

FORT STEWART SUPPORTS HBCT MANEUVER

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The massive land area of Fort Stewart is a defense asset that has supported many varied missions over the past 66 years. The installation was initially built to support anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) training during World War II. Since that time there has been a general misconception throughout the Army about Fort Stewart's inability to support maneuver by a heavy brigade combat team (HBCT). This misconception seems to emulate from the WWII cartoon that named a deep south installation "Camp Swampy," describing the poor drainage, standing water, insects, and other poor conditions there. This moniker for Fort Stewart is undeserved, because extraordinary efforts have been made to increase the maneuverability of its large land area.

Recently, considerable progress has been made to thin the standing timber to permit unimpeded cross country movement of heavy forces. The management program to enhance the habitat for the red cockaded woodpecker (RCW), which is a federally-listed endangered species, is one of the Army's success stories. Management efforts have focused largely on improving the RCW's habitat which consists of reducing the thickness of the forest through prescribed burning and forest thinning. This also assists maneuver training on Fort Stewart because the type of forest the RCW likes and that foresters and wildlife managers are creating is also good for cross country maneuver. In addition to threatened and endangered species, Fort Stewart also has more than 90,000 acres of jurisdictional wetlands. In order to improve the installation's support of heavy maneuver a long range program began in 1996 to create "maneuver lanes" on the 105,000 contiguous acres on the western side of Fort Stewart. The installation has greatly enhanced the trafficability of the wetlands by constructing low water crossings (fords) to connect upland training areas. Since 1997, 89 low water crossings have been completed. In



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Soldiers with the 2nd Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, conduct a readiness exercise at Fort Stewart, Georgia.

addition, maneuver lanes have been improved by constructing or improving additional combat trails, roads, timber thinning, and clearing to maximize the ability of our maneuver lanes to support heavy BCTs. The proof of concept for this effort was recently tested when Fort Stewart successfully supported two home station mission rehearsal exercises (HS-MRE), one concurrent with the 3rd Infantry Division's 4th Heavy Brigade Combat Team's pre-NTC "Vanguard Focus" exercise.

Doctrinal changes based on lessons learned during Operation Iraqi Freedom have resulted in a different maneuver posture at the installation. To accomplish these goals, the Installation has increased urgently required urban facilities using O&MA (Operations and Maintenance Army) funds. The intermediate range MCA program and these urban facilities will provide a capability that will greatly improve the Installation's ability to support heavy brigade maneuver in the urban environment.

The strategic location of the Fort Stewart

complex contiguous to the military operational airspace on the Georgia coast provides a unique combination of training battlespace that will facilitate any number of maneuver scenarios for joint forces. The largest wholly owned Army installation east of the Mississippi with more than 279,000 acres of maneuver space and range area, will continue to provide the outstanding maneuver support for not only heavy brigade teams but other combined arms training.

In recognition of the installation's efforts to support maneuver and live-fire exercises, the Department of the Army awarded Fort Stewart the Outstanding Sustainable Range Program Tier I Installation and Range Control Team Awards for 2007.

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