through public meetings in Delta Junction in February and June of 2003) have also been incorporated into this analysis. Based on tribal, public, and agency comments, and consistent with the goals of NEPA, the initial Supplemental Draft EIS, and Final EISs concentrate primarily on the major or controversial issues of concern identified during the scoping process. These issues include:

- **Issue 1:** Site criteria or selection of the site
- **Issue 2:** Permafrost impacts resulting from vegetation removal
- **Issue 3:** Flooding and hydrology, particularly with respect to winter ice overflow (aufeis) at Jarvis Creek
- **Issue 4:** Risk of wildfires
- **Issue 5:** Noise impacts

- **Issue 6:** Safety, as relating to the use of munitions and large convoys traveling on highways
- **Issue 7:** Seasonal moose movement and springtime migratory bird and waterfowl migration
- **Issue 8:** Impacts to cultural/historical/grave sites
- **Issue 9:** Airspace use and compatibility of range operations with other airspace users
- **Issue 10:** Army commitments to mitigations

1.9.2 Draft EIS Public Comment Period (November 2004 to January 2005)

Major or controversial issues of concern identified during the public comment period on the initial Draft EIS, in addition to those mentioned during the scoping process, include:

- Opposition to placing range facilities at Eddy Drop Zone due to the close proximity to Delta Junction
- Airspace use and compatibility of range operations with other airspace users (was added to primary issues list above)
- Modifications to public access and recreation at DTA East
- Bison movement and calving near North Texas Range
- Effects of range operation on the Cold Region Test Center's mission and infrastructure
- Identification of additional wetland data informational needs for adequate submission of Clean Water Act Section 404 permit application

These issues have been considered in detail throughout the Supplemental Draft EIS. Chapter 9 of the Supplemental Draft EIS contains USARAK's responses to comments received on the initial Draft EIS. Summaries of the public comment process and government-to-government consultation are also included. Comment letters from the federal, state and local agencies, Alaska tribal entities, the public and special interest groups, as well as verbatim transcripts from USARAK's government-to-government meetings with Alaska tribal entities and public comment meetings are also reproduced within Chapter 9 of the Supplemental Draft EIS. These comments and responses can be viewed at http://www.usarak.army.mil/conservation.

1.9.3 Supplemental Draft EIS Public Comment Period (March to May 2006)

Comments received on the Supplemental Draft EIS were considered in detail during the preparation of the Final EIS. Primary concerns were similar to those received on the initial 2004 Draft EIS, including opposition to placing range facilities at Eddy Drop Zone, impacts associated with flooding, wildland fire, increased noise and airspace use, cultural resources and long-term economic development.

Chapter 9 of the Final EIS contains a summary of USARAK's responses to comments received on the Supplemental Draft EIS. Summaries of the public comment process and government-to-government consultation are also included. Comment letters from federal, state and local agencies, Alaska tribal entities, the public and special interest groups, as well as verbatim transcripts from USARAK's government-to-government meetings with Alaska tribal entities and public comment meetings can be viewed at http://www.usarak.army.mil/conservation.

1.10 ISSUES OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THIS ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Issues that fell outside the scope of the proposed action were eliminated from further review. Issues were also eliminated if they did not suggest different actions or mitigation, if they did not influence the decision on the proposed action, or if they lacked the potential for significance.

1.11 OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSES RELEVANT TO THE ACTION

This Final EIS uses background information from previously prepared EISs and management plans that address relevant ongoing actions, issues, or baseline data at USARAK. These are either used as background information or are incorporated by reference, as appropriate. Examples of such NEPA documentation include:

- *Final Environmental Impact Statement for Transformation of U.S. Army Alaska, Vol. 1-2,* 2004.
- *Final Legislative Environmental Impact Statement for Alaska Army Lands Withdrawal Renewal, Vol. 1-2,* 1999.
- *Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan 2002-2006: Fort Greely and Donnelly Training Area,* 2002.
- *Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan 2001-2005: Fort Greely and Fort Wainwright,* 2002.
- *Integrated Training Area Management Plan and Environmental Assessment: Fort Wainwright, Donnelly Training Area, and Fort Richardson,* 2005.
- *Working Draft Ecosystem Management Plan, Donnelly Training Area,* 2002.
- *Working Draft Forest Management Plan, Donnelly Training Area,* 2002.
- *Final Environmental Impact Statement for National Missile Defense Deployment, Vol. 1-5,* July 2000.
- *Final Environmental Impact Statement, Pogo Mine Project, Alaska,* 2003.

In addition to NEPA, other applicable federal statutes, regulations, and directives are discussed in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement for Transformation of U.S. Army Alaska, Vol. 2.*

1.12 FEDERAL PERMITS, LICENSES AND OTHER ENTITLEMENTS

All federal permits, licenses and other entitlements that must be obtained prior to implementing the proposed action must be listed in the Final EIS (40 CFR 1502.25(b)). Table 1.b lists these requirements.

Table 1.b Permits, Licenses and Other Entitlements Required Prior to Implementing the Proposed Action.

Law or Regulation	Description
Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC § 1344)	Permits placement of dredge and fill material in waters of the United States, including wetlands.
Section 402 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC § 1342)	Permits point source discharges that require a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit.
Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC § 1341)	Certifies that the discharge will comply with the Clean Water Act, the Alaska Water Quality Standards, and other applicable state laws.
Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) (42 USC 300f et seq.)	Requires state review and approval of all public water systems including plan review, monitoring program and operator certification.
National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (16 USC 470 et seq.)	Section 106 of NHPA requires consultation with the Alaska State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) when there are effects on cultural resources listed on or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

1.13 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THIS EIS

This document is divided into nine chapters. Where appropriate, the chapters present separate information for each alternative site. For areas with common information, sections are grouped, as indicated in the section headings. Tables and figures presented in each chapter are numbered by first identifying the corresponding chapter (and, when applicable, section) and are presented in alphabetical order. For example, Figure 2.a identifies the first map (a) in Chapter 2. This EIS consists of two volumes. Volume One contains Chapters 1 through 8, as described below. Volume Two contains Chapter 9, the glossary, the appendix, and maps (figures).

Chapter 1: Purpose and Need for Action
This chapter explains the USARAK and Army requirements that establish the underlying purpose and need for the proposed action.

Chapter 2: Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives
This chapter further describes the proposed action, articulates differences between the alternative sites, and discusses the initial "screening" of sites.

Chapter 3: Affected Environment
Chapter 3 presents the environmental settings of the alternative sites.

Chapter 4: Environmental Consequences
This chapter analyzes and presents the environmental impacts on the resources for each alternative site. Potential impacts are described in terms of the activities that produce those impacts. The significance of those impacts is analyzed based upon their intensity and context. This chapter also includes an analysis of potential cumulative impacts. Existing and proposed mitigation measures are then discussed. Finally, a comparison of alternatives by impact is presented for each resource.

Chapter 5: List of Preparers and Contributors
In this chapter, the individuals who prepared this document are identified, along with their qualifications and contributions.

Chapter 6: Bibliography
Sources referenced in this EIS are documented in this chapter.

Chapter 7: Agencies and Individuals Contacted
This chapter identifies local, state, and federal agencies; tribes; and individuals that were contacted in the preparation of this EIS.

Chapter 8: Distribution List
This chapter identifies all agencies, organizations, and individuals who were sent copies of this EIS.

Chapter 9: Summary of Comments and Responses
This chapter contains the Army's responses to comments received on the Supplemental Draft EIS.

Glossary
This section defines various terms used in this EIS.

Appendix
The appendix contains detailed materials that were prepared for this EIS or used in the analyses and which are either (1) relevant to the decision to be made or (2) form the basis for analyses in this document. The Draft Finding of No Practicable Alternative can be found in this section. Figures are also contained in the appendix.