

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
BETWEEN  
THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
AND THE  
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE AIR COMBAT COMMAND

It is the desire of the Bureau of Land Management and the United States Air Force Air Combat Command that this Memorandum serve as the basis for and beginning of a cooperative and coordinated effort to maintain and enhance the environment and resources in which they share a joint interest. In particular, this Memorandum focuses on the activities related to the Air Force's Proposed Expansion of German Air Force Operations at Holloman AFB, New Mexico on the United States Army's McGregor Range, New Mexico. This memorandum documents the commitment of both agencies to a continued and productive relationship with respect to activities on the range. Its purpose is to describe and provide greater focus and detail to those commitments generally described in the Environmental Impact Statement and subsequently discussed by agency representatives.

Both parties understand and agree that the terms of this agreement are contingent on a number of events. First, a Record of Decision in the Air Force Proposed Expansion of German Air Force Operations at Holloman AFB, New Mexico which selects the West Otero Training Option for implementation. Second, to the degree that any of the terms included herein are inconsistent with current ARMY/BLM MOU, US Fish and Wildlife Service Biological Opinions or any other current Agency to Agency or Government to Government agreements the terms of the current agreement shall prevail and be considered incorporated by reference into this agreement. Further it is understood that any agreement contained herein applies only to the United States Air Force and its proposed operations under the referenced EIS and that the Air Force is without authority to bind or speak for the United States Army or in any way limit Army operations on McGregor Range.

Additionally, both parties agree that in the event any of the terms of this agreement lead to or would result in, a violation of federal law those terms would be void and not binding on either agency.

1. Public Access: The Air Force and BLM are resolved to protect public access for multiple use activities. Air Combat Command agrees to the following:

a. Provide routine public access on weekends from 1:00 p.m. Friday through Sunday 9:00 p.m.

b. Provide access 24 hours before and after New Mexico Fish and Game scheduled big game hunts.

c. Provide BLM with a tentative 30-day schedule of operations and final two-week schedule to facilitate scheduling of BLM administrative access. (This might be included as part of the Fort Bliss Master Range Schedule.)

d. Discuss with the U.S. Army at Fort Bliss and the BLM the possibility of coordinating a 1-800 number and/or a joint website that will post hours of public access and other range notes of public interest.

e. Comply with existing access permitting procedures in accordance with the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the U.S. Army at Fort Bliss and the BLM.

f. Once the impact area design is completed, the exact target location determined, and the accompanying weapons safety footprints, discuss the possibility of using existing roads for the safety buffer boundary, particularly along the eastern side.

2. Grazing Program Management: The Air Force and BLM will work together to ensure continuation of an effective grazing program. Air Combat Command agrees to the following:

a. Move the existing pipelines and stock tanks to outside of the impact area.

b. Relocate existing range improvements (fences, traps, etc.) from inside to outside the safety buffer where necessary.

c. Coordinate range closing for cleanup/cattle work. Restrict operations as necessary to meet BLM maintenance requirements.

d. Provide support in the form of forty man-hours per week to perform routine range management tasks.

e. Reimburse, replace, repair BLM range improvements damaged as a result of USAF activities on the range.

f. Agree to discuss the possibility of additional technology devices which may be added if needed, including such items as trough water-heaters, monitor cameras, pressure sensors, etc.

3. Wildlife: The BLM and the Air Force desire to continue to facilitate an effective wildlife management program. Air Combat Command agrees to:

a. Ensure water availability by moving existing infrastructure outside impact area.

b. Discuss expanding the charter of the multi-agency threatened and endangered species working group to include working cooperatively with other federal and state agencies with surveys and studies on big game and other natural resource issues.

c. Work cooperatively with other federal and state agencies with surveys and studies on the habitat/recovery of the Aplomado falcon.

4. Cultural Resources: The BLM and the Air Force are concerned about National Historic and Cultural Preservation. Air Combat Command will:

a. Continue good faith government to government consultations with the Mescalero Apache in face to face meetings with the goal of ascertaining impacts of the proposed action to Traditional Cultural Properties and Resources (to include view studies etc.).

b. Make inventory reports and mitigation plans available to the BLM so their comments may be considered in the course of consultations with the State Historic Preservation Office.

c. Discuss necessity of mitigations, if any, of potential historic landscape, if and when it is designated as such by the SHPO.

5. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC): The Air Force and BLM desire to protect the resources within the ACECs. Air Combat Command will:

a. Allow for scheduled activities consistent with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with New Mexico State University (NMSU).

b. In accordance with the Fort Bliss Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan monitor the impacts to the ACECs within the safety buffer.

6. Culp Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA): The Air Force and BLM are concerned about the natural aesthetic value of WSA. Air Combat Command will:

a. Design flight patterns to avoid overflights of the Culp Canyon WSA.

b. It is the Air Force intent to avoid low level (below 2000 feet AGL) overflight of Culp Canyon WSA. Exceptions would include events such as aircraft emergencies.

7. Fire: The Air Force and BLM are concerned with the impacts of fires caused by military flight operations. Air Combat Command will:

a. Cease military operations, on range, to allow for fire suppression.

b. Arrange for air-space use for fire suppression aircraft during a fire emergency.

c. Repair fire damage in accordance with the Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (to include re-vegetation of indigenous plants).

Signed this 26<sup>th</sup> Day of May 1998,

  
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