

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FNSI)
GEORGIA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD (GAARNG)
PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION, OPERATION, AND MAINTENANCE OF AN
IMPROVED MANEUVER AREA TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT SITE (MATES)
FORT STEWART, LIBERTY COUNTY, GEORGIA

Introduction

The Georgia Army National Guard (GAARNG), working cooperatively with the Department of the Army (DA) at Fort Stewart, prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) evaluating the potential physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic effects of the proposed construction, operation, and maintenance of an improved Maneuver Area Training and Equipment Site (MATES) at Fort Stewart in Liberty County, Georgia.

The proposed MATES would be located on an approximately 40-acre site within Fort Stewart. This 40-acre parcel is a portion of the approximately 715 acres within Fort Stewart currently licensed to the GAARNG by the DA. The 40-acre parcel, located at 10531 Troupe Avenue, is currently being used as a MATES by the GAARNG. The existing MATES is out-dated, insufficient, and does not meet the mission requirements of the GAARNG. The existing MATES does not meet current ARNG specifications for such a facility as described in National Guard Pamphlet (NG PAM) 415-12, *Army National Guard Facility Allowances*.

A MATES is the military equivalent of a large-scale, multi-bay commercial heavy truck maintenance and storage facility, with associated administrative facilities. Under the Proposed Action (Preferred Action Alternative), the improved MATES would be constructed at the site of the current GAARNG MATES at Fort Stewart, in a manner that allows for continuous operation during the construction period. The proposed improvements would be constructed using federal funds. As such, this is a federal Proposed Action.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide a modern, ARNG-standard MATES, in accordance with the specifications and facilities allowances set forth in NG PAM 415-12, at Fort Stewart, Georgia. This would ensure the GAARNG has a MATES of sufficient size and modern design to efficiently maintain the modern combat vehicles and other pieces of equipment currently serviced at this facility. The Proposed Action is needed to address the shortfalls of the existing MATES, which was built in phases from the 1960's through the 1980's, lacks sufficient functional space, is in poor condition, does not meet current building codes or military criteria, and is one-third of the size authorized to support the GAARNG's mission. The existing MATES lacks proper and adequate maintenance, training, storage, and administrative areas to maintain strategic, training, and logistics readiness of the GAARNG. Overall, the existing MATES is substandard and cannot support the GAARNG's requirement to maintain their assigned, modern combat/tactical vehicles and equipment.

As this is a federal Proposed Action, an EA was developed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and implementing regulations found at 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 1500 through 1508 (President's Council on Environmental Quality [CEQ] 2002), 32 CFR Part 651 (*Environmental Analysis of Army Actions*, Final Rule; 29 March 2002), and guidance provided in the *Army National Guard Manual for Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 – Guidance on Preparing Environmental Documentation for Army National Guard Actions in Compliance with NEPA* (ARNG 2006).

As described in the EA, the purpose of the EA is to inform federal decision-makers and the public of the potential environmental effects of the Proposed Action and its alternatives, prior to making a federal decision to move forward with the Proposed Action. As required under the above-referenced regulations, the EA assists federal decision-makers in determining whether or not the Proposed Action would result in significant environmental effects that cannot be mitigated to less-than-significant levels. In this manner, federal decision-makers can make a fully informed decision, aware of the potential environmental effects of the Proposed Action, while complying with these regulations.

1. Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action includes the construction, operation, and maintenance of an improved, ARNG-standard MATES, in accordance with the facilities allowances specified in NG PAM 415-12, in two phases, totaling approximately 294,700 square feet (ft²) of facilities on approximately 24 acres. The proposed MATES would include approximately 45 work bays, an engine/transmission test cell, mechanical rooms, unheated storage areas, tool storage/break room facilities, appropriate administrative facilities, various other storage areas, covered walkways, and improvements to existing parking areas. The Proposed Action would replace the existing MATES, which lacks sufficient functional space, is in poor condition and out-dated, does not meet current building codes or military criteria (as set forth in NG PAM 415-12), and is one-third of the size authorized to support the mission of this facility. The improved MATES would allow the GAARNG to meet their assigned maintenance support and training requirements. Currently, the MATES is utilized each weekday by up to 304 full-time, assigned staff. Staffing and utilization levels would not change under the Proposed Action.

A minimum of 24 acres of developable land is required to support a MATES that meets the above requirements. The size and capacity of the proposed facility are in accordance with NG PAM 415-12, dated 30 April 2007. The GAARNG would incorporate physical security measures, cost-effective energy conserving features, and sustainable design principles into the proposed facility. The MATES would be designed to meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver Certification, and would comply with current Green Infrastructure/Low-Impact Development (GI/LID) requirements of federal proposed actions.

The GAARNG would implement the environmental Best Management Practices (BMPs), or Environmental Protection Measures, listed in **Table 2** of the EA as part of the Proposed Action. These include "mitigation by design" measures that are routinely incorporated into all GAARNG projects across the State of Georgia. These measures, incorporated as part of the Proposed Action, serve to proactively "mitigate" adverse environmental effects. Prior to the conduct of any Proposed Action component, the GAARNG would obtain all required federal, state, and local permits and approvals necessary to comply with applicable laws. The GAARNG also would meet all of the Army's installation-specific construction permitting and procedure requirements associated with new construction projects at Fort Stewart.

Alternatives Considered

As part of early project planning, the GAARNG leadership identified 10 screening criteria to guide the initial alternatives review, evaluation, and selection process for the proposed MATES. The GAARNG developed these criteria based on the physical, operational, and location requirements of the Proposed Action. These criteria included: ability to meet mission requirements; land availability and size; overall project cost; land use compatibility; access; availability of utilities; and geotechnical, security, and environmental considerations. Early in the process, the GAARNG determined that the MATES must be located at Fort Stewart, Georgia (one of the GAARNG's primary training sites) on a portion of the existing 715 acres of Fort Stewart currently licensed to the GAARNG. Development of the proposed MATES within Fort Stewart would minimize construction costs, maximize use of existing land and facilities, minimize the need for additional commuting (or relocation) by full-time personnel, and provide a facility accessible to multiple units. Satisfaction of the GAARNG's screening criteria would provide reasonable alternative(s) best suited to meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action, while minimizing overall project costs.

The GAARNG screened potential alternatives using and applying these screening criteria. As part of this screening process, the GAARNG considered the following alternatives:

- **Alternative #1 - Preferred Action Alternative** - Construct, operate, and maintain the proposed improved MATES on the approximately 40-acre site of the existing MATES, located at 10531 Troupe Avenue within Fort Stewart in Liberty County, Georgia.
- **Alternative #2 - Other Layout Alternative** - Construct, operate, and maintain the proposed improved MATES on the approximately 40-acre site of the existing MATES, located at 10531 Troupe Avenue within Fort Stewart in Liberty County, Georgia in an alternative configuration to the Preferred Action Alternative.

- **Alternative #3 – Construct the MATES on Another GAARNG Parcel at Fort Stewart** – Construct, operate, and maintain the proposed MATES on another portion of the 715-acre, GAARNG-licensed property at Fort Stewart.
- **Alternative #4 – Construct the MATES at Another GAARNG Site Not at Fort Stewart** – Construct, operate, and maintain the proposed MATES at either the GAARNG's Lorenzo Benn Youth Development Center site or the GAARNG's Oglethorpe site near Atlanta, Georgia.
- **Alternative #5 - Renovate Existing Facilities** - Renovate the existing MATES at Fort Stewart to accommodate this requirement.
- **Alternative #6 - Acquire a New Site** - Acquire a completely new site in Georgia and construct, operate, and maintain the proposed MATES on this new site.
- **Alternative #7 - No Action Alternative** - Do not construct, operate, and maintain the proposed MATES and continue operations as currently conducted, using inadequate facilities. While the No Action Alternative would not meet the purpose of or need for the Proposed Action, it was analyzed within the EA to provide a comparative baseline as required under CEQ Regulations (40 CFR Part 1502.14).

Through this screening process, the GAARNG determined that only the Preferred Action Alternative was reasonable. This is the only alternative that meets the GAARNG's screening criteria, as well as achieves the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action. The EA provided an in-depth analysis of the Preferred Action Alternative and the No Action Alternative.

2. Environmental Analysis

Based on the analysis presented in the EA, the GAARNG determined that the Proposed Action (i.e., Preferred Action Alternative) would not have significant direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on the physical, biological, cultural, or human environments. The environmental BMPs specified in the EA as part of the Proposed Action would be implemented to further reduce environmental effects and to maintain these effects at acceptable levels.

Under the No Action Alternative, the improved MATES would not be constructed. Operations at the existing MATES would continue as under current conditions. This alternative would not enable the GAARNG to provide a modern, ARNG-standard MATES, and would continue to result in the GAARNG's use of inadequate, out-dated equipment maintenance facilities. This would continue to present the GAARNG with readiness challenges, and would not allow the GAARNG to attain their required readiness posture. Although the identified minor short-term (construction-related) adverse effects of the Proposed Action would not occur under the No Action Alternative, the long-term positive effects of the Preferred Action Alternative to air quality, utilities, and hazardous material and waste handling also would not occur.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures were identified by the EA's analysis and none are required. The GAARNG will implement the environmental BMPs listed in **Table 2** of the EA as part of the Proposed Action. Implementation of these BMPs will ensure that effects are maintained at acceptable, less-than-significant levels.

3. Regulations

The Preferred Action Alternative will not violate the NEPA, the CEQ Regulations, 32 CFR Part 651, or other federal, state, or local environmental regulations.

4. Commitment to Implementation

The National Guard Bureau (NGB) and the GAARNG affirm their commitment to implement this EA in accordance with the NEPA. Implementation is dependent on funding. The GAARNG and the NGB will ensure that adequate funds are requested in future years' budgets to achieve the goals and objectives set forth in this EA, and to fund the commitments described above.

The GAARNG will continue to work closely with the DA at Fort Stewart throughout the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed facility, and will meet all of the DA's installation-specific construction permitting and procedure requirements associated with new construction projects at Fort Stewart.

5. Public Review and Comment

The Final EA and Draft FNSI were made available for public review and comment for 30 days following publication of a Notice of Availability (NOA) in the *Coastal Courier* and *The Frontline*. This review period began on 22 January 2012 and ended on 21 February 2012. As announced in the NOA, these documents were available for public review at the Liberty County library and the Fort Stewart library. No comments were received.

For further information contact the GAARNG Environmental Office (Ms. Felicia Nichols, Environmental Program Manager) at (678) 569-6755 or felicia.nichols@us.army.mil.

6. Finding of No Significant Impact

After careful review of the Final EA, I have concluded that implementation the Preferred Action Alternative would not generate significant controversy or have a significant impact on the quality of the human or natural environment. This analysis fulfills the requirements of the NEPA and the CEQ Regulations. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will not be prepared and the National Guard Bureau is issuing this Finding of No Significant Impact.

8 Mar 12

Date

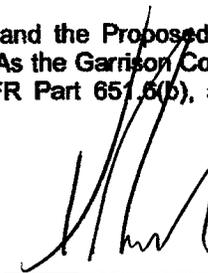


MICHAEL J. BENNETT
Colonel, US Army
Chief, Environmental Programs Division

The GAARNG is a licensee of land at Fort Stewart, and the Proposed Action would occur on land licensed by the GAARNG from the DA at Fort Stewart. As the Garrison Commander, I am the approving official for the DA at Fort Stewart pursuant to 32 CFR Part 651.6(b), and I concur with the above statements and findings.

26 MAR 12

Date



KEVIN W. MILTON
Colonel, US Army
Commanding