

Air Force: Divert facility will have no adverse effect on Saipan historic properties

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THE proposed divert facility will have no adverse effect on the historic properties in the former As Lito/Isely Airfield, or the Marpi Point National Historical Landmark, according to the U.S. Air Force.

But Col. Michael R. Cardoza, Pacific Air Forces chief of strategy and plans division, finds that certain proposed actions in the various alternatives could have an adverse effect on the West Field site on Tinian and possible indirect, adverse effect on the setting and feeling of the Aslito/Isely Field National Historic Landmark District on Saipan.

The Air Force is now requesting the CNMI officials to respond to these findings of no adverse effect no later than Oct. 15.

Cardoza said they want to work together with the CNMI to avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse effects.

According to the Air Force, construction at the airport on Saipan would have no direct effect on any standing historic structures that constitute the National Historic Landmark District.

These structures include hundreds of hardstands and foundations from the U.S. period, a torpedo regulating shop, cold storage building, 11 air raid shelters, a power plant, four gas drum storage bunkers, two runways, a semi subterranean bomb storage facility, among others.

There would also be no adverse effects of the construction on above-ground fuel storage tanks at the Saipan seaport, the Air Force stated.

But the Air Force said that its proposed divert activities under the modified Tinian alternative may have adverse effects on the American administration-period West Field.

The construction of either the Tinian North Option or South Option of the Tinian Alternative would “potentially compromise archaeological deposits that make the site eligible under Criterion D [for National Register of Historic Places],” the Air Force stated.

In addition, new elements to be introduced could diminish the integrity of the setting, design and feeling at West Field, the Air Force said.

The Tinian Landing Beaches, Ushi Point Field, and North Field National Historic Landmark are located north of the proposed site of the project which will not have direct or indirect adverse effects to historic properties, the Air Force added.

Gurguan Airfield site and the Naval Air Base HQ site, which are close to the Tinian International Airport, may be affected by the noise effects but these are only minimal, the Air Force said.

The proposed divert-airfield operation is one of four military proposals that will affect the region. The other are the Marine relocation to Guam; Mariana Islands Training and Testing or MITT; and CNMI Joint Military Training.

For the Marine relocation and MITT testing, the military have already issued a Record of Decision this year.

The Air Force has said it is not building a new airbase, but it requires a fallback divert airfield in the Northern Marianas in the

event that the Andersen Air Base on Guam become unavailable.

Under the hybrid alternative, Air Force will divide 12-tanker aircraft between Saipan and Tinian. But Tinian will be the primary divert location.

The divert facilities for the Northern Marianas has been budgeted for \$29.3 million.



[back to top](#)