INTRODUCTION
This Record of Decision (ROD) documents the Air Force’s decision regarding the implementation of the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF or F-35) beddown portion of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) decisions and related actions at Eglin Air Force Base (AFB), Florida. In making this decision, the information, analysis, and public comments contained in the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for F-35 Beddown at Eglin AFB, Florida, January 2014 (Federal Register, Vol. 79, No. 40, EIS No. 20140047, pg. 11428), were considered, among other relevant factors and supporting materials.

This ROD is prepared in accordance with the regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Title 42 U.S.C. §4321-4347; the President’s Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations at 40 CFR, §1505.2, Record of decision in cases requiring environmental impact statements; and 32 CFR §989.21, implementing the Air Force Environmental Impact Analysis Process (EIAP). Specifically, this ROD:

- States the Air Force’s decision;
- Identifies all alternatives considered by the Air Force in reaching the Initial Joint Training Site (IJTS) decision and specifies the alternative considered environmentally preferable;
- Identifies and discusses relevant factors balanced by the Air Force in making the IJTS decision, including economic and technical considerations, the Air Force’s missions, and essential national policy considerations, and states how those considerations entered into the decision;
- States whether all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm resulting from the selected alternative have been adopted, and if not, why they were not; and
- Carries forward and continues the existing mitigation, monitoring, and enforcement program based on the February 2009 ROD and directs its revision to reflect the analyses in the SEIS and this ROD.

DECISION SYNOPSIS
The Air Force will implement the No Action Alternative. The No Action Alternative reflects the Air Force’s “Record of Decision, Implementation of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) 2005 Decisions for the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) Initial Joint Training Site (IJTS), Eglin AFB, Florida,” dated February 5, 2009 (Federal Register, Volume 74, page 34, February 23, 2009) as combined with, and updated by, the information, analysis, and public comments contained in the SEIS (Pgs. 2-2 to 2-4, §2.1). The No Action Alternative in the SEIS allows for the limited operations of 59 F-35 aircraft as established by the February 2009 ROD. The mitigation and monitoring plan (MMP) based on the February 2009 ROD, entitled BRAC 2005 Decisions and Related Actions Final Mitigation and Monitoring Plan for JSF at Eglin AFB (May 2009) (hereafter 2009 MMP for JSF at Eglin AFB (EAFB)) and the provisions applicable to F-35 operations and procedures in Eglin Air Force Base Instruction, 11-201, Flying Operations, Air Operations (1 May 2013) (hereafter EAFB 11-201) will be updated to include the mitigations built into the No Action Alternative and operational monitoring required by this ROD.
Addendum to the 26 June 2014 Record of Decision (AROD) 
for the 
Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement ROD 
F-35 Beddown at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida

INTRODUCTION

This Addendum to the 26 June 2014 Record of Decision (AROD) documents the Air Force’s decisions regarding two proposals: 1) shifting primary runway to Runway 01/19 (RW 01/19) and allowing a temporary increase in previously limited F-35 operations for construction-related closure of Runway 12/30 (RW 12/30), and 2) the Department of the Navy’s (DoN’s) proposal to add fifteen (15) Backup Aircraft Inventory (BAI) of F-35C aircraft at Eglin AFB.

In issuing this addendum decision, the information, analysis, and public comments contained in the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for F-35 Beddown at Eglin AFB, Florida, January 2014 (Federal Register, Vol. 79, No. 40, EIS No. 20140047, pg. 11428), were considered, among other relevant factors and supporting materials.

This AROD augments the ROD signed on June 26, 2014, for the up to four-month period of RW 12/30 construction and throughout the temporary presence of any additional DoN F-35C BAI, but it does not replace it. The augmentation decisions in this AROD require updating of the Mitigation and Monitoring Plan currently in affect, pursuant to 40 CFR §1506.3.

This AROD is prepared in accordance with the regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Title 42 U.S.C. §4321-4347; the President’s Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations at 40 CFR, §1505.2, Record of decision in cases requiring environmental impact statements; and 32 CFR §989.21, implementing the Air Force Environmental Impact Analysis Process (EIAP)

DECISION SYNOPSIS

In the June 26, 2014 ROD, the Air Force implemented the No Action Alternative. The No Action Alternative was based on the Air Force’s, “Record of Decision, Implementation of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) 2005 Decisions for the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) Initial Joint Training Site (IPTS), Eglin AFB, Florida,” dated February 5, 2009 (Federal Register, Volume 74, page 34, February 23, 2009), as combined with and updated by the information, analysis, and public comments contained in the SEIS (Pgs. 2-2 to 2-4, §2.1).

The No Action Alternative in the SEIS allowed for the limited operations of fifty-nine (59) F-35 aircraft as established by the February 2009 ROD. The 26 June 2014 ROD directed that the mitigation and monitoring plan (MMP) based on the February 2009 ROD, entitled BRAC 2005 Decisions and Related Actions Final Mitigation and Monitoring Plan for JSF at Eglin AFB (May 2009) (hereafter 2009 MMP for JSF at EAFB), and the provisions applicable to F-35 operations and procedures in Eglin Air Force Base Instruction, 11-201, Flying Operations, Air Operations (1 May 2013) (hereafter EAFB 11-201) be updated to include the mitigations built into the No Action Alternative and operational monitoring required by the June 26, 2014 ROD.

This AROD augments those previous decisions, taking into consideration the above referenced documentation and related analyses, by allowing a one-time, temporary increase in certain F-35 operations on Runway 01/19 (RW 01/19) due to required construction-related closure of Runway 12/30 for up to four months from approximately 1 May 2015 through 31 August 2015. During this up to four-month period of construction partially closing RW 12/30, but only after all mitigations measures have first been implemented and/or exhausted, limited additional F-35
operations up to the number and type of average daily operations analyzed in Alternative 1A (predominantly departures/take-offs on RW 01 and approaches/landings on RW 19) of the SEIS and published in Table E-16 at pages E-84 and E-85 in Appendix E, will be allowed RW 01/19.

In addition, this AROD also augments the previous Air Force decisions by allowing the DoN to temporarily deliver up to fifteen (15) additional F-35Cs to Eglin AFB to serve as Backup Aircraft Inventory to the 15 F-35C addressed in the June 26, 2014 ROD, provided that VFA-101 continuously monitors its F-35C operations at Eglin AFB airfields on a weekly basis to ensure F-35C operations remain within the number, type, and temporal nature of its operations projected and analyzed for the No Action Alternative in the SEIS. The single exception to VFA-101 continuous weekly monitoring F-35C operations on all Eglin reservation airfields while any of these additional DoN F-35C BAI remain at Eglin AFB will be with respect to the monitoring of the limited additional operations permitted on RW 01/19 during the up to four-month construction project partially closing RW 12/30 from approximately 1 May 2015 through 31 August 2015. Those one-time, temporary additional F-35 operations allowed on RW 01/19 for the up to four-month construction period along with the pre-conditional mitigations apply to all variants of F-35s, and will be monitored by the 33rd Operations Group Commander (33 OG/CC) with assistance from both the 33rd Fighter Wing (33 FW) and the 96th Operations Support Squadron (96 OSS).

BACKGROUND

The primary purpose of the SEIS was to analyze the beddown, location, operational alternatives and possible mitigations for the 59 F-35 PAA authorized for delivery by the February 2009 ROD (Air Force (Twenty-four (24) F-35A PAA), Navy (Fifteen (15) F-35C PAA), and Marine Corps (Twenty (20) F-35B PAA), including the use of the Duke Field airfield and construction of a new runway(s) at Eglin Main Base. The SEIS analyzed additional alternatives regarding the proposed distribution of F-35 flight operations, on and off the Eglin Main Base, to allow efficient pilot training, deconflict flying operations with other military and civilian operations, and reduce or avoid noise impacts on sensitive receptors.

The SEIS evaluated beddown locations on the Eglin Reservation, operational parameters, and the degree to which other mitigation measures are possible. The SEIS contains analyses of operational alternatives and presented potential mitigations for the 59 aircraft authorized to be delivered to Eglin AFB under the February 2009 ROD.

To reduce noise impacts over the City of Valparaiso, runway (RW) 12/30 is the primary runway for F-35 operations at Eglin Main Base. Limited F-35 operations were allowed from RW 19, which, other than takeoffs, included only those flight operations necessary for emergencies, unplanned contingencies and weather affecting aircraft performance limitations and requirements. Limited F-35 operations were allowed from RW 01, which, other than approaches and landings, includes only those flight operations necessary for emergencies, unplanned contingencies, and weather affecting aircraft performance limitations and requirements.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

As more fully discussed in the above mentioned SEIS/ROD, alternatives that were carried forward for analysis in the SEIS were (ROD, pg. 4):
Up in the air: F-35 training program remains strong despite reduction in aircraft, students

By KELLY HUMPHREY
Posted Apr 23, 2016 at 12:00 PM
Updated Apr 25, 2016 at 8:57 AM

Way back in 2005, local political, business and military leaders were swooning at the possibility that the 33rd Fighter Wing would soon become home to the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter Integrated Training Center.

EGLIN AFB — Way back in 2005, local political, business and military leaders were swooning at the possibility that the 33rd Fighter Wing would soon become home to the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter Integrated Training Center.

Its arrival would put Eglin Air Force Base at the epicenter of training for both pilots and maintainers of the military's fighter jet of the future.

PHOTOS of the F-35 in action

The Base Realignment and Closure Committee (BRAC) recommended that up to 107 jets be stationed at the base, and a multi-million dollar training complex be constructed to serve students from the Navy, Marines and Air Force, as well as international pilots from eight allied countries.

In 2009, the University of West Florida's Haas Center for Business Research and Economic Development published a report on the potential economic effects BRAC activities could have on Okaloosa County.

Coupled with the relocation of the Army's 7th Special Forces Group (7SFG) from Fort Bragg, N.C., the F-35 program was predicted to add "slightly over $1 billion to Okaloosa County's gross regional product in the year 2016 — the assumed 'steady state' year."

Additionally, the realignment activities were predicted to create 10,000 jobs by 2016 and add nearly 11,000 people to the county's population.

Clearly, that hasn't happened.
Controversy and challenges

Nearly from its inception, the effort to produce a fifth-generation fighter jet to replace the military's aging fleet of tactical aircraft has been faced with challenges and controversies.

The F-35 and its three variants (the Air Force's F-35A, the Marine Corps' F-35B and the Navy's F-35C) have both ardent defenders and fierce critics in Congress, at the Pentagon, in the defense industry and on the Internet.

Thousands of critics and conspiracy theorists have questioned the aircraft's safety, effectiveness and cost.

At first, it seemed as if that controversy might bypass Okaloosa County, where support for the military runs deep.

But not long after the recommendation to build the training center at Eglin was announced, Valparaiso Mayor Bruce Arnold and many city residents began to express concerns about the projected noise levels of the new aircraft.

With plans for dozens of daily takeoffs and landings from a nearby runway, Arnold feared the impact the noise would have on his citizens' quality of life. The city sued the Air Force twice over the noise concerns.

Both lawsuits were eventually settled, and today Arnold maintains that his issue was never with Eglin, per se.

"Our concern was if the noise levels were too high, it would stop future development in the city, and would negatively impact our homeowners' property values," he said. "But that hasn't turned out to be the case. It's been noisy at times, but the current level of flights has been tolerable."

Arnold said there's no question in his mind that he did the right thing to question the Air Force's plans, despite the enormous criticism he received from other local politicians and residents who feared the controversy would lead the Air Force to look elsewhere for a home for the program.

He dismisses those who say the subsequent reduction in the number of aircraft from the proposed 107 to less than half of that is directly connected to his city's actions.

"That was purely a political decision based on available funding," he insists.
Present and future

Although the numbers fluctuate due to mission requirements and maintenance demands, at present Eglin has about 24 F-35A’s and around 20 F-35C’s. Those aircraft are used to train pilots from both the Air Force and the Navy, as well as maintainers from across the U.S. and other countries’ militaries.

While the Marine Corps originally trained its pilots at Eglin, last year the branch relocated its school to Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort in South Carolina, and took its F-35B’s with them. Going forward, F-35B pilots from the United Kingdom will also train at Beaufort.

That leaves less than 50 F-35s at the Eglin training facility.

While that reduction has caused some observers to wonder if the training program is in jeopardy, Okaloosa County Commissioner Wayne Harris isn’t worried.

“There are a lot of reasons that the reduction in planes has happened, and those are mostly due to fiscal constraints,” Harris said.

“The F-35 is a great plane, but it’s very expensive, and they’re still working on getting some of the bugs out of it,” he said. “I believe the training program at Eglin is very secure — the government has too much invested in it. I’m confident it will stay up and running.”

Whether the Navy will continue to train pilots at Eglin is still up for debate, however.

Lt. Commander Kyle Jason is an F-35C flight instructor with the Navy’s VFA-101 Fleet Replacement Squadron at Eglin.

A veteran of the Navy’s F-18 fighter jet, Jason is a fan of the F-35C and the training center at Eglin.

“We train all new F-35 pilots and maintenance crews,” Jason said. “In my 15 years of active-duty service, it’s the best I’ve ever seen.”

Despite the good relationship the Navy and the Air Force enjoy at Eglin, there is a possibility that the Navy could relocate its training program to Naval Air Station Lemoore in California.

“A decision on that hasn’t been made yet,” Jason said.
Significant benefits

While the financial impact of the F-35 training school at Eglin has fallen short of original expectations, Jim Breitenfeld maintains the program still provides a very significant benefit to the local economy.

"Regardless of how many planes we may have, we have still experienced $400 million worth of construction investment at Eglin," said Breitenfeld, the manager of the Defense Support Initiative of the Okaloosa Economic Development Council.

“That’s an asset that will give Eglin the capacity to take on new missions if the F-35 program should ever be reduced,” he said. “It’s like building an addition on your house. Whether you need the space or not, it adds value to your home.”

Breitenfeld pointed to the 400 people employed locally by Lockheed Martin, the aircraft’s prime contractor, and the number of military and civilians who work at the training program on base.

“Those are some of our higher paying jobs, like engineers and systems analysts,” Breitenfeld said. “While the number of students may be smaller than originally thought, you still need to have a certain amount of instructors. At the same time, the maintainers are still at projected levels, and there’s no indication that they’re going anywhere.”

Breitenfeld said the existence of such a high-profile program at Eglin attracts important visitors to the area, helping to secure the base’s future.

“Anytime you can showcase Eglin’s capacity to VIPs, it’s a good thing,” he said. “We’ve seen no indication that the program won’t continue to be here.”