

Annex 3.6 Salisbury Plain Training Area

1 Suitability

Location/Distance/Accessibility

- 1.1 Salisbury Plain Training Area (SPTA) is situated in the heart of Southern England, 100 miles west of London and 30 miles north of the conurbations of Southampton and Portsmouth.

Topography

- 1.2 The land principally consists of a plateau of rolling upland chalk grassland, with areas of woodland spread across the training area.

Size and Shape

- 1.3 SPTA consists of 38,000 hectares of land, extending to about 40 kms West-East and 15 kms North-South. It is organised into 4 areas, the West, Centre and East, as divided by the A360 and A345, and the Local Training Areas A-C, behind Tidworth and Bulford Garrison.
- 1.4 Due to its size, free draining chalk soils and many training features, SPTA provides a unique range of facilities in the UK and is the only UK area capable of sustaining free manoeuvre by armoured formations and units.

Facilities

- 1.5 SPTA is the largest, busiest and most diverse manoeuvre and artillery live firing military training area in the UK. It is the only training area within UK where manoeuvre up to Armoured Brigade formation level training can take place. Its importance as a dry training area is also paramount.
- 1.6 Whilst 'special to arm' tactical training takes the highest priority, SPTA also offers a range of other training opportunities, including:
- Armoured manoeuvre areas including TESEX

- Major artillery range for AS90, Light Gun and MLRS Reduced Range Practice Rocket (RRPR). Also suitable for infantry support weapons.
- Key training facilities for LWC and RSA career courses
- Extensive field firing facilities for infantry and other arms
- Copehill Down FIBUA village
- Small Arms Range complex at Warminster and Bulford
- Main training area for all pre-operational training packages less Northern Ireland
- Low-flying area for RAF and AAC
- Two DZs (Fox Covert and Everleigh)
- Three landing strips (Netheravon, Upavon & Deptford Down)
- Field firing boxes
- Six training camps providing over 25,000 bed spaces
- Two bivouac sites
- Five bridging sites (Berril and Avon Valley)
- Major logistic location (Avon Camp, Netheravon)
- Royal Engineer training site
- Cross country driving area.

2 Availability

Priority

- 1.7 The training area priorities for SPTA are to provide Tactical Engagement Simulation (TES) and Armoured Manoeuvre Training. It is the busiest armoured manoeuvre and artillery live firing military training area in the UK and is the only one where manoeuvre training for tracked and heavy wheeled vehicles to Brigade formation level can take place. This involves cross-country or 'free manoeuvres' of large tracked vehicles and night operations, when vehicles move at speeds up to 40mph under operation conditions without lights across SPTA (West).

Disruption

- 1.8 The existing level of training use that takes place each year on the SPTA training areas and ranges is very high, with the west, centre and east all utilised on 360 days per year. In general, data would indicate that on average 650,000 man-training days of training take place on SPTA each year or around 2000 troops per day on average out on the training area. In an area the size of SPTA this may appear a small figure. However, the

nature of military training, particularly armoured manoeuvre and the capabilities of today's weapon systems and detection devices, mean that troops need to be more widely dispersed and required to move their locations more frequently and more rapidly than 20 years ago.

- 1.9 SPTA is used for Pre-Operational Training for:
- Formations, Units and Individuals about to deploy on operations overseas, both planned and short notice requirements.
 - Special Forces

Limitations

- 1.10 The whole of SPTA covers 38,000 hectares in the freehold ownership of MOD.
- 1.11 The SPTA grasslands are the largest area of chalk grassland in North-West Europe and constitute about 40% of the remaining area of this habitat in Britain. In recognition of its importance, about 20,000 ha of grassland are notified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) by English Nature, a Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds under the EC Birds Directive and as a candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC) under the Habitats Directive. The River Avon, which runs through the training area, has also been notified as a SSSI and candidate SAC.
- 1.12 The archaeology is also of national importance because of its extent and the quality of the surviving remains. Many of the individual sites and some of the wider areas are protected as Scheduled Monuments (SM) in recognition of their national importance. Currently, 2,432 archaeological sites have been recorded on SPTA, of which 547 are protected as SMs.
- 1.13 There is estimated to be 337 kms of public rights of way (PROW) together with 83kms of metalled roads and 24kms of all weather tracks. Public access is governed by the military byelaws and access is permitted through Imber Village on approximately 50 days per year.

3 Available Sub Unit Training Weeks

Typical annual training programme

- 3.1 The backbone of the training programme is the armoured manoeuvre training and training for the Schools of Artillery. Pre – operational training occupies an increasing demand on SPTA. The Infantry Officers training course has recently moved to STANTA due to lack of availability. In addition there is now no company sized accommodation available following recent closures – accommodation being geared towards unit size occupation. There has been no recorded CP1, CP2 or CP3 training at SPTA within 2004

Availability for CP1 and CP2 light force training

- 3.2 SPTA is presently booked out to the end of 2006 and has no spare capacity for light force training exercises.

4 Sources of Information

- 4.1 Details of SPTA contained in this Annex is drawn from the following data sources:
- ATE Salisbury Plain : User Guide (*Limited Distribution: UK Officials are not to release or reveal this document outside UK Government Service without prior permission from Military Survey (UK)*)
 - ATE Salisbury Plain : Public Information Leaflet
 - RPS “Public Access Consultancy for the Army Training Estate : Regional Report ATE Salisbury Plain” August 2003
 - Meetings with Commandant SPTA on 31 January 2005