



February 2022

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 (USACE) 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 USACE 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. We partner 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 acquired Water Island in 1944 for a coastal defense installation. Water Island is the smallest of the U.S. Virgin Islands and is approximately 1,800 feet from St. Thomas, south of Charlotte Amalie. The Army constructed barracks, gun emplacements, watch towers, underground bunkers, and various other structures, and the installation became known as Fort Segarra. The Army constructed Battery 314 at the top of a hill in the southern portion of the island and the 818th Anti-Motor Torpedo Boat Battery at Druif Point and Providence Point. The batteries were not completed before the end of World War II, and the guns were never installed. The Army deactivated the 818th Battery in 1945 and Fort Segarra in 1946. The Army used Fort Segarra again between 1948 and 1950 for tests associated with the San Jose Project. Most of the land comprising this Formerly Used Defense Site is now privately owned.

ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has conducted a number of investigations of the former Fort Segarra over the years and completed a removal action to search for and remove any munitions-related items in 2009. In addition to the removal action, we installed signs at the public ferry and deep water docks to make sure the public is aware of the military's use of the island. We conducted a review in 2012 to see if the remedial action implemented in 2009 was still effective in protecting people from potential risks associated with the military's use of the island, and that led to replacing the two signs.

While no munitions or munitions debris have been identified in more than 20 years, to ensure public safety, USACE conducted a Remedial Investigation to determine if anything from the military's training remains in the area and to identify appropriate future actions. During the recently completed Remedial Investigation, the team analyzed all the available data from various

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sources including historical documents, reports from the Department of Interior, and our previous investigations. We did not identify any munitions at Fort Segarra nor any other hazard attributable to the Department of Defense. No guns were installed in the fort, and no munitions training was conducted there. While limited chemical warfare materiel and chemical agent use is documented, previous studies and investigations confirmed that the few chemical warfare materiel related items on Water Island were removed, and environmental sampling did not detect the presence of chemical agents at the site.

The Remedial Investigation concluded, as was presented in the Proposed Plan, there are no hazards or risks associated with the military's use of the fort, and no further action is warranted. The public had 60 days to review and comment on the Proposed Plan and the No Action alternative following a virtual public meeting. We did not receive any comments, and the No Action alternative was selected when USACE signed the Decision Document on September 28, 2021. The Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources concurred with the No Action determination as stated in their December 10, 2020 letter.



SAFETY FIRST

While it is unlikely there are munitions at Fort Segarra, always remember and follow the 3Rs of Explosive Safety: Recognize, Retreat, Report.

RECOGNIZE - The object you found could be dangerous.
RETREAT - Leave the area without touching or moving the object.
REPORT - Call 911 immediately.

 **R**ecognize  **R**etreat  **R**eport

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District
800.710.5184
FUDS.Florida@usace.army.mil
www.saj.usace.army.mil/FortSegarra

Reports are available on the project website:
www.saj.usace.army.mil/FortSegarra

