

Annex 3.3 Dartmoor Training Area

1 Suitability

Location/Distance/Accessibility

- 1.1 Dartmoor Training Area (DTA) is located in Devon within the Dartmoor National Park, some 25 miles west of Exeter and 30 miles north of Plymouth.
- 1.2 There is good vehicular access along the M5, A30 and A38 dual carriageway, although convoys are encouraged to travel at night during the main holiday rush. Rail access to Okehampton exists but has not been used in recent years.

Topography

- 1.3 Much of the area, including the majority of the northern training area, is made up of granite, which has provided Dartmoor with its relief, soils and vegetation. The combination of geology, soils, climate and management have resulted in an upland landscape with extensive peat bogs, an open aspect with little cover from wind, rain or sun and rapidly changing weather conditions. There is no other area in southern England that has the same or similar combination of size, terrain and climate.
- 1.4 The craggy granite tors, rock-strewn slopes, blanket bogs and steep sided river valleys provide challenging terrain for light force training. The exposure, high rainfall and rapid variation in climatic conditions place additional demands on troops. This combination of wild terrain and climate provides soldiers, sailors and airmen with ideal conditions in which to develop their character, skills and competence to the required operational capability.

Size and Shape

- 1.5 DTA covers 13,198 hectares of moorland. It is of sufficient size to support light force dry tactical training up to battalion level. Light force live fire tactical training up to company level is possible on Okehampton and Merrivale and platoon level on Willsworthy. Company level and limited battalion level live fire tactical training can also be achieved

using all 3 range danger areas concurrently. In addition dry tactical training takes places at Cramber and Ringmoor, to the south of Princetown.

- 1.6 The spread of the training areas, combined with the use of the surrounding TOPL for non-tactical activities, allows users to conduct realistic insertion and exfiltration, advance to contact with an opposing force. Most exercises take place in a north-south and south-north axis because of the narrow east-west frontage.

Facilities

- 1.7 Within DTA there are three individual training areas on the north moor – Okehampton, Merrivale and Willsworthy. Okehampton Range is the largest of the training areas, covering 6336 hectares and is used under licence from the Duchy of Cornwall. Merrivale Training Area, comprising 3756 hectares, lies to the south of Okehampton Range and is also used under licence from the Duchy of Cornwall, the Maristow Estate and others. Willsworthy Training Area, situated on the north-west side of Dartmoor, comprises 1533 hectares and is the only area over which the MoD holds the majority of the land under freehold. These areas provide the facilities required to carry out training for all phases of war for light forces from initial fire team practices up to the most advanced forms of live and dry battalion exercise. Battalion support weapons can be exercised together with artillery (less high explosive filled rounds) up to 155mm calibre.
- 1.8 On the south moor there are two dry training areas at Cramber (849 hectares) and Ringmoor (596 hectares) which are used under licence from South West Water and the Maristow Estate respectively.
- 1.9 DTA's greatest attribute is its arduous environment. Movement is primarily on foot but helicopters and vehicles (on tracks only) are also used to provide increased mobility and communications. The only tracked vehicle that is allowed is the low ground pressure BV206 (its later equivalent, the Viking, is being introduced).
- 1.10 Outside the principal training areas DTA also provides facilities for non-tactical training such as adventurous training, navigation, fitness and approach marches. These add considerably to the training objectives that can be achieved on DTA and its environs, enabling individuals to develop their resource and initiative and the team to be melded together. Much of this training involves facilities licenced to MoD such as reservoirs,

climbing areas, potholing caverns, in addition to the open moorland used for hill-walking and navigation.

2 Availability

Priority

2.1 The priorities for training on DTA is for light forces, helicopter and dismounted exercises.

2.2 In accordance with LANDSO 1406 (2nd Revision) DTA has the following priorities:

- i) **Priority 2** : 3 Commando Brigade, 2 Infantry Brigade, 52 Infantry Brigade and London District (LONDIST) Infantry Battalions;
- ii) **Priority 3** : Easter and summer training camps for officer cadets and cadet units;
- iii) **Priority 4** : Special Forces, Commander-in-Chief Fleet (CINCFLEET), 3 Commando Brigade, Commando Training Centre Royal Marines (CTCRM), Britannia Royal Naval College (BRNC), Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST), RAF St Mawgan, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) and the School of Army Aviation;
- iv) **Priority 5** : 16 Air Assault Brigade.

Disruption

2.3 Mission specific operational training may be directed by HQ Land as Priority 1, taking precedence over existing priorities and training already planned. This has affected DTA for around 3 to 4 weeks of a year.

Limitations

2.4 Some of the licences with the landowners impose additional constraints to those required by law and environmental good practice. For example, the period during which live firing is permitted and the weapon types are stated. These constraints do limit the freedom to train but are a statement of an agreed and accepted position by the MoD and the landowner. In most cases the constraints have also been agreed by MoD with the Dartmoor Steering Group (DSG), which reports to the Secretaries of State for Defence and the Environment.

- 2.5 At Okehampton (240 days), Merrivale (180 days) and Willsworthy (120 days) there are a number of guaranteed public access periods each month and during the year when live firing may not be programmed. However, outside these periods all three ranges are available for dry training and Cramber and Ringmoor are available for dry training for most of the year, although dry tactical training is restricted during the whole of August and Sundays and bank holidays on all the 5 ranges.
- 2.6 Military training on DTA must also take account of its environmental status. It is located wholly within the Dartmoor National Park and is of significant importance for its wildlife and habitats. Okehampton, Willsworthy and Merrivale Training Areas, form part of the North Dartmoor SSSI and Cramber and Ringmoor lie adjacent to the South Dartmoor SSSI. Both are components of the Dartmoor cSAC. In addition many of the Scheduled Monuments on Dartmoor lie within the training areas.
- 2.7 In addition, the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985 allows public access by foot or horse for recreational purposes over all unenclosed common land on Dartmoor except when prohibited by the military byelaws, which restrict public access during live firing. As well as this general right of access, there are 6 bridleways and 1 footpath in the southern Training Areas (Cramber and Ringmoor), 3 bridleways and 2 footpaths within Merrivale and 2 footpaths within Willsworthy.

3 Available Sub Unit Training Weeks

Typical annual training programme

- 3.1 The backbone of the annual training programme is the 2 weekly throughput of CTCRM recruit troops completing their live fire and dry tactical training packages, together with Priorities 2 to 9 (most directed training) which are allocated 12 months in advance of the training calendar year. Lower priority bids are made 9 months in advance and thereafter there are numerous low level and short notice allocations. Typically, there will be 10 units or sub units using the area at a time, with deconfliction being carried out by HQ DTA to enable users to achieve their respective training objectives.

Availability for CP1 and CP2 light force training

3.2 Taking account of the limitations on availability outlined above, the maximum availability for light force training at DTA totals 106 live fire sub unit training weeks and 472 dry tactical sub unit training weeks.

3.3 The estimate is set out below

DTA: Estimate of Available Dry and Live Sub Unit Training Weeks

Range	Area (ha)	Dry (concurrent with live firing)			Live		Total Sub Unit Dry Training Weeks (no concurrent live fire)	
		Available Training Weeks*	No. of Sub Unit Training Areas	Total Sub Unit Training Weeks	Available Training Weeks	No. of Sub Unit Training Areas		
Okehampton	6336	30	8	240	24	2	48	432
Merrivale	3756	20	4	80	34	1	34	216
Willsworthy	1533	22	2	44	48	0.5	24	140
Cramber	849	54	1	54	0	0	0	54
Ringmoor	556	54	1	54	0	0	0	54
Total				472			106	896

* Assume 5-day training week i.e. 70 training weeks per annum.
Also no training in August or any Sundays

3.4 Currently, Willsworthy is being used close to its effective live-firing capacity (82%), with Merrivale and Okehampton presently used to 63% and 48% of their effective capacity respectively. All areas show between 81% and 96% usage for dry training, which is close to their effective booking capacity.

4 Sources of Information

4.1 Details of the Dartmoor Training Area contained in this Annex is drawn from the following data sources:

- ATE South West : User Guide
- ATE South West: Public Information Leaflet
- Dartmoor Military Ranges and Training Areas – A Guide to Walkers and Riders

- RPS *“Public Access Consultancy for the Army Training Estate : Regional Report ATE South West”* December 2003
- Discussion with Commandant Dartmoor Training Area, 7 February 2005