

AUGUST 2019

### 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. The Department of Defense is committed to protecting people and the environment and improving public safety by cleaning up these sites if hazards from the former military operations remain. 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. The Corps conducts 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. We partner with stakeholders throughout the process, including congressional representatives, state and local governments, regulatory and environmental agencies, and affected property owners.

### BACKGROUND

During World War II, the military leased 2,560 acres in Sarasota County for flight crews from Sarasota Army Airfield to use for aerial bombing practice. The site, known as Venice Bombing Range, is south of US Highway 41 about four miles east of South Venice. The Army set up a target consisting of three concentric rings with a hexagonal warning line outside of the circles. The air crews practiced low-level dive bombing, dropping miniature practice bombs at altitudes of 1,500 to 2,500 feet above the target. Practice munitions do not contain the same explosive materials that are found in "live" or non-practice munitions. They are often filled with sand or water or could be a solid piece of metal.



When World War II ended, the Army no longer needed the site, and the leases were terminated. The land is now privately owned and is used primarily for cattle grazing and sod farming. A portion of it has been developed into a residential community.

### ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS

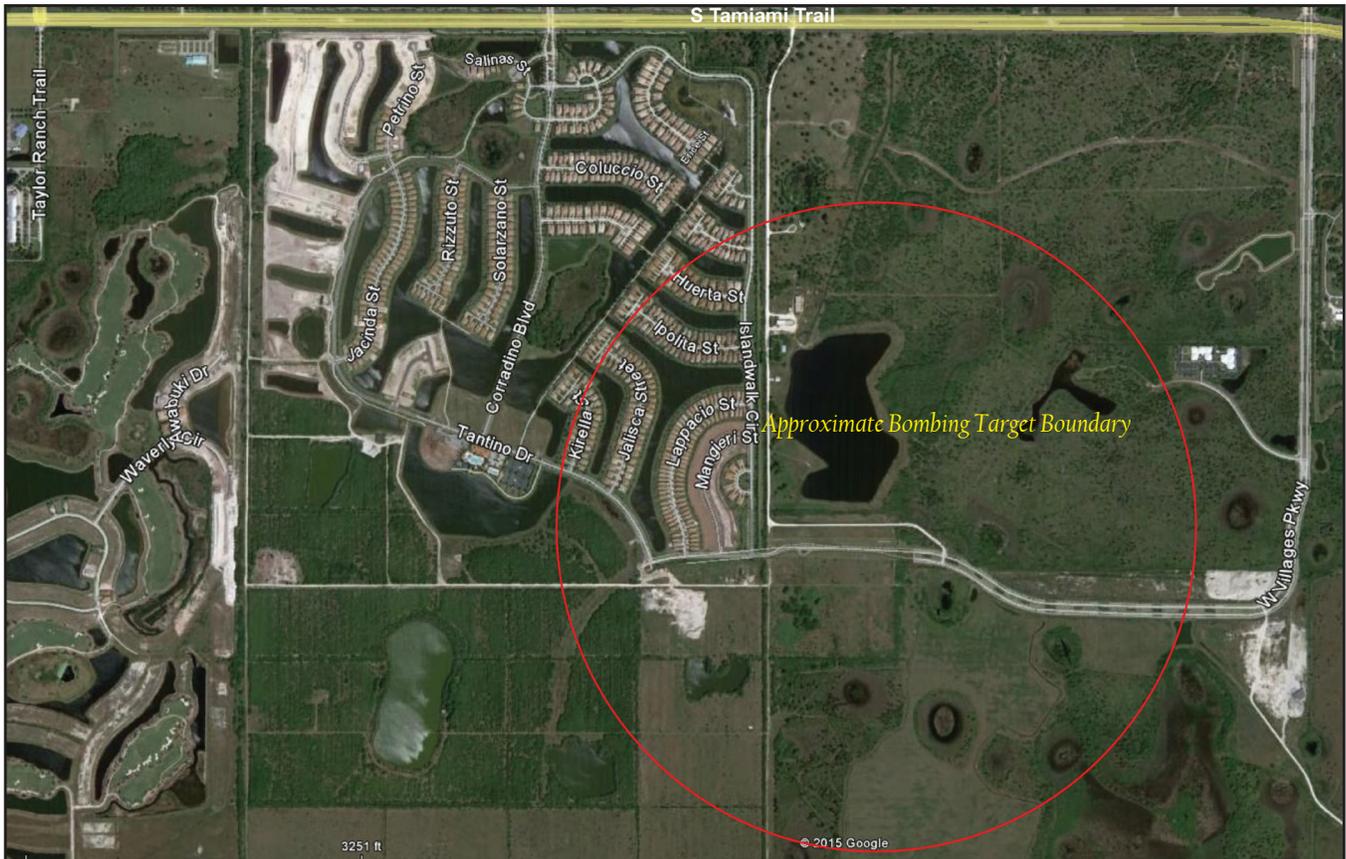
The Corps has assessed the site a number of times over the years to evaluate if there is the potential of anything remaining from the Army's training. Based on historical research, the Corps established a 649-acre target area which includes the target location and a buffer around it. The Corps completed a Site Inspection in 2010 to determine if further evaluation of the site may be necessary. No munitions, munitions debris (pieces from munitions) nor any other indication of the military's training was identified. However, because protecting people and the environment is our primary concern, the Corps will conduct a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study to ascertain if anything remains in the area from the Army's training, and if so, in what amounts

# FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITES | Venice Bombing Range

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 Venice Bombing Range. 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 Venice Bombing Range is low, the Corps has not yet scheduled the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study, but we will notify the public when we anticipate initiating further studies.

While the possibility of encountering munitions is low, always use caution in areas where the military has trained. Remember and follow the 3Rs of Explosive Safety. **Recognize** the object you found could be dangerous. **Retreat** from the area without touching the object, but make note of its location. **Report** it by calling 9-1-1.



## SAFETY FIRST: REMEMBER THE 3RS

If you are on a Formerly Used Defense Site, do not pick up anything that you did not put on the ground. 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.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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[www.saj.usace.army.mil/FormerlyUsedDefenseSites](http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/FormerlyUsedDefenseSites)

