



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 4
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ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-8960

DEC 19 2016

Mr. Hamid Kamalpour
U.S Air Force
AFCEC CZN
2261 Hughes Ave., Ste.155
JBSA Lackland AFB, TX 78236-9853

Re: EPA's Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed KC-46A Third Main Operating Base (MOB 3) Beddown: Westover ARB, MA; Grissom ARB, IN; Seymour Johnson AFB, NC and Tinker AFB, OK. ERP UAF-E1107800; CEQ No. 20160269

Dear Mr. Hamid Kamalpour:

Pursuant to Section 309 of the Clean Air Act (CAA) and Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed KC-46A Third Main Operating Base (MOB 3) Beddown: Westover ARB, MA; Grissom ARB, In; Seymour Johnson AFB, NC; and Tinker AFB, OK.

As background information, the U.S. Congress authorized and appropriated funds supporting the U.S. Air Force's (USAF's) selection of the KC-46A as the newest aerial refueling aircraft to replace a portion of the aging tanker fleet (H.R. 933, the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2013, H.R. 3304 - National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014, H.R. 4435 - Howard P. "Buck" McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015, H.R. 1735 National Defense Authorization Act For Fiscal Year 2016). Beginning in 2010, the deployment of new USAF aircraft and missions must follow Air Force Instruction (AFI) 10-503, "Strategic Basing". Per AFI 10-503, the USAF must perform an enterprise-wide evaluation of Air Force Bases (AFBs) that could be considered as basing locations for the KC-46A. An initial Beddown of a Formal Training Unit (FTU) and the First Main Operating Base (MOB 1) occurred at Altus AFB, Oklahoma, and McConnell AFB, Kansas, respectively. The units were led by active duty personnel. Additionally, a Second Main Operating Base (MOB 2) Beddown, led by the Air National Guard (ANG), occurred at Pease Air National Guard Station, New Hampshire.

The EPA recognizes that the USAF has identified and evaluated four alternative bases for the proposed MOB 3 mission: Grissom Air Reserve Base (ARB), Indiana; Seymour Johnson Air Force Base (AFB), North Carolina; Tinker AFB, Oklahoma; and Westover ARB, Massachusetts. The EPA has reviewed the potential environmental impacts resulting from the KC-46A MOB 3 Beddown. Based on our review of the information provided in the DEIS, it appears that you have addressed the EPA's primary concerns that we generally focus on for these types of proposed actions, such as

media areas that significantly adversely impact human health and the environment. However, any alternative selected should closely monitor and mitigate noise levels greater than 65 decibels (dB) and the community should be made aware of any procedures to follow for noise complaints. The EPA acknowledges that USAF prefers Seymour Johnson AFB as its preferred alternative. This proposed KC-46A MOB 3 mission would replace 16 KC-135 aircraft with 12 KC-46A aircraft. This proposed MOB 3 mission would also potentially result in an increase of 1,746 annual airfield operations, or an approximate 3 percent increase in overall annual airfield operations at Seymour Johnson AFB. The EPA acknowledges the use of best management practices (BMPs) referenced in this DEIS for the management of hazardous materials, underground storage tanks (USTs), toxic substances and the commitment to minimize and reduce vehicle emission during construction.

In summary, the EPA has no immediate environmental concerns regarding the overall scope this project has proposed, and has rated the DEIS as EC-1 (Environmental Concerns) with sufficient information provided. The EPA requests that the USAF continue to seek measures to avoid and minimize potential environmental impacts (i.e., Noise) in order to fully protect the environment and any nearby communities. Please provide the EPA with a copy of the Final EIS and a copy of the Record of Decision (ROD) when they become available.

We recommend that the USAF continue to keep the affected communities informed on the status of the Third Main Operating Base (MOB 3) KC-46A Beddown EIS process. We appreciate your coordination with us. If you have any questions, please contact Larry Gissentanna, of my staff, at 404-562-8248 or by e-mail at gissentanna.larry@epa.gov.

Sincerely,



G. Alan Farmer
Director
Resource Conservation and Restoration Division