

RECORD OF DECISION
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
B-21 BEDDOWN MAIN OPERATING BASE 2 (MOB 2) OR MAIN OPERATING BASE 3 (MOB 3) AT
DYESS AFB OR WHITEMAN AFB

INTRODUCTION

The Department of the Air Force (DAF) will replace B-2 aircraft with the beddown of the B-21 aircraft at MOB 2, Whiteman Air Force Base (AFB), Missouri, and replace B-1 aircraft with the beddown of the B-21 aircraft at MOB 3, Dyess AFB, Texas. The DAF based this decision on the evaluations presented in the *B-21 Beddown Main Operating Base 2 (MOB 2) or Main Operating Base 3 (MOB 3) at Dyess AFB or Whiteman AFB Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)* (*Federal Register* Vol. 89, No. 102, May 24, 2024, pg 45883, EIS No. 2024005). The DAF considered the information, analyses, and public comments contained in the Final EIS (FEIS), along with other relevant matters.

The DAF is issuing this Record of Decision (ROD) per the Council on Environmental Quality regulations that implement the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) at Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 1505.2 (*Record of decision in cases requiring environmental impact statements*).

This ROD documents:

- The DAF's decision;
- The alternatives considered;
- The environmentally preferable alternative;
- Relevant factors and how those factors entered into the decision;
- Whether the DAF adopts all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the selected alternative, and if not, why not;
- Mitigations.

DECISION SYNOPSIS

The DAF will beddown the B-21 MOB 2 under the Air Force Global Strike Command (AFGSC) at Whiteman AFB, Missouri and beddown the B-21 MOB 3 under AFGSC at Dyess AFB, Texas.

The B-21 MOB 2 beddown at Whiteman AFB would establish the B-21 Operations Squadrons, new infrastructure, and would increase numbers of support and operations personnel.

As explained in the FEIS (*Vol. I, Page S-1, S.1.*), the B-21 basing action will take place through a series of three MOB beddowns, and if one of the two remaining candidate bases is selected for MOB 2, then the final remaining base would become the MOB 3 beddown location. As such, the B-21 MOB 3 beddown at Dyess AFB will establish B-21 Operations Squadrons, a WGF, WIC, OT&E squadron, new infrastructure, and would increase numbers of support and operations personnel.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

On June 3, 2021, the DAF signed a ROD selecting Ellsworth AFB as the MOB 1 location after completing the *B-21 Main Operating Base 1 (MOB 1) Beddown at Dyess AFB, Texas or Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota Environmental Impact Statement*.

RECORD OF DECISION
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
*B-21 BEDDOWN MAIN OPERATING BASE 2 (MOB 2) OR MAIN OPERATING BASE 3 (MOB 3) AT
DYESS AFB OR WHITEMAN AFB*

For the Dyess AFB Alternative (*FEIS, Vol. 1, Pages 2-7 through 2-17, §2.3*), the B-21 beddown would include approximately 4.2 million square feet of new construction projects, 600,000 square feet of renovation projects, and 300,000 square feet of demolition projects. Additionally, the FEIS analyzed one location at Dyess AFB for the WGF. For military aircraft flying out of Dyess AFB, the FEIS analyzed the Lancer MOA, Lancer Bridge MOA, Bronco MOA (3 and 4), Pecos MOA, and all associated ATCAAs, including the Willie-Roscoe ATCAA, for aircraft training operations, and considered the Brownwood MOA for supplemental training airspaces (*FEIS, Vol. 1, Page 2-10, §2.3.4*). The B-21 mission will bring approximately 2,550 military personnel and 3,060 dependents to the area but will eventually displace the personnel associated with the current B-1 mission (*FEIS, Vol. 1, Page 2-8; §2.3.2*).

For the Whiteman AFB Alternative (*Vol. 1, Pages 2-17 through 2-28, §2.4*), the B-21 beddown would include approximately 600,000 square feet of new construction projects, 1.7 million square feet of renovation projects, and 85,000 square feet of demolition projects. For military aircraft flying out of Whiteman AFB, the FEIS analyzed the Smoky Hill Range (Smoky MOA, Bison MOA, and R-3601A/B), Cannon MOA (A and B), Ada MOA, and all associated ATCAAs, including the Ozark ATCAA (A, B, and C) for aircraft training operations, and considered the Lindbergh MOA (A, B, and C) and Truman MOA (A, B, and C) for supplemental training airspaces (*Vol. 1, Page 2-19 §2.4.4*). The B-21 mission will bring approximately 2,550 military personnel and 3,060 dependents to the area but will eventually displace the personnel associated with the current B-2 mission (*FEIS, Vol. 1, Page 2-18; §2.4.2*).

The FEIS also evaluated a No Action Alternative (*FEIS, Vol. 1, Pages 2-4 through 2-7, §2.2*). With the No Action Alternative, the B-21 MOB 2 and MOB 3 would not beddown at either Dyess AFB or Whiteman AFB and the B-1 and B-2 missions would continue at the respective bases at current levels. Baseline conditions, described as the affected environment (*FEIS, Vol. 1, Chapter 3*) for each resource area would continue under the No Action Alternative. The No Action Alternative analysis in the FEIS provides a benchmark for comparing the potential environmental effects of the action alternatives.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Based on that analysis, the Dyess AFB Alternative is the environmentally preferred alternative. Noise impacts associated with the beddown of the B-21 at Dyess AFB would be less than those compared to the No Action Alternative because of decreased airfield operations and airspace use relative to baseline conditions; the fact that the B-21 is projected to be less loud than the B-1; and flight profiles within the training airspace. This would also result in reduced impacts to land use, environmental justice, and biological resources. Noise modeling indicated that the number of residents near the Dyess AFB exposed to noise levels greater than 65 A-weighted decibels (dBA) day-night average sound level (DNL), including environmental justice and sensitive populations, would be reduced. In addition, time-averaged noise levels beneath the Dyess AFB training airspace would remain the same or decrease. The potential for noise effects on wildlife and wildlife-aircraft strikes would also be reduced. Because the B-21 is a new airframe, the FEIS used B-2 noise source data for noise modeling (*FEIS, Vol. 1, Page 3-21, §3.3.1.3.1*).

RECORD OF DECISION
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
*B-21 BEDDOWN MAIN OPERATING BASE 2 (MOB 2) OR MAIN OPERATING BASE 3 (MOB 3) AT
DYESS AFB OR WHITEMAN AFB*

Since there is a reduction in environmental impacts at Dyess AFB compared to the No Action Alternative (baseline), and there is not a reduction of environmental impacts at Whiteman AFB compared to the No Action Alternative, the Dyess AFB Alternative is considered the environmentally preferred alternative.

MITIGATION

To track mitigations, AFGSC will develop Mitigation Plans within 90 days of the signature of this ROD that identifies principal and subordinate organizations with responsibility for oversight and execution of specific mitigations. The DAF will not implement an impact-inducing action related to the B-21 MOB 2 or MOB 3 beddown before the applicable mitigation measure described in this ROD is funded and put in place.

The Mitigation Plans will:

- Identify specific actions.
- Identify the organization responsible for each action.
- Present the timing of each action.

B-21 MOB 2 Beddown at Whiteman AFB

The DAF will implement the following mitigations at Whiteman AFB for the B-21 MOB 2 beddown, listed below by resource area.

Noise

Per 40 CFR 1502.21, *Incomplete or Unavailable Information*, the noise analysis used the B-2 as a surrogate; therefore, the DAF is responsible for ensuring that the predictions (e.g., impacts) made in its completed NEPA documentation (40 CFR 1505.3, 1505.2(a)(3)) are accurate.

- If substantial changes are recognized that are relevant to environmental concerns or that bear on a proposed action or its impacts, the DAF would reevaluate for potential impacts related to those changes. This would include monitoring noise and public noise complaints and developing potential mitigation measures that could be implemented based on DAF monitoring.

Socioeconomics

To minimize additional pressure on socioeconomic resources (i.e., affordable housing, educational resources, and public services), the DAF would:

- Work with the local community to assist in any way possible with the planning for the increased population and increased requirements for support.

RECORD OF DECISION
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
B-21 BEDDOWN MAIN OPERATING BASE 2 (MOB 2) OR MAIN OPERATING BASE 3 (MOB 3) AT
DYESS AFB OR WHITEMAN AFB

Biological Resources

For federally listed bat species:

- Avoid tree clearing during the bat maternity and active season (April 1 through October 31).

For migratory birds:

- Avoid tree and shrub removal during the migratory bird nesting season (March through August).

Physical Resources

Reduce construction-related impacts on soil and surface water quality through:

- Implementing erosion and sediment control measures, especially in areas with steep slopes such as in the vicinity of North Lake and Northwest Lake.
- Designing site drainage around the new facilities to manage the anticipated increased runoff from the increased impervious surface through properly sized stormwater conveyance structures.
- Incorporating stormwater management features such as porous pavements and infiltration basins that treat, store, and infiltrate runoff on site before it can affect downstream water bodies.
- Placing facilities and structures where military operations would involve handling of hazardous chemicals or fueling operations where spill control structures serve as physical barriers that could prevent releases from flowing into streams.

Hazardous Materials and Hazardous and Solid Wastes

There is a potential that construction sites could be impacted by the presence of pre-existing perfluorooctane sulfonate/perfluorooctanoic (PFOS/PFOA) acid or other contaminants (e.g., fuels, solvents).

- If construction would require soil removal/disposal, then characterization and disposal would be conducted in accordance with DAF policy and guidance.
- Contaminated soils may be addressed on site or disposed of in an appropriate landfill.

RECORD OF DECISION
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
*B-21 BEDDOWN MAIN OPERATING BASE 2 (MOB 2) OR MAIN OPERATING BASE 3 (MOB 3) AT
DYESS AFB OR WHITEMAN AFB*

Transportation

To reduce the effects on level of service (LOS), both on-base and off-base, that could potentially result from relocation and construction activities:

- Identify measures to decrease on-base and off-base traffic congestion and queuing during relocation of Arnold Gate and construction of associated components.

To reduce the effects of commercial traffic on transportation operations and LOS on and near the base during construction, demolition, and renovation activities consider:

- Scheduling commercial deliveries outside peak traffic hours.
- Requiring all construction crews to use the commercial gate.

To eliminate the potential for construction, demolition, and renovation activities, as well as operation of new roadways, to negatively affect emergency services on the base:

- Include measures during project planning to ensure proper emergency response ability is maintained during construction activities and after project completion.

B-21 MOB 3 Beddown at Dyess AFB

The DAF will implement the following mitigations at Dyess AFB for the B-21 MOB 3 beddown, listed below by resource area.

Noise

Per 40 CFR 1502.21, *Incomplete or Unavailable Information*, the noise analysis used the B-2 as a surrogate; therefore, the DAF is responsible for ensuring that the predictions (e.g., impacts) made in its completed NEPA documentation (40 CFR 1505.3, 1505.2(a)(3)) are accurate.

- If substantial changes are recognized that are relevant to environmental concerns or that bear on a proposed action or its impacts, the DAF would reevaluate for potential impacts related to those changes. This would include monitoring noise and public noise complaints and developing potential mitigation measures that could be implemented based on DAF monitoring.

Socioeconomics

To minimize additional pressure on socioeconomic resources (i.e., affordable housing, educational resources, and public services), the DAF would:

- Work with the local community to assist in any way possible with the planning for the increased population and increased requirements for support.

RECORD OF DECISION
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
B-21 BEDDOWN MAIN OPERATING BASE 2 (MOB 2) OR MAIN OPERATING BASE 3 (MOB 3) AT
DYESS AFB OR WHITEMAN AFB

Biological Resources

For migratory birds:

- Avoid tree and shrub removal during the migratory bird nesting season (March through August).

For the Texas horned lizard:

- Prior to implementation of the Proposed Action, update the Dyess AFB Environmental Management System to identify areas of potential Texas horned lizard habitat.
- Conduct site-specific surveys for the state-listed threatened Texas horned lizard prior to any proposed habitat disturbance activity.
- Coordinate species surveys to be conducted by a permitted biologist.
- If Texas horned lizards are found on any project site, the DAF would contact the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to develop relocation plans.

Physical Resources

Reduce construction-related impacts on soil and surface water quality through:

- Implementing erosion and sediment control measures, such as minimization of earth-moving activities during wet weather/conditions, covering soil stockpiles, installation of silt fencing and sediment traps, and revegetation of disturbed areas with native plants as soon as possible to contain and prevent off-site migration of sediment or eroded soils from the project areas.
- Designing site drainage around the new facilities to manage the anticipated increased runoff from the increased impervious surface through properly sized stormwater conveyance structures.
- Incorporating stormwater management features such as porous pavements and infiltration basins that treat, store, and infiltrate runoff on site before it can affect downstream water bodies.
- Utilizing erosion controls and engineering planning to reduce the potential for the new road crossing of North Diversion Ditch to cause siltation, sedimentation, and hydrologic changes to the stream.

Hazardous Materials and Hazardous and Solid Wastes

There is a potential that construction sites could be impacted by the presence of pre-existing PFOS/PFOA or other contaminants (e.g., fuels, solvents).

- If construction would require soil removal/disposal, then characterization and disposal would be conducted in accordance with DAF policy and guidance.

Contaminated soils may be addressed on site or disposed of in an appropriate landfill.

RECORD OF DECISION
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
*B-21 BEDDOWN MAIN OPERATING BASE 2 (MOB 2) OR MAIN OPERATING BASE 3 (MOB 3) AT
DYESS AFB OR WHITEMAN AFB*

Transportation

To reduce the effects of commercial traffic on transportation operations and LOS on and near the base during construction, demolition, and renovation activities consider:

- Scheduling commercial deliveries outside peak traffic hours.
- Requiring all construction crews to use the commercial gate.

To eliminate the potential for construction, demolition, and renovation activities, as well as operation of new roadways, to negatively affect emergency services on the base:

- Include measures during project planning to ensure proper emergency response ability is maintained during construction activities and after project completion.

WETLANDS AND FLOODPLAINS FINDING OF NO PRACTICABLE ALTERNATIVE

B-21 MOB 2 Beddown at Whiteman AFB

Although analyzed in the EIS, a FONPA will not be required for the MOB 2 beddown at Whiteman AFB since construction activities will no longer take place in floodplain or wetland areas.

B-21 MOB 3 Beddown at Dyess AFB

Pursuant to Executive Order 11988, *Floodplain Management*, and Executive Order 13690, *Establishing a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard and a Process for Further Soliciting and Considering Stakeholder Input*, there is no practicable alternative to development within the floodplain from construction of a portion of the MOB 3 beddown at Dyess AFB (*FEIS, Vol. 1, Pages 3-271 to 3-272 §3.10.2.2*). Construction of some facilities will be in areas that contain 100-year and/or 500-year floodplains, which cannot be avoided because Dyess AFB does not have sufficient land outside of floodplains to construct required facilities for the B-21 MOB 3 beddown at the base. Approximately 83 acres of 100-year and/or 500-year floodplains occur within the planned areas of construction. Of those approximately 75 acres are within the 500-year floodplain and the remaining 8 acres are within the 100-year floodplain. Additionally, the DAF will construct a new road connecting the WGF to Avenue A, which will cross approximately 0.3 acres of floodplains adjacent to the North Diversion Ditch. Floodplain areas are limited in size in most planned areas of construction, and siting facilities away from these areas will be feasible in most but not all cases. The DAF would site facilities to avoid impacting the 100-year and 500-year floodplains to the extent possible. Floodplain zones within planned areas of construction consist of land that has been previously disturbed and developed. Therefore, redevelopment of these areas for the B-21 MOB 3 beddown would not change the hydrologic properties of the floodplain from current conditions.

RECORD OF DECISION
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
*B-21 BEDDOWN MAIN OPERATING BASE 2 (MOB 2) OR MAIN OPERATING BASE 3 (MOB 3) AT
DYESS AFB OR WHITEMAN AFB*

DECISION

The DAF selected Whiteman AFB for the B-21 MOB 2 beddown based on operational analysis; results of site surveys; environmental, economic, and technical factors; environmental impacts as analyzed in the FEIS; input from the public and government agencies; and military judgment factors. Essential considerations of national policy included continued B-2 operations until sufficient B-21s are fielded at Ellsworth AFB, alignment with the DAF's planned divestment of B-2 aircraft, maximizing and properly timing the reuse of existing facilities at Whiteman AFB, and allowing a properly-timed shutdown of the B-1 Formal Training Unit at Dyess AFB through the B-1/B-21 transition.

The DAF compared potential impacts from the beddown at Dyess AFB and Whiteman AFB. Although noise levels associated with airfield operations and temporary air emissions would slightly increase at Whiteman AFB, the DAF did not find a substantial difference in environmental impacts between the two locations.

Since the B-21 beddown will take place through a series of beddowns and the DAF selected Whiteman AFB as the B-21 MOB 2 location, Dyess AFB will be the B-21 MOB 3 beddown location. This decision supports the Secretary of the Air Force's preferred strategic basing alternative for the B-21 beddown. By implementing the mitigation measures identified in this ROD and adhering to the mitigation plans described herein, the DAF has adopted all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm.

The DAF has considered all of the alternatives, information, analyses, and objections submitted by State, Tribal, and local governments and public commenters for consideration in developing the environmental impact statement. The DAF will, by this decision, beddown the B-21 MOB 2 at Whiteman AFB and will beddown the B-21 MOB 3 at Dyess AFB.

ROBERT E. MORIARTY, P.E., SES
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force
(Installations)

Date