



White Sands Missile Range Army Air



Operating over the huge White Sands range in New Mexico, a small US Army aviation unit plays a vital role in the development of new weapon systems for all US services.

On 1 October 1999 the US Army Test and Evaluation Command (ATEC) was established by the Vice Chief of Staff, with the primary function of ensuring that the US Army is equipped with weapons that work as advertised. ATEC has overall responsibility for Army developmental and operational testing, with three fully integrated major subordinate commands: the US Army Developmental Test Command (DTC); US Army Operational Test Command (OTC); and the US Army Evaluation Center (AEC).

The US Army Developmental Test Command (DTC) is the developmental test arm of the US Army Test and Evaluation Command (ATEC) and as such is the Army's premier materiel developmental testing organisation for weapons and equipment. DTC offers a full range of test services, including the provision of unbiased test data on the technical feasibility of

early concepts, determining systems performance and safety, assessing technical risks during development, confirming designs, and validating manufacturers' facilities and processes at both system and component level.

DTC conducts operations in 12 different locations throughout the United States and includes three major range or proving ground organisations, or Major Range and Test Facility Bases (MRTFB). These are White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico, Yuma Proving Ground in Arizona, and Dugway Proving Ground in Utah.

The three major test centres are the Aviation Technical Test Center and Redstone Technical Test Center, both in Alabama, while the Aberdeen Test Center is in Maryland. The Cold Regions Test Center is at Fort Wainwright and Fort Greely, Alaska, and the Tropic Regions Test Center is located in Hawaii.

White Sands range

Within the vast high desert of south central New Mexico lies the Department of the Army's largest piece of real estate, known as White Sands Missile Range (WSMR). In fact, covering 3,200 square miles (8287 km²), WSMR is the largest military installation in the United States and the range boundaries extend almost 100 miles north to south, and 40 miles east to west,

making long flight corridors possible. Through agreements with surrounding landowners, an additional 2,400 square miles (6215 km²) can be added for test purposes on a temporary basis for longer-range scenarios.

As an element of the US Army Test and Evaluation Command, it plays an important role in the defence acquisition process by providing quality test, evaluation, research, assessment and other technical services to acquisition programmes of the Army, Navy, Air Force and the Missile Defense Agency, as well as some US companies and foreign allies. White Sands' significant test attributes are its extensive land-mass; 100 percent overland flight corridors; dedicated military airspace; off-range launch capabilities; advanced data-collection, analysis and presentation capabilities; and detailed post-test reporting. A wide-ranging array of sophisticated data-collection and analysis equipment, including radar, telemetry, optics and computers – all interlinked through an extensive network of fibre optic rings and microwave relays – can be found around this range and test ground. Because of this extensive instrumentation and data-collection capability, post-test reports are quickly given to the customer. A standout among WSMR assets is the Cox Range Control Center and, since 2003, all test