



# ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



### PUBLIC SCOPING FOR T-7A RECAPITALIZATION AT LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS



Photo Credit: Boeing T-7A Red Hawk Website, September 2021, <https://www.boeing.com/defense/t-7a/#/gallery>

aircraft and flight operations at Laughlin AFB and associated airspace to replace all T-38C Talon aircraft assigned to the installation; introduction of nighttime (between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.) T-7A flight operations; changes to the number of personnel and dependents in the Laughlin AFB region; and construction and upgrade of operations, support, and maintenance facilities. The number of T-7A aircraft, aircraft operations, and nighttime operations is evaluated as alternatives to the Proposed Action described on the back of this brochure.

#### Background

DAF proposes to recapitalize the flight training program at Laughlin AFB with T-7A aircraft because the T-38C is expected to reach the end of its service life within the next decade. Training with the T-38C does not adequately prepare pilots for the technological advancements of modern fourth and fifth generation aircraft including nighttime flight training. The Secretary of the Air Force has made strategic basing decisions to recapitalize existing T-38C pilot training installations, and Laughlin AFB would be the third of five T-38C installations to be environmentally analyzed for possible recapitalization.

#### What is the Public Scoping Process?

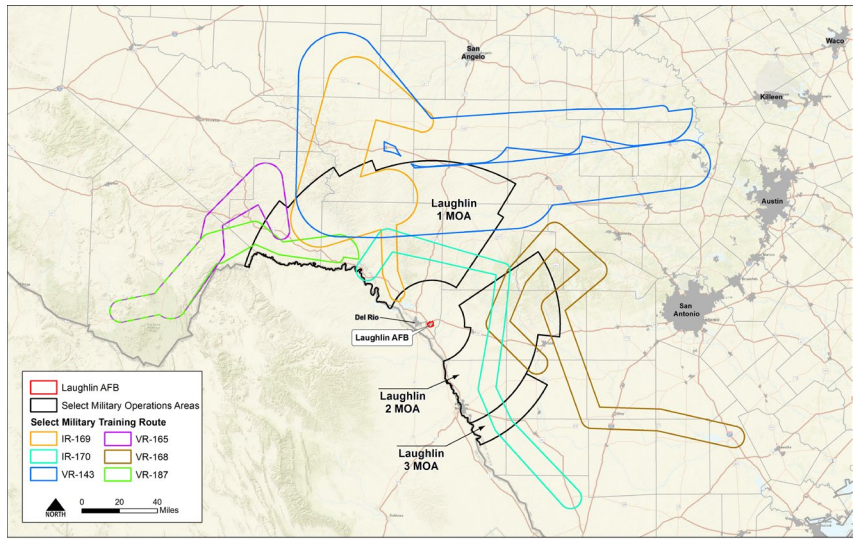
Public scoping is an early and open process, conducted in compliance with NEPA, for identifying issues and alternatives to be addressed in an EIS and determining who (e.g., public and government agencies) is interested in a proposed action. Public outreach is conducted as a part of the public scoping process to provide information to interested parties and to receive comments on a proposed action, alternatives, and potential impacts. Comments received during the public scoping process are considered in the preparation of the Draft EIS. A timeline showing the steps of the EIS process is on the back of this brochure.

#### Personnel and Construction

Laughlin AFB and surrounding region would experience a 190 staff and 361 dependent increase during the aircraft transition period of 2030 and 2031 and a 60 staff and 114 dependent decrease (relative to current personnel levels) after 2031. Six military construction and six facility sustainment, restoration, and modernization projects would be undertaken. These projects include construction at Laughlin AFB of a new Ground Based Training System Facility, Unit Maintenance Trainer Facilities, and hush house; addition to the Egress Shop; and 48 T-7A shelters.

#### Introduction

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was enacted to address concerns about federal actions and their effects on the environment. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is the most detailed analysis prescribed by regulations implementing NEPA. The U.S. Department of the Air Force (DAF) has published a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS, pursuant to NEPA, for the proposed T-7A recapitalization at Laughlin Air Force Base (AFB). This proposal is the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action entails introduction of T-7A Red Hawk



Laughlin AFB and Affected Military Training Airspace

## Alternatives

DAF is considering three alternatives to the Proposed Action (i.e., Alternatives 1, 2, and 3) and the No Action Alternative. These alternatives are described as follows:

### **Alternative 1: 63 T-7A Aircraft and T-7A Operations at a Level Sustaining Pilot Training while Simultaneously Phasing Out the T-38C and Phasing In the T-7A**

Laughlin AFB would receive 63 T-7A aircraft between 2030 and 2033. Pilot training operations would gradually transition from the T-38C to the T-7A during 2030, 2031, 2032, and 2033, and pilot training operations would be performed at a level to meet DAF's anticipated training needs. Operations are takeoffs, landings, the approach phase of a "touch-and-go", and the takeoff phase of a "touch-and-go". Up to 490 annual nighttime T-7A operations would occur. Existing military training airspace would be used, and no changes to airspace configurations would be required. All T-7A operations would be sub-sonic.

### **Alternative 2: 63 T-7A Aircraft and T-7A Operations 25 Percent Greater than the Proposed Action**

Alternative 2 would be identical to Alternative 1 except T-7A operations would be 25 percent greater than Alternative 1. Up to 613 annual nighttime T-7A operations would occur. Alternative 2 covers a potential scenario in which DAF requires a surge or increase in pilot training operations above current plan.

### **Alternative 3: 79 T-7A Aircraft and T-7A Operations 25 Percent Greater than the Proposed Action**

Alternative 3 would be identical to Alternatives 1 and 2 except 16 additional T-7A aircraft would be delivered in 2030 and 60 T-7A shelters would be constructed. T-7A operations would be identical to Alternative 2. Alternative 3 covers a potential scenario in which another military installation is unable to accept delivery of all their T-7A aircraft and some of those aircraft need to be permanently reassigned to Laughlin AFB.

### **No Action Alternative: Does Not Implement T-7A Recapitalization at Laughlin AFB**

The No Action Alternative assesses the environmental consequences from taking no action and serves as a baseline to compare the environmental consequences of the Proposed Action. For the No Action Alternative, T-38C aircraft would remain in service with no changes to operations at Laughlin AFB or airspace areas even though they will reach the end of their service lives within the next decade. No changes to the number of personnel and dependents would occur, and no construction would be undertaken.

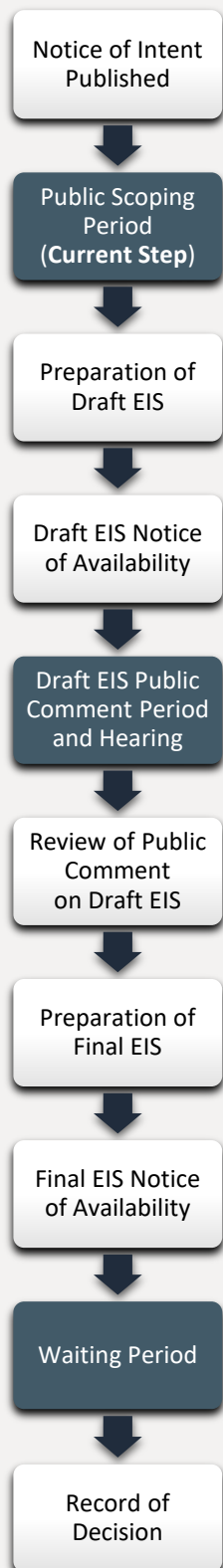
## Environmental Impact Analysis Process

DAF anticipates potential for the following notable environmental impacts from the Proposed Action:

1. Increased air emissions, particularly nitrogen oxides.
2. Increased noise from aircraft operations because the T-7A is inherently louder than the T-38C and the addition of nighttime operations may be bothersome to some residents. Increased noise could have a disproportionate impact on certain populations and impact off-installation land use compatibility.
3. Increased potential for bird/wildlife aircraft strike hazards.
4. Construction may have a minor impact on downstream water quality.

The EIS will model air emissions, noise levels, and the number of sleep and school disturbance events and compare to current conditions. DAF will also consult with appropriate resource agencies and Native American tribes to determine the potential for significant impacts. Consultation will be incorporated into the preparation of the EIS and will include, but not be limited to, consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Additional analysis will be provided in the Draft EIS, which is anticipated in late 2023. The Final EIS and a decision on which alternative to implement is expected in early 2024.

## EIS Timeline



Please provide comments on the project website, by email at [nolan.swick@us.af.mil](mailto:nolan.swick@us.af.mil), or via postal mail to Mr. Nolan Swick, 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. DAF also welcomes comments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 800). The scoping materials are also available in print at the Val Verde County Library (300 Spring Street, Del Rio, Texas) and by request. Please consider the environment before requesting printed material.

<https://laughlin.t-7anepadocuments.com/>

To ensure DAF has sufficient time to consider public input, please submit all comments by February 17, 2023.