



**Airspace Establishment Project
Frequently Asked Questions
Permanent SUA and Environmental Assessment
March 2019**



**OVERVIEW OF PERMANENT SPECIAL USE AIRSPACE ESTABLISHMENT
AND MODIFICATIONS AT MARINE AIR GROUND TASK FORCE
TRAINING COMMAND, TWENTYNINE PALMS, CA**

1. What is Special Use Airspace (SUA)?

- Special Use Airspace (SUA) is airspace of defined dimensions wherein activities must be confined because of their nature, or wherein limitations may be imposed upon aircraft operations that are not part of those activities. These limitations allow the Department of Defense to conduct necessary training activities while preserving public safety. Special use airspace at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) includes Restricted Areas, Military Operation Areas (MOAs), Air Traffic Controlled Assigned Airspace (ATCAA), and Controlled Firing Areas (CFAs).

2. What types of airspace are used to support military training at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC)?

- Restricted Area (RA): RAs are areas where operations are hazardous to nonparticipating aircraft and contain airspace within which the flight of aircraft, while not wholly prohibited, is subject to restrictions. Activities within these areas must be confined because of their nature, or limitations may be imposed upon aircraft operations that are not a part of those activities, or both. Restricted Areas denote the existence of unusual, often invisible, hazards to aircraft (e.g., artillery firing, aerial gunnery, or guided missiles). Non-military aircraft are prohibited from entering during military training activities that may involve live fire.
- Military Operations Area (MOA): MOAs consist of airspace with defined vertical and lateral limits established for the purpose of separating certain military training activities from IFR traffic. Whenever a MOA is being used, non-participating IFR traffic may be cleared through a MOA if IFR separation can be provided by Air Traffic Control (ATC). Otherwise, ATC reroutes or restricts nonparticipating IFR traffic. VFR traffic is not prohibited from flying within a MOA and does so at their own risk.
- Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspace (ATCAA): An ATCAA is the equivalent of 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. VFR traffic is not permitted at or above 18,000 feet.

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- Controlled Firing Area (CFA): This is airspace designated to contain activities that if not conducted in a controlled environment would be hazardous to nonparticipating aircraft. CFAs provide a means to accommodate, without impact to aviation, certain hazardous activities that can be immediately suspended if a nonparticipating aircraft approaches the area. The difference between CFA and other special use airspace is that activities must be suspended when a spotter aircraft, radar, or ground lookout position indicates an aircraft might be approaching the area.

3. Why does the Combat Center need additional permanent airspace?

- Marines cannot sufficiently train without the required airspace to support small arms, mortars, artillery, UAS, air-to-surface surface-to-surface weapons, and Large-Scale Combined Arms training.
- The Marine Corps does not have sufficient airspace to conduct scalable MAGTF level live-fire exercise training required by congress. While the base training range was expanded in 2014, the requisite permanent airspace to execute these essential exercises has not yet been modified to reflect the increased military training activity.
- The establishment of permanent SUA over and adjacent to the newly acquired lands in Johnson Valley is essential to safely undertake realistic MAGTF training that incorporates live-fire training both of ground and aviation units. As weapon systems continue to advance and provide military forces with greater capabilities for detecting and countering enemy threats at greater distances, the land and airspace required to train Marines for battle is also greater.
- The increased ranges acquired from the land expansion and proposed SUA are essential to achieve required scalable MAGTF and other training objectives, and have been developed to maintain safe distances for public safety, and balance the needs of the National Airspace System (NAS)

4. Why is the Marine Corps conducting an Environmental Assessment (EA)?

- The Marine Corps has worked with the FAA and stakeholders over many years to establish the permanent SUA necessary to achieve scalable MAGTF training indicated by the land expansion. The process for establishing permanent SUA takes several years to conduct thorough aeronautical and environmental review processes.
- Since the expansion of the training range in 2014, the FAA has worked with the Marine Corps to achieve temporary measures that allowed the Marine Corps to conduct smaller scale military training activities while a revised SUA proposal was developed.

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- The Marine Corps submitted a revised proposal for permanent SUA in August 2018. The revised proposal takes into account lessons learned from large-scale exercises conducted with support of temporary SUA, current weapons systems, and current training requirements while also minimizing impacts to the National Airspace System (NAS) and surrounding communities.
- To support decision making, the Marine Corps is preparing the EA to determine environmental impacts of the Marine Corps' revised proposal.
- The EA provides an environmental analysis of the Permanent SUA proposal the Marine Corps submitted to the FAA in August 2018. Its purpose is to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with establishing new permanent SUA and modifying existing SUA. The document's findings will also determine if it is necessary to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), or sufficient to prepare a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and proceed with coordination of the proposed action.

5. How many action alternatives is the Environmental Assessment evaluating?

- The EA evaluates three alternatives: two action alternatives and a no-action alternative. The proposed action is to establish new permanent SUA areas and to modify the lateral boundaries, component sectors, and/or altitude limits within existing SUA areas to support ongoing daily training activities at the Combat Center. Both action alternatives below would have minimal impact to the NAS and still allow the Combat Center to support ongoing daily training activities 365 days per year to varying degrees in accordance with pre-deployment readiness directives.
- Alternative 1 would establish new permanent SUA to the west and east of existing Combat Center SUA and modify existing SUA along the southern and eastern boundaries of the Combat Center. This expansion would enhance integrated aviation operations with new advanced capabilities associated with 5th Generation aircraft. Additionally, Alternative 1 would support greater joint (other service) aviation integration training activities to occur.
- Alternative 2 is similar to Alternative 1, but does not include establishing new permanent SUA (i.e., CAX MOA/ATCAA and the Turtle Low MOA) to the east of the Combat Center.

6. How will this airspace decision be made?

- The FAA will make a formal decision on the proposal after conducting an extensive aeronautical and environmental review of the proposal, and taking into consideration public comments from their rule and non-rule making processes.

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- The FAA will conduct formal airspace customer feasibility forums, and undertake the appropriate processes, including formal established procedures to analyze the airspace proposal requests.
- If the FAA concludes that additional SUA should be established, or current airspace modified, at MCAGCC to support scalable MAGTF training requirements, it would establish or modify such SUA per its published processes, including notice to the aviation community of the establishment and modification of the SUA utilized by MCAGCC in the prescribed publications. Once established, the Combat Center will schedule/utilize that SUA required to meet specific training requirements and will return scheduled SUA to the FAA.

7. What are the specifications of the Permanent SUA proposal?

- The proposed Permanent SUA will support scalable MAGTF combined arms exercises planned for existing and newly acquired training lands at MCAGCC and support year round training activities (Alternatives 1 and 2).
 - **R-2509 E/W/N** - The proposed Permanent R-2509 E/W/N will accommodate Marine Expeditionary Brigade Large Scale Exercise (LSE) building block live-fire combined arms training and will be activated either by itself or in conjunction with the existing and/or planned restricted area and MOAs/ATCAAs.
 - a). **R-2509E** Surface to 40,000 feet above MSL.
 - b). **R-2509W** Surface to 8,000 feet above MSL excluding that airspace within a 2nm radius and 1,500 feet AGL of three private airports (Kelly, B&E, and Abraham) in Johnson Valley.
 - c). **R-2509N** Surface to 16,000 feet above MSL.
 - **Johnson Valley MOA** – From 1,500 feet AGL up to but not including 18,000 feet above MSL.
 - **Johnson Valley ATCAA** – From 18,000 feet to 40,000 feet above MSL.
 - **Sundance MOA** – From 500 feet AGL up to but not including 18,000 feet above MSL; excluding a 1nm radius of the Dale Sky ranch airport surface to 1,500 feet AGL and a 1-mile (1.6-kilometer) wide corridor, extending from the center of the airport on a straight line south to the edge of the Sundance MOA.
 - **Sundance ATCAA** – From 18,000 to 22,000 feet above MSL.
 - **Bristol MOA** – From 2,000 feet AGL up to but not including 18,000 feet MSL.

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- **Bristol North ATCAA** – From 18,000 to 23,000 feet above MSL/18,000 to 40,000 feet above MSL for LSEs.
- **Bristol South ATCAA** – From 18,000 to 27,000 feet above MSL/18,000 to 40,000 feet above MSL for LSEs.
- **CAX MOA** – From 2,000 feet AGL to 8,000 feet above MSL.
- **CAX ATCAA** – From 18,000 to 21,000 feet above MSL.
- **Turtle Low MOA** – From 2,000 feet AGL to 11,000 feet above MSL.

Existing Airspace at the Combat Center

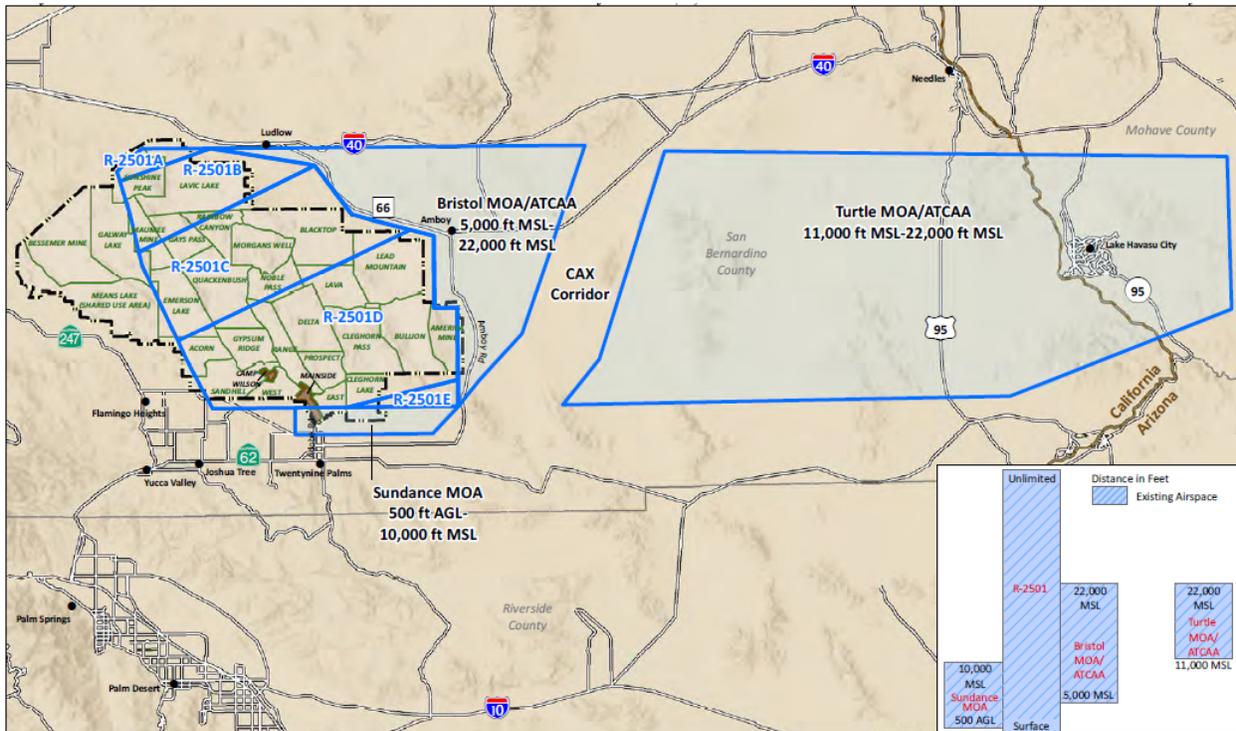


Figure 1-2. Existing Airspace at the Combat Center



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Proposed Additional Airspace in the EA (Alternative 1)

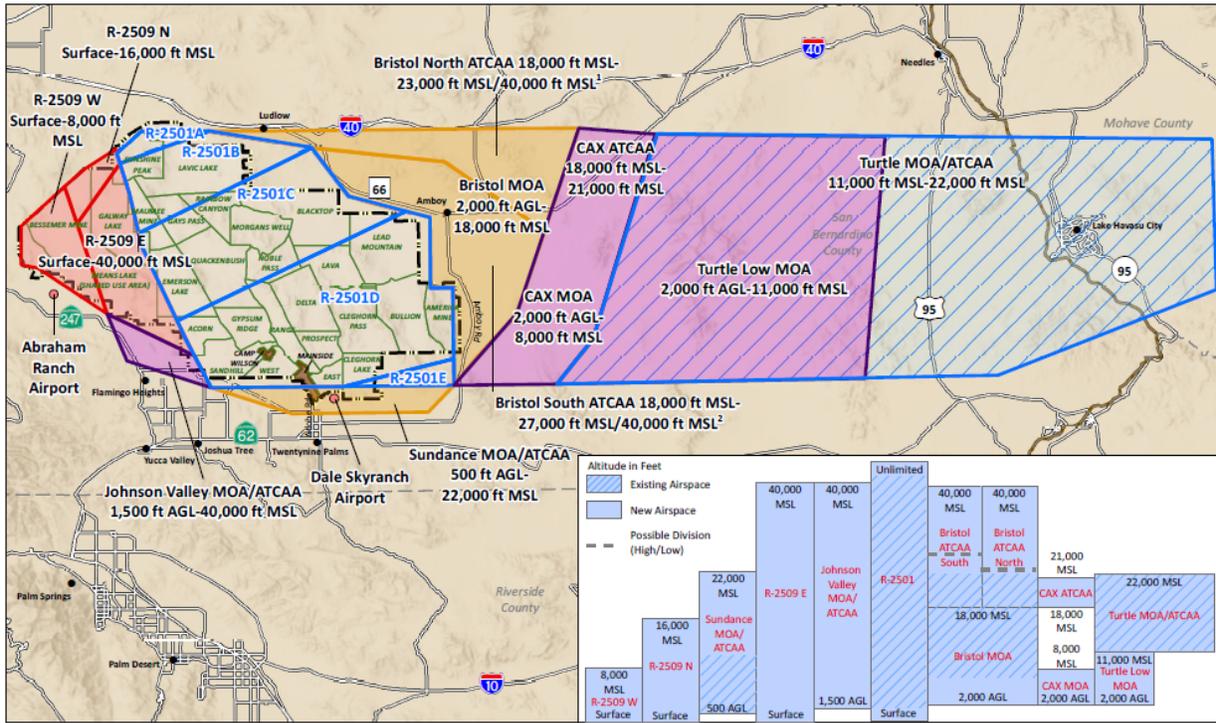
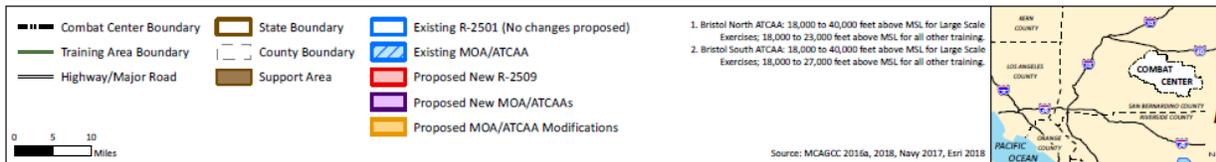


Figure 2-1. Alternative 1 Special Use Airspace



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Proposed Additional Airspace in the EA (Alternative 2)

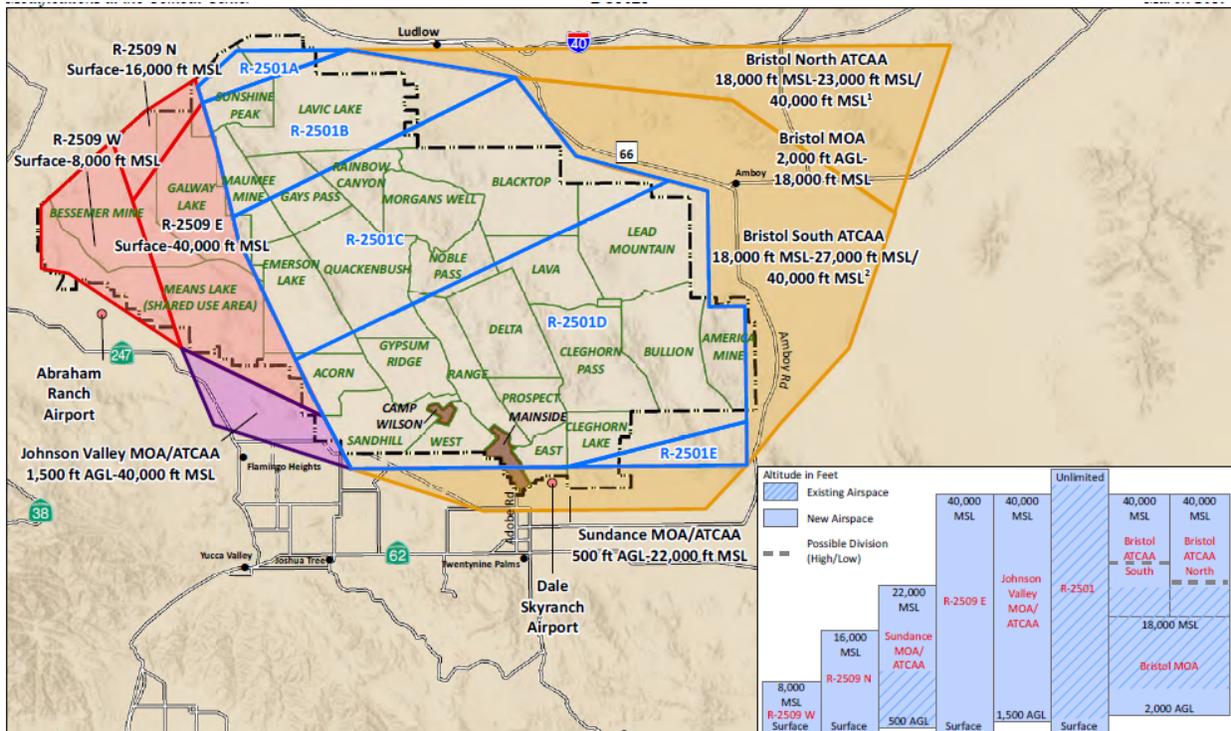


Figure 2-2. Alternative 2 Special Use Airspace



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