



NEWS RELEASE No.: 20210825-001

Cherry Point reaches new heights

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION CHERRY POINT, NC (Aug. 25, 2021) — Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Cherry Point has received approval from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to expand existing restricted airspace to heights that will better facilitate training for jet aircraft pilots.

The FAA established the airspace as R-5306F, and now reflects in the federal register with an effective date of Dec. 2, 2021.

The station's airspace training area, designated as R-5306A, has altitude constraints that cannot support current training and readiness requirements. As MCAS Cherry Point phases out legacy aircraft, the new airspace designation is critical to support the inbound F-35 Joint Strike Fighter Lightning II.

"This enhancement to our training range allows Cherry Point to better support 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing and our Joint users, by allowing aviators and support personnel to train how they fight," said MCAS Cherry Point Commanding Officer Col. Mikel Huber.

The high-altitude restricted use airspace has been extended from FL 180 (18,000 feet) to FL 290 (29,000 feet). This provides a more realistic training environment that pilots and aircrews need to in order to qualify and remain proficient in tactics for the employment of Precision Guided Munitions (PGM). PGMs are weapon systems that are released from higher altitudes and greater distances from the target than conventional unguided weapons. In conjunction with existing restricted area R-5306A, R-5306F will provide the airspace needed to contain actual and simulated deliveries of ordnance for training in tactics such as Close Air Support, Deep Air Support, and Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses.

"This is the first of several steps being taken to expand and combine the airspace overlying existing surface training areas," said U.S. Marine Corps Col. Sam Schoolfield, operations officer Marine Corps Installations East. "Eastern North Carolina has long been a premier training area for the U.S. military, and I am personally thankful for the people of North Carolina who make this a great place to live, work, and train."

Impacts to the surrounding community will be minimal, however the elevated airspace may actually reduce noise pollution and maximize airspace for commercial aircraft commuting to and from regional airports. "This will reduce aircraft noise over the Pamlico Sound while allowing Marines and our joint partners from the Navy and Air Force to train in a more realistic way," said Col. Schoolfield.

Commissioned in 1942, MCAS Cherry Point is the world's largest Marine Corps air station. It currently occupies more than 29,000 acres of land in Eastern North Carolina. Cherry Point provides air traffic control 24 hours a day, year round in the support of more than 150,000 annual flight operations for 22 visual flight rules and 10 instrument flight rules airports. Through its operation and development, the installation contributes approximately \$2.2 billion to the state and local economy.