



Kansas

Smoky Hill Air-to-Air Gunnery Range

Facility and Location

Smoky Hill Air-to-Air (ATA) Gunnery Range was located in western Kansas, about 15 miles south of Oakley. It encompassed nearly 218,000 acres. The Smoky Hill River runs through the site from west to east, bisecting a terrain which varies from rolling hills to steep canyons etched in the underlying limestone of the region. Near where the river crosses the Logan/Gove county line, numerous large formations of fossil laden chalk rise from the plain. The land is sparsely populated and used primarily for grazing cattle with some residences and crop land.

The range was used by air gunners who shot at sleeve targets towed by other planes. Mostly .50 caliber ammunition and a few 20mm projectiles have been found. The range was used by Smoky Hill Airfield, Walker Airfield, and McCook Airfield. Others may have also used the range since it was the only one of this type in the area. On September 25, 1947, the War Assets Administration provided a clearance certificate from the district engineer, dated September 16, 1947, which said that "all decontamination at Smoky Hill ATA Gunnery Range has been completed in accordance with existing regulations."

The World War II era ATA Gunnery Range measures 18 miles north-south by 19 miles east-west. Gunners from Army Air Forces bases in Kansas and Nebraska fired at targets towed by planes and at objects on the ground, including the chalk pyramid (monument rocks) and abandoned buildings.

Media Sampled and Findings

Groundwater — In 2009, three samples reported no detection.

Appropriate Actions

Not Applicable. All samples were below the EPA and DoD Preliminary Remediation Goal of 15 ppb.