

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
OPERATION ALLIES WELCOME SUPPORT
AT
HOLLOMAN AIR FORCE BASE, NEW MEXICO

Pursuant to provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Title 42 United States Code (USC) Sections 4321 to 4347, implemented by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations, Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §1500-1508, and 32 CFR §989, *Environmental Impact Analysis Process*, the Department of the Air Force (DAF) developed an Environmental Assessment (EA) to describe and evaluate the potential environmental consequences associated with the emergency temporary housing of Afghan evacuees at Holloman Air Force Base (HAFB). To comply with the provisions of NEPA for this Proposed Action, the DAF implemented special and emergency procedures pursuant to 32 C.F.R. §§ 989.34(a)-(b), 989.36, and in furtherance of 40 C.F.R. § 1506.12, *Emergencies* and CEQ guidance.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to support US Government Noncombatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) in accordance with DoD 3025.13, *Evacuation of US Citizens and Designated Aliens from Threatened Areas Abroad*, Executive Order (EO) 12656, *Assignment of Emergency Preparedness Procedures* and the 15 August 2021 - EXORD by housing Afghan evacuees who supported the US mission and forces in Afghanistan for the past 20 years. On 24 August 2021, the Secretary of the Air Force approved use of HAFB to assist the Department of State in support of the NEO to furnish shelter for the Afghan evacuees. The need for the Proposed Action is to provide safe haven and shelter at HAFB for Afghan evacuees at risk who assisted the US and our Allies in response to an increasingly unstable and deteriorating security situation caused by insurgent Taliban operations in Afghanistan. Taking no action would likely result in a considerable humanitarian crisis and harm to those who have furthered US and Allied operations and interests in Afghanistan.

As detailed in Section 2.0, the Proposed Action is to provide temporary sheltering of Afghan evacuees at HAFB. The EA analysis assesses potential environmental effects associated with the Proposed Action and supports informed DAF decision-making. The affected environment and environmental consequences sections of the EA (Section 3.0) form the scientific and analytic basis for the comparisons of alternatives including the “no action.” Alternatives considered, but eliminated from further analysis are described in Section 2.4. The EA carried forward potentially significant environmental issues and eliminated from further consideration insignificant issues (Section 3.0). The EA also considered reasonably foreseeable and environmental trends and planned actions in the Region of Influence (ROI) (Section 4.0), including potential impacts with a close causal connection to the Proposed Action.

Under the Proposed Action, the DAF would provide the following support to the Afghan evacuees within the United States at HAFB in New Mexico:

- Existing facilities for administrative support and reception
- HAFB land for temporary tent facilities

NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The No Action Alternative in the EA (Section 2.3.1) provides a baseline against which to contrast the impacts of the Proposed Action and alternatives, current and expected future conditions, and can be evaluated to identify impacts to the human environment in the absence of the Proposed Action or alternatives.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The analyses of the potential environmental consequences associated with implementing the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative are presented in Section 3.0 of the EA. Negligible environmental impacts associated with implementation of the Proposed Action were identified; and no mitigation measures were identified. HAFB invited Mescalero Apache Tribe for consultation on the Proposed Action on 1 September 2021. No responses were received from the Mescalero Apache Tribe. The DAF sent a coordination letter to the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) on 3 September 2021. The SHPO responded with a request for more information. The DAF provided the requested information and SHPO responded to this additional information with concurrence of no effect associated with implementation of the Proposed Action on 2 September 2021. The DAF also consulted with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on 1 September 2021. USFWS replied with a response concurring *Not Likely to Adversely Affect* on 15 September. The DAF has concluded that no significant adverse effects would occur to the following resources as a result of the Proposed Action: airspace, air quality, biological/natural resources, earth resources, land use, noise, cultural resources, safety and occupational health, infrastructure and utilities, socioeconomics, environmental justice, and water resources.

A Notice of Availability (NOA) for public review of the Draft EA was published in the Alamogordo Daily News and Las Cruces Sun News on 10 September 2021. The Draft EA was also made available for public review at the Alamogordo Public Library (920 Oregon Avenue, Alamogordo, NM 88310) and Ahrens Memorial Library (596 Fourth Street, Bldg 224, Holloman AFB, NM 88330). The NOA invited the public to review and comment on the Draft EA during the public review period ending on 13 September 2021. The Draft EA was also made available for public review electronically on the HAFB Public Affairs website at: <https://www.holloman.af.mil/Environmental-Information/>. Reasonably foreseeable environmental trends and planned actions in the ROI would not result in additional impacts to environmental resources with a close causal connection to the Proposed Action.

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Based on my review of the analyses in the attached EA, I conclude that the Proposed Action of the Temporary Shelter of Afghan evacuees on HAFB would not result in significant environmental impacts, either by itself or in combination with reasonably foreseeable environmental trends and planned actions in the affected Environment. Accordingly, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The signing of this FONSI completes the environmental impact analysis process.

RYAN P. KEENEY, Colonel, USAF
Commander, 49th Wing

Date