

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED MAR 6 1984  
DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Fort Tilden Historic District (Gateway NRA)

AND/OR COMMON

Fort Tilden

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Rockaway Beach Boulevard

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

New York

VICINITY OF 11

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

New York

36

Queens

81

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

National Park Service, North Atlantic Region

STREET & NUMBER

15 State Street

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Boston,

VICINITY OF

Mass.

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Queens County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

45th Avenue

CITY, TOWN

STATE

New York

NY

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

None

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

## Battery Harris Casemates (HS-406, 410)

Battery Harris originally (1921-24) consisted of two huge circular concrete platforms. The guns were exposed without benefit of any overhead protection. The original platforms remain although covered by earth, to a great extent at Structure 406.

The two guns of Battery Harris were roofed over in 1941-43 by massive concrete casemates approximately 850 feet apart. These two basically identical structures together comprise Battery Harris. Each emplacement was formerly equipped with one 16-inch gun. The two emplacements are roughly rectangular, single-story concrete structures constructed in a dome fashion and covered with earth and sand so that they resemble two oval hills approximately three hundred feet long and sixty feet high. The walls, floors, roofs and interior partitions are all concrete. Each bunker is laid out with two central corridors, one running north-south and one east-west. The guns were positioned in the southern end of the north-south corridor. There is a circular concrete hood which projects over the southern aperture of each emplacement designed to protect the guns from direct hits. There are six rooms leading off the two corridors: two powder rooms; two shell rooms; one tool room; and one latrine. There were steel grill gates installed in all four corridor entrances. These gates are in varying stages of deterioration. There are no mechanical or electrical facilities left in the emplacements. Structure 410, Gun #1, and Structure 406, Gun #2, constituted an important element in the harbor defense of New York City due to the long range and destructive power of the 16-inch gun. Each gun fired 2,100-pound projectiles for a maximum distance of 44,680 yards.

## Battery Harris Magazines (401, 405, 409, 414)

These magazines, dating from 1922 (401 was constructed later during the early 1930s), were constructed to store the shells and powder used by the twin guns of Battery Harris (No. 406, 410). These four buildings are basically identical. Each building is a rectangular, single-story structure with a built-up low gable roof. The roof decks are composed of precast concrete planks and are supported by steel joists. The tile block curtain walls are supported by paired columns, the inner being steel and the outer concrete. The buildings rest on concrete wall footings. The floors are concrete slabs with steel rails for the shell-moving machinery set into them. There are raised concrete docks on either side of each building which run the length of their interiors. There are rolling steel overhead doors in either end of each building. Each magazine also has a steel plate door in one gable end which is reached by a flight of concrete steps. These doors open onto the storage docks.

## Battery Harris Bombproof Magazine (411)

This earth-covered reinforced concrete bunker-like magazine was built for storage of shells and powder for Battery Harris. It was intended to be bomb-proof as contrasted to the other four Battery Harris magazines (401, 405, 409, 414) that are more exposed and not of the bunker class. This structure probably dates back to early 1940s when Battery Harris was casemated in fear of aerial bombardment.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES February 19, 1917

BUILDER/ARCHITECT U. S. Army

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Fort Tilden is significant because of its role in the defense network for New York Harbor. Although Fort Tilden was not established until 1917, Rockaway Peninsula on which it is situated was recognized as early as 1814 for its strategic location and a blockhouse was erected there during the War of 1812. There is no evidence that the peninsula was fortified in subsequent years. Following its construction, Fort Tilden joined Fort Hancock on Sandy Hook, New Jersey, and Fort Wadsworth on Staten Island, New York, as part of the outer defense system for New York City and the harbor from World War I through the Cold War era.

The twin emplacements of Battery Harris, moreover, illustrate the technical improvements which took place in military weaponry between the two World Wars. Originally constructed as open-topped 16-inch ~~disappearing~~ <sup>parabolic</sup> gun batteries, Battery Harris was updated during World War II. Reinforced concrete casemates were built over the guns to protect them from aerial bombardment.

As well as demonstrating technological developments in military history during the first half of the twentieth century, the site, in conjunction with Fort Hancock, illustrates complex reorganization of traditional coastal defense systems. Fort Tilden was part of the Army's highly specialized system for the protection of New York Harbor from attacks from the sea. Defensive elements such as seacoast artillery, anti-aircraft artillery, submarine mining and observation, lighting and listening posts were coordinated between the two forts. Battery Weed and Fort Tompkins within Fort Wadsworth and Fort Hancock are already on the National Register; it is appropriate that the third member of this triumvirate be listed as well.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Lewis, Emanuel Raymond. Seacoast Fortifications of the United States: An Introductory History. Annapolis:Leeward Publications Inc., 1979

Torres, Louis. "Historic Structure Report, Historical Data Section of Fort Tilden, Gateway National Recreation Area, New York." Denver:National Park Service, 1980.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 98 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	5,9,5,0,0,0	4,4,9,1,5,9,0	B	1,8	5,9,5,0,0,0	4,4,9,0,0,0,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,8	5,9,12,7,15,0	4,4,8,9,7,0,0	D	1,8	5,9,12,8,7,0	4,4,9,1,5,9,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of Fort Tilden Historic District is shown as the thick black line on the accompanying map.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Dwight Pitcaithley, NARO and Michael Wurm, GATE

ORGANIZATION

North Atlantic Region

STREET & NUMBER

15 State Street

CITY OR TOWN

Boston, Mass.

DATE

6/23/82

TELEPHONE

617-223-3778

STATE

Mass.

# 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES

NO

NONE

Albert E. Carrese  
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is  National  State  Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Edwin C. Beard

TITLE Chesapeake, NPS

DATE 3/6/84

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Michael Wurm  
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 7/20/84

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

**Igloo Magazines (403, 404)**

Located to the north of Magazine #405, there are two later magazines constructed circa 1943. These partially sunken concrete structures are of semi-cylindrical type known as Igloo Magazines. These two basically identical magazines are barrel vaulted structures with bulkhead entryways. Constructed of concrete, they have been banked with earth. They both have double wooden doors covered with tarpaper.

**Six-inch Gun Batteries (315, 321)**

The two 6-inch guns of Battery Construction No. 220 (#315) were moved from an earlier battery to the east and installed here by 1942. The guns are gone but their concrete platforms are still partly visible under heavy brush. They were separated by 210 feet. The concrete bunker was located to the rear and between the two gun platforms. It consists of a ground-level tunnel complex which was covered with sand and earth crowned by a rectangular, single-story observation or fire control station. The lower bunker rooms served as a magazine along with communications and other support functions. Its entrances are blocked with sand and the complex cannot be entered. The fire control booth on top of the bunker has a flat roof and an open hatchway in the northwest corner. Steel rungs are set into the wall of the booth and are the only remaining fixtures. There is a slit window which runs the length of the south side of the booth and for a short distance north of the booth. There are no mechanical or electrical facilities installed in the bunker. Probably finished by 1942, Battery Construction No. 220 has a seven-foot-thick front wall with a six-foot-thick rear wall.

The western battery, Battery Kessler (#321), was originally known as West Battery in 1917. At that time it consisted of two 5-inch guns mounted on circular concrete platforms. By 1942 an earth-covered concrete magazine bunker was constructed to the rear and between the two guns. As normal, the guns were removed around 1948 and the platforms are probably buried. The bunker is still extant, but it is a roughly rectangular single-story structure laid out with a main east-west corridor. To the south of the corridor are two powder rooms, a shell room, and two storerooms. The main corridor can be entered from doorways on both the east and west ends. The entire structure, except for the doors, is concrete. The double steel doors are still installed though somewhat rusted. They are three inches thick. There are no mechanical or electrical facilities still operating in the bunker.

**Support Buildings (322, 402)**

Designed as support buildings for the batteries, these structures are rectangular (12 x 18 and 12 x 14 respectively), single-story constructions with concrete block walls and flat concrete slab roofs. Both were probably constructed around 1940.

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ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

Power Plants (407, 408, 412)

Buildings Nos. 407, 408, and 412 were known historically as Power Plants 2, 3 and 1 respectively. The 3 formed part of Battery Harris. Power Plants 1 and 2 each supplied power to one of the big guns and Power Plant 3 was a reserve unit to be placed in operation in the event the other power plants were temporarily out of commission. Built during the early 1920s, all three are of concrete construction.

Fire Control and Plotting Room (413)

The building which contained plotting and switchboard rooms in support of Battery Harris is essentially an earth-covered concrete bunker. There is only one entrance which is equipped with steel gates. The structure was probably completed in 1924.

Mine Casemate and Plotting Room (511)

This structure, built during World War II, formed part of a mine battery consisting of three tactical units which were located at Fort Hancock, Fort Wadsworth, and Fort Tilden. The mine casemate was the command post for the Fort Tilden branch of the submarine defenses.

It is a concrete bunker covered by sand and sod. It has a number of flues extending from the roof which probably served as ventilators. There are two entrances on the north side.

Harbor Entrance Command Post (13)

Harbor Entrance (or Groupment) Command Post is the building in which the operational activities of Fort Tilden were coordinated. It is a one-story concrete bunker covered by sand and earth. The Command Post was constructed during World War II.

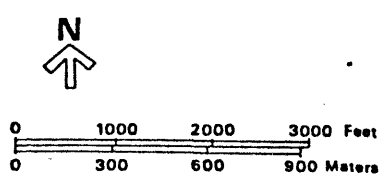
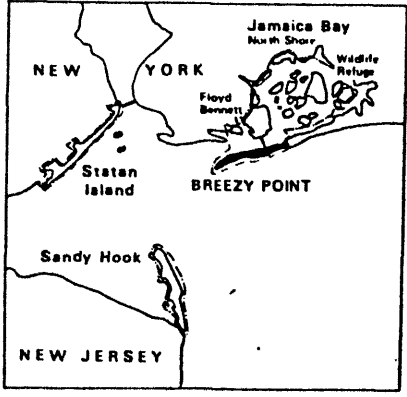
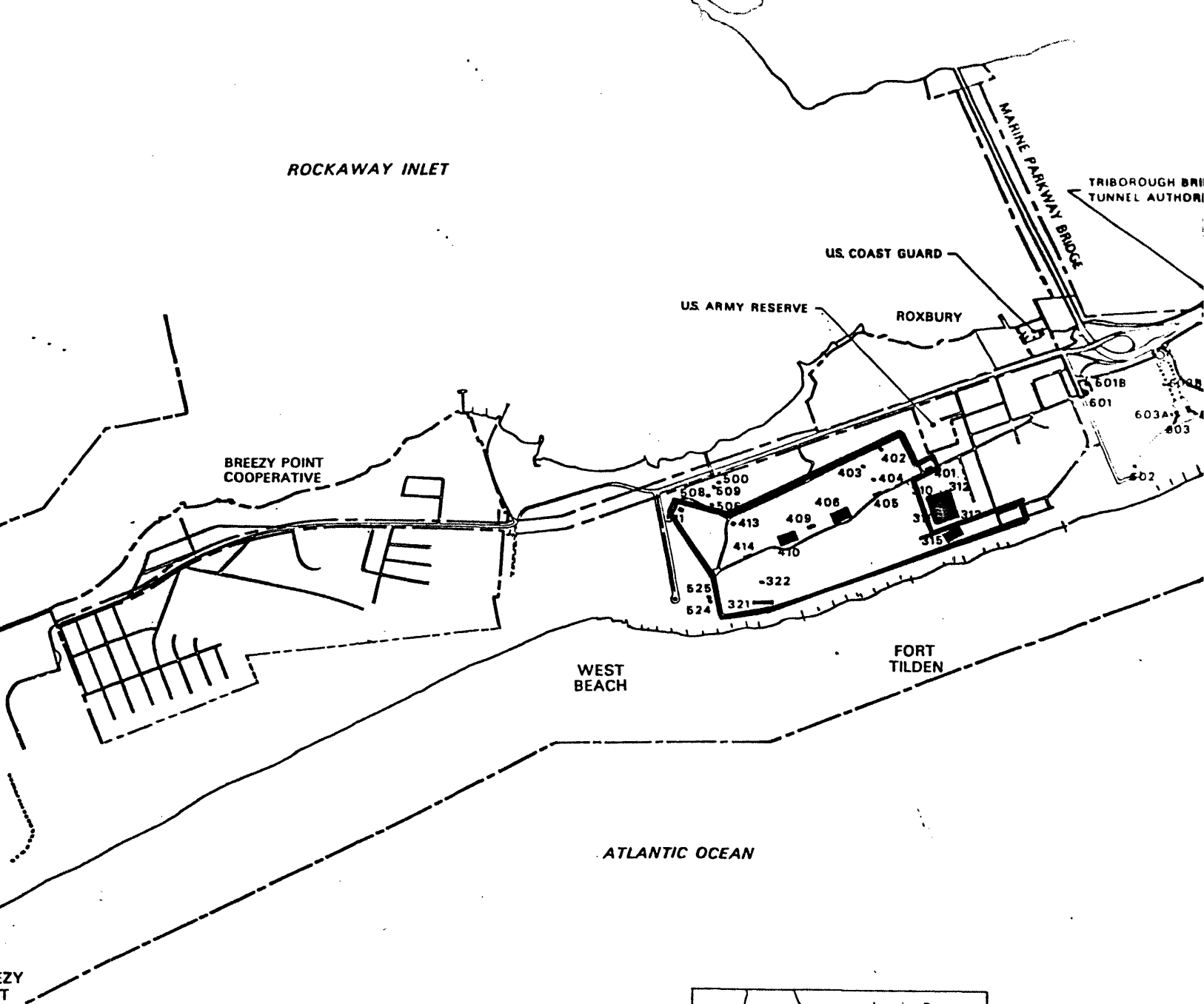
Telephone Pit (323)

This small rectangular, single-story building has a concrete slab hip roof. It is of concrete masonry construction and the floor is of sand.

Management Exclusion:

Within the boundaries of Fort Tilden there are several structures which do not meet National Register criteria. These buildings either do not relate to the harbor protection theme of the fort or, while they are listed on the enclosed site map, no longer exist. The structures include:

HS-316-320 Rifle range support structures  
Pistol range  
HS-324 No above grade remains  
HS-325 No above grade remains  
HS-514 No above grade remains  
HS-14 Utility building



———— FORT TILDEN HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARY

CUI