

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
FIGHTER AIRCRAFT USE OF BIGGS ARMY AIRFIELD  
FOR JOINT FORCES TRAINING  
FORT BLISS, TEXAS AND NEW MEXICO**

**1.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES**

**Proposed Action:** The U.S. Air Force 7<sup>th</sup> Air Support Operations Squadron (7 ASOS) and Fort Bliss prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) that analyzed the impacts of Air Force fighter aircraft operating out of Biggs AAF in support of specific joint training operations (JTOs) with Fort Bliss' 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division (1AD). JTOs with aircraft support presently occur at Fort Bliss; however, these aircraft are stationed at Holloman Air Force Base and other Air Force bases. A need exists for Air Force support forces to work more directly and in closer coordination with their supported Army units at Fort Bliss to conduct realistic training events. Approximately six JTOs will be conducted each year. Aircraft types to be hosted at Biggs AAF will include F-15, F-16, A-10, and F-18 fighter jets along with the required crew members; however, these personnel would not be permanently stationed on Fort Bliss. Some of these aircraft may use jet engine afterburners to increase thrust during take-offs as the situation requires. All aircraft will use only inert practice munitions during exercises. Under the Proposed Action there will be up to six exercise events per year, two weeks each, with five flying days per week, excluding weekends. All operations will occur between 8:00 AM and 12:00 midnight. Most of the take-offs and some of the landings will occur over Fort Bliss lands to the northeast of Biggs AAF primarily using Runway 03 for take-offs and Runway 21 for landings. This runway configuration (taking-off directly to the northeast and landing to the southwest) will reduce noise impacts and provide a safety measure for aircraft that have inert ordnance onboard. Inert training munitions to be used on established Fort Bliss impact areas include machine gun training projectile (TP) ammunition (30mm and smaller), defensive flares, chaff squibs, captive-carry training missiles, and inert concrete training bombs of 2,000 lbs or less. These munitions are already being used on the Fort Bliss ranges under previous NEPA analyses.

**Alternative Actions:** No other action alternative was evaluated since there were no reasonable alternatives that would satisfy the purpose and need of the Proposed Action.

**No Action:** Presently, the 7 ASOS supports joint training from Holloman AFB in New Mexico or from other home bases depending on the aircrews and type of aircraft used. The No Action Alternative would continue this support as is, but USAF and visiting allied nations' jet fighters supporting joint training with the 1AD would not be able to use Biggs AAF to refuel, rearm, and coordinate with local ground forces leaders and planners in face-to-face scenarios considered important to "train as you would fight." This would have a detrimental effect on military readiness and would also not satisfy the purpose and need of the Proposed Action.

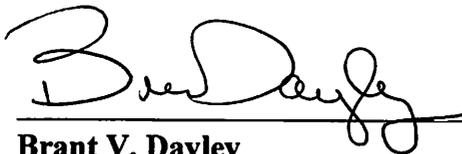
## 2.0 SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES AND IMPACTS

Implementation of the Proposed Action will essentially have no effects on human and environmental resources except for minimal impacts to airspace operations, ambient noise levels, safety, and air quality. The EA results indicate that impacts on air traffic and airspace will be insignificant and within the control capacity of both the Biggs AAF and the El Paso International Airport air traffic controllers. Noise modeling analysis indicates that ambient noise level contours would not increase substantially from background with incompatible use levels staying within the boundaries of Fort Bliss. Air quality analysis indicates the action would conform to the Clean Air Act general conformity rules. Safety concerns with loading ammunition, hung weapons or bombs, and wild-land fire hazard will be mitigated by standard and established control measures including diversion of aircraft to other bases, as required. The area affected by this action is within established airport zones of operation, so no land use changes will occur.

Cumulative effects from the proposed action are limited only to the intermittent and minor increases in noise when aircraft are taking off and landing as well as *de minimis* increases in mobile source emissions from the jet engines. Training and support operations for Army Transformation units including air operations were addressed in the *Fort Bliss, Texas and New Mexico Mission and Master Plan Final Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement* for which a Record of Decision (ROD) was signed 30 April 2007 and the *Fort Bliss Army Growth and Force Structure Realignment Final Environmental Impact Statement* for which a ROD was signed 8 June 2010. The Proposed Action would not materially change the analysis in these documents and the EA is tiered to those documents.

## 3.0 CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the Proposed Action and the operation, flight rules, and safety measures presented in the EA, I conclude that the impacts of the Proposed Action will not significantly affect the human or natural environment of Fort Bliss or the surrounding area. I further conclude that the Proposed Action Alternative will impose no direct or indirect effects that cannot be mitigated or that could contribute to cumulative effects requiring preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (Public Law 91-190). Therefore a Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) is warranted.



**Brant V. Dayley**  
Colonel, US Army  
Commanding

30 APRIL 2014

**Date**