FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

NAME OF PROPOSED ACTION. F-22A Beddown at Elmendorf Air Force Base (AFB), Alaska.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND NO ACTION ALTERNATIVES. The United States Air Force (Air Force) proposes to beddown two F-22A operational squadrons at Elmendorf AFB. The F-22A is a 21st century fighter designed to replace and supplement F-15C and F-15E aircraft which can be targeted by enemy air defenses at increasingly greater distances. The Proposed Action would beddown two operational squadrons (18 Primary Assigned Inventory [PAI] aircraft each) over a period of approximately 5 years and conduct flying sorties at the base and in existing Alaskan airspace. Personnel changes associated with the beddown of F-22A aircraft in combination with the Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC) reassignment of one F-15C squadron and the F-15E squadron would result in a net loss of 669 positions (36 officer and 759 enlisted positions at the base and an increase of 126 civilian positions). F-22A training flights would take place on existing Alaskan Military Operations Areas (MOAs), Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspace (ATCAAs), and ranges. During training, F-22As would employ defensive countermeasures such as chaff and flares in airspace authorized for their use and deploy munitions on approved ranges.

The Proposed Action could be accomplished through one of three construction options. Option A would construct facilities and infrastructure in an area designated as Fighter Town East (FTE) in the southeast portion of the base for a total cost of $402 million. Option B would construct some new facilities at FTE and modify some existing facilities across Runway 06/24 at an estimated cost of $323 million. Option C would locate wing facilities in FTE and modify existing facilities across Runway 06/24 and across Runway 16/34 at an estimated cost of $325 million. Under Option C, some F-22A aircraft would be parked in the runway clear zone (CZ).

The No Action Alternative would not locate an F-22A Operational Wing at Elmendorf AFB at this time. Based on the national mission of Elmendorf, No Action could affect the schedule for implementing BRAC 2005 actions.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES. The Environmental Assessment (EA) addresses the potential environmental consequences from implementing the Proposed Action through Option A, B, or C and includes the No Action Alternative. Through scoping and other agency and public inputs, the following resource areas were identified for assessment of potential direct or indirect environmental consequences: airspace management and air traffic control (including airport traffic), noise, safety, air quality, physical resources, biological resources, cultural resources, land use, socioeconomic, and environmental justice. Potential cumulative effects for each relevant resource are also presented.

The EA demonstrates that the proposed F-22A beddown would not result in significant environmental impacts to any environmental resource area. Potential environmental consequences may be summarized as follows. Under Option A, airspace management would not be impacted by the change in aircraft types. Portions of the Knik Arm, Port MacKenzie area, and the Port of Anchorage would experience noise levels of 65 dB or greater, but this change is not projected to significantly impact any human or natural resources, including Knik Arm beluga whales which occur in adjacent waters. The 65 dB noise contours would not extend off base over residential areas. Construction noise and air emissions would be localized and temporary. Option A constructs all facilities on a total of 50 acres of previously disturbed land at an estimated cost of $402 million. Construction would remove 30 acres of second growth forests but is not expected to impact wetlands or special-status species. Any hazardous materials associated with aircraft coatings will be handled in the new maintenance facility and controlled to protect air and water resources. Two structures scheduled for demolition and one for renovation would be evaluated for National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility. A fourth structure slated for renovation has been determined to be eligible for the NRHP. As defined in the Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan, State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) consultation would be performed on eligible and potentially eligible structures scheduled for demolition or exterior renovation. Short-term traffic congestion may occur during construction. A net reduction of 669 base positions (7.9 percent of base employment) is anticipated. A long-term reduction in off-base secondary employment by an estimated 223 positions would be somewhat offset
by a short-term gain of 1,904 temporary construction jobs. Disadvantaged populations and children would not be disproportionately affected by the proposed beddown.

Option B would have essentially the same effects as Option A, except $323 million construction would occur on a total of 40 acres of previously disturbed land with 20 acres of second growth forests. Two structures scheduled for demolition and two for renovation would be evaluated for potential NRHP eligibility. A fifth structure to be renovated has already been determined eligible for the NRHP. Option B is the Air Force’s preferred option and was noted as preferred by a commenter on the Draft EA. SHPO consultation would be performed as described for Option A. Construction would result in a gain of 1,526 temporary construction jobs. Option C would have essentially the same effects as Option A, except with $325 million construction in three separate locations on a total of 30 acres of previously disturbed land with 10 acres of second growth forest. In addition to the structures noted in Option B, Option C renovates two hangars in the Flightline Historic District. Any exterior renovation to these structures would require SHPO consultation. Construction would result in a gain of 1,536 temporary construction jobs.

Potential consequences associated with the proposed F-22A flight activities in existing Alaskan Special Use Airspace (SUA) may be summarized as follows. Under the Proposed Action, the F-22As will be replacing some existing F-15Cs and F-15Es. F-22As have advanced tracking computers and spend more time at higher altitudes than F-15Cs or F-15Es. This should minimally improve airspace management and safety within the airspace. F-22A increased supersonic capabilities result in 1 to 4 additional sonic booms per month in approved training airspaces except the Stony MOAs, where there would be an increase from the existing 15 to an estimated 28 sonic booms per month. Based on meetings with Alaska Natives in villages under the Stony MOAs during the Initial F-22 Operational Wing Beddown Environmental Impact Statement, and on comments received during scoping for this EA, this number of sonic booms is not expected to affect special status species, game species, or Alaska Native subsistence hunting or fishing. Alaska Natives or others who reside or spend extensive time under the airspace could have increased disturbance. Air quality, land use, recreation, and cultural resources should not be affected by the change in aircraft type. F-22A chaff and flare use and munitions training on approved ranges would not be substantially different from existing conditions.

Based on the findings of the EA Option B conducted in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, the Council on Environmental Quality regulations, and implementing regulations set forth in 32 CFR 989 (Environmental Impact Analysis Process), as amended, implementation of the Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human or natural environment. As such, a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) is made and preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not warranted. The FONSI incorporates by reference the April 06 EA, as amended by responses to public comments received during the 30-day public comment period and added as Table 2.4-3. For ease of reading, the responses to public comments, the April 06 EA and Table 2.4-3 will be integrated into a single EA, dated June 2006, which will be on file at:

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Date
25 May 2006