

## US Air Force Plans Low Altitude Supersonic Flights and Air Combat Training over the Apache Sitgreaves & Gila National Forest

The United States Air Force is proposing to modify ten existing Military Operations Areas (MOAs) that stretch across southern Arizona into southwest New Mexico as part of a plan to expand their Special Use Airspace across the southwest. The proposal will dramatically lower flight levels and increase training time. MOAs serve Luke and Davis-Monthan Air Force Bases and Morris Air National Guard Base. Two of these existing MOAs are over the Gila and Apache National Forests

### The Scoping Comment Deadline for the Air Force plan is March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022

#### Proposed changes to military training in the Morenci and Reserve MOAs above the Apache Sitgreaves National Forest & the Gila National Forest

- Lower the supersonic jet flight altitude from the current 30,000' to as low as 5,000' above ground level (AGL).
- Maintain the minimum altitude for low-level jet flight maneuvers as low as 1,500' AGL in the Morenci MOA and as low as 5,000' AGL in the Reserve MOA.
- Maintain the release of chaff and flares as low as 2,000' AGL in the Morenci MOA and as low as 5,000' in the Reserve MOA.
- Increase the hours of authorized use from the current times of 6am through 9pm (M-F), to the expanded hours of 6am to 10pm (M-F) in Morenci MOA.
- Convert the Reserve MOA from an advance notification to train area to open authorized use for training from 6am-10pm (M-F).



## Significant Issues with Air Force Plan

- Limited public meeting opportunities. No planned meeting in Silver City, Cliff, Lordsburg, Hachita Gila, Springerville, or other affected areas within the MOAs.
- Proposed changes cover the majority of the Apache Sitgreaves Forest, and a significant portion of the Gila National Forest. Notable areas include the Blue Wilderness, almost half of the Gila Wilderness, the Catwalk National Scenic Trail in Glenwood, portions of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, multiple river sections included in the proposed Wild and Scenic designation for the Gila River and the Hells Hole Lower San Francisco River Canyon Study Area.
- Fighter jet training as low as 1,500 feet AGL in the Morenci MOA, and supersonic flights as low as 5,000 feet AGL in both Morenci and Reserve MOAs will cause extreme noise and sonic booms above dozens of rural communities and sensitive natural resources
- Extreme noise from this training will impact wildlife and domestic animals, and degrade the quality of life that are the foundation of tourism, outdoor recreation and ranching economies in the region.
- The pressure wave generated by supersonic flights at 5,000 – 10,000 feet AGL can break glass, crack plaster, and collapse free standing walls.
- The release of chaff aluminum-coated silica fibers used on heavily used recreation areas within the A/S and Gila National Forests pollutes the environment and endangers the health of visitors.
- The dropping of flares as low as 2,000 feet above increases the risk of wildfire in areas already vulnerable to catastrophic wildfire and with limited resources for firefighting.
- The times of use for airspace would be extended into the evening hours disturbing families and communities throughout the region.
- The proposal creates a 5,000' AGL supersonic pathway for AZ Air Force bases from Globe AZ to Reserve, NM, across multiple tribal lands, dozens of communities, and into America's first Wilderness.

**The Scoping Comment Deadline for the Air Force proposal is March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

### Links

To **submit comments** to the Air Force during scoping: [EIS Comments](#)

[www.arizonaregionalairspaceeis.com/comments/](http://www.arizonaregionalairspaceeis.com/comments/)

For **more detail** on the Air Force plans for all 10 MOAs: [EIS Overview of Proposed Actions](#)

[www.arizonaregionalairspaceeis.com/overview-of-proposed-action/](http://www.arizonaregionalairspaceeis.com/overview-of-proposed-action/)

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