

Draft
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
INTERIM RELOCATION OF TWO F-16 SQUADRONS

Pursuant to provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 United States Code (U.S.C.) 4321 to 4370h; Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations, 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1500-1508; and 32 CFR Part 989, *Environmental Impact Analysis Process*, the U.S. Air Force prepared the attached environmental assessment (EA) to address the potential environmental consequences associated with temporarily relocating two F-16 squadrons currently based at Hill Air Force Base (AFB), Utah, to either Holloman AFB, New Mexico, or Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA) – Lackland (Kelly Field), Texas.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to temporarily relocate two F 16 squadrons currently based at Hill AFB to an existing F-16 FTU installation to support increased production of F-16 fighter pilots.

The need for the Proposed Action is to produce more F-16 fighter pilots. The Air Force is currently short 700 fighter pilots, with the shortage projected to increase to 1,000 within 5 years. Additionally, as the F-35 mission stands up at Hill AFB requiring more resources and support, the F-16 mission must depart because there is insufficient capacity at Hill AFB to host both F-35 and F-16 operations. The operational F-16s currently used at Hill AFB can be reassigned to a training mission upon relocation to a suitable installation, allowing for an increase in fighter pilot production. The Air Force will consider potential permanent relocation of the F-16 squadrons as an independent action that will be addressed in the future.

Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives

The Proposed Action is to relocate two squadrons of F-16s (45 total aircraft) currently based at Hill AFB, Utah, to one location currently hosting an F-16 FTU. F-16 aircraft are scheduled to begin departing Hill AFB in August 2017 with all 45 F-16 aircraft planned to arrive at the interim relocation installation by October 2018 (first squadron arrival complete by October 2017; second squadron complete by October 2018). The staggered arrival dates are a result of fourteen F-16 aircraft being on loan to other installations through September 2018. This relocation action is intended to be temporary (approximately 5 years) in order to increase F-16 pilot training during selection and preparation of the permanent F-16 FTU beddown location(s).

The Proposed Action would augment the current installation personnel with additional instructor pilots and contractor logistics support maintainers. Personnel associated with the interim relocation would include approximately 175 active duty Air Force personnel and the contractor equivalent of approximately 700 maintenance personnel (total of 875 personnel).

The required timeline for the relocation does not allow for major construction or renovation projects to be completed prior to the arrival of additional F 16 aircraft. Therefore, the relocation would make use of existing facilities with minor renovations as required.

Alternative 1: Holloman AFB. Existing facilities at Holloman AFB that would support the interim relocation of two F-16 squadrons include runways, taxiways, aprons, and structures, some of which require renovations to support the mission. Renovations would include changes to building interiors, re-striping of the existing parking apron, construction of aircraft sunshades with associated lighting, and installation of anchor points into the concrete apron for F-16 parking and sunshades. Additionally, use of three German-owned facilities and ramp space would be required under a lease agreement with the

German government. Negotiations are ongoing and the lease agreement is anticipated to be completed prior to May 2017 to define the parking, taxiing, and maintenance procedures to ensure the F-16 maintenance operations do not interrupt the GAF operations.

Training would include use of RR188 chaff and MJU-7 flares. Supersonic activities would be conducted at or above flight level (FL) 300 [30,000 feet]. The following Military Operating Areas (MOAs) would support training operations: Beak A-C and Talon Low/High East and West. The White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) Restricted Airspace would also be available. In addition, existing training ranges (Oscura and Red Rio Ranges at WSMR and the Centennial Range at McGregor Range) would support air-to-ground training. Frequency of airspace use would not be continuous; however, some or all parts would be active during the F-16 FTU flying operations windows, primarily from 7:00 am to 10:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

Alternative 2: JBSA-Lackland (Kelly Field). Existing facilities at JBSA-Lackland (Kelly Field) that would support the interim relocation of two F-16 squadrons include runways, taxiways, aprons, and structures, some of which require renovations to support the mission. Renovations would include changes to building interiors, re-striping of the existing parking apron, construction of aircraft sunshades with associated lighting, and installation of anchor points into the concrete apron for F-16 parking and sunshades. Additionally, approximately 4,500 linear feet of security fencing would be installed. The security fence would replace portions of the existing security fence in the area and would be approximately 6 feet in height consisting of chain-link fencing with three strands of barbed wire along the top and support posts placed approximately 20 feet apart.

Training would include use of RR188 chaff and MJU-7 flares. Supersonic activities would be conducted at or above flight level FL 300. The following Military Operating Areas (MOAs) would support training operations: Crystal, Rio Pecos, Brady, Kingsville 3/4, W-228, Texon, Randolph, Brownwood, W-147 C/D/E, and Hood. In addition, Warning Areas W-228, W-147 C/D/E would accommodate training. Non-live ground impact training would occur on the Yankee/Dixie bombing range. For live ordnance delivery and training, the F-16 FTUs would utilize the Fort Hood live drop range. Frequency of airspace use would not be continuous; however, some or all parts would be active during the F-16 FTU flying operations windows, primarily from 7:00 am to 10:00 pm, Monday through Friday. One weekend per month, Air National Guard training would require use of these airspaces on Saturday and/or Sunday.

No-Action Alternative: Under the No-Action Alternative, the interim relocation of two F-16 squadrons and the increase in pilot production would not occur. The F-16s would remain at Hill AFB and be placed into temporary storage until a permanent location could be selected and prepared. Hill AFB would temporarily park the aircraft on the 388 FW apron between the sunshade shelters and the open ramp. The aircraft would require periodic contract maintenance; however, the aircraft would not be flown. In the event the F-16 aircraft would be parked for 6 months or longer, the aircraft may be moved to the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group (AMARG) at Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ, where preservation storage is accomplished until the aircraft are ready to return to service.

Summary of Environmental Impacts

Based on the nature of the activities that would occur under the Proposed Action and alternatives, it was determined that impacts may occur to air quality, noise, biological resources, cultural resources, and airspace. The results of the EA analysis of these environmental resource areas are summarized below. Note that only operational noise at JBSA-Lackland (Kelly Field) was found to have a potentially significant impact if the additional F-16 FTU mission at each installation would be conducted according to the existing F-16 FTU training syllabus.

Air Quality

Holloman AFB: Renovation activities would result in short-term air quality impacts, but standard construction practices would be used to reduce emissions of dust and particulate matter. Emissions from aircraft operations would not exceed the 250 tons per year (tpy) threshold of significance for any pollutant. Increased emissions from F-16 training activities would not hinder maintenance of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS).

JBSA-Lackland (Kelly Field): Renovation activities would result in short-term air quality impacts, but standard construction practices would be used to reduce emissions of dust and particulate matter. Emissions from aircraft operations would not exceed the 250 tpy threshold of significance for any pollutant. Increased emissions from F-16 training activities would not hinder maintenance of the NAAQS.

Noise

Holloman AFB: Proposed F-16 operations (both squadrons operating according to the current F-16 FTU syllabus), would increase the area affected by noise levels greater than 65 decibels (dB) day-night average sound level (DNL) by 1,666 acres. No off-base residential areas would be exposed to DNL 65 dBA or greater; however, 976 on-base residents would be exposed to DNL 65 dBA or greater. Noise exposure for on-base noise sensitive receptors would increase by up to 3 dBA DNL, which is less than significant.

The number of sonic boom events along the low level supersonic test flight corridor were projected to double as compared to the existing (2017) condition. The potential noise impacts to people or building structural damage from sonic booms would remain low because the closest sensitive receptor/structure, the White Sands National Monument visitor center, is 8 miles away from the corridor and is not located in the zone affected by the boom effect. Therefore, sonic boom impacts would not be significant.

JBSA-Lackland (Kelly Field): Proposed F-16 operations (both squadrons operating according to the current F-16 FTU syllabus), would increase the area affected by noise levels greater than 65 dB DNL by 2,143 acres. An estimated 41 additional on-base and 7,645 additional off-base residents would be exposed to noise levels greater than 65 dBA DNL. Noise at sensitive receptor locations would increase by up to 5 dBA DNL, which would be considered a potentially significant increase.

To reduce noise impacts to a level below significance, mitigation was evaluated that would limit flight operations to produce noise increases no greater than 3 dBA DNL above current conditions. A 3 dBA DNL increase is considered to be barely perceptible. Such limited F-16 FTU operations at JBSA-Lackland (Kelly Field) would require operating only one F-16 squadron according to the F-16 FTU syllabus. The resultant increase in the area affected by noise levels greater than 65 dBA DNL would be 1,147 acres; the increase in population affected would be approximately 17 on-base and 3,861 off-base residents. However, the increase at noise sensitive receptor locations would not exceed 3 dBA DNL. This increase would be considered less than significant and would last for the duration of the F-16 FTU interim beddown.

Biological Resources

Holloman AFB: Wildlife species on and near Holloman AFB have been exposed to military aircraft noise for several decades; therefore, continuation of military aircraft noise would not be anticipated to result in significant impacts to wildlife or habitat. The project area does not support any federally listed species. The Air Force has completed informal consultation procedures, as advised under Section 7 of the federal Endangered Species Act, to address potential impacts to federally protected species that may occur at

the project site. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), in response to the Air Force Section 7 consultation, concurred with the determination that the proposed activity may affect but is not likely to adversely affect listed species.

Species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act have the potential to occur at Holloman AFB. Because only interior renovations and work on existing ramps would occur, impacts to these species are not anticipated. Conservation measures in accordance with the INRMP focusing on avoidance and minimization of adverse impacts to breeding, wintering, and migratory birds would be implemented during project activities.

JBSA-Lackland (Kelly Field): Analysis findings are identical to those for Holloman AFB.

Cultural Resources

Holloman AFB: Renovation activities would not affect any structures that are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Because no ground disturbance would occur, no archaeological impacts are anticipated. Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) was concluded with SHPO's concurrence on the determination of no significant impacts to cultural resources. Coordination with tribal governments as part of the environmental process indicated there were no concerns regarding traditional cultural resources, sacred areas, or traditional use areas.

Although there would be approximately double the number of supersonic operations, there would be no changes to the location and operation of areas where supersonic flights occur. Therefore, no significant impacts to adobe structures or hearth mounds are anticipated.

JBSA-Lackland (Kelly Field): Building renovations would be conducted in accordance with the existing Programmatic Agreement (PA). Consultation with the SHPO was concluded with SHPO's concurrence on the determination of the Area of Potential Effect and no significant impacts to archaeological resources. Additional consultation with the SHPO would occur if any exterior modifications were to be required; however, none are anticipated at this time. No substantial ground disturbance would occur; therefore, no archaeological impacts are anticipated. Coordination with tribal governments as part of the environmental process indicated there were no concerns regarding traditional cultural resources, sacred areas, or traditional use areas.

Airspace

Holloman AFB: The regional airspace restrictions already in place near Holloman AFB would continue. The Holloman AFB airfield would experience an approximate doubling of air operations; however, the air traffic's management system is robust and could accommodate the increase in air operations. More frequent use of currently utilized airspace would be expected, including more operations using the same volume of airspace and same time periods currently used. No significant impacts are anticipated, and airspace operational capacity is anticipated to increase through ongoing optimization efforts.

JBSA-Lackland (Kelly Field): The regional airspace restrictions already in place near JBSA-Lackland (Kelly Field) would continue. The JBSA-Lackland (Kelly Field) airfield would experience an approximate tripling of air operations if both F-16 squadrons trained in accordance with the syllabus; under the mitigated scenario, air operations would double. The air traffic's management system is robust and could accommodate either increase in air operations. More frequent use of currently utilized airspace would be expected, including more operations using the same volume of airspace and same time periods currently used. No significant impacts are anticipated, and airspace operational capacity is anticipated to increase through ongoing optimization efforts.

Cumulative Impacts

The EA considered cumulative impacts that could result from the incremental impact of proposed construction activities when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions. No potentially significant cumulative impacts were identified for Holloman AFB or JBSA-Lackland (Kelly Field).

Mitigations

The EA analysis concluded that the Proposed Action and Alternatives would not result in significant environmental impacts if the additional F-16 FTU mission relocated to Holloman AFB and training occurred in accordance with the established syllabus. Therefore, no mitigations for Holloman AFB are required; however, standard construction practices (also known as Best Management Practices [BMPs]) were recommended where applicable.

The EA analysis concluded that the Proposed Action and Alternatives may result in significant noise impacts if the additional F-16 FTU mission relocated to JBSA-Lackland (Kelly Field) and training occurred in accordance with the established syllabus. Therefore, mitigation to reduce increased noise to less than significant levels was evaluated. Limiting the number of additional F-16 operations to 40,436 instead of 60,654 would reduce noise increases to no more than 3 dBA DNL, which is considered less than significant. No other potentially significant impacts were identified for JBSA-Lackland (Kelly Field), so no other mitigations are required. BMPs were recommended as described above.

Conclusion

Finding of No Significant Impact. After review of the EA prepared in accordance with the requirements of NEPA; CEQ regulations; and 32 CFR Part 989, *Environmental Impact Analysis Process*, and which is hereby incorporated by reference, I have determined that the proposed activities to temporarily relocate two F-16 FTU squadrons to either Holloman AFB or JBSA-Lackland (Kelly Field) under a mitigated operational scenario would not have a significant impact on the quality of the human or natural environment. Accordingly, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. This decision has been made after taking into account all submitted information, including a review of public and agency comments submitted during the 30-day public comment period, and considering a full range of practical alternatives that meet project requirements and are within the legal authority of the U.S. Air Force. The signing of this FONSI completes the environmental impact analysis process.

CYNTHIA OLIVA, GS-15
Chief Resource Integration Division

DATE

Attachment:
Environmental Assessment for the Interim Relocation of Two F-16 Squadrons