

## FACT SHEET: Fort Lewis HIMARS training at Fort Lewis and Yakima Training Center

**1. Purpose.** To explain the steps Fort Lewis will take prior to firing the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) on Fort Lewis or Yakima Training Center (YTC), why the installation is considering this training, and to ensure the communities understand the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental impact analysis (EIA) that will take place before a decision is made to fire HIMARS.



The Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) family of munitions includes the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS). HIMARS is a U.S. light multiple rocket launcher system mounted on the U.S. Army's family of medium tactical vehicles (FMTV) five-ton truck. The launch truck carries six rockets or one Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) missile with other trucks within the unit serving as ATACMS supply vehicles.

- **Force Modernization.** I Corps and Fort Lewis continues to modernize its forces with the stationing of the 17<sup>th</sup> Fires Brigade, and the fielding of two HIMARS battalions – 5th Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery (FA) Regiment, and 1st Battalion, 94th FA Regiment. The 17th Fires Brigade, and its HIMARS weapons systems capability, reflects the Army's ongoing transformation into a more mobile, flexible, rapidly-deployable combat force.
- **Unit Certification.** The 17th Fires Brigade HIMARS battalions must certify HIMARS launch procedures every six months. All total, the brigade will launch 216 rockets annually – either at Fort Lewis or at YTC.

Fort Lewis will assess whether HIMARS training will produce significant environmental impacts at Fort Lewis and/or YTC. There are weather, scheduling, and seasonal constraints the Army has little or no control over that could impact this training. A NEPA environmental impact analysis will take place before a decision is made to launch HIMARS at Fort Lewis.

### 2. Background.

- **Previous documentation.** An environmental assessment was completed in the 1980's for MLRS training at YTC. Training with MLRS at YTC has demonstrated that the activities do not produce significant environmental impacts. YTC expanded its land base in the 1990's and rockets can now be launched from the new land base into the impact area.
- **The Reduced Range Practice Rocket.** Whether firing the HIMARS at YTC or Fort Lewis, the HIMARS battalions will only fire the M28A2 Reduced Range Practice Rocket (RRPR), which has a range of 8-15 km. The RRPR enhances training by allowing commanders the option to live fire from firing points normally reserved for cannon battalions. The M28A2's reduced range of 8-15 km makes it suitable for use on smaller firing ranges. The M28A2 rocket has a blunt nose, high-drag warhead section that contains no actual explosive. Unlike cannon artillery there is no explosion upon impact. The rocket flies at approximately 400 meters above the ground and the rocket propulsion smolders out 2-3 seconds after ignition leaving an empty inert tube for impact.
- **Training Area adjustments.** To accommodate HIMARS firing trajectory clearance on Fort Lewis, about 41 acres of forested area (~1,300 trees) would need to be harvested from Training Area 4 (Hayes Hill) (a 300 by 600 meter area). This rectangular area will be adjacent to the firing point and extend directly downrange in the direction of the impact area.

**3. Plan.** Fort Lewis will inform its internal and external audiences so they fully understand the NEPA EIA process, and steps Fort Lewis will take prior to firing the HIMARS at Fort Lewis.

- **Environmental Impact Analysis.** In September the Army will conduct public scoping meetings near Fort Lewis and Yakima Training Center (Lacey and Yakima respectively). As the EIA process unfolds, a determination will be made whether the action has significant environmental impacts and the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) is needed. If a determination that there are no significant environmental impacts is made, then the I Corps command will review the environmental assessment and draft "finding of no significant impact" and will approve its release for a 30-day public review in January 2009. At the completion of the EIA process, a decision will be made whether to move forward, to include removing the trees necessary to allow the firing of the HIMARS rockets.
- **Timeline.** Presently, the EIA process is scheduled to be completed in June of 2009. A decision will be made as to the feasibility of firing rockets at Fort Lewis at that time, and whether to proceed with training. Once that decision is made, preparations will be made and the unit will conduct a test firing of about three rockets and then pause to gather data and assess the effects of the firing. Pending the outcome of that assessment, a decision will be made whether to continue with a full schedule of firing at Fort Lewis.