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JACKSON, MISS—The Mississippi Army National Guard and U.S Forest Service officials announce today the closure of National Forest lands in and around the Range Impact Area at Camp Shelby, Miss. The closure, which becomes effective on July 29, 2004, is required by revised Army regulations aimed at protecting the general public from possible injuries when exposed to unexploded shells, also known as Unexploded Ordnance (UXO). Although this closes 13,500 acres of National Forest lands to the public for hunting and recreation, there are another 370,500 acres in the De Soto National Forest available for these activities, including three wildlife management areas.

“We understand this closure may affect some residents that use this area for recreation and hunting,” said Maj. Gen. Harold A. Cross, the adjutant general of Mississippi. “But, for the protection of the public, we are now required by regulation to prohibit people from entering these areas.”

Forest Supervisor Gerry Farmer states that, “I am closing this Impact Area to support the Mississippi Army National Guard in their compliance with revised Army regulations and also because of our mutual concern for safety.” He added that, “*Safety is our number one priority. Although this closure may cause inconvenience to those who used the area in the past, if it saves the life of one person, then it's worth it.*”

The closure area will be identified with the appropriate signage. U.S. Forest Service law enforcement personnel and military personnel will patrol the area to ensure compliance. Additional law enforcement personnel will be added to assist in patrolling the area and enforcing the new regulations. Entering these areas could result in fines or possible appearance before a U.S. Magistrate for disposition.

**For more information, contact:
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