

RECORD OF DECISION FOR THE KC-46A THIRD MAIN OPERATING BASE (MOB 3) BEDDOWN

Introduction

The United States Air Force (USAF) is issuing this Record of Decision (ROD) for the KC-46A Third Main Operating Base (MOB 3) Beddown Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) [*Federal Register (FR)*, Vol. 82, No. 71, EIS No. 20170053, Page 17991, April 14, 2017]. In making this decision, the information, analysis, and public comments contained in the KC-46A MOB 3 Beddown Final EIS (FEIS), along with other relevant matters, were considered.

This ROD is prepared in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) at Title 40 *Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)* §1505.2, (*Record of decision in cases requiring environmental impact statements*) and 32 CFR §989, Environmental Impact Analysis Process (EIAP). The USAF is the Lead Agency and there are no cooperating agencies.

Specifically, this ROD:

- States the USAF's decision (**Page 1 and 6**);
- Identifies alternatives considered by the USAF in reaching the decision (**Page 2**) and specifies the alternative considered to be environmentally preferable (**Page 2**);
- States whether all practicable means to avoid, minimize or mitigate environmental harm from the selected alternative have been adopted, and if not, why they were not adopted, and summarizes the applicable management actions (**Pages 3 through 5**).
- Identifies and discusses relevant factors that were considered in making the decision among the alternatives, and states how those factors entered into the decision (**Page 3**).

Decision

The USAF will, by this decision, beddown up to twelve (12) KC-46A Primary Aerospace Vehicles Authorized (PAA) in one squadron at Seymour Johnson AFB, where Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC) leads the Mobility Air Force mission.

Background

For more than 50 years, the KC-135 Stratotanker has served as the aerial refueling backbone to project U.S. global reach and combat power. The U.S. Congress authorized and appropriated funds supporting the USAF's selection of the KC-46A as the newest aerial refueling aircraft to replace a portion of the aging tanker fleet. Congress funded a total aircraft inventory of up to 179 KC-46A aircraft by 2028 to correct deficiencies, update the fleet, enhance operations, and increase mission effectiveness. The new KC-46A Pegasus will provide updated technology designed to enhance operations and increase mission effectiveness to support USAF, Navy, Marine Corps, and allies who rely on tanker range and flexibility to strengthen the coalition mission.

This basing action is only part of the USAF's program to replace the older KC-135 aircraft. This ROD focuses on the location for the USAF's KC-46A MOB 3 mission. Air Mobility Command (AMC) is preparing a separate EIS that will support an independent decision to beddown 48 KC-46A Pegasus aircraft at two active duty installations within the CONUS for the MOB 4 mission. Following these initial beddown actions, the USAF will plan additional beddown actions in the future for the remaining KC-46A aircraft.

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Alternative Identification

As more fully described in the FEIS (**Volume I, Pages 2-1 through 2-3, §2.2**), AMC presented the Lead Command Intent for the KC-46A to the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) in September 2011. This Lead Command Intent included planning conventions that described the proposed basing action tenets, force structure mix, and basing timelines. These planning conventions included the critical information that would be used to shape and inform decisions made throughout the KC-46A Strategic Basing Process.

In 2012, AMC presented objective screening criteria to the SecAF. The approved screening criteria were used to screen the enterprise of 18 bases to identify those bases' capacity to successfully support the MOB 3 mission. The objective criteria included mission, capacity, environmental considerations, and cost.

The Strategic Basing Process resulted in the identification of Seymour Johnson Air Force Base (AFB) in North Carolina as the preferred alternative and Grissom Air Reserve Base (ARB) in Indiana, Tinker AFB in Oklahoma, and Westover ARB in Massachusetts as reasonable alternatives for the MOB 3 mission.

The No Action Alternative was evaluated at each of the alternative basing locations and constitutes the baseline conditions at each alternative location (**FEIS, Volume I, Page 2-36, §2.6**).

Environmentally Preferred Alternative

The environmentally preferred alternative is considered to be the No Action Alternative. The No Action Alternative constitutes the baseline conditions at each alternative location and would not substantially change existing environmental conditions.

Basis of Decision

Seymour Johnson AFB was selected for the MOB 3 mission based on operational analysis, results of site surveys, environmental, economic and technical factors discussed in this ROD; environmental impacts as analyzed in the Final EIS; input from the public and government agencies and military judgment factors. The primary drivers for selecting Seymour Johnson AFB were its lower costs and its highly successful existing active-duty association, which will lead to the lowest active-duty manpower required to stand up the KC-46A unit.

Public Involvement

Public involvement was integral to the USAF's development of this EIS. Public and agency comments were received and considered, including those received during scoping, at public hearings, and during the public comment period on the Draft EIS.

Information reflecting public involvement can be found in the FEIS (**FEIS, Volume I, Pages 1-5 to 1-8 and 6-1 to 6-3, §1.5, §1.6 and Chapter 6**). Furthermore, FEIS Volume II, Appendix A, provides public involvement documentation as well as copies of comments received during the Draft EIS public comment period. Public notices and meetings included:

- Notice of Intent: Published March 23, 2016, in the FR, Vol. 81, Number 56, page 15510.
- Scoping Period: March 23, 2016 through April 25, 2016.
 - Scoping meetings:
 - April 12, 2016, Castle of Knights, Chicopee, Massachusetts;
 - April 14, 2016, Herman Park Center, Goldsboro, North Carolina;
 - April 19, 2016, Milestone Center, Peru, Indiana;
 - April 21, 2016, Reed Conference Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

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- Draft EIS Notice of Availability (NOA): Published November 18, 2016, in the FR, Volume 81, Number 223, EIS No. 20160269, page 81765;
- Public Comment and Review Period: A 45-day comment period was initiated with the NOA publication in the FR on November 18, 2016 and ended on January 2, 2017;
 - Public Hearings:
 - December 6, 2016, Reed Conference Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
 - December 8, 2016, Milestone Center, Peru, Indiana;
 - December 13, 2016, Westover Airport, Chicopee, Massachusetts;
 - December 15, 2016, Herman Park Center, Goldsboro, North Carolina.
- FEIS NOA: Published in the FR on April 14, 2017, Vol. 82, No. 71, EIS No. 20170053, Page 17991, April 14, 2017. This initiated the mandatory 30-day waiting period prior to ROD signature.

Government to Government Consultation

The USAF conducted Government to Government Consultation with 19 different Federally Recognized Tribes (Tribes). Each tribe was contacted early in the environmental planning process and received USAF notification of the project in March 2016. Although the USAF consulted with the tribes on all of the alternatives in the EIS, the descriptions below describe only the consultations associated with the preferred alternative, Seymour Johnson AFB for MOB 3 mission.

Agency Coordination and Consultation

As described more completely in the FEIS (Volume II, Appendix A), the USAF coordinated and consulted with Federal and state agencies. The Federal and state agencies responsible for biological and cultural resources were contacted early in the environmental planning process and received USAF notification of the project in March 2016. The USAF consulted on all of the alternatives in the EIS. However, the descriptions which follow below describe only the consultations associated with the preferred alternative, Seymour Johnson AFB for MOB 3 mission.

Endangered Species Act Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The USAF completed informal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. The USAF determined, through informal consultation with the USFWS, that there are no Federal or state threatened or endangered species in the region of influence at Seymour Johnson AFB. Therefore, no further Section 7 consultation was required.

National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Consultation

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the USAF initiated Section 106 consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in North Carolina. On June 14, 2016, the North Carolina SHPO concurred with the USAF determination that none of the buildings affected by this undertaking are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Section 106 consultation was concluded on February 21, 2017 when the North Carolina SHPO concurred that no historic properties would be affected by implementation of the MOB 3 mission at Seymour Johnson AFB (FEIS Volume II Appendix A, Page A.5-8).

National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Government to Government Consultation

The USAF completed government-to-government consultation with potentially affected Tribes. No adverse Section 106 impacts to tribal resources are anticipated to result from implementation of the MOB 3 mission at Seymour Johnson AFB. There are no tribal resources located at Seymour Johnson AFB or in Wayne County. Seymour Johnson AFB has previously initiated consultation with the Eastern Band of the

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Cherokee Nation. The tribe has indicated that they have no interests in projects in Wayne County (see email dated 14 April 2014 in Volume II, Appendix A, Page A.3-10, § A.3.1.2). Section 106 consultation for the KC-46A MOB 3 mission at Seymour Johnson AFB is complete.

Coastal Zone Management Act Consultation

On May 4, 2016, the North Carolina Division of Coastal Management agreed with the USAF determination that a Federal Consistency Determination would not be necessary for implementation of the KC-46A MOB 3 mission at Seymour Johnson AFB (see letter dated May 4, 2016 in Volume II, Appendix A, Page A.2-21, § A.2.4).

No agency coordination or consultation was required for air quality. Seymour Johnson AFB is located in an attainment area; therefore, a general conformity determination was not required for implementation of the MOB 3 mission at Seymour Johnson AFB.

Management Actions

The USAF considered and adopted all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm at Seymour Johnson AFB. For the purposes of this ROD and future planning, management actions are defined as those actions that are built or designed into the proposed action and alternatives and either prevent or minimize impacts.

Specific management actions (i.e., those required by regulation, or USAF guidance or instructions) to facilitate the implementation of the decision were identified in the FEIS and will be carried forward and implemented (FEIS, Volume I, Pages 2-49 and 2-50, §2.9). Management actions are summarized below by their applicable environmental resource areas. Compliance laws and regulations administered by the US EPA and other regulatory and/or state environmental quality agencies are mandated, and although the laws and regulations have mitigating effects, they are not considered discretionary with respect to Air Force decision making.

To accommodate this continuous cycle and to track management actions, within 90 days of the signature of this ROD, AFRC will develop a management plan that identifies principal and subordinate organizations having responsibility for oversight and execution of specific management actions. In no case will an impact-inducing action be taken or implemented, prior to the applicable management action (defined below) being put in place.

The management action plan will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Identification of the specific actions;
- Identification of the responsible organization for each action;
- Timing for execution of the actions, and;
- Definition of the adaptive management approach to be used.

Within certain parameters, the USAF may develop an adaptive management program as part of its overarching monitoring program. In doing so, the USAF would follow the President's Council on Environmental Quality mitigation and monitoring guidance¹ and other legal and generally accepted practices.

¹ "Appropriate Use of Mitigation and Monitoring and Clarifying the Appropriate Use of Mitigated Findings of No Significant Impact," January 14, 2011

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Furthermore, the USAF intent is to provide flexibility in its adaptive management approach in order to comply with regulatory requirements and allow for considered adaptations. Where the proposed use of adaptations are considered, the USAF will, before adapting, fully consider whether or not the adaptation triggers the need for more full analysis under NEPA and the USAF's EIAP (e.g., supplementation, tiering, etc.).

As described in the FEIS (**Volume I, Pages 4-23 to 4-43, §4.2**), management actions for the MOB 3 mission are listed below by each of the FEIS resource areas.

Noise

The USAF has required the KC-46 to meet FAA Part 36, Stage 4 noise levels (the most restrictive commercial aircraft noise level standard) and International Congress of Aeronautical Organizations, Committee of Environmental Protection (CAEP)/6 air contaminant emission limits (**FEIS Volume I, Page 1-4, §1.4.2**).

KC-46A operations will mirror existing tanker operations making use of existing ground tracks and altitude profiles currently flown by KC-135 aircrews at Seymour Johnson AFB (**FEIS, Volume I, Page 4-24, §4.2.1**). KC-46A aircrews based at Seymour Johnson AFB would fly five percent of total operations during acoustic night (10:00 P.M. to 7:00 A.M.), a decrease from the 13 percent of KC-135 operations currently flown during acoustic night (**FEIS, Volume I, Page 4-24, §4.2.1**).

The KC-46A will be operated at the same auxiliary airfield (Kinston Regional Jetport, Kinston, North Carolina) currently used by Seymour Johnson AFB based KC-135 aircrews and at about the same frequency. The KC-46A aircrews will use the same flight routes to access the auxiliary airfield and will operate on the same flight tracks that are used by the KC-135 aircrews. Use of the Kinston Regional Jetport, between 10:00 PM and 7:00 AM, as an auxiliary airfield, will be rare (**FEIS, Volume I, Page 4-24, §4.2.1**).

Air Quality

Employ fugitive dust control and soil retention practices (**FEIS, Volume I, Page 4-28, §4.2.2**) including:

- Water trucks to keep all areas of vehicle movement damp enough to prevent dust from leaving the construction area;
- Minimize the amount of disturbed ground area at a given time;
- Suspension of all soil disturbance activities when winds exceed 25 miles per hour or when visible dust plumes emanate from the site.
- Designating personnel to monitor the dust control program and to order increased watering, as necessary, to minimize the generation of dust.

Safety

- Existing KC-135 emergency fuel jettison locations and procedures will be used for all KC-46A missions, if necessary (**FEIS, Volume I, Page 2-8, §2.3.1.4, Page 3-31, §3.2.3.1 and Volume II, Pages B-16 and B-17, §B.3.3.1**).
- Emergency and mishap response plans will be updated to address the needed procedures and response actions specific to the KC-46A airframe.

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Soils and Water

The Storm Water Plan (SWP) will be revised to include an evaluation of deicing procedures and ways to minimize the use of deicing materials and prevent the release of deicing materials from entering stormwater systems. The revised SWP will include an evaluation of the means that may be practicable for modifying current use and practices to collect deicing effluent runoff. The SWP will also be updated as required by state and federal Clean Water Act requirements (FEIS, Volume I, Page 2-49, §2.10 and Page 4-34, §4.2.4.2);

- Silt fence, interceptor trenches, hay bales, or other suitable erosion and sediment control measures will be used during construction. At the completion of construction, re-vegetation of disturbed areas will occur as soon as practical (FEIS, Volume I, Pages 4-37, §4.2.8.3);
- Post construction, all disturbed areas will be re-graded to pre-construction contours (FEIS, Volume I, Page 2-49 §2.10), and;
- Continue best management practices to reduce stormwater runoff containing deicing fluid. The revised SWP would include an evaluation of the means that may be practicable for modifying current use and practices to collect deicing effluent runoff (FEIS, Volume I, Page 4-34, §4.2.4.2).

Biological Resources

- Continue adherence to Bird/Wildlife Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) program (FEIS, Volume I, Page 4-35 §4.2.5.2).

Cultural Resources

- In the case of unanticipated or inadvertent cultural resources discoveries, the USAF would comply with Section 106 of the NHPA and follow the standard operating procedures outlined in the Integrated Cultural Resource Management Plan (ICRMP) (FEIS, Volume I, Page 4-35 §4.2.6).

Land Use

- Once the full complement of KC-46A aircraft are operating at Seymour Johnson AFB, the USAF will prepare an update to the current Air Installation Compatible Use Zone Study (AICUZ) to validate operational data and identify projected noise levels based on the most recent noise data.

Infrastructure

- Incorporate Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) and sustainable development concepts into construction projects to achieve optimum resource efficiency, sustainability, and energy conservation, except to the extent limited or prohibited by law (FEIS, Volume I, Pages 2-4 and 4-28, §2.3 and §4.2.2).
- Continue and enhance recycling and reuse programs to accommodate waste generated by the KC-46A beddown (FEIS, Volume I, Page 4-38, §4.2.8.6).

Hazardous Materials and Waste

- Update the Hazardous Waste-Management Plan to account for any new and/or changed waste streams or new procedures, if any, for managing hazardous materials and wastes associated with KC-46A aircraft (FEIS, Volume 1, Page 2-50, Table 2-21);

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- Review construction plans to identify any monitoring wells that would need to be removed and/or replaced (FEIS, Volume I, Page 2-50, §2.3);
- Review construction plans to identify any buildings containing toxic substances such as lead based paint (LBP) and asbestos.

Although the USAF considered and adopted all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm at Seymour Johnson AFB, potential impacts that could occur and cannot be mitigated include (but may not be limited to) the following (FEIS Volume I, Page 2-67, §2.10, et seq.).

- The proposed MOB 3 mission would result in an increase of 1,746 annual airfield operations, or a three percent increase in overall annual airfield operations at Seymour Johnson AFB exposing one additional off-base acre of land and one estimated off-base resident to 65 dB L_{Adm} or greater noise levels;
- The existing capacity of regional landfills would be reduced due to the solid waste generated;
- Hazardous and nonhazardous waste would be generated as a result of maintenance functions associated with the new aircraft;
- Stormwater runoff and associated erosion may increase due to construction, and;
- There is potential for an increase in the number of bird/wildlife-aircraft strikes and aircraft mishaps resulting from the increased number of annual operations.

The FEIS identifies all practicable measures to minimize harm to the existing environment.

Decision

The USAF will, by this decision, beddown up to twelve KC-46A PAA in one squadron at Seymour Johnson AFB, where the AFRC leads the Mobility Air Force mission.


JENNIFER L. MILLER
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force
Installations

8 Sept 2017
(Date)