

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### Second Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Army Training Land Retention at Pōhakuloa Training Area, Hawai'i

April 12, 2024

#### **Q-1. What is the Pōhakuloa Training Area (PTA) and what is it used for?**

**A-1:** PTA is on the island of Hawai'i and encompasses approximately 132,000 acres of land for the specific purpose of preparing military personnel for the rigors of combat. U.S. Army Hawai'i (USARHAW) conducts training at PTA to meet its federally-mandated mission of readiness. Training offered at installations such as PTA supports the U.S. Army's fulfillment of its role in the nation's defense. Users of PTA, including the Active Army, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Army Reserve, Hawai'i Army National Guard, Hawai'i Air National Guard, State and County of Hawai'i first responders and firefighters, Hawai'i Civil Defense Agency, Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency, State Office of Homeland Security, Hawai'i Police Department, and others, rely on the installation to fulfill agency-specific mission and readiness requirements. PTA is the largest contiguous live-fire range and maneuver training area in Hawai'i and is considered the Pacific region's premier military training center. It is the only U.S. training area in the Pacific region where USARHAW units can complete all mission-essential tasks, and the only U.S. training area in Hawai'i that can accommodate larger than company-sized units for live-fire and maneuver exercises.

#### **Q-2. What is the history of military training at PTA and how would PTA support future military needs?**

**A-2:** During World War II, the U.S. Marine Corps trained on the land now known as PTA. PTA was formally established in 1956 through an agreement between the Territory of Hawai'i and the Army. In 1964, the State of Hawai'i granted the Army a 65-year lease of approximately 23,000 acres of land adjacent to PTA for military purposes. The State-owned land now contains utilities, critical infrastructure, maneuver area, and key training facilities, some of which are not available elsewhere in Hawai'i. The parcel also provides access between the PTA cantonment area and approximately 84,000 acres of adjacent, federally-owned land at PTA. The State-owned land has been key to PTA's ability to support numerous training requirements, including austere-environment training, for USARHAW, other military services, and state/local agencies. The Army's proposed action is to retain up to approximately 22,750 acres of State-owned land at PTA in support of continued military training.

#### **Q-3. Why is the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) being prepared?**

**A-3:** The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requires federal agencies to examine the potential effects of proposed actions on the human environment. Under Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapter 343 and Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR) Chapter 11-200.1 – collectively referred to as the Hawai'i Environmental Policy Act

(HEPA) – use of State lands is a trigger that requires environmental disclosure. An EIS-level analysis is being conducted because, in accordance with HAR Section 11-200.1-14(d)(2), the accepting authority (Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources) has determined that the Army's proposed action may have a significant effect.

NEPA environmental disclosure requirements are set forth by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) in Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations [C.F.R.] Parts 1500–1508. Army NEPA implementation regulations are in Title 32 C.F.R. Part 651.

The Army has prepared a single, joint EIS, compliant with NEPA and HEPA regulations, to facilitate concurrent public review and processing at the federal and state level.

**Q-4. Why is the Army publishing a Second Draft EIS?**

**A-4:** In response to comments received from agencies and the public regarding the Draft EIS that was published in April 2022, the Army is no longer considering the retention of approximately 250 acres of State-owned land administered by the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands. In addition to analyzing impacts of a fee simple retention method, the Second Draft EIS also assesses impacts of a lease retention method. Due to these changes, the Army is publishing the Second Draft EIS for public review during a 45-day comment period.

**Q-5. What is the difference between NEPA and HEPA?**

**A-5:** NEPA is a federal law whereas HEPA is a law of the State of Hawai'i.

**Q-6. What agency is undertaking the EIS?**

**A-6:** The project proponent undertaking the EIS is U.S. Army Garrison-Hawai'i (USAG-HI). The preparer of the EIS is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Honolulu District.

**Q-7. What proposed action is considered in the Second Draft EIS?**

**A-7:** The proposed action is to retain up to approximately 22,750 acres of 23,000 acres of State-owned land at PTA in support of continued military training. The Army would retain the State-owned land prior to the 2029 expiration of the lease to limit impacts on training. Alternatives considered are: 1) Maximum Retention (of approximately 22,750 acres); 2) Modified Retention (of approximately 19,700 acres); 3) Minimum Retention and Access (of approximately 10,100 acres and 11 miles of roads and training trails); and the No Action Alternative, under which the Army's and other DoD components' use of the land would cease altogether when the lease expires in 2029.

**Q-8 Is there a preferred alternative?**

**A-8:** The Army has identified Alternative 2, Modified Retention, as the preferred alternative.

**Q-9. What is the purpose of and need for the proposed action?**

**A-9:** The purpose of the proposed action is to enable USARHAW to continue to conduct military training on the State-owned land at PTA to meet USARHAW's ongoing training requirements. The proposed action is needed to preserve limited maneuver area, provide austere-environment training, enable access among major parcels of U.S. Government-owned land at PTA, retain substantial infrastructure investments, allow for future facility and infrastructure modernization (which is not currently planned and would require separate, future NEPA analysis), and maximize use of the impact area in support of USARHAW-coordinated training.

**Q-10. What resources are analyzed in the Second Draft EIS?**

**A-10:** The Second Draft EIS analyzes: land use; biological resources; historic and cultural resources and cultural practices; hazardous substances and hazardous wastes; air quality and greenhouse gases; noise; geology, topography, and soils; water resources; socioeconomics; environmental justice; transportation and traffic; airspace; electromagnetic spectrum; utilities; and human health and safety. The Second Draft EIS quantitatively and qualitatively analyzes and evaluates the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts of the proposed alternatives.

**Q-11. What resources may be significantly impacted from implementation of the proposed action?**

**A-11:** The Second Draft EIS indicates that under Alternatives 1, 2, and 3, significant adverse impacts on land use (land tenure), cultural practices, and environmental justice could occur. Under the No Action Alternative, significant adverse impacts on biological resources, socioeconomics, and utilities could occur. The No Action Alternative could have significant beneficial impacts on land use, cultural practices, and environmental justice.

To mitigate adverse impacts to land use, the Army would consider adding non-barbed wire fencing and signage to minimize encroachment and accidental or intentional trespass from adjacent non-U.S. Government-owned land. In consideration of adverse impacts to cultural practices and environmental justice, the Army proposes to: 1) formalize a cultural access request process to enable Native Hawaiians and cultural practitioners to promote and preserve cultural practices, beliefs, and resources; and 2) explore options to provide unlimited access to specific locations to be determined in consultation with Native Hawaiians and cultural practitioners. To mitigate adverse impacts on human health and safety, the Army would consider: 1) negotiating an agreement with the State to allow the Army to monitor for wildfires on the State-owned land that is not retained by the Army; and 2) continuing or renegotiating its Memorandum of Agreement with the Hawai'i County Fire Department to assist wildfire responders with wildfire suppression outside of PTA boundaries.

The No Action Alternative could have significant adverse impacts on biological resources, socioeconomics, and utilities, and significant beneficial impacts for land use,

cultural practices, and environmental justice. Less than significant impacts on all other resources could occur under the No Action Alternative.

**Q-12. What methods of land retention is the Army considering?**

**A-12:** After the Army issues the Record of Decision (ROD), the Army would negotiate with the State regarding the most appropriate land retention method(s) for the selected alternative. Title 10 of the U.S. Code identifies the Army's authorized methods of land retention, which include fee title, lease, and easement.

**Q-13. When is the public comment period for the Second Draft EIS?**

**A-13:** The 45-day public comment period for the Second Draft EIS begins on April 19, 2024 and ends on June 7, 2024. Native Hawaiian Organizations, federal, State, and local agencies and officials, and other interested organizations and individuals are encouraged to provide comments on the Second Draft EIS during the 45-day public comment period.

After the public comment period, comments on the Second Draft EIS will be reviewed and considered. A Final EIS will then be prepared. To be considered in the Final EIS, all comments must be postmarked or received by 11:59 p.m. Hawai'i Standard Time on June 7, 2024.

**Q-14. How can the public be involved in the Second Draft EIS public meetings?**

**A-14:** Public meetings will be held in Waimea District Park on May 6, 2024, and at the 'Imiloa Astronomy Center on May 7, 2024 to provide information on the Second Draft EIS and to enhance the opportunity for public comment. Information on how to participate in the Second Draft EIS public meetings and submit comments is available on the EIS website at <https://home.army.mil/hawaii/index.php/PTAEIS>.

**Q-15. How do you submit comments?**

**A-15:** Written comments should be submitted through the EIS website (<https://home.army.mil/hawaii/index.php/PTAEIS>), mailed to ATLR PTA EIS Comments, P.O. Box 3444, Honolulu, HI 96801-3444, emailed to [atlr-pta-eis@g70.design](mailto:atlr-pta-eis@g70.design), or provided during the public meetings. All comments submitted during the 45-day public comment period will be considered in the development of the Final EIS. Comments must be postmarked or received by 11:59 p.m. Hawai'i Standard Time on June 7, 2024.

**Q-16. Will the public have additional opportunities to participate in the EIS process?**

**A-16:** Public outreach will be conducted during the 45-day Second Draft EIS comment period. Written comments will be accepted on the Second Draft EIS for 45 days after publication of the Notice of Availability (NOA) in the *Federal Register*. When the Final EIS is ready, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will publish a NOA in the *Federal Register*, which will initiate a 30-day waiting period. The Army will complete the NEPA process by issuing a ROD no sooner than the end of the 30-day waiting period.

For the HEPA process, written comments will be accepted for 45 days after publication of the Second Draft EIS in *The Environmental Notice* (i.e., the State Environmental Review Program's publication). A similar NOA will be published in *The Environmental Notice* regarding the Final EIS. The Hawai'i Board of Land and Natural Resources will conduct an acceptability determination regarding the Final EIS.

**Q-17. When will the Final EIS be completed?**

**A-17:** The Army estimates the Final EIS will be available in April 2025.