

Proposed 29 Palms Training Land/Airspace Acquisition Project



The Department of the Navy is in the initial stages of preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed acquisition of lands and establishment of airspace contiguous to the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) at Twentynine Palms, California. This fact sheet provides information about the proposed project and the environmental review process.

Project Background

Currently, no Department of Defense facility is large enough to provide sustained, combined-arms (air and ground), live fire and maneuver Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) training under realistic conditions. A 2004 Center for Naval Analyses study concluded that expansion at MCAGCC was necessary to provide realistic MEB training.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 requires federal agencies to analyze the potential environmental effects of their proposed actions. This analysis is presented in a document called an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

As part of the NEPA process, the Marine Corps is evaluating a range of reasonable alternatives for acquiring land and establishing corresponding airspace around MCAGCC. These acquisitions would permit three Marine battalions to simultaneously maneuver for 48 to 72 hours and converge on a single objective using combined-arms live fire.

The table below shows the steps in the NEPA process. The highlighted boxes indicate opportunities for public involvement.

NEPA Process
Notice of Intent
Scoping Period
Draft EIS
Public Meetings & Comment Period
Final EIS
Public & Agency Review Period
Record of Decision

Proposed Action: The Marine Corps is proposing the acquisition of lands and the establishment of Special Use Airspace contiguous to the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) at Twentynine Palms, California.

Purpose and Need of the Proposed Action: Meet Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) training requirements.

Marine Corps Requirements

The Marine Corps is directed by federal law to fulfill the following requirements:

- Operate as a combined-arms task force. Combined arms means using fully integrated ground and air live-fire weapons to support maneuver.
- Train for its missions. Training is how Marines prepare for combat. Marines must “train as they fight.” Realistic training prepares Marines to succeed in their mission and helps bring them home safely from combat.
- “...perform such other duties as the President may direct.” These words have significantly impacted Marine Corps doctrine, operations and training for more than 60 years.



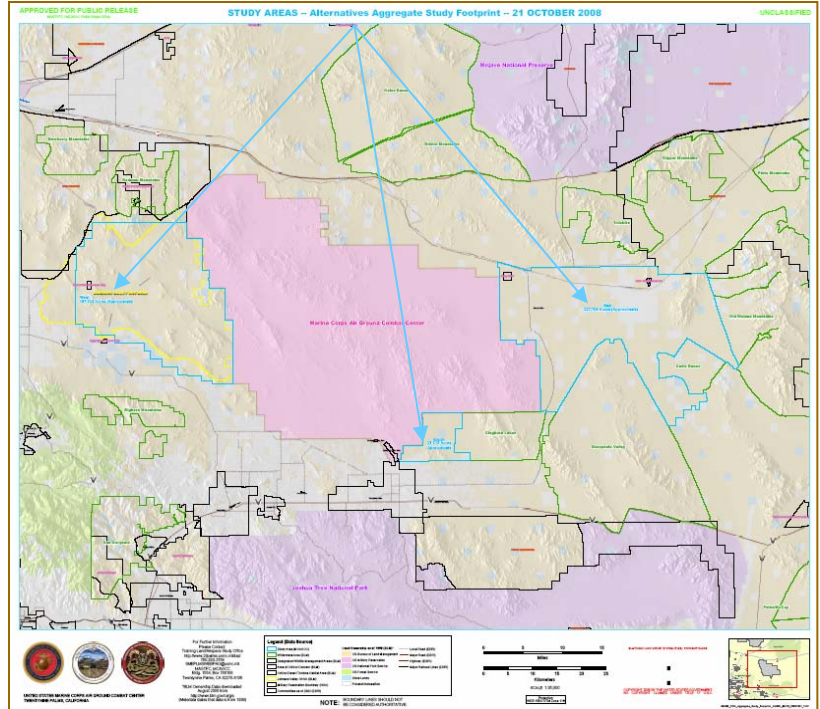
A **Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF)** is an organization of Marine Corps forces composed of the following elements:

- Command Element
- Ground Combat Element, including infantry, artillery and armor units
- Air Combat Element, including fixed and rotary wing aircraft
- Logistics Combat Element, including transport, maintenance, medical, food, ammunition, fuel and engineering

A **Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB)** is a type of MAGTF that responds to crises and smaller-scale contingencies. MEBs can range from 3,000 to 20,000 personnel.

Realistic Training

The Marine Corps must be able to provide sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver training for a Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB), ranging from 3,000 to 20,000 Marines and Sailors. Marines need sufficient land and airspace to be able to realistically train a MEB. Realistic training prepares Marines to succeed in their mission and helps bring them home safely from combat. MCAGCC is the premier facility for such training.



Project Alternatives

The map at right shows the areas near MCAGCC currently being studied. Several alternatives are being considered involving lands south, east and west of MCAGCC. Other alternatives continue to be examined, and alternatives approved for study by the Secretary of the Navy, including a No Action alternative, will be analyzed in the EIS. During the EIS process, the Marine Corps will work with stakeholders to minimize any disruption to current uses on public lands.

Excellence in Environmental Stewardship

The Marine Corps at MCAGCC has a strong, proven record of stewardship for natural and cultural resources. MCAGCC is committed to continuing its record of excellence during and after this project. Below are a few examples of environmental stewardship.

Natural Resources

MCAGCC's Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) provides a summary of the many projects and programs the Marine Corps has in place at MCAGCC to protect natural resources.



Cultural Resources

A significant portion of the base has been surveyed and inventoried for cultural resources and archeological sites. All areas of cultural and historical significance at MCAGCC are protected and are off-limits to training exercises.



Resource Conservation and Sustainability

MCAGCC generates 60 percent of its energy (95 percent in the winter) and operates a solar array and cogeneration plant.



For more information, or to submit written comments, please contact:
 MAGTF/TC, MCAGCC, ATTN: Land Acquisition Program Manager
 Box 788104, Building 1554, Room 138
 Twentynine Palms, CA 92278-8104
 SMBPLMSWEBPAO@usmc.mil

Comments must be received by Jan. 31, 2009, for consideration in the Draft EIS.