

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
PERSONNEL RECOVERY UPDATE – DAVIS-MONTHAN AFB, ARIZONA**

In accordance with the *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969* ([42 United States Code § 4321](#) et seq.) (NEPA), as amended by the *Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023* ([Public Law 118-5](#)) (FRA); the United States (US) Department of Defense NEPA Implementing Procedures (June 2025), US Department of the Air Force (DAF) NEPA Implementing Procedures (March 2026), and applicable Executive Order requirements, the DAF prepared the attached Environmental Assessment (EA) to address the potential environmental consequences associated with multiple personnel recovery (PR) training and activities to enhance readiness of forces at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base (DMAFB).

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide real-world training and enhance readiness of forces operating out of DMAFB. PR training events that are critical for joint readiness and strengthening multi-national partnerships are limited due to the lack of available, appropriate training sites. Due to environmental changes caused by forest fires in the Southwest, some of the sites covered in the *Personnel Recovery 2020 EA* are not currently usable. In order to address these limitations, DMAFB is proposing to identify additional sites that can be used to support the training activities. Further, additional landing zones (LZs) and drop zones (DZs) for Pararescue, HH-60, A-10, and C-130 aircraft operations are needed to provide a wider range of site selection, specifically closer to DMAFB. This would include austere and semi-improved landing strips (dirt/pavement) for takeoff and landings and Forward Arming and Refueling Points (FARP) operations.

Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives

Under the Proposed Action, the DAF is proposing to improve PR training conducted throughout the Tucson region. Improvements would involve increasing suitable training site access and expanding training activities at some sites. Currently, there are 175 PR training sites already evaluated under the 2020 EA that may be utilized during PR training. Under the Proposed Action in this EA, six additional sites would be authorized for use. In addition, the range of authorized PR training activities on some current sites would be expanded to include additional activities.

The Proposed Action involves the following activities:

- establishment of two helicopter landing zones (HLZs) and Pararescue training areas within the Coronado National Forest: the Mount Lemmon/Windy Vista Summer training area and the Redington Pass training area;
- establishment of a dirt landing strip on the Willcox Playa;
- establishment of the Sentinel DZ in Marana, Arizona;
- establishment of HLZs, fixed-wing LZs, and DZs at the Shi-Ka-She Training Complex in St. David, Arizona; and
- establishment of the Benson DZ at Benson Municipal Airport in Benson, Arizona.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no additional training sites, HLZs, LZs, DZs, FARP operation locations, or landing strips would be established for PR training activities at DMAFB. PR training events would remain limited due to the lack of available, appropriate training sites.

While the No Action Alternative would not satisfy the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action, this alternative is retained to provide a comparative baseline against which to analyze the environmental effects of the Proposed Action. The No Action Alternative serves as a benchmark for the evaluation of the Proposed Action.

Summary of Findings

Potentially affected environmental resources were identified through communications with state and federal agencies and review of past environmental documentation. Specific environmental resources with the potential for environmental consequences include airspace, air quality, noise, cultural resources, biological resources, land use, earth resources, and safety.

Airspace

No significant effects to airspace would be expected to result from implementation of the Proposed Action. No existing Special Use Airspace would be utilized as part of the Proposed Action nor would any airspace be modified. Airspace management in the Tucson area would not be impacted by the Proposed Action.

Air Quality

No effects to air quality would be expected to result from implementation of the Proposed Action. The estimated total annual emissions of the Proposed Action would not exceed the *de minimis* or Prevention of Significant Deterioration permitting thresholds for any criteria pollutant or precursor. The proposed net changes in criteria pollutants and/or precursors would be less than the indicator of significance threshold of 250 tons per year for all the criteria pollutants and 25 tons per year for lead.

While emissions for all pollutants would increase at the six training sites with implementation of the Proposed Action, the net changes are less than the *de minimis* thresholds. Because the emissions associated with the Proposed Action are below the General Conformity *de minimis* thresholds, the requirements of the General Conformity Rule are not applicable, as documented in the detailed air conformity analysis performed for this EA and available in the Project Administrative Record.

Noise

The Proposed Action would introduce new military noise sources at all six training sites. However, as there are no nearby residences at the six training sites or other noise-sensitive receptors, these noise impacts would be negligible.

Cultural Resources

No significant effects to cultural resources would result from implementation of the Proposed Action. No ground-disturbing activities are included as part of the Proposed Action. No cultural resources listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places have been identified within four of the six training sites. The Proposed Action would not impact archaeological sites, historic properties, or Native American Traditional Cultural Places.

Biological Resources

For five of the six sites, the DAF has determined that the Proposed Action would not affect any threatened or endangered species. Critical habitat for the Mexican spotted owl has been designated in the Santa Catalina and Rincon mountains, including the Mount Lemmon site. If the Mexican spotted owl is present, the proposed helicopter training operations and land navigation training could cause the species to avoid these areas, affecting daily activities, movement, and breeding behavior, resulting in direct, short-term effects to the species. However, helicopter training flights would last approximately 45 minutes and would occur about six times annually. With the identification of specific areas to avoid and maintaining an appropriate buffer distance during the Mexican spotted owl nesting season, implementation of the Proposed Action at the Mount Lemmon HLZ training site would not adversely affect the Mexican spotted owl.

Land Use

Under the Proposed Action, PR training activities would occur on training sites that are publicly and privately owned. All activities would occur within the proposed training site to minimize interaction with the public. All PR training activities would comply with the special use permits issued by either the US Forest Service or local governments and would be consistent with existing land use. In addition, the proposed PR training activities would not restrict the ability of individuals to use or access recreational areas. Implementation of the Proposed Action at the six training sites would not result in significant impacts to land use.

Earth Resources

The Proposed Action does not include construction activities at the six training sites and would not result in substantial alteration of underlying geologic conditions or the disturbance of soils. Implementation of the Proposed Action at the training sites would not impact earth resources.

Safety and Occupational Health

Ground Safety

Although the Proposed Action involves PR training activities that inherently include risks to safety, PR personnel are properly trained to operate in these environments. Ground crews are used to ensure that the general public is not exposed to any ground safety risks resulting from PR training activities. The proposed PR training activities would prepare PR personnel for deployment, resulting in beneficial impacts. Therefore, implementation of the Proposed Action and exposure to short-term, adverse ground safety risks would result in long-term, beneficial impacts to military personnel safety.

Flight Safety

Safety personnel at DMAFB regularly train and prepare for flight safety incidents. With the established crash response program and implementation of all applicable DAF Office of Safety and Health and Occupational Safety and Health Administration requirements, no significant impacts to flight safety would occur from the Proposed Action. Likewise, no significant impacts to flight safety would be expected with implementation of flight safety rules and bird/wildlife-aircraft strike hazard procedures.

Reasonably Foreseeable Impacts

This EA considered cumulative impacts that could result from the incremental impact of the Proposed Action when added to the effects of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions within the project area. When considered in conjunction with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions within the six training sites, no significant reasonably foreseeable effects would occur with implementation of the Proposed Action.

Mitigation

The EA analysis concluded that the Proposed Action would not result in significant environmental impacts; therefore, no mitigation measures are required. Best management practices are described in the EA where applicable.

Conclusion

Finding of No Significant Impact. After review of the EA prepared in accordance with the requirements of NEPA, and which is hereby incorporated by reference, I have determined that the Proposed Action would not have a significant impact on the quality of the human or natural environment. Accordingly, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. This decision was made after considering all submitted information, including a review of agency comments submitted during the 30-day public comment period, and considering a full range of practical alternatives that meet project requirements and are within the legal authority of the DAF.

JOSE L. CABRERA, Colonel, USAF
355th Wing Commander

Date