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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

The U.S. government began acquiring property in 1939 to establish what became known as Ramey Air Force Base (AFB). Located north of Aguadilla, it grew to encompass approximately 4,357 acres. Initially known as Borinquén Field, it was an important location during World War II, providing a base for reconnaissance flights to defend the U.S. against German U-boats. It also served as a refueling station and maintenance area for aircraft flying to Europe and Africa. In 1948, it was renamed Ramey Air Force Base and was operated under the Strategic Air Command. Ramey played a critical role during the Cold War for reconnaissance missions and refueling squadrons. B-52 bombers arrived at Ramey in the 1950s, and bomber crews continued to be on alert at Ramey until 1972.

The Ramey AFB Ammunition Storage Area/Disposal Range consisted of 228 acres located in the northeastern portion of the property, where the Air Force stored munitions and destroyed obsolete or damaged munitions from 1943 to 1973.

By 1973, the Air Force no longer needed the base, and it was deactivated. The Ramey AFB Ammunition Storage/Disposal Area property was transferred to university entities with smaller portions owned by government facilities.

ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS

The Corps has evaluated the site several times over the years to determine if anything remains from the military's use. Through historical research and sites visits, the Corps identified the areas that were known to be used to store munitions and an ordnance disposal area. In 2007, the Corps completed a Site Inspection to determine if further evaluation of the site may be necessary based on the past military use of the property. No munitions with the exception of munitions debris (expended small arms

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and/or pieces of munitions) was found at the site. Munitions debris does not pose an explosive hazard, and no munitions or explosive materials have been identified within the former Ramey AFB Ammunitions Storage Area/Disposal Range. 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 evaluate the risk to people and the environment at Formerly Used Defense Sites, such as the former Ramey AFB. 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. The Corps has not scheduled the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study for Ramey AFB due to its lower prioritization score, but we will notify the public when we anticipate initiating further studies.



Source: Google Earth 2019

SAFETY FIRST: Remember the 3Rs

Because of previous military training, munitions may potentially be present. These could be dangerous and may not be easily recognizable. Never touch, move or disturb something you think may be a munition. Remember the 3Rs of explosive safety.

RECOGNIZE - The object you found could be dangerous.

RETREAT - Leave the area without touching or moving the object.

REPORT - Call 9-1-1 immediately.

 **Recognize**  **Retreat**  **Report**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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