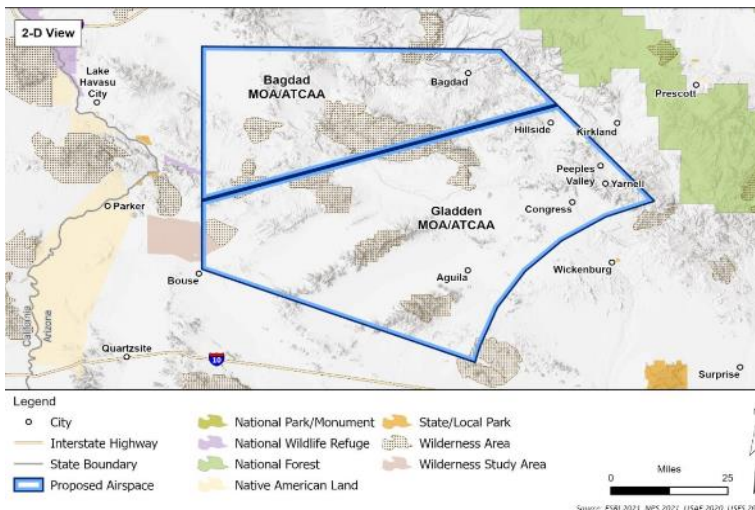


US Air Force Plans Increases in Low Altitude & Supersonic Air Combat Training over Central Arizona

The United States Air Force has released its proposal to modify ten existing Military Operations Areas (MOAs) that stretch across southern and central Arizona into southwest New Mexico as part of a plan to expand their Special Use Airspace across the southwest. The MOAs serve Luke and Davis-Monthan Air Force Bases in Tucson and Morris Air National Guard Base in Phoenix. Two of these existing MOAs, Bagdad and Gladden, are northwest of Phoenix. Within these MOAs, the plan will dramatically lower the flight floor for low altitude combat training, significantly increase the number of combat training sorties including supersonic flights, lower the altitude at which flares can be dropped, and expand training hours.

**OCTOBER 9TH DEADLINE TO SUBMIT COMMENTS on
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**
www.arizonaregionalairspaceeis.com/comments/



***Tell the Air Force that expanding military combat training over rural communities and tribal and public lands is not acceptable.**

***The Air Force should restrict its lower elevation and supersonic flights, and other combat training, such as dropping chaff and flares, to the Barry M Goldwater Range where it's already happening.**

***The Air Force must not shift the burden of risk to rural and tribal communities in southern AZ and southwest NM.**

Proposed changes to Military Training & Comments on the Significant Issues affecting Bagdad and Gladden MOAs

Proposed: The number of combat training missions permitted in the two MOAs is increased up to 32% for a total of 9,120 sorties, including 66% which could include supersonic flight at 10,000' MSL (mean sea level).

Comment: Increasing military training activity above these communities will negatively impact wildlife, domestic animals, real estate values and create conflicts with existing land use such as traditional ranching and farming, degrading the quality of life. These social, cultural and economic impacts have not been properly measured or analyzed by the existing DEIS, thereby minimizing the risks and negative consequences.

Comment: The DEIS analysis of supersonic flight is flawed when it concludes there will be no increase in negative impacts, despite increasing evidence nationwide of broken windshields, cracked foundations and dozens of recorded examples of damaged houses. The Air Force should limit supersonic flights over populated areas, utilizing the existing training grounds at the Barry M Goldwater range for these trainings needs.

Proposed: The existing flight floor of both MOAs will be **reduced from 7,000' above ground level (AGL) to 500' AGL** across the entire airspace allowing for thousands of low altitude combat sorties over the area.

Comment: *The impact of lowering the altitude of combat training will be felt by everyone living below this airspace including thousands of school children, families, and veterans who may suffer from PTSD. During these low altitude training maneuvers, the risk of crashes and catastrophic accidents increases.*

Proposed: The number of bundles of chaff, aluminum coated silica fibers, used in evasive maneuvers- will be increased up to 32% to 19,050. The average annual use of flare cartridges is also increased up to 32% resulting in over 20,600 dropped flares annually, targeted over millions of acres of highly flammable forest lands. Additionally, the plan lowers the altitude at which flares can be dropped from 5,000' to 2,000'.

Comment: *An increase in the dispersal of aluminum chaff fibers is irresponsible. The DEIS completely ignores any possibility of pollution or contamination of waters. The lowering of the altitude flares can be dropped, along with the substantial rise in the number of flares, increases the risk of wildfire in areas already vulnerable to wildfire and with limited resources for firefighting. The DEIS fails to acknowledge any increased risk of fire and uses 30-year-old data to analyze the likelihood of fires from flares or crashes and places the burden for the initial emergency response on local resources.*

Proposed: The proposed published time of use of both MOAs expands from 6am-6pm, to 6am-midnight, five days a week.

Comment: *The towns and cities below the MOAs are already subjected to thousands of training hours annually. Expanding operating hours is an undue intrusion on communities.*

Additional Comments

The DEIS fails to offer a compelling reason why expanding low altitude combat training and lowering supersonic flight levels is warranted. Using the Barry M Goldwater Range (BMGR) is a safer choice given they are better prepared for accidents and emergencies than rural and tribal communities.

The DEIS analysis of noise is based on outdated research and needs to consider additional and more recent studies.

The DEIS minimizes the effect on regional airspace needs within the developing civil aviation community.

The Air Force has not responded to requests for information on the need for the optimization and has been unresponsive to existing noise and disturbance complaints from communities below their airspace.

Make your voices heard - submit public comments today
www.arizonaregionalairspaceeis.com/comments/

Get more details about the full Air Force proposal at: www.peacefulgilaskies.com
Contact Laiken Jordahl ljordahl@biologicaldiversity.org