

SITE SURVEY SUMMARY SHEET
FOR
DERP-FUDS SITE NO. J09CA7301
ALCATRAZ ISLAND
SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

SITE NAME:

The property is known as Alcatraz Island. The island's first given European name by the Royal Spanish explorers in the year of 1775 was *Isla de los Alcatraces* (Island of the Pelicans), which was then condensed to *Alcatrasses* in 1827. The property has been known as the Post on Alcatraces Island; Fort and/or Fortress Alcatraz; Pacific Branch, United States Military Prison, Alcatraz Island; Pacific Branch, United States Disciplinary Barracks; United States Penitentiary, Alcatraz; and the modern day name Alcatraz Island or commonly known as Alcatraz. This property was originally addressed in a Defense Environmental Restoration Program (DERP) - Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS) Inventory Project Report (INPR), written for the Golden Gate National Recreation Areas (GGNRAs), Site Number J09CA0001. Hereinafter, this site will be referred to as Fort Alcatraz (FA).

LOCATION:

FA was located on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco County, California, approximately one and one-half miles north of the city of San Francisco in San Francisco Bay, directly east of the Golden Gate Bridge (Figure 1). Alcatraz Island is approximately located at Latitude 37.827 North, Longitude (-)122.424 West. The island measures a quarter mile long and 500 feet wide with its two peaks reaching an elevation of 140 feet.

SITE HISTORY:

On 6 November 1850 President Millard Fillmore signed an Executive Order reserving certain lands in and around San Francisco Bay, including FA, "for Public Purposes;" retaining FA as permanent Government property. In 1853, construction began on FA and by 1859 the island became the most powerful defense of all Pacific Coast defenses for the joint U.S. Army-Navy commission. During these first years of inhabitancy by troops, 24-Pounder Howitzers, 8-

Inch Columbiads, 10-Inch Mortars, and 15-Inch Rodmans (smooth-bore cannons, Figure 3) were placed at the north, west, south and east sides of FA (North Battery, West Battery, South Battery and Three-Gun Battery which was located east of South Battery) to provide gunfire at incoming enemy ships (Figure 2). Eventually, 111 cannons almost encircled the island and over 430 military personnel had been stationed at FA. FA began to be used as a disciplinary barracks for the U.S. Army during the Civil War (1861-1865). FA then became obsolete as a harbor defense against modern guns and warships. On 27 August 1861 FA was designated the Pacific Branch of the United States Military Prisons. Throughout the years after the first Army prisoners, some Indians, Spanish-American war prisoners, San Francisco jail inmates (after the 1906 fire), and World War I conscientious objectors were detained on FA. In 1933, FA was transferred to the Department of Justice under the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and in 1934 the Federal Government opened a maximum security prison and closed it in 1963. FA is now part of the GGNRA, which is managed by the National Park Service (NPS).

"The Citadel," as the barracks for the soldiers came to be known, was constructed atop the very summit of the island and through its rifle-slit windows, officers and riflemen could command the entire perimeter of FA. The Citadel was built in an excavated rectangular pit measuring 150 by 75 feet, lined with brick, which formed a dry moat or ditch around the three-story Citadel. The exterior counter scarp walls of the moat were hollowed out for privies, store rooms and water cisterns. The contents of these hollowed, brick-lined spaces were once living quarters and storage for food and ammunition (Figure 4a). In 1908 the Army began constructing a massive concrete cellhouse atop the Citadel, leaving the moat and underground lower level of the former Citadel structure in existence.

Excavation began in 1865 for a two-tiered brick casemate (gun chamber) building named the Bomb Proof Barracks as an additional soldiers' quarters and housing for 22 cannons to guard the dock. Due to lack of funds and obsolete design, only one tier was completed and the cannons were never mounted. In 1883, FA was designated a place for storage of mines by the Ordnance Department. It was recorded that the War Department sent a total of 451 devices to store in the casemate of the unfinished Bomb Proof Barracks on FA. The Commander of FA allowed this

action due to the fact that the mines were not yet filled with Trinitrotoluene (TNT). Storage room conditions on FA were poorly ventilated, and soon the empty mines rusted. The mines were then moved to drier quarters on nearby Yerba Buena Island.

The end of the Civil War in April 1865 marked the end of FA as an effective harbor defense. Although there were over one hundred smooth-bore cannons on the island were obsolete. New rifled-bore artillery (200-Pounder Parrott Rifle, Figure 2) had replaced the old guns, and by 1891 there were only seven cannons mounted. Cliffs behind the old gun batteries were cut down, and pairs of Rodman cannons were separated by traverses (rocky hills covered with dirt and grass). The traverses contained brick-lined powder magazines and tunnels to allow access to ammunition and other gun emplacements (Figure 4b). Depicted on a map titled, *Alcatraz Island; As It Was July 1875*, were 13 gun batteries encircling FA and nine traverses (powder magazines). Only one time in recorded history on 1 October 1863, did an FA gun fire in earnest. Historical documentation states that practice firing from cannons were shot out into the bay and at practice targets on the nearby Angel Island. Historical photographs depict cannon balls stacked upon one another in ordnance yards located behind each of the batteries and also adjacent to the former Citadel. There has been no ordnance or traces of ammunition found on FA since the military vacated the island.

The DERP-FUDS INPR, Site No. J09CA0001, for GGNRA sites was compiled by the USACE in 1994. That INPR addressed any HTRW concerns on FA and determined that all structures and fuel storage means were beneficially used.

SITE VISIT:

On 5 August 1999 a site visit was performed at FA by Ms. Karise Rose and Mr. John Headlee, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Sacramento District. USACE representatives met with former Ranger John A. Martini, NPS. Mr. Martini is now an Historical Consultant for FA and working at the Presidio Archives in San Francisco. An extensive survey was performed throughout the island including all infrastructures. Mr. Martini was stationed as a Ranger on Alcatraz for over 18 months and during that time he examined the island extensively in search of

historical memorabilia. Mr. Martini stated that 8-inch Columbiads were known to explode during target practice. One of these guns exploded in the North Battery and it was reported to have split open, spraying the emplacement with flying iron. Mr. Martini discovered a small piece of a smooth-bore cannon on the west shore in 1974 and he stated that it was the only item found at FA pertaining to ordnance. A complete photo log and site visit report is filed with USACE Sacramento District.

CATEGORY OF HAZARDS: NDAI

AVAILABLE STUDIES AND REPORTS:

1. DERP-FUDS INPR No. J09CA0001 for GGNRAs, March 1990, prepared by the Earth Technology Corporation (Project No. 89-650-0003), prepared for USACE Sacramento District.
2. Martini, John A., Fortress Alcatraz: Guardian of the Golden Gate, published by Pacific Monograph, 1990.
3. Thompson, Erwin, Golden Gate, The Rock: A History of Alcatraz Island, 1847-1972, Historic Resource Study, May 1979.

**DEFENSE ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION PROGRAM
FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITES**

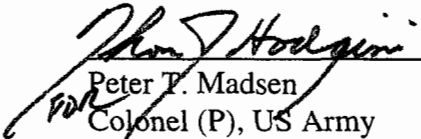
**FINDINGS AND DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY
ALCATRAZ ISLAND
SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
SITE NO. J09CA7301
FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. Fort Alcatraz (FA) was located on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco County, California, approximately one and one-half miles north of the city of San Francisco in San Francisco Bay, directly east of the Golden Gate Bridge. The island measures a quarter mile long and 500 feet wide with its two peaks reaching an elevation of 140 feet. On 6 November 1850 President Millard Fillmore signed an Executive Order reserving certain lands in and around the San Francisco Bay, including Alcatraz Island, "for Public Purpose", retaining FA as permanent Government property.
2. During the first years of inhabitancy by troops, Howitzers, Rodmans and Columbiads (smooth-bore cannons) were placed at the north, south, and west sides of FA to provide gunfire at incoming enemy ships. By 1859 the island was the most powerful of all Pacific Coast defenses for the joint U.S. Army-Navy commission. FA began to be used as a disciplinary barracks for the U.S. Army during the Civil War (1861-1865). In 1907, FA was designated the Pacific Branch of the United States Military Prisons. It was used for this purpose until 1933.
3. In 1933, FA was transferred to the Department of Justice under the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and in 1934 the Federal government opened a maximum security prison; and closed the prison in 1963. FA is now part of the GGNRA, which is managed by the National Park Service. The lighthouse operating today on FA is a successor to the original which began service in 1854.

DETERMINATION

Based on the forgoing finding of fact, the site has been determined to be formerly used by the DoD. Therefore this site is eligible for the Defense Environmental Restoration Program for Formerly Used Defense Sites established under 10 U.S.C. 2701 *et seq.*

27 Sep 97
Date


Peter T. Madsen
Colonel (P), US Army
Commanding