



Executive Summary September 2012

OVERVIEW: CNMI Divert Activities Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

What Happens Next?

The EIS review process began in October 2011 and is expected to be completed December 2012. The United States Air Force (USAF) released the Draft EIS (DEIS) on June 8, 2012 and requested public and agency comments on the DEIS through July 23, 2012.

The USAF is currently in the process of reviewing comments submitted and is revising the DEIS to prepare the Final EIS.

The Final EIS (FEIS) will incorporate and formally respond to all public comments received on the DEIS and will identify the preferred alternative for implementation.



What is the CNMI Divert Activities EIS?

The CNMI Divert Activities EIS serves as the environmental review process that provides a thorough discussion and assessment of significant environmental impacts that could result from a proposed federal action. This study will help to understand the effects on the environment, including natural and cultural resources, and the economic well-being of the people of CNMI from proposed military activities and exercises.

Who Prepared the Draft EIS?

The *Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for Divert Activities and Exercises, Guam, and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)* was prepared by the Headquarters, Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii.

What Is Proposed?

The proposed action includes improvements to existing airport facilities and associated infrastructure to support the USAF's current and future mission to provide defense support in the CNMI region.

What Are the Decisions?

The decisions to be made are whether and how to implement the proposed military and related actions. The EIS is useful in facilitating the decision-making process based on the environmental consequences of the proposed action.

Will the Proposed Actions Benefit the CNMI?

The proposed actions would account for an estimated \$110 – 190 Million in construction and in infrastructure improvements. This investment in infrastructure would also enhance airport capabilities for tourism and commercial purposes, expanding regional and global access. The CNMI would also benefit from annual revenues from goods and services purchased through the local economy to support both temporary workers and military personnel who are actively working at the Divert Airport Facilities.

What Areas Are Under Consideration?





C-17 Loading Disaster Relief Supplies

What Does the USAF Propose to Do?

The USAF is proposing to expand facilities in the CNMI that would include and allow for:

- Improving airfield operational infrastructure
- Runway expansion and aircraft parking areas
- Temporary munitions storage areas
- Hazardous cargo pad
- Aircraft hangar and maintenance facility
- Capabilities for jet fuel storage, receipt, and delivery
- Potential for unplanned aircraft landings
- Periodic military exercises (flight and tanker operations)
- Humanitarian airlift staging for emergency or disaster relief
- Staffing of up to 700 personnel



Tinian Airport Landing Strip

Why Is This Action Necessary?

The Proposed Action is necessary to meet the following military operational requirements:

- Ensure airfield accessibility if access to Andersen Air Force Base (AFB) or other Western Pacific airfields is limited or denied;
- Provide for alternate operations to include humanitarian relief efforts;
- Accommodate future increases in operational tempo and associated training; and
- Achieve and sustain military readiness.

The purpose of the proposed action is to expand PACAF capabilities to support and conduct current and future training activities and to achieve divert (unplanned or emergency landing) capabilities in the region. There is currently no other alternate/emergency airfield on U.S. territory in the Western Pacific that is designed and designated to provide an alternate airport for landings and trainings in the event that access to Andersen (AFB) or other Western Pacific locations is limited or denied. Implementation of the proposed action would support the PACAF mission to provide ready air and space power to promote U.S. interests in the Asia-Pacific region during peacetime, through crisis, and in war.



Takeoff of KC-135 Aircraft

What Are the Alternatives?

The alternatives being considered are Alternative 1 on Saipan (Saipan International Airport) and Alternative 2 on Tinian (Tinian International Airport).

The Council on Environmental Quality regulations allows an agency to select a Preferred Alternative at the Draft and Final EIS stage; however, this does not mean that this alternative will be the alternative that is ultimately selected for implementation.

What Do the Two Alternatives Have in Common?

The alternatives considered in this DEIS were based on USAF selection standards for airfield improvements and flight operations. Requirements to meet these standards include:

- Within a U.S. territory
- Outside range of a selected storm radius that could be impacted by a typhoon
- Existing land and infrastructure with expansion capabilities
- Within the Marianas Islands Range Complex training area
- Existing fuel-receiving capabilities at the port

Both Alternatives include improvements to an airfield design that could accommodate twelve KC-135 aircraft. The improved facilities and infrastructure would support a combination of cargo, fighter,

and tanker aircraft and associated support personnel for periodic exercises, unplanned landings, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in the Western Pacific.

This airfield design also accommodates other military logistics and tactical aircraft that could be routed to or exercised from the improved airport selected for implementation. In order to reduce strain on existing airport and commercial facilities and infrastructure, the USAF proposes to construct and expand new facilities, rather than fully utilize existing facilities.

Both alternatives include the following components:

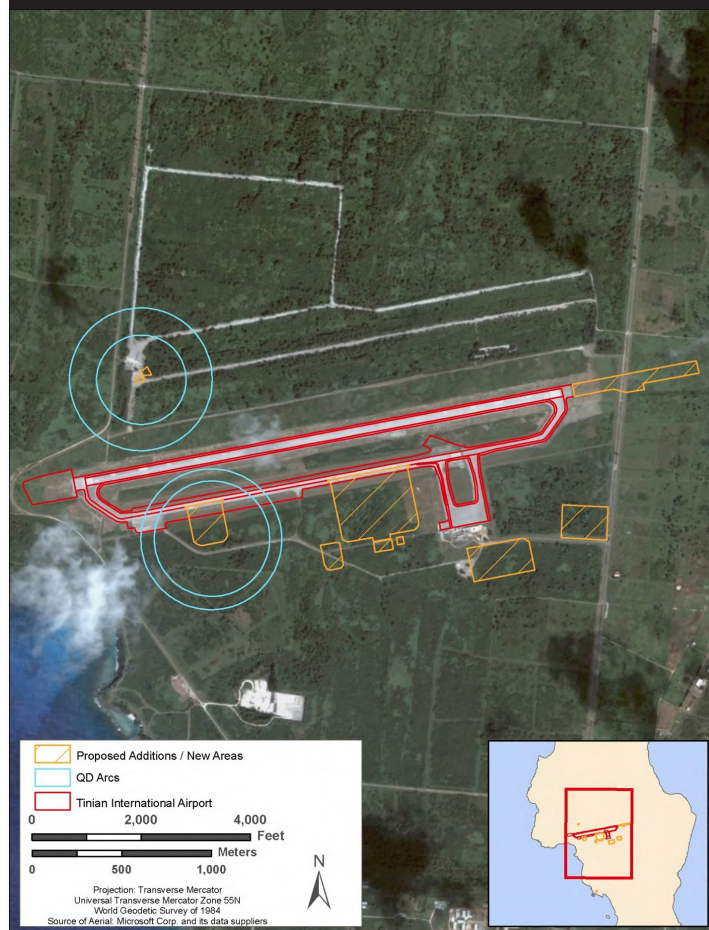
- Improving airfield operational infrastructure
 - Runway expansion and aircraft parking areas
 - Temporary munitions storage areas
 - Hazardous cargo pad
 - Aircraft hangar and maintenance facility
 - Capabilities for jet fuel storage, receipt, and delivery
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PACAF has chosen Alternative 1 – GSN (Saipan) as the Preferred Alternative. This alternative includes three separate options, referred to as the low, medium, and high- scenarios in the DEIS; however, the preferred option has not been selected at this time.

Alternative 1: Saipan International Airport



Alternative 2: Tinian International Airport



Issues Identified and Rationale for Concern

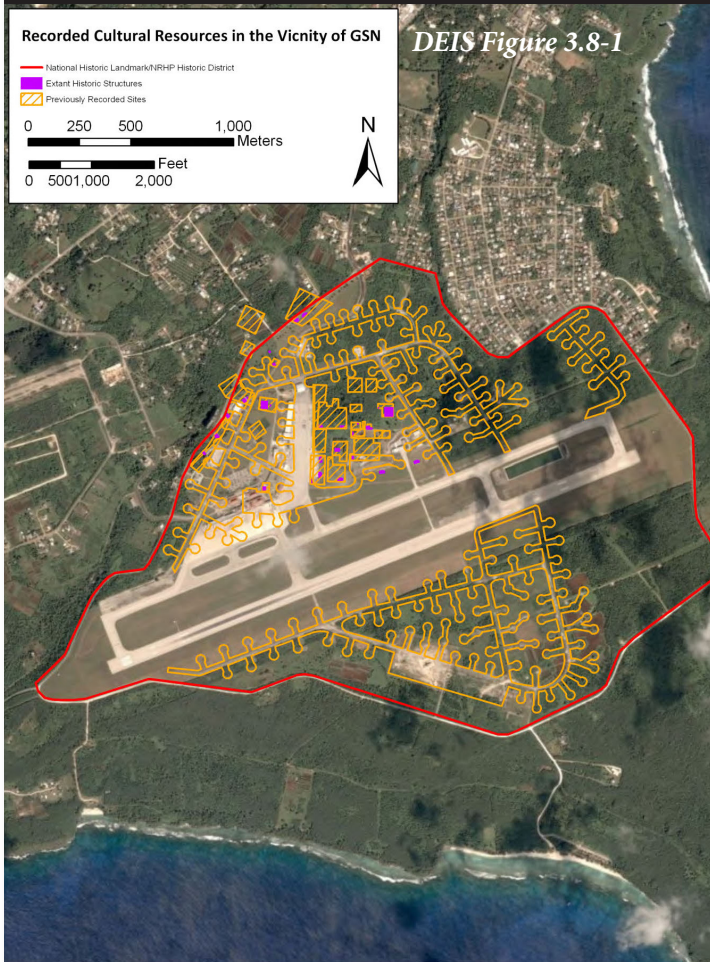
Impacts are presented by resource areas that have been deemed significant in the context of the National Environmental Policy Act. The primary concerns are associated with potential impacts that would result from:

- The Covenant between the CNMI and the U.S.
- The National Historic Landmark at Saipan International Airport
- Increased noise levels near schools, homes, and tourist areas
- Impaired water quality and increased stormwater runoff

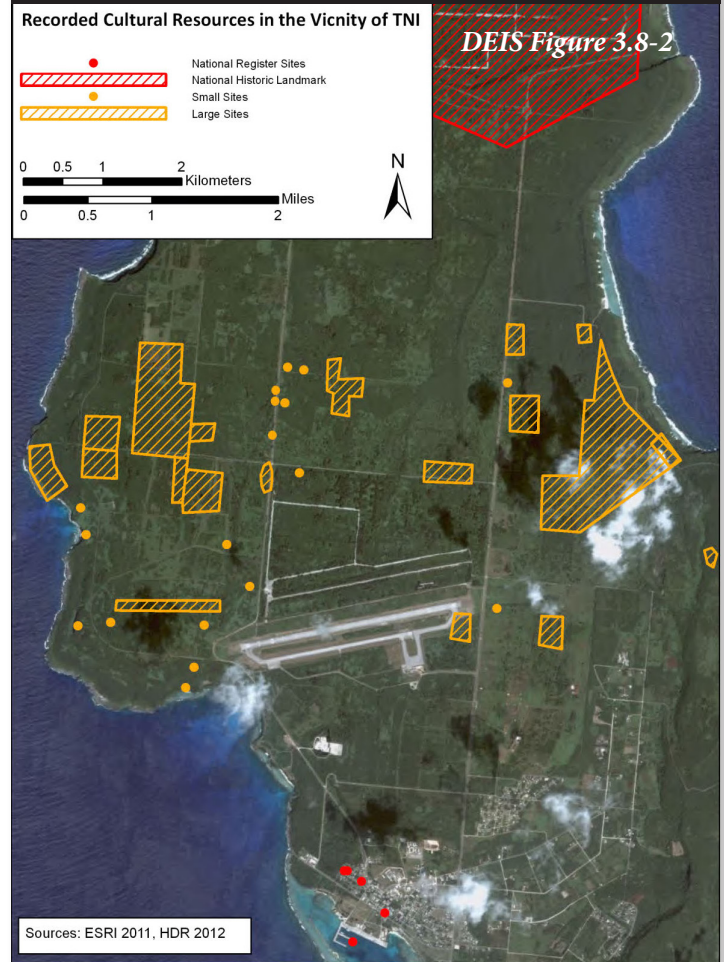



Issue	Rationale for Concern
Land Use: <i>Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States</i>	<p>The primary land use concern regarding the identification of Alternative 1 as the Preferred Alternative is the impact it has on land use as it relates to the Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America. The 1976 Covenant defines the unique relationship between the Northern Mariana Islands and the United States, recognizing U.S. sovereignty but limiting, in some respects, applicability of federal law. Approximately 17,799 acres of land on Tinian and 177 acres of land on Saipan are part of the Covenant. Use of the leased lands on Tinian would provide a beneficial impact to the DoD operation and its commitment to Tinian.</p> <p><i>The DoD is asking for an additional 40+ acres of land on Saipan for Alternative 1 when they have approximately 18,000 acres of existing DoD leased lands located adjacent to the Tinian International Airport, which are currently minimally used for DoD operations.</i> The DoD maintains the right to use approximately sixty percent of Tinian's land area for the purpose of establishing a large military presence; however, this has not been executed and remains an unfulfilled commitment to the island of Tinian.</p>
Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice: <i>Impacts to Low Income Areas</i>	<p>The proposed action would result in a positive economic impact to the CNMI overall. However, <i>Alternative 1 (Saipan) has the greatest negative impact (noise) on the lowest economic group of citizens</i> in comparison to the positive effect on the community and citizens on Tinian. <i>Alternative 2 (Tinian) would eliminate the potential for any environmental justice concerns</i>, by reducing or eliminating the noise and associated impacts on the population in the villages of Koblerville, Dan Dan, and San Antonio. The initial Tinian investment would be slightly higher if it is viewed as a stand-alone action. However, as an initial component to a long term strategic initiative, the delta in initial costs are insignificant and are easily off-set by long term return on investment. Investing in Tinian is in concert with and reinforces DoD's pivot to the Pacific Region.</p>
Water Resources: <i>Aquifer Recharge</i>	<p>Impacts to water resources in the CNMI region (including both alternatives) are primarily a result of increased levels of impervious surface area (pavement) that could increase the amount of pollutants that enter nearby water bodies, alter flood zones, and degrade drinking water quality. <i>The increase in impervious surfaces has a greater effect on Saipan due to aquifer recharge and the impacts to the waste water treatment demands.</i> Although the use of improved materials and technologies would mitigate some adverse effects to water resources, the impact of the increased water treatment facility demands requires further assessment and consideration, particularly as it relates to the impact to Saipan.</p> <p>The majority of the coastal marine waters are Class AA, meaning that these waters should remain in their natural pristine state to the extent possible with an absolute minimal pollution or alteration of water quality from any human-related source or action. It is imperative that adequate mitigation measures are employed to maintain the quality of water for Saipan, Tinian, and in CNMI.</p>

Cultural Resources at GSN (Saipan)



Cultural Resources at TNI (Tinian)



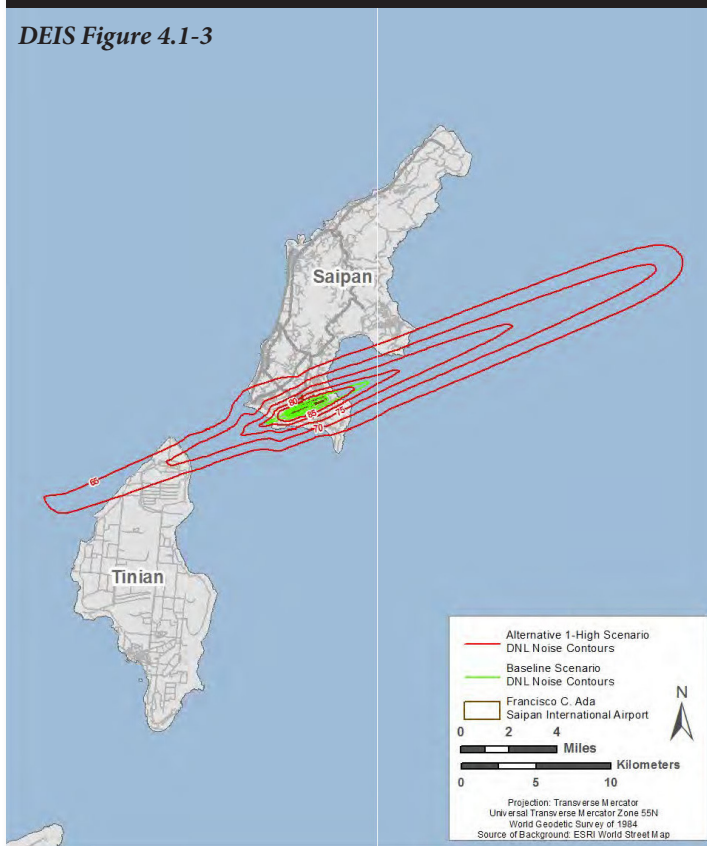
Issue	Rationale for Concern
<p>Historic/Cultural Resource: Saipan International Airport</p>	<p><i>The proposed action for Alternative 1 (Saipan) would result in major adverse effects on Saipan International Airport, a National Historic Landmark.</i> The impacted resources include concrete air raid bunkers and the Isley Field Historic District. The bunkers associated with the Japanese involvement in World War II and the historic artifacts and features associated with the 1934 construction of Japanese Aslito Field would be susceptible to impacts from vibration-related deterioration due to heavy traffic. Using Alternative 2 (Tinian) would eliminate any concerns with disturbing cultural artifacts on Saipan.</p> 

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Issue	Rationale for Concern
<p>Noise: <i>Increased Noise Levels Would Affect Sensitive Land Uses</i></p>	<p><i>With Alternative 1, the noise sensitive land uses, including three elementary schools and one high school in the Saipan area, would be subject to increased noise levels. This area contains an estimated 25% of Saipan residents including approximately 2,768 low income housing units, which are not designed to deflect loud noises. Additionally, the land surrounding the airport would be subject to increased noise levels three times greater for the Saipan Alternative versus the Tinian Alternative.</i></p> <p>While noise impacts are unavoidable when planning for increased military air operations, the effects on school children and the educational system is of paramount importance that requires greater consideration and should be planned for consistency with DoD guidelines for compatibility. Increased noise levels can impair learning ability as well as interfere with the general well-being of residents. Because the public schools that would be affected are limited in their ability to use air conditioning and must work with the windows open, there are no sound attenuation materials that could mitigate these impacts. The noise impacts will also have a significant effect on the tourist destinations (Lao Lao Bay Golf Course, Coral Ocean Point Golf Course, Obyan Beach, Ladder Beach, Forbidden Island, and the Pacific Islands Club Resort and Waterpark), which could be detrimental to the tourist industry and overall economy of Saipan.</p>
<p>Air Quality: <i>Further Analysis Required</i></p>	<p>The DEIS identifies air quality impacts to be equivalent for both alternatives considered; however, the level of detail performed for the analysis does not account for the modeling and standards required by local and federal regulations. Localized air emissions could occur from operations, fuel storage and transport, and transport between the port and airport. The travel route passes through residential areas that could be affected by these emissions, particularly on the more populated island of Saipan. Localized air pollution could cause further health concerns to an already economically disadvantaged community.</p>
<p>Geological Resources: <i>Increased Hard Surfaces</i></p>	<p>Impacts to geological resources in the CNMI region (including both alternatives) are primarily a result of increased levels of impervious surface area (pavement). The consequences are greater for Alternative 2 (Tinian); however, mitigation measures through the use of improved technologies and best practices were not included in the DEIS assessment. Farmland productivity is a prime resource in the CNMI region and could be degraded by the increase in pollutants and runoff.</p>
<p>Terrestrial Biological Resources: <i>Threatened and Endangered Species and Migratory Bird Populations</i></p>	<p>The proposed actions would impact both threatened and endangered species and bird populations. The impacts to Saipan are greater due to the removal of Tanagantan forest, which was aerially seeded by the U.S. Navy and is a critical habitat for the endangered Nightingale Reed Warbler. Removal of portions of this forest would harm both the natural environment and its cultural resource value. The migratory bird populations near the Saipan airport could be harmed by the proposed action as several species on Saipan are considered valuable based on their federal protection status. There are no endangered species within the proposed divert base area on Tinian that would require mitigation.</p>
<p>Recreation: <i>Potential Detriment to Tourism Economy</i></p>	<p>The proposed infrastructure would affect the existing soccer field between Flame Tree and Airport Roads on Saipan, which is used by numerous high schools and recreational league sports teams. Noise levels would also increase at several tourist destinations, which could be detrimental to the tourist industry and overall economy of Saipan.</p>

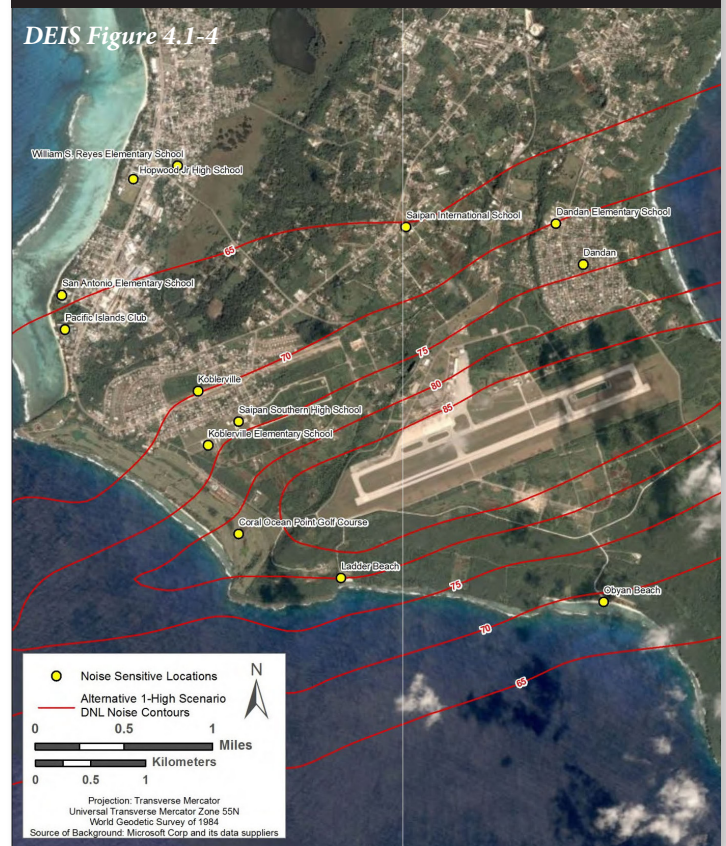
Alternative 1 - High Scenario Noise Contours at GSN

DEIS Figure 4.1-3



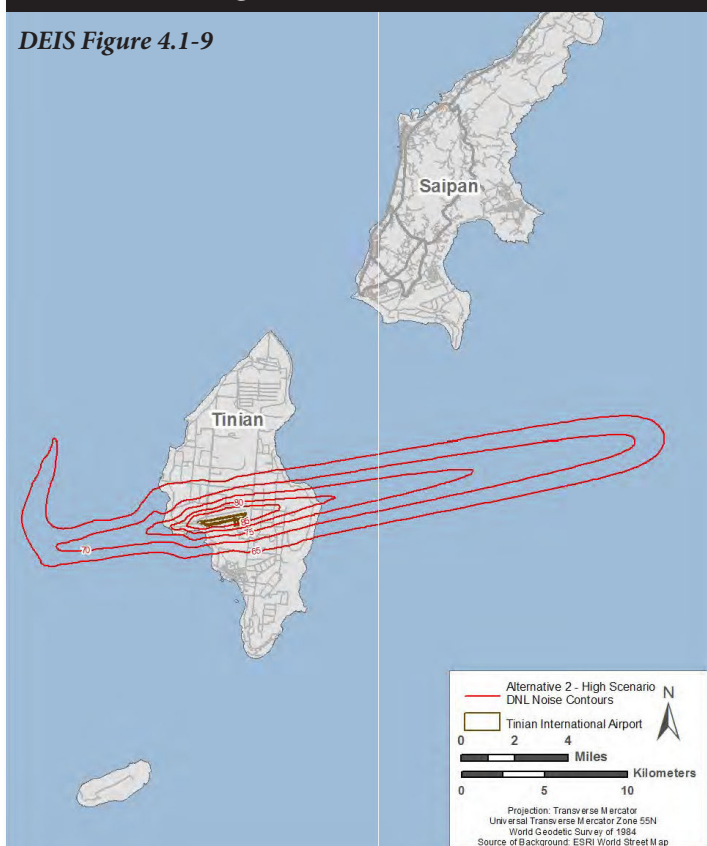
Noise Sensitive Locations at GSN West

DEIS Figure 4.1-4



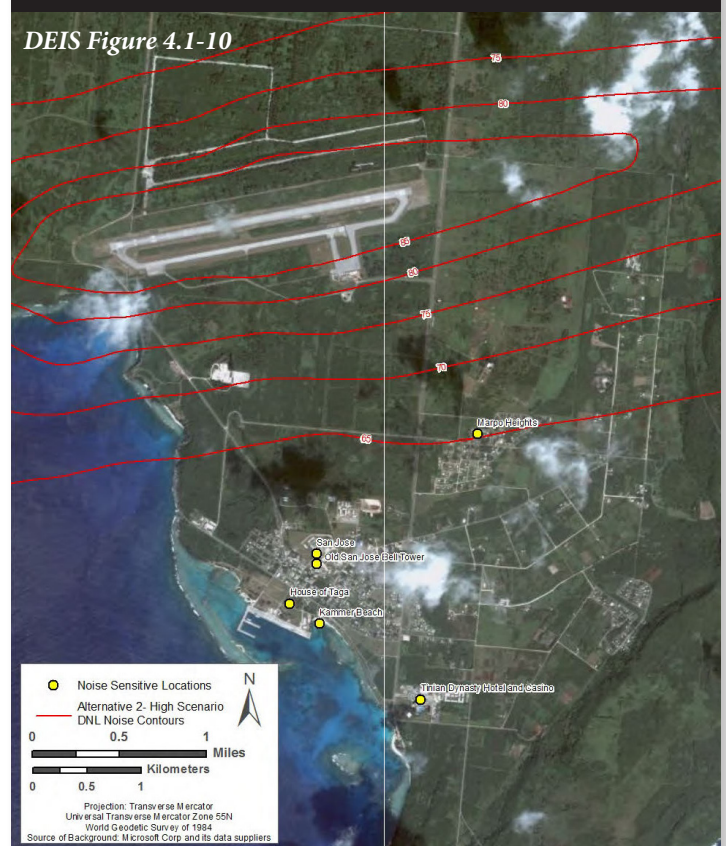
Alternative 2 - High Scenario Noise Contours at TNI

DEIS Figure 4.1-9



Noise Sensitive Locations at TNI

DEIS Figure 4.1-10



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Next Steps

The USAF formally initiated the EIS process by conducting the scoping period, which began on September 27, 2011 and lasted through November 10, 2011. The purpose of this scoping period is to identify issues that will be addressed in the environmental review process by obtaining input and recommendations from agencies and interested parties.

The Military Integration Management Committee (MIMC) participated in the scoping process that included five public meetings: two on Guam, one on Saipan, one on Tinian, and one on Rota. The USAF then used the input obtained through this process to develop the DEIS. The DEIS was released by PACAF on June 12, 2012, at which time they invited interested agencies and the public to review and comment on the evaluation and assessment of impacts. Two public hearings were also held to review the DEIS: one on Saipan and one on Tinian.

The MIMC reviewed the DEIS and submitted concerns and comments to the USAF. The issues identified by the MIMC's review are summarized on pages 4 through 6 of this Executive Summary and a synopsis of the comments submitted to the USAF is presented below. The USAF is in the process of reviewing and responding to all comments submitted and will release the Final EIS (FEIS) in November 2012.

The CNMI is staying engaged in the EIS process through coordination and communication with the USAF. Additional meetings to explain the results of the EIS and how it affects CNMI will occur as the project progresses and additional information is available. CNMI is encouraging the USAF to consider a more strategic and holistic approach, which leverages scarce DoD resources on a joint service – joint international training complex on the island of Tinian. The CNMI has been providing, and will continue to provide, support for all military initiatives in the region.

CNMI's Response to the USAF

The primary concerns identified relate to the selection of Saipan as the Preferred Alternative, including the noise impacts to the villages of Koblerville, Dan Dan, and San Antonio; the requirement for additional land leases on and around Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) property; and the Cultural Resource adverse impacts on Aslito/Isley Field National Historic Landmark, in addition to the issues summarized in this Executive Summary.

Land Use: The MIMC has requested an explanation of the rationale for why the DoD is asking for additional land on Saipan instead

of using the existing DoD leased lands adjacent to the Tinian International Airport. The MIMC has requested that these lands on Tinian be reconsidered in the spirit of the Covenant and the CNMI's commitment to support military initiatives as the Nation and DoD pivot toward the Pacific.

Historic/Cultural Resources: The MIMC has requested that the USAF give greater consideration to the selection of Tinian as the preferred alternative in order to eliminate concerns associated with disturbing cultural artifacts on Saipan.

Water Resources: The DEIS states that proper site design is needed to minimize the depletion of groundwater resources and increased salt water intrusion to drinking water wells on Saipan. The comments submitted to the USAF include a request to review the final site design and mitigation measures that would decrease the impacts to valuable water resources.

Noise: Due to the nature of proposed military operations that would occur, increased noise levels would impact nearby residents and sensitive land uses such as schools. The MIMC has requested that this issue be well mitigated if the Saipan Alternative is selected as the location for the divert activities.

Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice: The proposed action would result in a positive economic impact to the CNMI overall. The MIMC has requested that the USAF recognize the proposed action as a long term strategic initiative, which would have a long term return on investment for CNMI. Investing in the Tinian alternative is in concert with and reinforces the DoD's needs in the Pacific Region.

Air Quality: The MIMC has requested that the FEIS include a more thorough technical evaluation of air quality impacts.

Geological Resources: The MIMC has requested that the FEIS consider mitigation measures that would reduce the amount of new pavement associated with the expansion and improvement of infrastructure as well as mitigation to impacts on farmland, which is a valuable resource throughout the CNMI.

Terrestrial Biological Resources: The MIMC has requested that the FEIS consider the value of the endangered nightingale reed warbler, and the impacts to migratory bird populations near the airport, consistent with federal protection and the importance of this species.

Recreation: The MIMC has requested additional information be provided on how scheduled military training exercises will be coordinated and communicated to the community to avoid scheduling conflicts for use of the recreational facilities that are frequented by numerous high schools and recreational league sports teams.

