



**Proposed Land Acquisition/Airspace Establishment in Support
of Large-Scale MAGTF Live-Fire and Maneuver Training
Project Overview Paper—Issue 9—July 2015
Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command
Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center
Twentynine Palms, CA**

Background: Marines must train as they fight. To meet tomorrow's challenges, the Marine Corps has taken and is taking the steps necessary to fulfill Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) training requirements. The Marine Corps studied alternatives for training-land acquisition and accompanying Special Use Airspace for three battalions to simultaneously maneuver in close coordination using combined-arms (i.e., air/ground) live fire for a 48-72 hour training period. A Marine Corps study, conducted by the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), assessed three regions of the country for their capability to support sustained MEB training. It found the Southwest most suitable, but it showed that achieving the required sustained, combined-arms live-fire maneuver MEB training capability, without distributed operations (i.e., spread over multiple bases) and representational forces, would require expansion at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC), Twentynine Palms, CA.

Project Alternatives: The Marine Corps considered many alternatives to meet its MEB training requirements at MCAGCC, looking to the north, south, east and west. Five land acquisition and associated airspace establishment alternatives were presented to interested stakeholders at Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) public scoping meetings in December 2008. Nearly 20,000 public comments on these alternatives and issues helped to develop a range of reasonable alternatives to meet MEB training requirements, including an "Alternative 6" that would recommend continued public access to a Shared Use Area in the West Study Area when Marines would not use the area for MEB training, an area comprising 43,049 acres.

Public Involvement: A Draft EIS (DEIS) analyzed these six alternatives and a "No Action Alternative," consistent with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements. It described the alternatives, how training would occur under them, their environmental impacts, and ways to mitigate those impacts. Published in February 2011 for review and comment, the DEIS drew over 650 stakeholders to attend three public meetings. It received nearly 22,000 comments from federal, state and local public agencies and elected officials, businesses, and non-governmental organizations – including conservationists, recreation enthusiasts, aviators, farmers/ranchers, manufacturers, miners, developers and individuals. These comments were evaluated in preparing

For Further Information Please Contact
29Palms Training Land/Airspace Acquisition Project
(web) <http://www.29palms.marines.mil/Staff/G4InstallationsandLogistics/LandAcquisition.aspx>
(e-mail) SMBPLMSCOMBATCENTERPAO@usmc.mil – (phone) 760-830-3737
(mail) MAGTF TC, MCAGCC, Bldg. 1417, Box 788105, Twentynine Palms, CA 92278-8105

Project Overview Paper—Issue 9

the Final EIS (FEIS), a number of additional studies were conducted, and changes were made in response to them. An FEIS was released on July 27, 2012.

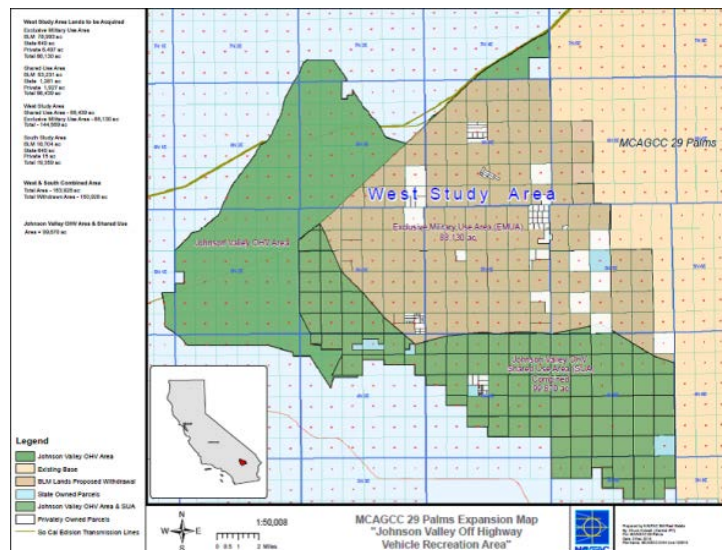
Making a Decision: After evaluating nearly 1,000 comments on the FEIS and considering the FEIS along with costs and mission training requirements, the Secretary of the Navy published the Record of Decision (ROD) on February 15, 2013. The ROD selected a modified Alternative 6 as the alternative to meet MEB training requirements, with a recommendation for mitigation developed in coordination with the Bureau of Land Management. The Department of the Navy submitted an application to Congress for the withdrawal of public lands.

Congressional Withdrawal: Enacted in December 2013, the National Defense Authorization Act of 2014 (NDAA) authorized the withdrawal of federal land and purchase of non-federal land to meet MEB training requirements. This included an Exclusive Military Use Area west and south of MCAGCC of approximately 107,000 acres. It also included an approximately 56,000 acre Shared Use Area available for public recreation 10 months per year and for military training two months of each year. The bill also designated approximately 43,000 acres as the Johnson Valley Off Highway Vehicle Recreation Area (JVOHVRA) for year-round public recreation.

Special Use Airspace Proposals: In April 2014, the Marine Corps and the Department of the Navy submitted

Special Use Airspace (SUA) proposals to the FAA for meeting the requirements for live fire from aviation and ground-based weapons, which is necessary to support the MEB training requirement. The FAA will undertake its public involvement processes in the months, and maybe years, ahead, allowing aviation stakeholders to comment on the proposals under consideration. As it does now with its current SUA, the Marine Corps promises to release to the National Airspace System any SUA when it is not needed for military training requirements

Resource Management Group (RMG): With the Congressionally chosen alternative, the NDAA also established the RMG, a partnership between the BLM and the Marine Corps to alternatively manage the Shared Use Area, develop and implement a Public Outreach Plan, and draft an Implementation Agreement.



For Further Information Please Contact

29Palms Training Land/Airspace Acquisition Project – (phone) 760-830-3764
(web) <http://www.29palms.marines.mil/Staff/G5CommunityPlansPAO/JohnsonValley.aspx>
(e-mail) SMBPLMSCOMBATCENTERPAO@usmc.mil – (phone) 760-830-3737
(mail) MAGTFTC, MCAGCC, Bldg. 1417, Box 788105, Twentynine Palms, CA 92278-8105