

US Air Force Plans Low Altitude Supersonic Flights and Air Combat Training over SE Arizona and SW New Mexico

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.

The Scoping Comment Deadline for the Air Force plan is March 4th, 2022

Proposed changes to military training in the Tombstone MOA above Southwest New Mexico and Southeast Arizona

- **Increase the overall size of the MOA from 3,968 sq. mi to 4,766 sq. mi.**
- **Lower the supersonic jet flight altitude from the current 30,000' to as low as 5,000' above ground level (AGL).**
- Combine Tombstone A, B, and C MOAs into one large area and **lower the minimum altitude for low-elevation jet flight maneuvers as low as 100 AGL.**
- Lower the release of chaff and flares from 5,000' AGL to as low as 2,000' AGL across the entire MOA.
- Maintain the hours of authorized use from 6am to 10pm (M-F).



Federal Public Lands

- Area of Critical Environmental Concern
- Conservation Area
- National Forest
- National Monument
- National Park

- National Wildlife Refuge
- BLM Public Lands
- Research Natural Area
- Wilderness Area
- Wilderness Study Area



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Significant Issues with Air Force Plan

- Limited public meeting opportunities. No planned meeting in Portal, Bisbee, Douglas, or any newly affected communities in Southeastern Arizona
- The proposed to increase the size of the Tombstone MOA by nearly one third, including the town of Portal and the world-renowned birding area of Cave Creek within a low-altitude training area.
- In Arizona, the proposed changes cover significant portions of the Coronado National Forest including multiple Wilderness Study Areas, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, national wildlife refuges, the entire Chiricahua Wilderness Area, and portions of the Chiricahua National Monument.
- In New Mexico, the proposed changes encompass additional sections of the Coronado NF across the Peloncillo Mountains. The land under the airspace also includes 12 distinct Wilderness Study Areas & Areas of Critical Environmental Concern as well as a National Audubon Bird Conservation Area, home to multiple endangered bird species. In addition, sixty-seven miles of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail lie within New Mexico portion of the Tombstone MOA.
- The proposal creates a 100' AGL, low-altitude airspace training ground across two states, dozens of sensitive resource areas, and multiple communities that depend on tourism as the basis of their economy.
- Supersonic flights as low as 5,000 feet AGL will cause extreme noise and sonic booms. This extreme noise will impact wildlife and domestic animals and degrade the quality of life that are the foundation of tourist economy, 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 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 have limited resources for firefighting.

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Links

To **submit comments** to the Air Force during scoping: [EIS Comments](https://www.arizonaregionalairspaceeis.com/comments/)

www.arizonaregionalairspaceeis.com/comments/

For **more detail** on the Air Force plans for all 10 MOAs: [EIS Overview of Proposed Actions](https://www.arizonaregionalairspaceeis.com/overview-of-proposed-action/)

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