

## **FINDING OF**

### **NO DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE ACTIONS INDICATED**

**1. SITE NAME: Alcatraz**

**FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITE PROJECT NUMBER: J09CA310800**

**LOCATION:**

**City:** Alcatraz Island, 1.5 miles North of San Francisco  
**County:** San Francisco  
**State:** California

**2. POINTS OF CONTACT:**

**Property owners at the time of the site visit:**

National Park Service, Golden Gate National Recreation Areas

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:**

Gerald E. Vincent  
FUDS Program Manager  
U.S. Army Engineer District, Sacramento Corps of Engineers  
(916) 557-7452  
Gerald.E.Vincent@usace.army.mil

**State of California:**

Anthony Landis  
Chief of Northern California Operations  
Office of Military Facilities  
Department of Toxic Substances Control, State of California  
(916) 255-3565  
TLandis@dtsc.ca.gov

**3. SITE DESCRIPTION:**

Alcatraz is located within the former Fort Alcatraz parade grounds on the eastern portion of Alcatraz Island, San Francisco County, California. The site occupies the eastern portion of the former two-acre parade grounds of what is now Alcatraz Island National Park. Coordinates for the site are N 37° 49' 36" Latitude, W 122° 25' 24" Longitude. Alcatraz Island is in the 8<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congressional District of California and in Region IX of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

**4. SITE HISTORY:**

Alcatraz was used as a military facility, as well as a prison, during Department of Defense (DOD) occupation of the island. On 6 November 1850, U.S. President Millard Fillmore signed an Executive Order reserving Alcatraz "for Public Purpose," preserving Alcatraz as permanent government property. In 1853, construction began on Fort Alcatraz and by 1859; Alcatraz had become the most powerful defense position for the joint U.S. Army-Navy commission along the Pacific Coast. Once construction was

completed, the fort was armed with 24-Pounder Howitzers, 8-Inch Columbiads, 10-Inch Mortars, and 15-Inch Rodmans, placed around the perimeter of Fort Alcatraz. These defense locations included the North Battery, West Battery, South Battery, and Three-Gun Battery located east of the South Battery, providing defensive gunfire toward any incoming enemy ships. During its peak, Fort Alcatraz was armed with 111 cannons and housed 430 military personnel.

The first use of Fort Alcatraz as a disciplinary barracks occurred during the Civil War years. The Fort housed Union deserters and Confederate sympathizers. Due to the advancement of modern guns on war ships, Fort Alcatraz became obsolete as a harbor defense. On 27 August 1861, Fort Alcatraz was designated as the Pacific Branch of the U.S. Military Prisons. Once this designation took effect, the fort was slowly converted from a fort to a military prison. Detainees of the military prison included U.S. Army prisoners, Indians, Spanish-American War prisoners, San Francisco Jail inmates (after the 1906 fire), and World War I conscientious objectors. In 1933, Fort Alcatraz was transferred to the U.S. Department of Justice under the U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons. In 1934, the Federal Government opened a maximum-security prison on the island.

Alcatraz was used again by the military during World War II. Four anti-aircraft batteries were placed on Alcatraz from 1942 to 1944, under an agreement with the U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons. Attorney General Robert Kennedy closed the prison in 1963 due to increased maintenance and operational cost. After closure of the prison, the island was officially turned over to the National Park Service and opened to the public in 1973.

The Alcatraz site includes rubble of three buildings, which once functioned as housing for correctional officers until the prison closed in 1963. Two of the three buildings were constructed by the U.S. Department of Corrections. The third building was constructed by the Department of Defense (DOD) prior to its use as a prison. After closure of the prison, these buildings remained abandoned until late 1970, when Native Americans illegally occupied them. During Native American occupation, these buildings were used as a school, nursery, and housing. In 1971, the Native Americans were removed from the site and the buildings were demolished by the General Services Administration (GSA), leaving extensive piles of concrete and steel rubble that presently exist. No Inventory Project Report (INPR) was completed for the site. The former Alcatraz site remains as part of a tourist attraction on Alcatraz Island.

**5. SITE INVESTIGATIONS/CURRENT STATUS:**

On 5 August 2004, a site visit was conducted to verify current conditions and identify any additional evidence of DOD activity or hazards not previously reported. The site was inspected on foot in an effort to identify hazards of DOD origin. The site consists of rubble remaining from three buildings, only one of which is DOD in origin. With the aid of Ranger Jayeson Vance of the National Park Service, a survey of all remaining DOD structures and property was performed. Although the present condition of the former DOD structures on the island varies, all are currently in beneficial use. The former site functions as a tourist attraction receiving more than 5,000 visitors per day.

The three demolished buildings are located within the former parade grounds, on the east end of the site. At the time of the site inspection, the location of the demolished buildings could only be seen from the lighthouse area. Access to the demolished buildings is limited to the months from September to January in order to protect the nesting of Western gulls, cormorants, and black-crowned night herons. When accessible, the area around the demolished buildings is roped off from visitors due to and safety concerns.

The DOD did not construct two of the three demolished buildings. All three buildings on the subject property were used by the Department of Corrections. The potential safety hazards found at the site would not currently exist if the GSA had not demolished the buildings and created the hazards.

Other than the one demolished building, no structures or facilities known to be of DOD origin were identified on the property. Other than the possible physical hazards of the demolished building, no overt evidence of hazardous or toxic waste, waste ordnance, underground storage tanks, or hazardous building debris, as a result of DOD use of the site was observed.

6. **NDAI RECOMMENDATION:**

This site is recommended for No Department of Defense Actions Indicated at this time. During the records research, interviews, and site inspections conducted for this site, there were no hazards or potential environmental liabilities identified from past use by the Department of Defense that would pose an immediate risk to the environment or public. No evident hazards were found during the site visit; therefore, no projects are recommended at this site.

7. **NDAI CONCURRENCE:**



U.S. Army Engineer District  
Sacramento Corps of Engineers

Department of Toxic Substances Control  
State of California

1 Nov 2004  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date