

**DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Relocation of United States Marine Corps Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron Three from Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, California to Hawai'i

Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) (Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Title 40, Parts 1500-1508 et seq.) regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 United States Code [USC] §4321, et seq.); Marine Corps Order P5090.2A, Change 3, Environmental Protection and Compliance Manual; and the USMC National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Manual, version 2.0, the United States Marine Corps (USMC) gives notice that an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for the Relocation of USMC Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron Three (VMU-3) from Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC), Twentynine Palms, California to Hawai'i. Based on the results of the EA, the action will result in no significant impacts to the human or natural environment; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is the relocation of VMU-3, including 274 active-duty USMC and U.S. Navy personnel, an estimated 202 dependents, and approximately three contract/civilian personnel, from MCAGCC Twentynine Palms, California to the state of Hawai'i, and the conduct of unmanned-aircraft training activities within existing training ranges in the region. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to address an existing Aviation Combat Element (ACE) deficiency in Hawai'i by adding Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) under the ACE, thereby achieving a balance in the USMC's capabilities in the Pacific and ensuring that Marine forces are sufficiently manned, trained, and equipped to meet any crisis or conflict. The need for the Proposed Action is to ensure that the III Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) operational commander is supported by a balanced, geographically collocated Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) in Hawai'i.

Under the Proposed Action, VMU-3 will be based at Marine Corps Base Hawaii Kaneohe Bay (MCB Hawaii Kaneohe Bay). Renovation of existing facilities at MCB Hawaii Kaneohe Bay will satisfy operational and administrative requirements. Additionally, VMU-3 will establish a temporary facility followed by a planned permanent facility at Wheeler Army Air Field (WAAF), an existing U.S. Army base at Wahiawa on O'ahu. The temporary and permanent facility will support VMU-3 operational and training requirements. Housing for personnel and dependents will be provided on-base at MCB Hawaii Kaneohe Bay, at other Navy/Marine Corps housing areas on the island of O'ahu, or within the local community, as needed and available.

The Proposed Action includes the use of three RQ-7B UAS, at four aircraft per system, and nine RQ-21A UAS, at five aircraft per system, for a total of 57 unmanned aircraft (12 RQ-7B and 45 RQ-21A). The Proposed Action includes UAS flight training activities in the state of Hawai'i, primarily within Special Use Area restricted airspace, at MCB Hawaii Kaneohe Bay and WAAF on the island of O'ahu; at the U.S. Navy training range (Pacific Missile Range Facility [PMRF],

Barking Sands) on the island of Kaua‘i; and at the U.S. Army training area (Pohakuloa Training Area [PTA]) on the island of Hawai‘i.

The squadron, with its dependents and contractors, is scheduled to relocate to Hawai‘i with RQ-7B systems beginning in June/July 2014. The delivery of the initial RQ-21A systems is scheduled for 2015.

Alternatives Analyzed

Site and operational selection criteria were identified and applied to potential basing locations in Hawai‘i. Five other alternatives were considered, but eliminated from further consideration because they did not fulfill the minimum objectives and criteria to achieve the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action. These alternatives were: 1) relocating VMU-3 to WAAF; 2) relocating VMU-3 to Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam (JBPHH); 3) relocating VMU-3 to Dillingham Airfield, O‘ahu; 4) relocating VMU-3 to PMRF; and 5) relocating VMU-3 to PTA.

No-Action Alternative

The No-Action Alternative is the only other alternative evaluated in this EA. Under the No-Action Alternative, VMU-3 would not relocate to Hawai‘i and would remain at MCAGCC Twentynine Palms, CA. The No-Action Alternative would not address the ACE deficiency in Hawai‘i nor achieve balance in the USMC’s capabilities in the Pacific. The No-Action Alternative would not meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action.

Environmental Effects

The Proposed Action will not result in significant impacts on airspace; air quality; noise; topography and soils; groundwater; surface water; wetlands; biological resources; population; housing and education; surrounding land use; cultural resources; traffic and circulation; recreational facilities; utilities, infrastructure, and solid waste; visual and aesthetic resources; and hazardous materials and waste. The Proposed Action will not create environmental health or safety risks that could disproportionately impact children, minority populations, or low-income populations. The Proposed Action is listed among the *de minimis* activities agreed upon between the Department of the Navy and the State of Hawai‘i Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Program and, as such, is not subject to further review under the State CZM Program.

Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Proposed Action will have an adverse effect on Hangar 102 at MCB Hawaii Kaneohe Bay, which is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). MCB Hawaii Kaneohe Bay has complied with NHPA Section 106 by affording the Hawai‘i State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), the Historic Hawai‘i Foundation, and Native Hawaiian Organizations an opportunity to comment on the Proposed Action and consult to resolve the adverse effect. The consultation resulted in an executed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between MCB Hawaii Kaneohe Bay and the Hawai‘i SHPO that commits the USMC to measures that mitigate the adverse effect. Accordingly, the impact of the Proposed Action on Hangar 102 is not considered to be a significant impact to cultural resources under NEPA.

Public Involvement

Public involvement consisted of publication of the draft EA for a 30-day review period between January 8 and February 10, 2014, during which five comment submissions were received. Two comments were in support of the proposal to relocate VMU-3 to Hawai'i. Other comments expressed concerns regarding: NHPA Section 106 consultation with Native Hawaiian groups on Moloka'i; potential cumulative noise impacts in Kaneohe; potential impacts to land use near PTA; and concern regarding the USMC's public involvement for this EA. Minor changes to the EA were made in response to the comment on land use near PTA.

Finding

Based on the information gathered during the preparation of this EA and the analysis presented, the USMC has determined that the Proposed Action will have no significant impacts on the quality of the human or natural environment. Consequently, an EIS is not required.

Point of Contact:

Interested parties may download an electronic copy of the EA addressing this action from the Marine Corps Base Hawaii website at <http://www.mcbhawaii.marines.mil/UnitHome.aspx>. The EA and FONSI are on file at Naval Facilities Engineering Command Pacific, 258 Makalapa Dr, Suite 100, Pearl Harbor, HI 96860-3134 (Attention: Project Manager, VMU-3 EA, Code EV21).



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Date