



What Is The Proposed 29Palms Training Land Acquisition and Airspace Establishment Project? Frequently Asked Questions—Airspace Related December 2010



ALTERNATIVE SIX IS THE OPTIMAL ALTERNATIVE CONSIDERING OPERATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT FACTORS TOGETHER

1. Why did the Marine Corps select Alternative 6 as the *preferred alternative*?

- Alternative 6 is selected in the DEIS as the preferred alternative because it is the optimal alternative considering operational and environmental impact factors together.
- Alternative 6 was developed in response to public comments and was designed to preserve public access to important off-road recreation areas during periods when MEB training did not require use of those lands. It would allow for reopening to public recreation use approximately 40,000 acres of the acquisition area for 10 months a year.
- Alternative 6 does not meet the MEB training operational requirements as well as Alternative 1, but Alternative 1 does not provide for public access to any of the training lands that would be acquired. (*From an operational perspective, Alternative 1 is the best alternative.*)
- While Alternative 5 is the environmentally preferred alternative, it is a very poor alternative from an operational perspective.

2. Is this a done deal?

- No. The public may comment on the DEIS from 25 February through 26 May – in writing, on the web and at public meetings. (See the addresses below on this page.)
- In addition, three public comment meetings will be held on the DEIS: one on April 12, 2011 in Joshua Tree; one on April 13, 2011 in Ontario; and a third on April 14, 2011 in Victorville.
- Comments received at the meetings and otherwise during the comment period will be evaluated in preparation of the Final EIS – and will be part of the record in front of the Department of the Navy when it makes its Record of Decision (ROD) about whether and how to proceed to meet Marine Corps' MEB training requirements.
- If the ROD determines that land acquisition is needed, then a formal withdrawal request will be made to Congress, and it will have to approve the withdrawal. Any non-federal lands would be acquired at fair market value.
- If the ROD determines that land acquisition is needed then the Navy would also request that the FAA proceed to evaluate the Department of the Navy's request to establish corresponding Special Use Airspace (SUA), or to modify existing SUA.

3. What does the DEIS show about the impacts to the environment of the proposed action?

- As analyzed under NEPA and CEQ guidelines, the DEIS shows that the alternatives studied would have Less than Significant Impacts on air quality, socio economics, public health and safety, visual resources, transportation (except for Alternative 3), noise, geological resources

For Further Information Please Contact

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(web) <http://www.marines.mil/unit/29palms/las/> – (e-mail) SMBPLMSWEBPAO@usmc.mil
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and water resources.

- As analyzed under NEPA and CEQ guidelines, the DEIS shows that the alternatives studied would have Significant Impacts on land use, recreation (except Alternative 3), airspace management and biological resources.
- As analyzed under NEPA and CEQ guidelines, the DEIS shows that the alternatives studied would have Less than Significant Impacts on cultural resources, although when added to known projects also in the region the effects could become Significant.
- Special Conservation Measures would be implemented with the proposed action to avoid or minimize potential impacts.
- The table below shows a comparison of the impacts by resource type and alternative.

Summary of Environmental Impact Evaluation						
	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 5	Alternative 6 (Preferred)
Change In Conditions						
Land Acquired (acres)	201,657	134,863	198,580	201,657	180,353	167,971
Restricted Public Access?	No	No	No	Yes - All	Yes - All	Yes (38,137 acres)
MEB Building Block Training	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes (108,530 acres)
Change in Personnel	70	65	59	77	77	77
Resource Area Impacts						
Land Use	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI
Recreation	SI	SI	LSI	SI	SI	SI
Socioeconomics	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI
Public Health and Safety	LSI	LSI	LSI			LSI
Visual Resources	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI
Transportation	LSI	LSI	SI	LSI	LSI	LSI
Airspace Management	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI
Air Quality	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI
Noise	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI
Biological Resources	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI
Cultural Resources						LSI
Geological Resources	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI
Water Resources	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI

Notes: **SI** = Significant Impact; **LSI** = Less than Significant Impact; **NI** = No Impact.

4. Would additional noise bother the outlying communities?

- The Marine Corps has studied potential noise impacts in preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) analysis and the study has determined that noise impacts of any land acquisition or airspace establishment would likely remain on board the installation and would be less than significant off base.

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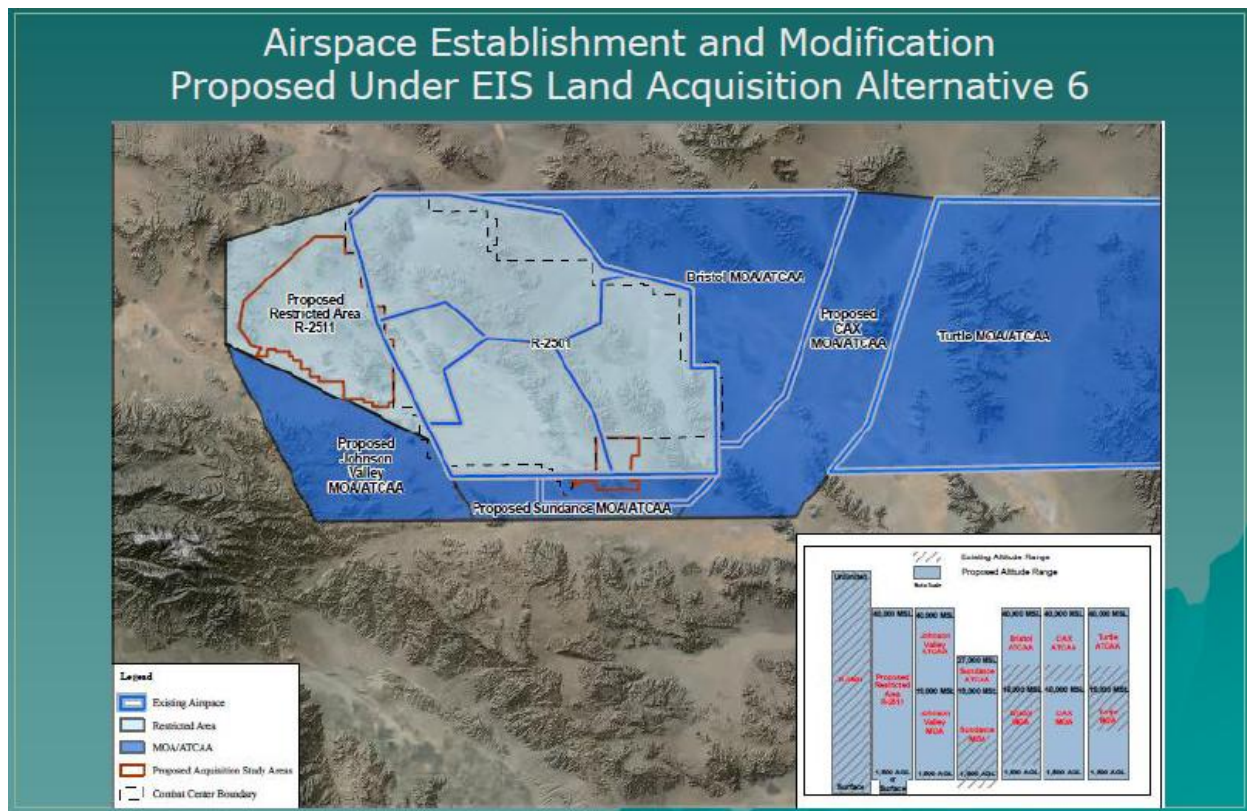
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- The Marine Corps will take measures to minimize noise to Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) neighbors. Potential mitigation will be identified in the EIS.
- Stakeholders will have a chance to review and comment on the analyses, including regarding noise, set out in the Draft EIS during the public comment period ending May 26, 2011 and at the three public comment meetings to be held April 12, 13 and 14, 2011.

5. What Special Use Airspace is proposed for establishment or modification in Alternative 6?

- The graphics below depict the Special Use Airspace proposed for establishment and modification in Alternative 6, including the days and hours of proposed use
- As is currently the case, when Special Use Airspace associated with the installation is not needed for military training, it will be returned to the National Airspace system for use.



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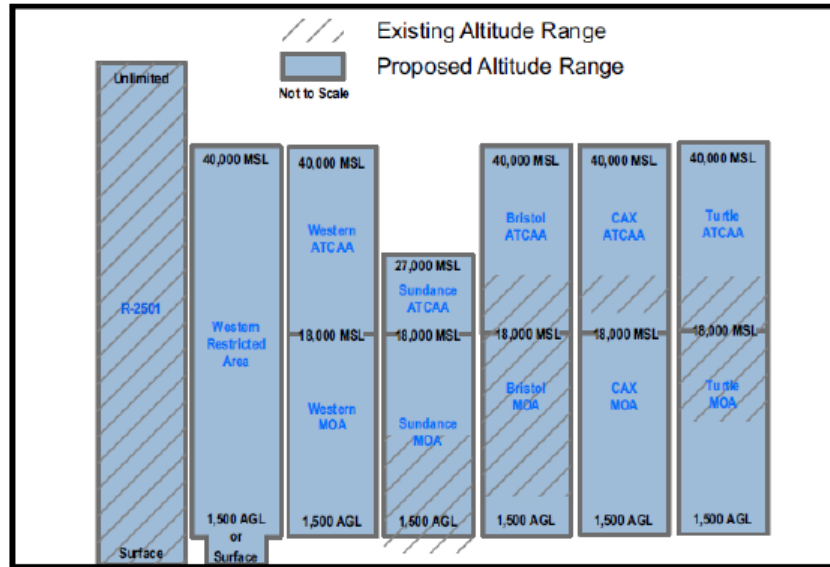
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Airspace Establishment and Modification Proposed Under EIS Land Acquisition Alternative 6 Surface and Ceiling of Airspace Blocks in Alternative



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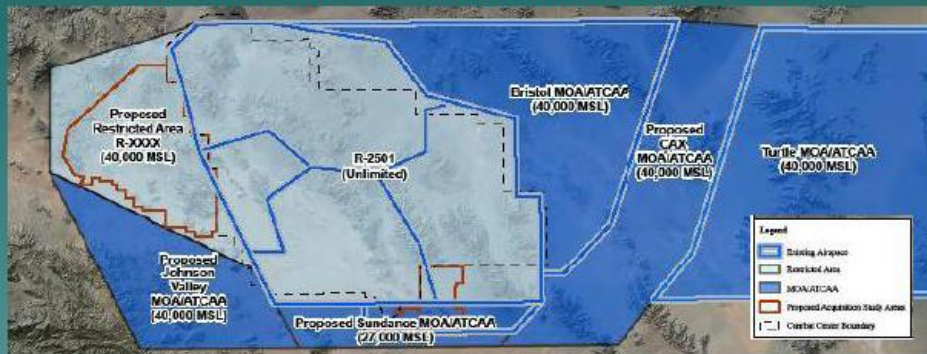
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Airspace Establishment and Modification Proposed Under EIS Land Acquisition Alternative 6 Days and Hours of Proposed Usage of SUA



R-XXXX parameters:	Johnson Valley MOA/ATCAA parameters:	Sundance MOA parameters:	Bristol MOA/ATCAA parameters:	CAX Corridor MOA/ATCAA parameters:	Turtle MOA parameters:																																																																																										
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MARINE CORPS REQUIREMENTS DRIVE THE 29 PALMS LAND/AIRSPACE STUDY

1. What is the training requirement driving the project?

- A Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) training exercise requires sustained (48-72 hours), continuous offensive action (combined arms, live fire and maneuver) with three battalions moving abreast—in three different corridors—and with, at a minimum, two battalions converging on a single objective. The MEB includes a Ground Combat Element, an Air Combat Element, a Command Element and a Combat Logistics Element.
- Combined arms means that ground-based and airborne weapons systems, including direct and indirect fire, will be used in the training exercise.

2. What do you mean by “Marines must train as they fight?”

- Training is mission rehearsal. To meet training requirements, Marines must train under conditions that closely approximate those of the battlefield.
- By training as they fight, Marines become proficient in tactics, techniques, and procedures both as individuals and as units. This training concept is as essential for success in military operations as it is in nearly all other team activities.
- Marines will instinctively do as they are trained. Because Marines are equipped and deployed to combat as a Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF), they must train to the MAGTF training standards prior to deployment.
- Marines need to train as a MAGTF in order to succeed. Doing less will jeopardize their safety and degrade mission readiness. A MEB, one type of MAGTF of about 15,000 Marines, is the Marine Corps’ primary contingency response force.
- A MEB must train realistically, with all elements – ground combat, air combat, logistics and command – involved in the sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver training exercise.

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POTENTIAL SPECIAL USE AIRSPACE RESPONDS TO TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

1. Why is the Marine Corps studying the establishment or modification of Special Use Airspace?

- Advanced weapons systems now provide military forces with greater capabilities for detecting and countering enemy threats at greater distances. This has required that range and airspace areas be expanded, where necessary and feasible, to enable these forces to train in an environment that is more representative of realistic combat conditions. For that reason, the Marine Corps requires corresponding training airspace to support MEB training.
- All of the live fire from ground based and airborne weapons systems must occur within Restricted Area, an area that is restricted from public use during the exercise to ensure public safety. Military Operations Areas (MOAs) also provide airspace where attack maneuver and other activities can be carried out, but no live fire occurs in a MOA. Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspace (ATCAA), like MOA, allows non-military aircraft to be vectored through at the discretion of the local air traffic control authority.
- A Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) is an Air Ground Task Force. The Marines deploy to combat as a combined-arms unit, which includes air and ground combat elements (along with command and logistics elements).
- To ensure that MEB training requirements are fulfilled, both training lands and training Special Use Airspace must be sufficient to meet requirements for sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver.

2. How will this airspace decision be made?

- In preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), both land and airspace issues and resource impacts were evaluated through the analysis of a range of reasonable alternatives. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), as the civil aviation authority, is an important cooperating agency in the project EIS.
- Throughout the EIS process, the FAA is cooperating with the Department of the Navy during study of alternatives to establish, expand or modify Special Use Airspace. With the FAA's cooperation and expertise, the Department of the Navy will be better able to prepare an EIS that is fully sufficient for FAA decision making.
- If the Record of Decision (ROD) determines that Special Use Airspace needs to be established or modified to meet MEB training, the Marine Corps will submit an airspace proposal to support any training land acquisition. The FAA would conduct formal airspace customer feasibility forums, and undertake the appropriate processes, including Proposed Rulemaking to analyze that request.
- If the FAA concludes that additional Special Use Airspace should be established, or current airspace modified, at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) to support MEB training, it would establish or modify such Special Use Airspace per its published process.

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3. Would this program result in any new restrictions being placed on commercial airline or civil aviation over flights?

- MCAGCC airspace restrictions might be extended over any newly-acquired land due to safety issues involved with live-fire, combined arms air-ground task force training.
- The Marine Corps will work with the FAA and aviation stakeholders on issues examined during the EIS.
- Through its long-standing working relationship with the FAA, the Marine Corps will continue to work to minimize disruption to the National Airspace System. The Marine Corps supports FAA efforts to optimize the safe use of airspace over the installation by commercial and civil aviation.

4. What types of airspace is used to support military training at MCAGCC?

- Restricted Area (RA): Non-military aircraft are prohibited from entering during military training activities that involve live fire; MCAGCC releases it for use by all aircraft in the National Airspace System when not needed for military training.
- Military Operations Area (MOA): A military operations area is airspace designated outside of Class A airspace (18,000-60,000 feet) to separate or segregate certain nonhazardous military activities from Instrument Flight Rule (IFR) traffic and to identify for Visual Flight Rule (VFR) traffic where these activities are conducted.
- Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspace (ATCAA): Similar to a MOA (and usually overlaying a MOA) within Class A airspace (18,000-60,000 feet), non-military aircraft may fly in ATCAA during military training so long as air traffic controllers can maintain IFR separation from military aircraft; only non-hazardous military activities may be undertaken in ATCAA.

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THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS ENSURES PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND INPUTS

1. How does the public express its views of the project alternatives? To what extent is the Marine Corps currently coordinating with the public?

- The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) has analyzed the environmental impacts, on both natural and socio-economic resources, of the various alternatives. Stakeholders – including public agencies; state, local and tribal governments; businesses, non-governmental organizations, including conservationists, recreation enthusiasts and developers and individuals – can participate in a transparent public process to review and comment on the DEIS, with a public comment period from 25 February through 26 May, 2011 and three public meetings (one in Joshua Tree on April 12, one in Ontario on April 13 and one in Victorville on April 14).
- Nearly 20,000 public comments were received during the three-month EIS scoping period that ended January 31, 2009. Those comments helped shape both the land acquisition and airspace alternatives under study. Alternative 6, the preferred alternative selected, was developed specifically in response to stakeholder comments.
- The Marine Corps will continue to work closely with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the FAA throughout the EIS process. These cooperating agencies will help ensure that all stakeholder concerns are addressed during the EIS.
- Representatives of the Marine Corps, including Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) personnel, regularly meet with stakeholders to discuss issues, both aboard Marine Corps installations and in community forums, in order to draw community perspectives into its planning processes.

2. What is the Project timeline?

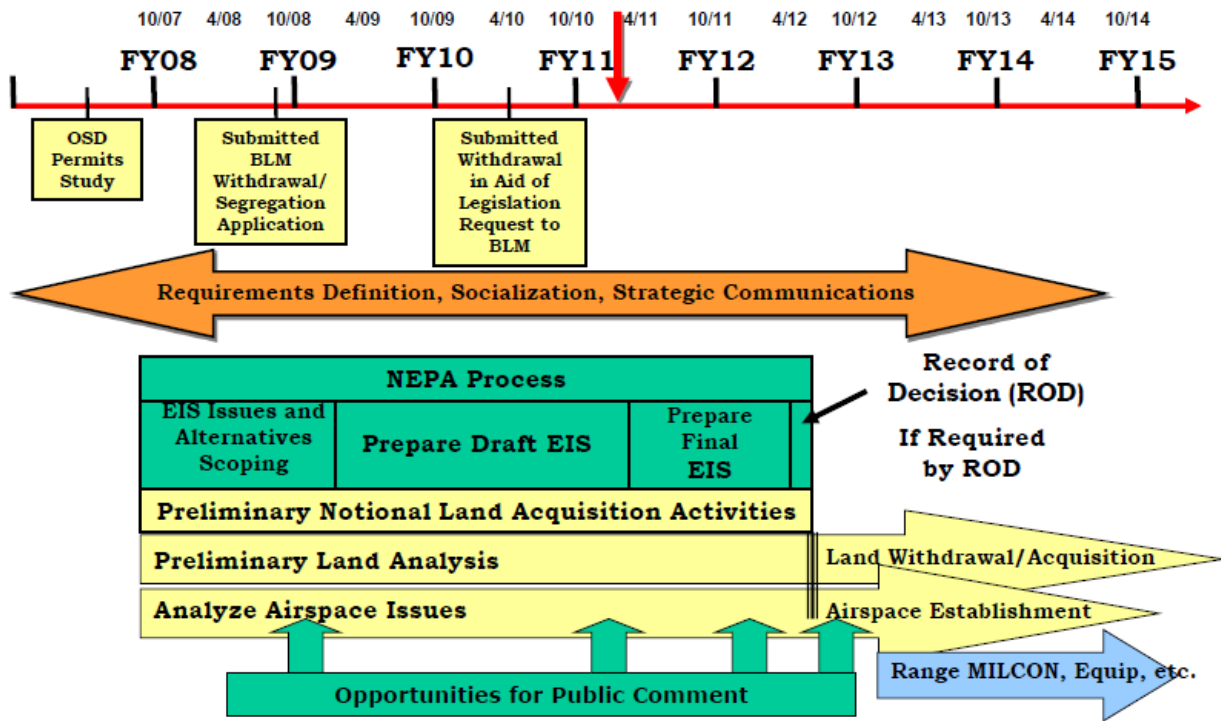
- The EIS study process will take a total of two to three years to complete, including public review and comment. The Draft EIS was released on 25 February 2011; the Final EIS is scheduled for release in the December 2011.
- The Department of the Navy plans to issue a Record of Decision (ROD) after the Final EIS in April 2012.
- If the ROD supports the acquisition of additional lands and/or the establishment or modification of Special Use Airspace, the goal will be to have Marines training in those new training lands and airspace by 2015.
- If required in the ROD, military land withdrawal legislation would be submitted for approval to Congress, and must be enacted into law.
- If requested as a result of the ROD, the FAA would then undertake its rulemaking process to consider establishment or modification of Special Use Airspace, which should conclude in 2013.
- The timeline that follows on the next page displays those objectives.

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MCAGCC, A PREMIER TRAINING FACILITY

INCIDENTAL PROJECT QUESTIONS

1. How long has this potential acquisition been in the works?

- The Marine Corps' Requirements Oversight Council (MROC) initiated the effort in 2002 by asking for a study to determine how best to meet future training requirements. Once MROC determined the requirement to provide sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver training for a Marine Expeditionary Brigade, they initiated further studies to see how to meet those training requirements. A study, conducted by the Center for Naval Analyses, showed that the ranges in the Southwest United States provided the best opportunity to meet this requirement, but that it could only be met with the expansion of the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) at Twentynine Palms. The MROC authorized a study to look into potential land acquisition at MCAGCC. That decision has been reviewed at various levels within the Department of the Navy and the Department of Defense since, and has received validation and confirmation through all echelons.

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