

**FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITES (FUDS)  
PROJECT FACT SHEET  
SEPTEMBER 1996  
TAG REVIEW DATE: 25 March 1997**

**1. SITE NAME:** Camp Essex  
**SITE NUMBER:** J09CA027800

**LOCATION:**  
City: Essex  
County: San Bernardino  
State: California

**PROJECT NUMBER:** J09CA027801

**CATEGORY:** OE

**INPR RAC:** 2

**ASR RAC:** 1

**TAG RAC:** 2

**2. POC's:**

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**3. SITE DESCRIPTION:** The former Camp Essex, consisting of 30,536.50 FDE acreage and a proposed 1,021.00 acres additional acreage for a total of 31,557.50, is located in an undeveloped region of San Bernardino County, California, approximately 32 miles west of Needles, California, west of Essex. Camp Essex is located within T8N, R16E, Sections 1-3, 10-30, 33, 34 (San Bernardino Meridian); T8N, R17E, Section 3-9, 17-19; T9N, R16E,

Sections 22-27, 34-36; and T9N, R17E, Sections 31, 32 and 33. The majority of the site is undeveloped desert. Interstate 40 runs east to west through the northern third of the site. A rest stop on Interstate 40 is located on the site of the Camp Essex Garrison Area.

Approximately 23,036.6 acres are currently owned by the U.S. Department of the Interior - Bureau of Land Management, approximately 640 acres are owned by the State of California, and approximately 6,860.40 acres are owned by various private owners. The entire site is currently undeveloped.

The site is located within the Great Basin. The former Camp Essex is located between the Clipper Mountains on the west and the Piute Mountains on the east. The Clipper Mountains are located partially within the western boundaries of the former Camp Essex. The east face of the mountains are steep and very rocky. Between the mountain ranges is a large alluvial plain with both east and west areas gradually sloping up to the respective mountain ranges. Within the plain are various washes, the main one being Watson Wash which runs through the east side of the site. When rainfall does occur, the washes located in this area become areas of raging water that travel at high speeds resulting in heavy soil erosion and flash flooding.

**4. SITE HISTORY:** Total acreage of 30,536.50 was acquired for Camp Essex, which was part of the Desert Training Center (DTC). This includes the area for Camp Clipper, which was present prior to the formal acquisition of land for Camp Essex. On 13 December 1943, the U.S. Department of the Interior transferred, by means of a use permit, 21,537.78 acres to the War Department in lieu of a formal real estate directive. An additional 8,998.72 acres was granted by eight other permits. Since documentation pertaining to these permits could not be found, the associated dates and parties could not be determined. However, they were most likely secured from the State of California, the Southern Pacific Company and other private landowners between 1942 and 1943.

Camp Clipper was established during 1942 and occupied by the 33rd Infantry Division. Camp Clipper, a temporary camp, was located west of what would be the encampment area for Camp Essex. The 33rd Infantry Division was stationed at Camp Clipper from 28 March to 17 July 1943. Camp Clipper was abandoned after the completion of Camp Essex.

The 93rd Infantry Division arrived at Camp Essex on 21 June 1943. While at Camp Essex the division conducted individual and unit training in preparation for maneuvers and combat operations. Temporary improvements constructed consisted of 24 enlisted men's shower buildings, 12 officer's shower buildings, 191 latrines,

149 pyramidal tent frames, an outdoor theater, two 740-foot-deep wells, and a 50,000 gallon water storage tank. The only permanent structure constructed on the site was a 500,000 gallon concrete reservoir. In addition, 14 firing ranges were located on the site, to the west of the Camp Essex encampment area, on the abandoned Camp Clipper encampment site. The 93rd Infantry Division participated in its first exercise on 9 November 1943. The division departed Camp Essex on 5 January 1944.

Camp Essex was declared surplus on 16 March 1944. On 7 February 1945, 21,537.78 acres were relinquished back to the U.S. Department of the Interior. On 1 June 1949, this acreage was formally retransferred. A permit for 40 acres was terminated on 18 August 1944. On 13 November 1944, six permits totaling 7,678.72 acres were terminated. Two additional permits totaling 1,280 acres were terminated on 8 March 1945. In February 1944, the 827th Tank Destroyer Battalion was given responsibility for closing the ranges at Camp Essex and removing salvageable materials. In May 1944, 350 Italian prisoners of war were brought to Camp Essex to clear artillery duds from the ranges. In May of 1964, the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division from Fort Riley Kansas occupied the former Camp Essex as part of the Desert Strike Exercise. A newspaper article indicates that the Division Headquarters was located at least temporarily at Camp Essex.

## 5. PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Area A-1	
Size, Acres:	3,690
Former Use:	Clipper Mountains Impact Area
Present Use:	Undeveloped Public & Private Land
Probable End Use:	Same as present
Ordnance Presence:	Confirmed
Types:	Mortar ammunition
	Potential
Types:	Projectile, 105mm & 155mm
Area A-2	
Size, Acres:	160 (See Acreage in para 8)
Former Use:	Clipper Mountains Impact Area
	Additional Acreage
Present Use:	Undeveloped Public & Private Land
Probable End Use:	Same as present
Ordnance Presence:	Confirmed
Types:	Mortar ammunition
	Potential
Types:	Projectile, 105mm & 155mm
Area B	
Size, Acres:	3,245

Former Use: Small Arms Range South  
Present Use: Undeveloped Public & Private Land  
Probable End Use: Same as present  
Ordnance Presence: None  
Type: Not applicable

Area C  
Size, Acres: 650  
Former Use: Small Arms Range North  
Present Use: Undeveloped Public & Private Land  
Probable End Use: Same as present  
Ordnance Presence: None  
Type: Not applicable

Area D  
Size, Acres: 640  
Former Use: Grenade Pits West  
Present Use: Undeveloped Public Land  
Probable End Use: Same as present  
Ordnance Presence: See Issues and Concerns Below  
Type: See Issues and Concerns Below

Area E  
Size, Acres: 640 (See Acreage in para 8)  
Former Use: Grenade Pits East  
Present Use: Undeveloped Public Land  
Probable End Use: Same as present  
Ordnance Presence: See Issues and Concerns Below  
Type: See Issues and Concerns Below

Area F  
Size, Acres: 2,308  
Former Use: Camp Essex Garrison Area  
Present Use: Undeveloped Public & Private Land  
Probable End Use: Same as present  
Ordnance Presence: None  
Type: Not Applicable

Area G-1  
Size, Acres: 85  
Former Use: Camp Essex Airstrip  
Present Use: Undeveloped Public Land  
Probable End Use: Same as present  
Ordnance Presence: None  
Type: Not Applicable

Area G-2  
Size, Acres: 221 (See Acreage in para 8)  
Former Use: Camp Essex Airstrip, Additional  
Acreage  
Present Use: Undeveloped Public Land  
Probable End Use: Same as present

Ordnance Presence: None  
Type: Not Applicable

Area H  
Size, Acres: 19,919  
Former Use: Remaining Lands  
Present Use: Highway; Residence; Undeveloped  
Public Land  
Probable End Use: Same as present  
Ordnance Presence: None  
Type: Not Applicable

**6. CURRENT STATUS:** The Archives Search Report (ASR) for Camp Essex was completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, in September 1996.

**7. STRATEGY:**

AREA A-1: EE/CA;(RAC 3)  
AREA A-2: EE/CA;(RAC 3)  
AREA B: NOFA;(RAC 5)  
AREA C: NOFA;(RAC 5)  
AREA D: Institutional Controls; (RAC 4)  
AREA E: Institutional Controls; (RAC 2)  
AREA F: NOFA;(RAC 5)  
AREA G-1: NOFA;(RAC 5)  
AREA G-2: NOFA;(RAC 5)  
AREA H: NOFA;(RAC 5)

**8. ISSUES AND CONCERNS:** The site strategy above decided upon by the Technical Advisory Group (TAG), differs from the strategy formulated in the ASR and concurred with by Ken Shott on CEHNC Form 7 dated 23 October 1996. Rational for the TAG consensus concerning these areas is listed later in this paragraph.

The only OE found by the site survey team during inspection of the accessible areas of Camp Essex were limited to small arms bullets and cartridge cases, and mortar ammunition remnants. Heavy erosion in most areas of the site have transformed the landscape so that with the exception of the Airstrip, no evidence of former military use or OE was found.

**HNC Safety Comment:** The comment was in agreement with the ASR site strategy, which was changed during the TAG for Areas D, E, and H as discussed above.

**Acreege of the Site:** The TAG agreed with the ASR recommendation to update the FDE by adding a total of 1021 acres to the site represented by areas A-2, E and G-2. Documents in ASR Findings at F-12 and G-2 indicate that the 160 acres in A-2 are

contaminated. Interviews in the ASR Findings at I-2 and I-7 indicate that grenade pits were located at both sections 34 and 35, T8N, R16N, which includes the 640 acre addition for Area E as well as Area D. Finally, the G-2 acreage addition of 221 acres is based on the determination that part of the Camp Essex Airstrip was located outside the camp boundary.

**Areas with Potential or Confirmed OE:** These areas are A-1 and A-2. In the A Areas, the site survey team found mortar ammunition fragments and .50 caliber bullets. The possibility for 105mm and 155mm OE exists, possibly further up the mountain, as the training unit had these weapon systems. Documents in the ASR Findings at F-6, F-7 and L-1 indicate Area A-1 is heavily impacted with mortar fire (T8N, R16E, sections 17, 18, 19, 20, 29 and 30) and that it should be restricted to surface use only. Area A-2 was discussed in the previous paragraph.

**Areas D and E.** The location of these areas as former grenade pits, used for practice in the use of HE and Practice Grenades, was included in the ASR based only on the basis of interviews with two people. There is no other substantiation. Inspection of these areas revealed a heavily eroded area subject to washouts during heavy rain. No OE was present and there was no indication that these areas had been used by the military. Given this background, it was decided by the TAG that institutional controls for these areas would be the best strategy.

**Remaining Lands, Area H,** was determined in the ASR to have the potential for ammunition based on a history of training not being limited to ranges at other sites in the DTC. The TAG non-concurred with this rationale and agreed on a strategy of NOFA, RAC 5 for the following reasons: (1)Using the ASR rationale for Area H, all 12 million acres of the California-Arizona Maneuver Area, of which Camp Essex is a part, would have to have a strategy of EE/CA. (2)No OE was found in Area H by the site survey team. (3)The ASR rationale for Area H is a personal opinion. (4)No historical documents were found that would specifically indicate an OE presence in Area H. During construction of I-40 through the site, no OE was found. Attached is a revised RAC Form indicating a score of 5 for Area H.

**Areas with No OE:** Areas B, C, F, G-1 and G-2 determined to have no potential or confirmed OE. Of these areas, small arms cartridge cases and bullets were found only in Area B. In Areas B and C, only small arms were fired. There was no record of OE in the Garrison Area, Area F. The Airstrip, Areas G-1 and G-2 was used by spotter planes and for routine flights that did not involve the use of OE.

Based on the above changes , the RAC score for the overall site is changed from a 1 to a 2. Attached is the revised RAC form.

**Safety Precautions:** Poisonous snakes are present throughout the site. Summer temperatures can be very high, sometimes reaching 120 degree plus. Low lying areas are subject to infrequent flash floods. There is severe erosion and it is sometimes difficult to travel even with a four wheel drive vehicle.

**Specifics for Area A:** This area is extremely rugged and vehicle access is limited. The Clipper Mountains are very rocky, and because of the loose rock on the surface very difficult to climb. The majority of Area A is within the Clipper Mountain Wilderness Area, and vehicle access is not permitted except on established roads.

**Site Clearance:** Document L-1 of the ASR Findings, a map dated October, 1951, Office of the District Engineer in Los Angeles, indicates that all of Camp Essex, with the exception of the western six sections, had been "inspected and/or dedudded and certified clear for all uses". The western six were "inspected and/or dedudded and restricted for surface use only".

**Natural Resources:** There are known Federally- and State-listed species which may occur within the site area. Listings are provided in the ASR Findings, page 6, paragraph 3f and Table 3-2. All areas are potential habitat for the desert tortoise, a threatened species. An on-site inspection by appropriate State and Federal personnel may be necessary to verify the presence, absence or location of listed species, or natural communities.

**Historical Resources:** Cultural and historical sites associated with this site are reported in the ASR Findings, page 6, paragraph 3g and in Document F-10. Intrusive measures taken within the area will require oversight by the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) and/or other like organizations.

9. **SCHEDULE SUMMARY:** EE/CA

10. **FUNDING/BUDGET SUMMARY:** For Official Use Only

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