

FINAL FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**JOINT READINESS TRAINING CENTER AND FORT POLK, LOUISIANA****EXPANSION OF R-3803 RESTRICTED AREA COMPLEX AIRSPACE**

1. The findings and conclusions reached in this document are based on a thorough review of the impacts and analysis conducted and disclosed in the Environmental Assessment (EA) attached to this document. The EA, including its data, analysis, and conclusions, are incorporated in this Final FNSI by reference.
2. **Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action:** The purpose of the Proposed Action is to enable the Army to conduct the necessary type, level, duration, and intensity of live-fire and other military training exercises for the combat units assigned to Fort Polk and the Rotational Training Units at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC). To be operationally effective in the combat environment, Soldiers must acquire and sustain the skills and experience to operate and maintain weapons. They must also train as they fight, incorporating into training the same munitions and equipment used in combat.

Expansion of the R-3803 Restricted Area (RA) complex airspace (R-3803) overlying recently acquired land is required to better achieve combined arms teamwork and synchronization per recent Army doctrine. This includes allowing Combined Arms Live Fire Exercises (CALFEX) training, and utilization of current ranges for larger weapon systems with higher trajectories fired into the existing Peason Ridge impact areas.

3. **Proposed Action and Alternatives:** The Proposed Action is to request the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) establish new RA overlying recently acquired land to conduct future training activities. The Army carried forward four RA design alternatives along with a No Action Alternative for full analysis in this EA (see Table 1).

Table 1. Alternatives Considered

Alternative	Description
No Action Alternative	No changes to RA would occur.
Alternative 1 – Establish Lower Altitude RA	Restrict airspace in R-3803C and R-3803D, from the surface up to but not including 18,000 feet MSL, excluding that area from surface to and including 2,000 feet MSL. Activated by NOTAM.
Alternative 2 – Establish Lower Altitude RA, Excluding the Airspace Above the Exclusion Area	Restrict airspace in R-3803C and R-3803D, from the surface up to but not including 18,000 feet MSL, except airspace above the exclusion area. Activated by NOTAM.
Alternative 3 – Establish Lower and High Altitudes (<i>Preferred Alternative</i>)	Restrict airspace in R-3803C and R-3803D, from the surface up to but not including 18,000 feet MSL, and in R-3803-E and R-3803F from 18,000 feet MSL up to but not including 35,000 feet MSL, excluding that area from surface to and including 2,000 feet MSL. Activated by NOTAM.

Table 1. Alternatives Considered

Alternative	Description
Alternative 4 – Establish Lower and High Altitudes, Excluding Airspace Above the Exclusion Area	Restrict airspace in R-3803C and R-3803D, from the surface up to but not including 18,000 feet MSL, and in R-3803E from 18,000 feet MSL up to but not including 35,000 feet MSL. Activated by NOTAM.

¹ Polygon R-3803D has an area in the southwest corner that extends from the surface to and including 2,000 feet MSL, the excluded area is referred to as the “exclusion area” within the EA.

MSL = mean sea level; NOTAM = Notices to Airmen; RA = Restricted Area (airspace)

4. **Environmental Consequences:** Potential impacts to the natural and human environment were considered and analyzed for the Proposed Action and alternatives. Based on the analysis of baseline conditions, proposed activities, potential environmental effects, and continued environmental stewardship, no significant adverse effects to the environment would be expected under the implementation of any one of the alternatives (see Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison Summary of Potential Effects¹

RESOURCE	ALTERNATIVES					CUMULATIVE EFFECTS
	No Action Alternative	Proposed Action 1	Proposed Action 2	Proposed Action 3	Proposed Action 4	
Airspace	Minor	Minor	Moderate	Minor	Moderate	Minor to Moderate
Noise	Negligible	Moderate	Minor	Moderate	Minor	Minor to Moderate

¹Refer to Section 3.1 of the EA for a discussion of impact ratings.

5. **Proposed Impact Reduction Measures:** As demonstrated in Table 2, impacts resulting from the Proposed Action would be less than significant. Various measures have been identified within the EA analysis that could be undertaken by Fort Polk to minimize adverse effects. This includes continued implementation of existing operational and management controls (Table 3), and the adoption and implementation of proposed operational and management mitigations (Table 4). No other mitigation measures would be required.

Table 3. Summary of Fort Polk Existing Protection Measures

Concern	Primary Resource(s) Affected	Existing Control/Description
Noise	Noise Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management Control: Fort Polk would continue to maintain the 24-hour hotline to receive noise complaints associated with military training operations. Management Control: Fort Polk would continue to operate a noise abatement program, designed to increase pilot awareness of noise issues and encourage practices that reduce aircraft noise in sensitive areas (such as the exclusion area).

Table 3. Summary of Fort Polk Existing Protection Measures

Concern	Primary Resource(s) Affected	Existing Control/Description
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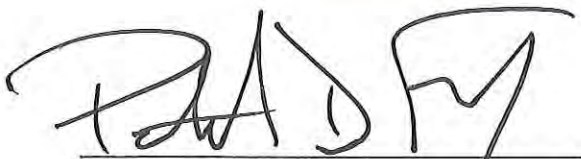
Table 4. Summary of Proposed Mitigations for RA Expansion

Concern & Related Resource Significant Thresholds	Description of Proposed Mitigation	Mitigative Effect	Alternative
<p>Airspace Use:</p> <p>Infringement upon current private airspace</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Operational Control:</u> Fort Polk is in the process of establishing a firebreak that could be used by pilots as a visual reference for the edges of the proposed RA. 	<p>Firebreaks will exist providing a visual boundary between the newly acquired lands and private landholdings within the exclusion area which would allow aircraft to visually identify the edge of private property.</p>	<p>1 through 4</p>

RA = restricted area (airspace)

- 6. Public Comment:** The EA and Draft FNSI were made available for public review from September 02, 2016 through October 03, 2016. No public comments were received. Additional information regarding this decision may be obtained by contacting the JRTC and Fort Polk Public Affairs Office as listed below.
- 7. Conclusions:** I have carefully reviewed the attached EA and the potential environmental consequences of each of the alternative actions. Based on this review, I have determined that selection of an alternative in support of the Proposed Action will have no significant impacts on the environment. Therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required.
- 8. Decision:** In light of the preceding conclusions, I have decided to implement Proposed Action Alternative 3. This will allow for the establishment of additional restricted airspace as described in this EA.

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