

[Home](#) [EIS/OEIS](#) [Range Sustainability](#) [Natural Resources](#) [Get Involved](#) [Other Resources](#)

EIS/OEIS

What is a Range Complex?

Mariana Islands Range Complex (MIRC)

Background

Why is the proposal needed?

What is proposed?

What will be evaluated?



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What is a Range Complex?

A "range complex" is an organized and designated set of specifically bounded geographic areas which can encompass a landmass, body of water (above or below the surface), and/or airspace. Range complexes are used to conduct operations, training, research, and development and test and evaluate military hardware, personnel, tactics, munitions, explosives, or electronic combat systems.

Ranges and operational areas (OPAREAs) are locations where U.S. military personnel train to accomplish their mission of national defense. The Navy has geographically grouped its ranges and OPAREAs to form range complexes, which are organized and managed to optimize training opportunities in a safe and controlled environment. The ranges, facilities, and installations of the Mariana Islands Range Complex are unique and provide training opportunities essential for the safety and readiness of military personnel and the success of the military mission. The protection of natural and cultural resources is also an integral component of this training. Training activities incorporate protective measures as standard operating procedure to promote environmental conservation.

Mariana Islands Range Complex

The U.S. Military has been training in the Mariana Islands Range Complex for national defense purposes for decades. The Mariana Islands Range Complex encompasses the onshore, nearshore, and offshore areas on and adjacent to the islands of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. It includes multiple ranges varying from small arms to maneuver areas to Farallon de Medinilla (FDM), the only U.S.-controlled live air-to-ground range in the Western Pacific.

Collectively, the components of the Mariana Islands Range Complex provide the space and resources needed to execute training events across the training continuum, from individual skills training to complex joint exercises. The mission of the Mariana Islands Range Complex is to support training of the U.S. Military Services by maintaining and operating range facilities and by providing range services and support to the Pacific Fleet, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific, and other forces and military activities. The Commander, Fleet Forces Command and Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet are responsible for operations, maintenance, training, and support of this national training asset.



Background

The training areas on Guam and the Marianas are known as "ranges" and are present on land, sea and air spaces in the region. To optimize the use of these vital training ranges, the Navy is managing training at a range complex-wide level. In line with range complex-wide management practices, the Navy is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS/OEIS) to comprehensively evaluate the effects of current and future activities of the Department of Defense within the range complex on the environmental, natural, cultural and socioeconomic resources.

Why is the proposal needed?

U.S. military transformation initiatives determine current, emerging, and future requirements for training access to the Mariana Islands Range Complex. Moreover, recent world events have placed the U.S. military on heightened alert in the defense of the U.S., and in defense of allied nations. At this time, the U.S. military is actively engaged in anti-terrorism efforts around the globe. Title 10 of the United States Code directs each of the Services to organize, train, and equip forces for combat so that they are capable of winning wars, deterring aggression, and maintaining freedom. To achieve this level of readiness, the U.S. military must have access to ranges, operating areas (OPAREAs), and airspace where they can develop and maintain skills for wartime missions and conduct RDT&E of weapons systems. As such, Department of Defense ranges, OPAREAs, and airspace must be maintained and/or enhanced to accommodate necessary training and testing activities in support of national security objectives.

What is proposed?

The **proposed action**, therefore, responds to the U.S. military's need to:

- (1) maintain baseline operations at current levels.
- (2) accommodate future increases in operational training tempo in the Mariana Islands Range Complex as necessary to support the deployment of military forces.
- (3) achieve and sustain readiness so that the U.S. military can quickly provide significant combat power in the event of a national crisis or contingency operation and consistent with the Department of Defense's Training Transformation processes.
- (4) support the acquisition, testing, training, and introduction of advanced platforms and weapons systems.
- (5) enhance investments to optimize range capabilities required to adequately support required training.

The U.S. military will meet these needs and maintain the long-term viability of the Mariana Islands Range Complex, while protecting human health and minimizing the effects to the environment.

What Will be evaluated?

The U.S. military and the Navy understand and recognize the potential effects training activities may have on the environment, for surrounding community, and the many businesses that rely on the environmental, natural, cultural and socioeconomic resources available. Therefore, public input received during the scoping phase of the process will be carefully considered as alternatives are refined and analyzed. Currently, the following three alternatives are refined and analyzed:

The No Action Alternative is comprised of baseline operations and support of existing range capabilities.

Alternative 1 is comprised of the No Action Alternative plus additional operations on upgraded/modernized existing ranges.

Alternative 2 is comprised of Alternative 1 plus new ranges, new dedicated capabilities, additional increased tempo (beyond Alternative 1) to optimize training in support of future contingencies.

The analysis will address potentially significant direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts.