

1 **4.2 AIRSPACE**

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3 The potential impacts to airspace use resulting from the alternatives are discussed below. Cumulative
4 impacts and mitigation measures, if appropriate, are also presented in this section.
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6 **4.2.1 Alternative 1**

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8 The McGregor Range mission activities under Alternative 1 would not affect airspace use or airport
9 activities in the ROI. Under this alternative, current military use of the airspace would remain essentially
10 unchanged except for initiatives now being evaluated that may expand the level of operations in the
11 McGregor Range training areas. These include (see Section 2.1.1) the development of a helicopter
12 training complex, the launching of 4 to 6 ATACMS per year into McGregor Range, and the proposed
13 development of a new USAF air-to-ground tactical target complex to be located on Otero Mesa. USAF
14 air-to-ground sorties on McGregor Range in R-5103 (B or "low") was 1,151 sorties in FY 95 and
15 projected to decline to 833 in FY 00 without the USAF tactical target complex. When the tactical target
16 complex is constructed, USAF sorties are projected to increase by 100 to 933 in FY 00 (USAF, 1998).
17 Although these initiatives may cause a shift and an increase of activity within McGregor Range, they do
18 not contain the potential to change airspace operating requirements. There are no impacts to air
19 operations.
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21 **4.2.2 Alternative 2**

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23 McGregor Range activity under Alternative 2 would have no impact upon airport operations or airspace
24 use and management. This alternative provides for the return of the Sacramento Mountains foothills
25 portion of McGregor Range to the public domain, which would change the northeastern ground boundary
26 of the McGregor Range withdrawal. This alternative does not propose any change to the configuration of
27 McGregor Range Restricted Area airspace. Except for changes to existing missile firing scenarios and
28 dismantled training activities that now use the Sacramento Mountains foothills, McGregor Range would
29 support the existing and proposed mission activities described in Alternative 1.
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31 **4.2.3 Alternative 3**

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33 Alternative 3 would not affect airspace use or airport activities in the ROI. Under this alternative there
34 are no proposed changes to the configuration of McGregor Range Restricted Area airspace. With respect
35 to airspace use, helicopter aerial gunnery at Cane Cholla and fixed-wing air-to-ground operations at the
36 existing Class C Bombing Range would continue. Missile activities would be re-oriented and reduced as
37 necessary, relative to the reduced property boundaries. The return of Otero Mesa and other areas of the
38 existing McGregor Range to the public domain would preclude development of the USAF tactical target
39 complex on Otero Mesa, reducing the level of activity within the Restricted Area. Military operations that
40 are constrained by reduced land areas within McGregor Range would still be contained within the existing
41 Restricted Area airspace.
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43 **4.2.4 Alternative 4**

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45 Alternative 4 would not have an effect upon airport operations or airspace management within the ROI.
46 Under this alternative, all portions of McGregor Range north of New Mexico Highway 506 and the Otero
47 Mesa would be returned to the public domain. Relative to airspace use, the constraints to missile and
48 aircraft activity described in Alternative 3 would apply to Alternative 4. Additionally, further constraints to
49 other live-fire missile activities would be required. The Class C Bombing Range used for air-to-ground
50 gunnery and bombing training would lie outside of McGregor Range boundaries and that activity

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1 would have to be discontinued. As in all previous alternatives, there would be no change to the
2 configuration of the existing McGregor Range Restricted Area airspace.

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4 **4.2.5 Alternative 5 – No Action**

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6 Alternative 5, the No Action Alternative, provides that the Restricted Airspace above McGregor Range
7 could continue to be used for some military aircraft training. If the Restricted Area is maintained in its
8 current configuration the No Action Alternative would not affect airspace use or airport activities in the
9 ROI.

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11 It is possible that with discontinuance of all air-to-ground, and ground-to-air activities, the Restricted Area
12 airspace, in consultation between the DoD and the FAA, could be reconfigured to change the vertical
13 boundaries, lateral boundaries, and/or operating procedures. It is also possible that the Restricted Area
14 could be changed to a Military Operations Area (MOA). MOAs are established to separate
15 nonhazardous military flight training from other air traffic flying under IFR and to identify for pilots flying
16 under VFR where such military flight training is being conducted. VFR aircraft are not restricted from
17 flying through a MOA. However, all civil and military pilots flying VFR in a MOA are required by federal
18 regulation to maintain visual separation from each other. Any of these airspace actions would follow
19 congressional action on the McGregor Range LEIS and would be evaluated under a separate NEPA
20 process.

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22 **4.2.6 Alternative 6**

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24 Under Alternative 6, the designation of the wilderness area or NCA would not likely affect airspace
25 management. However, this alternative requires congressional action for implementation. Because the
26 precise nature and extent of the congressional action cannot be determined at this time, detailed airspace
27 analysis of this alternative is deferred until the proposal is specified for this type of nonmilitary withdrawal
28 by the DOI.

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30 **4.2.7 Cumulative Impacts**

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32 Projected military activities that have the potential to contribute to cumulative airspace use impacts in the
33 McGregor Range airspace ROI are activities at HAFB and WSMR. The cumulative impact of the
34 proposed HAFB action is a positive impact created by a reduction in flight operations in McGregor Range
35 restricted airspace. Activities at HAFB that could impact cumulative airspace use in the ROI are the
36 completion of the Taiwanese Air Force Training program and the associated deactivation of the 435th
37 Fighter Squadron. The reduction in sorties in R-5103B as a result of these actions to 833 sorties is a
38 decrease of 318 sorties from FY 95 levels. This is partially offset by the 100 sorties projected for the
39 USAF tactical target complex. The net cumulative effect is a decline of 218 sorties from FY 95.

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41 Based upon the information contained in the WSMR EIS, proposed WSMR activities should have no
42 significant cumulative airspace impacts relative to McGregor Range. With respect to potential airspace
43 related cumulative impacts of WSMR activities, the WSMR/EIS (U.S. Army, 1996p) identifies ongoing
44 and projected test programs and other missions anticipated at WSMR. The WSMR EIS provides that,
45 relative to the projects and new programs proposed over the next 10 years at WSMR, changes in the
46 scope of operations resulting from each component cannot be predicted or are not defined and will require
47 separate environmental documentation. However, the broad analysis of potential cumulative impacts
48 conducted in the WSMR EIS did not include airspace as one of the four areas identified as areas of
49 specific cumulative impacts.

1 **4.2.8 Mitigation**

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3 Because no significant impacts to airspace management would occur as a result of any McGregor Range
4 alternative or cumulative airspace actions, no mitigative measures are necessary.

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6 **4.2.9 Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources**

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8 No irreversible and irretrievable commitment of airspace resources would occur.