

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
FOR THE
MODIFICATION OF SPECIAL USE AIRSPACE
FORT BLISS, TEXAS AND NEW MEXICO**



Prepared for:

**Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization, and Security
Fort Bliss**

Prepared by:

**Directorate of Public Works
Environmental Division, Fort Bliss**

August 2012

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
MODIFICATION OF SPECIAL USE AIRSPACE
FORT BLISS, TEXAS AND NEW MEXICO**

1.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES.

Proposed Action: The U.S. Army and Fort Bliss prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) that analyzes the impacts of modifying current Class G airspace to Special Use Airspace (SUA) over the South Training Areas and certain adjacent lands to separate military aircraft (helicopters and authorized Unmanned Aerial Vehicles used and operated by Combat Aviation Brigade units) and civilian aircraft operating in those areas. The Proposed Action will:

- Designate SUA (restricted airspace) in the South Training Areas and Training Areas 8 and 9 in the McGregor Range from the surface to a ceiling of 1,200 feet above ground level (AGL) (approximately 5,200 feet mean sea level [MSL]), including an area over private land extending east of the South Training Areas and south of the Terrain Flying Area;
- Correct restricted airspace coordinates currently in effect for R-5103A airspace to extend that airspace south to the Texas/New Mexico state line and the Fort Bliss property boundary, as originally intended.

Alternative Actions: One other action alternative was evaluated as follows:

- Alternative 1 – This alternative would extend SUA over the South Training Areas, McGregor Range Training Areas 8 and 9, as well as, extend R-5103A restricted airspace as described for the Proposed Action. The area over private and state lands east of the South Training Areas would not be included in the SUA, however.

No Action: Under the No Action Alternative, no modification of airspace or designation of SUA would occur, and helicopter and Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) training missions will continue as they are currently. Low-level military air operations in the South Training Areas will continue to be affected by potential conflicts with civilian air traffic. Live-fire training and other hazardous military activities on the ground will continue to pose threats to overflying civilian aircraft.

2.0 SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES AND IMPACTS

Implementation of the Proposed Action will essentially have no impacts on any resource except for national airspace and air traffic safety. The EA results indicate that impacts on air traffic and

airspace will be insignificant, because the proposed SUA is not frequently used by civilian aircraft; the restrictions are temporary and only during training (usually 12-15 hours) on weekdays, and no unusual civilian air traffic congestion will occur. Implementation of the Proposed Action will not hamper the ability of civilian aircraft to transit the affected area en route to or from El Paso International Airport or to other areas away from El Paso if altitude is maintained above 1,200 feet AGL. When the SUA is implemented, Range Management Operations – Airspace Scheduling, which coordinates with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), will ensure that General Aviation would be notified when the SUA is active or not active

The Proposed Action will increase safety in the training areas by providing positive separation between military and civilian aircraft during training missions. Safety for General Aviation would also be enhanced by preventing overflights by civilian aircraft of danger areas, such as when drop zones, shoot houses, live fire activities, terrain flying operations, and munitions loading areas are being used.

The cumulative impacts from the stationing and training of Base Realignment and Army Transformation units including the Combat Aviation Brigades 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 design, construction, operation, 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 than 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

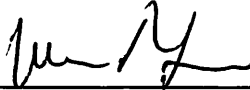
28 AUGUST 12

Date

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PREPARED FOR:

Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization, and Security

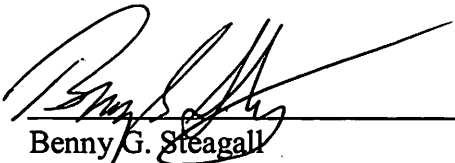


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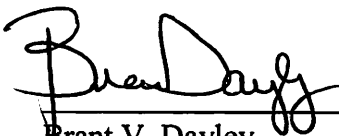


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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
FOR THE
MODIFICATION OF SPECIAL USE AIRSPACE
FORT BLISS, TEXAS AND NEW MEXICO**

Proposed Action

The U.S. Army and Fort Bliss proposes to change airspace over the South Training Areas and McGregor Range Training Areas 8 and 9 from Class G to Special Use Airspace (SUA) to restrict flights in the area to military aircraft only from the surface to 1,200 feet above ground level (AGL), including an area of private and state lands east of the South Training Areas and south of the Terrain Flying Area in the Hueco Mountains. The new SUA would be adjacent to existing Class C and Class E airspace for El Paso International Airport. The existing Restricted Airspace R-5103A would be extended south to the Texas/New Mexico state line to align with the edge of Fort Bliss property.

Purpose

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to accommodate new training requirements and increased air traffic associated with the establishment of a Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB) at Fort Bliss in 2012, as well as other aviation units, and to increase air traffic safety over live-fire areas, drop zones, shoot houses, munitions loading areas, and terrain flying areas in the South Training Areas and McGregor Range Training Areas 8 and 9. This Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, the President's Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for the implementation of NEPA, and Army regulation\Federal regulation codified in 32 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) 651 *et seq.*

Alternatives

The Proposed Action, the No Action Alternative, and one action alternative were carried forward for analysis during the preparation of the EA. The No Action Alternative would not establish new SUA over the South Training Areas and McGregor Range Training Areas, and increased training associated with the CAB stand-up scheduled for 2012 would be more difficult and expensive. Also, existing and future safety concerns for civilian aircraft in the training area would remain. Alternative 1 would be similar to the Proposed Action, but would not include

SUA over private and state land east of the South Training Areas and south of the Terrain Flying Area.

Environmental Consequences

The Proposed Action would not change land use for any property on Fort Bliss or any property outside of Fort Bliss. Fort Bliss property underlying the proposed SUA is currently used for military training, and the property outside of Fort Bliss consists of rugged, mountainous terrain in the Hueco Mountains utilized for cattle grazing.

The Proposed Action would primarily modify airspace within the current boundaries of Fort Bliss to restrict civilian aviation traffic in areas not previously restricted. The SUA (restricted airspace) proposed would provide safety improvements for civilian and military aviation in the project area. Impacts on air transportation would be insignificant, since most civilian and commercial flights operate above the altitudes that would be restricted by the new SUA. No other human or natural resources would be impacted by the Proposed Action.

Based upon the analyses of the EA, the Proposed Action would not have a significant effect on the environment. Therefore, no additional evaluation is warranted.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	i
1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Fort Bliss Background	1
1.2 Purpose and Need	3
1.3 Background for the Proposed Action.....	5
1.4 Location of the Proposed Action	7
1.5 Airspace Background.....	7
1.6 South Training Areas Utilization and Safety	9
1.7 Scope and Content of the Environmental Assessment	12
1.8 Applicable Environmental Statutes and Regulations.....	13
1.9 Decision(s) to be Made	14
1.10 Public Participation.....	14
2.0 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES.....	15
2.1 Proposed Action.....	15
2.2 Alternative 1.....	19
2.3 No Action Alternative.....	19
2.4 Alternatives Eliminated from Further Consideration	21
2.4.1 Military Operations Areas (MOA).....	21
2.4.2 Controlled Firing Areas (CFA).....	21
2.4.3 National Security Areas (NSA)	21
2.5 Relationship of Action Alternatives to Purpose and Need	22
3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND CONSEQUENCES	23
3.1 Airspace and Air Traffic Safety	25
3.1.1 Affected Environment.....	25
3.1.2 Environmental Consequences.....	26
3.1.2.1 Proposed Action.....	26
3.1.2.2 Alternative 1.....	28
3.1.2.3 No Action Alternative.....	28
3.1.3 Cumulative Environmental Consequences	28
3.1.3.1 Proposed Action.....	28
3.1.3.2 Alternative 1.....	29
3.1.3.3 No Action Alternative.....	29
4.0 CONCLUSIONS	31
5.0 REFERENCES.....	33
6.0 LIST OF PREPARERS.....	35
7.0 DISTRIBUTION LIST	37
8.0 ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS.....	39

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1.	Fort Bliss Vicinity Map	2
Figure 1-2.	Fort Bliss Existing Airspace Map (FAA El Paso North Sectional)	8
Figure 1-3.	South Training Area and Airspace Hazards.....	10
Figure 2-1.	Proposed Action Special Use Airspace Boundaries	17
Figure 2-2.	Fort Bliss Airspace and Proposed Changes	18
Figure 2-3.	Alternative 1 Proposed Action Special Use Airspace Boundaries	20

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1-1.	Applicable Environmental Statutes and Regulations	13
Table 2-1.	Relationship between Purpose and Need and Alternatives	22

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph 1-1.	UH 60/HH 60 – Utility and Medical Evacuation Helicopter	6
Photograph 1-2.	AH 64 D Longbow Apache Attack Helicopter	6
Photograph 1-3.	CH 47 E Medium Cargo Helicopter.....	6

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A.	Correspondence
Appendix B.	Alternative 1 Definition and Coordinates
Appendix C.	FAA Current Airspace Navigation Chart

**SECTION 1.0
INTRODUCTION**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Assessment (EA) addresses the potential effects, beneficial and adverse, of the proposed modification of airspace to establish Special Use Airspace (SUA) at Fort Bliss to prevent civilian aviation conflicts with military air traffic and munitions during training.

1.1 Fort Bliss Background

Fort Bliss is a multi-mission Army installation located in Texas and New Mexico (Figure 1-1). The U.S. Army (Army) Garrison and Fort Bliss were originally established in 1849. Fort Bliss has been the home of the Army Air Defense Artillery Center since 1957, with its primary mission to support the Army's Air Defense Artillery training. It consists of a Cantonment Area (Main Post, William Beaumont Army Medical Center, and Logan Heights), Biggs Army Airfield (BAAF), and the Fort Bliss Training Complex (FBTC). The FBTC contains approximately 1.1 million acres of land and is used for training and maneuvers by the Army and other units. The FBTC is composed of the South Training Areas, Doña Ana Range-North Training Areas, and McGregor Range, which are further subdivided into numbered training areas to manage and schedule the different training missions (see Figure 1-1).

As a result of recent Department of Defense (DoD) initiatives, Fort Bliss is in transition from an Air Defense Center to a major mounted training installation supporting multiple types of Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) under Forces Command (FORSCOM). These initiatives include Base Closure and Realignment Act (BRAC), Army Transformation, Grow the Army, and Global Defense Posture Realignment, among others. A major result of these initiatives is the re-stationing of the First Armored Division (1AD) from Germany to Fort Bliss. The 1AD consists of four heavy maneuver brigade combat teams (HBCTs), an aviation brigade, and a fires brigade. Land use changes and range construction to accommodate these units were analyzed in the *Fort Bliss Texas and New Mexico Mission and Master Plan Final Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS)*, for which a Record of Decision (ROD) was signed in April 2007 (Army 2007a). Under this SEIS, a large portion of the Fort Bliss training areas, including the South Training Areas that are the focus of this EA, were authorized for weapons firing activities.

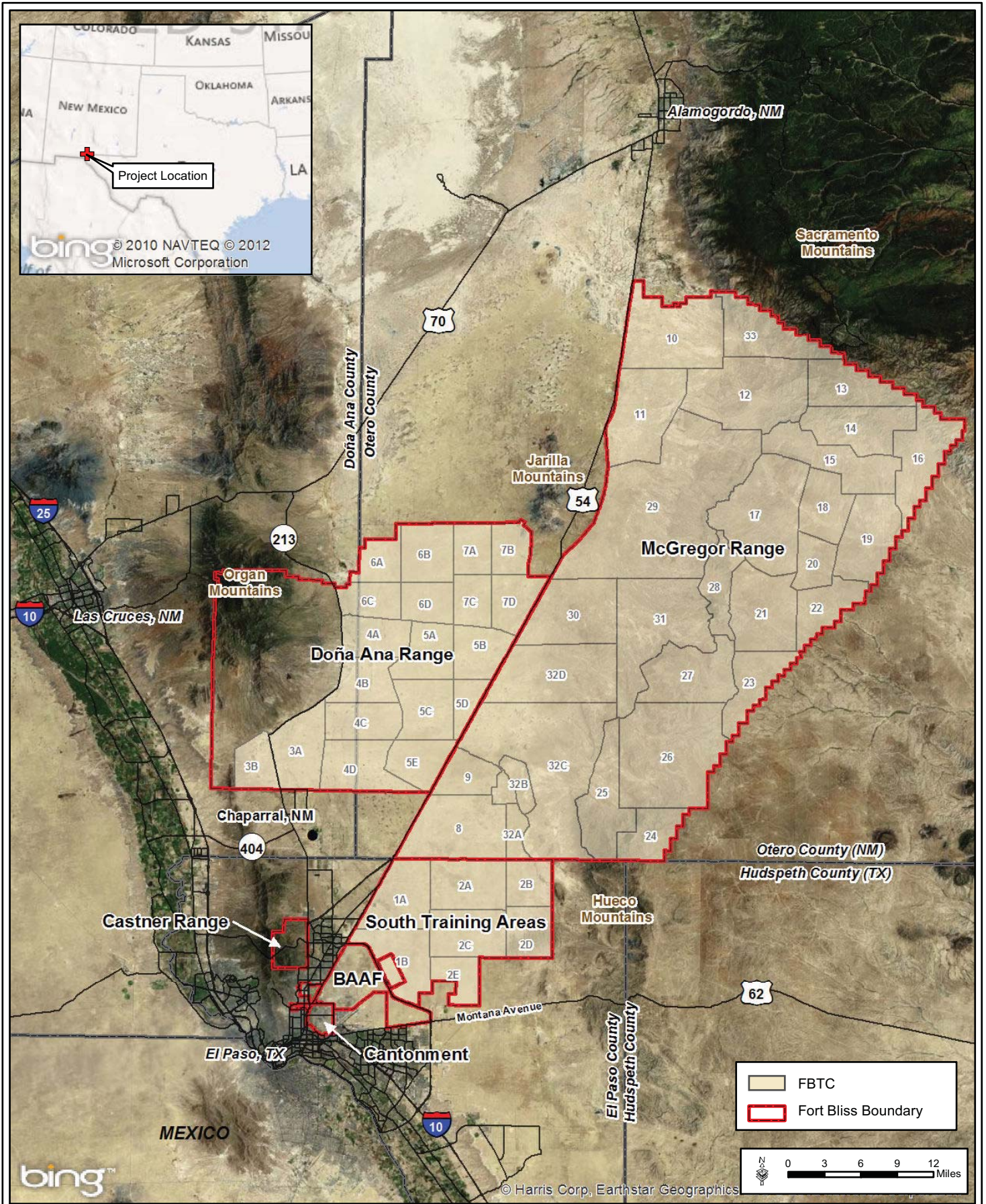


Figure 1-1: Fort Bliss Vicinity Map

In December 2007, the Army signed the ROD for the 2007 *Grow the Army Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement*, programming the stationing of up to two light Infantry Brigade Combat Teams (IBCTs) at Fort Bliss (Army 2007b). In June 2010, the Army signed the ROD for the *Fort Bliss Army Growth and Force Structure Realignment Final Environmental Impact Statement*, (GFS EIS) which will allow training of the IBCTs, as well as up to two Stryker Brigade Combat Teams (SBCTs) at Fort Bliss (Army 2010). The SEIS also identified the establishment of a Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB) at Fort Bliss. Pursuant to force structure growth, including the CAB, Fort Bliss will be required to facilitate the training for approximately 100 Army helicopters and 100 Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS). UASs are integrated components of any intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) plan used by military commanders during warfare situations. UAS missions provide unit commanders with current battlefield information and the ability to influence actions at the time and place of their choosing. As such, the ability of Fort Bliss to provide realistic training to units is essential to enhance the commanders' effectiveness and improves the soldiers' survivability on the modern day battlefield. As Army helicopters are a critical component of U.S. Army Combat Power and Theater Logistical Sustainment, integrated Combat Aviation Training will be a major piece of the 1AD's combat power.

1.2 Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide realistic mission training on Fort Bliss, which involves helicopter maneuvers, air-to-ground live fire, and UAS mission support, without endangering the general public and general aviation aircraft.

There is a need to enhance safety by restricting general aviation aircraft flight within the south training areas of Fort Bliss at times when certain hazardous conditions exist. These conditions for the most part are when helicopters are using the low level airspace within the installation boundaries for training. Fort Bliss has identified a need to restrict airspace when helicopters are conducting potentially hazardous maneuver training of the following types: providing air support of ground units; training in attacking targets on the ground; firing live rounds with the potential for ricochet; training in formation flying (two or more helicopters flying together); practicing evasive maneuvers; practicing air-to-air combat maneuvers (helicopter against helicopter);

**Environmental Assessment for the Modification of Special Use Airspace
Fort Bliss, Texas and New Mexico**

transporting of equipment and cargo; simulated transporting of wounded Soldiers; and practicing for and responding to use of firefighting equipment such as dip buckets and dip tanks.

During these types of training scenarios, helicopter pilots can be distracted, intent on the exercise at hand, watching for ground units, concentrating on maneuvering the aircraft, etc. Training should be conducted in airspace free from the possible presence of general aviation aircraft since situational awareness may be such that helicopter pilots, focused on intense operations, may not see in-coming traffic.

Other activities that can present a potential hazard from the ground for low flying aircraft during training include: live fire activity in the South Training Area; flying over designated weapons safety zones; and flying air maneuver routes to the northern training ranges, missile assembly areas and other hazardous areas.

Military aircraft require greater flexibility to travel throughout the Fort Bliss region and be better able to maneuver freely when conducting simulated and live fire, air-to-ground exercises as well as aerial combat practice.

There is also an increasing need to support UAS activities that mostly use low-level airspace. In recent years, these aircraft have become an important part of the U.S. arsenal in a variety of observation, reconnaissance, and weapon platform roles. Additional capability is also needed for Soldier training on UAS. Most UAS used will be small and hand-launched. Others are a bit larger and launched via a system similar to a rail catapult. All fly for the most part within the 0-1,200 feet AGL airspace. Large UAS or any without a Certificate of Authorization from the FAA are not planned for use within the proposed restricted airspace.

Goals of the proposed action are summarized as follows: to provide transition airspace needed for helicopters, and other military aircraft flying in a southerly direction from McGregor Range to lower operating altitudes in the South Training Areas; 2) afford fast moving military aircraft sufficient space to maneuver and remain within the northern restricted airspace when performing low-level simulated air attacks on tactical missile sites in support of the Japanese Annual Service

Practice, the use of Centennial Bombing Range by the German Air Force, and other CAB training events; and 3) provide better separation between military and civilian aircraft in airspace over private lands adjacent to Fort Bliss and south of the Terrain Flying Area, but which will be used heavily by helicopters.

1.3 Background for the Proposed Action

CABs are organized to conduct and/or support ground maneuvers through aviation operations. The brigade must prepare to fight as whole support BCTs using pure or task-organized units, and conduct multiple independent missions requiring pure or task-organized units. Each aviation brigade is tailored for specific missions; however, each accepts other organizations and performs missions not necessarily defined in the mission statement. Aviation brigade missions include:

- Reconnaissance
- Security
- Movement to contact
- Attack
- Air assault
- Air movement
- Smoke/obscurant (C2) support
- Aeromedical evacuation
- Casualty Evacuation (CASEVAC)
- Personnel Recovery (PR) operations

The aviation brigade is also capable of conducting enabling missions to support operations and facilitate regeneration of combat power. These enabling missions include:

- Downed aircraft recovery
- Forward Area Refuel Point (FARP) operations
- Aviation maintenance
- Air Traffic Services (ATS)

**Environmental Assessment for the Modification of Special Use Airspace
Fort Bliss, Texas and New Mexico**

All these CABs have the capability to perform as a BCT when reinforced with appropriate ground units. These brigades can perform screen missions without augmentation, and can perform guard and cover missions when properly reinforced.

Helicopters employed as part of a CAB include the UH 60/HH 60 (Photograph 1-1), the AH 64 Longbow Apache (Photograph 1-2), and the CH 47 E (Photograph 1-3). As an integral part of CAB training, helicopters are required to operate in unison with CAB ground forces, and they normally fly at altitudes of 1,200 feet AGL or less.



Photograph 1-1. UH 60/HH 60 – Utility and Medical Evacuation Helicopter



Photograph 1-2. AH 64 D Longbow Apache Attack Helicopter



Photograph 1-3. CH 47 E Medium Cargo Helicopter

UAS are organized and developed to provide three echelons of operation: (a) battalion and below; (b) brigade level with BCTs and the battlefield surveillance brigade (BfSB); and (c) division and above. This stratification of UAS maximizes operations and provides a combat enabler to maneuver forces.

1.4 Location of the Proposed Action

Fort Bliss is located in west Texas, immediately north of El Paso, Texas, and extends north across the state line into New Mexico (see Figure 1-1). The south boundary of the installation is situated in El Paso, adjacent to and partially beneath the Class C and Class E airspace for the El Paso International Airport. The proposed SUA would be located within the South Training Areas in Hudspeth County, Texas, and McGregor Range Training Areas 8 and 9 in Otero County, New Mexico, adjoining SUA R-5103A and R-5103B (Figure 1-2). The proposed SUA would also extend south of the Terrain Flying Area in the Hueco Mountains adjacent to SUA R-5103A.

1.5 Airspace Background

Generally, airspace has defined designations assigned by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and adopted from international norms to control flights of all aircraft, especially around airports. These designations are letter-classified as follows (FAA 2008, FAA 2011):

- **Class A:** Generally, that airspace from 18,000 feet to 60,000 feet mean sea level (MSL). All operations must be conducted under instrument flight rules (IFR) or special visual flight rules (SVFR).
- **Class B:** Generally, that airspace from the surface up to 10,000 feet MSL surrounding the busiest airports with heavy traffic operations. This airspace is individually tailored to the specific airport in several layers. Air Traffic Control (ATC) clearance is required for all aircraft. Operations may be conducted under IFR, SVFR, or visual flight rules (VFR) clear of clouds.
- **Class C:** Generally, that airspace from the surface to 4,000 feet above the airport elevation surrounding those airports that have an operational control tower and radar control. Class C airspace is individually tailored in layers, but usually extends out to 10 nautical miles (NM) from 1,200 feet to 4,000 feet above the airport elevation. Entering Class C airspace requires radio contact with the controlling ATC authority, and an ATC clearance is ultimately required for landing. Operations may be conducted under IFR, SVFR, or VFR.

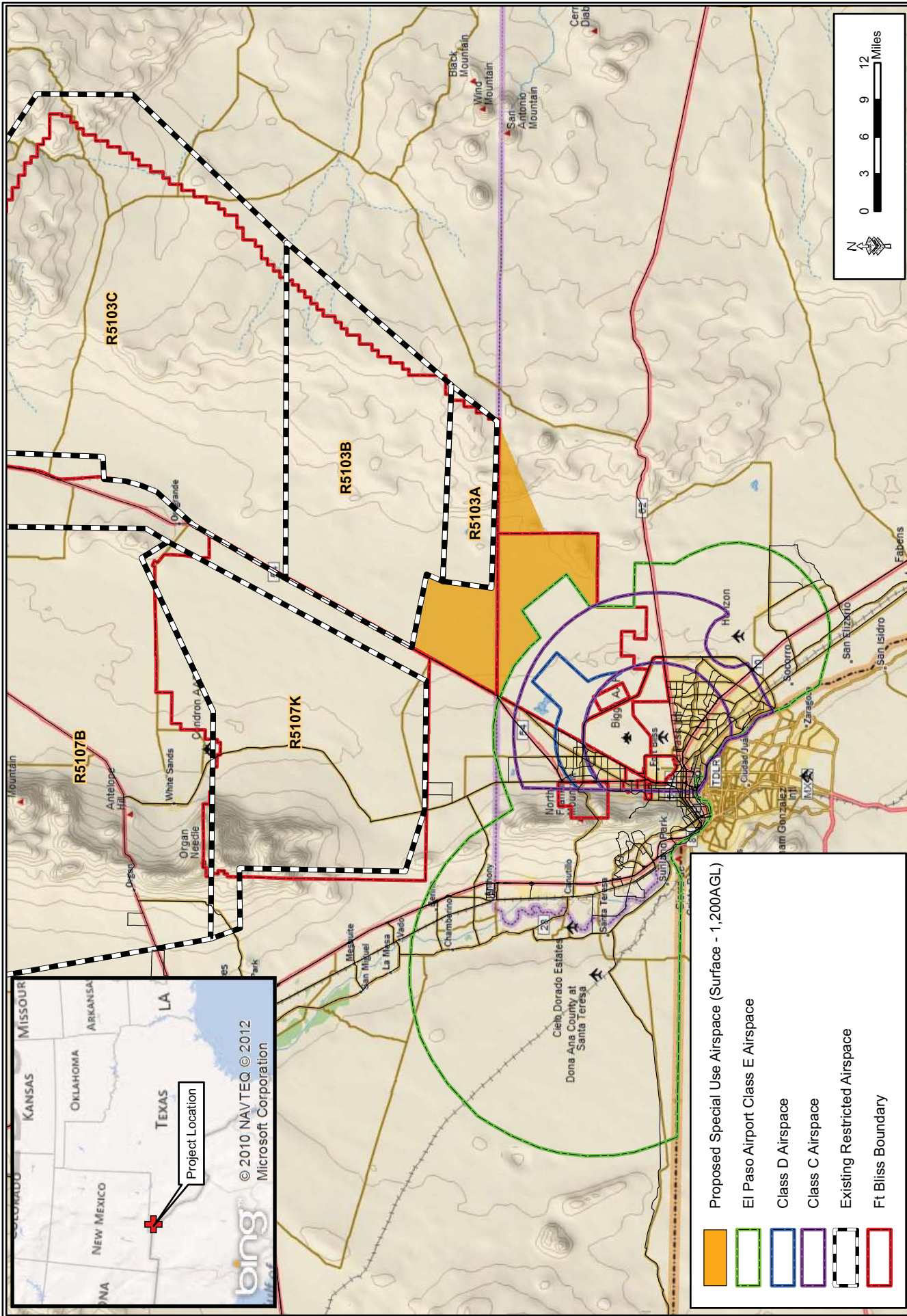


Figure 1-2: Fort Bliss Existing Airspace Map (FAA El Paso North and Albuquerque South Sectionals)

- **Class D:** Generally, that airspace from the surface to 2,500 feet above the airport elevation surrounding those airports that have an operational control tower. Aircraft entering the airspace must establish and maintain radio contact with the controlling ATC. Operations may be conducted under IFR, SVFR, or VFR, but aircraft separation services are not provided.
- **Class E:** Generally, this is controlled airspace that is not Class A, B, C, or D. In the El Paso area, Class E airspace begins at 1,200 feet above ground level (AGL) (except for that Class E airspace assigned to El Paso International Airport, which begins at 700 feet AGL) and extends up to, but not including, 18,000 feet MSL. Subdivisions within Class E are for transitional purposes, extensions to the other controlled airspace classes, or other uses. Operations may be conducted under IFR, SVFR, or VFR. Flights under VFR are not subject to ATC clearance.
- **Class G:** Airspace that has not been designated as Class A, B, C, D, or E. Operations may be conducted under IFR or VFR. ATC aircraft separation service is not provided. Traffic information may be given as far as is practical with respect to other flights.

Airspace in the vicinity of Fort Bliss consists of a combination of Class C and Class E airspace around the El Paso International Airport, Class D airspace around BAAF, Restricted Airspace over the Fort Bliss Doña Ana and McGregor training ranges, and Class E and G airspace over areas not controlled by the airspace designations listed previously (see Figure 1-2) (FAA 2011). The Class G airspace below 1,200 feet AGL and Class E airspace above 1,200 feet AGL includes the area over the South Training Areas where the Proposed Action would occur. The Class C airspace surrounding the El Paso International Airport requires notification and permission from the El Paso tower controller for operation of any aircraft in that airspace. Operations in the Class D airspace for BAAF require notification and permission from the BAAF tower controller. The Restricted Airspace (R-5103A and R-5103B) over the Fort Bliss McGregor Training Range is controlled by Fort Bliss, and restricts operation of any civilian aircraft in the area when the airspace restrictions are activated. The current FAA air navigation chart for the El Paso area can be found in Appendix C.

1.6 South Training Areas Utilization and Safety

The South Training Areas consist of approximately 92,285 acres of relatively flat terrain in El Paso County located adjacent to BAAF and structures associated with the HBCT, IBCT, and CAB brigades operations (Figure 1-3). It is one of the most heavily utilized training areas on the FBTC due to its proximity to BAAF and the relatively low cost for logistics and deployment of

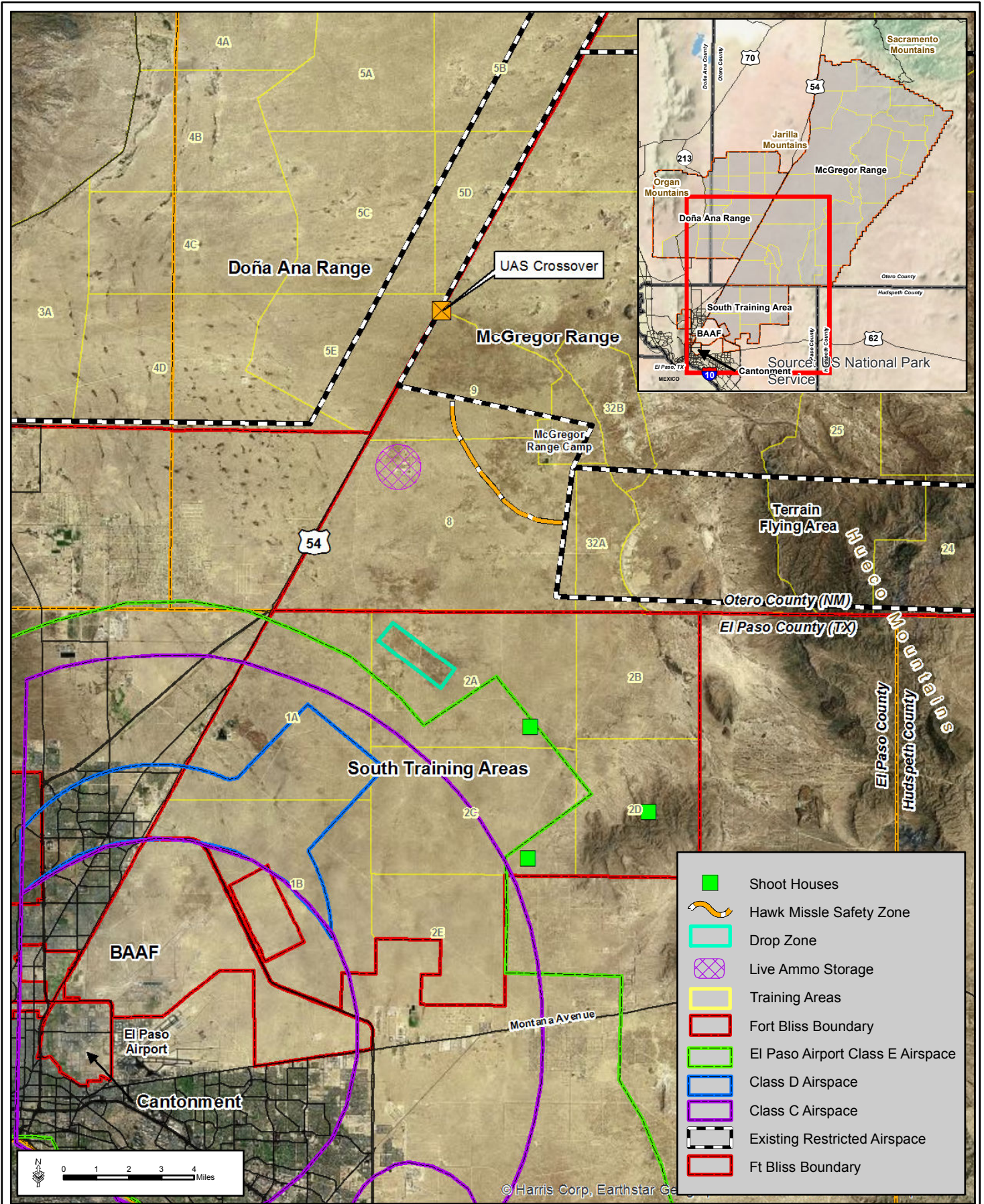


Figure 1-3: South Training Area and Airspace Hazards

the brigade training operations there. As such, it would be a primary training area for the new CAB projected to station at Fort Bliss beginning in January and February 2012 with completion of the full stationing of helicopters by end of 2012. The South Training Areas currently are situated primarily in Class E and G airspace, south of Restricted Airspace R-5103A and north of Class C airspace for El Paso International Airport. Class E Airspace for El Paso International Airport also partially extends over the South Training Areas (see Figure 1-3). Training Areas 8 and 9 in the McGregor Range are also located in Class E and G airspace. FAA airspace descriptions and definitions are provided in Section 1.5.

The South Training Areas, as well as Training Areas 8 and 9 of the McGregor Range, currently contain facilities and operations, as shown in Figure 1-3, that can pose a safety risk for low-flying aircraft. The live ammunition storage and supply depot, located near U.S. Highway 54 (US 54) in Area 8 of the McGregor Range, is a no-fly zone for military aircraft due to the potential for explosive accidents during ammunition handling. The Hawk missile assembly area Safety Zone, located in Areas 8 and 9, is also a hazard zone for the same reason. These hazard areas should also be civilian no-fly zones due to the potential for explosive accidents.

There are airborne drop zones in the South Training Areas that will be used with increased frequency as CAB training operations are brought to full strength. Live fire shoot houses located in the South Training Areas are currently under a Small Arms Range Safety Area (SARSA) to minimize stray fire hazards for low-flying aircraft. The entire South Training Areas have been approved for live-fire exercises, as provided in the SEIS (Army 2007a), which would pose a safety concern for low-flying aircraft between the surface and 1,200 feet AGL during military operations when live-fire exercises are authorized. Designation of individual Controlled Firing Areas (CFAs) for each scheduled small arms live-fire exercise in the South Training Areas would be impractical for CAB training, and would have a severe negative impact on the Army's mission, requiring observers during exercises and suspension of training when civilian aircraft fly over.

Transition airspace is necessary for helicopters and other military aircraft flying from the McGregor Range and the UAS crossover lane to the north in order to descend to CAB operating altitudes in the South Training Areas.

1.7 Scope and Content of the Environmental Assessment

This EA was prepared in accordance with the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 as amended (42 U.S. Code [U.S.C.]. 4321 *et seq.*), the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) NEPA implementing regulations at 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1500, and 32 CFR 651 – Environmental Analysis of Army Actions. NEPA is a Federal environmental law establishing a national policy of procedural requirements for all Federal government agencies, including the preparation of EAs for proposed agency actions. NEPA directs the Army to disclose the effects of its proposed activities at Fort Bliss to the public and officials who must make decisions concerning the proposal.

Under NEPA, the analysis of environmental conditions only addresses those areas, or Region of Influence (ROI), and environmental resources with the potential to be affected by the Proposed Action or alternatives. Locations and resources with no potential to be affected need not be analyzed. The ROI includes all areas and lands that might be affected, and may change depending on how the natural, cultural, and socioeconomic resources they contain or support are affected.

The purpose of this EA is to develop and evaluate alternatives for the Proposed Action and evaluate potential impacts of alternatives on pertinent resources on the FBTC and the adjacent natural and human environment. Resources that could potentially be affected as a result of the proposed restricted (SUA) airspace designations and that are evaluated in this EA include national airspace and air traffic safety. No construction, ground activities, economic changes, or personnel changes would occur as a result of the Proposed Action; therefore, no other resources associated with the natural or human environment would be impacted. National airspace and air traffic safety changes and impacts are guided by FAA regulations, including *Order JO 7400.2G, Procedures for Handling Airspace Matters* (FAA 2008), and *Order 1050.1E, CHG 1, Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures* (FAA 2006).

1.8 Applicable Environmental Statutes and Regulations

Table 1-1 summarizes the pertinent environmental regulations, laws, and Executive Orders (E.O.) that guided the development of this EA. Due to lack of impacts on most resources and lack of construction or operational changes at Fort Bliss, most of the statutes and regulations listed in Table 1-1 are not relevant to the Proposed Action.

Table 1-1. Applicable Environmental Statutes and Regulations

Federal Laws and Regulations
Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act
Clean Air Act of 1970, as amended
Clean Water Act of 1987, as amended
Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1986
Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended
Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act
Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1972
National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended
National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended
Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990
Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976
Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974
Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954
Executive Orders and Army Regulations
Environmental Effects of Army Actions (32 CFR 651)
Environmental Protection and Enhancement (AR 200-1)
Exotic & Non-Native Species (E.O. 13112)
Protection of Migratory Birds and Game Mammals (E.O. 11629)
Flood Plain Management (E.O. 11988)
Protection of Wetlands (E.O. 11990)
Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations And Low-Income Populations (E.O. 12898)
Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks (E.O. 13045)
FAA Regulations
Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures (Order 1050.1E)
Procedures for Handling Airspace Matters (Order JO 7400.2G)

1.9 Decision(s) to be Made

The U.S. Army, Forces Command-Fort Bliss, is the lead agency responsible for the completion of the EA, assisted by U.S. Army Installation Management Command Headquarters, U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Bliss. If no significant environmental impacts are determined based on the evaluation of impacts in the EA, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) will be signed by the Garrison Commander. If it is determined that the Proposed Action will have significant environmental impacts, the action will be dropped or a Notice of Intent will then be published, leading to the preparation of an EIS. NEPA documentation for the decision will be submitted to the FAA as part of the justification for the requested designation of the SUA. The FAA is a cooperating agency in the preparation of this EA.

1.10 Public Participation

Coordination with appropriate Federal and state agencies has occurred during the preparation of this EA. The primary Federal agency consulted was the FAA. The draft EA and draft FNSI were sent to the FAA for comment and coordination. Following FAA consensus on the draft EA and draft FNSI, the document was made available to the general public, for a 30-day review and comment period in accordance with coordination requirements as set forth by 32 CFR 651. A notice of availability was placed in the *El Paso Times*, *Las Cruces Sun-News*, and *Alamagordo Daily News* newspapers announcing that the draft EA and draft FNSI was available for review at public libraries and on the Fort Bliss website www.bliss.army.mil (click on “Environmental”). Copies of the draft EA and draft FNSI were sent to the individuals and agencies listed in Section 6.0.

All pertinent comments received during the 30-day public review period were addressed before the FNSI was signed. Correspondence received during this review period were included as Appendix A and retained as part of the administrative record.

SECTION 2.0
DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

In accordance with CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1502.14) and 32 CFR Part 651, the EA must identify and describe all reasonable alternatives to the Proposed Action, including the No Action Alternative. This EA analyzes the Proposed Action, one action alternative, and the No Action Alternative.

2.1 Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is to:

- Designate SUA (restricted airspace) in the South Training Areas and Training Areas 8 and 9 in the McGregor Range from the surface to a ceiling of 1,200 feet above ground level (AGL) (approximately 5,200 feet mean sea level [MSL]), including a triangular area over private land extending east of the South Training Areas and south of the Terrain Flying Area;
- Correct restricted airspace coordinates currently in effect for R-5103A airspace to extend that airspace south to the Texas/New Mexico state line and the edge of Fort Bliss property, as originally intended.

This would not interfere with commercial aircraft operating out of El Paso International Airport, since normal VFR and IFR takeoff climb angles and landing patterns in that direction would place aircraft above the proposed SUA (1,200 feet AGL).

The proposed SUA over the South Training Areas would restrict operation of civilian aircraft from the surface to an altitude of 1,200 feet AGL (equivalent to approximately 5,200 feet MSL). The proposed SUA would extend north of the El Paso International Airport to a point that it adjoins the R-5103A and R-5103B airspace. An area east of the South Training Areas and south of the Terrain Flying Area would be included in the SUA. The expected military usage of the SUA would be 5 days per week, with a daily usage of 15 hours per day. The SUA would be accessible to civilian aircraft during times when military operations are not being conducted; however, civilian aircraft would have to obtain permission to access the SUA, as is required for all restricted airspace. No airspace used by commercial air traffic would be altered by the proposed restricted airspace expansions. The proposed restricted airspace (SUA) is shown in

Figure 2-1. A three-dimensional depiction of the proposed changes and their relationship to other airspace in the El Paso area is shown in Figure 2-2.

The description of the proposed SUA is as follows:

R-5103A South Extension to the Texas/New Mexico State Line

Boundaries – Beginning at lat. 32°00'30"N., long. 106°10'03"W.;;
to lat. 32°00'08"N., long. 106°10'31.6"W.;;
to lat. 32°00'05.5"N., long. 105°57'07.8"W.;;
to lat. 32°00'15"N., long. 105°56'41.9"W.;;
to the point of beginning.

SUA over the South Training Areas and McGregor Range

Boundaries – Beginning at lat. 32°06'00" N., long. 106°15'32" W.;;
to lat. 31°59'53.4"N., long. 106°19'29.9"W.;;
to lat. 31°59'51.5"N., long. 106°19'31.8"W.;;
to lat. 31°59'13.8"N., long. 106°17'49.2"W.;;
to lat. 31°58'13.9"N., long. 106°16'02.2"W.;;
to lat. 31°57'04.1"N., long. 106°14'38.1"W.;;
to lat. 31°58'22.4"N., long. 106°12'23.6"W.;;
to lat. 31°55'16.2"N., long. 106°9'21.2"W.;;
to lat. 31°53'35.4"N., long. 106°12'01"W.;;
to lat. 31°53'04.8"N., long. 106°11'48.6"W.;;
to lat. 31°53'04.7"N., long. 106°05'57.5"W.;;
to lat. 31°56'48.1"N., long. 106°05'59.6"W.;;
to lat. 32°00'05.5"N., long. 105°57'07.8"W.;;
to lat. 32°00'08"N., long. 106°10'31.7"W.;;
to lat. 32°00'30"N., long. 106°10'27"W.;;
to lat. 32°03'55"N., long. 106°10'00"W.;;
to lat. 32°05'02"N., long. 106°09'22"W.;;
to the point of beginning.

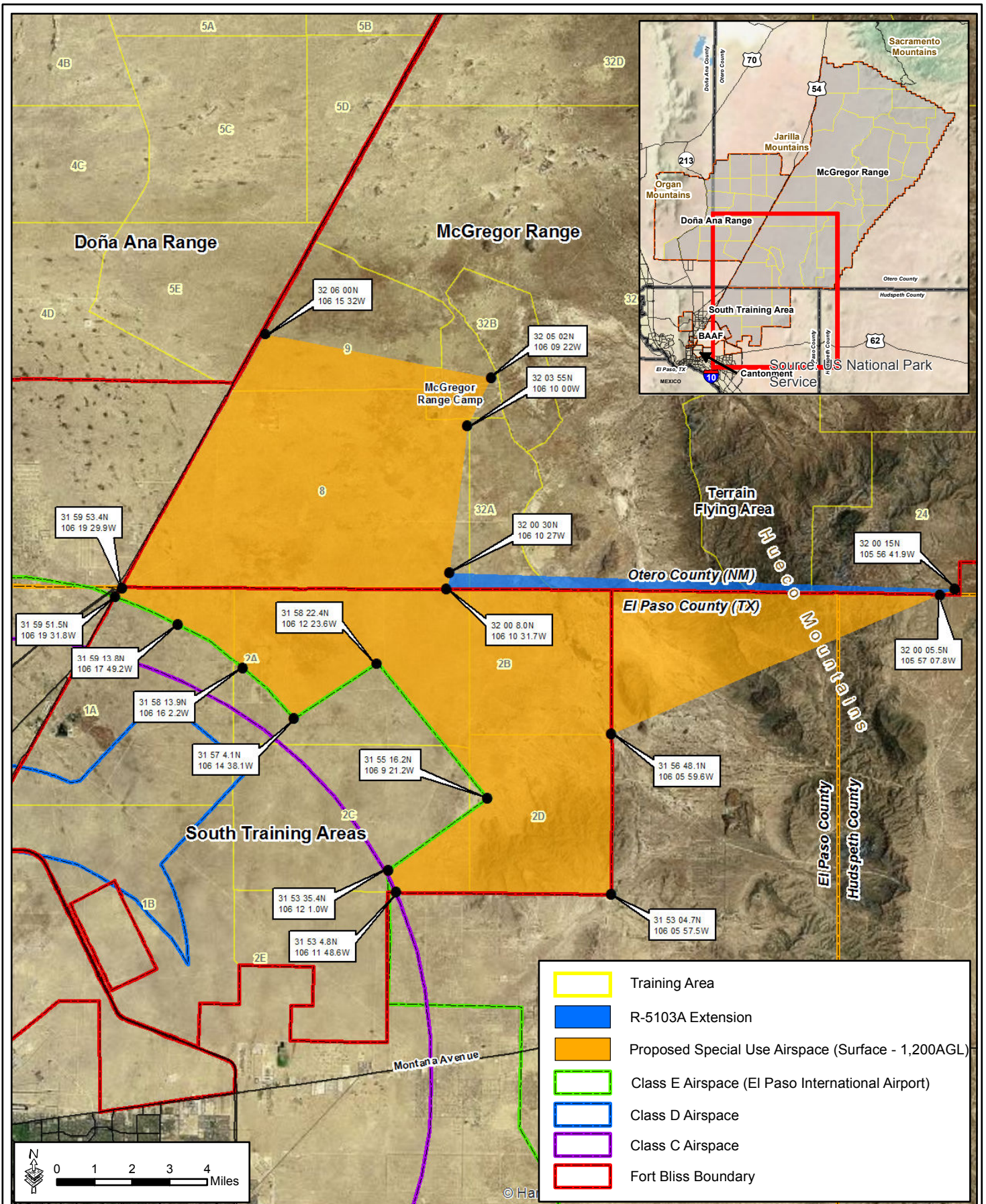


Figure 2-1: Proposed Action Special Use Airspace Boundaries

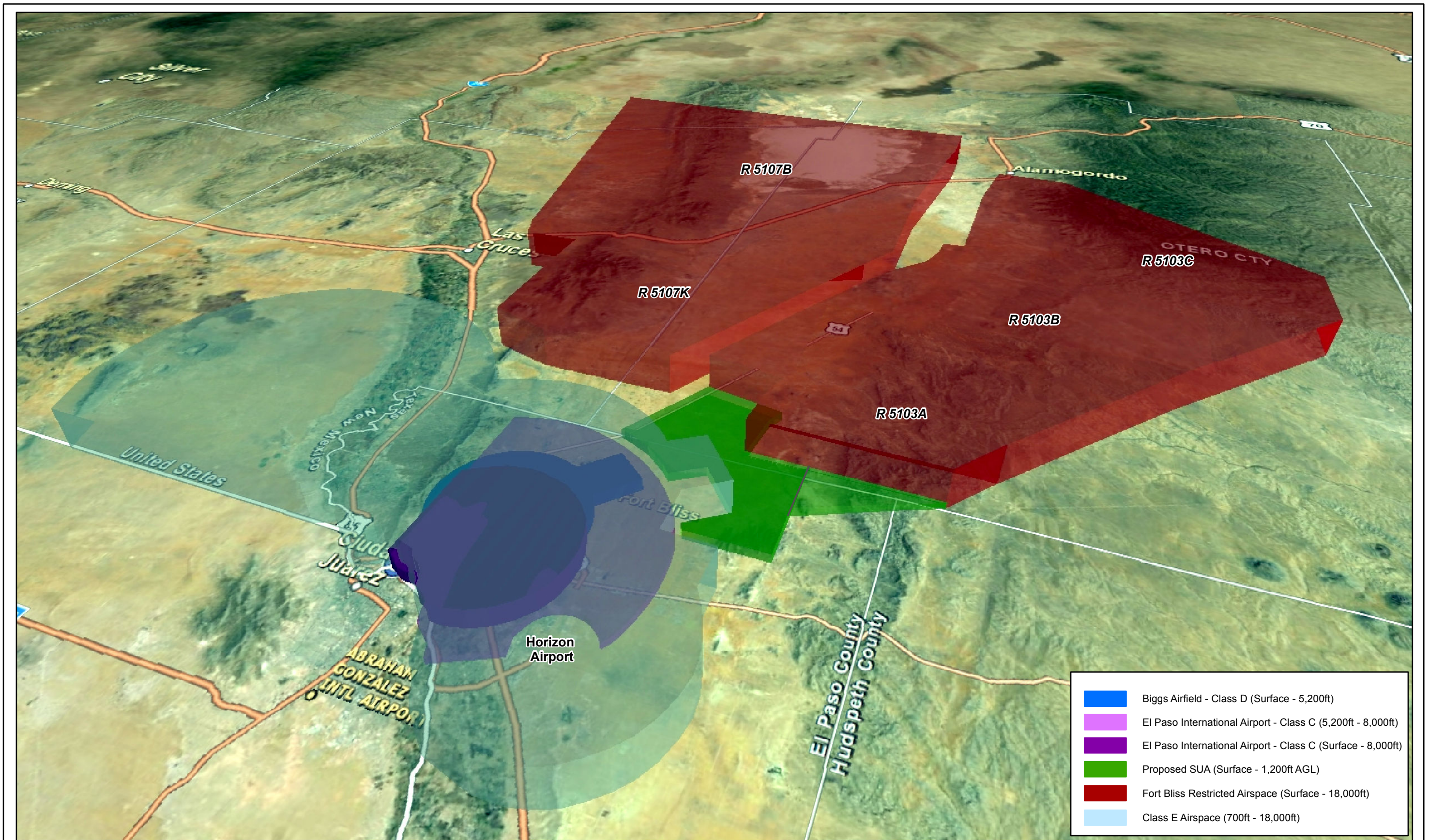


Figure 2-2: Fort Bliss Airspace and Proposed Changes

Designated Altitudes	Surface to 1,200 feet AGL
Time of Designation	0700 to 2000 (7:00 AM to 8:00 PM) Monday through Friday
Controlling Agency	FAA, Albuquerque, New Mexico Traffic Control Center
Using Agency	Commanding General, U.S. Army and Fort Bliss, Texas

2.2 Alternative 1

Alternative 1 would extend the SUA over the South Training Areas and McGregor Range training areas as proposed for the Proposed Action, but the area over private and state lands east of the South Training Areas would not be included in the SUA (Figure 2-3). The R-5103A restricted airspace would also be extended to the Fort Bliss boundary, as described in the Proposed Action. The description of the proposed SUA and the location coordinates for Alternative 1 can be found in Appendix B. This alternative would partially meet the purpose and need for the action; however, the military training flight spillover from the Terrain Flying Area southward would not be addressed, and would be subject to conflicts with civilian aircraft.

2.3 No Action Alternative

NEPA and Army implementing regulations require the analysis of all reasonable alternatives, including the No Action Alternative. The No Action Alternative provides a benchmark, enabling decision makers to compare the magnitude of environmental effects of the action alternatives.

Under the No Action Alternative, UAS training missions would continue as they are currently. This would require an FAA Certificate of Authorization (COA) for use of the Terrain Flying Area 5 and Live-fire activities and low-level helicopter operations in the South Training Areas would continue to have conflicts with, and pose a danger to, civilian air traffic. The No Action Alternative would result in training delays, excess expenditure of training funds, unrealistic battle conditions, and possibly shortened training, which would not satisfy Army standards.

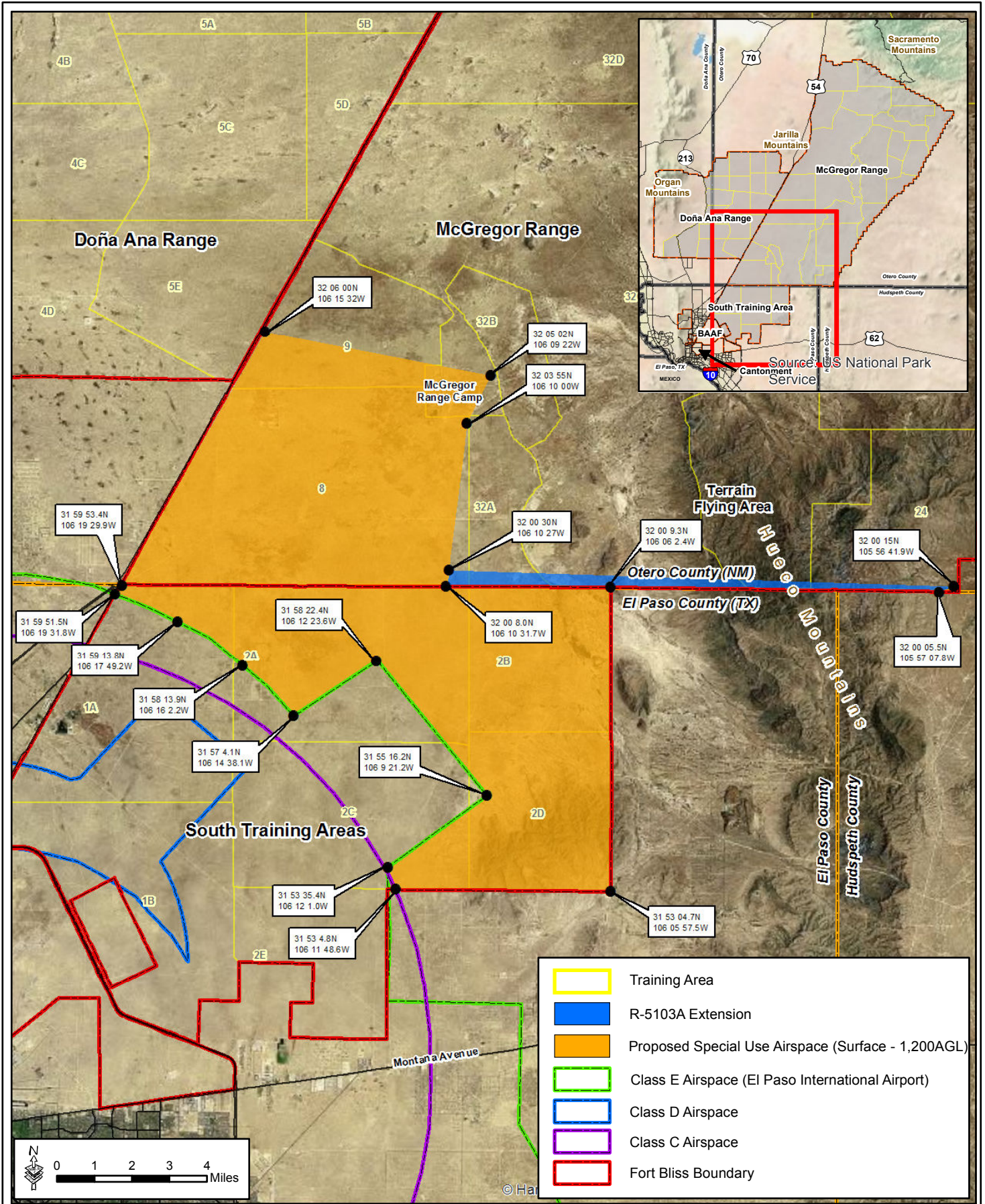


Figure 2-3: Alternative 1 Proposed Action Special Use Airspace Boundaries

2.4 Alternatives Eliminated from Further Consideration

2.4.1 Military Operations Areas (MOA)

The issuance of new MOAs to cover the areas in the South Training Areas where conflicts between military and civilian flights occur was considered. This would require notification to non-participating civilian aircraft of military operations, but would not preclude civilian aircraft from operating in or transiting the MOA during military use. Because the military use of the South Training Areas would be continuous during daylight hours, and because the military use area would be over lands primarily owned by Fort Bliss and at altitudes not normally visible to ATC radar facilities in El Paso, the MOA would not separate military and civilian air traffic, and would not meet the purpose and need for the action.

2.4.2 Controlled Firing Areas (CFA)

The use of CFAs to prevent impacts on civilian aircraft from active small arms firing activities in the South Training Areas was considered; however, the designation of individual CFAs for each training activity (activities would occur continuously and daily over a wide area) would be an onerous requirement, with the obligation to establish perimeter monitors for each area to watch for encroaching civilian aircraft. Civilian aircraft would not be required to avoid the operations areas, and training activities would be subject to unscheduled and intermittent interruptions, which would be costly for the Army and would not meet Army training standards.

2.4.3 National Security Areas (NSA)

Designation of an NSA over each hazardous munitions loading or handling area in the McGregor Range Areas 8 and 9 was considered. However, NSAs are designated for ground facilities security concerns, not for aircraft safety issues. Civilian aircraft are requested to voluntarily avoid flight through NSAs, and such designation would not prevent a potential munitions accident. The hazardous areas in Areas 8 and 9 are permanent features, which are surrounded by other training areas better suited to designation of SUA. Therefore, individual NSAs would not be practical or useful for the munitions hazard areas addressed in this EA or for the South Training as a whole.

2.5 Relationship of Action Alternatives to Purpose and Need

Table 2-1 illustrates the relationship between each of the action alternatives addressed in the EA and the purpose and need for the action. While Alternative 1 would partially separate civilian and military aircraft during training operations, there would still be areas of risk for civilian aircraft for certain military flight operations.

Table 2-1. Relationship between Purpose and Need and Alternatives

Requirements	No Action Alternative	Proposed Action	Alternative 1
Separate civilian and military aircraft during training operations	No	Yes	Partial
Prevent civilian aircraft encroachment over hazardous sites and munitions use areas	No	Yes	Yes
Allow for more realistic unrestricted day/night military training	No	Yes	Yes
Prevent military/civilian aircraft interaction south of the Terrain Flying Area	No	Yes	No

SECTION 3.0
AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND CONSEQUENCES

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND CONSEQUENCES

This section of the EA describes the natural and human environment that exists within the project area and the potential impacts of the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative and other Alternatives outlined in Section 2.0 of this document. Only those resources that have the potential to be affected by any of the alternatives considered are described, as per CEQ guidance (40 CFR 1501.7 [3]). No construction is involved in the Proposed Action or alternatives, and no ground actions, additional personnel or equipment, or change in operations from those assessed in the SEIS and the GFS EIS are proposed. All impacts resulting from increased military aircraft activities and CAB operations were addressed in previous environmental documents (Army 2007a, Army 2007b, and Army 2010). The only resource that would be impacted by the Proposed Action or the alternatives is national airspace and air traffic safety. The focus of this EA is on air traffic safety.

The following resources are not addressed in this EA for the reasons stated:

- **Land Use** – Within the affected area, all land use is military training almost exclusively. The only area that falls below the SUA request and not used for military training is a portion of land southeast of the Meyer Range that is privately owned and used to graze a few head of cattle (the forage is very poor in this area). This area is actively being sought for Army acquisition under the Army Compatible Use Buffer program. No changes to existing land use would occur as a result of the proposed action.
- **Aesthetics** – The Proposed Action would not change aesthetics or vistas visible to the public.
- **Air Quality** – No new military ground activities are proposed, and no new military aircraft would be deployed that would result in additional air emissions. Air quality impacts from CAB operations were addressed in previous environmental documents at the EIS level that are incorporated into this EA by reference.
- **Coastal Resources** – Fort Bliss is not located in or near any designated coastal area.
- **Compatible Land Use** – The addition of SUA would be over lands owned by Fort Bliss that are dedicated to military training. The SUA proposed over private lands would not affect the surface use of that land, since it is range land used for cattle grazing.
- **Construction Impacts** – No construction would be conducted as part of the Proposed Action.

- **Department of Transportation Act: Section 4(f)** – Designation of airspace for military flight operations is exempt from section 4(f). The Department of Defense reauthorization in 1997 provided that “[n]o military flight operations (including a military training flight), or designation of airspace for such operation, may be treated as a transportation program or project for the purposes of section 303(c) of title 49, United States Code.” (PL 105-85, Nov. 18, 1997)
- **Farmlands** – No farmlands or special agricultural soils exist within the area proposed for the airspace restrictions.
- **Fish, Wildlife, and Plants** – The Proposed Action would not involve any ground actions, and would not change military operations that would affect any biological resources. All biological resource impacts associated with the CAB operations were addressed in previous environmental documents incorporated by reference.
- **Floodplains** – There are no floodplains within or near the area of the Proposed Action.
- **Hazardous Materials, Pollution Prevention, and Solid Waste** – The Proposed Action would not generate any additional hazardous materials, petroleum products, solid wastes, or explosives.
- **Historical, Architectural, Archaeological, and Cultural Resources** – No activities are proposed that would affect or be affected by any of these resources. Cultural resource impacts of CAB operations were addressed in previous environmental documents incorporated by reference.
- **Light Emissions and Visual Impacts** – No increased light emissions or visual impacts would occur as part of the Proposed Action.
- **Cultural Resources** – The proposed action is a request to change an airspace designation. As such there would be no impact on surface lands and no impact on cultural resources, including historic structures.
- **Natural Resources and Energy Supply** – The Proposed Action would have no effect on natural resources. No additional energy use would occur as part of the Proposed Action.
- **Noise** – The designation of SUA over Fort Bliss southern training areas would not change the level or type of military training currently being conducted or proposed there. All noise impacts associated with CAB operations were addressed in previous environmental documents incorporated by reference.
- **Secondary (Induced) Impacts** – No secondary impacts have been identified as a result of the Proposed Action.
- **Water Quality** – No activities are proposed that would affect surface or groundwater, or that would require additional water resources.
- **Socioeconomic Impacts, Environmental Justice, and Children’s Environmental Health and Safety Risks** – The Proposed Action would not add or subtract personnel or facilities to the existing Fort Bliss training mission, and no economic activities are proposed, all designated SUA would be over military training lands or unoccupied range lands, and no minority populations or children would be affected.

- **Wetlands** – There are no wetlands within the area affected by the Proposed Action.
- **Wild and Scenic Rivers** – There are no wild and scenic rivers located within or near the area affected by the Proposed Action.

In accordance with both NEPA and the CEQ regulations implementing NEPA, this EA will examine the potential impacts on those resources that could be affected by the Proposed Action, Alternative 1, or the No Action Alternative. More specifically, the EA will examine the potential for direct, indirect, adverse, or beneficial impacts. The EA will also assess whether such impacts are likely to be long-term, short-term, permanent, or cumulative.

3.1 Airspace and Air Traffic Safety

This resource consists of the commercial air traffic utilizing the El Paso International Airport and BAAF, as well as the civilian aircraft operating in the vicinity of El Paso and Fort Bliss. This includes aircraft based in the El Paso area and those aircraft transiting the El Paso area airspace.

3.1.1 Affected Environment

The airspace around El Paso and Fort Bliss is designated by the FAA as controlled airspace around the El Paso International Airport and BAAF. The controlled airspace is designed to provide aircraft separation for approach, landing, and takeoff from the airports in the El Paso area. The location and types of controlled airspace were shown previously in Figure 1-2 and in Appendix C. The Class C and E airspace around the El Paso International Airport dominates the controlled airspace pattern over El Paso, and the SUA Restricted Areas over the FBTC dominate the airspace north of El Paso. The Restricted Areas on the FBTC are restricted to military aircraft flights only.

Between the El Paso International Airport Class C and E airspace and the Fort Bliss Restricted Areas, there is a segment of airspace that is currently designated as Class G, or uncontrolled, airspace below 1,200 feet AGL, with non-designated Class E airspace above that. Within the Class G airspace and the non-designated Class E airspace, any aircraft can fly at any altitude from the surface up to 18,000 feet MSL without contact with ATC at El Paso International

Airport or BAAF. This Class E and G airspace also connects with a Class E and G corridor extending from El Paso to Alamogordo, New Mexico, generally following the US 54 corridor.

Within this Class E and G airspace area, most of which is over Fort Bliss property, the number of aircraft operating is estimated at approximately 50 aircraft per week, mostly at altitudes of between 6,500 and 8,500 feet MSL (FAA, El Paso, personal communication). The undesignated Class E and Class G airspace is beyond the normal takeoff and landing approach slopes controlled by ATC at El Paso International Airport, and commercial aircraft in that area are operating at altitudes above 5,500 feet MSL. Military aircraft (primarily helicopters) flying out of BAAF would generally operate in the Class E and G area at altitudes between the surface and 1,200 feet AGL as they land or take off for training on the FBTC. BAAF traffic is controlled by the BAAF ATC within the (blue) Class D airspace assigned to BAAF (see Figure 1-2).

There is no aircraft separation service provided for aircraft operating at low altitudes in the Class E and G airspace over the South Training Areas. Aircraft flying below 5,500 feet MSL are generally not visible to El Paso International Airport ATC radar.

3.1.2 Environmental Consequences

The environmental consequences resulting from the Proposed Action and alternative actions are defined as effects on commercial and other civilian aircraft related to flight paths, available flight altitudes, disruption of normal flight patterns, and restrictions on past flight activities which would no longer be available. Adverse and beneficial effects on flight safety for civilian and military aircraft are also discussed.

3.1.2.1 Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would extend the current Restricted Airspace R-5103A south to the Texas/New Mexico state line and the edge of Fort Bliss property, as was originally intended. The Proposed Action would also designate SUA (Restricted Area) over the South Training Areas and McGregor Range Training Areas 8 and 9 from the surface to 1,200 feet AGL (approximately 5,200 feet MSL). The SUA joins the R-5103A and R-5103B Restricted Areas over the McGregor Range. This would result in a restriction of civilian aircraft entering the new SUA

when it is activated for Army training. This is expected to be from 0700 to 2000 hours (7:00 am to 8:00 pm) Monday through Friday of each week. This would require any civilian aircraft to fly above 1,200 feet AGL during those times, but would not significantly inhibit transient civilian aircraft from flying over the South Training Areas. Aircraft approaching El Paso International Airport would also be required to fly above 1,200 feet AGL in the Restricted Area, but aircraft approaching El Paso International Airport for landing normally are above 1,200 feet AGL over that area prior to transitioning into the landing pattern, and aircraft taking off from El Paso International Airport would also normally climb above 1,200 feet AGL over the area en route to a flight path out of the El Paso area. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not interfere with normal aircraft landing and takeoff procedures for El Paso International Airport.

IFR operations into and out of El Paso International Airport would not be compromised by the Proposed Action, since authorized IFR flight paths and altitudes are above 1,200 feet AGL over the South Training Areas. Most aircraft flying over the South Training Areas above 1,200 feet AGL would normally be visible to El Paso ATC radar, which would also allow for additional traffic separation service and added safety.

Aircraft operating in the Terrain Flying Area (R-5103A and R-5103B) northeast of the South Training Areas would be afforded additional separation from civilian aircraft and added safety when they transition into and out of that area in the Hueco Mountains.

The floor of the El Paso International Airport Class E airspace northeast of the airport would remain at 700 feet AGL. Likewise, the floor of the undesignated Class E airspace over the South Training Areas would remain at 1,200 feet AGL. This would not impose a hardship restriction on aircraft operations in that area, since almost all aircraft currently operate above that altitude. The Class G airspace over the South Training Areas would be replaced by the new SUA. Aircraft transiting the area between El Paso International Airport and the Fort Bliss restricted areas to the north would still be able to fly above 1,200 feet AGL to reach the flight corridor to Alamogordo along US 54.

The Proposed Action would greatly reduce the potential for aircraft accidents by separating military and civilian air traffic over the South Training Areas. Civilian aircraft would also be protected from adverse impacts due to military training activities on the ground. Aviation safety would be greatly enhanced, but no significant impacts on or disruption of civilian or commercial aircraft operations would result from implementation of the Proposed Action.

3.1.2.2 Alternative 1

The only difference between the Proposed Action and Alternative 1 is the elimination of the SUA over private and state lands east of the South Training Areas and south of the Terrain Flying Area. The effects of Alternative 1 would be the same as for the Proposed Action, except that the separation between civilian aircraft and military aircraft in the transition area south of the Terrain Flying Area would be eliminated, and continuing safety concerns for all aircraft in that area below 1,200 feet AGL would remain due to the heavy use of the Meyer Range live fire ranges.

3.1.2.3 No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would leave the airspace designations over Fort Bliss and the South Training Areas as they are currently. The addition of the CAB beginning in 2012 would result in an increase in military flights, primarily helicopters, over the South Training Areas (Army 2010). Increased use of drop zones, shoot houses, and live fire exercises would result in increased safety risk for low-flying civilian aircraft, should they fly over the South Training Areas during training exercises. Scheduled military training exercises in the South Training Areas would be subject to interruption if civilian aircraft stray into the area.

3.1.3 Cumulative Environmental Consequences

3.1.3.1 Proposed Action

The Proposed Action Alternative would not cause any significant cumulative impacts on Fort Bliss or in the El Paso area, since there are no other airspace changes planned for the area by any other agencies. Beneficial cumulative effects would accrue for civilian and military aircraft operations over the South Training Areas, as the separation of military and civilian aircraft

would alleviate safety concerns associated with increased military training flights expected to occur in 2012 and beyond.

3.1.3.2 *Alternative 1*

Cumulative impacts for Alternative 1 would be similar to those for the Proposed Action; however, continued and increasing conflicts between civilian and military air traffic over the Hueco Mountains south of the Terrain Flying Area would remain.

3.1.3.3 *No Action Alternative*

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no modification of airspace over the South Training Areas and no restrictions on civilian air traffic would occur. Airspace congestion and potential civilian/military air traffic conflicts would increase below 1,200 feet AGL when CAB operations are scheduled to begin in 2012, resulting in cumulative impacts on air traffic safety.

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SECTION 4.0
CONCLUSIONS

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

This EA describes proposed changes to airspace to include SUA over the southern part of Fort Bliss. This action has been evaluated to determine potential environmental impacts and their severity. If the Proposed Action alternative is carried out as described in the EA, the action would have no significant impact on the natural or human environment.

Thus, a FNSI has been concluded. Accordingly, the U.S. Army has determined that an EIS pursuant to NEPA is not required for the Proposed Action.

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SECTION 5.0
REFERENCES

5.0 REFERENCES

- Army Regulation 200-1. Environmental Quality, Environmental Protection and Enhancement. Headquarters Department of the Army Washington, DC 21 February 1997.
- Army (Air Defense Artillery Center and Fort Bliss) 2007a. Final Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement; Fort Bliss, Texas and New Mexico Mission and Master Plan, March 2007.
- Army (Department of the Army) 2007b. Final Environmental Impact Statement for Army Growth and Force Structure Realignment, October 2007.
- Army 2010. Fort Bliss Growth and Force Structure Realignment, Final Environmental Impact Statement, March 2010.
- Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) 2006. Order 1050.1E, CHG 1, Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures. March 20, 2006.
- FAA 2008. Order JO 7400.2G, Procedures for Handling Airspace Matters. April 10, 2008.
- FAA 2012. Albuquerque, South Sectional Aeronautical Chart, 89th Edition, 3 MAY 2012 to 18 OCT 2012.
- FAA 2012. El Paso, North Sectional Aeronautical Chart, 89th Edition, 26 JULY 2012 to 7 FEB 2013.

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SECTION 6.0
LIST OF PREPARERS

6.0 LIST OF PREPARERS

The following people were primarily responsible for preparing this Environmental Assessment.

Name	Agency/Organization	Discipline/ Expertise	Experience	Role in Preparing EA
Chris Ingram	Gulf South Research Corporation	Biology/Ecology	30 years NEPA and natural resources studies	EA review and comment Meetings and coordination
Steve Oivanki	Gulf South Research Corporation	Geology	20 years natural resources and NEPA studies	Project Manager EA preparation
Chris Cothron	Gulf South Research Corporation	GIS/Graphics	3 years GIS/graphics experience	GIS analysis and graphics
Mark Walker	Gulf South Research Corporation	Forestry/Natural Resource Management	30 years natural resources and NEPA studies	EA review and comment
John Barrera	Fort Bliss Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division	NEPA Program Manager	20 years	Fort Bliss Project Manager EA review and comment
Benny Steagall	Fort Bliss Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization, and Security	Air Traffic and Airspace Officer	40 years	Proponent, EA review and comment
Eric Wolters	Fort Bliss Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division	NEPA Specialist	30 years	EA review and comment
John Kipp	Fort Bliss Environmental Division, NEPA Planner	Soil science, Geomorphology	25 years earth science and NEPA	EA review and comment

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**SECTION 7.0
DISTRIBUTION LIST**

1 **7.0 DISTRIBUTION LIST**

2

3 **Libraries**

4 Alamogordo Public Library

5 920 Oregon Ave

6 Alamogordo, NM 88310

7

8 El Paso Main Public Library

9 501 North Oregon

10 El Paso TX 79901

11

12 **Civil Air Patrol**

13 Texas Wing Group 1

14 El Paso Squadron

15 8025 Boeing Dr

16 El Paso, TX 79925

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18 **El Paso International Airport**

19 Attn: Air Traffic Control Operations

20 6701 Convair Road

21 El Paso, TX 79925

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**Environmental Assessment for the Modification of Special Use Airspace
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PUBLISHERS AFFIDAVIT

GULF SOUTH

STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTY OF EL PASO

Before me, a Notary Public in and for El Paso County, State of Texas, on

this day personally appeared TERRIE CARTER who state

upon oath that he is the CLASSIFIED SUPERVISOR of the El Paso Times, a daily

newspaper published in the City and County of El Paso, State of Texas, which is

a newspaper of general circulation and which has been continuously and

regularly published for the period of not less than one year in the said County of

El Paso, and that he was such upon the dates herein mentioned:

That the LEGAL ALAMOGORDO copy was published in the ~~El~~

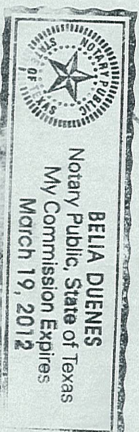
~~DAILY NEWS~~ Paso Times for the ONE DAY. The dates of such

publication being as follows, to wit FEBRUARY 12, 2012

Subscribed and sworn to before me, Signed _____

This the 12th day of February 2012

Rob Owers



Terrie Carter

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY
Draft Finding of No
Significant Impact
Environmental
Assessment for the
Modification of Special
Use Airspace,
Fort Bliss, Texas and
New Mexico

Fort Bliss has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate potential environmental impacts concerning a proposed change from unrestricted to Special Use Airspace (SUA) over the South Training Areas and southern McGregor Range, Fort Bliss. Restriction of airspace from surface to 1200 feet above ground level (AGL) is needed to improve the safety of civilian aircraft overflights from live-fire activities, munitions loading areas, drop zones, and other hazardous operations. In addition, SUA would allow military aircraft more room to maneuver when performing low-level exercises. The EA has resulted in a Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI). Both are available for public review and comment at the following libraries: the Thomas Branigan Memorial Library, 200 E. Picacho Ave., Las Cruces, NM 79916; Alamogordo Public Library, 920 Oregon Ave., Alamogordo, NM 88310; and the El Paso Main Public Library, 501 North Oregon, El Paso, TX 79901. The Draft FNSI and EA can also be viewed on Fort Bliss website at www.bliss.army.mil; click on "Environmental".

The public is encouraged to review and comment on these documents. Submittal of public comments must be received no later than 13 March 2012 and can be submitted by e-mail at john.f.barrera@nra.af.mil or mailed to: Mr. John F. Barrera, NEPA Program Manager, IMB1-PWE, 8624 Pleasonton Avenue, Fort Bliss, Texas 79916-6812.

PUBLISHERS AFFIDAVIT

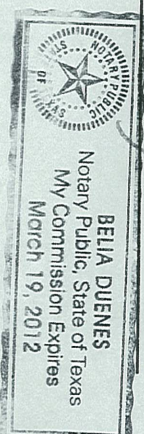
STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTY OF EL PASO

GULF SOUTH RESEARCH

Before me, a Notary Public in and for El Paso County, State of Texas, on this day personally appeared TERRIE CARTER who state upon oath that he is the CLASSIFIED SUPERVISOR of the El Paso Times, a daily newspaper published in the City and County of El Paso, State of Texas, which is a newspaper of general circulation and which has been continuously and regularly published for the period of not less than one year in the said County of El Paso, and that he was such upon the dates herein mentioned:

That the LEGAL copy was published in the El Paso Times for the ONE DAY. The dates of such publication being as follows, to wit FEBRUARY 12, 2012
Subscribed and sworn to before me, Signed _____

This the 12th day of February 2012



Terrie Carter

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY
Draft Finding of No Significant Impact Assessment for the Modification of Special Use Airspace, Fort Bliss, Texas and New Mexico

Fort Bliss has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate potential environmental impacts concerning a proposed change from unrestricted to Special Use Airspace (SUA) over the South Training Areas and southern McGregor Range, Fort Bliss. Restriction of airspace from surface to 1,200 feet above ground level (AGL) is needed to improve the safety of civilian aircraft overflights from live-fire areas, drop zones, and other hazardous operations. In addition, SUA would allow military aircraft more room to maneuver when performing low-level exercises. The EA has resulted in a Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI). Both are available for public review and comment at the following libraries: the Thomas Branigan Memorial Library, 200 E. Picacho Ave., Las Cruces, NM 79916; Alamogordo Public Library, 920 Oregon Ave., Alamogordo, NM 88310; and the El Paso Main Public Library, 501 North Oregon, El Paso, TX 79901. The Draft FNSI and EA can also be viewed on Fort Bliss website at www.bliss.army.mil/Environmental/.

The public is encouraged to review and comment on these documents. Submittal of public comments must be received no later than 13 March 2012 and can be submitted by e-mail at john.f.barrera.civ@mail.mil, or mailed to: Mr. John F. Barrera, NEPA Program Manager, IMBL-PWE, 8624 Pleasonton Avenue, Fort Bliss, Texas 79916-6812.

PUBLISHERS AFFIDAVIT

GULF SOUTH

STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTY OF EL PASO

Before me, a Notary Public in and for El Paso County, State of Texas, on this day personally appeared TERRIE CARTER who state upon oath that he is the CLASSIFIED SUPERVISOR of the El Paso Times, a daily newspaper published in the City and County of El Paso, State of Texas, which is a newspaper of general circulation and which has been continuously and regularly published for the period of not less than one year in the said County of El Paso, and that he was such upon the dates herein mentioned:

That the LEGAL copy was published in the EL PASO TIMES SUN ~~Paso Times~~ for the ONE DAY ~~ONE DAY~~ The dates of such publication being as follows, to wit FEBRUARY 12, 2012

Subscribed and sworn to before me, Signed TERRIE CARTER
This the 12th day of February 2012
Belia Duenes



NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY
Draft Finding of No Significant Impact Environmental Assessment for the Modification of Special Use Airspace, Fort Bliss, Texas and New Mexico

Fort Bliss has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate potential environmental impacts concerning a proposed change from unrestricted to Special Use Airspace (SUA) over the South Training Areas and southern portion of the Range, Fort Bliss, Restriction of Airspace from surface to 1,200 feet above ground level (AAGL) is needed to improve the safety of civilian aircraft overflights from live-fire activities, munitions loading areas, drop zones, and other hazardous operations. In addition, SUA would allow military aircraft more room to maneuver when performing low-level exercises. The EA has resulted in a Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI). Both are available for public review and comment at the following libraries: the Thomas Branigan Memorial Library, 200 E. Picacho Ave., Las Cruces, NM 79916; Alamogordo Public Library, 920 Oregon Ave., Alamogordo, NM 88310; and the El Paso Main Public Library, 501 North Oregon, El Paso, TX 79901. The Draft FNSI and EA can also be viewed on Fort Bliss website at www.bliss.army.mil; click on Environmental.

The public is encouraged to review and comment on these documents. Submittal of public comments must be received no later than 13 March 2012 and can be submitted by e-mail at john.f.barrera.civ@mail.mil, or mailed to: Mr. John F. Barrera, NEPA Program Manager, IMBL-PWE, 8624 Pleasonton Avenue, Fort Bliss, Texas 79916-6812.

SECTION 8.0
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

1 8.0 ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

2

3	1AD	First Armored Division
4	AGL	Above Ground Level
5	AR	Army Regulation
6	Army	U.S. Army
7	ATC	Air Traffic Control
8	ATS	Air Traffic Services
9	BAAF	Biggs Army Airfield
10	BCT	Brigade Combat Team
11	BfSB	Battlefield Surveillance Brigade
12	BRAC	Base Closure and Realignment Act
13	CAB	Combat Aviation Brigade
14	CASEVAC	Casualty Evacuation
15	CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
16	CFA	Controlled Firing Area
17	CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
18	COA	Certificate of Authorization
19	DoD	Department of Defense
20	DPW	Directorate of Public Works
21	EA	Environmental Assessment
22	EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
23	E.O.	Executive Order
24	FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
25	FARP	Forward Area Refuel Point
26	FBTC	Fort Bliss Training Complex
27	FNSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
28	FORSCOM	Forces Command
29	GSRC	Gulf South Research Corporation
30	HBCT	Heavy Maneuver Brigade Combat Team
31	IBCT	Infantry Brigade Combat Team
32	IFR	Instrument Flight Rules
33	ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
34	MOA	Military Operations Area
35	MSL	Mean Sea Level
36	NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
37	NM	Nautical Mile
38	NSA	National Security Area
39	PR	Personnel Recovery
40	ROD	Record of Decision
41	SARSA	Small Arms Safety Zone
42	SUA	Special Use Airspace
43	SVFR	Special Visual Flight Rules
44	TA	Training Area
45	UAS	Unmanned Aircraft System

**Environmental Assessment for the Modification of Special Use Airspace
Fort Bliss, Texas and New Mexico**

- 1 U.S. United States
- 2 U.S.C. U.S. Code
- 3 VFR Visual Flight Rules
- 4

**APPENDIX A
CORRESPONDENCE**



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Air Traffic Organization
Central Service Center

2601 Meacham Blvd.
Fort Worth, TX 76137

DEC 23 2011

Ms. Vicki Hamilton, R.A.
Chief, Environmental Division
Directorate of Public Works
United States Army Garrison
1 Pershing Road
Fort Bliss, TX 79916-3803

Dear Ms. Hamilton:

Thank you for allowing us to review your Environmental Assessment (EA) as a Cooperating Agency for the modification of special use airspace at Fort Bliss, Texas and New Mexico. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has reviewed this document from an environmental and aeronautical perspective.

FAA JO 7400.2H, Procedures for Handling Airspace Matters, Chapter 23, paragraph 23-1-2, states "Restricted areas are established when determined necessary to confine or segregate activities considered hazardous to nonparticipating aircraft." The section on Purpose and Need, as described on page three, lines 25-31 of your EA does not adequately justify the need for restricted airspace. Additional comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment for the Modification of Special Use Airspace Fort Bliss, Texas and New Mexico, November 2011 are found in the enclosed attachment.

The FAA looks forward to working with Fort Bliss to ensure your aeronautical needs are met while FAA also manages the nation's airspace. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Gregory Hines, Environmental Specialist, Operations Support Group, ATO Central Service Center, at (817) 321-7709.

Sincerely,

David P. Medina, Manager
Operations Support Group
ATO Central Service Center

Enclosure

Comments: Draft EA for Fort Bliss Airspace Modifications

Reviewer	Page/Section/Line #	Comment	Response
Joe Yadouga	Pg. 3, lines 25-31 and Pg 4, lines 1-5	The above is Not justification for restricted airspace. Also, live fire should be in restricted airspace not "Live fire activity in vicinity of the restricted airspace" Simulated air attacks are nonhazardous by definition and could be performed in MOAs. Controlled Firing Areas (CFAs) are appropriate for small weapons fire. Over flight of sensitive areas could be handled by a NSA (National Security Area). We do not build restricted areas "to provide transition airspace ... for UAS..."	
Joe Yadouga	Pg. 8, line 27	"Prohibit" is incorrect. Non-participating aircraft are restricted from flying within active restricted areas; however, there are times that the Controlling Agency will allow access to the airspace.	
Joe Yadouga	Pg. 10, lines 9-25	Does not justify restricted airspace. What is happening today? Are civil aircraft allowed to fly over this airspace today? Justification only supports CFAs or NSA. The proposal appears to be vehicle to allow UAS ops without COA. If we proceed, we may need to come up with a name for the proposed restricted area such as "R-5103XXX" or "R-XXX"	
Greg Hines	Pg. 21, 3.0	Land Use- The EA must still state what the underlying and adjacent land use areas are in the document	
Greg Hines	Pg. 21, Section 3.0	Noise- Noise analysis will need to be conducted to determine if a more detailed analysis is necessary. Please use a noise analysis tool as approved in FAA Order 1050.1e. If there will be additional aircraft, a noise analysis is needed. If the proposed action calls for aircraft to be located in a different area, the noise analysis should analyze the proposed action.	
Greg Hines	Pg. 21, Section 3.0	Air Quality- If there will be additional operations, please explain how these additional operations might affect air emissions?	
Greg Hines	Pg. 21, Section 3.0	Cultural Resources- Please state in the document where historic properties are located at. Will the state historic preservation be contacted? If not, explain why not.	

The following list are the impact categories that any Environmental Assessment(EA) must contain prior to FAA adopting the EA. This list is contained within Appendix A of FAA Order 1050.1e. We suggest that your EA include a table listing these impact categories with the corresponding location in the document or why this impact category is not applicable. For example under Wild and Scenic River, the corresponding table could state There are no Wild and Scenic Rivers located within the boundaries of the proposed action, if this were correct.

Air Quality

Coastal Resources

Compatible Land Use

Construction Impacts

Department of Transportation Act: Sec. 4(f): Please include the following language in this section.

FAA Order 1050.1E Appendix A. 6.1c. Designation of airspace for military flight operations is exempt from section 4(f). The

Department of Defense reauthorization in 1997 provided that “[n]o military flight operations

(including a military training flight), or designation of airspace for such an operation, may be

treated as a transportation program or project for purposes of section 303(c) of title 49, United

States Code”(PL 105-85, Nov. 18, 1997).

Farmlands

Fish, Wildlife, and Plants

Floodplains

Hazardous Materials, Pollution Prevention, and Solid Waste

Historical, Architectural, Archeological, and Cultural Resources

Light Emissions and Visual Impacts

Natural Resources and Energy Supply

Noise

Secondary (Induced) Impacts

Socioeconomic Impacts, Environmental Justice, and Children’s Environmental Health and Safety Risks

Water Quality

Wetlands

Wild and Scenic Rivers

Comments: Draft EA for Fort Bliss Airspace Modifications

Reviewer	Page/Section/Line #	Comment	Response
Joe Yadouga	Pg. 3, lines 25-31 and Pg 4, lines 1-5	<p>The above is Not justification for restricted airspace. Also, live fire should be in restricted airspace not "Live fire activity in vicinity of the restricted airspace". Simulated air attacks are nonhazardous by definition and could be performed in MOAs. Controlled Firing Areas (CFAs) are appropriate for small weapons fire. Over flight of sensitive areas could be handled by a NSA (National Security Area). We do not build restricted areas "to provide transition airspace ... for UAS..."</p>	<p>Noted. The emphasis of the SUA request has been changed for use by helicopter training which was inadvertently de-emphasized in the EA. Additionally, the SEIS (2007) opened up the southern training area (where we are requesting the SUA) to live fire activities. As such, Fort Bliss is requesting the restricted airspace to conduct live fire operations safely. Designation of CFAs would negatively impact the Army's mission and require observers to watch for low-flying civilian aircraft and suspend training activities when aircraft fly over. Establishing NSAs over individual facilities that perform potentially hazardous operations would not be practical.</p>
Joe Yadouga	Pg. 8, line 27	<p>"Prohibit" is incorrect. Non-participating aircraft are restricted from flying within active restricted areas; however, there are times that the Controlling Agency will allow access to the airspace.</p>	<p>Agree. The airspace will be open to non-participating aircraft during times when military training is not being conducted. Scheduling would be determined by the installation airspace manager and the range scheduler. The FAA would be notified when the airspace is to be used and</p>

<p>Joe Yadouga</p>	<p>Pg. 10, lines 9-25</p>	<p>Does not justify restricted airspace. What is happening today? Are civil aircraft allowed to fly over this airspace today? Justification only supports CFAs or NSA. The proposal appears to be vehicle to allow UAS ops without COA. If we proceed, we may need to come up with a name for the proposed restricted area such as "R-5103XXX" or "R-XXX"</p>	<p>when it would be open to non-participating aircraft. This information would then be made available in the NOTAMS to the aviation community.</p>
<p>Greg Hines</p>	<p>Pg. 21, 3.0</p>	<p>Land Use- The EA must still state what the underlying and adjacent land use areas are in the document</p>	<p>Civilian aircraft are now allowed to fly over the area where we are requesting an SUA., However, the Combat Aviation Brigade authorized by BRAC will be fully stood up here in 2012 and a second CAB may be coming in the near future. These 120 or so aircraft will be conducting numerous round the clock operations, which is one reason that the Army is requesting restrictions from 0 to 1200 AGL. Civilian aircraft will still be able to fly through the SUA when not active and over the area but above 1200 AGL anytime. No UASs without a COA would be allowed to fly from the restricted airspace into FAA controlled airspace until COAs are granted by the FAA.</p> <p>Land use underlying the airspace is almost all military training with a small amount of grazing rangeland for cattle. Surrounding land is almost completely rangeland as well. A large buffer area will be mapped between the airspace and the military training lands</p>

Greg Hines	Pg. 21, Section 3.0	<p>Noise- Noise analysis will need to be conducted to determine if a more detailed analysis is necessary. Please use a noise analysis tool as approved in FAA Order 1050.1e. If there will be additional aircraft, a noise analysis is needed. If the proposed action calls for aircraft to be located in a different area, the noise analysis should analyze the proposed action.</p>	boundary so as not to encroach in areas within the city of El Paso. This will be included in a revised document.
Greg Hines	Pg. 21, Section 3.0	<p>Air Quality- If there will be additional operations, please explain how these additional operations might affect air emissions?</p>	Noise analyses for two helicopter brigades were conducted for the SEIS and the GFS EIS. Nothing will change operationally from the activities of these two brigades. We only ask for the restricted airspace 0-1200 AGL so that the helicopters can operate safely.
Greg Hines	Pg. 21, Section 3.0	<p>Cultural Resources- Please state in the document where historic properties are located at. Will the state historic preservation be contacted? If not, explain why not.</p>	Air quality impacts were analyzed in the two EISs which have been included in the EA by reference. We will add into the document any cultural resource issues although the proposed action will have no effect to features on the ground. All impacts from incoming aviation assets and on the ground training were analyzed in the BRAC SEIS and GFS EIS.

The following list are the impact categories that any Environmental Assessment(EA) must contain prior to FAA adopting the EA. This list is contained within Appendix A of FAA Order 1050.1e. We suggest that your EA include a table listing these impact categories with the corresponding location in the document or why this impact category is not applicable. For example under Wild and Scenic River, the corresponding table could state There are no Wild and Scenic Rivers located within the boundaries of the proposed action, if this were correct.

On the first page of section 3 of the EA we list Valued Environmental Components. We will add these to the list.

Air Quality The action would not create new emissions above those analyzed in the BRAC SEIS EIS (2007). Coastal Resources Fort Bliss is not located on or near a coastal area.

Compatible Land Use Land area below the requested airspace is currently almost all military training. Construction Impacts No construction would be conducted as part of this action.

Department of Transportation Act: Sec. 4(f): Please include the following language in this section.

The following language would be added: FAA Order 1050.1E Appendix A. 6.1c. Designation of airspace for military flight operations is exempt from section 4(f). The

Department of Defense reauthorization in 1997 provided that “[n]o military flight operations (including a military training flight), or designation of airspace for such an operation, may be treated as a transportation program or project for purposes of section 303(c) of title 49, United States Code”(PL 105-85, Nov. 18, 1997).

Farmlands No farmlands or special soils exist within the area scheduled for the airspace restrictions. Fish, Wildlife, and Plants No listed plants, animals, or special habitats exist within the area of the SUA expansion.

Floodplains No floodplains exist within the area.

Hazardous Materials, Pollution Prevention, and Solid Waste - The proposed action would not generate any additional hazardous waste, solid waste or cause pollution.

Historical, Architectural, Archeological, and Cultural Resources – No affect would be seen to these resources from the proposed action.

Light Emissions and Visual Impacts No increased light emissions or impacts on visual resources would occur as part of the proposed action.

Natural Resources and Energy Supply The proposed action would have a slight beneficial effect on natural resources by making the area less crowded with

aircraft which would be less disturbing to wildlife. However, this effect would be very slight. No additional energy use would occur as part of the proposed action.

Noise Noise of military flight operations were accessed in the two aforementioned EISs. No additional noise sources would occur as part of this action.

Secondary (Induced) Impacts No secondary impacts have been identified as part of the proposed action.

Socioeconomic Impacts, Environmental Justice, and Children’s Environmental Health and Safety Risks No effect on these VECs would occur as a result of the proposed action.

Water Quality No additional water would be used as part of the proposed action nor will regional water quality be affected.

Wetlands There are no wetlands within the affected area.

Wild and Scenic Rivers There are no wild and scenic rivers within the affected area.

APPENDIX B
ALTERNATIVES DEFINITIONS AND COORDINATES

ALTERNATIVE 1 DESCRIPTION

R-5103A South Extension to Texas/New Mexico State Line

Boundaries – Beginning at lat. 32°00'30"N., long. 106°10'03"W.;;
to lat. 32°00'08"N., long. 106°10'31.6"W.;;
to lat. 32°00'05.5"N., long. 105°57'07.8"W.;;
to lat. 32°00'15"N., long. 105°56'41.9"W.;;
to the point of beginning.

SUA over the South Training Areas and McGregor Range

Boundaries – Beginning at lat. 32°06'00" N., long. 106°15'32" W.;;
to lat. 31°59'53.4"N., long. 106°19'29.9"W.;;
to lat. 31°59'51.5"N., long. 106°19'31.8"W.;;
to lat. 31°59'13.8"N., long. 106°17'49.2"W.;;
to lat. 31°58'13.9"N., long. 106°16'02.2"W.;;
to lat. 31°57'04.1"N., long. 106°14'38.1"W.;;
to lat. 31°58'22.4"N., long. 106°12'23.6"W.;;
to lat. 31°55'16.2"N., long. 106°9'21.2"W.;;
to lat. 31°53'35.4"N., long. 106°12'01"W.;;
to lat. 31°53'04.8"N., long. 106°11'48.6"W.;;
to lat. 31°53'04.7"N., long. 106°05'57.5"W.;;
to lat. 32°00'9.3"N., long. 106°06'02.4"W.;;
to lat. 32°00'08"N., long. 106°10'31.7"W.;;
to lat. 32°00'30"N., long. 106°10'27"W.;;
to lat. 32°03'55"N., long. 106°10'00"W.;;
to lat. 32°05'02"N., long. 106°09'22"W.;;
to the point of beginning.

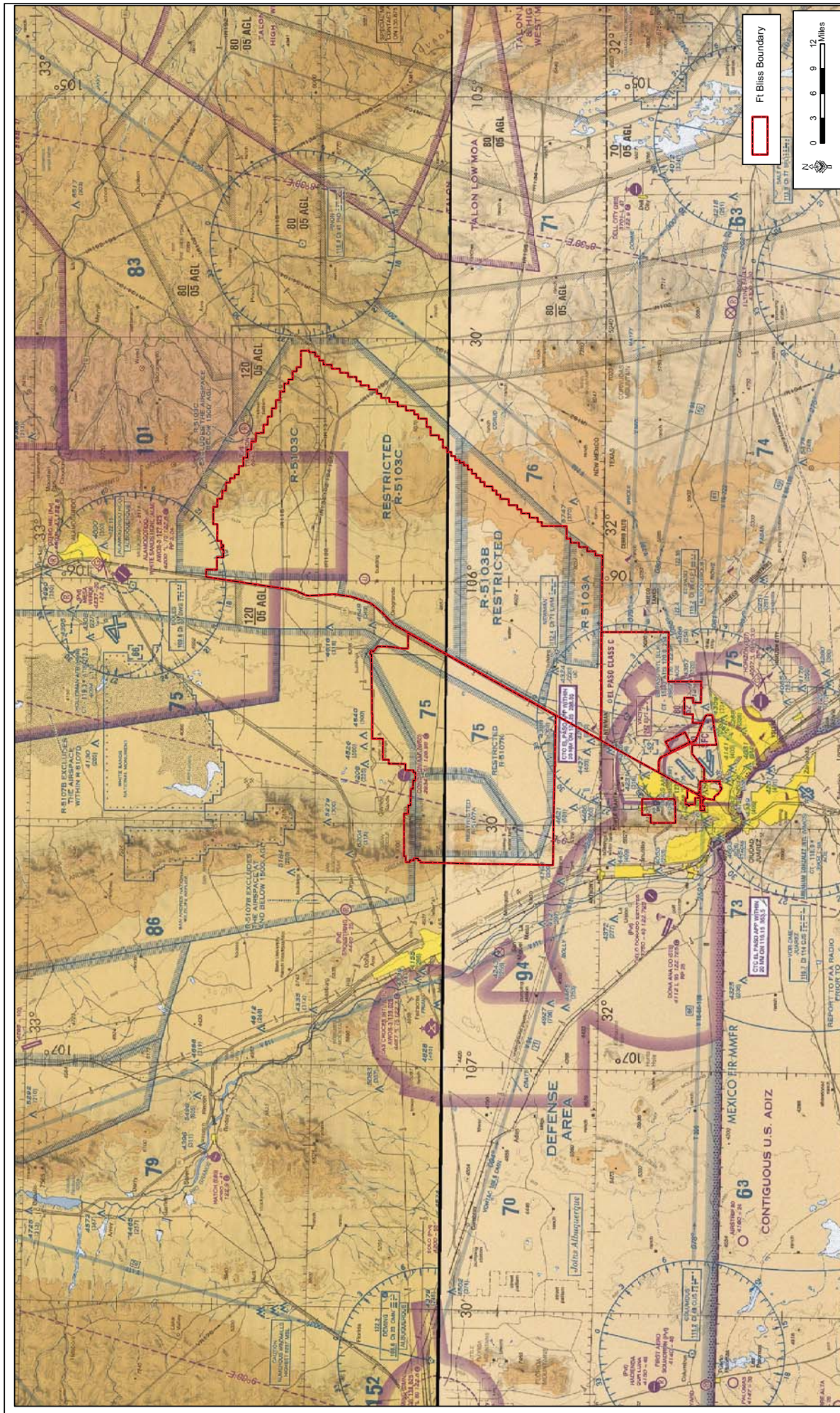
Designated Altitudes Surface to 1,200 feet AGL

Time of Designation 0700 to 2000 Monday through Friday

Controlling Agency FAA, Albuquerque, New Mexico Traffic Control Center

Using Agency Commanding General, U.S. Army and Fort Bliss, Texas

APPENDIX C
FAA CURRENT AIRSPACE NAVIGATION CHART



Fort Bliss Existing Airspace Map (FAA El Paso North and Albuquerque South Sectionals)