

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

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

**April 15, 2025**

#### **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 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 allows 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 to support 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 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) determined that the Army's proposed action may have a significant effect on the environment.

The Final EIS adheres to the NEPA statute, the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA implementing regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) Parts 1500–1508), and the Army's NEPA implementing regulations (32 C.F.R. Part 651).

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

**Q-4. What is the difference between NEPA and HEPA?**

**A-4.** NEPA is a federal law whereas HEPA is a law of the State of Hawai'i.

**Q-5. What agency is undertaking the EIS?**

**A-5.** The project proponent undertaking the EIS is U.S. Army Garrison Hawai'i. The preparer of the EIS is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Honolulu District.

**Q-6. What proposed action is considered in the Final EIS?**

**A-6.** The proposed action is to retain up to approximately 22,750 acres of 23,000 acres of State-owned land at PTA to support 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 4) the No-Action Alternative, under which the Army's and other DoD components' use of the State-owned land would cease altogether when the lease expires in 2029.

**Q-7. Is there a preferred alternative?**

**A-7.** The Army has identified Alternative 2, Modified Retention, as the preferred alternative.

**Q-8. What is the purpose of and need for the proposed action?**

**A-8.** 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-9. What resources are analyzed in the Final EIS?**

**A-9.** The Final 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 Final EIS quantitatively and qualitatively analyzes and evaluates the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts of the proposed alternatives.

The air quality, greenhouse gas, and environmental justice analyses were prepared according to now-rescinded Executive Orders, the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA implementing regulations, which are in the process of being rescinded, and the Army's NEPA implementing regulations, which are now under revision. Because analysis regarding air quality, greenhouse gases, and environmental justice was already provided to the public for comment, such analysis is included in the Final EIS.

**Q-10. What resources may be significantly impacted from implementation of the proposed action?**

**A-10.** The Final EIS indicates that under Alternatives 1, 2, and 3, significant adverse impacts on land use (land tenure), biological resources, 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 reduce adverse impacts, the Final EIS identifies the following mitigation measures: 1) develop a formalized plan for quarterly access for Native Hawaiian Organizations, individuals, consulting parties, 'ohana (family), lineal descendants, and cultural practitioners; 2) install interpretive panels at the Gilbert Kahele Recreational Area; 3) negotiate an agreement with the State to allow the Army to monitor for wildfires on the State-owned land that the Army does not retain; 4) install advanced technology, including additional thermal technology, that will enable firefighting personnel to locate and eliminate hotspots; and 5) undertake a multi-year research project to identify possible biological controls to address invasive *Cenchrus setaceus* (fountain grass), conduct an invertebrate study, and perform a study to assess ungulates' impact on the health of the vegetation community.

The mitigation measures will be discussed in the Record of Decision (ROD), should the Army decide to seek retention of the State-owned land. No mitigation measures would be implemented under the No-Action Alternative. If the Army selects an Action

Alternative, the Army would plan to begin implementation of mitigation measures by October 2028. If funding is available earlier, mitigation measures and mitigation monitoring could be implemented prior to October 2028.

**Q-11. What methods of land retention is the Army considering?**

**A-11.** After the Army issues the ROD, the Army would negotiate with the State regarding the most appropriate land-retention method(s) for the selected alternative. Title 10, U.S. Code, identifies the Army's authorized types of land retention, which include fee title, lease, and easement.

**Q-12. When were the public comment periods for the Draft EISs?**

**A-12.** The 60-day public comment period for the Draft EIS began on April 8, 2022, and ended on June 7, 2022. All comments postmarked or received by 11:59 p.m. Hawai'i Standard Time on June 7, 2022, were reviewed and considered in preparing the Second Draft EIS.

The 45-day public comment period for the Second Draft EIS began on April 19, 2024, and ended on June 7, 2024. All comments postmarked or received by 11:59 p.m. Hawai'i Standard Time on June 7, 2024, were reviewed and considered in preparing the Final EIS.

Native Hawaiian Organizations, federal, State, and local agencies and officials, and other interested organizations and individuals were invited to participate in the public comment processes for the Draft and Second Draft EISs.

**Q-13. When were the public meetings held for the Draft EISs?**

**A-13.** Public meetings were held in April 2022 for the Draft EIS and in May 2024 for the Second Draft EIS to provide information and to enhance the opportunity for public input. Further information regarding the public meetings is available on the EIS website: <https://home.army.mil/hawaii/ptaeis/project-home>.

**Q-14. When will the Army issue the ROD?**

**A-14.** The Army will observe a 30-day waiting period before deciding how much land, if any, it will seek to retain. The waiting period for the Final EIS will end 30 days after publication of the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register, at which time the Army can execute the ROD.