

# Realistic Bomber Training Initiative

## *What is the Realistic Bomber Training Initiative?*

The Realistic Bomber Training Initiative (RBTI) is an Air Force proposal to provide realistic bomber training for B-1B and B-52 aircrews from Dyess and Barksdale Air Force Bases (AFB), respectively. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Air Force as lead agency with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as cooperating agency, prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that addressed potential impacts from the RBTI proposal. Under RBTI, the Air Force would establish a linked set of training assets comprising an electronic scoring site system. Components of the electronic scoring site system would include a military training route (MTR) linked to a military operations area (MOA), an Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspace (ATCAA) above the MOA, a set of five locations for placement of electronic threat emitters, and two electronic scoring sites.

**RBTI Draft EIS.** The RBTI Draft EIS was made available to the public in March 1999. Four alternatives were evaluated: Alternative A, the no-action alternative and three action alternatives—B, C, and D. Alternative B: IR-178/Lancer MOA and Alternative C: IR-178/Texon MOA are almost entirely in western Texas; only a small portion of airspace of both alternatives extends into New Mexico. Alternative D: IR-153/Mt. Dora MOA is located primarily in northeastern New Mexico with portions of the MTR extending into northwestern Texas. The RBTI Draft EIS identified the affected environment for each alternative, considered the then current conditions of that affected environment, and compared those to conditions that could result from implementation of an alternative.

**RBTI Final EIS.** The Air Force asked the FAA's regional air traffic division (ATD) to conduct an informal study of the aeronautical impacts of the RBTI alternatives being considered by the Air Force. The regional ATD, in turn, requested information and review of the alternatives from relevant FAA field facilities and provided those results to the Air Force in August 1999 (following the end of the RBTI Draft EIS public comment period). This FAA input resulted in both modification to the alternatives and clarification of the analysis from the Draft EIS to the Final EIS. Because it was offered as part of the informal give and take between the FAA as cooperating agency and the Air Force as lead agency on the RBTI EIS, neither agency regarded this study as representing formal "public" comment on the Draft EIS. To address these FAA issues, the Air Force modified some aspects of the alternatives and presented enhanced analysis of impacts to civil and commercial aviation in the Final EIS.

The Air Force made the Final EIS available to the public in January 2000. In March 2000, Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Air and Space issued the Record of Decision (ROD), identifying Alternative B for implementation.

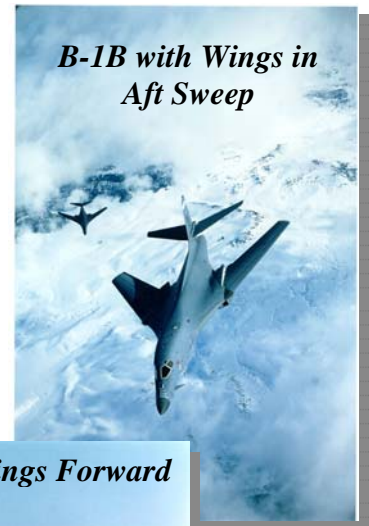
The Air Force submitted to the FAA its formal proposal to establish the Lancer MOA in April 2000. Pursuant to FAA order 7400.2D (now 7400.2E), the FAA conducted a formal aeronautical study of the proposed Lancer MOA. In coordination with the Air Force, the FAA's air traffic control facilities and regional ATD also reviewed and provided aeronautical concurrence on the Air Force's proposed modification to IR-178. After conducting its own independent evaluation, the FAA adopted the Final

EIS and gave its final approval for the RBTI airspace on December 11, 2001, with an effective date of February 21, 2002.

### ***Why is the Air Force conducting RBTI public hearings?***

After issuance of the Air Force's ROD in 2000, the Davis Mountains Trans-Pecos Heritage Association and Buster Welch *et al.* sued the Air Force and FAA, alleging the Air Force and FAA failed to comply with the requirements of NEPA. In March 2003, the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas, Lubbock Division, dismissed both lawsuits. The plaintiffs appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit in 2004. One of the plaintiffs also filed a separate petition in the Fifth Circuit alleging that the FAA had failed to comply with NEPA in approving the RBTI airspace. In a single opinion covering both the Air Force and FAA cases, the Court of Appeals upheld the adequacy of the RBTI Final EIS in most respects, but "remanded the Air Force and FAA to prepare a Supplemental EIS which adequately addresses wake vortex impacts and the FAA comments as required by Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and Air Force regulations." This Supplemental EIS has been prepared to comply with the Court's order.

***Summary of the RBTI Supplemental EIS.*** In compliance with the order of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, the Air Force reevaluated and analyzed the potential impacts to structures, vehicles, persons, wildlife, and livestock from aircraft wake vortices. The analysis presented in the RBTI Supplemental EIS demonstrates that wake vortices, except under rare atmospheric and wind conditions from standard B-52 and B-1B low-altitude flights, fail to generate sufficient wind velocities to damage ground structures and vehicles, or pose a hazard to people or animals on the surface.



In regards to the FAA comments, the Court found the Air Force did not refer in the Final EIS public comment appendix to where the FAA's informal study was addressed or provided any written explanation with regard to that information. Thus, this Supplemental EIS presents the specific aeronautical information provided by the FAA, indicates how this information was addressed in the Final EIS, where FAA input resulted in changes in the proposed airspace configuration, and how the Air Force altered operations to address potential conflicts between military aircraft and civilian and commercial aircraft within the airspace units.

While the RBTI Draft Supplemental EIS provides additional analysis required by the Court, the preferred alternative remains Alternative B.

### ***What is the NEPA process for the RBTI Supplemental EIS?***

The environmental impact analysis process provides numerous opportunities for public input and involvement. This environmental process began when the Notice of Intent was published in the *Federal Register* on January 12, 2005, announcing the intent of the Air Force to prepare a Supplemental EIS in response to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling. Preparation of the RBTI Draft Supplemental EIS began in late spring 2005 and resulted in publication of this document in November 2005.

Following receipt of comments on the Draft Supplemental EIS, the Air Force will prepare the Final Supplemental EIS, including responses to relevant comments. The Final Supplemental EIS availability will be announced in local newspapers and the *Federal Register*. Copies of this final document will be sent to those of you who already received a copy of the draft and/or have indicated that they would like a copy of the final. A waiting period of 30 days will occur after the Final Supplemental EIS is published, and then the Air Force will announce their ROD.

#### **The Supplemental EIS Timeline**

<b>Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals Ruling</b>	<b>October 12, 2004</b>
<b>Notice of Intent Published in the <i>Federal Register</i></b>	<b>January 12, 2005</b>
<b>Preparation of Draft Supplemental EIS</b>	<b>December 2004 through November 2005</b>
<b>Notice of Availability of Draft Supplemental EIS</b>	<b>November 18, 2005</b>
<b>Public Comment Period – 45 days</b>	<b>November 18, 2005 to January 2, 2006</b>
<b>Preparation of Final Supplemental EIS</b>	<b>January through March 2006</b>
<b>Notice of Availability of Final Supplemental EIS</b>	<b>April 2006</b>
<b>Waiting Period – 30 days</b>	<b>April through May 2006</b>
<b>Record of Decision</b>	<b>May 2006</b>

### ***Where are we now in the process?***

We are now in the 45-day public comment period during which public hearings will be held. A public hearing is a meeting where the public is given the opportunity to voice their concerns on the Draft Supplemental EIS. Each person wishing to provide oral testimony will be given a time allotment so everyone will have an opportunity to speak. Your comments are important; however, the more effective comments are those that directly relate and are specific to the contents and analysis presented in the Draft Supplemental EIS (i.e., wake vortex effects and FAA comments).

Locations for the public hearings considered those communities potentially affected by the RBTI proposal. All hearing meetings start at 5 p.m. and end at 9 p.m. The dates and locations for the RBTI Supplemental EIS public hearings are listed below.

<b>RBTI Supplemental EIS Public Hearing Locations</b>		
<i>Location</i>	<i>Date (2005)</i>	<i>Facility Location</i>
Snyder	Monday, 5 December	Scurry County Coliseum, Room A
Alpine	Tuesday, 6 December	Alpine Independent School District Auditorium
Pecos	Wednesday, 7 December	Pecos High School Auditorium
Taos	Friday, 9 December	Town of Taos Civic Center, Bataan Hall

***Where Can You Find a Copy of the RBTI Draft Supplemental EIS?***

If you want to review the RBTI Draft Supplemental EIS but did not request a copy, the list below shows the many locations that have the document (as well as a CD copy of the Final RBTI EIS originally published in January 2000). The RBTI Draft Supplemental EIS can also be found on the Air Force, Air Combat Command web site at <http://www.cevp.com>.

**TEXAS**

*Abilene*—Abilene Public Library  
*Alpine*—Alpine Public Library  
*Amarillo*—Amarillo Public Library  
*Aspermont*—Stonewall County Library  
*Barksdale AFB*—Public Affairs Office  
*Big Lake*—Reagan County Library  
*Big Spring*—Howard County Library  
*Crane*—Crane County Library  
*Dalhart*—Dallam County Library  
*Dyess AFB*—Public Affairs Office  
*Ft. Davis*—Jeff Davis County Library  
*Ft. Stockton*—Ft. Stockton Public Library  
*Jayton*—Kent County Library  
*Kermit*—Winkler County Library  
*Lamesa*—Dawson County Public Library  
*Lubbock*—Lubbock Library  
*Marfa*—Marfa City Municipal Library

*Merzton*—Irion County Library  
*Monahans*—Ward County Library  
*Odessa*—Ector County Library  
*Pecos*—Reeves County Library  
*Post*—Post Public Library  
*Presidio*—City of Presidio Library  
*Rankin*—Rankin Public Library  
*Rotan*—Rotan Public Library  
*San Angelo*—Tom Green County System Library  
*Sierra Blanca*—Sierra Blanca Public Library  
*Snyder*—Scurry County Public Library  
*Sterling City*—Sterling County Public Library  
*Tahoka*—City-County Library  
*Van Horn*—Van Horn Library

**NEW MEXICO**

*Taos*—Taos Public Library

***Please send your written comments by January 2, 2006 to ensure they are addressed in the Final Supplemental EIS. Mail these written comments to:***

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 Langley AFB, VA, 23665-5399