



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS AIR COMBAT COMMAND
JOINT BASE LANGLEY-EUSTIS VA

1 Aug 2011

Brigadier General Christopher Burne
Staff Judge Advocate
220 Sweeney Blvd, Suite 122
Joint Base Langely-Eustis, VA 23665

Mr. Erik B. Ryberg
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312 South Convent Avenue
Tucson, AZ 85701

Mr. Ryberg

The Office of the Secretary of the Air Force received your June 9, 2011, letter regarding Operation Snowbird activities at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. I have been asked to respond to your letter. You are well versed in the history of Operation Snowbird and have raised a number of concerns stemming from a perceived "very lengthy delay in initiating the environmental assessment" associated with that operation. I offer the following information to address your concerns.

First, as Major General Byers noted in his January 24, 2011, letter to you, the Environmental Assessment (EA) process is underway for Operation Snowbird. Thus the true issue you outline rests more with the speed of the process than its initiation. This is a concern we share, for although the analysis is underway, its progress was admittedly delayed by the complexity of gaining input on the overall training plan from multiple parties throughout the chain of command in both active duty and Air National Guard units. Valuable input has now been gained and much has been accomplished with all units actively participating with a great sense of urgency.

I am pleased to report that we are in the final stages of the coordination process, and we fully anticipate the training plan being approved within the next few weeks. This will complete the first major step of the EA process. Once the plan is complete, we will move to the next phase and prepare for conducting informational meetings with the public to obtain their input. We intend to hold those meetings within the next 60 days, no later than September 30, 2011. You will be fully informed of exactly when and where those meetings will be held, and your clients will be afforded every opportunity to communicate their concerns as part of the EA process.

As the EA proceeds, we will use the input from those public forums to continue scoping the issues requiring more detailed analysis. As you know, this will result in a draft EA, that once complete, will be available for public comments that will be carefully considered and incorporated prior to finalizing the EA. We expect the final EA to address identified potential environmental impacts, to include the noise and safety concerns you have raised.

Agile Combat Power

I thank you for your continued interest in Air Force activities and, in particular, the activities associated with Davis-Monthan that continue to be important to improving America's air power, thereby contributing to our national security. I sincerely hope this letter addressed your concerns with the progress of the EA associated with Operation Snowbird. We look forward to you and your clients' participation in the NEPA process as the EA enters its next phases. I assure you Air Force leadership is as keenly interested as our Davis-Monthan Tucson neighbors in bringing this EA process to a timely, yet deliberative conclusion.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris F. Burne", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

CHRISTOPHER F. BURNE
Brigadier General, USAF
Staff Judge Advocate