

492nd Special Operations Wing Beddown

 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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492nd SPECIAL OPERATIONS WING BEDDOWN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared for:
Air Force Special Operations Command

October 2024

Privacy Advisory

This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has been provided for public comment in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations Parts 1500–1508) and with 32 Code of Federal Regulations Part 989, *Environmental Impact Analysis Process (EIAP)*.

The EIAP provides an opportunity for public input on United States Department of the Air Force (DAF) decision-making, allows the public to offer input on alternative ways for the DAF to accomplish what it is proposing, and solicits comments on the DAF’s analysis of environmental effects.

Public input allows the DAF to make better-informed decisions. Letters or other written or verbal comments provided may be published in this EIS. Providing personal information is voluntary. Private addresses will be compiled to develop a stakeholders inventory. However, only the names of the individuals making comments and specific comments will be disclosed. Personal information, home addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses will not be published in this EIS.

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

The digital version of this EIS and its project website are compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, because assistive technology (e.g., “screen readers”) can be used to help the disabled to understand these electronic media. Due to the nature of graphics, figures, tables, and images occurring in the document, accessibility may be limited to a descriptive title for each item.

Cover Sheet

- a. **Responsible Lead Agency:** Department of the Air Force (DAF)
- b. **Cooperating Agencies:** None
- c. **Title:** 492nd Special Operations Wing Beddown at Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona Environmental Impact Statement
- d. **Inquiries:** Information regarding the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is available on the website at www.492sow-beddown-eis.com. Questions can also be directed to 492 SOW Beddown EIS, 13397 Lakefront Drive, Suite 100, Earth City, MO 63045. For other inquiries, please contact Mr. Nick Post, NEPA Project Manager via email at afcec.czn.nepacenter@us.af.mil or by phone at 210-925-3516. The Draft EIS 45-day comment period begins with publication of the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. It is recommended that all comments be submitted during this 45-day comment period to allow sufficient time for full consideration during development of the Final EIS.
- e. **Designation:** Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
- f. **Abstract:** This Draft EIS has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act to analyze the potential environmental consequences of the 492nd Special Operations Wing (492 SOW) Beddown. The 492 SOW, located at Hurlburt Field, Florida, is being transformed into an Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) Power Projection Wing (PPW) that is proposed to be relocated to Davis-Monthan Air Force Base (AFB), Arizona. This EIS analyzes the environmental consequences of the beddown of the 492 SOW to Davis-Monthan AFB. AFSOC's PPW would include the 492 SOW, 492nd Theater Air Operations Squadron, 6th Special Operations Squadron, 6th Special Operations Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, an unnamed MC-130J Special Operations Squadron, an unnamed MC-130J Special Operations Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, 319th Special Operations Squadron, 21st Special Tactics Squadron, and the 22nd Special Tactics Squadron. Air Combat Command (ACC) will have a geographically separated Intelligence Squadron (IS) under the 361st Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Group. Throughout this document, these units are included in the phrase "492 SOW Beddown." The 492 SOW Beddown includes both OA-1K and MC-130J aircraft and would occur over the next 6 years. The Proposed Action would include the construction, renovation and demolition of facilities at Davis-Monthan AFB, as necessary to support the 492 SOW Beddown. AFSOC aircrews would use airspace over areas in Arizona and New Mexico, including special use airspace. No new special use airspace would be created and no modifications to existing special use airspace are being proposed due to this Programmatic Basing Action. Under the No Action Alternative, the 492 SOW Beddown would not occur at Davis-Monthan AFB and there would be no new AFSOC mission personnel or ACC IS personnel at Davis-Monthan AFB. Potential impacts could include impacts to noise, air quality, soil and water resources, biological and cultural resources, socioeconomics, infrastructure, and hazardous materials and hazardous waste. The EIS also identifies potential mitigation measures and best management practices that the DAF could implement to minimize or offset potential adverse impacts.
- g. **Comment Dates:** Although the DAF will accept comments at any time during the EIS process, in order for comments to be fully considered, comments should be postmarked or received by the DAF by December 9, 2024.
- h. **EIS Identification Number:** EISX-007-57-UAF-1728379504.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

492 SOW	492nd Special Operations Wing
ACC	Air Combat Command
AFSOC	Air Force Special Operations Command
DAF	Department of the Air Force
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
IS	Intelligence Squadron
NDS	National Defense Strategy
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
PPW	Power Projection Wing

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ES.1. INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to analyze the potential environmental consequences of the beddown of the 492nd Special Operations Wing (492 SOW). The 492 SOW, located at Hurlburt Field, Florida, is being transformed into an Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) Power Projection Wing (PPW) that is proposed to be relocated to Davis-Monthan Air Force Base (AFB), Arizona. This EIS will analyze the environmental consequences of the beddown of the 492 SOW to Davis-Monthan AFB.

AFSOC's PPW will include the 492 SOW, 492nd Theater Air Operations Squadron, 6th Special Operations Squadron, 6th Special Operations Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, an unnamed MC-130J Special Operations Squadron, an unnamed MC-130J Special Operations Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, 319th Special Operations Squadron, 21st Special Tactics Squadron, and the 22nd Special Tactics Squadron. Air Combat Command (ACC) will establish a geographically separated Intelligence Squadron (IS) at Davis-Monthan AFB under the 361st Intelligence and Surveillance Reconnaissance Group. Throughout this document, all these units are included in the phrase "492 SOW Beddown." The 492 SOW Beddown includes both OA-1K and MC-130J aircraft. The 492 SOW Beddown is proposed to occur over the next 6 years.

ES.2. PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION (EIS CHAPTER 1.0)

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to create co-located AFSOC and ACC units that have the resources required to optimize the DAF's special operations and special warfare forces while maximizing AFSOC's capabilities as a PPW that provides United States Special Operations Command and combatant commands specialized airpower against the entire range of threats to the United States and our allies and partners.

The need for the Proposed Action is to transform AFSOC to properly prepare, prevent, and prevail against any adversary in today's uncertain environment. The Proposed Action is also needed to meet the National Defense Strategy (NDS) through the establishment of a continental United States AFSOC PPW.

ES.3. INTERIM CONDITIONS

In addition to the proposed alternatives, for this EIS, it is important to understand other actions occurring at Davis-Monthan AFB during the same timeframe. Also occurring at the same time as the 492 SOW Beddown is the nationwide retirement of the A-10s. The retirement of A-10s is planned to occur in two phases at Davis-Monthan AFB. Phase 1 includes the retirement of all A-10 aircraft associated with the 354th Fighter Squadron and a portion of the A-10s associated with the 357th Fighter Squadron from Davis-Monthan AFB. Phase 2 includes the retirement of the remaining A-10s from Davis-Monthan AFB (DAF, 2024a). Therefore, the interim conditions for this EIS are defined as the timeframe between the Phase 1 and planned Phase 2 A-10 retirements, which reflects the continued operations of the remaining A-10s not included in the Phase 1 retirement, along with the other ongoing rotary- and fixed-wing aircraft missions.

ES.4. OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED ALTERNATIVES

ES.4.1. No Action Alternative (EIS Section 2.1)

The No Action Alternative for this EIS means that AFSOC's 492 SOW Beddown would not occur at Davis-Monthan AFB. Additionally, ACC's IS personnel would not come to Davis-Monthan AFB. However, the planned Phase 2 of the A-10 retirement would be implemented, to include associated personnel, airfield operations, and airspace and range utilization. Ongoing and currently planned activities, missions, and programs, including associated aircraft operations previously analyzed in separate NEPA documents, which are included in the interim conditions, would continue to occur at Davis-Monthan AFB. The No Action Alternative is the environmentally preferrable alternative.

ES.4.2. Proposed Action Alternative (EIS Section 2.2)

Implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative would involve changes in personnel, airfield operations, airspace and range utilization, and facilities and infrastructure at Davis-Monthan AFB. The Proposed Action Alternative addresses several actions at Davis-Monthan AFB in support of the 2022 NDS. One of the actions includes relocating the 492 SOW (to include personnel and aircraft) from Hurlburt Field, Florida to Davis-Monthan AFB. Another action involves the transfer of additional AFSOC units and personnel to Davis-Monthan AFB that will align under the 492 SOW from Duke Field in Florida, Cannon AFB in New Mexico, Pope Field at Fort Liberty in North Carolina, and Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington. This also includes personnel associated with Special Tactics and Special Operations Theater Air Operations Squadrons. The remaining action is the activation of an ACC IS, which involves the relocation of personnel from Hurlburt Field in Florida and Cannon AFB in New Mexico to Davis-Monthan AFB.

Although not part of the Proposed Action Alternative, changes resulting from the planned and eventual Phase 2 of the A-10 retirement from Davis-Monthan AFB is considered in the analysis.

ES.4.2.1. Personnel (EIS Section 2.2.1)

The DAF estimates that the 492 SOW Beddown would require approximately 2,300 military, civilian and contractor personnel. Using DAF estimates, there would be approximately 2,543 dependents associated with military personnel. However, after the planned Phase 2 A-10 retirement and implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative, there would be a net increase of approximately 1,317 military personnel and 1,380 associated dependents.

ES.4.2.2. Airfield Operations (EIS Section 2.2.2)

All units under the 492 SOW would conduct approximately 20,040 aircraft operations per year from Davis-Monthan AFB. Under interim conditions, A-10 pilots currently conduct 24,068 of the total 63,968 aircraft operations occurring per year at Davis-Monthan AFB. After the planned Phase 2 A-10 retirement and implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative, there would be a net decrease of 4,028 operations per year, for a total of 59,940 annual operations.

Davis-Monthan AFB quiet hours policies would also apply to the proposed AFSOC aircrews (i.e., OA-1K and MC-130J) under the Proposed Action Alternative. Quiet hours are observed from 10:30 P.M. to 6:00 A.M. For base-assigned C-130 (HC-130J Model) and HH-60 aircraft, arrivals are allowed from 10:30 P.M. to midnight between October 1 and February 28 and are allowed from 10:30 P.M. to 2:00 A.M. from March 1 to September 30. During these periods, aircrews would make one approach to

a full stop to comply with the base quiet hours. The only change to Davis-Monthan AFB local flying guidance proposed at this time is to include the proposed AFSOC aircraft (i.e., OA-1K and MC-130J) in the list of aircraft that includes HC-130J and HH-60 aircraft currently operating at the base. Any deviations from the quiet hours policies would require approval of by the 355th Operations Group Commander.

A-10 pilots based at Davis-Monthan AFB conduct approximately 1,037 annual aircraft operations between 10:00 P.M. and 7:00 A.M. under interim conditions. These operations would no longer occur after the planned Phase 2 A-10 retirement. Certain AFSOC aircraft training mission requirements must also be completed after dark and some aircraft operations would extend into the late night. Aircrews from the 492 SOW would conduct approximately 1,964 aircraft operations per year (i.e., approximately 10 percent of total annual proposed AFSOC operations) between 10:00 P.M. and 7:00 A.M., resulting in a net increase of approximately 927 aircraft operations per year at Davis-Monthan AFB during these times.

AFSOC aircrews based at Davis-Monthan AFB would also use other military airfields and municipal airfields to support mission training requirements. OA-1K aircrews could use towered and non-towered airfields within 100 miles of Davis-Monthan AFB. Aircraft operations at other airfields would occur on an occasional basis. AFSOC aircrews (i.e., OA-1K and MC-130J) would comply with all air traffic control guidance and local flight procedures while operating at other airfields.

ES.4.2.3. Airspace Use (EIS Section 2.2.3)

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, no new special use airspace would be created and there would be no modifications to existing special use airspace.

Implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative compared to interim conditions would result in a decrease of 8,828 annual aircraft operations in the existing Military Operations Areas (MOAs) and Restricted Areas shown on Figure 2-2. Implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative compared to No Action Alternative would result in an increase of 3,040 annual aircraft operations. The No Action Alternative is a potential future scenario that has not yet been experienced because the A-10s are still operating at the installation.

AFSOC aircrews would conduct training in airspace after dark, with some operations occurring during the late night. Under interim conditions, A-10 pilots based at Davis-Monthan AFB conduct approximately 593 operations per year between 10:00 P.M. and 7:00 A.M. in the MOAs and Restricted Areas shown on Figure 2-2. These operations would no longer occur after the planned Phase 2 of the A-10 retirement. Under the Proposed Action, AFSOC aircrews would fly approximately 957 operations annually during this late-night period, resulting in a net change relative to interim conditions of 364 additional airspace operations between 10:00 P.M. and 7:00 A.M. (Table 3-32).

AFSOC aircrews would occasionally use other airspace, including the combat search and rescue low altitude tactical navigation area and various military training routes as shown on Figure 13 in the noise supporting documentation available on the project website at www.492sow-beddown-eis.com. AFSOC aircrews would comply with flight procedures established for these existing airspaces.

ES.4.2.4. Range Use (EIS Section 2.2.4)

Live munitions training would be conducted by air and ground units at existing ranges. The OA-1K (like the A-10) can carry and use air-to-ground ordnance (e.g., inert 2.75-inch rockets), and aircrews would require training in their use. OA-1K aircrews would use the existing Barry M. Goldwater Range for

air-to-ground ordnance training. MC-130J aircrews would not conduct air-to-ground weapons training. Implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative compared to interim conditions would result in a decrease of 768,185 air-to-ground munitions used per year.

Similar to A-10 pilots, AFSOC aircrews (OA-1K and MC-130J) would use chaff and flares as defensive countermeasures in training. Flares are one of the defensive mechanisms dispensed by military aircraft to avoid attack by enemy aircraft and air defense systems. Defensive countermeasures would only be used in areas approved for their use, and flares would be used above current minimum altitudes. Compared to interim conditions, the Proposed Action Alternative would result in a decrease of 45,680 chaff and flare drops per year.

Ground unit training by the Special Tactics Squadron would be conducted at existing facilities on the Davis-Monthan AFB Combat Arms Training and Maintenance range or at suitable existing facilities off base. Such facilities could include—but would not be limited to—Fort Huachuca and Barry M. Goldwater Range, which are used on a regular basis for similar live-fire training. The Special Tactics Squadron unit training would not result in any exceedances of training range usage, use of new ammunition types, or require creation of new ranges at this time.

ES.4.2.5. Facilities and Infrastructure (EIS Section 2.2.5)

Construction of 9 new facilities (approximately 408,000 square feet), renovation or repair of 28 facilities (approximately 585,000 square feet), and demolition of 2 facilities (approximately 14,000 square feet) would be required to support the 492 SOW Beddown. Construction activities would take place on previously disturbed land adjacent to existing buildings and infrastructure. The planned areas of construction depicted in EIS Figure 2-3 reflect the proposed facility sites including the 492 SOW West Campus and the 492 SOW East Campus, as well as areas designated for construction support activities such as a construction access road, fence, and contractor laydown areas.

ES.5. COMPARISON OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES (EIS Section 2.3.1)

This EIS focuses on those resources potentially impacted by implementation of the proposed 492 SOW Beddown and the No Action Alternative. The environmental resources evaluated include acoustic environment, air quality, soil and water resources, biological resources, cultural resources, socioeconomics, infrastructure, and hazardous materials and hazardous waste. Implementation of either the No Action Alternative or the Proposed Action Alternative would not result in significant short- or long-term impacts to any environmental resources. Section 2.3.1, Table 2-8, includes a detailed comparison of impacts between the two alternatives.