

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Joint Military Training Update



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

1. What's changed since the 2015 Draft Environmental Impact Statement?

The training concept currently being proposed by the Marine Corps is fundamentally different from that assessed in the 2015 Draft Environmental Impact Statement. In the current version, we are not proposing any training activities on Pagan, nor will we seek to establish high hazard impact areas on Tinian. This proposal does not include artillery or aviation-delivered munitions, and is designed to accommodate vital commercial air traffic. The current proposal reduces the 2015 vision of 14 live-fire ranges across the Military Lease Area to just two ranges. The reduced military training and facilities footprint of the current proposal recognizes the importance of co-use of the Military Lease Area by the public and the military.

2. Why did the Marine Corps change the training concept for Tinian?

The international security environment of the Western Pacific has greatly changed in the past decade. Current training requirements rely on small, stealthy, and dispersed military units seeking to disrupt an opponent. The current proposed training concept will take advantage of what makes Tinian unique within the Western Pacific—it's natural coastline, dense vegetation, and rugged terrain, all characteristics that mirror areas where U.S. Armed Forces could deploy throughout the Pacific and Asia.

3. What is included in this revised training concept for Tinian?

Under the current proposed training concept, the Marine Corps would develop a realistic training environment in the Military Lease Area on Tinian, to include two live-fire ranges towards the northern end of Tinian, ground training (non-live-fire) within the Military Lease Area, aviation training at North Field, 13 landing zones within the Military Lease Area that could be used for ground or aviation training, and a simple base camp. The proposed locations of the ranges were specifically chosen to avoid training activity impacts on residential areas on Tinian and allow safe public access within the Military Lease Area for family subsistence efforts and use of recreational beaches, and cultural resources including the North Field National Historic Landmark.

4. How will the Marine Corps keep the people and environment safe while training?

Dedicated full-time and part-time government personnel will coordinate military training and public access to the Military Lease Area. This group, to be known as Range Control, will be the local point of contact for coordination with Tinian officials. They will ensure that training is conducted safely while allowing public access to the Military Lease Area. In addition, Range Control will implement the Marine Corps' environmental and training requirements proposed in the Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

5. Will the Marine Corps schedule the entire Military Lease Area for training and how often?

The current proposed training concept envisions maximizing co-use of the Military Lease Area, which will be subdivided into smaller numbered scheduling areas. This would allow Range Control to deconflict training from public use of other areas within the Military Lease Area. In addition, Range Control will work with Tinian officials and residents to identify holidays and other important days when access to the Military Lease Area is needed by the public.

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6. How will the public know which areas in the Military Lease Area are safe to access?

The training schedule will be made available to the public, for example, using social media, newspapers and radio, or posted notices at the Tinian Mayor's Office. We welcome additional suggestions for making the training schedule available. During training events, road guards will ensure that active training areas are not accessed by the public. In addition, Range Control will also post notices or signage for the public and will monitor areas around the ranges to ensure safety.

7. How will the Marine Corps keep non-native or invasive species from Tinian (for example, brown tree snakes, plants, insects, or any other non-native wildlife)?

Biosecurity is an essential part of all military training. Three words are important in assuring biosecurity: inspect, clean, and educate. All vehicles and equipment must be inspected before departing for Tinian and when arriving on Tinian. Before vehicles and equipment move onto or leave Tinian, they must be thoroughly cleaned. All training units will be educated about the importance of biosecurity and the need to be vigilant and thorough. Biosecurity protocols also apply to any construction activities related to the training.

8. There are areas on Tinian that have sensitive natural and cultural resources. How does the revised training concept take those areas into consideration?

Under the current training concept, the locations for training facilities (ranges, landing zones, and base camp) were initially selected based on mission needs then adjusted to avoid existing agricultural leases and natural and cultural resources where possible. Biologists and archaeologists surveyed the proposed locations to identify any sensitive natural and cultural resources. This survey information will be used to support the analyses in Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement, which will be available for public review and comment.

9. How will the Marine Corps clean up after military training?

Range Control on Tinian will be responsible for the removal and proper disposal of all military munitions, other range-related debris, packaging, and crate materials in the Military Lease Area. Clean-ups and check-ins will occur at many stages:

- Immediately after every training event, Range Control will inspect the live-fire ranges to ensure debris has been removed and these areas are in "left as found" condition.
- After 1 year of operations, range environmental conditions will be evaluated, to include a detailed assessment of potential munitions constituents on the range. Results will be made available to the public.
- After that one-year evaluation, thorough evaluations of the Tinian ranges will occur, at a minimum, every five years.

10. When will the Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement be available for public comment?

In the coming months, the Marine Corps will be analyzing the impacts of the revised training concept on the human and natural environment. We hope to release the Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement in fall 2024. At that time, the public will have the opportunity to read the environmental analysis and provide comments. The public will be notified when and where the draft document will be available for review, the timing and length for the public review and comment period, how to submit comments, and the dates, times, and locations for public meetings.