**Fort Bliss**

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| **Fort Bliss** |
| Part of [Army Forces Command (FORSCOM)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Army_Forces_Command) |
| [El Paso County, Texas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Paso_County%2C_Texas) and [Doña Ana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Do%C3%B1a_Ana_County%2C_New_Mexico) / [Otero](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otero_County%2C_New_Mexico) counties, [New Mexico](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Mexico), [Southwestern United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southwestern_United_States) |
| An [Abrams tank](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M1_Abrams) crew on Fort Bliss’ [Doña Ana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Do%C3%B1a_Ana) Range. |
| **Type** | [Military installation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_installation) |
| **Coordinates** | [31°48′07″N 106°25′29″W﻿ / ﻿31.801847°N 106.424608°W﻿ / 31.801847; -106.424608](http://toolserver.org/~geohack/geohack.php?pagename=Fort_Bliss&params=31.801847_N_-106.424608_E_type:landmark)[Coordinates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_coordinate_system): [31°48′07″N 106°25′29″W﻿ / ﻿31.801847°N 106.424608°W﻿ / 31.801847; -106.424608](http://toolserver.org/~geohack/geohack.php?pagename=Fort_Bliss&params=31.801847_N_-106.424608_E_type:landmark) |
| **Built** | 1849-1893 |
| **In use** | 1849-Present |
| **Controlled by** | 1849-1861: [United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States)1861-1862: [CSA](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confederate_States_of_America)1862-Present: [United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) |
| **Garrison** | [U.S. 1st Armored Division](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._1st_Armored_Division)[15th Sustainment Brigade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/15th_Sustainment_Brigade)[5th Armored Brigade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/5th_Armored_Brigade_%28United_States%29)[32d Army Air and Missile Defense Command](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/32nd_Army_Air_%26_Missile_Defense_Command)[11th Air Defense Artillery Brigade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/11th_Air_Defense_Artillery_Brigade_%28United_States%29)[Joint Task Force North](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joint_Task_Force_North)[German Air Force](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Air_Force) Command USA/CAN[German Air Force](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Air_Force) Air Defense Center**Facilities**: [Biggs Army Airfield](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biggs_Army_Airfield)[McGregor Range](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/mcgregor.htm)[Doña Ana Range](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/dona-ana.htm)North Training AreaSouth Training Area |
| **Currentcommander** | [Major General](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Major_General_%28United_States%29) [Dana J.H. Pittard](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dana_J.H._Pittard) |
| **Commanders** | [John J. Pershing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_J._Pershing) |

**Fort Bliss** is a [United States Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Army) post in the [U.S. states](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._state) of [New Mexico](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Mexico) and [Texas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Texas). With an area of about 1,700 square miles (4,400 km2), it is the Army's second-largest installation, behind the adjacent [White Sands Missile Range](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Sands_Missile_Range). It is [FORSCOM](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FORSCOM)'s (United States Army Forces Command) largest installation, and has the Army's largest Maneuver Area (992,000 acres) behind the [National Training Center](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Training_Center). Part of the post in [El Paso County, Texas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Paso_County%2C_Texas), is a [census-designated place](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Census-designated_place) (CDP); it had a population of 8,591 at the [2010 census](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Census%2C_2010). Fort Bliss provides the largest contiguous tract (1,500 sq mi, 3,900 km2) of virtually unrestricted airspace in the [Continental United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continental_United_States). The airspace is used for missile and artillery training and testing.

Fort Bliss is home to the [1st Armored Division](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1st_Armored_Division_%28United_States%29), which returned to US soil in 2011, after 40 years in Germany. The division is supported by the [15th Sustainment Brigade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/15th_Sustainment_Brigade). The installation is also home to the [32nd Army Air & Missile Defense Command](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/32nd_Army_Air_%26_Missile_Defense_Command), along with its subordinate [11th Air Defense Artillery Brigade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/11th_Air_Defense_Artillery_Brigade).

The headquarters for the [El Paso Intelligence Center](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Paso_Intelligence_Center), a federal tactical operational intelligence center, is hosted at Fort Bliss. Its [DoD](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_Defense) (United States Department of Defense) counterpart, [Joint Task Force North](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joint_Task_Force_North), is at [Biggs Army Airfield](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biggs_Army_Airfield). Biggs Field, a military airport located at Fort Bliss, is designated a [military power projection](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Power_projection) platform.

[Fort Bliss National Cemetery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Bliss_National_Cemetery) is located on the post. The fort is named for [Mexican-American War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican-American_War) soldier [William Wallace Smith Bliss](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Wallace_Smith_Bliss).

**History**

Early locations

Fort Bliss [100th Anniversary Issue](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._space_exploration_history_on_U.S._stamps) of 1948

Fort Bliss in 1885. Photo courtesy of [SMU](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMU)

Replica of Old Fort Bliss' Magoffinsville site, dedicated on the 100th anniversary, 1948. Located next to the Parade Ground.

* Post opposite El Paso del Norte (1849–1854): In 1846, Colonel [Alexander Doniphan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Doniphan) led [1st Regiment of Missouri mounted volunteers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican_American_War_campaigns#Monterrey.2C_21_September_1846) through [El Paso del Norte](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Paso_del_Norte), with victories at the [Battle of El Brazito](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_El_Brazito) and the [Battle of the Sacramento](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Sacramento). Then on 7 November 1848, War Department General Order no. 58 ordered the establishment of a post across from [El Paso del Norte (now Ciudad Juárez)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ciudad_Ju%C3%A1rez). On 8 September 1849, the garrison party of several companies of the [3rd U.S. Infantry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/3rd_United_States_Infantry_Regiment_%28TOG%29), commanded by [Major Jefferson Van Horne](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Texas_county_seat_name_etymologies), found only four small and scattered settlements on the north side of the [Rio Grande](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rio_Grande). The fort was first established at the site of Smith's Ranch (now downtown [El Paso](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Paso%2C_Texas)) and, along with [Fort Selden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Selden) and other Southwestern outposts, protected recently-won territory from harassing [Apaches](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apache) and [Comanches](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comanche). With constant Indian raids, garrisons had to be moved frequently to meet the shifting threats. In 1851, thetwo companies of troops stationed in El Paso were moved 40 miles (64 km) north to [Fort Fillmore](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Fillmore). For more than two years, there was no garrison opposite [El Paso del Norte](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Paso_del_Norte).
* Magoffinsville: When the Smith's Ranch post was abandoned in 1854, a new post was established at Magoffinsville. There it remained for the next 14 years, serving as a base for troops guarding the area against Apache attacks. Until 1861 most of these troops were units of the [8th Infantry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/8th_Infantry_Regiment_%28United_States%29). At the outbreak of the [American Civil War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Civil_War), [the Commander of the Department of Texas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Emanuel_Twiggs) ordered the garrison to [surrender](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surrender_%28military%29) Fort Bliss to [the Confederacy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confederate_States_of_America). Confederate forces held the post in 1861, and used the post as a platform to launch [attacks into New Mexico and Arizona](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trans-Mississippi_Theater_of_the_American_Civil_War#Arizona_and_New_Mexico) in an effort to force the Union garrisons still in these states to surrender. Initially the Confederate Army had success in their attempts to [gain control of New Mexico](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Mexico_Campaign), but following the [Battle of Glorieta Pass](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Glorieta_Pass) Confederate soldiers were forced to retreat. The Confederate garrison abandoned Fort Bliss without a fight the next year when a Federal column of 2,350 men under the command of [Colonel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonel) James H. Carlton advanced from [California](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California). The Californians maintained an irregular garrison at Fort Bliss until 1865 when 5th Infantry units arrived to reestablish the post.
* Camp Concordia (1868–1876): After 1868 [Rio Grande](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rio_Grande) flooding seriously damaged the Magoffinsville post, Fort Bliss was moved to a site called Camp Concordia in March 1868. Camp Concordia's location was immediately south of what is now [Interstate 10](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interstate_10), across from Concordia Cemetery in El Paso. The [Rio Grande](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rio_Grande) was about a mile south of the camp at that time; water was hauled daily by mule team to the camp. In 1869 the old name of Fort Bliss was resumed. Water, heating, and sanitation facilities were at a minimum in the [adobe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adobe) buildings of the fort; records reveal that troops suffered severely from [dysentery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dysentery) and [malaria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malaria) and that supplies arrived irregularly over the [Santa Fe Trail](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Fe_Trail) by [wagon train](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wagon_train). The Concordia post was abandoned in December, 1876, and after troops left in January, El Paso was without a garrison for more than a year. By that time, the town and its environs on the north side of the river had swelled to a population of almost 800.
* Hart's Mill (1878–1893): In 1878, Fort Bliss was established as a permanent post; the [Buffalo Soldiers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buffalo_Soldier) of the [Ninth Cavalry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/9th_Cavalry_Regiment_%28United_States%29) were sent to Fort Bliss to prevent further [trouble over the salt beds](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Elizario_Salt_War) and the usage of Rio Grande water for irrigation purposes. Prior to this date, the government had had a policy of simply leasing property for its military installations. Now, however, a tract of 135 acres (0.55 km2) was purchased at Hart's Mill on the river's edge in the Pass, near what is today the [UTEP](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Texas_at_El_Paso). With a $40,000 appropriation, a building program was begun. The first railroad arrived in 1881, and tracks were laid across the military reservation, thereby solving the supply problems for the fort and the rapidly-growing town of El Paso. By 1890, Hart's Mill had outlived its usefulness, and Congress appropriated $150,000 for construction of a military installation on the mesa approximately 5 miles (8.0 km) east of El Paso's 1890 city limits. Although no money was appropriated for the land, $8,250 was easily raised by the local residents, who realized the economic benefit to the area.

Ruhlen's 1893 buildings (currently offices) still stand at Fort Bliss, as do the officers' quarters.

Parade Ground of Fort Bliss. [Franklin Mountains](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_Mountains_%28Texas%29) in the background.

* Present site (1893-today): The present site of Fort Bliss on La Noria mesa, was laid out by Captain John Ruhlen from 1891 to 1892 and was first occupied by four companies of the [18th Infantry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/18th_Infantry_Regiment_%28United_States%29) in October 1893. New construction for the additional [Brigade Combat Teams](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brigade_Combat_Teams) of the [First Armored Division](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1st_Armored_Division_%28United_States%29) is currently underway in East Fort Bliss, which lies inside the northeast corner of [Loop 375](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Texas_State_Highway_Loop_375).

**The Pershing Expedition**

In January 1914, [John J. Pershing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_J._Pershing) arrived in El Paso to take command of the [Army 8th Brigade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/8th_Military_Police_Brigade_%28United_States%29) that was stationed at Fort Bliss. At the time, the [Mexican Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican_Revolution) was underway in Mexico, and the 8th Brigade had been assigned the task of securing the [U.S.-Mexico border](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S.-Mexico_border). In March 1915, under the command of General [Frederick Funston](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_Funston), Pershing led the 8th Brigade on the failed 1916–1917 [Punitive Expedition](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pancho_Villa_Expedition#Campaign) into Mexico in search of the outlaw [Pancho Villa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pancho_Villa).

**World War I and World War II**

As [American Expeditionary Forces](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Expeditionary_Force) (AEF) commander (1917–1918), [John J. Pershing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_J._Pershing) transferred to Fort Bliss and was responsible for the organization, training, and supply of an inexperienced force that eventually grew from 27,000 men to over 2,000,000—the [National Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Army) of [World War I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I).

From December 10, 1917-May 12, 1918, the wartime [15th Cavalry Division](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1st_Cavalry_Division_%28United_States%29#1920s_and_1930s) existed at Fort Bliss. Similarly, the [Headquarters, 2nd Cavalry Brigade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1st_Cavalry_Division_%28United_States%29#1920s_and_1930s) was initially activated at Fort Bliss on December 10, 1917 and then deactivated in July 1919, but then reactivated at Fort Bliss on August 31, 1920. Predominantly a cavalry post since 1912, Fort Bliss acquired three light [armored cars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armored_car_%28military%29), eight medium armored cars, two motorcycles, and two trucks on November 8, 1928.

During [World War II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II), Fort Bliss focused on training [anti-aircraft artillery battalions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-aircraft_warfare) (AAA). In September 1940 the Coast Artillery's anti-aircraft training center was established, and in 1941 the [1st Tow Target Squadron](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_units_using_the_B-26_Marauder_during_World_War_II#Tow_target_squadrons) arrived to fly [target drones](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Target_drone) (the [6th, 19th, & 27th Tow Target Squadrons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_units_using_the_B-26_Marauder_during_World_War_II#Tow_target_squadrons) were at the nearby [Biggs Field](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biggs_Army_Airfield)). On August 3, 1944, the [Anti-Aircraft Artillery School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Army_Air_Defense_Artillery_School) was ordered from [Camp Davis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_Davis) to Fort Bliss to make the training of anti-aircraft gunners easier, and they became the dominant force at Fort Bliss following the departure of the [U.S. 1st Cavalry Division](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1st_Cavalry_Division_%28United_States%29).

Group of 104 [Operation Paperclip](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Paperclip) [rocket scientists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rocket_scientist) in 1946 at Fort Bliss (35 were at [White Sands Proving Grounds](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Sands_Proving_Grounds))

By February 1946, over 100 [Operation Paperclip](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Paperclip) scientists had arrived to develop [rockets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rocket) and were attached to the Office of the Chief of [Ordnance Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ordnance_Corps_%28United_States_Army%29), Research and Development Service, Suboffice (Rocket), headed by Major James P. Hamill. Although the scientists were initially “pretty much kept [on ice](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/on_ice)” (resulting in the nickname "Operation Icebox"), they were subsequently divided into a research group and a group who assisted with [V-2 test launches](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_V-2_test_launches) at [White Sands Proving Grounds](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Sands_Missile_Range). [German](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_%28people%29) families began arriving in December 1946, and by the spring of 1948, the number of German rocket specialists (nicknamed "[Prisoners of Peace](http://books.google.com/books?id=8jIeqqCkDHQC&pg=PA63&lpg=PA63&dq=%22prisoners+of+peace%22+%22von+braun%22&source=web&ots=-q1zfMmcre&sig=etMeRdN00lDmguumowvPHRQzYpo&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=6&ct=result)") in the US was 127. Fort Bliss rocket launches included firings of the [Private missile](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Private_%28missile%29) at the [Hueco Range](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hueco_Mountains) in April 1945. In 1953, funding cuts caused the cancellation of work on the [Hermes B2 ramjet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermes_project) work that had begun at Fort Bliss.

In late 1953 after troops had been trained at the Ft Bliss Guided Missile School, field-firing operations of the [MGM-5 Corporal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MGM-5_Corporal) were underway at Red Canyon Range Camp, WSPG. In April 1950, the 1st Guided Missile Group named the [Republic-Ford JB-2](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic-Ford_JB-2) the ARMY LOON.

**The Cold War**

Fort Bliss trained thousands of U.S. Soldiers during the [Cold War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold_War). As the United States gradually came to master the art of building and operating missiles, Fort Bliss and [White Sands Missile Range](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Sands_Missile_Range) became more and more important to the country, and were expanded accordingly. On 1 July 1957 the U.S. Army Air Defense Center was established at Fort Bliss. Located at this Center, in addition to Center Headquarters, are the [U.S. Army Air Defense School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Army_Air_Defense_Artillery_School); Air Defense; the 6th Artillery Group (Air Defense); the 61st Ordnance Group; and other supporting elements. In 1957 Fort Bliss and its anti-aircraft personnel began using [Nike Ajax](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nike_Ajax), [Nike Hercules](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nike_Hercules), [Hawk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MIM-23_Hawk), [Sprint](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sprint_%28missile%29), Chaparral, and [Redeye](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FIM-43_Redeye) missiles. Fort Bliss took on the important role of providing a large area for troops to conduct [live fire exercises](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Live_fire_exercise) with the missiles.

Because of the large number of Army personnel enrolled in the air defense school, Fort Bliss saw two large rounds of construction in 1954 and 1958. The former was aimed at creating more barracks facilities, while the latter was aimed at building new classrooms, materials labs, a radar park, and a missile laboratory. Between 1953 and 1957 the Army also expanded McGregor Range in an effort to accommodate live fire exercises of the new missile systems. Throughout the [Cold War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold_War) Fort Bliss remained a premier site for testing anti-aircraft equipment.

Fort Bliss was used as the Desert Stage of the [Ranger School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ranger_School) training course to prepare Ranger School graduates for operations in the deserts of the Middle East. From 1983 to 1987, Fort Bliss was home to the Ranger School's newly formed 4th (Desert Ranger) Training Company. This unit was later expanded in 1987 to form the newly-created [Ranger Training Brigade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ranger_Training_Brigade)'s short-lived 7th Ranger Training Battalion, which was then transferred to the [Dugway Proving Grounds](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dugway_Proving_Grounds) in [Utah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utah). The deserts of Utah proved to be unsuitable so the 7th Ranger Training Battalion was returned to Fort Bliss from 1991 until the Ranger School's Desert Phase was discontinued in 1995.

While the [United States Army Air Defense Artillery School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Army_Air_Defense_Artillery_School) develops doctrine and tactics, training current and future soldiers has always been its core mission. Until 1990 the post was used for [Basic Training](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Army_Basic_Training) and [Advanced Individual Training](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advanced_Individual_Training) (AIT), under the 1/56 ADA [Regiment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regiment), part of 6th ADA. Before 1989, 1/56 had three basic training companies and two AIT [batteries](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artillery_battery). After 1990, 1/56 dropped basic training, that mission assumed by [Fort Sill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Sill). The unit now had four enlisted batteries for enlisted AIT, one battery for the Officer's Basic Course and Captain's Career Course (added in 2004) and one company that trained army truck drivers ([MOS](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_Occupational_Specialty) 88M). As of 2005, the AIT portion of the school has [undergone significant changes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Army_Air_Defense_Artillery_School#Current_status).

A U.S. [Patriot Missile](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MIM-104_Patriot) fires from its launch canister.

**Base Realignment and Closure**

In 1995, the Department of Defense recommended that the [U.S. 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._3d_Armored_Cavalry_Regiment) be relocated to [Fort Carson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Carson), [Colorado](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colorado). Efforts to consolidate units from another post with those units that remained at Fort Bliss were overruled by the [Base Realignment and Closing Commission](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Base_Realignment_and_Closing_Commission), leaving Fort Bliss without any armored vehicles. Units operating the US Army’s [MIM-104 Patriot Missile Defense System](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MIM-104_Patriot) relocated to Fort Bliss during the 1990s. The Patriot system played an important role in the [Persian Gulf War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_War)/[Operation Desert Storm](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Desert_Storm) in 1991. In commemoration, the [US 54](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/US_54) expressway in northeast [El Paso](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Paso) was designated the Patriot Freeway.

**The War on Terror**

After the [September 11, 2001 attacks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_11%2C_2001_attacks), Fort Bliss provided ADA Battalions for US and NATO use in Afghanistan and Iraq, and has served as one of the major deployment centers for troops bound for [Iraq](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraq) and [Afghanistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghanistan). This mission is accomplished via nearby [Biggs Army Airfield](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biggs_Army_Airfield), which is included in the installation's supporting areas. Following the [U.S. Liberation of Afghanistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_in_Afghanistan_%282001%E2%80%93present%29) in 2001 Fort Bliss began training Afghan security forces at the [U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Army_Sergeants_Major_Academy) at Fort Bliss, with the hope that these newly trained soldiers would eventually be able to take control of their own national security.

**Base Realignment and Closure, 2005**

See also: [Base Realignment and Closure, 2005](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Base_Realignment_and_Closure%2C_2005)

In 2005, the Pentagon recommended transforming Fort Bliss into a heavy armor training post, to include approximately 11,500 new troops from the [U.S. 1st Armored Division](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1st_Armored_Division_%28United_States%29) - at that time stationed in [Germany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germany) -, as well as units from [Fort Sill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Sill) and [Fort Hood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Hood). An estimated 15,918 military jobs and 384 civilian jobs would be transferred to Fort Bliss, bringing the total number of troops stationed at Fort Bliss under this alignment to a total of 35,000 by 2012. Officials from Fort Bliss and the City of El Paso were thrilled with the decision; the general mood of the city government was perfectly captured by the May 14 edition of the [*El Paso Times*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Paso_Times), which boldly proclaimed "BLISS WINS BIG".

According to [Senator](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Senate) [Eliot Shapleigh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eliot_Shapleigh), the BRAC commission considered three primary factors to make its decision: The military value of Fort Bliss, the potential for other branches of the armed service to use a post as large as Fort Bliss, and the lack of urban encroachment around Fort Bliss that would otherwise hinder its growth. The arrival of the 11,500 troops from the 1st Armored Division is also expected to create some 20,196 direct and indirect military and civilian jobs in El Paso. According to the [Department of Defense](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_Defense), this is the largest net gain in the United States tied to the Base Realignment and Closure recommendations. Of the 20,196 new jobs expected to come to El Paso as a result of Bliss’ realignment 9,000 would be indirect civilian jobs created by the influx of soldiers to the "Sun City". When the BRAC commission recommendations were released Senator [Kay Bailey Hutchison](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kay_Bailey_Hutchison)’s spokesman reported that El Paso was the only area that came out with a major gain of forces.

The news that El Paso had been selected to receive major elements of the 1st Armored Division was met with joy, but at the same time many expressed surprise at the panel's recommendation to transfer the Air Defense Artillery School, [6th ADA Brigade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/6th_Air_Defense_Artillery_%28United_States%29), and its accompanying equipment (including the [MIM-104 Patriot Missile Anti-Aircraft/Anti-Missile defense system](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MIM-104_Patriot)) to [Fort Sill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Sill). On August 25 officials representing Fort Bliss went before the BRAC Commission to plead their case for maintaining the ADA school and its accompanying equipment at Fort Bliss, citing among other thing the size of Fort Bliss and the history of the ADA school in the region. The BRAC Commission ultimately ruled against Fort Bliss, and the roughly 4,500 affected soldiers have begun their transfer to Fort Sill. The entire transfer of soldiers to and from Fort Bliss must be completed no later than 15 September 2011.

On June 25, 2009, authority over the post was shifted from [Training and Doctrine Command](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TRADOC) to [Forces Command](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FORSCOM).

Building 500 area of Fort Bliss today.

**Today**

Among Fort Bliss' missions:

* Provide anti-aircraft and missile defense capabilities.
* Conduct [live fire exercises](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Live_fire_exercise) of nearly every type of Army weapon.
* Host joint military exercises with other U.S. and foreign units,
* Be home to many maintenance crews and supply units.
* Be one of the Army's premier bases for test-driving tanks and other equipment.
* House thousands of military vehicles, including all the equipment needed to set up [Patriot missile](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patriot_missile) sites.
* Hosted the [USAADCEN](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Army_Air_Defense_Artillery_School) Air Defense Artillery Center from 1942-2010. USAADCEN has almost completed its transfer to [Fort Sill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Sill). Concomitantly, the German Air Force Air Defense school is going to move to new training facilities in [Germany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germany) and [Greece](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greece).
* Monitor missile launches conducted by [White Sands Missile Range](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Sands_Missile_Range), located 70 miles (110 km) to the north, in [New Mexico](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Mexico).

Training missions are supported by the McGregor Range Complex, located some 25 miles (40 km) to the northeast of the main post, in New Mexico. Most of Fort Bliss lies in the state of [New Mexico](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Mexico), stretching northeastward along [U.S. Route 54](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Route_54) from [El Paso County, Texas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Paso_County%2C_Texas) to the southern boundary of the [Lincoln National Forest](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lincoln_National_Forest) in [Otero County, New Mexico](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otero_County%2C_New_Mexico); in addition, much of the northwestward side of Highway 54 is part of the Fort Bliss Military Reservation, ranging from the northern side of [Chaparral, New Mexico](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaparral%2C_New_Mexico) to the southern boundary of [White Sands Missile Range](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Sands_Missile_Range); the main facilities are within the city limits of [El Paso, Texas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Paso%2C_Texas). According to the city zoning map, the post officially resides in [Central El Paso](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_El_Paso).

**Museum Display**
[Nike Ajax](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nike_Ajax)
[MIM-14 Nike-Hercules](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MIM-14_Nike-Hercules)
[MIM-23 Hawk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MIM-23_Hawk)
[MIM-104 Patriot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MIM-104_Patriot)
[Spartan (missile)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spartan_%28missile%29)
[Sprint (missile)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sprint_%28missile%29)
[Sherman Tank](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sherman_Tank)
[M163 Vulcan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M163_Vulcan)
[Skysweeper](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skysweeper)
[M42 Duster](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M42_Duster)
[German 88](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_88)
[V-2](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V-2_rocket)

**Fort Bliss K-12 Schools**
[Bliss Elementary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Paso_Independent_School_District#Elementary_schools)
[Logan Elementary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Paso_Independent_School_District#Elementary_schools)
[Milam Elementary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Paso_Independent_School_District#Elementary_schools)
[Colin Powell Elementary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Paso_Independent_School_District#Elementary_schools)
[Chapin High](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Captain_John_L._Chapin_High_School)

Separate from the main post are the [William Beaumont Army Medical Center](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Beaumont_Army_Medical_Center) (which also serves the [warrior transition battalion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Army_Wounded_Warrior_Program) for the post's [wounded warriors](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wounded_warrior)) and a [Veterans Administration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_Veterans_Affairs) center at the eastern base of the [Franklin Mountains](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_Mountains_%28Texas%29). All of these supporting missions serve the military and retired-military population here, including having served General [Omar N. Bradley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omar_N._Bradley) in his last days. A new warrior transition complex, located at Marshall and Cassidy roads, was opened in June 2011 to replace the older facility serving the warrior transition battalion.

The installation is also close to the El Paso Airport (with easy access from the post via Robert E. Lee Road), Highway 54, and Interstate 10. There is a replica of the original Fort Bliss on the post simulating the adobe style of construction. Other items of interest include the [Buffalo Soldier](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buffalo_Soldier) memorial statue on Robert E. Lee Road, and a missile museum on Pleasanton Road.

The walls of the old Fort Bliss Officers Club contains adobe bricks that are more than a century old. The building now houses a [Family Readiness Group](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Family_Readiness_Group).

**Local impact of Fort Bliss**

Fort Bliss soldier running up [McKelligon Canyon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McKelligon_Canyon) for his daily [PT](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Endurance_training).

As of 2005, the base contributed about $1.7 billion to the economy of [Central El Paso](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_El_Paso) and [Northeast El Paso](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northeast_El_Paso), and many businesses in the region serve the post's troops. When troops are transferred to other posts or called up for service overseas, the [economic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy) fallout can be felt throughout the city. Following the departure of the 3rd Cavalry Regiment in 1995, many businesses in the Central and Northeast parts of the city closed or moved. Conversely, the expected influx of troops from the 1st Armored Division has led to a housing and schools construction boom in the Central and Northeast areas of El Paso.

Fort Bliss has also assisted El Paso during local [disasters](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disaster). In 1897, and again in 1925, the fort provided food and housing to those displaced by flood waters. Following the 2006 flooding Fort Bliss dispatched troops to the flood-affected areas to help with cleanup, to monitor and secure the Rio Grande, and to tow vehicles stuck in standing water to safety.

As of July 2010, electric power consumption at Fort Bliss had been reduced by three megawatts as the base continues to work towards becoming a "net zero" energy installation.

A joint study by Fort Bliss and El Paso-area city governments found that desalination was a viable method for increasing El Paso's water supply by 25%. The [Kay Bailey Hutchison](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kay_Bailey_Hutchison) Desalination Plant, on Montana Avenue, is located on Fort Bliss property, and desalinates the groundwater of the Hueco Bolson for use by El Paso and Fort Bliss. This reverse-osmosis plant protects the fresh groundwater supplies from invasion by more brackish water. This plant is currently the largest non-seawater desalination plant in the world.

**Geography**

Location of the CDP in El Paso County.

The Fort Bliss CDP is located at

WikiMiniAtlas

[31°48′07″N 106°25′29″W﻿ / ﻿31.801847°N 106.424608°W﻿ / 31.801847; -106.424608](http://toolserver.org/~geohack/geohack.php?pagename=Fort_Bliss&params=31.801847_N_-106.424608_E_type:city)[Coordinates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_coordinate_system): [31°48′07″N 106°25′29″W﻿ / ﻿31.801847°N 106.424608°W﻿ / 31.801847; -106.424608](http://toolserver.org/~geohack/geohack.php?pagename=Fort_Bliss&params=31.801847_N_-106.424608_E_type:city). According to the [United States Census Bureau](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Census_Bureau), the CDP has a total area of 6.2 square miles (16.0 km²), all of it land. In terms of its [United States physiographic region](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_physiographic_region), it is a southern part of the [Basin and Range Province](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basin_and_Range_Province).

**Demographics**

As of the [census](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Census) of 2000, there were 8,264 people, 1,527 households, and 1,444 families residing on the post. The [population density](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Population_density) was 1,340.1 people per square mile (517.1/km²). There were 2,309 housing units at an average density of 374.4/sq mi (144.5/km²). The racial makeup of the post was 58.1% [White](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_%28U.S._Census%29), 25.1% [African American](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_American_%28U.S._Census%29), 2.4% [Asian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian_%28U.S._Census%29), 1.3% [Native American](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_%28U.S._Census%29), 0.7% [Pacific Islander](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_Islander_%28U.S._Census%29), 8.9% from [other races](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Race_%28United_States_Census%29), and 3.5% from two or more races. [Hispanic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hispanic_%28U.S._Census%29) or [Latino](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latino_%28U.S._Census%29) of any race were 19.3% of the population.

There were 1,527 households out of which 80.0% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 84.5% were [married couples](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marriage) living together, 8.2% had a female householder with no husband present, and 5.4% were non-families. 4.9% of all households were made up of individuals and none had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 3.54 and the average family size was 3.62.

On the post the population was spread out with 29.3% under the age of 18, 33.6% from 18 to 24, 34.7% from 25 to 44, 2.3% from 45 to 64, and 0.1% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 22 years. For every 100 females there were 167.0 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 204.8 males.

The median income for a household on the post was $35,970, and the median income for a family was $34,679. Males had a median income of $19,920 versus $17,227 for females. The [per capita income](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Per_capita_income) for the post was $13,201. About 9.5% of families and 11.0% of the population were below the [poverty line](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty_line), including 12.5% of those under age 18 and none of those age 65 or over.

**See also**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | [***United States Army portal***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal%3AUnited_States_Army) |

Leaving Fort Bliss

* [1st Armored Division (United States)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1st_Armored_Division_%28United_States%29)
* [11th Air Defense Artillery Brigade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/11th_Air_Defense_Artillery_Brigade)
* [15th Sustainment Brigade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/15th_Sustainment_Brigade)
* [32nd Army Air & Missile Defense Command](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/32nd_Army_Air_%26_Missile_Defense_Command)
* [El Paso metropolitan area](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Paso_metropolitan_area)
* [Joint Task Force North](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joint_Task_Force_North)
* [Fort Bliss shooting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Bliss_shooting)
* [Oozlefinch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oozlefinch)
* [Operation Paperclip](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Paperclip)
* [Saint Barbara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Barbara)
* [Transformation of the United States Army#Divisions and Brigades](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transformation_of_the_United_States_Army#Divisions_and_Brigades)