

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF A
NEW ACCESS CONTROL POINT
FORT GORDON, GEORGIA

Introduction

Fort Gordon is situated in east-central Georgia, 9 miles southwest of the City of Augusta. It encompasses portions of Columbia, Jefferson, McDuffie, and Richmond counties, but lies primarily within Richmond County. Fort Gordon is subdivided into 49 training areas, two restricted impact areas, a main cantonment area, and an industrial cantonment area. Fort Gordon is approximately 55,590 acres, of which 5,590 acres are the main cantonment area, 13,000 acres are impact areas, and 37,000 acres are on-Post maneuver and training areas. Fort Gordon employees and visitors who enter the installation by way of Gates 1 and 2 are currently experiencing congestion and delays during peak commuting hours. This congestion frequently affects the flow of traffic on Gordon Highway, on the installation, and into and out of the Grovetown area. There is concern that continued workforce expansion at Fort Gordon will exacerbate the traffic situation in these areas and could even pose a threat to public safety if movement of fire, police, and rescue vehicles is hindered. During peak traffic times, traffic backs up on Gordon Highway and into Grovetown on East Robinson Avenue due to the lack of stacking space on Fort Gordon (i.e. sufficient space for queued-up vehicles between the installation entrance and the access control point [ACP], where drivers' credentials are inspected). There is also significant traffic congestion on Fort Gordon between the entrance gates located on Gordon Highway and critical mission support locations during these peak traffic times. In addition, the existing Visitor Control Center (VCC) is too small to accommodate the number of visitors that are processed on a typical weekday. Gate 3, which is 0.6 mile southwest of Gate 2 on Gordon Highway and sometimes referred to as the "commercial gate," also lacks sufficient stacking space for the large delivery and tractor-trailer trucks that use it. Further, the Gate 3 vehicle search area and background

check trailer are too small for the increasing number of delivery trucks and service vehicles that use it.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to establish a new access point (ACP) onto Fort Gordon that will reduce traffic congestion on roadways servicing Fort Gordon and to provide a shorter, more-direct route to areas of Fort Gordon that are experiencing the greatest growth. This access point is needed to accommodate mission expansions and personnel increases that Fort Gordon is experiencing and to improve traffic flow in and out of the installation. It will also help alleviate public safety concerns on Fort Gordon and in neighboring communities caused by traffic congestion.

Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives

Proposed Action: The Army proposes to construct and operate a new ACP on Fort Gordon. Establishing a new ACP onto Fort Gordon will help to reduce traffic congestion on roadways servicing the installation and will provide a shorter, more-direct route to areas of Fort Gordon that are experiencing the greatest growth. A new ACP will accommodate the personnel and mission increases that Fort Gordon is experiencing and will improve traffic flow in and out of the installation.

Alternatives Considered and Evaluated: Numerous alternatives to the Proposed Action were considered and the following alternatives were carried through for analysis in an environmental assessment (EA).

- ***Alternative 2 (Preferred Alternative): Training Area 17 Alternative:*** Under the Preferred Alternative, GDOT would widen Gordon Highway between Gate 2 and a new entrance that would be established approximately 0.5 mile southwest of the Parham Road/Gordon Highway intersection.—Additional traffic lanes would be added south of the existing highway (on Fort Gordon property) to facilitate the flow of traffic onto the installation. The new multi-lane road would narrow to two lanes after exiting a new ACP, which would be located a short distance east of the new entrance. The two-lane access road would traverse Training Area (TA) 17, then extend southeast into TA 16, curve east around the southern boundary of the

Ammunition Supply Point (ASP), and, a short distance southeast of the ASP, would either (1) continue east, crossing the tank trail and entering the cantonment area at the intersection of 107th Avenue and 12th Street or (2) extend southeast, paralleling North Range Road for approximately 3,000 feet before turning east to enter the cantonment area at the intersection of 110th Avenue and 12th Street. Up to 150 acres of land could be disturbed under Alternative 2. Substantially less than 150 acres --- as little as a third of that acreage --- would be permanently altered, cleared for the new roadways, buildings, parking lots, and infrastructure. The remainder of the 150 acres could be temporarily disturbed for construction-phase parking, construction laydown areas, construction trailers, and equipment storage. A new VCC would be constructed near the new ACP. Gate 1 would become a Department of Defense (DOD) gate only and all visitor traffic would be through the new ACP. Gate 2 would be placed in an inactive status and may be used in the future for special events or emergencies but would not be used on a regular basis. Gate 3 would be closed permanently and contractors would use the new ACP.

- **No Action Alternative:** Under the No Action Alternative, traffic flow on Fort Gordon would be managed as it is currently managed. Installation personnel and visitors would continue using the existing system of gates and access roads.

Environmental Analysis

Environmental Consequences and Comparison of Alternatives: The EA, which is attached hereto and incorporated by reference into this Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI), examined the potential effects of the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 2: Training Area 17 Alternative) and No Action Alternative on 13 resource areas and areas of environmental and socioeconomic concern: geology and soils; water resources; floodplains and wetlands; ecological resources; air quality; hazardous materials, hazardous waste and installation restoration program (IRP) sites; noise; cultural resources; land use; facilities; infrastructure and utilities; traffic; and socioeconomics, environmental justice and protection of children. Implementation of the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 2: Training Area 17 Alternative) would result in a combination of short and long term impacts. It would likely result in positive impacts on facilities; traffic; economy and public health and safety. Potential negative impacts would be expected to

soils; groundwater; surface water; wetlands; floodplains; ecological resources; air quality; hazardous materials, waste and IRP sites; noise; cultural resources; land use; infrastructure; and traffic. Many of these impacts would be associated with land clearing and construction activity, but would be temporary and relatively minor. All impacts, short and long term, would be less than significant. The EA identifies impact reduction measures (e.g. avoidance, best management practices (BMPs), and environmental compliance) to minimize potential environmental impacts.

Cumulative Impacts: Cumulative impacts result from the incremental effect of separate past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions on the environment, regardless of what agency or person undertakes those actions. They can accrue from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over an extended period of time. Taken individually, environmental damage is incremental, occurring one action at a time. However, determining the significance of the collective actions requires an understanding of their effect on the larger environment.

Projects occurring on Fort Gordon (in addition to the Preferred Alternative) would be required to follow the BMPs described in the EA. If these BMPs are properly implemented and maintained for each project, there would be only minor cumulative impacts. When necessary, appropriate state and federal agencies would be consulted, and impacts on the respective resources would be avoided by following the agency recommendations.

Public Review and Comments

The EA and draft FNSI were made available to federal, state, and local agencies and the public for review and comment for 30 days. A Notice of Availability for the EA and draft FNSI were published in the *Augusta Chronicle*. During the public review and comment period, copies of the EA were made available at the Fort Gordon Public Affairs Office (Building 33720, Darling Hall, Chamberlain Ave., Fort Gordon, GA), Woodworth Library (Building 33500, Rice Road, Fort Gordon, GA), and the Augusta-Richmond County Library (823 Telfair St., Augusta, GA). During and immediately following this public comment period, the Army collected, logged, and incorporated any comments received into the EA and FNSI as necessary. The Army will prepare and release a final FNSI and EA to the appropriate local, state, and federal repositories after receiving all comments.

The signed FNSI and EA will remain on record with the Fort Gordon, DPW, Environmental Division Office.

Finding of No Significant Impact

The results of the analysis in the EA, comments received within the public review period, and the needs of Fort Gordon have been considered by the Fort Gordon garrison. Based on these factors, the decision is to implement the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative (Alternative 2: Training Area 17 Alternative). Implementation of the Proposed Action will not have a significant impact on the quality of human life or natural environment.

This analysis fulfills the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as implemented by the Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), as well as the requirements of the Environmental Analysis of Army Actions (32 CFR 651). Therefore, issuance of a FNSI is warranted, and an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

TODD TURNER
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Commanding

Date