

APPENDIX F

MILITARY FLIGHTS OVER THE DESERT

The California Deserts are vast, harsh yet fragile lands within a day's drive of 40 million people. Approximately 80 percent of the desert, or 25 million acres, is publicly owned and includes two national parks, one national preserve, six military bases, 72 wilderness areas, 14 state parks and extensive holdings of public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Conflicting demands for use of California desert lands make it imperative for governmental agencies to work cooperatively in support of agency missions, protection of desert resources, and public use. The DMG was established as the forum for government agencies to address and discuss issues of common concern. Through cooperative management each agency achieves greater operational efficiency, enhances resource protection, and the public is better served.

The Steering Committee has established the following interagency working groups which are comprised of representatives from the DMG agencies and other technical experts:

Data Management Work Group
Desert Information Resources Work Group
Desert Lands Restoration Work Group
Hazardous Materials Work Group
Law Enforcement Work Group
Noise and Overflight Work Group
Paleontology and Cultural Resources Work Group
Science Work Group
Wilderness Work Group

The following brochure was developed and published by the Desert Management Group Noise and Overflight work group. Further information may be obtained by visiting www.dmg.gov.

Figure F-1

Over the years, the southern California deserts have been recognized for their significant natural and cultural resources. Many opportunities exist for the public to enjoy these resources. As early as 1933, federal and state governments established protected lands, national and state parks, recreation areas, preserves, and wilderness areas. They are managed by various federal and state agencies. Land management agencies are mandated, by laws and regulations to preserve these resources and to provide for the public's enjoyment of them.

The United States military has used the region since the 1930's for a host of test and training activities involving aircraft and associated aerospace vehicles. The commanders from the various military services that use the airspace in the region are charged by law and regulation to conduct training operations in support of the national defense of this country.

"Land management agencies safeguard our nation's heritage through the protection of our natural resources and preservation of our country's special places for the enjoyment of this and future generations. The U.S. military protects our heritage through a strong national defense to ensure that this and future generations have the freedom to continue to preserve and enjoy these special places. Constructive engagement between these government entities honors their missions." - John Reynolds, Regional Director, Pacific West Region, National Park Service

"By working as a team we can preserve both the natural diversity of military training areas and our opportunity to train the way we plan to fight now and in the future." - General Joseph W. Ralston, USAF, Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

In combat situations, military aircraft avoid detection by enemy radar systems by flying as fast and as close to the ground as possible. Pilots must routinely train for, and test for, this type of flying.

The California desert may seem limitless, but, a single low level training mission by a military fighter can require a route 500 miles long to provide adequate training in navigation, timing, and aircraft systems operations.

In the Southwest between Los Angeles and San Diego, and extending more than 250 miles to the east are seven military installations with a flying mission. Each installation has men and women who are required to maintain their skills and test their equipment on a continuing basis. The spectacular scenic mountains and valleys of the desert are the same rugged mountains and valleys the military need to practice their war-fighting mission. In other words, the geography that makes southern California attractive for recreational use is the same geography the military needs for training and testing. Low level flying normally occurs during daylight hours. So, military flights may operate in the area during your stay in the desert.

The California Desert Protection Act, passed by Congress in 1994, requires the integration of diverse missions through the protection of resources while ensuring the military's ability to conduct operations. Congress passed the Act to "...preserve unrivaled scenic, geologic, and wildlife values associated with these unique natural landscapes." Congress also recognized that "...continued use of the lands and airspace in the California desert region is essential for military purposes..."

Figure F-2

