Appendix B
Characteristics of Chaff

APPENDIX B CHARACTERISTICS OF CHAFF

Chaff is currently authorized for use in the specific training airspaces and under the Proposed Action, training chaff would continue to be employed in the airspace. The chaff used during training consists of extremely small strands (or dipoles) of an aluminum-coated crystalline silica core. When released from an aircraft, chaff initially forms a sphere, then disperses in the air and eventually drifts to the ground. The chaff effectively reflects radar signals in various bands (depending on the length of the chaff fibers) and forms a very large image or electronic "cloud" of reflected signals on a radar screen. When the aircraft is obscured from radar detection by the cloud, the aircraft can safely maneuver or leave an area.

Chaff is made as small and light as possible so that it will remain in the air long enough to confuse enemy radar. The chaff fibers are approximately the thickness of a human hair (i.e., generally 25.4 microns in diameter), and range in length from 0.3 to over 1 inch. The weight of chaff material in the RR-170 or RR-188 chaff cartridge is approximately 95 grams or 3.35 ounces (Air Force 1997). Since chaff can obstruct radar, its use is coordinated with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). RR-170B/AL or RR-180A/AL are new combat chaffs designed for use by F-22A aircraft. RR-188 chaff has D and E band dipoles removed to avoid interference with FAA radar. Combat chaff dipoles are cut to disguise the aircraft and produce a more realistic training experience in threat avoidance. Based on experience with the stealth airframe and chaff discharge from the F-22A, the chaff approved for use by the F-22A as of 2006 is the RR-170B/AL or RR-180A/AL combat chaff with three to six mylar wrapping materials. Combat chaff is not approved for use at WSMR or in the Continental U.S. because it significantly interferes with FAA radars. For the purpose of this EA, no combat chaff is assumed to be used. Instead, a new RR-188 type dipole cut chaff with three 2-inch by 4-inch mylar wrappers is assumed to be available by the time F-22A aircraft would arrive at Holloman AFB.

Chaff Composition

Chaff is comprised of silica, aluminum, and stearic acid, which are generally prevalent in the environment. Silica (silicon dioxide) belongs to the most common mineral group, silicate minerals. Silica is inert in the environment and does not present an environmental concern with respect to soil chemistry. Aluminum is the third most abundant element in the earth's crust, forming some of the most common minerals, such as feldspars, micas, and clays. Natural soil concentrations of aluminum ranging from 10,000 to 300,000 parts per million have been documented (Lindsay 1979). These levels vary depending on numerous environmental factors, including climate, parent rock materials from which the soils were formed, vegetation, and soil moisture alkalinity/acidity. The solubility of aluminum is greater in acidic and highly alkaline soils than in neutral pH conditions. Aluminum eventually oxidizes to Al_2O_3 (aluminum oxide) over time, depending on its size and form and the environmental conditions.

The chaff fibers have an anti-clumping agent (Neofat – 90 percent stearic acid and 10 percent palmitic acid) to assist with rapid dispersal of the fibers during deployment (United States Air Force [Air Force] 1997). Stearic acid is an animal fat that degrades when exposed to light and air.

A single bundle of chaff consists of the filaments in an 8-inch long rectangular tube or cartridge, a plastic piston, a cushioned spacer, and two plastic end caps (1/8-inch thick, 1-inch x 1-inch or 1-inch x 2-inch). The chaff dispenser remains in the aircraft. The plastic end caps and spacer fall to the ground when chaff is dispensed. The spacer is a spongy material (felt) designed to absorb the force of release. Figure 1 illustrates the components of a chaff cartridge. Table 1 lists the components of the silica core and the aluminum coating. Table 2 presents the characteristics of RR-188 chaff.

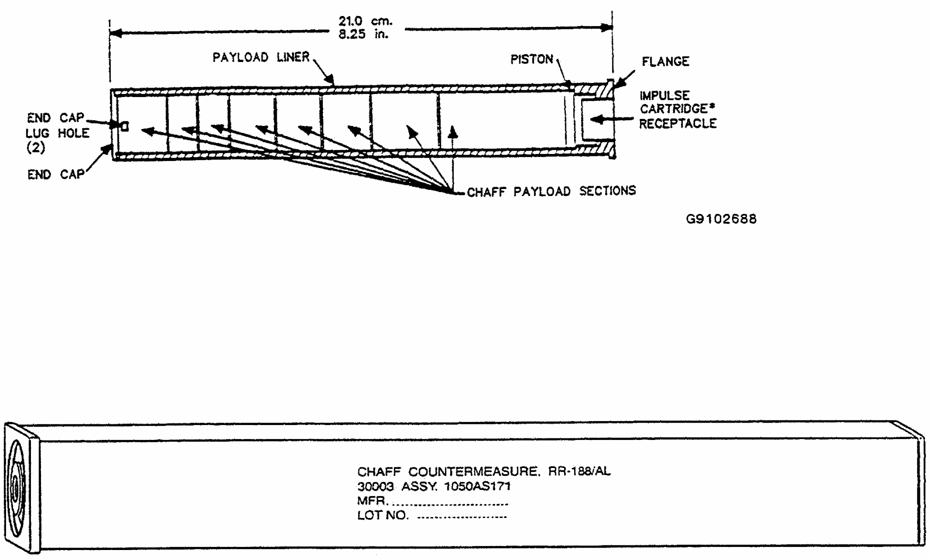

Figure 1. RR-188 Chaff Cartridge

Table 1. Components of RR-188 Chaff

Element	*Chemical Symbol*	*Percent (by weight)*
Silica Core		
Silicon dioxide	SiO_2	52-56
Alumina	Al_2O_3	12-16
Calcium Oxide and Magnesium Oxide	CaO and MgO	16-25
Boron Oxide	B_2O_3	8-13
Sodium Oxide and Potassium Oxide	Na_2O and K_2O	1-4
Iron Oxide	Fe_2O_3	1 or less
Aluminum Coating (Typically Alloy 1145)		
Aluminum	Al	99.45 minimum
Silicon and Iron	Si and Fe	0.55 maximum
Copper	Cu	0.05 maximum
Manganese	Mn	0.05 maximum
Magnesium	Mg	0.05 maximum
Zinc	Zn	0.05 maximum
Vanadium	V	0.05 maximum
Titanium	Ti	0.03 maximum
Others		0.03 maximum

Source: Air Force 1997

Table 2. Characteristics of RR-188 Chaff

Attribute	*RR-188*
Aircraft	F-15C, F-15E, F-22A (assumed)
Composition	Aluminum coated silica
Ejection Mode	Pyrotechnic
Configuration	Rectangular tube cartridge
Size	8 x 1 x 1 inches (8 cubic inches)
Number of Dipoles	5.46 million
Dipole Size (cross-section)	1 mil (diameter)
Impulse Cartridge	BBU-35/B
Other Comments	Cartridge stays in aircraft; less interference with FAA radar (no D and E bands)

Source: Air Force 1997

For this EA, the F-22A is assumed to use the same chaff material in a slightly different chaff wrapping to expedite clean ejection of the chaff. The chaff cartridge design with mylar wrapping is less likely to leave debris of any kind in the dispenser bay yet still provides robust chaff dispensing. Figure 2 is a photograph of this type of RR-170B/AL chaff cartridge. The F-22A is assumed to use chaff packaged in soft packs that retain the same number of dipoles per cut as RR-188 chaff. The RR-170B/AL has a 1-inch by 1-inch end cap, a piston of the same size, and three mylar wraps that facilitiate deployment. One end cap, one piston, and three approximately 2-inch by 4-inch mylar pieces of wrap fall to the ground with each chaff cartridge deployed. The rubber bands in the photograph are removed before loading. RR-180A/AL chaff cartridges are dual cartridges with the same type of chaff material and six mylar wrappings slightly smaller than those of RR-170B/AL chaff. Both RR-170B/AL and RR-180A/AL have chaff dipoles cut to combat lengths and cannot be used because of excessive interference with FAA radars. An equivalent RR-188AL chaff is assumed to be produced and available for training within the Holloman AFB SUA by F-22A aircraft.

Chaff Ejection

Chaff is typically ejected pyrotechnically using a BBU-35/B impulse cartridge. Pyrotechnic ejection uses hot gases generated by an explosive impulse charge. The gases push the small piston down the chaff-filled tube. A small plastic end cap with an attached felt spacer is ejected, followed by the chaff fibers, the piston, and, in the case of F-22A chaff, three to six mylar pieces. The plastic tube remains within the aircraft. Debris from the ejection consists of two 1-inch by 1-inch square pieces of plastic 1/8-inch thick (i.e., the piston and the end cap), three to six mylar strips, and the felt spacer. Table 3 lists the characteristics of BBU-35/B impulse cartridges used to pyrotechnically eject chaff.

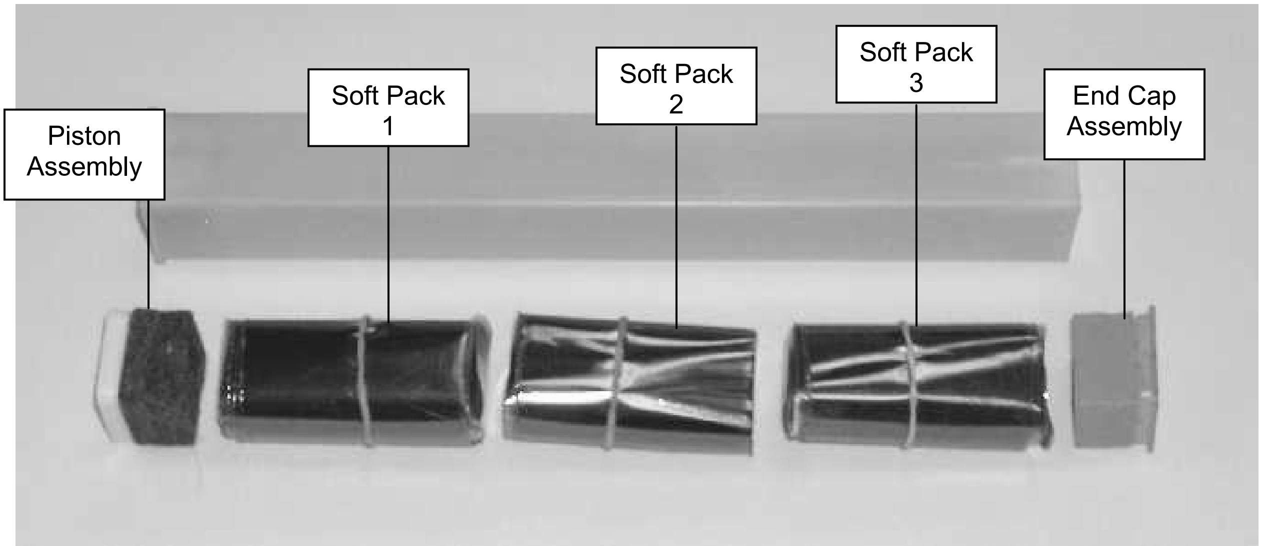

Figure 2. RR-170B/AL Layout

Table 3. BBU-35/B Impulse Charges Used to Eject Chaff

Component	*BBU-35/B*
Overall Size Overall Volume Total Explosive Volume	0.625 inches x 0.530 inches 0.163 inches^3 0.034 inches^3
Bridgewire	Trophet A 0.0025 inches x 0.15 inches
Initiation Charge	0.008 cubic inches 130 mg 7,650 psi boron 20% potassium perchlorate 80% *
Booster Charge	0.008 cubic inches 105 mg 7030 psi boron 18% potassium nitrate 82%
Main Charge	0.017 cubic inches 250 mg loose fill RDX ** pellets 38.2% potassium perchlorate 30.5% boron 3.9% potassium nitrate 15.3% super floss 4.6% Viton A 7.6%

Source: Air Force 1997

Upon release from an aircraft, chaff forms a cloud approximately 30 meters in diameter in less than one second under normal conditions. Quality standards for chaff cartridges require that they demonstrate ejection of 98 percent of the chaff in undamaged condition, with a reliability of 95 percent at a 95 percent confidence level. They must also be able to withstand a variety of environmental conditions that might be encountered during storage, shipment, and operation.

Table 4 lists performance requirements for chaff.

Table 4. Performance Requirements for Chaff

Condition	*Performance Requirement*	
High Temperature	Up to +165 degrees Fahrenheit	
Low Temperature	Down to –65 °F	
Temperature Shock	Shock from –70 °F to +165 °F	
Temperature Altitude	Combined temperature altitude conditions up to 70,000 feet	
Humidity	Up to 95 percent relative humidity	
Sand and Dust	Sand and dust encountered in desert regions subject to high sand dust conditions and blowing sand and dust particles	
Accelerations/Axis	G-Level	Time (minute)
Transverse-Left (X)	9.0	1
Transverse-Right (-X)	3.0	1
Transverse (Z)	4.5	1
Transverse (-Z)	13.5	1
Lateral-Aft (-Y)	6.0	1
Lateral-Forward (Y)	6.0	1
Shock (Transmit)	Shock encountered during aircraft flight	
Vibration	Vibration encountered during aircraft flight	
Free Fall Drop	Shock encountered during unpackaged item drop	
Vibration (Repetitive)	Vibration encountered during rough handling of packaged item	
Three Foot Drop	Shock encountered during rough handling of packaged item	

Note: Cartridge must be capable of total ejection of chaff from the cartridge liner under these conditions.
Source: Air Force 1997

Policies and Regulations on Chaff Use

Current Air Force policy on use of chaff and flares was established by the Airspace Subgroup of Headquarter Air Force Flight Standards Agency in 1993. It requires units to obtain frequency clearance from the Air Force Frequency Management Center and the FAA prior to using chaff to ensure that training with chaff is conducted on a non-interference basis. This ensures electromagnetic compatibility between the FAA, the Federal Communications Commission, and Department of Defense (DoD) agencies. The Air Force does not place any restrictions on the use of chaff provided those conditions are met (Air Force 1997).

Air Force Instruction (AFI) 13-201, U.S. Air Force Airspace Management, September 2001. This guidance establishes practices to decrease disturbance from flight operations that might cause adverse public reaction. It emphasizes the Air Force's responsibility to ensure that the public is protected to the maximum extent practicable from hazards and effects associated with flight operations.

AFI 11-214 Aircrew and Weapons Director and Terminal Attack Controller Procedures for Air Operations, July 1994. This instruction delineates procedures for chaff and flare use. It prohibits use unless in an approved area.

References

Air Force. 1997. *Environmental Effects of Self-Protection Chaff and Flares*. Prepared for Headquarters Air Combat Command, Langley Air Force Base, Virginia.

_____. 1999. *Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives (DOPAA) for the Expansion of the Use of Self-Protection Chaff and Flares at the Utah Test and Training Range, Hill Air Force Base, Utah*. Prepared for Headquarters Air Force Reserve Command Environmental Division, Robins AFB, Georgia.