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DEFENSE ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION PROGRAM FOR FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITES

Across the country, the Department of Defense acquired properties, often during times of war, to use for military training, testing and demonstrations. When no longer needed, many of these properties were cleaned up according to the best practices available at the time and then transferred to other owners such as private individuals or other government entities. These Formerly Used Defense Sites can range from privately owned farms to National Parks. They also include residential, industrial and educational properties. We are committed to protecting people and the environment and improving public safety by cleaning up these properties. The Defense Environmental Restoration Program for Formerly Used Defense Sites was established to evaluate and, if necessary, to remediate Formerly Used Defense Sites. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) manages the program on behalf of the Department of Defense.

Congress passed the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, also known as Superfund, in 1980 and the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act in 1986. These laws give the Corps the authority for certain cleanup activities and dictate the process we must follow. We conduct investigations to determine the potential risk to people and the environment from the military's use of the property. Public involvement and community participation are important components of the process. The Corps partners with stakeholders throughout the process, including congressional representatives, state and local governments, regulatory and environmental agencies, and affected property owners.

BACKGROUND

In 1925, the military began acquiring land for what would become Fort Buchanan, located about four miles south of San Juan. Initially, it was used as a target range, but with the onset of World War II, it grew in size and significance. The fort included roads, utilities, barracks, administrative buildings, a depot, ammunition storage, family housing, and a host of other support facilities. By 1949, Fort Buchanan's military port and general depot were responsible for receiving and shipping all supplies for every Army and Air Command Station in the Caribbean. Fort Buchanan also played a key role in the Korean Conflict, again serving all the Army facilities in the Caribbean.

Following World War II, the Army began reducing the size of Fort Buchanan.

By the mid-1960s, Army restructuring led to significantly reducing the size of Fort Buchanan. The Formerly Used Defense Site comprises the 1,037.44 acres that were previously part of Fort Buchanan. That land is now used for homes, businesses and a park (Julio Enrique Monagas).



ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS

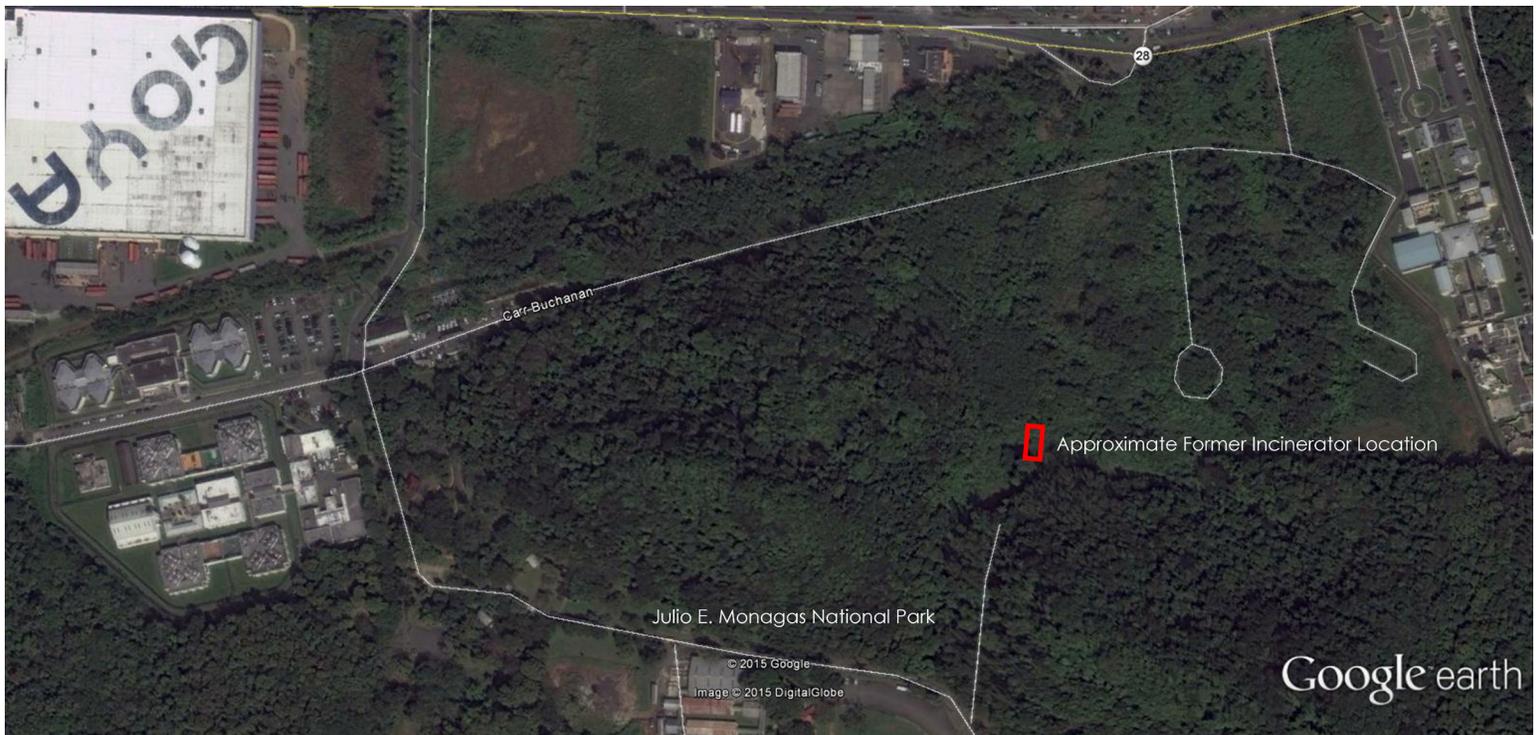
The Corps has evaluated the site several times over the years to determine if anything remains from the military's training.

FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITES | Fort Buchanan

Historical research identified an ammunition storage area and pistol and skeet ranges. In 2011, the Corps conducted a Site Inspection to determine if further evaluation of the site was necessary based on the past military use of the property. No munitions or munitions debris (small arms or pieces of larger munitions items) were identified in one area. Munitions debris was found near the location of one of the small arms ranges. Additionally, crews located the former incinerator area where munitions may have been destroyed. The incinerator area includes two concrete structures in a heavily wooded area within the park. Crews found debris not associated with the military as well as .45 caliber, .50 caliber, and shotgun shell casings.

Expended small arms do not pose an explosive hazard, and no munitions or explosive materials have been identified within the former Fort Buchanan area. However, because safety is our primary concern, the Corps will conduct a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study to determine what may be present in what amounts and locations. This is known as characterizing the nature and extent of potential military-related materials.

The Corps uses a tool called the Munitions Response Site Prioritization Protocol to rank the risk to people and the environment at Formerly Used Defense Sites, such as the former Fort Buchanan land. This tool helps the Department of Defense prioritize studies or remediation (if necessary) for properties across the country. Sites that have a higher potential risk to people and the environment are addressed first. Since the potential risk at the former Fort Buchanan is low, the Corps has not scheduled the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study for the Small Arms Range or the Incinerator Area. We will notify the public when we anticipate initiating further studies.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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