



# TOWNSEND BOMBING RANGE MODERNIZATION



FACT SHEET – March 2018

## MARINE CORPS TRAINING REQUIREMENT

The Marine Corps is the nation's expeditionary force in readiness. As "the first to fight," Marines must be prepared to deploy as an air-ground task force, which unites substantial combat forces of both Marine aviation and Marine ground units under a single commander. As a part of this task force, Marine aviators are routinely called into action when the Commander in Chief requires airborne strikes or support for ground forces. The Marine Corps continues to successfully deter threats, prevent conflict, and provide humanitarian assistance because it conducts realistic training exercises.

This realistic training, which includes air-to-ground training exercises and training exercises with various weapons systems, is essential for developing and maintaining the combat skills critical for wartime missions and real-world events. Air-to-ground training is when military aircraft deliver munitions, such as rockets and bombs, to simulated military targets on the ground. It also includes strafing training (shooting from aircraft-mounted automatic weapons), and close air support training exercises. Marines also conduct training with other weapons systems, such as rifles, howitzers, and more. Each training range is specifically designed for the type of training and munitions used.

As modern combat and warfare technologies evolve, the training ranges that prepare the nation's aviators must also adapt to meet and anticipate these changes. Marine aviators must train and be experts in multiple skills, which includes the delivery of precision-guided munitions (PGMs) and other air-to-ground weapons against a range of target types. In combat, Marine aviators must fire at various enemy targets, such as tanks, buildings, missile launchers, and more. PGMs are a modern class of weapons that permit Marine aviators to attack specific threats and isolate targets from long ranges and with great precision.

## TOWNSEND BOMBING RANGE

Townsend Bombing Range (TBR) is the East Coast's premier air-to-ground training range. It provides the nation's aircrews access to world-class training, which is critical to maintain a strong national defense in a world of ever-changing enemies, battlegrounds, and technologies. Located in Long and McIntosh Counties in southeast, coastal Georgia, TBR is the primary air-to-ground training range for aviation units stationed at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Beaufort, home to Marine Aircraft Group 31 (MAG-31). TBR is located within the local flying area of MAG-31, an area defined as the maximum distance an aircraft can travel, complete its mission, and return to base without refueling or landing. MAG-31 aircrews regularly rotate overseas, either to support Operation Inherent Resolve, Western Pacific or Navy aircraft carrier deployments. TBR has been critical to realistic training for these deployments. At any given time, up to half the squadrons based at MCAS Beaufort may be found at various points around the globe, and, most recently, have seen combat in the skies over Iraq and Syria.

In addition to being an essential training asset to Marine Corps aviation units, Navy, Air Force and Air National Guard, and Army units from more than six states also train at TBR and its complex of Special Use Airspace.

## MODERNIZATION

Until TBR is fully modernized, the aviators stationed at MCAS Beaufort deploy to the West Coast of the United States to train with PGM. To train as they fight, Marines must practice releasing PGM from combat distances, altitudes, and airspeeds. Because PGM are released to their target from much greater distances and altitudes than other ordnance, if a PGM were to malfunction – either the guidance or a mechanical system – its potential impact area is much larger than ordnance released from lower altitudes and shorter distances. Therefore, the Weapon Danger Zones, which are also informally referred to as "safety zones," at TBR must be sized to ensure that any errant bomb would safely land within TBR. To modernize TBR to meet this requirement, additional land was acquired. Without modernization of TBR, Marine Corps units would have to continue to deploy to California and Arizona to conduct PGM training.

The modernization and expansion of TBR to accommodate training with inert PGMs will significantly enhance the efficiency of East Coast aviation unit training, and enable more appropriate utilization of the nation's other training ranges. Presently, TBR can accommodate less than half of the required F/A-18 Hornet individual fixed-wing air crew air-to-ground training syllabus. The modernization and expansion of TBR will allow aircrews to meet up to 85% of their air-to-ground proficiency requirements at TBR and prepare them for follow-on large-scale unit exercises with live ordnance at other ranges later in the training program.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit: [www.beaufort.marines.mil/Townsend-Bombing-Range](http://www.beaufort.marines.mil/Townsend-Bombing-Range)

Contact: MCAS Beaufort Office of Communication 843-228-7225



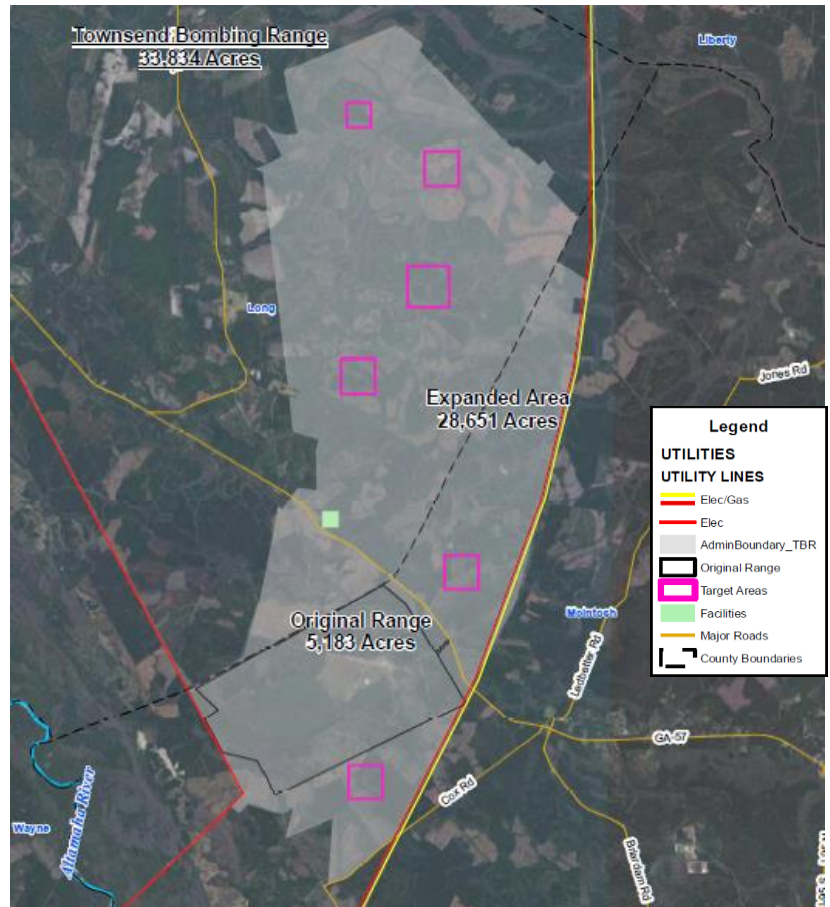
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## MODERNIZATION BACKGROUND

- In January 2009, the Marine Corps Training and Education Command and the Marine Requirements Oversight Council determined that modernization of TBR was critical to ensure the effective training of East Coast-based Marine Corps aviation units, especially for units based at MCAS Beaufort, and to ensure their readiness to deploy. The Marine Corps and the Department of the Navy (DON) secured Department of Defense approval to study land acquisition and range design alternatives that could achieve the best support for the modernization of TBR.
- The Marine Corps and its partners began the required National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental assessment in 2010, and completed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Proposed Modernization and Expansion of Townsend Bombing Range, Georgia, in March 2013. The EIS assessed potential impacts that the proposed alternatives and a “No Action” alternative could have on the human and natural environment. The EIS process provided multiple opportunities for public comment, and the Marine Corps reduced its study area for potential land acquisition by approximately 20,000 acres in response to comments during Public Scoping.
- The DON published its Record of Decision (ROD) on the Final EIS in the Federal Register on January 31, 2014. The ROD documented the DON’s decision to proceed with the modernization and expansion of TBR. The DON reached this decision after careful consideration of the purpose and need, the analysis and conclusions presented in the Final EIS, and comments received from federal, state, and local agencies, non-governmental organizations, tribal nations, and the public. Congress authorized funding for the two-phased project in fiscal years 2014 and 2016 through the Military Construction Program. The full versions of the EIS, ROD, and additional project items can be found on the website: [www.beaufort.marines.mil/Townsend-Bombing-Range/TBR-Environmental-Impact-Statement/](http://www.beaufort.marines.mil/Townsend-Bombing-Range/TBR-Environmental-Impact-Statement/)
- In January 2015, the National Guard Bureau made the decision to divest its operational control by October 2017. The Marine Corps worked closely with Georgia Air National Guard (GAANG) on the transition and assumed operational control of TBR on 1 October 2017.



## UPDATED BOUNDARIES

As of December 31, 2017, the land acquisition for the expansion of TBR is complete. In total, the DON acquired approximately 28,651 acres. Added to the original 5,183-acre range, TBR now totals approximately 33,834 acres. Individuals have a personal and legal responsibility to avoid trespassing onto TBR regardless of the presence or absence of signs. This is consistent with all federal law and is not unique to the TBR. Training operations in the expanded area are anticipated to begin by December 2019. The updated boundaries and training operations will not affect the public’s continued safe use of Highway 57.

The Marine Corps is committed to working with federal, state, and local leaders; resource and regulatory agencies; neighbors; and public stakeholders to keep them informed of project developments.

For the latest status of the modernization, visit: <http://www.beaufort.marines.mil/Townsend-Bombing-Range/About-Townsend-Bombing-Range> or call (843) 228-7225 with questions.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit: [www.beaufort.marines.mil/Townsend-Bombing-Range](http://www.beaufort.marines.mil/Townsend-Bombing-Range)  
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