



Laughlin Air Force Base T-7A Recapitalization Draft Environmental Impact Statement Virtual Public Hearing December 11, 2023

Dial-In: 1-408-418-9388 Meeting number: 2492 634 5953 Meeting Password: PublicHearing

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Introduction



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT T-7A RECAPITALIZATION AT LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS



Laughlin Air Force Base T-7A Recapitalization Draft Environmental Impact Statement In-Person Public Hearing December 5, 2023





Photo Credit: Boeing T-7A Red Hawk Website, January 2022. https://www.boeing.com/defense/t-7a/#/gallery





Virtual Public Hearing

Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the T-7A Recapitalization at Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas

December 11, 2023







In-Person Public Hearing

Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the T-7A Recapitalization at Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas

December 5, 2023







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- If joining only by phone (basic dial-in) you will hear and be able to make a comment but will not see the presentation.
- If dialing in and are joining online via Webex (on your computer or smartphone) you will also be able to see the presentation.

If you get disconnected and wish to rejoin:

- Phone: Call 408-418-9388 and enter the meeting number: 2492 634 5953 and passcode 782 542 43.
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Tech Talk and Troubleshooting



T-7A RECAPITALIZATION AT LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS



Chinling Chen, Air Force Civil Engineer Center (AFCEC), NEPA Division

AETC T-7A Program Office

Laughlin Air Force Base (AFB)

HDR and HMMH, Contractor Team



NEPA Team Members



T-7A RECAPITALIZATION AT LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS

Air Force Presentation

- Proposed Action and alternatives
- Overview of the NEPA process
- Summary of the potential environmental consequences of the proposal
- Discussion of the Department of the Air Force (DAF)'s plans and actions to mitigate and manage any adverse impacts

Formal Draft EIS Verbal Comment Opportunity

- Statements on the record
- Transcribed by Court Reporter

Public Hearing Agenda





T-7A RECAPITALIZATION AT LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS

- **During this Virtual Public Hearing:** Follow the teleconference prompts to register to provide a comment.
- Mail: Ms. Chinling Chen, AFCEC/CZN Attn: Laughlin AFB T-7A Recapitalization EIS Headquarters Air Education and Training Command Public Affairs 100 H. East Street, Suite 4; Randolph AFB, TX 78150
- Email: chinling.chen@us.af.mil
- Online on the Project Website: https://laughlin.t-7anepadocuments.com
- Comment Form: Available for download on project website.



To ensure timely consideration of your comments in the Final EIS, please submit comments by January 8, 2024.

Providing Comments



T-7A RECAPITALIZATION AT LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS



- During this Public Hearing: Verbal and written comments accepted.
- Mail: Ms. Chinling Chen, AFCEC/CZN Attn: Laughlin AFB T-7A Recapitalization EIS Headquarters Air Education and Training Command Public Affairs 100 H. East Street, Suite 4; Randolph AFB, TX 78150
- **Email:** chinling.chen@us.af.mil
- Online on the Project Website: https://laughlin.t-7anepadocuments.com
- Comment Form: Available at the table in the rear of the room and for download on project website.



To ensure timely consideration of your comments in the Final EIS, please submit comments by January 8, 2024.

Providing Comments



T-7A RECAPITALIZATION AT LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS



Laughlin AFB is home to the 47th Flying Training Wing (FTW) of the U.S. Air Force Air Education and Training Command (AETC).

- **47 FTW Mission:** Building combat-ready Airmen, leaders, and pilots!
- **47 FTW Pilot Training:** Undergraduate pilot training: T-38C Talon.

The T-38C aircraft are approaching the end of their useful life, and student pilots need a more technologically advanced aircraft with which to train.

AETC and Laughlin AFB Introduction







DAF plans to recapitalize the T-38C fleet with T-7A aircraft to provide a training environment suitable for modern aircraft.

Procure approximately 350 T-7A aircraft and deliver these aircraft to the five T-38C pilot training installations using a geographically phased replacement.

- Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA)-Randolph
- Columbus AFB
- Laughlin AFB -- NEPA analysis now occurring.
- Vance AFB
- Sheppard AFB
- T-7A aircraft will provide a training environment suitable for fifth-generation fighter training requirements.
- T-7A end state requires approximately the same number of personnel authorizations as currently programmed.

T-7A Strategic Basing Initiative







- The Acting Secretary of the Air Force selected Laughlin AFB to be the third installation to undergo T-7A recapitalization.
- Recapitalizing Laughlin AFB third would:
 - Result in the least impact on continued pilot production during the transition of aircraft types.
 - Provide the most efficient cost and student production and management plan.
 - Align with AETC's student pipeline flow for the Undergraduate Pilot Training and Introduction to Fighter Fundamentals curricula.
- JBSA-Randolph and Columbus AFB are first and second installations, and Vance and Sheppard AFBs would follow as the fourth and fifth installations.

Why Laughlin AFB Third?





T-7A RECAPITALIZATION AT LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS



To continue the T-7A recapitalization program by recapitalizing Laughlin AFB to prepare pilots to operate modern fourth and fifth generation aircraft.









Current training practices with the older T-38C aircraft fail to prepare pilots for the technological advancements of fourth and fifth generation aircraft. Training systems provided with the newer T-7A aircraft allow for enhanced and improved flight and simulator training.

The T-7A recapitalization program will allow DAF to provide more efficient and effective instructor and pilot training for operating fourth and fifth generation aircraft.

T-7A recapitalization at Laughlin AFB would allow DAF to continue the geographically phased sequence, ensuring pilot training requirements are met.







T-7A RECAPITALIZATION AT LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS





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Project Location







T-7A RECAPITALIZATION AT LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS

The DAF would recapitalize the T-38C flight training program at Laughlin AFB with T-7A aircraft. Recapitalization entails the following elements:

- Replacement of all T-38C aircraft assigned to Laughlin AFB with T-7A aircraft.
- Transition of aircraft operations and associated airspace from the T-38C to T-7A.
- Changes to the number of personnel and dependents in the Laughlin AFB region.
- Construction and upgrade of operations, support, and maintenance facilities through 13 projects – 6 military construction (MILCON) and 7 facilities sustainment, restoration, and modernization (FSRM) projects – to support pilot training and aircraft operations and maintenance.

Overview of the Proposed Action







The DAF analyzed the environmental impacts of three action alternatives:

- Alternative 1
- Alternative 2
- Alternative 3

The three action alternatives consider different numbers of T-7A aircraft stationed at Laughlin AFB and different numbers of operations at Laughlin AFB and associated airspace training areas.

Overview of Action Alternatives







Alternative 1 – 63 T-7A Aircraft and T-7A Operations at a Level Sustaining Pilot Training

- T-7A aircraft would be delivered to Laughlin AFB beginning in 2030 and continuing through 2033.
- As T-7A aircraft are delivered and placed into service, T-38C aircraft would be withdrawn from service.
 - ✤ T-38C withdrawal would begin in 2030 and be complete by the end of 2031.
 - ✤ T-7A operations would begin in 2030 and increase to steady state in 2033.
 - At steady state, T-7A would perform approximately 42,000 more end state operations than T-38C baseline levels.
 - Up to 493 annual nighttime T-7A operations would occur at Laughlin AFB, which is a decrease of approximately 77% from baseline levels.









Alternative 2 – 63 T-7A Aircraft and T-7A Operations at 25 Percent Greater than Alternative 1

- Intended to cover a scenario where DAF requires a surge or increase in pilot training operations above the current plan.
- Like Alternative 1, 63 T-7A aircraft would be delivered and placed into service beginning in 2030, T-38C withdrawal would be complete by the end of 2030, T-7A operations would increase to steady state by 2033, and T-38C operations would conclude by the end of 2030.
- T-7A aircraft would perform annual operations at Laughlin AFB and associated airspace training areas at an intensity that is approximately 25% greater than Alternative 1.
 - At steady state, T-7A nighttime operations would occur with up to 614 annual nighttime operations at Laughlin AFB, which is a decrease of approximately 72% from baseline levels.





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Alternative 3 – 79 T-7A Aircraft and T-7A Operations at 25 Percent Greater than Alternative 1

- Intended to provide operational flexibility so that 16 additional T-7A aircraft can be assigned to Laughlin AFB, if needed.
- An additional 16 T-7A aircraft would be delivered to Laughlin AFB in 2030 resulting in a total of 79 T-7A aircraft by 2033.
- Like Alternative 1, T-38C withdrawal would be complete by 2030, T-7A operations would increase to steady state by 2033, and T-38C operations would conclude by the end of 2030.
- T-7A operations, to include nighttime operations, at Laughlin AFB and associated airspace training areas would be identical to those described for Alternative 2.









- A "No Action Alternative" is considered in the Draft EIS.
- Provides a baseline to evaluate the impacts of the Proposed Action.
- The No Action Alternatives analysis presents the environmental impacts of not implementing the Proposed Action.
- The T-7A program will be implemented regardless of whether the No Action Alternative is selected.
- If the No Action Alternative is selected, DAF would re-evaluate their T-7A strategic basing decisions and implement all or a portion of the basing requirements proposed for Laughlin AFB at an undetermined location.
- DAF would not implement T-7A recapitalization at Laughlin AFB.

No Action Alternative





- The Draft EIS has been prepared in accordance with NEPA regulations.
- Federal agencies must analyze potential impacts of proposed actions, reasonable alternatives, and a no action alternative, before action is taken.
- The goal is to support sound decisions through the assessment of impacts and involve the public in the EIS process.
- The results of this analysis and other relevant factors will be considered before the DAF makes a decision on this proposal.

Your input during the public scoping period earlier in the NEPA process and this public comment period help the DAF decisionmaker make the most informed decision possible on this proposal.

NFPA







We are currently at the Draft EIS comment stage.

- *Federal Register* publication of the Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Draft EIS occurred on November 9, 2023.
- Draft EIS made available on project website and at Val Verde County Library.
- Notification letters mailed to federal, state, and local representatives and elected officials, Native American tribes, and individuals who requested copies during the EIS scoping period.
- The comment period is 60 days. Our date for completion of the public review period is January 8, 2024.









- After the public review period closes, DAF will:
 - Review all comments received tonight, through the mail, or electronically via email or on the project website, and consider them in preparing the Final EIS.
 - Respond to substantive comments in the Final EIS.

(Substantive comments offer information regarding the alternatives or are relative to the assessment of impacts or NEPA process.)

- Final EIS is scheduled to be released in early to mid-2024.
- After the Final EIS NOA is published in the *Federal Register*, a waiting period of at least 30 days is observed before DAF signs the Record of Decision to document actions selected to implement.

The EIS Timeline (continued)







Resource areas analyzed in detail for potential environmental impacts are:

- Air Quality and Climate Change
- Noise
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Land Use

- Hazardous Materials and Waste
- Infrastructure and Transportation
- Safety
- Water Resources
- Environmental Justice

Resources determined to have negligible effects and not analyzed in detail within the Draft EIS are:

• Airspace

Geological Resources

Socioeconomics

Draft EIS Resource Areas







- T-7A RECAPITALIZATION AT LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS
- The proposed construction or renovation of facilities at Laughlin AFB is not anticipated to have significant impacts on any of the resources.
- Noise associated with T-7A flight operations under Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 would increase areas of incompatible land use on and adjacent to Laughlin AFB.
 - DAF is committed to coordinating with Val Verde County and the city of Del Rio, as well as other local communities, to analyze compatible land use surrounding the installation.
- Aircraft operations for the T-7A under Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 would result in a disproportionate adverse impact on environmental justice and sensitive receptor populations when compared to baseline conditions.

Potential Environmental Impacts Overview 26



- T-7A RECAPITALIZATION AT LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS
- Temporary (2026 and 2027) air emissions produced from the use of heavy equipment for construction.
- Operational air emissions would begin in 2028.
- Annual net change of criteria pollutant emissions for all 3 action alternatives would not exceed insignificance indicators for all criteria pollutants.
- GHG emissions would not contribute meaningfully to the potential effects of global climate change and would not considerably increase the total GHG emissions produced in the state.
- Climate priorities would be considered during the design phase for new buildings.
- No future climate scenario or potential climate stressor would have significant effects on any element of the Proposed Action.

Air Quality and Climate Change







- All construction would be within the Laughlin AFB boundary, be collocated with other existing noise-compatible activities, and would not result in significant impacts on any noise-sensitive site.
- Noise from aircraft operations would increase areas of incompatible land use on and adjacent to Laughlin AFB. The acreage and population within the 65 dBA DNL contour would increase incrementally for Alternative 1 and Alternatives 2 and 3 from baseline/current conditions.
- The changes in acreage and population for each alternative are provided in the EIS and summarized on the next slide. The modeled footprints for each alternative at Laughlin AFB are shown on the following two slides.
- No change in noise levels under training airspace.







T-7A RECAPITALIZATION AT LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS



| | Baseline/Existing | Alternative 1 | Alternatives 2 and 3 |
|--|-------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| Laughlin AFB | | | |
| Aircraft Noise Footprint (within 65+ dBA DNL) | 4,738 acres | 8,739 acres | 9,575 acres |
| Population (within 65+ dBA DNL) | 101 | 408 | 533 |

Noise (continued)





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT T-7A RECAPITALIZATION AT LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS





Noise – Existing Conditions vs Alternative 1





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Noise – Existing Conditions vs Alternatives 2 & 3





- Draft EIS contains more detailed analysis.
- Includes analysis of potential for speech interference, classroom learning interferences, sleep disturbance, potential for hearing loss, and damage to structures in nearby locations for each alternative.
- No significant impacts on the noise environment are anticipated.
 - The additional land acreage and population exposed to higher levels of noise from all three alternatives is already exposed to aircraft noise under baseline conditions.
 - The increased noise levels would not significantly adversely affect the health of residents.









- Biological resource impacts are evaluated with a specific look at vegetation, wildlife, and special status species.
 - Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 would have a negligible to minor impact on vegetation from the temporary or permanent removal of vegetation for construction of new facilities.
 - Wildlife impacts from construction would be negligible to minor.
 - Long-term impacts on wildlife from aircraft strikes could occur from aircraft operations. The Bird/Wildlife Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) Plan would be updated and implemented to minimize potential strikes.
 - Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 would have no effect on 11 federally listed or candidate species with the potential to occur on Laughlin AFB. No appreciable effects on state-listed and sensitive species would result from aircraft operations.

Biological Resources







- Three FSRM projects would entail alterations to three historic-age buildings.
 - DAF determined these three buildings lack the significance and integrity necessary for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and received concurrence from the Texas State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) on that determination.
- Four MILCON and three FSRM projects would involve ground disturbance.
 - These projects are not anticipated to impact archaeological resources.
- DAF consulted with Texas SHPO and Native American tribes under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Cultural Resources







- Proposed MILCON and FSRM projects would be sited, designed, and constructed consistent with the Laughlin AFB Installation Development Plan and would have no significant impacts on land use.
- Residential land use is considered incompatible with any aircraft noise zone above 65 dBA DNL. Most land uses surrounding Laughlin AFB are considered Open, Recreation, Agriculture, or Low-Density Residential.
 - DAF would continue to coordinate with local governments to analyze compatible use surrounding Laughlin AFB.
 - DAF prepare an Air Installations Compatible Use Zones (AICUZ) plan update to address any increases of land area within the greater than 65 dBA DNL noise contour for Laughlin AFB.
 - DAF would also continue to pursue DoD Readiness and Environmental Protection funds to further implement strategic land use acquisitions, controls, and landscape improvements associated with incompatible land use.









T-7A RECAPITALIZATION AT LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS

- Assessed to determine whether environmental justice populations (i.e., minority or low-income populations) or sensitive receptors (i.e., youth or elderly populations) would be disproportionately impacted.
 - Three of the six Census Block Groups within the 65 dBA DNL or greater noise contour contain environmental justice populations at levels above 50 percent of the total population or greater than 10 percent of the community of comparison.
 - Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 would have a disproportionate, adverse impact on environmental justice and sensitive receptors within three of the six Census Block Groups that coincide with the 65 dBA DNL noise contour.
 - ✤ Although disproportionate, these impacts would not be significant.

Environmental Justice







- Other resources that were analyzed in detail include Hazardous Materials and Wastes, Infrastructure and Transportation, Safety, and Water Resources.
- These resources were determined to have no significant impacts from Alternatives 1, 2, or 3.
- Further details are found in the Draft EIS.

Other Resources



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT T-7A RECAPITALIZATION AT LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS



The public comment portion of the hearing will commence following this brief break.





T-7A RECAPITALIZATION AT LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS



To make a comment, you need to virtually raise your hand.

Personal computer:

Click the menu icon then click the raise hand icon.

Smartphone or tablet:

Click the participant icon O then click the raise hand icon.

• Landline telephone or cell phone: Dial *3 on your phone keypad.

When it is time to make your comment, you will hear a beep and you will be unmuted.

- Clearly state and spell your name and affiliation, if any.
- Comments will be limited to 3 minutes.
- You will be given a notice when you have only 30 seconds remaining.

You will be given a final notice when your time is up.

After commenting, please **virtually lower your hand** using the same procedures required to raise your hand.

Virtual Public Hearing Procedures

| Ø | Raise Hand | |
|---|------------|--|
| 0 | Raise Hand | |





The number on your speaker card is the order we will follow.

When it is time to make your comment, please:

- Clearly state and spell your name and affiliation, if any.
- Comments will be limited to 3 minutes.
- You will be given a notice with a yellow card when you have only 30 seconds remaining.

You will be given a final notice with a red card when your time is up.

After commenting, please return to your seat.

Public Hearing Procedures



T-7A RECAPITALIZATION AT LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS



Mail: Ms. Chinling Chen, AFCEC/CZN Attn: Laughlin AFB T-7A Recapitalization EIS Headquarters Air Education and Training Command Public Affairs 100 H. East Street, Suite 4; Randolph AFB, TX 78150

Email: chinling.chen@us.af.mil

Online on the Project Website: https://laughlin.T-7anepadocuments.com

Downloadable Comment Form: Available for download on project website.



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Comment Options



T-7A RECAPITALIZATION AT LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS



THANK YOU for participating in this public hearing for the

Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Laughlin AFB T-7A Recapitalization

