

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ES – INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

On October 14, 2011, the Army published a Notice of Availability (NOA) of a Draft *Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for the Modernization of Training Infrastructure and Construction and Operation of an Infantry Platoon Battle Area at Pōhakuloa Training Area (PTA), Hawai‘i* in the **Federal Register**. The Draft PEIS included a Tier 1 programmatic level analysis of future modernization of ranges, training and support infrastructure, and the Cantonment Area. The Draft PEIS only broadly assessed future modernization projects at PTA because the information available for many of these projects was still in the planning stage and funding was not yet programmed. The Draft PEIS also included a Tier 2 project-specific analysis of the construction and operation of an Infantry Platoon Battle Area (IPBA) at PTA, the first modernization project.

A number of factors caused the Army to carefully reconsider the programmatic portion of this analysis: the highly uncertain nature of the future projects in the modernization program, a rapidly changing austere fiscal environment, as well as the many public and agency comments received on the Draft PEIS. After thorough consideration of all of these factors, Army leadership has decided not to proceed with the programmatic portion of the EIS.

This Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) analyzes only the site-specific construction and operation of an Infantry Platoon Battle Course (IPBC) at PTA, Hawai‘i. The Final EIS includes two action alternatives and a No Action Alternative. The U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC) and the U.S. Army Garrison-Hawai‘i (USAG-HI) are the lead agencies for this Final EIS.

A 30-day public review period for this Final EIS will be followed by a decision by the Army’s designated Senior Commander in Hawai‘i on the construction of the IPBC. The Senior Commander’s decision and comments on this Final EIS will be contained in a Record of Decision (ROD).

ES – PURPOSE AND NEED OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The purpose for the Proposed Action is to construct and operate a modern IPBC that is compliant with current Army training requirements, to ensure our Soldiers receive training in accordance with existing Army training standards. The proposed IPBC would support the live-fire collective training needs of Army, Army Reserve Component (RC), and Hawai‘i Army National Guard units (HIARNG), as well as other Service components that are stationed or train in Hawai‘i.

The Army needs an IPBC at PTA. Presently, PTA does not have a range capable of supporting standard collective Infantry Platoon Live-fire Training that enables the unit to accomplish its Mission Essential Task List (METL) tasks using one range to train battle tasks tied to its METL, and accomplish its requirement of conducting platoon-level live-fire exercises twice per year. The proposed IPBC would improve the live-fire collective training capability for Army, Army RC, and HIARNG units, as well as other Service components that are stationed or train in Hawai‘i.

PTA is a 132,000 ac (53,418 ha 5051 m²) multi-function training ground located on the island of Hawai‘i used by all branches of the U.S. military (including the Army, Navy, and Air Force) and includes live-fire ranges, an airfield, 566 ac (229 ha 521 m²) facility area (referred to as the Cantonment Area), and a 51,000 ac (20,638 ha 9,679 m²) artillery impact area. PTA supports full-scale combined arms live-firing and field training military exercises at all levels from squad to brigade for Army Active Component (AC) units stationed in Hawai‘i, and supports similar training up to company level for the Army RC and HIARNG units stationed in Hawai‘i. AC training at PTA primarily includes the units of the 25th ID, composed of the 2/25th Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT), 3/25th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT), and 25th Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB). Other units that use PTA include the 94th Army Air and Missile Defense Command, 8th Theater Sustainment Command, 45th Sustainment Brigade, 8th Military Police (MP) Brigade, and the 130th Engineer Brigade. PTA is also used by Hawai‘i’s Emergency First Responders and the Hawai‘i Police Department.

ES – PROPOSED ACTION

The Army’s Proposed Action is to reduce a current shortfall in collective (group) live-fire standard training capabilities for units stationed in Hawai‘i. The Proposed Action includes construction and operation of an IPBC.

ES – DECISION TO BE MADE

The Army’s designated Senior Commander in Hawai‘i will consider the potential environmental impacts presented in the Final EIS before making a final decision on whether and where to construct and operate the proposed IPBC. This decision will be issued in a ROD. The ROD will be signed no earlier than 30 days from the publication of the Final EIS NOA and will be available to the public.

ES – PUBLIC SCOPING

The Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare the PEIS was published in the **Federal Register** on December 23, 2010. The Army held public scoping meetings over a two-day period in mid-January 2011 and public hearings on the Draft PEIS over a two-day period in November 2011. The scoping meetings and public hearings included an open information session that allowed individuals to review posters describing the Proposed Action, and also provided a forum for attendees to voice their concerns to the Army in both written and oral testimony. Section 1.7 of this document discusses in greater detail the topics of concern raised by the public during scoping and the Draft PEIS public hearings and provides the reader with further information on where these concerns were addressed within the document.

In general, the public asked the Army to survey IPBC alternative locations for natural and cultural resources, analyze impacts on wildlife and protected species, address depleted uranium (DU) and any impacts it may have to the community surrounding PTA, look at noise issues related to nearby parks, review the cumulative impacts of recent Army and Marine Corps actions (including helicopter training), and provide information on munitions and explosives of concern (MEC)/unexploded ordnance (UXO) cleanup.¹

Many concerns expressed during scoping and the Draft PEIS public hearings included opposition to the expansion of PTA beyond its present boundaries. There are no plans to expand PTA beyond its existing boundaries.

ES – ALTERNATIVES

The Draft PEIS, published in October 2011, divided the proposed modernization projects into two basic groups: a shorter term, Proposed Five-Year Project List (Fiscal Year 12-16), and a list of Extended Planning Annex Projects (see the Draft PEIS at Table 2.1-1). This was to show when the modernization projects were anticipated to be constructed. As explained above, the Army has decided not to proceed with the programmatic portion of the document, and proceed only with the proposed IPBC.

In the Draft PEIS, the IPBC was analyzed as part of a larger IPBA, which included a Military Operations on Urban Terrain (MOUT) Assault Course and a live-fire Shoothouse facility. However, due to funding constraints, the MOUT Assault Course and Shoothouse facility are no longer part of the present project. Therefore, the Army has determined that the IPBC will be the only part of the IPBA analyzed in this document. An IPBC supports a variety of light infantry training events, day and night, such as reconnaissance and security, movement to contact, attack, raid, ambush, defend, and retrograde. An infantry platoon training on the IPBC would maneuver from objective to objective while engaging targets. The infantry platoon would normally conduct several practice runs using blank ammunition and pyrotechnic simulators prior to using live munitions.

No Action Alternative: Do not construct or operate the IPBC.

Alternative 1: Construct and operate the IPBC at the Western Range Area Alternative location (Preferred Alternative).

¹ MEC is more commonly known as unexploded ordnance (UXO). MEC is technically a more accurate term when the Department of Defense (DoD) considers the challenges that munitions constituents of ordnance fill poses to cleanup efforts.

Alternative 2: Construct and operate the IPBC at the Charlie Circle Alternative location.

In the Draft PEIS published in October 2011, the Army identified a third alternative for construction and operation of the IPBC, a location named Southwest of Range 20. This alternative was determined to be operationally unfeasible. Section 2.5 provides information on project-specific alternatives considered but eliminated from analysis, including Southwest of Range 20.

The two-action alternative locations for the IPBC share some common features. They are within the existing impact area at PTA but do not conflict with the Improved Conventional Munitions (ICM) restricted area or known sites containing DU. Each site is located in the historically underutilized portions of the impact area where no live-fire ranges exist, thereby minimizing Surface Danger Zone (SDZ) and training conflicts with other operational ranges.

The analysis for the proposed IPBC includes all required infrastructure to operate the range. Access roads will need to be built and/or improved. A new power line will be constructed to service the range.

The alternative sites run west to east from the western most portion of the impact area toward the center of the impact area. Much of the terrain consists of smooth rolling pāhoehoe flows interrupted by elevated a`a flows with steep banks. Lava flows cover the majority of the area, much of which would need to be softened in order to accommodate dismounted training by infantry units.

The Army worked closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Hawai'i State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD) of the Department of Land and Natural Resources, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), three agencies that have jurisdiction over or special expertise regarding resources at PTA.

ES – SUMMARY OF POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

Table ES-1 summarizes potential impacts on Valued Environmental Components (VECs) as a result of the Proposed Action and alternatives. Both action alternatives would result in significant impacts on cultural resources. Significant but mitigable impacts would occur to air quality, biological resources, hazardous materials and waste, and wildfires as a result of either action alternative. With the No Action Alternative, only cultural resources has a significant but mitigable to insignificant impact. The remaining resources (VECs) were found to experience less than significant impacts. The potential impacts on all resources analyzed are found in detail in Chapter 4 Environmental Consequences. The impact tables appearing after some resource areas analyzed in Chapter 4 are broken out into sub-elements. For example, Air Quality is broken out into sub-elements such as fugitive dust and emission of criteria pollutants. Table ES-1 below represents the most substantial potential impacts on each resource area.

Table ES-1. Summary of Potential Impacts

Valued Environmental Components Analyzed	IPBC at Western Range Area Alternative	IPBC at Charlie Circle Alternative	No Action Do Not Build IPBC
Land Use and Recreation	○	⊗	○
Airspace	○	○	○
Visual Resources	⊙	⊙	○
Air Quality	⊗	⊗	○
Noise	⊙	⊙	○
Traffic and Transportation	⊙	⊙	○
Water Resources	⊙	⊙	○
Geology and Soils	⊙	⊙	○
Biological Resources	⊗	⊗	○
Cultural Resources	⊗	⊗	+
Hazardous Materials and Waste	⊗	⊗	○
Depleted Uranium	○	○	○
Socioeconomics and Env. Justice	○+	○+	○
Public Services and Utilities	⊙	⊙	○
Wildfires	⊗	⊗	○
Sustainability	○-⊙	○-⊙	○

LEGEND

- ⊗ = Significant impact
- ⊗ = Significant impact mitigable to less than significant
- ⊙ = Less than significant impact
- = No impact
- + = Beneficial impact

Summarized below are the resource areas that would be expected to experience *some* impact from either of the action alternatives.

Land Use

A corner of the SDZs for the proposed IPBC at the Charlie Circle Alternative may encroach upon Training Area 23 and, without proper mitigation measures (e.g., restrictions on tracer ammunition), could result in operational restrictions under this alternative.² This encroachment would interfere with training being conducted on both the Charlie Circle Alternative and Training Area 23; the Army could use Training Area 23 in the future for nonlive-fire activities or other compatible training. The SDZs for Charlie Circle Alternative fall outside the outer ungulate exclusion fenced area at Training Area 23; however, there may be a potential risk for species there.

² The MPRC was built at PTA, but never used by the Army. While other NEPA documentation covering PTA has referred to this area as the MPRC, for the purposes of this EIS, the Army refers to the area within which the MPRC is located, as Training Area 23.

Air Quality

Air quality concerns related to the IPBC would result from the quantities of fugitive dust expected to be generated during the construction phase. During the construction phase, these impacts would be temporary, lasting only for the duration of construction. Mitigation measures could include the use of dust palliatives to temporarily moisten and bind loose soils to prevent them from becoming airborne. Fugitive dust generated by travel to the IPBC and during operations could also be mitigated through similar management practices. Through mitigation, the expected impacts would be less than significant.

Noise

Elevated noise levels would be experienced during construction of the IPBC. Operation of the proposed IPBC at either alternative location would result in less than significant noise impacts.

Traffic and Transportation

The Army anticipates a temporary increase in traffic volume on Saddle Road during the initial period of range construction resulting from additional equipment, supplies, and construction worker personally owned vehicles. Construction is expected to last approximately two years. Traffic related conflicts with military traffic (multi-service units using the General Range Area) would not occur because no ranges currently exist in the immediate area of the proposed IPBC.

Given these factors, the potential impacts from construction at either alternative location would be less than significant.

Water Resources

Construction of the proposed IPBC could result in erosion and sediment, which would be mitigated by best management practices (BMPs) and would result in less than significant impacts. Operation of the proposed IPBC at either alternative location would result in less than significant impacts on water resources.

Geology and Soils

Construction activities such as site clearing and grading for the proposed IPBC would expose soils to enhanced erosion by water and/or wind. This impact could be mitigated through the use of standard erosion control practices and possible development of an erosion control plan. Operation of the proposed IPBC at either alternative location would result in less than significant impacts on geology and soils.

Biological Resources

Implementation of the IPBC at PTA could result in potentially significant impacts from the spread of invasive species. Movement of equipment into Hawai'i from the continental U.S. or foreign ports, as well as from other islands or sub-installations within Hawai'i, would increase the likelihood of invasive plant and animal introductions. Construction activities can introduce invasive species and other weeds through the use of sand and gravel that contains plant seeds and by equipment and vehicles carrying invasive plant material from offsite locations. The spread of invasive species would have both short- and long-term impacts on vegetation resources and sensitive plants and wildlife. The Army would implement mitigations to reduce the level of significance from the spread of invasive species (e.g., applying currently used and effective management controls to new range construction, and continue instituted controls through the use of washracks).

Construction and operation of the IBPC at PTA could result in potentially significant impacts on federally-listed plant species. Federally-listed plant species were found to occur in the Western Range Area Alternative and Charlie Circle Alternative IPBC locations. Potentially significant impacts may occur resulting from range construction and/or operation to these species at these locations, but could be mitigated through conservation and avoidance measures. The Army consulted with the USFWS on potential mitigation measures to protect federally-listed species. The USFWS issued a Biological Opinion (BO) pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act for the construction and operation for the Proposed Action on 11 January 2013 (Appendix G). The BO contains various mitigation measures the Army would implement during the construction and operation of the IPBC.

The BO also contains mitigation measures required to protect the Hawaiian goose (nēnē). These measures apply to the whole of PTA. As explained in Section 3.9.4 of this Final EIS, telemetry data indicates that the nēnē does not seem to reside at, or utilize, either of the proposed IPBC alternative locations as habitat; therefore, impact on the nēnē as a result of the proposed IPBC is anticipated to be negligible.

Cultural Resources

Significant and irreversible impacts could occur to resources in these areas. The Army consulted with the SHPD, ACHP, and other consulting parties, including Native Hawaiian organizations, on potential effects on cultural resources and mitigation of those effects. The Army anticipates that it and the consulting parties will sign a Programmatic Agreement (PA) (Appendix D) soon pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act that establishes the means by which the remaining steps to the Section 106 consultation will be completed, and the mitigation measures for the potential adverse effects on cultural resources.

As explained in Section 3.10.5 of this Final EIS, during an archeological survey of the Charlie Circle (non-preferred) Alternative, human remains were discovered in a lava tube. As a result, impacts on cultural resources from choosing the Charlie Circle Alternative could be significant; however, consultation under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act is ongoing, the result of which could lessen this impact.

Hazardous Materials and Hazardous Waste

Decades of using PTA as a training area have introduced a significant risk of encountering MEC/UXO. MEC/UXO is known to exist in the impact area and is expected to be encountered during range construction activities; but there is also a medium risk of finding MEC/UXO outside the impact area. The Army would conduct surveys for these hazards prior to implementing the proposed project to mitigate the risks to a level of less than significant. Operation of the proposed IPBC would result in the firing of lead bullets. The potential for lead hazards to accumulate and cause health concerns to users and workers at the IPBC could be significant, but would be mitigated through BMPs to a level of less than significant. The Army has determined that DU spotting rounds were used on PTA. The residual DU will be the subject of a license by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The activities proposed at the two IPBC locations will not affect the areas where DU is located.

Wildfires

The risk of live-fire training igniting wildfires in the General Range Area is high because of sparse fuel supplies with localized areas of heavier fuels (easily ignitable or dry vegetation). Regular monitoring and mitigation activities are required to prevent the damaging effects of wildfires on human health, sensitive cultural and biological resources, and range assets. The Army will continue to take measures to minimize the potential for wildfire ignition (e.g., use of fire breaks), and will continue to have readily available firefighting assets on-hand. Given these management controls, the potential impacts from wildfires could be significant mitigable to less than significant.

ES – CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The Final EIS also identifies the potential cumulative effects from implementing the Proposed Action at PTA when combined with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future military, public, and private actions that were determined to also pose impacts on the human environment. These are discussed fully in Chapter 5.

ES – MITIGATION

This Final EIS identifies mitigation measures for construction and operation of the IPBC. These measures are proposed to reduce or eliminate the potential environmental impacts from implementing the Proposed Action at PTA. In particular, as noted above, the USFWS BO at Appendix G contains various specific, required mitigation measures for biological resources. Similarly, the PA at Appendix D contains required mitigation measures for cultural resources. Mitigation measures are discussed fully at the conclusion of each resource area discussion in Chapter 4, and summarized in Section 4.18.