

RECORD OF DECISION
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
BASING F-35A LIGHTNING II FORMAL TRAINING UNIT AT KINGSLEY FIELD AIR
NATIONAL GUARD BASE, KLAMATH FALLS, OREGON

INTRODUCTION

The Department of the Air Force (DAF) will beddown and operate one F-35A Lightning II Formal Training Unit (FTU) squadron at Kingsley Field Air National Guard Base (ANGB), located at Crater Lake-Klamath Regional Airport (LMT) in Klamath Falls, Oregon. The squadron consists of up to 24 Primary Aerospace Vehicle Authorized (PAA) aircraft and 2 Backup Aerospace Vehicle Authorized (BAA) aircraft and includes implementing necessary supporting infrastructure. The DAF based its decision on the evaluations, analyses, and public comments contained in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for Basing F-35A Lightning II Formal Training Unit at Kingsley Field ANGB, Klamath Falls, Oregon, alongside other relevant matters, to make its decision.

The DAF is the Lead Agency, and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) served as a Cooperating Agency pursuant to 42 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 4336a(a)(3). The DAF is issuing this Record of Decision in accordance with Department of War National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Procedures Part 4.1(d) and DAF NEPA Implementing Procedures Part 4.1(b).

This ROD documents:

- The DAF's decision;
- The alternatives considered;
- Relevant factors considered in the decision;
- Mitigations.

The DAF's selected alternative involves construction of infrastructure necessary to support the military aircraft basing at Crater Lake-Klamath Regional Airport (LMT) which requires changes to the Airport Layout Plan (ALP) for LMT, where the FAA has jurisdiction by law and is the approval authority for changes to an ALP. Thus, the FAA's federal action¹ is whether to approve changes to the ALP when the City of Klamath Falls submits an update to the FAA depicting the DAF infrastructure projects subject to FAA review pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 47107(a)(16) et seq., and Section 743 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024.

DECISION SYNOPSIS

The DAF will beddown and operate one F-35A FTU squadron at Kingsley Field ANGB. This mission includes the beddown of up to 24 PAA and 2 BAA aircraft, for a total of 26 F-35A aircraft, alongside transitioning flight training operations from legacy platforms to the F-35A. To support this flying mission, the DAF will add approximately 30 contracted personnel and execute ground infrastructure improvements, including the construction, renovation, and demolition of facilities to meet training, maintenance, and hangar requirements. The DAF selected the

¹ Certain proposed changes to ALPs are major federal actions requiring FAA compliance with NEPA. FAA's action is a separate but connected action, see FAA Order 1050.1G §6.1. As such, the FAA determination whether to approve a request for change(s) to the City of Fort Smith's ALP under 49 U.S.C §47101 is not the same as the DAF proposed actions under the authority of other laws. Also see 42 U.S.C. §4336(b) requiring evaluation in a single document when a proposed agency action requires action by more than one Federal agency.

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Proposed Action to ensure pilot readiness by establishing a dedicated fifth-generation FTU, thereby satisfying critical national defense requirements.

BACKGROUND

The DAF is transitioning from legacy fighter aircraft to the fifth-generation F-35A Lightning II to meet current and future operational and pilot training requirements. Kingsley Field ANGB previously supported the 173d Fighter Wing's (173 FW) F-15C/D FTU mission; however, the F-15C/D aircraft have been divested.

The Secretary of the Air Force identified Kingsley Field ANGB as the preferred location for the F-35A FTU, subject to the completion of environmental impact analyses under NEPA. The FEIS evaluates the potential environmental consequences of the beddown, associated airspace operations, personnel shifts, and ground infrastructure improvements, providing the analytical foundation for the DAF final decision.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The EIS analyzed two alternatives: the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.

Proposed Action (FEIS, Section 2.1.2, Pages 2-1 through 2-14)

The DAF would beddown and operate one F-35A FTU squadron consisting of up to 24 PAA and 2 BAA aircraft, for a total of 26 F-35A at Kingsley Field ANGB. The first aircraft would arrive in FY2027, with full operational capacity expected in FY2029.

Operations & Airspace: F-35A pilot training would occur within existing military training airspace and ranges. No changes to military training airspace boundaries, altitudes, or management are proposed. The F-35A annual flying program would total approximately 6,000 hours annually. Based on an average sortie duration of approximately 1.3 hours, the F-35A FTU would conduct approximately 4,615 sorties annually. Annual F-35A airfield operations would total approximately 20,780 operations, and total airfield operations would be approximately 50,280.

Personnel & Projects: Approximately 30 contracted personnel would be added. Construction, renovation, and demolition projects (listed in *FEIS, Tables 2.1-3 and 2.1-4*) would support the mission. Key projects include:

- Construction, renovation, or expansion of squadron operations, simulator facilities, and specialized training centers.
- Construction or renovation of hangars, maintenance shops, and egress/maintenance support facilities.
- Aircraft parking apron, ramp, taxiway access improvements (including Taxiway A / Building 400 repair), and construction of an east-side C-17 parking ramp.
- Demolition of legacy structures, security and access improvements, and upgrades to communications, electrical, water, and stormwater utility infrastructure.

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No Action Alternative (FEIS, Section 2.2, Page 2-15)

Under the No Action Alternative, the DAF would not beddown the F-35A FTU squadron at Kingsley Field ANGB, and the base would not receive the F-35A aircraft or undergo the associated facilities construction, renovation, demolition, and personnel increases. The No Action Alternative serves as the baseline against which the impacts of the Proposed Action are evaluated. The No Action Alternative would not meet the DAF's purpose and need to transition to fifth-generation fighter training to meet critical national defense readiness requirements.

MITIGATION

The DAF and the National Guard Bureau (NGB) will implement the mitigations identified in the FEIS to address significant effects, regulatory requirements and DAF policies. Regardless of the mitigations established in this ROD the DAF maintains an ongoing obligation to review the FEIS and consider any new information regarding environmental impacts.

The NGB will develop a Mitigation and Monitoring Plan within 60 days of the signature of this ROD to track and coordinate the implementation of the mitigation measures listed below.

The Mitigation Plan will:

- Identify specific mitigative actions.
- Identify the principal and subordinate organizations with responsibility for oversight and execution of specific mitigations.
- Present the timeline and completion schedule for each action.
- Be coordinated with the FAA and the City of Klamath Falls, as appropriate.

Project-Specific Mitigation: Cultural Resources (FEIS Section 3.9)

To mitigate the Adverse Effect on the National Register of Historic Places-eligible Kingsley Field Alert Hangar Historic District resulting from the demolition of Building 219, the NGB and the Oregon Air National Guard have executed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

- *Digital Story Map*: The primary mitigation under the Memorandum of Agreement includes the development, hosting, and public promotion of a comprehensive digital Story Map. The Story Map will detail the development of Kingsley Field from WWII through the Cold War, focusing on Building 219's architectural role as a maintenance hangar and its significance within the Air Defense Command's interceptor and alert programs.

Inadvertent Discovery Protocol: In the event of an inadvertent discovery of archaeological resources or human remains during construction, work will cease immediately, the location will be secured with an adequate buffer, and the NGB will initiate consultation with the Oregon SHPO, tribal authorities, and cultural resource managers in accordance with federal regulations.

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Existing Standard Operating Procedures and Best Management Practices

In lieu of project-specific mitigation for other resource areas analyzed in FEIS Chapter 3, the F-35A beddown relies on established operational procedures and standard compliance mechanisms:

- **Airspace Operations:** The 173 FW will continue full adherence to established flight rules, altitude floors, seasonal wildlife avoidance buffers, and civil aviation deconfliction procedures codified under the 2017 Oregon Airspace EIS (NGB 2017) and the 2023 Mountain Home Airspace Optimization EIS (DAF 2023a).
- **Noise Abatement:** Operational noise modifications (such as reducing sorties, altering flight tracks, or restricting power settings) were evaluated and determined to be impracticable due to adverse impacts on flight safety, pilot training syllabi, and operational readiness; therefore, no project-specific noise mitigations are adopted.
- **Physical and Natural Resources:** Ground-disturbing activities and base operations will adhere to standard Best Management Practices, contractual construction requirements, and existing installation management plans. This includes routine compliance with established programs for fugitive dust control, stormwater management and erosion control, spill prevention and hazardous waste handling, flight safety (BASH), and natural resources management.

DECISION

The Proposed Action is selected for implementation after considering the potential environmental consequences provided in the FEIS for Basing F-35A Lightning II Formal Training Unit at Kingsley Field Air National Guard Base, Klamath Falls, Oregon; comments received during the NEPA process; mission requirements; operational needs; and other matters related to national defense, including current military operational needs and costs.

By this decision, the DAF will beddown and operate one F-35A FTU squadron at Kingsley Field ANGB consisting of up to 24 PAA aircraft and 2 BAA aircraft. The DAF will execute all operational, training, construction, renovation, demolition, and personnel components of the Proposed Action as analyzed in the FEIS. Final implementation of individual construction, renovation, demolition, and infrastructure projects will depend on mission requirements, final design, funding availability, and applicable regulatory approvals.

DAF will monitor standard environmental protection measures and compliance requirements through established installation environmental management systems.

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ROBERT E. MORIARTY, P.E., SES, DAF
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force
(Installations)

Date