Public Meetings
USMC West Coat F-35B EIS
Frequently Asked Questions

The mission of the Marine Corps, as established in the National Security Act, requires the Marines to be trained, organized, and equipped as a force in readiness to meet national needs. The Marine Corps is assigned the unique defense mission among the nation's armed services: field, on short notice, a self-sufficient air and ground combat force trained to fight as an integrated team—the Maine Air-Ground Task Force—under a single command. The aviation combat element is one of four Marine Air-Ground Task Force elements organized, trained, and equipped from the operating forces assigned to the Marine Corps Forces Atlantic, U.S. Marine Forces Command, and Marine Corps Forces Reserve. The other elements consist of ground combat, combat logistics, and headquarters.

Q*: Who prepared the Environmental Impact Statement?*

A: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, the Department of the Navy (DoN) has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that analyzes the potential environmental impacts for the West Coast basing of the F-35B as part of the Third and Fourth Marine Aircraft Wings (3D and 4th MAW) in southern California and Arizona. The EIS is being developed on behalf of the U.S. Marine Corps and considers a range of reasonable alternatives for accomplishing the Proposed Action. Alternatives include basing the F-35B at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar, California and MCAS Yuma, Arizona.

Q: *When and where can I read the draft EIS?*

A: The draft EIS was made available on the project website for download on May 21, 2010. Hard copies are also provided to the following local libraries:

(1) San Diego County Public Library Fallbrook Branch, 124 S. Mission Road Fallbrook, CA 92028, telephone: 760-728-2373,

(2) San Diego Public Library Mira Mesa Branch, 8405 New Salem Street San Diego, CA 92126, telephone: 858-538-8165,

(3) Scripps-Miramar Ranch Library Miramar, 10301 Scripps Lake Drive, San Diego, CA 92131, telephone: 858-538-8158,

(4) Yuma County Library Heritage Branch (Main Library), 350 Third Avenue Yuma, AZ 85364, telephone: 928-782-1871.

Q: ***How do I get more information about this?***

A: There is a website established at www.usmcJSFwest.com where you can find more information.

Q: ***What's the next step in this process?***

A: Open house public meetings are being conducted during the review period in San Diego (June 15 at the Scripps-Miramar Ranch Library) and in Yuma, Arizona (June 17 at the at Gila Vista Junior High School). The public is encouraged to comment and provide feedback on the Proposed Action and alternatives to the Proposed Action and all environmental impacts associated with these alternatives as presented in the Draft EIS. Public participation will help the DoN make informed decisions about its Proposed Action. Comments can be submitted orally or in writing at the open houses, and written comments will be accepted online and through postal mail.

After the close of the comment period on July 6, 2010, a Final EIS will be prepared and will address all substantive comments received. The DoN may respond to public comments in different ways, such as correcting data, clarifying and modifying analytical approaches, or including additional data or analyses. The Final EIS will then be released for public review before a Record of Decision (ROD) is issued. The ROD will summarize the Assistant Secretary of the Navy's decision, identify the selected course of action, describe the public involvement and agency decision-making processes, and present commitments to specific mitigation measures.

Q: How can the public get involved?

A1: The NEPA process provides several opportunities for the public to be involved in the development of an EIS.

A2: Scoping meetings for this EIS were held in 2009, and agencies and interested parties submitted comments about resource areas to be analyzed in the Draft EIS, as well as helping define the proposal.

A3: The Draft EIS is being circulated for review and comment by government agencies, local organizations, Native American tribes and interested private citizens between May 21 and July 6, 2010.

A4: The public can attend public meetings and the website provides detailed information.

Q: ***How can I comment on the draft document?***

A: There are four ways to provide comments on the draft EIS: written comments submitted at a public meeting; oral comments that are recorded by a court reporter; written comments submitted by mail; and comments submitted via the project website.

Q: What potential effects to the environment were evaluated in the Draft EIS?

A: To ensure the thoroughness of the analysis, the potential effects to the following resource areas were evaluated:

- Airfields and Airspace
- Noise
- Land Use
- Air Quality
- Safety and Environmental Health
- Infrastructure and Utilities
- Socioeconomics
- Community Facilities and Services
- Ground Traffic and Transportation
- Environmental Justice
- Hazardous Materials Management
- Topography, Geology and Soils
- Biological Resources
- Water Resources
- Cultural Resources

Q: How does this Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) basing action relate to other Marine Corps projects?

A: The EIS includes an assessment of cumulative effects to the environment from this basing action when combined with other Marine Corps (e.g., MV-22 Basing) and other federal projects in the area. However, the purpose of the EIS is to inform the Assistant Secretary of the Navy of the potential environmental impacts from the F-35B basing, not of all Marine Corps actions in the same area.

Q: Why didn't the DoN prepare the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) F-35B EIS at the same time as the MV-22 aircraft?

A: The JSF and MV-22 are two separate programs on separate developmental timelines years apart. The JSF EIS fully evaluated the potential cumulative effects of the MV-22 basing action as described in that Final EIS.

Q: ***How much will this EIS and related studies cost and where does the money come from?***

A: Approximately $3.1 million, funded by the Marine Corps environmental compliance accounts.

Q: ***Who will make the final decision about this proposal?***

A: The Assistant Secretary of the Navy makes the basing decision.

Q: What is the Marine Corps proposing to do?

A: The Marine Corps proposes to provide the facilities and functions to support the basing and operation of 11 operational F-35B squadrons and 1 F-35B Operational Test and Evaluation (OT&E) squadron on the West Coast of the U.S at MCAS Yuma and MCAS Miramar. The F-35B aircraft would replace the legacy F/A-18 Hornet and AV-8B Harrier aircraft in the Third Marine Air Wing (3D MAW) and Fourth Marine Air Wing (4th MAW). These legacy F/A-18 and AV-8B aircraft are respectively based at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar near San Diego, California, and MCAS Yuma in Yuma, Arizona. In total, 184 F-35B aircraft are proposed to replace 126 F/A-18 aircraft and 56 AV-8B aircraft. Specifically, the Proposed Action includes:

- Basing 11 operational F-35B squadrons (up to 16 aircraft each)
- Basing 1 Operational Test and Evaluation squadron with up to 8 aircraft
- Replacing F/A-18 Hornet – 126 total aircraft
  - Transitioning 7 squadrons (12 aircraft each) from MCAS Miramar
  - Decommissioning VMFAT – 101 squadron (42 aircraft)
- Replacing AV-8B Harrier – 56 total aircraft
  - Transitioning 4 squadrons (up to 14 aircraft each) from MCAS Yuma

Q: What is the purpose of the Proposed Action?

A: The **purpose** of the Proposed Action is to efficiently and effectively maintain combat capacity and mission readiness as the Marine Corps faces increased deployments across a spectrum of conflicts, and a corresponding increased difficulty in maintaining an aging legacy aircraft inventory.

Q: Why is this Proposed Action needed?

A: The **need** for the Proposed Action is to replace aging legacy aircraft and integrate operational and operational, test and evaluation F-35B squadrons into the existing Marine Corps command and organizational structure.

Q: ***When would the F-35B arrive at Yuma?***

A: If approved, the first operational F-35B squadron would be based at MCAS Yuma in 2012.

Q: ***When would the F-35B arrive at Miramar?***

A: If approved, the first operational F-35B squadron would be based at MCAS Miramar in 2017.

Q: ***How would flight operations change? More? Less? Different?***

A1: Under the Preferred Alternative, airfield operations would be reduced at MCAS Miramar by 17 percent, and increased at MCAS Yuma by 15 percent. Aircraft at the airfields would fly similar operations to the F/A-18 and AV-8B, including FCLPs and closed patterns. At MCAS Miramar, the operations would change from current conditions since the F-35Bs would conduct short take offs and vertical landings unlike the F/A-18s.

A2: Overall airspace and range operations would increase, but changes in operations would differ for the various airspace units. The degree of increase would be reduced with the elimination of legacy F/A-18 and AV-8B operations. In addition, operations would be conducted differently to meet the training requirements specific to the F-35B. For example, F-35B training operations generally would be conducted at higher altitudes. While some units like the Dome MOA/ATCAA would receive increased use, the Proposed Action would result in reduced operations in the larger areas such as Barry M. Goldwater Range East.

A3: The F-35Bs would conduct more supersonic training than the F/A-18s in authorized airspace above the Barry M. Goldwater Range West. Supersonic events would last roughly 2 minutes and typically occur above 25,000 feet MSL. On a rare occasion, the F-35Bs could fly supersonic in authorized airspace over the Barry M. Goldwater Range East. With the reduction in use of this part of the range by the F-35Bs, these supersonic activities would represent a negligible component of the activities in the airspace.

Q: ***What airspace and training ranges would the F-35B use?***

A: The Marine Corps would use existing DoD land and airspace that is in use today: Bob Stump Training Range Complex and Barry M. Goldwater Range East. The Bob Stump Training Range Complex includes the Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range in California, El Centro Range in California, Yuma Proving Ground in Arizona, Barry M. Goldwater Range West in Arizona, Dome MOA/ATCAA in Arizona, and the Imperial ATCAA overlapping the California/Arizona border.

Q: ***What is the floor elevation for supersonic operations?***

A: Supersonic operations are only allowed in areas authorized for supersonic flight. Supersonic flight would be focused on the Barry M. Goldwater Range West in a corridor authorized for this activity. Supersonic flight would typically occur above 25,000 feet MSL.

Q: ***How low will the F-35B fly?***

A: The F-35B is expected to fly at higher altitudes than legacy aircraft. The F-35B has enhanced capabilities and performance, so we anticipate it being operated somewhat differently than the aircraft it is replacing. Aircraft will conduct 99 percent of operations above 5,000 feet AGL. Low-altitude training would occur in the Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range and the Barry M. Goldwater Range West. The aircraft would travel to and from training airspace using the FAA *enroute* system as would any other aircraft. MTR use would decrease by 90 percent compared to legacy aircraft, resulting in few low-altitude MTR flights.

Q: ***Where will it perform vertical landings?***

A: At designated VL landing areas at MCAS Miramar, MCAS Yuma and the Auxiliary Landing Field (ALF) in Barry M. Goldwater West. Field Carrier Landing Practice (FCLP) for carriers would occur at the installations, and FCLP practice for amphibious assault ships would occur at the ALF.

Q: ***How loud is this plane?***

A2: The F-35B would be comparable to or louder than the F/A-18, depending upon mode of flight and altitude. It would be consistently louder than the AV-8B.

Q: ***Will there be changes in AICUZ?***

A1: No. The Preferred Alternative basing will not change the AICUZ.

A2: The EIS for basing the F-35B and the AICUZ are independent products. MCAS Miramar plans to update the AICIZ in FY-13. We except different noise contours because we will be using a new Advanced Acoustic Model with noise measurements from the F-35B to support it. We don't know how the noise contours will change but only that they will be a better representation of the noise environment around MCAS Miramar.

Q***: The F-35B is a new aircraft; what is its safety record?***

A1: Safety is a priority for the Marine Corps, and the fielding of the F-35B includes a robust safety clearance program conducted by test pilots in multiple phases prior to basing at MCAS Miramar and/or MCAS Yuma

A2: The test and evaluation effort for the newest DoD fighter aircraft follows a detailed and disciplined plan in an incremental approach.

A3: Prior to, and throughout the flight-test program, modeling, simulation, and ground tests help reduce the risks and uncertainties of flight-testing.

A4: The aircraft uses the most advanced technology to increase aircraft reliability.

Q: The F-35B is a single engine jet, what happens if that engine fails?

A: Unlike the AV-8B, the F-35B has single-engine flame out procedures.

Q: What are the procedures to avoid populated areas in case of engine failure?

A: While this type of occurrence is extremely rare, our training and standard operating procedures are implemented to best protect life and property.

Q: How many mishaps have there been in the F-35?

A: There have been no crashes during the testing and development of the JSF.

Q: Does the F-35B produce more air pollutants than current aircraft?

A: The EIS includes a comprehensive assessment of air quality under each alternative. The analysis for the Preferred Alternative indicates the proposal would not produce impacts or exceed the federal *de minimis* thresholds for nonattainment pollutants at MCAS Miramar. At MCAS Yuma, the action would result in a reduction in the criteria pollutants CO, VOC, PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$, and increases in NO_X

and SO_X, but would not exceed regulatory thresholds. In airspace and over ranges, annual emissions for most criteria pollutants would decrease. Increases in NO_x at Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range and PM_{10} at Barry M. Goldwater Range West would not exceed *de minimis* levels. No regulatory thresholds would be exceeded.

Q: ***What are the implications for climate change? Will there be more greenhouse gas emissions from the new planes?***

A: The Draft EIS includes a comprehensive assessment of air quality, including GHG. While total CO_2e emissions would be higher than legacy aircraft, CO_2e emissions associated with the Preferred Alternative would amount to approximately 0.003 percent of the total CO_2e emissions generated by the U.S. Therefore, cumulative emissions to global climate change would be negligible.