



# MARINE AIR GROUND TASK FORCE TRAINING COMMAND

## MARINE AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER

### PERMANENT SUA AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

September 2025

#### 1. What is Special Use Airspace (SUA)?

Special Use Airspace (SUA) is designated airspace where activities require specific restrictions on aircraft operations for safety or operational reasons. At Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC), SUA includes Restricted Areas, Military Operations Areas (MOAs), Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspace (ATCAA), and Controlled Firing Areas (CFAs). These areas support necessary military training. Pilots should always check NOTAMs (Notices to Airmen) before flying in or near SUA.

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

- **Restricted Area:** 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:** MOAs consist of airspace with defined vertical and lateral limits established for the purpose of separating certain military training activities from IFR (instrument flight rules) 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:** 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.
- **Controlled Firing Area:** 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.

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

While the base training area was expanded in 2014, the requisite permanent SUA to execute these essential exercises has not yet been modified to reflect the increased military training activity. The Marine Corps *requires* sufficient permanent SUA over the expanded lands to support congressionally mandated requirements for large-scale, combined-arms, live-fire training for both ground and aviation forces. 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.

Establishment of Permanent SUA over Johnson Valley will allow for realistic exercises essential for maintaining readiness and provide for the full scope of training exercises that predicated the land expansion.

- **Realistic Training:** The current limited airspace restricts live-fire activities and prevents full use of the expanded training areas. This new airspace is crucial for creating realistic training scenarios that accurately simulate modern combat environments.
- **Meeting National Security Requirements:** Congress requires the Marine Corps to conduct large-scale, Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) training. The proposed airspace enables us to meet this critical national security requirement. Training conducted at the Combat Center prepares troops for operational flexibility when in combat with modern peer adversaries with capabilities spanning the air, maritime, space, and information domains.
- **Expanded Capabilities, Expanded Space:** As weapon systems evolve, Marines need greater distances for detecting and responding to threats. The increased ranges resulting from the land expansion, combined with the proposed SUA, would provide the necessary space for this advanced training.
- **Safety and Public Access:** This proposed airspace has been carefully designed to maintain safe distances and minimize impacts on the National Airspace System and surrounding communities. We are committed to balancing training needs with public safety and access.

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

In 2014, MCAGCC expanded its land footprint to support enhanced training. The establishment of corresponding Special Use Airspace (SUA) is the necessary next step to fully utilize that expanded land for realistic training exercises and aviation safety. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies like the Marine Corps to assess the potential environmental impacts of proposed actions, such as establishing new SUA. This ensures that environmental factors are considered in the decision-making process.

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Feedback from the EA helps the FAA engage the Marine Corps on refinements to the proposal and is considered in their rulemaking process.

- **FAA Collaboration:** After the Combat Center land expansion was authorized, the decision for establishment of airspace was deferred to allow the Marine Corps and FAA to develop airspace configurations and characteristics that could meet Marine Corps training requirements while minimizing impacts to the National Airspace System (NAS). Since then, the Marine Corps has worked closely with the FAA and other stakeholders to develop several proposals for Permanent SUA.
- **Determining Environmental Impacts:** The Marine Corps is now conducting an Environmental Assessment (EA) to thoroughly evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with establishing new permanent SUA and modifying existing SUA at the Combat Center.
- **Informing the Decision:** The EA's findings will determine whether a more detailed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required, or if a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) can be issued, allowing the proposed action to proceed. The EA supports responsible decision-making.

## 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 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:** Similar to what was proposed in the 2012 Final EIS, Alternative 1 would establish new Permanent SUA (R-2509, Johnson Valley MOA/Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspace (ATCAA), Sundance ATCAA, CAX MOA/ATCAA, and Turtle Low MOA) within the same footprint as presented in the 2012 EIS.

Alternative 1 would also modify existing airspace at the Combat Center (Bristol MOA/ATCAA and Sundance MOA).

- **Alternative 2 (Preferred Alternative):** Alternative 2 would establish new permanent SUA (R-2509, Johnson Valley MOA, Sundance ATCAA, CAX MOA, and Turtle Low MOA) and modify existing SUA (Bristol MOA/ATCAA and Sundance MOA).

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Alternative 2 airspace configurations would differ from Alternative 1 in the following ways:

- Limiting altitudes to 16,000 feet MSL in R-2509C and Johnson Valley MOA.
- Not creating a Johnson Valley ATCAA or CAX ATCAA.
- Limiting altitudes in Bristol ATCAA to Flight Level (FL)220 (same as existing airspace) and not dividing into Bristol North ATCAA and Bristol South ATCAA.
- Modifying the southern boundary of Sundance ATCAA.

Under Alternative 2, the Marine Corps would only activate R-2509 over Johnson Valley up to 60 days per year.

- No-Action Alternative: The No-Action Alternative would result in no changes to the Combat Center's existing airspace. It represents existing conditions.

## 6. How will this airspace decision be made?

The FAA has the sole authority to make a formal decision on this airspace proposal. The FAA's decision will be based on an extensive and objective review process, designed to ensure the safety and efficiency of the NAS while also considering the needs of the Marine Corps. The FAA will conduct a thorough aeronautical and environmental review of the proposal. This includes:

- **Aeronautical Analysis:** Assessing the impact of the proposed airspace on air traffic patterns, safety procedures, and existing airspace users. This will include the use of existing established procedures for analysis.
- **Environmental Review:** Evaluating the potential environmental impacts of the proposal, as documented in the Environmental Assessment (EA).
- **Public Input:** Carefully considering all public comments received during the FAA's rulemaking process.

## 7. How would these proposed airspace changes impact civilian aviation?

The Marine Corps will activate the RA by Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) only when required for military training. When the airspace is not activated, it would be available to other users in compliance with FAA Joint Order 7400.2P, which requires that SUA be returned to the controlling agency and become available for access by non-participating aircraft. These permanent RAs improve safety for military and civilian pilots by providing charted, predictable boundaries for all aviators. This allows pilots to more effectively plan their flights in accordance with published NOTAMs. This clear delineation minimizes uncertainty and improves situational awareness for all airspace users.

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**8. How would these proposed changes to the airspace impact recreation activities in the Johnson Valley Shared Use Area?**

The Combat Center is committed to honoring the shared aspect of the Johnson Valley Shared Use Area. The proposed airspace changes are designed to minimize disruption to recreation activities that the Johnson Valley Shared Use Area is known for – off-roading, camping, recreational drones and model rocketry, and even low-level flights for filming/chasing during off-road events.

- **Activation:** For both Alternative 1 and 2, the Marine Corps would activate the RA by Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) only when required for military training. When the airspace is not activated, it would be available to other users in compliance with FAA Joint Order 7400.2P, which requires that SUA be returned to the controlling agency and become available for access by non-participating aircraft. Under Alternative 2, the Preferred Alternative, the Marine Corps would only activate the RA above the Johnson Valley Shared Use Area for up to 60 days per year, often coinciding on with pre-scheduled closure periods for military training.
- **Recreation Compatibility:** For occasions when the area is open to the public and the Marine Corps would need to activate the airspace in support of training, the floor of the airspace would start at an altitude compatible with recreation activities in Johnson Valley. This means that the public can continue to enjoy typical recreation activities the same way they do today, even on the occasion that the Marine Corps activates the airspace. There is no need to verify the airspace status for recreationists that want to off-road, camp, fly drones, or enjoy similar ground activities.

We understand how important recreation in Johnson Valley is to the local community and developed our proposal to accommodate these activities whenever the area is open to the public.

**9. Under Alternative 2, the Restricted Area over the Johnson Valley Shared Use Area would only be activated for up to 60 days per year. The EA states that the information gathered during the first year of establishment could be used to consider additional days of use for the future. Will the days of use over the Johnson Valley Shared Use Area increase after the first year?**

The proposed limit of up to 60 days of RA activation per year under Alternative 2 is to allow for a feasibility study focused on analyzing the impacts of activation of this RA on the NAS.

Importantly, regardless of the outcome of the feasibility study or any potential future requests for additional days of RA use, recreational access will be preserved through established dynamic floor procedures. These procedures ensure that when the Shared Use Area is open to the public, any RA activation over the Shared Use Area would be established a floor

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compatible with recreation activities. This procedural mechanism provides a clear and consistent method for managing airspace access, ensuring that ground-based and low-altitude recreational activities in the Shared Use Area can continue uninterrupted, even with potential adjustments to the number of authorized activation days.

**10. Would the proposed changes in airspace impact King of the Hammers off-road event?**

The Marine Corps understands the importance of the King of the Hammers (KOH) event to the off-road community and the local economy. We are committed to working collaboratively with Hammerking Productions and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to support this event and ensure its continued success.

- **Continued Support for KOH:** The proposed changes in airspace will not impact the event's ability to use helicopters or drones for event operations.
- **Ongoing Coordination:** The Marine Corps continues to coordinate with Hammerking Productions regarding future events. The ongoing communication will ensure that any changes in airspace will not impact the event within the Shared Use Area or over the event routes that are licensed for use on the installation.

**11. How would the establishment of Permanent SUA impact rapid medical evacuation in the case of civilian accidents in the Johnson Valley Shared Use Area?**

The Marine Corps understands that minutes can be critical when saving lives and is fully committed to ensuring that MEDEVAC access is not compromised by the proposed airspace expansion. In compliance with FAA JO 7400.2P, the Marine Corps will implement clear and effective procedures that guarantee rapid and safe access during medical emergencies, including immediately suspending training activities if need to facilitate safe and efficient passage for emergency aircraft.

- If the RA is not activated and/or access required is below the floor of activated RA, no additional coordination with the installation for Medevac is needed.
- If the RA is activated and altitude requirements are above the established floor, MCAGCC Range Control will facilitate coordination with the MEDEVAC service, ensuring prompt facilitation of access.

**12. Why is the establishment of Permanent SUA necessary? Could you accommodate military training requirements through use of a Temporary Flight Restrictions?**

TFRs are for reactive civilian hazard mitigation to address temporary, unforeseen hazards like natural disasters or accidents – not planned, inherently hazardous military training. Marine Corps training requires proactive airspace management, not reactive restrictions.

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- Using TFRs is not an adequate solution to meet the Marine Corps' training requirements and is fundamentally incompatible with the nature of our training, compromising readiness and increasing risk.
- Existing regulations for TFRs (primarily 14 CFR 91.137) do not support establishing them to support military training.
- Reliance on TFRs would necessitate constant monitoring and immediate suspension of training whenever non-participating aircraft enter the area, severely impacting training effectiveness and readiness.

### 13. What are the specifications of the Permanent SUA proposal?

Details on the Combat Center's current proposal are below. These are the same specifications in the Draft EA for Alternative 2, the Preferred Alternative.

**R-2509 A/B/C/D** - The proposed Permanent R-2509 A/B/C/D will accommodate Marine Expeditionary Brigade Large Scale Exercise (LSE) building block live-fire combined arms training and will be activated in conjunction with the Johnson Valley MOA.

- **R-2509 A:** Surface to 6,000 feet MSL
- **R-2509 B:** Surface to 16,000 feet MSL
- **R-2509 C:** Surface to 40,000 feet MSL
- **R-2509 D:** Surface to 8,000 feet above MSL; excluding airspace within a 3.4-nm radius of lat. 34°25'3.34"N., long. 116°36'52.12"W., which would be surface to 1,500 feet AGL to accommodate Abraham Ranch, Kelly, and B&E private airports

Restricted Areas would only be activated when needed for military training, **up to 60 days annually**. The floor over the Johnson Valley Shared Use Area (JVSUA) would only be established at the surface when the area is closed for military training.  
When the JVSUA is open for public use, if the airspace is activated, the floor would be established at an altitude compatible with public recreation – off-roading, drones, model rocketry, and low flying helicopters for filming, etc.

**Johnson Valley MOA** – From 1,500 feet AGL to 16,000 feet 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 FL180 to FL220

**Bristol MOA** – From 2,000 feet AGL up to but not including FL180

**Bristol ATCAA** – From FL180 to FL220

**CAX MOA** – 2,000 feet AGL to 8,000 feet MSL

**Turtle Low MOA** – 2,000 feet AGL to but not including 11,000 feet MSL

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## CURRENT AIRSPACE PROPOSAL

### ALTERNATIVE 2 AIRSPACE CONFIGURATION (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)

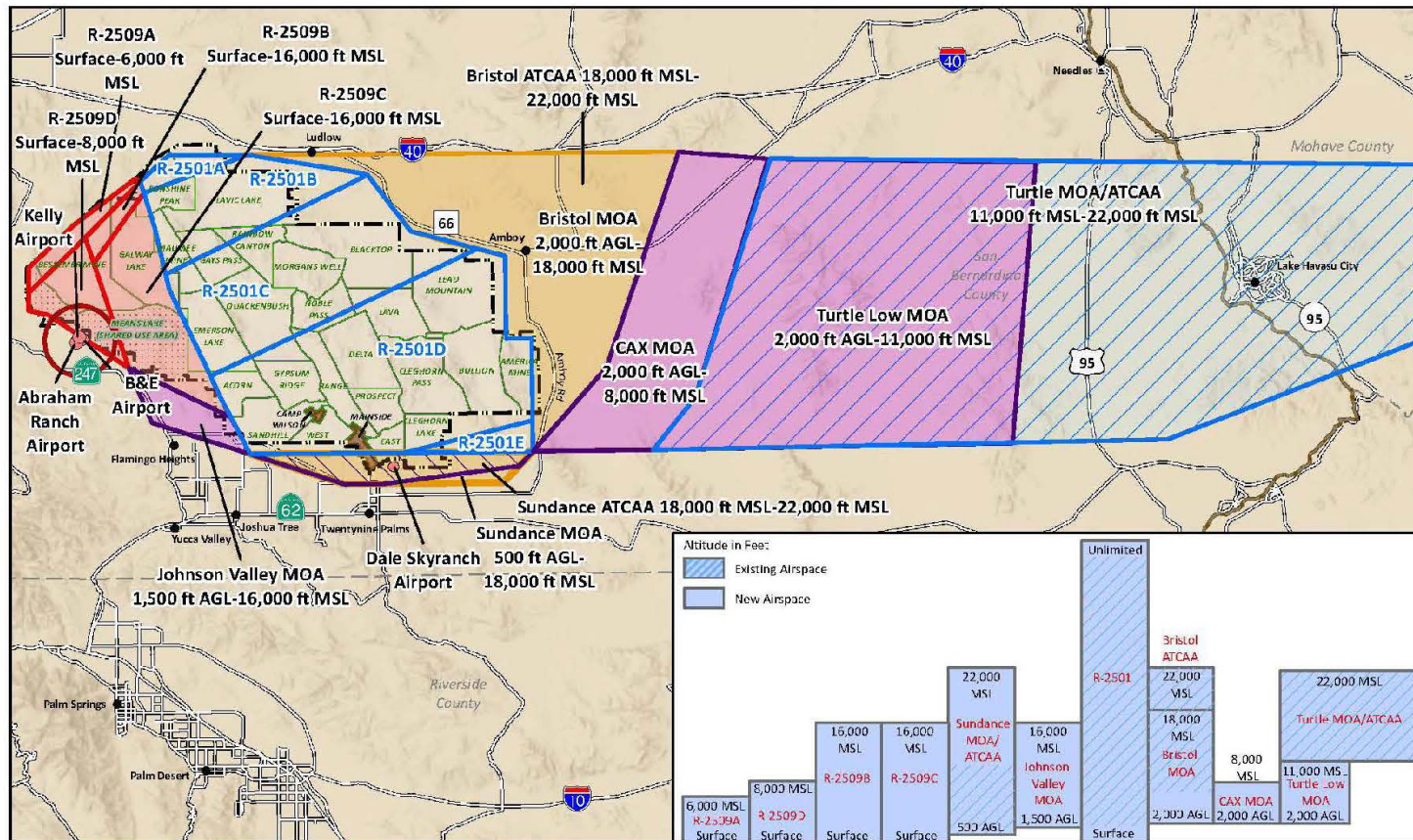
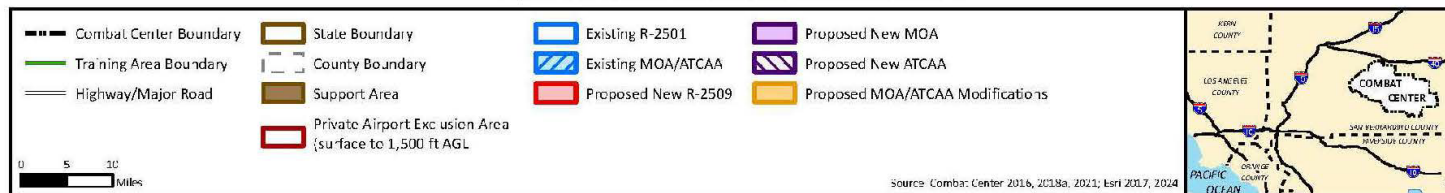


Figure 2-3. Special Use Airspace Under Alternative 2



#### Key Details

- Similar configurations as Alternative 1 but differs by:
  - R-2509 only activated up to 60-days per year
  - Limiting altitudes to 16,000 ft MSL in R-2509C and Johnson Valley MOA
  - Does not create a Johnson Valley ATCAA or CAX ATCAA
  - Limits altitudes in Bristol ATCAA to FL220 (same as existing airspace)
  - Not dividing Bristol ATCAA North and South
  - Modifies southern boundary of Sundance ATCAA
- Supports Training 365 days per year
- FAA Los Angeles ARTCC would remain controlling agency, with the Combat Center the using agency
- Supports ongoing training and large-scale exercises
- Preferred Alternative- reduced impacts to the NAS in comparison to Alternative 1

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