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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

MILITARY TRAINING ON PUBLIC LANDS:
GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESS

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT
INTENDED FOR PUBLICATION

by

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Mr. Michael R. King

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> The increasing demand for readiness and training offers special challenges to the Armed Services. Obtaining suitable training sites to conduct operations and training is often controversial. Development and identification of guidelines that active, Reserve and National Guard units must consider when seeking and conducting training on public lands in the continental United States are discussed.

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The goal of Army training is to produce a force trained to mobilize, deploy, fight and win anywhere in the world. The challenge is to train an Army that is ready today and preparing for tomorrow . . . Training is the number one priority for the Army.¹

Our national defense and the commitments we have worldwide are highly dependent on the skills and readiness of our Armed Forces. Training these forces is a dynamic and complex process. However, bases and training centers that exist in the United States today were for the most part established before World War II, and the amount and types of land available to conduct military training have essentially remained static. To increase the capability of existing training facilities, the Armed Forces, through their local installation commanders, have relied on the use of adjacent public and private lands to complement their training facilities. Examples of such public lands are national forests, public domain (U.S. government land administered by the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management), state forests, and game reserves. In the last few years the use of these lands for military purposes has caused considerable discussion and in some cases controversy. Because many Americans have an increased awareness of environmental, social, and economic issues related to natural resource management, the military often faces adverse public reaction to conducting training on these lands. My purpose here is to discuss the issue of military training on public lands and to

identify guidelines that military decision makers can apply to meet their training objectives within the strictures that Americans expect of proper public land management.

BACKGROUND

Weapons

During the last twenty five years the Armed Forces have experienced tremendous changes. Technology has provided a climate in which new weapons, equipment, weapon platforms, and delivery systems have flourished. Weapon capabilities have increased in range, speed, convenience, and effectiveness. Equipment is faster, more durable, and more sophisticated than ever before. Margins of safety in training have increased due to the potential destructive effects of these modern weapons. The typical ground soldier of today has an arsenal of high-tech, lethal weapons that boggle the mind of a World War II combat veteran. To master and become proficient in the employment of this equipment and weaponry requires a great deal of time in training for soldiers and units.

Doctrine

AirLand Battle doctrine provides the guidance on how the Army will fight. It includes the principles to be used by Army forces in conjunction with other services and allies in planning and conducting operations.² Three of the basic tenets (agility, depth, and synchronization) help to paint a picture of a fast, mobile, highly maneuverable force. The doctrine

sets against a background of expansive, varied terrain with room to position and surprise enemy forces. Inherent in the AirLand Battles doctrine is the use of aircraft for close air support and the ability to simultaneously inflict damage on the enemy's rear echelons. Operational and tactical training based on this doctrine requires a great deal of area to simulate realistic battlefield conditions.

Training

Training doctrine itself has greatly changed. Unit commanders must "Train as they intend to fight."³ Training should be as realistic as possible to include the terrain, weather, weapons, communications, and jointness. The training environment, together with the application of tactics, should produce the psychological conditions encountered on the battlefield and in support areas. Military training philosophy has evolved to a team concept of multi-echelon training. Battalion and brigade exercises are often conducted today, where years ago platoons and companies were the typical training units. Larger-unit training requires more area and a variety of ground conditions in order to develop the situations and roles typical of battlefield conditions. Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army Paul W. Johnson states the Army position well: "We need more land out there. We want to get into brigade-size exercises and joint maneuvers. That's what it's all about."⁴

Concurrent with the changes in weapons, battle doctrine, and training doctrine has been the rise in Reserve and National Guard forces. Most of the time spent in weekend and two-week drills is spent in a training mode. Armories and storage yards are limited in their ability to meet the hands-on experience and training needs of today's soldiers. Therefore, more and larger training areas are needed.

Training centers and local Reserve Component unit commanders have been creative in meeting the demand for increased area, space, and terrain with which to complement their facilities and installations. In the 1950s the Department of Defense developed Joint Policy Statements with the USDA Forest Service for the use of National Forest lands. Permits and rights-of-way were sought from the Bureau of Land Management for federally managed public domain lands. National Guard and Army Reserve units across the country leased land from farmers, ranchers, and large land-owning corporations. They also developed agreements with other state agencies to use state forests, state parks, game reserves, and other similar natural resource lands. For example, in 1986 the Army in the United States utilized 14.5 million acres of non-Army, private, state, and federal lands to conduct training and testing and to buffer private lands from Army activities. Most of this was National Forest Land (70%).⁵

In November 1988, a new Interdepartmental Agreement was signed by the Secretaries of Agriculture and Defense. This Agreement updates the earlier policy statements and identifies

the procedures for planning, scheduling, and conducting military activities on National Forest lands. It also affirms the long-standing policy that national forests can provide a variety of settings to conduct military training activities.⁶

TRENDS IN SOCIETY

At the same time the Armed Forces were changing with respect to weapons, battle, and training doctrine, America underwent a transformation toward an increased awareness and appreciation for natural resource lands and improved environmental laws. Legislation in Congress produced the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Wilderness Act, the National Trails Act, and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. In 1970 America experienced its first "Earth Day"--April 22, 1970. The words "ecology," "environmentalist," "environmental analysis" and "special interest group" became the buzz words of the natural resource community. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA, 1974) and the National Forest Management Act (1974) directed the Bureau of Land Management and USDA Forest Service to conduct environmental impact analyses and land use planning for the public lands under their administration. The development of these land use management plans was to be done with intensive public involvement, land capability and suitability determination, and economic analysis. States initiated similar environmental analyses and planning for land uses and developments within their jurisdictions.

An indirect outcome of this environmental legislation and land use planning was the increasing sophistication and organization of persons and groups interested in natural resource lands. National groups such as the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, National Wildlife Federation, Ducks Unlimited, Trout Unlimited, and Audubon Society geared up to promote their concerns for public land management. Similarly the timber, mining, livestock, and recreation industries promoted their interests through national, regional, and local organizations. The management of America's national resource lands became a land allocation decision, that is, designating areas for certain kinds of uses and experiences compatible with the land's capabilities, the public's wishes and, in some respects, the political process. The executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government exert their authorities through policy decisions, budgets, laws, and court decisions. In essence, then, the management of America's public lands has evolved to include social, economic, psychological, and political aspects in concert with the physical attributes and capabilities of the land.

THE CONTROVERSY

The designation of America's public lands is for the most part completed. Few additions to federal or state parks, forests, or game reserves have occurred in the last several decades. Therefore, one could say that "the pie is already

cut." These lands have been set aside through congressional classification or state initiatives. In some instances, private lands have been purchased with federal and state funds. Private conservation groups such as the Nature Conservancy or Trust for Public Lands have also acquired and donated or traded land for public use. The designation process itself often is controversial, as the role of government versus private land development and use is intensively debated. The result of this process is that local communities, neighboring land owners, and public land users expect a given level of land stewardship from their public land managers.

When the Army, proposes to conduct military training in a national forest or game reserve, for example, the power or interest balance is tested. Segments of the population feel that the bases and training centers scattered around the United States are the proper places to train. People are sensitized through television news, movies, and personal experience to equate training with destruction. Furthermore, with "peace breaking out" worldwide, the need for more training seems inappropriate. The idea of training on natural resource lands also violates a widespread belief that military training is not an appropriate use of these lands. Wildlands are essentially "zoned" for recreational enjoyment, wildlife, grazing, timber, and minerals management. Many people think military use violates the "psychological experience" one comes to expect from public lands. In the last few years examples where controversy have arisen include:

Arkansas: The Army proposed the expanded use of portions of the Ouachita National Forest for the Joint Readiness Training Center. The purpose of the Joint Readiness Training Center is to train in Light Infantry Combat tactics.

West Virginia: The West Virginia Air National Guard proposed low-level air flights and airborne training on portions of the Monongahela National Forest and adjacent private lands. The forest is also proposed as a potential training site for land navigation and orienteering training for Army units from Ft. Bragg, North Carolina.

Minnesota: The Minnesota National Guard proposed an expansion of Camp Ripley onto the Superior National Forest in Northern Minnesota. The purpose of the expansion is to conduct division-sized maneuvers in mechanized infantry, tanks, and artillery tactics.

Washington: The Army proposes the expansion of the Yakima Firing Range by acquiring 63,000 acres of private land. The Army is presently preparing an Environmental Impact Statement to analyze the potential effects of its proposal.

California: The Army's National Training Center near Barstow is proposing an expansion of this facility. An Environmental Impact Statement is presently being developed.

The list above is not an entire representation of proposed military training on public lands.

To obtain ideas and learn of actions taken that were successful in meeting military objectives and land managers' concerns, I interviewed military and civilian personnel of the Army, Marine Corps, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve Components, as well as land managers, elected officials, and land commissioners.⁷ Conclusions and ideas emerging from these interviews were grouped and summarized into the eight guidelines that follow.

GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESS

Command and Control

Before initiating a new training project, the unit commander proposing the project must obtain a clear and detailed legal methodology for obtaining the necessary authorizations. The chain of command, specific task assignments, a precise line of control and communication, and a clearly identified trail of responsibility and performance must be developed. Obviously this will be commensurate with the size, duration, and complexity of the proposed activity. Long-term commitments covering large training areas, neutralization of anticipated controversy, and abundant coordination require the support and resources of major command authorities. A rule of thumb for a significant project might be to first determine the level of authority responsible for approving the project and then to provide briefings and information papers to two organizational levels above. This ensures that senior-level concerns and support are taken into account in developing proposals. The "big picture" viewpoint often provides political insights that are useful to installation commanders and training officers. Moreover, the military has various proponents who through their missions and functions tend to be fairly independent in their normal course of work. For example, the Joint Readiness Training Center (a TRADOC entity) is a special activity and tenant of Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. Close coordination and clearly understood

lines of authority and responsibility are necessary to the success of training expansion proposed by the Joint Readiness Training Center or other similar entities.

Installations also should have master plans identifying the facilities, activities, and potential uses or expansion opportunities. A long-range plan which provides priorities, scheduling, and activities is very important to determine the adequacy of the installation for present or future training. The need for adjacent public lands for training should not be a surprise to unit or installation commanders or the local community. Neither should it be a program of "fits and starts." The long-term planning necessary to meet the Armed Forces' training needs is too important to be considered haphazardly or without the full knowledge, support and coordination of key players.

Public Information

Military officials and land managers stress the importance of an active and professional public involvement program. This is true for the local National Guard commander who uses a small parcel of state game reserve lands as well as the commandant responsible for long-term training programs on thousands of acres of adjacent national forest land. Inherent and paramount to the success of conducting training on public lands is a professional and well-trained public affairs staff.

The local National Guard commander may perform these duties in his or her area. This might include contacting, briefing, and soliciting advice from local mayors, county supervisors, conservation leaders, and state representatives. Special interest groups such as sportsman's clubs, wildlife and fisheries groups, and local Sierra Club chapters are also important. These persons and groups have an intensive interest in the management of their public lands. Failure to take their interests into account during the development of military training proposals threatens the success of one's proposal.

The commander of a large training center such as Ft. Bragg, Ft. Chaffee, the National Training Center, or other similar installations has a similar but profoundly more complex challenge. Besides local and community interests, state and national leaders should be consulted. Governor's offices, state conservation leaders, and elected officials should be considered participants in the decision-making process. The congressional delegations and their staffs should be consulted and informed of the proposals to enter into agreements with public land or large private landowners. Often the first place a concerned citizen or group turns to is their senators or representatives in Washington, D.C.

Several persons interviewed stressed the importance of selecting individuals who are skillful in presenting training proposals, knowledgeable in understanding the political process of decision-making, and sensitive to the concerns expressed by key players. The military prides itself in being open, candid,

up-front, and honest in its dealings. These are excellent attributes for success in the public involvement process. There is a delicate line that must be considered in selecting public affairs personnel. Because an individual is an excellent infantry, armor or artillery officer does not mean that he also has good public relations skills. Several persons interviewed related incidents at meetings, briefings and contacts with public agencies in which military personnel exhibited arrogance, intimidation, and insensitivity to the concerns of others. Questioning a detractor's patriotism, for example, does little to develop an understanding of the issues or consensus in later negotiations. One needs to remember that in many instances people have been actively involved in the development of land management plans in their states and regions. Controversy may have existed, with issues having been resolved through hard work, consensus, compromise, and sometimes litigation. A new training proposal that upsets the balance or is contrary to the key players' expectations will be viewed as a threat.

Another consideration to be aware of is the military's tendency to use jargon to describe a thing, activity, unit, or person. Avoid it as much as possible. Use common terms people can identify with in their everyday life. Translate military jargon into their terms and words rather than asking them to accept military jargon or acronyms.

In summary, assessing the internal and external influences of a training proposal, developing a public involvement strategy, and using the skills of sensitive professionals to carry out the strategy are extremely important aspects of the public information process.

Situation Assessment

Closely related to the public information and involvement process, situation assessment may offer the greatest challenge to the military training proponent. Public lands are managed by a diversity of state and federal agencies. Each has its unique mission and charter. For example, national forests are designated by Congress for multiple-use management. Within national forests are found other areas specially designated by Congress such as wilderness, national recreation areas, or wild or scenic river corridors. Each of these has a set of laws and policies unique to its management. Understanding the terms of the recently signed Interdepartmental Agreement with the Forest Service is essential for all participating military services. State forests and game reserves generally have different missions and are managed by different state agencies with oversight by appointed or elected commissioners. State laws, regulations, and policies also apply. Public domain lands in the west are managed by the Department of Interior's Bureau of Land Management. Military training occurs on all of these types of public lands. Different agencies have various structures, procedures, laws, policies, management plans, and

processes for approving uses and activities under their jurisdiction. It is important to note that there is no single individual or agency responsible for federal land management. This is also generally true at the state government level. It behooves the training proponent to become familiar with the characteristics of the agencies with which it is dealing.

Just as the military has its constituency, so do the land managing agencies. As stated earlier, individuals, special interest groups, government officials, contractors, communities, and industries all have developed concepts, ideas, and interests concerning public land management. Understanding who these groups are, what they represent, and how they interact with the public land manager are important. Often long-time relationships have evolved, consensus and acceptance developed, coalitions established, and partnerships initiated to promote resource issues and problem resolution. To some extent, the military is already a part of this constituency. Ft. Bragg, North Carolina, the Pennsylvania and West Virginia National Guards, the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, California long standing agreements relative to training on adjacent public lands. That is not to say, however, that future training proposals will be welcomed or approved. Each will, no doubt, be considered on its own merits. The key point to recognize here is that existing relationships and processes need to be followed. If new training is proposed, an accurate assessment of the key players and their role in the public involvement and

decision-making process must be completed. This assessment in concert with the unique processes or procedures of a particular agency must be well understood or learned.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 as amended sets forth the necessary procedures for evaluating proposed activities on federal lands. The most important thing to remember about this law is that it sets forth a decision-making process based on social, economic, psychological, and environmental effects of a proposed activity. It is not a justification of a project or action. It requires public involvement and consideration of public concerns. It is not a tool to tell the public as much as it is to ask the public. It is viewed by land managers and the public as establishing a credible decision-making process for analyzing activities and uses of public lands. While it may be new to the unit or installation commander, it is the normal way to do business for the land manager.

To comply with the NEPA, the land managing agency will typically require the military to do the analysis for the land manager's approval. Generally, the Corps of Engineers does this for the Army. It is important to recognize that the Corps may not be familiar with all the different aspects of the training proposal. Often the Corps district office is headquartered some distance away from the public land agency and proposed training site. As such, the Corps of Engineer

Staff may be unfamiliar with the local and regional politics, special interest groups, and key players. When the Corps or other third party conducts the environmental analysis for a proposed project, they are often viewed by locals as outsiders and proponents of the project. The viewpoint of the public then is that the analysis is merely a pretextual justification for the training, not a truly objective sifting of the pros and cons.

A key consideration should be the quality of service provided by the Corps in conducting environmental analysis for military training. During the interviews, several military and civilian personnel stated that they were "receiving average service and quality" in their analysis. In training proposals where controversy is expected, where credibility is important, and where training missions are critical, "average" may not be good enough. The process of coming to a decision may be as important as the decision itself. Land managing agencies are asked to develop alternatives, analyze, and come to a decision. The better the data, public involvement, options, and analysis, the more credible the decision becomes.

Enhancement Projects

Without exception one of the best public relations tools related to training is the resource enhancement project. Land managing agencies are strapped for funding like other government services. They usually have a variety of proposed resource projects that require equipment and labor to improve

their land stewardship. Examples include road construction and maintenance, wildlife clearing, construction and maintenance, flood damage repair, erosion prevention, mine reclamation, fisheries improvement, and debris clean-up. As a unit commander proposing training on public lands, offer to take on a project. Work it into the training plan as it is developed. In many cases, the equipment time used will provide the necessary training needed by operators. For example, the Ohio National Guard built timber access roads on the Monongahela National Forest in the summer of 1988. They bivouaced on site and provided all the equipment, manpower and logistics to survey and build the roads. They came as a self-contained unit and rotated their battalions during two-week periods throughout the summer. The project was a success in that it provided a valuable training experience and at the same time met natural resource objectives for the Forest Service.⁸ Other similar projects occur in Pennsylvania, California, and Washington. This is not a new idea by any means. In many instances soldiers work alongside volunteer groups in carrying out the projects. Working together with local people enhances the image of the military, develops support from local community leaders, and develops partnerships that will assist in future training and enhancement projects.

Liaison

As already mentioned, task assignment and coordination responsibilities must be developed prior to contacting public land managers. A key position is that of a liaison to whom the land manager and interested public can refer. This person is important during every phase of the training operation.

In most instances, training on public lands is a routine and recurring part of the training program. It may be authorized under a master agreement as exists between the Department of Defense and USDA Forest Service or a memorandum of agreement between the state adjutant general and a state land managing agency. Over time, a long-term relationship develops that provides an efficient method of handling new training exercises. This was evident in most states and agencies that were interviewed.

In some cases, the military commander has entered into an agreement that reimburses the land managing agency for the time spent preparing analysis and coordinating and monitoring the training programs. Another successful technique is the financial reimbursement for an established and designated agency person to act as military-agency liaison. The benefits of this to the military are:

- o It provides a responsive service from the agency.
- o The liaison provides a continuous communication link to land/agency activities and decisions.
- o The liaison provides the military commander with ready expertise and advice concerning laws, regulations, policies and land management direction of the public land agency.

The Toiyabe National Forest has such an agreement with the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, California. The long-term intensive use of approximately 10,000 acres of national forest land requires a ready, responsive, and coordinated relationship between the two entities. Reimbursement of a Forest Service liaison person has been in practice for approximately four years and is working very well.⁹ Unit commanders who offer funding to cover the administrative aspects of conducting training will generally find a more receptive and responsive land manager.

Mitigation

One of the challenges facing training officers and unit commanders is to conduct realistic training that closely imitates the actual battlefield situation. The training environment should provide the factors that test the individual or unit skills. These include the physical and psychological aspects. Training on military reservations is fairly unconstrained. However, public land agencies have a different charter. Therefore, training may have to be modified somewhat.

When developing training plans and proposals for public lands, consider the effects on the resources and other users. Develop criteria for the types of land that are desired rather than a specific site. Often when land managers know the kind of training experience desired, they can offer suggestions on locations where controversy and effects on other users can be lessened or eliminated. Military officials who demand

exclusive use of an area that closes off the area during training will find a cool reception by land managers. Training that is scheduled during peak weekends or high use seasons generally is not approved. In some cases overnight bivouac sites will not be allowed or, if allowed, restricted to certain areas. The use of heavy equipment off roads is critically reviewed. Generally the use of "live fire" is prohibited. All such concerns should be considered in developing training plans.

A key question a training proponent should ask is whether an activity is "nice or necessary." Can a skill be obtained or tested without some of the logistic or special military requirements used? Examples include helicopter support for mountain climbing or winter survival in wilderness, the use of explosives, or clearing landing zones when suitable terrain exists nearby. These examples are fairly elementary. The key concept to recognize is that different agencies and lands have various resource and psychological experiences as part of their management plan objectives. Being open to these ideas and compromising when the occasion calls for it will greatly enhance the ability to conduct training on public lands.

Another important aspect is to offer contingency plans for the restoration of the land should unforeseen maneuver damage occur. Accidents, emergencies, and unplanned damage do occur. Being prepared for these and developing contingency plans will minimize the concerns of the land manager and the public.

Alternatives

There are numerous land use factors that the military will experience in the future. The potential decrease in the Department of Defense budget will limit training funds. The base closure study recently conducted by Congress may cause consolidation of bases and result in an increased need for training land in certain areas. The evolution of the AirLand Battle concept, and increased technology will continue to pressure existing lands for training. The increasing emphasis on special operations, low intensity conflict and light forces has changed the types of training conducted. The concept of "training where you fight" may initiate the development of new training facilities and centers. The expansion of the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, and the Yakima Firing Range indicate that the Army has already identified the need for more land to conduct training. Options that should also be considered are the outright purchase of lands adjacent to existing centers, land exchanges¹⁰ with adjacent public land managing agencies, and long-term leases of private lands. All of these options are workable means to mitigate or preclude the potential conflicts that arise when training on public lands. Of course, they are not without cost or potential controversy in their own right. Recent legislation in the 100th Congress prohibited acquiring additional land adjacent to the China Lake Naval Weapons Center and the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center for example, and leasing of private lands has run into snags due to interpretations of

liability by the military. These instances point out that the task of acquiring additional training lands is not getting any easier. The point is, the military must conduct long-term planning and look for various ways to meet its training objectives.

CONCLUSION

My interviews and observations indicate that the Armed Forces have achieved numerous successes in acquiring sites and conducting training on public lands. The de facto application of the guidelines developed in this essay indicate that many installation and unit commanders already have a good grasp of the situation in their respective areas. Further opportunities to improve lie in improved up-front planning, public involvement, and leadership's sensitivity to the socio-political environment. Suggested avenues to meet these ends include:

- o Sharing training facilities with other branches of service.
- o Developing longer tours for public affairs and community involvement personnel and utilizing more civilians in public affairs duties. The objective is to attain an increased awareness and sensitivity to local and regional situations. It is assumed that tenure provides a method to acquire this knowledge.
- o Acquiring skills in consensus decision-making methods. The land managing agencies and their constituencies are familiar with these negotiation concepts. An understanding of this process aids in planning and developing proposed projects or training proposals.

- c. Unit commanders working closely with their environmental coordination staff. Their advice, knowledge and assistance is important to the success of any training proposal.

Training officers and unit commanders should consider the eight guidelines delineated above when conducting training on public lands. For many, these ideas are not new. Successful training on public lands has resulted when these guidelines have been consciously applied, and the guidelines will be helpful in achieving future training successes as well.

ENDNOTES

1. Army Forces Training, Army Regulation 350-41, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, DC, 26 September 1986.
2. Operations, Field Manual No. 100-5, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, DC, 5 May 1986.
3. Army Forces Training, Army Regulation 305-41, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, DC, 26 September 1986.
4. Los Angeles Times, 30 January 1989, pg. 3. "Army May Buy 200,000 Acres to Expand Training at Ft. Irwin," Melissa Healy, Times Staff Writer.
5. Interview with Assistant Secretary of the Army Staff, Pentagon, Washington, DC, 1 December 1988.
6. The Friday Newsletter, USDA - Forest Service 11 November 1988.
7. Interviews with Active and Reserve Units, the Pentagon, as well as public land managing agencies and special interest groups were conducted in person or on the phone. Most provided information based on a non-attribution basis. The author has respected this in citations referenced.
8. Personal knowledge and observations of the author who was Deputy Forest Supervisor, Monongahela National Forest June 1987 - August 1988.
9. Phone interviews with Cliff Shaw, Forest Service - Marine Corps liaison, Bridgeport, California, November, December 1988.
10. Land Exchange: purchase lands needed by public agencies and exchange them for lands needed by the military. The desired effect is to be consolidate ownership into large blocks where efficiency can be gained or where special needs can be obtained by a land managing agency.