RECORD OF DECISION

Final Environmental Impact Statement for 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment Transformation and Installation Mission Support, Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) and Fort Polk, Louisiana, and Long-Term Military Training Use of Kisatchie National Forest Lands

1.0 Introduction

The Department of the Army, and the US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service and US Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), have prepared the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to address proposed actions affecting the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) and Fort Polk, Louisiana; portions of the Kisatchie National Forest in west-central Louisiana; and England Industrial Airpark at Alexandria, Louisiana. The Department of the Army is the lead agency for the proposed actions and preparation of the EIS, and the Forest Service and FAA are cooperating agencies. Each agency will issue a separate Record of Decision (ROD) in accordance with its procedures. This ROD applies only to the proposed action and decisions under the authority and jurisdiction of the Army.

In our respective roles as Director, U.S. Army Installation Management Agency, Southwest Region Office, and Deputy Chief of Staff, G-3/5/7, U.S. Army Forces Command, we have reviewed the above-captioned EIS. The EIS identifies all relevant environmental and socioeconomic impacts of the proposed action and alternatives on the biological, physical, and cultural environment. The EIS rigorously evaluates both the context and intensity of such impacts and discloses those that are likely to be significant; and fairly discloses those impacts in a manner that is understandable to us, public agencies, and interested members of the public. This ROD meets the requirements of Council on Environmental Quality and Army regulations[1] implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).[2] Being fully informed as to the environmental consequences and weighing those consequences with other relevant factors, we have decided to proceed with the proposed action.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Army Transformation

In October-1999, the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff of the Army articulated a vision about people, readiness, and transformation of the Army to meet the demands of the 21st century. The requirement for change within the Army is based on the emerging security challenges of the 21st century. Chief among these challenges is the need to be able to respond more rapidly to different types of operations requiring military action. The strategic significance of land forces continues to lie not only in their ability to fight and win the Nation's wars, but also in their providing options to shape the global setting to the future benefit of the United States and its allies. The Army must change to become more strategically responsive and dominant at every point on the spectrum of operations.

In February 2002, the Army published its *Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Army Transformation*, and on April 11, 2002, issued its ROD. The Army's Programmatic EIS evaluated the Army Transformation Program, and the ROD approved the near-term role of the 2d Armored Cavalry

[1] Council on Environmental Quality, *Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act*, 40 CFR 1500 – 1508 and U.S. Army, *Environmental Analysis of Army Actions*, 32 CFR 651, respectively.

[2] 42 U.S.C. 4321 – 4347 (Pub. L. 91 – 190, January 1, 1970).

Regiment in transformation of the Army toward its Future Force. The Final EIS, upon which this ROD is based, relies on and responds to the purpose and need set forth in the Army's Programmatic EIS. The decision made in this ROD is also responsive to the Army's direction to transform documented in the ROD for the Army's Programmatic EIS.

1.1.2 The JRTC and Fort Polk

The JRTC and Fort Polk, home to the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment and other war fighting units, is located in Vernon, Natchitoches, and Sabine Parishes in west-central Louisiana. Fort Polk consists of 107,024 acres owned in fee by the Army. The Army uses 98,125 acres of the Kisatchie National Forest through a Special Use Permit issued by the U.S. Forest Service. The JRTC is one of four Combat Training Centers (CTCs) in the world. It performs the primary mission of supporting advanced-level joint training for Army, Air Force, Army National Guard, Navy, and Marine units under conditions that simulate low- and mid-intensity conflicts. In addition, the JRTC and Fort Polk serves as a power projection platform from which trained and ready units deploy to contingency missions around the world.

2.0 Proposed Action and Alternatives

2.1 Proposed Action

The Army's proposed action evaluated in the EIS consists of three major aspects. These aspects are summarized below and are described in greater detail on pages 2-28 and 2-29 of the Final EIS.

- ***Transformation.*** The first aspect concerns the proposal to transform the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment to a medium-weight combat force equipped with Stryker Interim Armored Vehicles (IAVs). Upon conversion, the unit will be known as the 2d Cavalry Regiment and will serve as a key component of the bridge between the Army's Current Force and the Future Force. The conversion of the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment primarily involves force structure (the new unit will have 110 more personnel), addition of 238 Stryker IAVs and 48 mobile gun systems, reduction of 155 High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles, and reduction of 273 other medium and heavy tactical trucks.[3]

  The 2d Cavalry Regiment will reflect changes in Army doctrine to meet the challenges of the 21st century. To meet emerging threats, the 2d Cavalry Regiment will be optimally designed for reconnaissance operations and will be prepared for the full spectrum of operations and actions in multidimensional settings. The 2d Cavalry Regiment will employ an intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems approach involving human collectors and multifunctional sensor suites, manned and unmanned sensor platforms, ground- and air-based systems, and connectivity with Joint systems in a battlespace measuring 90 kilometers by 60 kilometers. The 2d Cavalry Regiment will be highly mobile, yet have sufficient combat capability to conduct the full range of cavalry missions. Initial Operational Capability is planned to occur by May 2006.

- ***Installation Mission Support.*** The second aspect of the Army's proposed action is to provide installation mission support to JRTC and Fort Polk home-stationed and rotational units to meet their training needs for current and future missions. This support involves the modernization and improvement of maneuver areas and ranges, construction of numerous facilities, and other actions at

[3] The numbers of personnel, vehicles and equipment to be assigned to the 2d Cavalry Regiment may vary slightly as the Army makes additional refinements to doctrine. Future introductions of new weapons systems, vehicles and equipment could further alter the total number of personnel, vehicles and equipment in the regiment. However, such refinements are not expected to result in sizable differences in the number of personnel, vehicles and equipment.

the JRTC and Fort Polk, portions of adjacent Forest Service lands, and England Industrial Airpark in nearby Alexandria, Louisiana.

The EIS considered 20 specific projects: Mission Support Training Facility, South Fort Polk; Aviation Maintenance Hangar, Polk Army Airfield and Intensive Use Area (IUA); Sniper Range, IUA; Digitize and Upgrade Existing Multipurpose Range Complex, Main Post; Intensive Use Area Road Construction and Improvements; Limited Use Area (LUA) Stream Crossings and Approaches; JRTC Observer/Controller Operations Facilities, North Fort Polk; JRTC Observer/ Controller Vehicle Maintenance Facility, North Fort Polk; After Action Review Theater, North Fort Polk; Forward Operating Base, North Fort Polk; Deployment Storage Facility, South Fort Polk; Arms Storage Facilities, South Fort Polk; Alert Holding Area, South Fort Polk; Hotpads, England Industrial Airpark; Pallet Processing Facility, South Fort Polk; Ammunition Supply Point Expansion, South Fort Polk; Arrival/Departure Airfield Control Group Facility, England Industrial Airpark; North Ramp Upgrade, England Industrial Airpark; Battalion Headquarters/Materials Management Center, South Fort Polk; and Company Headquarters Buildings, South Fort Polk.

Additional installation mission support actions pertain to provision of locations for specialized training. The JRTC and Fort Polk currently operates three helicopter training areas for tactical terrain flight training (flying characterized as low-level, contour, or nap-of-the-earth). To enhance pilots' skills, the JRTC and Fort Polk will enlarge one of the existing helicopter training areas and establish a fourth one. Also, training for home-stationed and rotational units will continue to occur principally on Army and Forest Service lands. However, training and operational events will continue to occur at several off-post sites. These include Camp Beauregard (near Alexandria), England Industrial Airpark (Alexandria), Chennault Industrial Airpark (east of Lake Charles), Port of Beaumont, and Port of Lake Charles, as well as additional off-post locations for short-term training events to enhance the skills development of home-stationed and rotational units.

- ***Long-Term Use of Kisatchie National Forest.*** The final aspect of the Army's proposed action is to continue its long-term collaborative use and joint stewardship of portions of the Kisatchie National Forest and to renew its Special Use Permit (SUP) agreement with the U.S. Forest Service for military training use of those lands to fulfill real property needs for maneuver ranges and gunnery training.[4]

The purpose of the Army's proposed action is to transform forces; to provide realistic, advanced field training, modernized weapons training, and performance evaluation opportunities for Stryker Brigade Combat Teams (SBCTs) and other Army brigades; and to provide sustainable training lands and supporting facilities for forces training at the JRTC and Fort Polk. The need for the proposed action is to ensure that the JRTC and Fort Polk has the capabilities necessary to support military training, readiness, and national defense requirements, as well as to sustain training lands, facilities, and natural resources for continued use and benefit.

[4] The Kisatchie National Forest encompasses approximately 604,000 acres of national forest land in northwest and west-central Louisiana. The JRTC and Fort Polk main post consists of 107,024 acres that are divided between Army fee-owned land on the northern portion (66,998 acres) and Forest Service fee-owned land on the southern portion (40,026 acres). The national forest land comprising the southern portion of the main post is referred to as the Intensive Use Area (IUA). An area contiguous to and south of the main post is used for less intensive military training and is known as the Limited Use Area (LUA). The LUA consists of 44,799 acres, fee-owned and managed by the Forest Service. Peason Ridge is a non-contiguous training area north of the main post; the Army owns 33,011 acres and the Forest Service owns 480 acres. North of Peason Ridge is an area owned by the Forest Service and referred to as the Special Limited Use Area (SLUA) consisting of 12,820 acres and made available for limited training by the JRTC and Fort Polk.

2.2 Alternatives

2.2.1 No Action

The EIS evaluated in detail the proposed action and, as required by regulations issued by the Council on Environmental Quality, a no action alternative. Under the no action alternative, the JRTC and Fort Polk would not undertake the proposed action to convert the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment to an SBCT unit. The 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment would continue to train and operate, as at present, with the mission to conduct reconnaissance and security operations for an airborne corps. Also, the JRTC and Fort Polk would not undertake specified proposed actions to support the missions of home-stationed and rotational units. Construction projects affecting maneuver areas and ranges and the JRTC and Fort Polk's inventory of facilities, including those on National Forest lands and at England Industrial Airpark, would not proceed. Following the initial SBCT rotation exercises to validate organizational and operational concepts, other rotations of SBCT units could occur following an appropriate evaluation of environmental effects as required by NEPA. The Forest Service proposal to thin overstocked pine stands would not be carried out and to classify inactive red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) clusters as abandoned would not be carried out as proposed. To maintain the status quo—continuation of the 2d ACR as part of the Current Force and operation of the JRTC and Fort Polk as a CTC—the Army would seek to continue its use of National Forest lands through renewal of the existing SUP. No changes to current JRTC and Fort Polk operations and facilities on National Forest lands, or at other sites periodically used during training exercises, or changes to existing permit terms and conditions would be made. The no action alternative is described in more detail on pages 2-2 to 2-27 of the Final EIS.

2.2.2 Alternatives Considered But Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

In addition to the proposed action and no action alternative, the EIS considered six alternatives associated with the three principal aspects of the proposed action. These alternatives involved conversion of the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment elsewhere; conversion of an Army brigade-sized unit other than the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment; transformation without installation mission support actions; alternative locations for facilities construction projects; designation of different uses of the LUA and modifications to use schedules; and use of private timberlands for training.

To warrant detailed evaluation, an alternative must be reasonable; that is, it must be feasible, ripe for decisionmaking, affordable, capable of implementation, and able to satisfy the purpose of and need for the proposed action. As set forth in the EIS, none of the foregoing six alternatives were found reasonable because they would not meet one or more of these criteria. Accordingly, they were not examined in detail in the EIS, although alternative site layouts for the proposed installation mission support projects were considered during screening level analyses and project design phases. Alternatives considered but dropped from detailed analysis, and the reasons for their elimination, are described more fully on pages 2-94 to 2-126 of the Final EIS.

3.0 Public Involvement

The Army, Forest Service and FAA provided opportunities for public involvement at numerous points in EIS process, in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality regulations and agency procedures. On March 8, 2002, the Army and Forest Service published in the *Federal Register* a Notice of Intent to prepare the EIS, and formal notices were published in 10 newspapers of general circulation throughout the State of Louisiana. Notices of the initiation of the EIS process, soliciting input and comment, were also provided to 427 organizations and persons who had taken an active interest in environmental affairs at the JRTC and Fort Polk and the Kisatchie National Forest in the past. In addition, the Army and Forest Service held scoping meetings at three locations to provide information on the proposed action and solicit

input on issues, concerns and opportunities to be considered through the NEPA process. The Army and Forest Service hosted meetings on March 25, 2002, in Baton Rouge; on March 26, 2002, in Leesville; and on March 28, 2002, in Bossier City. The FAA held a fourth meeting on June 11, 2002 in Alexandria, at which the Army and the Forest Service participated, to receive input on proposed Army actions at England Industrial Airpark.

Input received during the scoping process from federally recognized tribes, Federal and State agencies, stakeholder groups, and members of the general public was used to develop the primary issues of concern to be considered in the EIS. Appendix D of the Final EIS contains the detailed list of issues and sub-issues derived from public scoping; copies of the comment letters and forms received on the proposed action and on the Draft EIS; and the Army, Forest Service and FAA responses to those comments. The primary issues of concern were as follows:

- ***Air Quality.*** Potential for increased emissions, including emissions of criteria and hazardous air pollutants, and adverse effects on local or regional ambient air quality as a result of the proposed action.

- ***Cultural Resources.*** Potential for adverse effects on cultural, archeological, and historic resources under the proposed action.

- ***Biological/Ecological Considerations.*** Potential for adverse effects on wildlife, aquatic life, plants, and their associated habitats under the proposed action.

- ***Proposed, Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive and Conservation (PETSC) Species.*** Potential effects on PETSC species and their habitats resulting from the proposed action.

- ***Environmental Justice.*** Potential for implementation of the proposed action to disproportionately affect low-income or minority populations, particularly with respect to air quality, noise, and water quality.

- ***Environmental Stewardship.*** Effects of ongoing Environmental Stewardship programs and future initiatives on environmental and natural resources.

- ***Land Use.*** Potential changes in land use patterns under the proposed action, compatibility with other land uses, and the ability of Army and National Forest lands to sustain more intensive training use.

- ***Noise.*** Potential for increased noise and associated effects on noise sensitive receptors resulting from the proposed action.

- ***Soils and Erosion.*** Potential adverse effects of the proposed action on soils, including soil loss and erosion, compaction, rutting, mechanical disturbance, and loss of soil fertility.

- ***Waste Management and Pollution Prevention.*** Potential effects of the proposed action on generation and management of wastes and hazardous materials, and current and future measures to promote sustainability through waste minimization, pollution prevention, and institutional controls.

- ***Transportation and Infrastructure.*** Potential effects of the proposed action on existing or future roadways and infrastructure and the associated levels of service.

- ***Water Resources.*** Potential effects of the proposed action on surface and groundwater resources, including streams, wetlands, floodplains, and aquifers.

- ***Health and Safety.*** Potential for adverse effects on public health and safety resulting from operation of the new Stryker vehicles and equipment and expanded and/or more intensive training activities on non-Department of Defense lands.

- ***Socioeconomic Conditions.*** Potential for effects, both beneficial and adverse, on socioeconomic conditions within the Region of Influence for the proposed action.

- ***Visual Quality.*** Potential effects of the proposed action on the visual quality of areas viewed by the general public or military family members.

The Draft EIS was released for public review and comment on August 1, 2003. The comment period closed on September 15, 2003. During the 45-day public comment period, three public meetings were held around the state to answer questions regarding the draft document and to receive public comment. Public meetings on the Draft EIS occurred on August 19, 2003, in Leesville; on August 25, 2003, in Baton Rouge; and on August 26, 2003, in Alexandria.

The public meetings and availability of the Draft EIS was publicized in newspapers of general circulation around the state and on public service announcements broadcast by radio stations in local markets. Copies of the Draft EIS were also placed in libraries around the state for public review. In addition, a website was established to facilitate public involvement in the NEPA process. The Draft EIS and information on the proposed action and NEPA process was published on the website at http://notes.tetratech-ffx.com/PolkEIS.nsf for public review throughout the 45-day comment period.

4.0 Environmental Consequences

The EIS considered potential direct, indirect and cumulative environmental effects on numerous resource areas and conditions within the region of influence. Resource areas analyzed in the EIS included land cover/land use/special permits, geology and soils, water resources (toxics, sedimentation/hydrology, wetlands, and groundwater), biological resources (vegetation/forestry; aquatic life and wildlife; proposed, endangered, threatened, sensitive, and conservation species; and management indicator species), cultural resources, noise levels, air quality, visual quality, social conditions, economic conditions, transportation and infrastructure, and hazardous and toxic materials/wastes.

The environmental consequences under the no action alternative, the proposed action, and the cumulative effects of the proposed action, when combined with effects resulting from past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions, are summarized for each resource area in Table 5-1 of the Final EIS. Implementation of either the no action alternative or the proposed action would result in some degree of adverse effects on most resource areas except regional economic conditions, for which long-term minor beneficial effects are predicted. Long-term minor to significant beneficial effects to natural resources are also projected to result from implementation of certain aspects of the proposed action, including Army environmental stewardship initiatives and Forest Service thinning of upland pine stands in the IUA for RCW habitat improvement. The EIS predicted that significant long- and short-term adverse effects to soils, surface waters, and wetlands would occur under the proposed action, unless enhanced environmental stewardship, best management practices and mitigation measures were implemented.

Significant adverse environmental effects under the proposed action would occur primarily as a result of increased soil erosion, sedimentation, and direct or indirect loss or degradation of on-site wetlands due to

increased training intensity associated with fielding of the Stryker vehicle, 2d Cavalry Regiment exercises and expanded JRTC rotational exercises. Proposed construction activities and associated changes in vegetative cover would also contribute to significant adverse effects to soils, surface waters and wetlands. Acting as joint stewards of the lands and resources entrusted to their management, the Army and Forest Service have collaborated to develop a range of mitigation and monitoring measures designed to avoid, minimize, rectify, or reduce long-term adverse effects associated with the proposed action. Although some adverse effects would be unavoidable, full and ongoing implementation of proposed mitigation measures, monitoring and adaptive management is predicted to reduce adverse environmental effects under the proposed action to minor or moderate levels.

5.0 Decision

On behalf of the Army, we have decided to proceed with the proposed action. Consistent with this decision and the proposed actions and analyses described in the EIS, the Army shall:

- Undertake transformation of the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment at the JRTC and Fort Polk, to include all actions and activities necessary to bring it to Initial Operating Capability in May 2006, as described in the EIS. The conversion of the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment to the 2d Cavalry Regiment will include the following changes in force structure, vehicles and equipment: an increase of approximately 110 personnel; addition of approximately 238 Stryker IAVs and 48 mobile gun systems; and reduction of approximately 155 High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles and 273 other medium and heavy tactical trucks;

- Implement the proposed projects and activities described in the EIS to further support existing and future installation mission requirements for JRTC and Fort Polk home-stationed and rotational units, including modernization and improvement of maneuver areas and ranges, construction of facilities, and other actions on Army lands, portions of adjacent Kisatchie National Forest lands, and England Industrial Airpark in nearby Alexandria, Louisiana. Facilities construction on the Kisatchie National Forest and at England Industrial Airpark will proceed in accordance with Forest Service and FAA decisions, as described in Section 6 below; and

- Continue long-term use of portions of the Kisatchie National Forest (IUA, LUA, and Special Limited Use Area (SLUA)) for training and maneuver purposes. JRTC and Fort Polk use of Forest Service lands will be subject to the terms and conditions of a SUP and mutually agreed-upon operating plan to facilitate use of each land area over a 20-year period, as described in the Forest Service ROD (see Section 6.0 below). The operating plan will identify types of authorized activities by area, operating conditions, and management requirements, including mitigation and monitoring actions.

5.1 Activity Groups

The three main parts of the Army's proposed action—transformation of the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment, installation mission support, and long-term continued use of portions of the Kisatchie National Forest—are broad statements of steps the JRTC and Fort Polk must take to meet its purpose of and need for action. Because these top tier descriptions of the proposed action are so broad, some actions and activities that would be involved in implementing the proposed action might not be readily apparent. Accordingly, and for consistency with the Army's *Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Army Transformation*, the EIS categorized into six "activity groups" the principal kinds of actions and activities that would occur in transforming the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment, supporting the installation mission, or using Forest Service lands for training. The environmental effects associated with the six activity groups were evaluated in detail in the EIS. The activity groups and associated decisions are described below:

- ***Systems Fielding***. This activity group will involve the delivery of new weapon systems, vehicles and equipment necessary to achieve the characteristics of the Future Force. As an activity group, systems fielding will end upon completion of new equipment training. We have decided to proceed with fielding of three systems at the JRTC and Fort Polk. Foremost among the systems is the Stryker Family of Vehicles (FoV) that will be used by the 2d Cavalry Regiment and other transformed units participating in JRTC rotational exercises. The Stryker is an eight-wheeled, 20-ton combat vehicle that can be transported on the C-130 aircraft. The Stryker has two primary variants: the Infantry Carrier Vehicle (ICV) and the Mobile Gun System (MGS). The Stryker ICV is a troop transport vehicle capable of carrying nine infantry soldiers and their equipment, with a crew of two. The Stryker ICV and its configurations will be fielded for the 2d Cavalry Regiment beginning in 2005. The MGS is based on the ICV but is modified to incorporate a 105 mm turreted gun and autoloader system and a crew of three; fielding of the MGS for the 2d Cavalry Regiment is scheduled to begin in 2008.

  This decision also includes fielding of the RQ-7A Shadow Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (TUAV) to the 2d Cavalry Regiment. The Shadow TUAV is an unmanned aircraft designed for night reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition capability. The Shadow TUAV may also be used by visiting rotational units that have been transformed to achieve capabilities of the Future Force. Its use at the JRTC and Fort Polk will be limited to restricted airspace.

  The RAH-66 Comanche helicopter had been slated for fielding at the JRTC and Fort Polk to replace the Kiowa and Apache helicopters; however, the Army recently announced its decision to cancel development and production of the Comanche. Therefore, fielding of the Comanche at the JRTC and Fort Polk will not proceed.

  As the Army progresses toward the Future Force, additional vehicles, weapons systems, and equipment may be fielded at the JRTC and Fort Polk. An example is the Prophet electronic warfare and signals intelligence system for use by division and armored cavalry commanders. As proposals for fielding of new systems at JRTC and Fort Polk are considered, separate environmental impact analyses will be performed, as appropriate.

- ***Construction***. This activity group includes construction, modernization and revitalization of buildings, live-fire ranges and other training facilities, and infrastructure. It also includes demolition of buildings and facilities. We have decided to proceed with construction of 19 of the 20 projects described in the EIS to support existing and future mission requirements. These projects will be constructed at various locations across Army lands at the JRTC and Fort Polk, Forest Service IUA and LUA lands, and at England Industrial Airpark at Alexandria, Louisiana (see Figures 2-2 through 2-5 in the Final EIS for specific locations). The projects, their general locations and their planned construction dates are listed below:

  Mission Support Training Facility (South Fort Polk, 2004). This project will include construction of an 85,000 square foot facility dedicated to support sophisticated, realistic battle simulation training required by the 2d Cavalry Regiment and the Army's digitized combat training platform. It will also include demolition of buildings to make room for the new facility and realignment of adjacent intersections and roadways. A Section 404 Clean Water Act permit will be obtained for impacts to wetlands along the new alignment of Mississippi Avenue required for the facility.

  Aviation Maintenance Hangar (Polk Army Airfield and IUA, 2004). This project will provide hangar space for climate-sensitive indoor maintenance on 2d Cavalry Regiment aircraft. It will also include construction of an unmanned aerial vehicle hangar adjacent to Self Airfield at the North Fort Polk cantonment area. A Section 404 Clean Water Act permit will be obtained for impacts to wetlands and

channelization of approximately 1500 feet of Bundick's Creek associated with construction of the aviation hangar. The Forest Service approved construction of portions of this facility on Kisatchie National Forest lands, as described in its ROD (see Section 6.0 below).

Sniper Range (IUA, 2009). This project will provide a suitable sniper training and testing facility that meets the requirements of Army sniper qualification. It will be located within the footprint of the existing Range 9 to minimize removal of timber. A Section 404 Clean Water Act permit may be required. The Forest Service approved construction of the sniper range on Kisatchie National Forest lands, as described in its ROD (see Section 6.0 below).

Intensive Use Area Road Construction and Improvements (IUA, Long Range). This project will include a combination of improvements to existing primitive roads and trails and construction of new roads and stream crossings in the IUA. Approximately 13.3 miles of roads will be improved or constructed to provide for better east-west mobility and more realistic, varied training scenarios. JRTC and Fort Polk has obtained a Section 404 Clean Water Act permit for the project; however, an amendment to the permit will be sought for design improvements to selected stream crossings to lessen effects to aquatic life and stream hydrology. The Forest Service approved improvement and construction of the roads on Kisatchie National Forest lands, as described in its ROD (see Section 6.0 below).

Limited Use Area Stream Crossings and Approaches (LUA, Long Range). This project will involve construction of 20 stream crossing structures in the LUA. The structures will vary based on site-specific conditions. Hardened bottoms will be installed in shallow, first-order streams below grade to avoid the erosive force of stream flow. Appropriately sized box culverts will be installed on most second-order streams. Bridge spans will be installed at three crossings on streams designated under the Louisiana Natural and Scenic River Program. A Section 404 Clean Water Act permit will be obtained for each crossing, and a Scenic River permit will be obtained for three of the crossings. The Forest Service approved construction of the stream crossings on Kisatchie National Forest lands, as described in its ROD (see Section 6.0 below).

JRTC Observer/Controller Operations Facilities (North Fort Polk, Long Range). This facility will provide a co-located Observer/Controller task force, augmentee support, and mission support headquarters complex to accommodate the JRTC Operations Group and a third Observer/Controller task force. It will also include demolition of buildings in the 1650, 1651, 1652, 7000 and 7100 blocks. A Section 404 Clean Water Act permit may be required.

JRTC Observer/Controller Vehicle Maintenance Facility (North Fort Polk, Long Range). This project will provide consolidated maintenance, administrative, and hardstand facilities for a large battalion unit level motor pool to accommodate the current JRTC Operations Group and a third Observer/Controller task force. A Section 404 Clean Water Act permit may be required.

After Action Review Theater (North Fort Polk, Long Range). This project will include a 21,000 square foot facility at which JRTC rotational participants can learn from the events and activities conducted during their training.

Forward Operating Base (North Fort Polk, Long Range). This project will allow construction of facilities to accurately replicate the Forward Operating Base training required to support the integration of Special Forces with other joint readiness training activities.

Deployment Storage Facility (South Fort Polk, 2006). This project will involve construction of two buildings totaling approximately 77,200 square feet to improve climate-controlled storage capability

for deployment equipment for the 2d Cavalry Regiment. A Section 404 Clean Water Act permit may be required.

Arms Storage Facilities (South Fort Polk, 2004). This project will include construction of six new standard-design facilities and rehabilitation of two existing arms storage buildings to provide centralized weapons storage for the 2d Cavalry Regiment to meet 96-hour deployment criterion.

Alert Holding Area (South Fort Polk, 2004). This project will replace an obsolete facility to meet mobilization requirements for the 2d Cavalry Regiment and other units stationed at the JRTC and Fort Polk. A Section 404 Clean Water Act permit will be obtained for this project.

Pallet Processing Facility (South Fort Polk, 2005). This facility will provide the only installation level pallet-processing facility for Fort Polk and visiting JRTC units. It is needed for timely, efficient and safe loading of equipment.

Ammunition Supply Point Expansion (South Fort Polk, 2005). This project will expand the existing ammunition supply point by approximately 25 percent to meet the ammunition storage requirements for deployment of two SBCTs, or for support of JRTC rotational units. A Section 404 Clean Water Act permit may be required.

Battalion Headquarters/Materials Management Center (South Fort Polk, 2005). This project will provide each squadron of the 2d Cavalry Regiment and the supporting Materials Management Centers with their own headquarters building to accommodate increased operational support requirements.

Company Headquarters Buildings (South Fort Polk, 2007). This project will create new company headquarters buildings through a combination of renovation of old buildings and new construction. It will support the 2d Cavalry Regiment's 96-hour deployment requirements by providing adequate equipment storage space for units.

Hotpads (England Industrial Airpark, 2005). This project will include construction of three hazardous cargo hotpads and keel section reconstruction for runway 18/36. The project will provide for safe loading and unloading of ammunition and munitions for U.S. Air Force aircraft associated with deployments and deployment training for the 2d Cavalry Regiment. A Section 404 Clean Water Act permit may be required. Construction of this project may require amendment by the FAA of the Alexandria International Airport Layout Plan, as described below (see Section 6.0).

Arrival/Departure Airfield Control Group (ADACG) Facility (England Industrial Airpark, 2005). This project will provide a dedicated passenger processing facility in support of the 2d Cavalry Regiment and other units deploying to and from the JRTC and Fort Polk and will support the 96-hour mobilization criterion for the 2d Cavalry Regiment. The project will be constructed on land leased from the England Economic and Industrial Development District. Construction of this project may require amendment by the FAA of the Alexandria International Airport Layout Plan, as described below (see Section 6.0).

North Ramp Upgrade (England Industrial Airpark, 2005). This project will upgrade and expand the existing north ramp deployment apron situated on leased land at the JRTC and Fort Polk's Intermediate Staging Base at the airpark. It will provide for accommodation of U.S. Air Force C-5 and C-17 aircraft supporting operational and training deployments of the 2d Cavalry Regiment and other units visiting or deploying through the JRTC and Fort Polk. Construction of this project may require amendment by the FAA of the Alexandria International Airport Layout Plan, as described below (see Section 6.0).

The Final EIS included consideration of the JRTC and Fort Polk's proposal to digitize and upgrade its Multipurpose Range Complex. Inclusion of the proposal in the EIS ensured full consideration of potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts associated with activities at Fort Polk. Specific requirements for the Multipurpose Range Complex, however, continue to evolve in areas such as optimal layout for roads and trails, firing points, and targets, and the magnitude of changes needed to accommodate future training doctrine. In light of these circumstances, the decision whether to proceed with the proposal to digitize and upgrade the Multipurpose Range Complex is deferred. Additional environmental impacts analysis will be conducted on the proposal regarding the Multipurpose Range Complex in order to ensure full understanding of potential impacts. That future study may be tiered from the Final EIS.

- ***Land Transactions***. This activity group involves JRTC and Fort Polk's use of lands through permit, lease, or other agreement. We have decided to implement three specific transactions involving lands: a permit agreement with the Forest Service for long-term use of portions of the Kisatchie National Forest for military training; leasing of land and facilities at England Industrial Airpark for construction of three facilities (described under the Construction activity group heading above); and establishment of low-level flight areas with the potential for acquisition of landing rights.

  JRTC and Fort Polk will enter into a permit agreement with the Forest Service for continued use of the IUA, LUA and SLUA for a 20-year term. The permit will include a mutually agreed-upon operating plan to facilitate use of each land area, as described in the Forest Service ROD (see Section 6.0 below). The operating plan will identify types of authorized activities by area, operating conditions, and management requirements, including mitigation and monitoring actions.

  The JRTC and Fort Polk will enter into an agreement with the England Economic and Industrial Development District for long-term subleases of two additional, contiguous parcels to support construction of hotpads and reconstruction of the keel section of runway 18/36, construction of the ADACG facility, and upgrade and expansion of the existing north ramp.

  The JRTC and Fort Polk will also enlarge one existing and create one additional helicopter training area (HTA). The installation currently operates in three HTAs, shown in Figure 2-7 of the Final EIS. JRTC and Fort Polk will expand the existing HTA 2 and establish HTA 4. The existing HTA 2 is a rectangular area covering approximately 70 square miles beginning on the Sabine-Vernon Parish border and running south approximately between Highway 111 (to the west) and Vernon Lake and Anacoco Lake (to the east). The enlarged HTA 2 will lie over approximately 132 square miles, providing a longer area (north-south axis), with the Sabine River defining its western boundary. HTA 4 will be a somewhat pentagonal area over approximately 820 square miles south of the installation. The enlarged HTA 2 and HTA 4 occur within the boundaries of the Warrior Military Operating Area. Existing and new HTAs will be available on a 24-hour basis, although most operations will occur from 9:00 a.m. to midnight. The boundaries of the enlarged HTA 2 and HTA 4 are depicted in Figure 2-7 of the Final EIS.

  The JRTC and Fort Polk may seek landing rights from property owners for both the enlarged HTA 2 and HTA 4 through permits or licenses if involving privately owned land. Separate, site-specific environmental impact analyses will be prepared for future activities proposed on private land, as appropriate.

  The JRTC and Fort Polk will continue to use particular off-post sites as it has in the past, such as Camp Beauregard, Chennault Industrial Airpark, and the Port of Lake Charles, for specific training purposes. The Final EIS also described the potential for use of private, off-post sites. The JRTC and Fort Polk has not yet identified any particular new types of training events that would need to be

conducted on private lands or any specific locations for such training. Therefore, this aspect of the proposed action is not fully developed or ripe for decision. If the need for use of other off-post parcels arises, the JRTC and Fort Polk would conduct appropriate environmental impact analyses and would adhere to Army regulations governing acquisition of real property or interests therein. In obtaining use of private-lands, the Army would negotiate with willing land owners for real property agreements.

- ***Deployment.*** This activity group involves operational deployment of forces, as well as training that is specifically tied to the deployment of forces. This decision includes continuation of deployment and deployment training by air and sea by 2d Cavalry Regiment and other units assigned to JRTC and Fort Polk as described on pages 2-78 to 2-79 of the Final EIS. Deployment or training for deployment by air of Army units from the JRTC and Fort Polk will continue to occur primarily at England Industrial Airpark, at Alexandria, Louisiana, and deployments or training for deployment by sea will continue to occur primarily at the Port of Beaumont on the Sabine-Neches ship channel in Beaumont, Texas.

- ***Training.*** The training activity group involves achieving and maintaining readiness to perform assigned missions on both an individual and collective (unit) basis. We have determined that training exercises for the 2d Cavalry Regiment and other Army units assigned to the JRTC and Fort Polk, as well as brigade-level training rotations at the CTC, shall proceed as proposed in the EIS.

  The JRTC and Fort Polk will continue to host field training exercises for conventional, Current Force, light infantry brigades. In the past, light infantry brigades undergoing CTC training fielded two battalions and simulated the presence of a third battalion. Future light infantry brigade exercises will routinely involve three battalions in the field. Combat Training Center exercises will also include SBCTs. Although the number and composition of rotations will vary from year-to-year as the Army continues to transform, the JRTC and Fort Polk will typically host 10 rotations per year with the following unit compositions: three light infantry brigade rotations with two battalions in the field; three light infantry brigade rotations with three battalions in the field; two mission rehearsal/mission readiness exercises; one Ranger regiment (two battalions in the field); and SBCT rotation (three battalions in the field).

  Training of home-stationed units will continue on Army and Forest Service lands, in accordance with permit terms and conditions. Specific tasks associated with training of the 2d Cavalry Regiment will reflect new doctrine being developed by the Army for the Future Force. Training in garrison and in the field of the 1-509th Infantry Regiment and the Louisiana Army National Guard will be similar to past and present training. Training for the Warrior Brigade will also reflect past and present practices.

  Training in the employment of biological integrated detection systems (BIDS) will occur at currently approved locations.[5] Three additional on-post aerosol release points will be designated near the Shughart-Gordon Complex in Mill Creek Training Area 4, Six Mile Creek Training Area 1, Observation Post 2 in Peason Ridge Training Area 3, and the central portion of Peason Ridge Training Area 4. The installation's standard operating procedures for BIDS training will be modified to account for the new sites and conditions for use of the BIDS simulant at those specific sites.

[5] The JRTC and Fort Polk prepared an environmental assessment, *Aerial Release of Biological Simulant for Biological Integrated Detection System Training, Fort Polk, Louisian*a. A Finding of No Significant Impact was issued in August 2000 for release at three on-post locations: Geronimo Drop Zone on the Main Post, Tiger Drop Zone, and the Forward Landing Strip at Peason Ridge.

The overall training intensity, as measured by Maneuver Impact Miles (MIMs), will increase over current levels. MIMs are predicted to increase by approximately 56 percent over baseline conditions as a result of fielding of the Stryker vehicle, conversion of the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment, and expanded JRTC exercises.

- ***Environmental Stewardship.*** This activity group will entail achieving and maintaining readiness to perform assigned missions through sound environmental stewardship, including sustainable management of training ranges and maneuver areas to ensure their continued availability to support the mission of the JRTC and Fort Polk. The activity group includes actions by both the Army and the Forest Service. The JRTC and Fort Polk will continue to implement an array of environmental protection programs (described on pages 2-19 to 2-27 of the Final EIS) and will undertake additional environmental stewardship initiatives in the following areas: sustainability, adaptive management, expansion of maneuver damage inspection and reporting, adoption of the Army Training and Testing Area Carrying Capacity Model, and Environmental Management Systems. These initiatives are described on pages 2-85 to 2-87 of the Final EIS.

5.2 Mitigation and Monitoring Measures

Implementation of the proposed action is predicted to result in significant long- and short-term adverse effects on soils, surface water quality and wetlands, unless enhanced environmental stewardship, best management practices and mitigation measures are implemented. The Final EIS identifies and evaluates 15 proposed mitigation and monitoring measures designed to avoid, reduce, or compensate for such effects, along with potential adverse effects to other resource areas of concern. The mitigation and monitoring measures addresses five functional areas: training area maintenance; training land resource allocation (i.e., scheduling of training and non-training activities); facilities design and construction process oversight; soldier sustainable range awareness training; and environmental monitoring and resource protection.

Subject to the availability of funds, it is our decision to implement the mitigation and monitoring measures proposed in the Mitigation and Monitoring Plan included in Appendix V of the Final EIS. Consistent with the Mitigation and Monitoring Plan, and in order for the Army to be a responsible steward of the resources entrusted to it, the following 15 mitigation measures are adopted and will be carried out as described below:

Training Area Maintenance

- *Maneuver Damage Inspection and Monitoring*. The JRTC and Fort Polk's maneuver damage inspection and repair program will be expanded to include identification, repair, and monitoring for damages from routine home station training events and to track compliance with applicable environmental protocols and restrictions on Army and Forest Service lands. All training lands will be inspected for maneuver damage to soils, vegetation, streams and wetlands, and sensitive environmental resources following each training exercise, and corrective actions will be conducted to standard. A point of contact within each unit, such as the Environmental Compliance Officer, will be designated to ensure that repairs conducted by the unit are completed appropriately. In addition, a written agreement between the garrison commander and mission commanders will establish responsibilities and funding mechanisms for maneuver damage repairs. Corrective actions such as grading, seeding, and fertilizing to reestablish vegetative cover will be monitored and evaluated for effectiveness. This mitigation measure expands Fort Polk's existing maneuver damage inspection and repair program (discussed at Section 2.4.6.1 of the Final EIS) through inclusion of provisions for written agreements for funding of repairs. It is included in the mitigation and monitoring plan based on its linkage to other mitigation measures involving

temporary closure of sites, integration of maneuver damage inspection and repair into annual training calendar, scheduling of non-training activities during the Green Period, scheduling of non-training activities outside the Green Period, bog mapping and monitoring, and implementation and effectiveness monitoring.

- *Development and Implementation of Watershed Management Plans*. Watershed management plans will be updated or developed for all subwatersheds on the Fort Polk main post, IUA, LUA, and Peason Ridge where ground disturbing military activities are permitted. Management plans will be reviewed annually and updated on a rotating basis at 3-5 year intervals according to watershed conditions, priorities for land rehabilitation, and availability of funds. Watersheds in the northeastern portion of Peason Ridge containing tributaries to Kisatchie Bayou will receive first priority for update of management plans and land rehabilitation measures. Within other watersheds, sites requiring rehabilitation or maintenance will be prioritized by identification of severity of erosion problem areas.

- *Annual Maintenance of Sediment Basins*. All sediment basins will be inspected to insure they are functioning properly. Basin maintenance will be prioritized based on need. Excess sediment will be removed from basins, applied to upland areas and stabilized.

- *Temporary Closure of Sites*. Maneuver damage inspectors will identify sites on the installation needing protection to facilitate recovery from maneuver damage to soils, vegetation, streams and wetlands, and sensitive environmental resources. Sites will be marked as temporarily off-limits to digging/driving, and recovery will be monitored. These closed areas will be added on a quarterly or as needed basis to the "No Dig/No Drive" map used to help military trainers for planning purposes.

Training Land Resource Allocation

- *Integration of Maneuver Damage Inspection and Repair into Annual Training Calendar*. Sufficient time on the Annual Training Calendar will be scheduled for maneuver damage inspection and repair following all training events. Updated protocols for scheduling of maneuver damage inspections, repairs and other resource management needs on Army and Forest Service lands will be incorporated into JRTC and Fort Polk Regulation 350-10. These protocols will provide enhanced opportunities for damage inspection, corrective actions, and monitoring.

- *Scheduling of Non-Training Activities During Green Period (IUA)*. Non-training activities such as land rehabilitation and maintenance, prescribed burning, forest thinning, and other forest management activities, and maneuver damage repair will be scheduled at the monthly Resource Allocation Conferences rather than the subsequent Non-Training Allocation Conferences. This will ensure that damage repair and forest management receive top priority during the Green Period and that restoration and maintenance activities occur according to schedule. Changes to the existing installation protocols for scheduling of non-training activities will be incorporated into JRTC and Fort Polk Regulation 350-10.

- *Scheduling of Non-Training Activities Outside Green Period (IUA)*. Non-training activities such as land rehabilitation and maintenance, prescribed burning and other forest management activities, and maneuver damage repair that occur outside the Green Period will also be scheduled at the Resource Allocation Conference. This will ensure that scheduling for damage repair and forest management activities will be coordinated with scheduling for training activities and that opportunities for resource management, including thinning of upland pine stands on the IUA, will

be maximized. Changes to the existing installation protocols for scheduling of non-training activities will be incorporated into JRTC and Fort Polk Regulation 350-10.

Facilities Design And Construction Process Oversight

- *Environmental Screening/Alternatives Analysis for Construction Projects*. The installation Master Planner will provide project footprint and alternative sites to the Environmental and Natural Resources Management Division before the plans are presented to the Real Property Planning Board for development of a screening analysis of effects and identification of environmentally preferred siting and design options. The environmentally preferred options will be presented to the Real Property Planning Board, along with other options under consideration, to ensure that environmental factors and concerns are integrated early in the planning process. Potential benefits are reductions in future construction and mitigation costs, reduction or avoidance of adverse cumulative effects to environmental resources, streamlining of design and construction processes, and promotion of sustainability, conservation, and compliance with environmental regulations.

- *Construction Process Oversight*. Procedures to ensure that environmental compliance requirements and measures to reduce adverse effects to environmentally sensitive resources are included in contract specifications for military construction projects. A Contracting Office Representative will ensure compliance with specified limits of construction, construction sequencing, Section 404 permit conditions, storm water pollution prevention plans, and other environmental considerations during construction, as specified in construction specifications and NEPA and permit documents. The Contracting Officer Representative will review environmental requirements before construction, coordinate with the Environmental and Natural Resources Management Division NEPA document point-of-contact to ensure compliance, and have authority to halt construction if work is not performed in accordance with environmental requirements.

- *Design Adjustments to Proposed Intensive Use Area Roads*. Selected pipe culverts as originally proposed will be replaced with arched spans on the proposed IUA east-west roads where the alignments cross larger perennial (third order) streams. In addition, portions of proposed road segments designated as Six Mile Creek 1 and Zion Hills 3 will be realigned to minimize effects to RCW clusters located near the alignments. Benefits include reductions in road and stream crossing maintenance costs, minimization of effects to the RCW, promotion of responsible environmental stewardship, and compliance with the Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act.

Soldier Sustainable Range Awareness Training

- *Initiation of Sustainable Range Awareness Training Program*. Modules and instructional aids will be developed to train soldiers to promote responsible environmental stewardship during field activities. Examples of topics include Louisiana pine snake identification and discourse on its protection status, and other subjects ranging from forest and water quality management to waste minimization. The training program will also educate soldiers involved in the operation of Stryker vehicles on the importance of lower tire inflation settings while driving off-road. Training modules will be available both in a classroom and on-line format and will be provided to all military units training at Fort Polk down to the squad level unit of organization. Certificates will be disbursed upon completion.

Environmental Monitoring And Resource Protection

- *Development of Stream Gage Network*. The U.S. Geological Service and Fort Polk's

Environmental and Natural Resources Management Division will establish a network of stream gaging stations to monitor stream flow and water quality parameters, for the purpose of assessing stream responses to changes in training intensity or land use. Six gaging stations will be established to collect baseline data on stream characteristics and water quality. The data collected by the gages will help to estimate and mitigate sedimentation rates, a water quality issue of concern because of the highly erodible nature of the native soils and the potential for proposed construction and training activities to increase soil erosion and delivery of sediment to streams.

- *Bog Mapping and Monitoring*. The Environmental and Natural Resources Management Division will digitally map and monitor bogs on Army land to complement a map already developed for the IUA and LUA. Bogs will be inspected for maneuver damage following training exercises and during annual training land inspection events, and corrective action to protect wetlands and rare/sensitive plant species will be implemented as appropriate.

- *Louisiana Pine Snake Conservation*. To avoid or reduce future construction-related effects to the Louisiana pine snake, Fort Polk will conduct surveys for the snake and/or pocket gopher mounds within proposed construction footprints for all new construction projects within the range and maneuver areas. Pocket gopher mounds will be avoided during construction whenever feasible.

- *Implementation and Effectiveness Monitoring*. A joint Army-Forest Service committee for implementation and effectiveness monitoring will be established. The purpose of the committee is to evaluate implementation and effectiveness of planned mitigations, range sustainability, compliance with SUP conditions, and installation environmental policies and regulations. The committee will identify and report on performance indicators, evaluate performance, and conduct mid-course correction as needed in accordance with the installation's Environmental Management System. Examples include testing the effectiveness of best management practices by monitoring downstream water quality for total suspended solids, turbidity, dissolved oxygen, temperature, metals, and total nitrogen during base flow periods and storm events. The committee will also publish annual report on results derived under the Sustainability and Environmental Monitoring Plan (described below) for review by members of the public, federally recognized tribes, state and federal agencies, and other stakeholder groups.

5.3 Mitigation Goals and Objectives

With full implementation on an annual basis, the mitigation and monitoring measures are predicted to reduce adverse environmental effects under the proposed action to less than significant levels, i.e., to minor or moderate levels. Nonetheless, some degree of uncertainty exists regarding the level of effects that will occur under the proposed action. For instance, there may be some inherent imprecision in the Army Training and Testing Area Carrying Capacity model which was used to predict the extent of damages to soils and vegetative cover. Also, the new Stryker vehicle does not yet have a performance record upon which to gauge its long-term effects on soils and vegetative cover in training areas. Furthermore, the effectiveness of some of the mitigation measures themselves may be subject to certain limitations.

Balancing these unknowns is the use of a formal Environmental Management System and adaptive management practices. The mitigation and monitoring measures provide for a broadly inclusive range of actions that will involve taking measurements and making adjustments over time. The Army and Forest Service have jointly developed a Sustainability and Environmental Monitoring Plan, included in Appendix V of the EIS, as a structured approach to address uncertainty and to take corrective actions. Monitoring will be used to inform and adapt future environmental and resource management decisions, and results will be made available to the public on an annual basis.

The Sustainability and Environmental Monitoring Plan identifies measurable goals and objectives for the continuation of sound environmental stewardship. The plan is designed to track implementation of mitigation measures and to evaluate their effectiveness, as well as to foster good relationships with neighboring residents and communities. The plan will incorporate and replace the LUA monitoring plan.[6] The goals and objectives set forth in the Sustainability and Environmental Monitoring Plan are as follows.

- ***Goal 1***. Ensure that training lands are sustained for long-term use and maintained in world-class conditions. Protect and conserve basic soil, water and land resources so that forest ecosystems endure for future generations.

  Objective 1-1. Minimize or avoid degradation of training lands and long-term damage to soils, vegetation, streams and wetlands, and sensitive environmental resources through identification and correction of maneuver damages and Soldier Sustainable Range Awareness education.

  Objective 1-2. Sustain training land conditions and long-term soil productivity. This is accomplished by implementing land rehabilitation and maintenance practices designed to minimize soil erosion and compaction, limit soil loss, restore or maintain vegetative cover, and restore disturbed or degraded areas to natural conditions. Develop and update watershed management plans for Fort Polk and Kisatchie National Forest training lands and prioritize land rehabilitation and maintenance activities within and across watersheds based on watershed conditions and training area carrying capacity.

  Objective 1-3. Protect and maintain high water quality and aquatic ecosystems by preventing excessive siltation to surface water resources due to training activities, conserving wetlands and streamside/riparian areas, providing for stream bank stability and natural flow regimes. This is achieved through maintenance of stream and wetland crossing structures, roads and trails; maintenance of sediment basins; and restrictions on training activities within streams, wetlands and riparian areas

- ***Goal 2***. Manage for biological diversity and ecological integrity. Protect and conserve threatened, endangered and rare species, and restore and maintain ecosystems and ecological processes at landscape and local scales.

  Objective 2-1. Promote recovery of the Vernon-Fort Polk RCW population through cooperative Fort Polk and Kisatchie National Forest management and monitoring strategies. Conduct population monitoring in accordance with the joint monitoring plan, educate soldiers on the RCW and its habitat, and maintain RCW cluster resources to minimize the occurrence of unauthorized training activities within cluster boundaries and reduce the threat of cavity tree loss due to military related wildfires.

  Objective 2-2. Provide high-quality habitat for the RCW, Louisiana pine snake, and other rare species native to longleaf pine landscapes. Use prescribed fire to maintain open longleaf pine forest conditions and natural plant communities, with an emphasis on growing season burns, and conduct thinning as planned on approximately 21,500 acres of upland pine stands within the IUA to achieve Desired Future Conditions. Maintain suitable RCW habitat at the appropriate scale

[6] In addition to mitigation measures identified in the EIS, the Sustainability and Environmental Monitoring Plan also incorporates Army and Forest Service commitments for mitigation and monitoring contained in the *Final Environmental Assessment for Increased Military Training Use of the Vernon Unit, Calcasieu Ranger District, Kisatchie National Forest* and the associated Decision Notice/Finding of No Significant Impact issued by the Forest Service in September 2000.

and distribution as identified in the Fort Polk Endangered Species Management Plan (2003) and the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the Kisatchie National Forest (1999).

Objective 2-3. Promote viability of the Louisiana pine snake through cooperative management strategies designed to minimize the potential for listing of the Louisiana pine snake as a threatened/endangered species. Minimize or avoid adverse impacts to the snake and its habitat through soldier education, identification of probable Louisiana pine snake habitat, and through integration of Louisiana pine snake habitat/pocket gopher mound survey and monitoring data with project planning. (See Appendix O in the Final EIS for a copy of the Candidate Conservation Agreement for the Louisiana pine snake and a listing of cooperating agencies.)

Objective 2-4. Protect rare plants and unique wetlands habitats through identification, marking and monitoring of hillside seeps and bogs. Develop and maintain geographical information system locations and data on the condition of high quality seeps and bogs on Fort Polk and Kisatchie National Forest training lands, and monitor annually for potential training impacts. Maintain signage marking high quality seeps and bogs "off-limits" to vehicle movement and digging in the LUA.

- ***Goal 3***. Provide for and maintain functional, healthy, low-impact and cost-effective facilities and infrastructure by integrating master planning, engineering and environmental concerns. Conserve natural resources and energy, and reduce generation of wastes and pollutants by fully incorporating the principles of sustainable design and development.

  Objective 3-1. Avoid or minimize impacts to environmentally sensitive resources and promote installation sustainability through early integration of master planning and environmental concerns.

  Objective 3-2. Ensure that new facilities are designed and constructed to comply with requirements under the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, Endangered Species Act (ESA), and NEPA. This is achieved by including limits of construction and clearing, Section 401/404 permit requirements, site-specific mitigation measures and other environmental conditions in construction design plans and specifications; ensuring that Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plans are implemented for all construction sites one acre or more; and by monitoring during and after construction to ensure adherence to plans and specifications. Initial monitoring is to be conducted for transformation-related military construction projects; other projects are to be monitored as determined by the joint oversight committee (see Implementation and Effectiveness Monitoring measure described in Section 5.2 above).

- ***Goal 4.*** Act as "good neighbors" to residents and communities near Fort Polk and the Kisatchie National Forest and serve as good stewards of public lands and resources. Manage training lands and resources for public safety and provide fair public access to training lands for recreation and other non-training uses.

  Objective 4-1. Support opportunities for public recreational and other multiple use activities on the Fort Polk and Peason Ridge Wildlife Management Areas, the LUA and SLUA. This is accomplished by providing up-to-date information on area closures, training schedules and activities on the Wildlife Management Areas, LUA, and SLUA; maximizing opportunities for hunting on opening weekends/ special hunts for deer (modern fire arms), turkey and squirrel seasons; scheduling training activities to accommodate recreational events and other public activities on the LUA and SLUA; and by educating soldiers on training restrictions for the use of recreational facilities and maintained recreational trails.

Objective 4-2. Protect the quality of life for residents and communities living in the LUA and near the installation boundaries. This is accomplished by monitoring of noise levels in the LUA and near the Peason Ridge Training Area boundary; maintaining land line markings, fire lines and wildfire fire response plans to avoid trespass and damage to private property; repairing military-related damages to public roads in the LUA in accordance with agreements with Vernon Parish Policy Jury, and upgrading LUA roads as required to support military traffic; and responding expeditiously to public concerns and complaints regarding military activities.

Objective 4-3. Conduct military activities in a manner to avoid risks to public safety or conflicts with other activities in the LUA approved under Forest Service Special Use Permits or other authorizations. This is achieved by scheduling military convoys to avoid school bus routes; conducting blackout driving in accordance with Special Use Permit/Operating Plan terms and conditions; identifying pipelines and utility lines on the ground and on training maps; scheduling/conducting training activities to provide access for other permitted uses; and by educating soldiers on other permitted uses and activities in the LUA and related training restrictions.

- ***Goal 5.*** Monitor to provide feedback regarding progress toward accomplishing mutual Fort Polk and Kisatchie National Forest goals and objectives. Evaluate opportunities for continuous improvement of environmental and natural resource management practices and procedures, and adapt management strategies according to new information.

  Objective 5-1. Jointly monitor to document annual progress for the implementation and effectiveness of mitigation measures finally adopted in the ROD for the EIS on 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment transformation, installation mission support, and long-term military use of Kisatchie National Forest lands; and the Decision Notice for the environmental assessment on increased military use of the LUA.

  Objective 5-2. Jointly evaluate and report monitoring results, and adapt operations and management accordingly.

5.4 Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation

Our decision includes the findings and outcomes of formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) that was conducted as part of the EIS process. Formal consultation was completed with USFWS issuance of a Biological Opinion on December 17, 2003 (see Appendix R of the Final EIS). The USFWS determined that the proposed action will result in the take of three RCW groups (clusters 240-04, 251-04, and 16-A) but that the level of anticipated take is not likely to result in jeopardy to the RCW or destruction or adverse modification of proposed critical habitat. The Biological Opinion included a statement authorizing the incidental take of RCW, an act otherwise prohibited by Section 9 of the ESA. The authorization for incidental take was conditioned on the Army's compliance with reasonable and prudent measures which are accomplished by implementation of more specific terms and conditions.

The USFWS identified three reasonable and prudent measures to minimize the impacts of incidental take of RCWs:

1. Continue to move RCW nesting and foraging habitat toward the recovery standard identified in the RCW Recovery Plan.

2. Continue to monitor the Vernon – Fort Polk RCW population to ensure that potential long-term habitat degradation associated with the proposed Army transformation is not adversely affecting that population.

3. Ensure that the amount of clearing for the proposed construction projects does not exceed the project description and that those construction activities do not additionally impact RCW clusters; thereby ensuring that the level of take is not exceeded.

The USFWS further determined that in order to be exempt from prohibitions of Section 9 of the ESA, the Army must comply with 10 terms and conditions, which implement the reasonable and prudent measures described above and outline required reporting/monitoring requirements. These terms and conditions are non-discretionary.

In accordance with the USFWS Biological Opinion, the terms and conditions listed below shall be implemented.

1. Fort Polk and the Kisatchie National Forest shall identify specific RCW and forest management objectives (i.e., thinning, prescribed burning, etc.) and accomplishments within the Vernon – Fort Polk RCW population for each year in an annual report provided to the USFWS's Louisiana Field Office. That annual report may be included within the Joint Monitoring Plan (see below). If Fort Polk and the Kisatchie National Forest fail to meet their intended objectives, they should provide written justification for such failure and a plan for corrective action to the USFWS Lafayette Field Office and other interested natural resource agencies.

2. The Army shall continue to provide 14 consecutive days per quarter when prescribed burning and other natural resource management activities take precedence over training (i.e., "Green Periods") within the IUA.

3. The Army shall continue to coordinate with the Kisatchie National Forest to implement thinning, prescribed burning, and other management activities outside of those "Green Periods" in areas that would not impact military training within the IUA.

4. The Army shall make all reasonable attempts to provide the Kisatchie National Forest adequate time to meet their management objective of thinning 21,540 acres of upland pine stands in the IUA over a 10-year period, or approximately 2,100 acres per year. Thinning activities should be scheduled within 2 years of the signed ROD. If the Kisatchie National Forest is unable to conduct those thinning activities within that time frame, the Army and Kisatchie National Forest shall cooperatively modify the timeline to allow completion of those thinning activities. Any timeline modifications should be provided to the USFWS within 30 days of their development.

5. To the maximum extent practicable, thinning activities within one-half mile of clusters 240-04, 240-05, 249-01, and 251-04 shall be conducted prior to or concurrent with construction.

6. Should the number of active clusters within the Vernon – Fort Polk RCW population either decrease by 5 percent from one year to the next, decrease for more than two consecutive years, or not show a net increase over a 5-year period, the Army and Kisatchie National Forest shall meet with interested parties (including the USFWS) to determine the cause of that trend and to discuss a plan to expedite population increases.

7. The Kisatchie National Forest and Fort Polk will continue to cooperatively implement the Joint Monitoring Plan, with approved amendments, to measure potential effects of the proposed action

on RCWs for an additional 5 years (i.e., through 2010), at the end of which time the need for further continuation of that plan will be evaluated. If Kisatchie National Forest and Fort Polk jointly determine via adaptive management, however, that continuation of the monitoring plan is no longer warranted prior to 2010, further coordination with the USFWS will be necessary.

8. Monitor those construction activities which would impact RCW nesting and/or foraging habitat for clusters 16-A, 240-04, 240-05, 249-01, and 251-04 daily to ensure that the limits of construction are maintained as described in the proposed action. The personnel responsible for on-site monitoring must have the authority to halt construction activities, if necessary, until appropriate corrections can be made.

9. Monitor all construction projects within the RCW Habitat Management Area weekly to ensure that the limits of construction are maintained as described in the proposed action. The personnel responsible for on-site monitoring must have the authority to halt construction activities, if necessary, until appropriate corrections can be made.

10. Upon locating a dead, injured, or sick individual of an endangered or threatened species, initial notification must be made to the USFWS Law Enforcement Office at Lafayette, Louisiana [(337) 291-3110]. Additional notification must be made to the USFWS Ecological Services Field Office at Lafayette, Louisiana [(337) 291-3132]. Care should be taken in handling sick or injured individuals and in the preservation of specimens in the best possible state for later analysis of cause of death or injury.

5.5 Implementation of Mitigation and Monitoring

The mitigation and monitoring measures adopted in this ROD reflect all practicable means that will avoid or minimize environmental harm.[7] Combined with existing environmental stewardship measures, full implementation of the measures will aid in avoiding, minimizing, reducing or rectifying averse effects over time to soils, vegetative cover, water quality and biological resources.

In support of the goals and objectives listed in Section 5.3, and subject to the availability of funds,[8] the Army shall take all necessary steps to implement the mitigation and monitoring measures listed at Section 5.2. The JRTC and Fort Polk shall submit timely funding requests on an annual basis for each mitigation and monitoring measure requiring allocation of budget resources. The U.S. Army Forces Command and the Headquarters, Installation Management Agency shall evaluate and validate funding requests, and provide the necessary funds to the JRTC and Fort Polk for execution of the mitigation and monitoring measures.

Because of the critical nature of the expanded maneuver damage inspection, repair and monitoring process (see mitigation measure above for *Maneuver Damage Inspection and Monitoring*) for minimizing or avoiding degradation of training lands and long-term damage to soils, vegetative cover, surface waters, and other sensitive environmental resources, the JRTC and Fort Polk shall evaluate the need for a maneuver damage program manager no later than November 2006, or six months following achievement of Initial Operating Capability for the 2d Cavalry Regiment. This evaluation will be made to ensure

[7] Fifteen mitigation measures, identified at Section 4.17 of the Final EIS, were not carried forward for adoption because, for the most part, they are already expressed in existing Army policies or because they could be incorporated into mitigation measures adopted above.

[8] A key provision of the Anti-Deficiency Act (31 U.S.C. 1341 (a)(1)), provides that an officer or employee of the United States Government may not (a) make or authorize an expenditure or obligation exceeding an amount available in an appropriation or fund for the expenditure or obligation or (b) involve the government in a contract or obligation for the payment of money before an appropriation is made unless authorized by law.

efficient and effective execution of the maneuver damage inspection and repair program in light of increased training intensity and potential constraints with respect to opportunities for natural resource management.

Implementation of the Sustainability and Environmental Monitoring Plan, as approved in this ROD, will include use of three types of monitoring. *Implementation monitoring* will be used to determine if mitigation measures and related environmental stewardship and natural resource management practices are implemented as designed. *Effectiveness monitoring* will be used to determine whether mitigation measures and related environmental stewardship practices are effective in achieving established goals and objectives. Effectiveness monitoring may be used to adjust Sustainability and Environmental Monitoring Plan objectives, targets, mitigation measures, environmental stewardship practices and best management practices, and it may lead to changes to the SUP/Operating Plan or installation planning documents. *Validation monitoring* will be used to determine whether initial assumptions used in developing approaches to mitigation and monitoring are correct, or if there are betters ways of meeting established goals and objectives. Validation monitoring may also be used to adjust management practices or to suggest changes to the SUP/Operating Plan or other planning documents. The JRTC and Fort Polk shall appoint an Army representative to serve as co-chair of the joint Army-Forest Service committee for oversight of the mitigation and monitoring plan (see mitigation measure above for *Implementation and Effectiveness Monitoring*).

6.0 Cooperating Agency Proposed Actions and Decisions

6.1 Forest Service

In addition to the Army's proposed action described above, the EIS evaluated Forest Service proposals to thin approximately 21,540 acres of upland pine stands designated for military training use by the Army and to classify as "deleted," and thereby remove from further management and monitoring RCW clusters that have been inactive for the past 5 years.

On February 20, 2004, the Forest Service signed and made available its ROD concurrently with publication of the Final EIS, indicating that its proposals for RCW habitat improvement thinning and reclassification of abandoned RCW clusters will proceed as evaluated in the EIS.

The Forest Service ROD also approved four Army construction projects on Forest Service lands and authorized the Army's use of the IUA, LUA, and SLUA for military training for a 20-year period (2004-2024), subject to the preparation of a mutually agreed-upon plan of operation for each area.

The four Army construction projects approved on Forest Service lands are as follows:

- Aviation Maintenance Hangar (Polk Army Airfield and IUA, 2004);
- Sniper Range (IUA, 2009);
- Intensive Use Area Road Construction and Improvements (IUA, Long Range); and
- Limited Use Area Stream Crossing and Approaches (LUA, Long Range).

The Forest Service decision will allow increased maneuver training in the LUA and SLUA; however, live-fire exercises will not be authorized in these areas. In addition, the Forest Service will eliminate the existing requirement to obtain a supplemental SUP to use the SLUA on a case-by-case basis. The following conditions will apply to the respective Forest Service lands:

- **IUA.** The IUA will continue to be used in a manner similar to current designated uses. Approved land uses in the IUA will be essentially unchanged from the previous permit. See the Final EIS, Table

2–2, pages 2-7 to 2-10 for a complete listing of authorized activities for the IUA. Use of the TUAV and the Stryker IAV and MGS will be newly allowed activities.

- **LUA.** The terms and conditions for use of the LUA will be consistent with authorizations granted by the Forest Service as a result of prior environmental analysis and September 2000 Decision Notice. That decision added the use of pyrotechnics and artillery simulators, limited digging (2-person positions), off-road vehicle movement, blackout driving on approved roads, use of obstacles (simulated mines and concertina wire), and establishment of support areas and hospitals. See the Final EIS, Table 2–2, pages 2-7 to 2-10 for a complete listing of authorized activities for the LUA. Use of the TUAV within restricted airspace over the northern portion of the Rustville training area and non-live-fire maneuver of the Stryker IAV and MGS will be newly allowed activities.

- **SLUA (Horse's Head)**. This area will be subdivided into smaller training areas and brought into the Resource Allocation Conference scheduling system. The Army will be allowed to schedule 15 historically approved low-intensity training events. See the Final EIS, Table 2–2, pages 2-7 to 2-10 for a complete listing of authorized activities for the SLUA. Forest Service multiple-use management activities, as well as continued public access, will have priority over military training activities in the SLUA. In addition to the historically approved training activities, two helicopter landing zones and two bivouac sites will be designated in the SLUA (see Final EIS, Figure 2–6, page 2-67 for their locations). Non-live-fire road maneuver of the Stryker IAV and MGS will be a newly allowed activity.

In addition, the Forest Service ROD identifies the mitigation and monitoring measures developed jointly by the Army and Forest Service and included in Appendix V of the Final EIS. The Forest Service further recognized as mitigation and monitoring measures the 10 terms and conditions required by the USFWS to minimize the impacts of incidental take of RCWs and to be exempt from prohibitions of Section 9 of the ESA. The Forest Service considers each of these mitigation and monitoring measures necessary for the Army's continued use of the Kisatchie National Forest. The mitigation and monitoring measures will be recognized as permit conditions, and compliance with those conditions will be incumbent upon the Army for the permit to be issued and to remain in effect.

6.2 Federal Aviation Administration

The FAA served as a cooperating agency based on its intent to issue a separate ROD for Airport Layout Plan modifications at Alexandria International Airport that are required as a part of the Army's proposed action. These modifications are expected to include the depiction of the Army's proposed construction projects at the airpark for three new hotpads and keeling a portion of Runway 18/36, a new arrival/departure airfield control group facility, and upgrading the north ramp. Issuance of the Federal Aviation Administration's ROD on modifications to the Airport Layout Plan will precede the Army's implementation of its three projects at England Industrial Airpark.

7.0 Rationale for the Decision

7.1 Relevant Factors and Considerations

We have chosen to proceed with the proposed action, mitigation and monitoring measures, and terms and conditions for implementing reasonable and prudent measures for minimizing the impacts of incidental take on the RCW, as described in Section 5 above. Our decision to implement the proposed action is based on consideration of the analysis of effects contained in the EIS, assessment of the alternatives in relationship to the primary issues of concern, comments provided during formal public review periods, and Army-wide transformation, national security and mission requirements.

The 21st-century strategic setting requires that the Army transform the way it fights to win the nation's wars. Present world events and emerging security challenges require Army forces that are strategically responsive and dominant across a spectrum of military operations. To respond to changing world conditions, the Army is now engaged in a synchronized program of transformation planned to occur over three decades. Transformation activities will affect virtually all aspects of the Army — to include doctrine, training, leader development, organizations, installations, materiel, and soldiers — and will result in a Future Force that is more responsive, deployable, agile, versatile, lethal, survivable, and sustainable.

We have determined that the proposed action alternative best meets the purpose and need for the Army's action and that it reflects a proper balance between mission imperatives and goals for protection of the environment. The 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment, to be known upon conversion as the 2d Cavalry Regiment, is among five other combat brigades designated to convert to an SBCT as a part of the Interim Capability Phase of transformation. The proposed action considered in the EIS will allow the JRTC and Fort Polk to assist in bringing the 2d Cavalry Regiment to operational capability by manning, organizing, training and equipping the 2d Cavalry Regiment to achieve the characteristics of the Future Force. The proposed action will also provide necessary training and support facilities and lands to enhance the ongoing and future missions of the JRTC and Fort Polk: as a CTC, to provide for realistic, advanced field training, modern weapons training, and performance evaluation opportunities for SBCTs and other Army brigades; and as a power projection platform, to train and deploy forces by air, rail and sea to areas of operation around the world.

In addition to supporting national defense requirements, the proposed action also provides for appropriate mitigation and monitoring actions to ensure the sustainability of Army and Forest Service resources and their continued availability for military training and other uses. Comments received during the EIS process from Federal and State agencies, federally recognized tribes, and members of the public expressed both support for the Army's proposed action and concerns regarding potential effects of the proposed action to natural and cultural resources entrusted to the Army and Forest Service. The commentors' concerns included potential degradation of water resources, protection and management of PETSC species, and the adequacy of alternatives and mitigation measures to address adverse environmental impacts. The mitigation and monitoring plan added to the Final EIS and described in Section 5.2 above responds to these and other concerns. These mitigation and monitoring measures would augment existing and proposed Army and Forest Service environmental stewardship programs and practices, and taken collectively, would mitigate adverse effects through time. The Sustainability and Environmental Monitoring Plan is designed to track the implementation of mitigation measures described above and in the Final EIS, and to evaluate whether mitigation measures, environmental stewardship practices, and BMPs are effectively meeting goals and objectives for sustainability, compliance with applicable environmental laws and regulations, and SUP/Operating Plan terms and conditions.

We have decided not to select the no action alternative for implementation. Although the no action alternative would respond to certain issues of concern by minimizing or avoiding potential adverse environmental effects relative to the proposed action, it would not meet the Army's underlying purpose and need for action. Under the no action alternative, the JRTC and Fort Polk would not convert the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment to an SBCT as directed by the Army. In addition, the installation would not undertake the actions proposed to support the missions of the 2d Cavalry Regiment or other home-stationed or rotational units. At present, the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment is not optimally equipped, organized, manned or trained to respond to the range of emerging threats and circumstances that the Army is likely to encounter. Failure to transform the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment to an SBCT and to provide the needed training and support facilities and lands to meet ongoing and future mission requirements of the JRTC and Fort Polk could place at risk the Army's readiness to meet its obligations to

fight and win the nation's wars. Thus, implementation of the no action alternative could hinder national security interests.

7.2 Environmentally Preferred Alternative

We recognize that preferences among alternatives may be based on relevant factors including environmental, economic, and technical considerations and agency statutory mission, and that the Army's preferred alternative will not necessarily be the environmentally preferred alternative.[9] The Final EIS provides detailed evaluation of the likely environmental effects under the proposed action and no action alternatives. In determining the environmentally preferable alternative, we have taken into account numerous considerations. The proposed action is inherently complex in that it extends to unit transformation (which itself involves diverse activity groups), multiple construction projects across a variety of sites, and long-term use of public lands under the administrative control of another federal agency. In addition, the proposed action would occur over a relatively long period and would affect more than 200,000 acres of land of diverse nature. Implementation of either the proposed action or no action alternative would result in some degree of adverse effects on most resource areas, some of which could be enduring.

Upon consideration of all these factors, we have determined that the proposed action is the environmentally preferred alternative. We recognize that compared to the no action alternative, the proposed action is predicted to result in more significant impacts to environment resources due, primarily, to changes in training intensity and new construction. For instance, construction projects and increased training intensity are predicted to result in increased rates of erosion in several areas. However, the proposed action provides for the continuation of existing, as well as the introduction of new, environmental stewardship programs such as an expanded maneuver damage repair program and a Sustainability and Environmental Monitoring Plan, which provides for continuous improvement and adaptive management. The Sustainability and Environmental Monitoring Plan encompasses the whole of Army and Forest Service lands affected by this decision, and thus represents a more integrated and proactive inter-agency approach to environmental stewardship than is conceived under the no action alternative. Thus the significant adverse impacts under the proposed action should be largely offset by implementation of the proposed environmental stewardship programs and the mitigation and monitoring measures set forth in the Sustainability and Environmental Monitoring Plan.

Our determination that the proposed action is the environmentally preferred alternative is also made in light of Forest Service proposals that will result in thinning of approximately 21,540 acres of upland pine stands in the IUA. Thinning of the forest will provide long-term habitat improvement for the endangered RCW as well as other species native to the longleaf pine ecosystem. These benefits to the RCW and longleaf pine ecosystem would be unrealized or delayed under the no action alternative.

Finally, the Sustainability and Environmental Monitoring Plan included in this decision promotes sound environmental stewardship of Army and Forest Service lands through public involvement. The JRTC and Fort Polk and the Kisatchie National Forest have committed to publish results of monitoring on an annual basis. This open disclosure of results will allow for review of agency activities and accomplishments, and for input from interested members of the public, other Federal and State agencies, and tribes. Ultimately, we believe that this approach will strengthen the sustainability of the JRTC and Fort Polk and the lands and communities in which soldiers, their families, their neighbors and other users of the forest live, work and play.

[9] 32 CFR 651.45(j)(1).

8.0 Point of Contact

Further information concerning the Final EIS and this ROD may be obtained through: Dan Nance, Fort Polk Public Affairs Office, 7073 Radio Road, Fort Polk, LA 71459-5342; phone: (337) 531-7203; fax: (337) 6014; e-mail: eis@polk.army.mil.

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Installation Management Agency:

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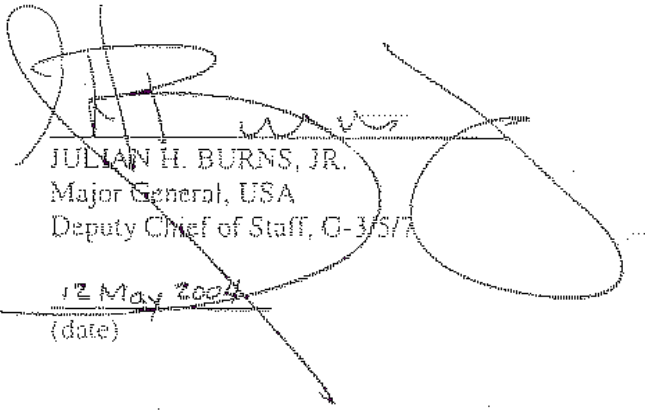
27 Apr 04
(date)

U.S. Army Forces Command:



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12 May 2004
(date)