

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Maintaining the ability of military installations and ranges to carry out their missions is vital to the preservation of national security. However, the nation's military forces face serious training and readiness challenges that have the potential to reduce mission readiness and adversely impact national security. **Encroachment**—including incompatible civilian development near military facilities and the expansion of military operations into civilian areas—is increasingly reducing the military's ability to train its fighting forces and execute its missions.

The Joint Land Use Study program (JLUS), administered by the Department of Defense (DoD) Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA), is the only federal government program that provides assistance to communities to help them work with the military to prevent and mitigate encroachment. However, DoD and the Military Departments also have undertaken several other efforts to help address encroachment challenges. One, the Department's Sustainable Ranges Initiative, directly addresses the need to ensure long-term sustainability of military testing and training ranges. Another, the Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative, or REPI, provides federal funds in support of the purchase of conservation land or easements on lands around military installations and ranges to restrict land uses that would be incompatible with military missions. Beyond encroachment, DoD provides funds to assist communities to adjust to the impacts of significant increases or decreases in the defense presence, including changes resulting from Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) decisions.

OEA asked the National Academy of Public Administration (Academy) to appoint an expert Panel to study the JLUS program in the context of related DoD efforts and identify ways to improve the program so it can meet current and future encroachment concerns.

The Panel believes that the encroachment challenges facing DoD and the Military Departments are significant and growing. Encroachment takes many forms. Military operations, among other effects, can (1) create intense noise that extends into communities, (2) increase risks of airplane crashes or exposure to unexploded ordnance, (3) contaminate the environment and damage ecosystems, (4) endanger protected species, (5) stress public infrastructure and services, and (6) generate citizen complaints. At the same time, civilian communities can, among other effects, (1) expand development or other activities in ways that constrict the use of military training areas, (2) permit development that can present obstacles to low-flying aircraft, (3) interfere with night-time training through light pollution, (4) degrade electronic navigation and communication frequencies used by the military, (5) fail to support needed public infrastructure for DoD activities, and (6) through development, force the migration of endangered species onto military property.

To meet these challenges, the Panel recommends that the prevention and mitigation of encroachment be given higher priority within DoD. The challenges of addressing encroachment would be better met if existing DoD programs were organized and implemented in a more cohesive, proactive, and inclusive manner at both the headquarters and community levels. The JLUS program has made it possible for DoD and local communities to address numerous concerns at the local and regional levels. The Sustainable Ranges Initiative has enabled progress

in assessing and addressing encroachment on ranges. The REPI program has produced a growing number of mitigation successes.

These steps are not sufficient; DoD needs to do more. It needs a better system to identify risks proactively, target resources to mitigate the greatest risks, and assess progress toward maintaining mission capability through reduced encroachment. The programs that the Panel reviewed, including JLUS, can only go so far toward success without a better overall system.

In addition, the Panel believes that DoD needs a better approach to achieve active and sustained collaboration between military installations and surrounding communities. The Panel's review concluded that collaboration was a vital factor in successful encroachment mitigation and prevention. Too often, the Panel also found that strong obstacles prevented effective collaboration. One such obstacle is the lack of resources in both DoD and the communities. A second obstacle is the lack of mutual understanding on each side about the other side's goals, needs, and processes. A third obstacle is that each of the existing DoD programs to mitigate encroachment, including the JLUS program, is essentially a "one time, as needed" effort. The Panel found that efforts are not institutionalized, that they do not exert long-term influence, and that DoD does not monitor the overall outcomes or impacts of encroachment mitigation efforts.

The Panel believes that strong military and community leadership will be required to overcome these obstacles and to provide the impetus and resources to ensure successful collaborative processes that support installation mission readiness needs. Collaboration works better when it is part of a continuous process. Such a process enables mutual trust and understanding, can support ways to identify emerging problems, and can enable stakeholders to act in a timely manner when specific issues do appear. Finally, both the Military Departments and the local communities have access to additional resources which could be leveraged to address encroachment issues. Many other stakeholders—federal agencies, states, regional organizations, and non-profits—can, and should, be more extensively involved in supporting encroachment mitigation and prevention efforts.

The Panel's specific findings can be summarized as follows:

1. Encroachment is a serious national security issue that has affected and can continue to affect military training, readiness, and test and evaluation missions.
2. Congress, DoD, and the Military Departments have been addressing the encroachment challenge, but progress from these efforts has been insufficient.
3. There is no DoD-wide system to identify encroachment risks, assess priorities, set requirements, provide standards, communicate objectives, or effectively coordinate resources for encroachment mitigation and prevention.
4. Collaboration is a vital factor in successful encroachment mitigation.
5. Strong military and community leadership is required to address encroachment.
6. There is a need for a reliable, continuing process to maintain encroachment mitigation and prevention activities between the installation and the community.

The Panel recommends the following six major actions be taken to improve the JLUS program and to address the encroachment concerns alluded to above.

1. **The Secretary of Defense, through a directive to the Military Departments, should increase the emphasis on activities related to the analysis, prioritization, and mitigation and prevention of encroachment issues on installations, training ranges, and test and evaluation ranges.** These activities should focus on both current and future encroachment challenges and should provide dedicated on-site installation staff to work with communities, training for base and range commanders and their staff on how to work more constructively and proactively with communities, and a procedure to share information on both community and military proposals that might have encroachment impacts.
2. **The Congress should require DoD to combine the annual reports on Sustainable Ranges and REPI and integrate them with an annual report on the JLUS program.** This congressional requirement is needed to support an expanded DoD focus on the breadth of encroachment assessments and on setting encroachment risk priorities proactively across all major DoD facilities. Congressional reporting requirements would encourage assessments and priorities by requiring comprehensive information on encroachment risks and on progress being made toward mitigating them. This information should be reported in a consolidated and expanded annual report that would replace the existing separate reports on Sustainable Ranges and REPI.
3. **The Secretary of Defense should strengthen coordination among the groups that deal with encroachment issues.** Several mechanisms already exist in DoD that can help to improve encroachment mitigation and prevention planning and coordination. There are at least four key groups, DoD's Sustainable Ranges Integrated Product Team, Land Use Inter-Service Working Group, and Senior Readiness Oversight Council, along with the Economic Adjustment Committee, that should be better integrated and utilized. OEA's expertise and experience working at the military-community interface and its leadership role in existing coordination groups should be used to sustain a stronger community-based voice in developing and implementing DoD-wide strategies for maintaining the installations' essential contributions to the nation's military readiness.
4. **The Secretary of Defense should redefine and strengthen the roles of OEA in facilitating military-community relationships.** DoD should make OEA, in coordination with the Military Departments and Services, the main bridge between the Department and its civilian partners, with clearly defined roles for bringing community viewpoints into DoD's and the Military's encroachment mitigation and prevention analysis and planning. The unifying theme to OEA's mission should be sustainment, mission sustainment for military installations and ranges and sustainment of economic viability and quality of life for the communities that support them. To enhance these roles, the Panel recommends establishing a new OEA advisory committee to link DoD better to the many state, local, and non-profit stakeholders that can play an important role in sustainability efforts. This group should build on the many successful ad hoc relationships that already exist with OEA and other DoD and Military Department headquarters and field offices to link DoD more systematically and productively to its non-federal civilian partners.

5. **Congress should consider reshaping the financial assistance mechanisms in which the military and surrounding communities partner in support of military missions. The funds now available for DoD-wide programs could be consolidated into a single, flexible program to provide continuous funding to communities and states associated with military installations.** Funding for OEA’s JLUS and economic adjustment programs and REPI should be managed by a single organization. This could be accomplished administratively by DoD initially. The Panel believes that it is possible that a stronger program could be achieved legislatively. Therefore, Congress should consider consolidating these programs into a single, flexible program designed to support an on-going, institutionalized, and sufficiently resourced local-level collaborative process that would identify problems and systematically prioritize and select the actions best suited to address them.

6. **The Director of OEA should strengthen OEA’s emphasis on the JLUS program.** While the Panel believes that Congress should consider consolidating the OEA and REPI programs, it also believes that the JLUS program itself can and should be improved. The JLUS program has contributed significantly to improved military-community relations as well as to reduced encroachment. This capability can be further enhanced by OEA’s taking steps to focus more on following up on the implementation of JLUS recommendations, assessing program outcomes, working to increase state support, and encouraging the use of a broader range of encroachment mitigation and prevention tools.

The Panel believes that the program enhancements recommended above are all feasible and essential. They can be instrumental in making great strides toward improving military readiness, enhancing national security, and sustaining more livable civilian communities.

The Panel observes that federal action will not be sufficient, by itself, to reduce encroachments to levels acceptable to both the military and civilian communities. The Panel believes states and local communities share, with the federal government, inherent responsibilities to support national defense, and the recommendations above should lay a solid foundation for strengthening their engagement with DoD and the Military Departments in supporting military readiness. Since the Panel’s study did not include a full assessment of state and local government resources for, or incentives and disincentives to, support military readiness, the Panel believes it would be useful for DoD to initiate a national dialogue with regard to shared defense responsibilities and roles and to develop a better understanding of the need for state and local governments to play a stronger role in supporting DoD missions.