

DEFENDING THE MILITARY MISSION

IN THE CALIFORNIA DESERT REGION

June 2017

Fact Sheet 1 of 6

This fact sheet summarizes the information that is presented in more detail in the Sonoran Institute report titled [Evaluating Encroachment Pressures on the Military Mission in the California Desert Region](http://www.tiny.cc/CalDesertMilitary). (www.tiny.cc/CalDesertMilitary)

This document should be paired with the individual fact sheets representing the five desert facilities. Recommendations in this document apply broadly across the studied military facilities in the California Desert region.



Desert's Federal Lands Key to Future Military Operations

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This report explores encroachment issues and analyzes their impact on five significant military facilities in the desert region of California (Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range, Edwards Air Force Base, Fort Irwin National Training Center, and Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms). In general, we conclude that effective natural resource management in this region is critical to preserve the military mission at these facilities.

The report identifies the range of potential impacts which are anticipated in the region that will require vigilant monitoring, including renewable energy and urban development, transmission lines, recreational use, mining activity, and the management of wildlife. The report provides an analysis of the potential encroachment for these five impacts and suggests a range of actions that should be taken in order to ensure that both the natural resources and U.S. military operations endure.

Key Findings

- Military missions in the California Desert region are reliant on the health of natural resources and openness of the landscape in order to operate.
- To preserve the viability of these important and irreplaceable military readiness activities, there is a critical need for integration of military activities and natural resource management.
- Managing military lands in this region is complex due to the need to preserve viable populations of threatened and endangered species.



- A coordinated and collaborative approach for the management of natural resources in the region is required in order to sustain the viability of military missions in region.
- The future is uncertain. Proactive strategies that ensure long-term protection of military assets will provide a more stable foundation for the sustainment of military missions.
- Military missions are threatened throughout the United States due to impacts from many sources. In the California region these issues are:

Direct encroachment:

1. Urban and rural residential development that can be incompatible with military related noise and activities
2. Wind and solar projects creating new obstructions in military airspace
3. New transmission infrastructure which can obstruct military airspace
4. Recreational activities that stray into military training areas

Indirect impacts from:

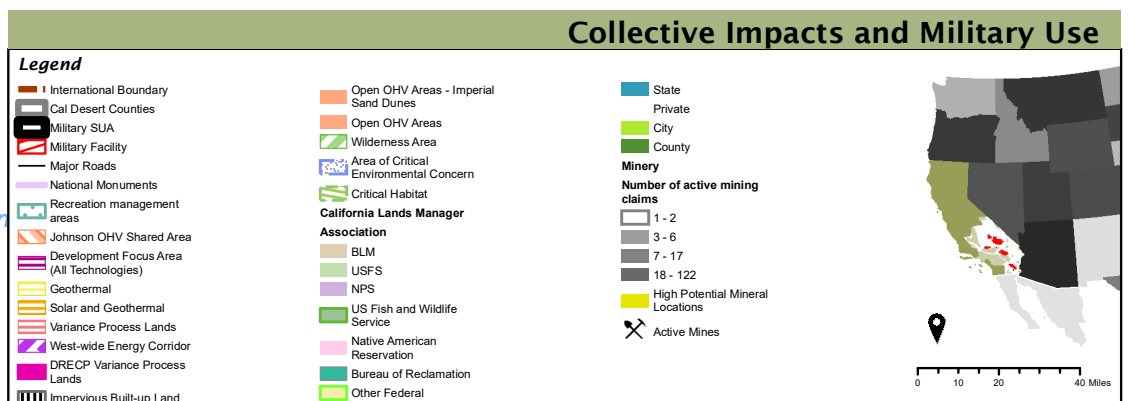
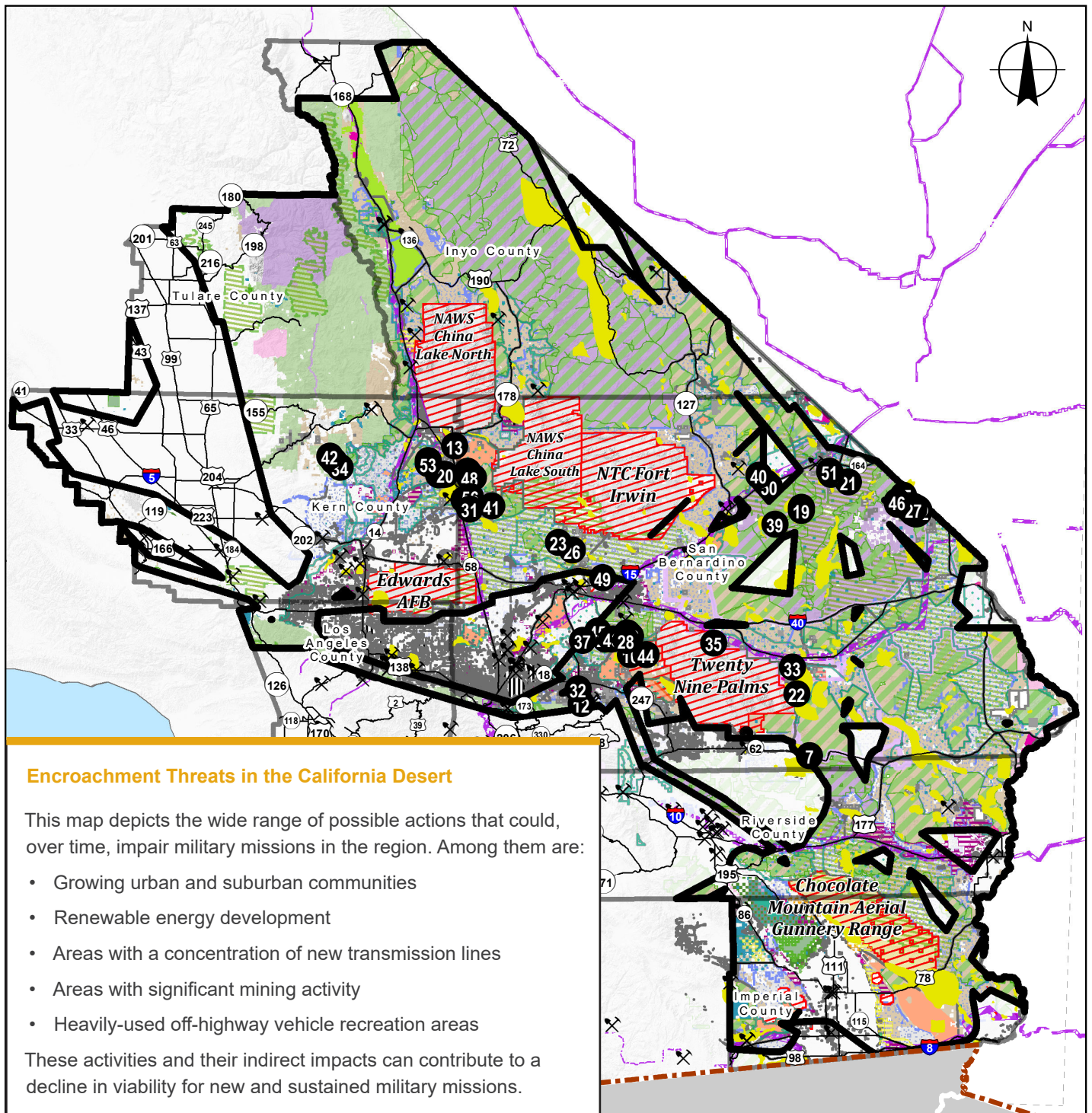
1. Ongoing development within wildlife habitat corridors that threatens viable populations of plant and animal species managed by the Department of Defense

2. Management practices on federal lands that result in habitat fragmentation and challenge military natural resource objectives
3. Overuse of water resources that are necessary for the sustainment of the military operations

Recommendations

- Collaborative planning activities will improve the sustainment of military facilities in the California Desert region. In particular, Joint Land Use Studies (JLUS) need to be developed and kept up-to-date with surrounding communities in order to encourage compatible land uses and address water resource challenges. In addition, some installations are focusing on implementation strategies from their planning documents, which will provide better long-term outcomes.
- Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans (INRMPs) need to be constantly updated in response to changing management requirements, natural resource conditions, and policy.
- Military advocacy groups should be empowered to engage with stakeholders in pursuit of solutions that could include new conservation designations and/or federal or state policy that proactively addresses encroachment challenges.







- Increased dialogue with municipalities and land managers would help prevent new pressures. By assigning liaisons with all governmental entities and having an annual education forum, better coordination should occur.
- The Desert Managers Group is an example of a best practice that has been successful at encouraging coordination across sectors. More participation from the environmental and municipal sectors would improve the likelihood for successful outcomes.
- Conservation activities throughout the California Desert region will benefit the long-term sustainability of military facilities through:
 - o The prevention of encroachment activities in areas of importance to military missions.
 - o Facilitating the more effective management practices within designated conservation lands that prioritize compatible uses and natural resource protection.
 - o Acquisition of developable private lands within key areas of ecological importance in order to proactively prevent encroachment.
- Water resources are increasingly constrained, requiring coordination with nearby municipalities to ensure that military activities can be sustained and quality of life is preserved in surrounding areas.

To learn more about our efforts to preserve military missions through environmental stewardship, visit our website or contact:

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The Mission of the Sonoran Institute

The Sonoran Institute's mission is to connect people and communities with the natural resources that nourish and sustain them. We work at the nexus of commerce, community, and conservation to help people in the North American West build the communities they want to live in while preserving the values which brought them here. We envision a West where civil dialogue and collaboration are hallmarks of decision making, where people and wildlife live in harmony, and where clean water, air, and energy are assured.

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