COUNTY OF RIO ARRIBA
RESOLUTION # 2011- 025

A RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION TO THE LOW ALTITUDE TACTICAL NAVIGATION (LATN) TRAINING PROPOSAL

WHEREAS, The 27th Special Operations Wing, (27 Sow) based at Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico proposes to conduct Special Operations Forces (SOF) mobility training in Northern New Mexico and Southern Colorado; and,

WHEREAS, The training aircraft would conduct their exercises between 200 and 500 feet above ground level (AGL) and at speeds below 250 knots; and,

WHEREAS, these sorties would occur after dusk, three times nightly, with 95% taking place Monday thru Friday and approximately 688 flights proposed annually with an indefinite time frame; and,

WHEREAS, approximately three hours a night would be spent in the LATN training area and the remainder of the five-hour flight would be spent training at Melrose Range or a local airfield; and,

WHEREAS, pursuant to environmental justice many of our community members have their primary language as Spanish and Native American dialects and no LATN project information has been provided in these languages; and,

WHEREAS, many of our communities have active-duty military or veterans who suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), the symptoms of which can be triggered by the sounds of combat as would be created by the LATN project; and,

WHEREAS, there are other community residents who are also afflicted with psychiatric and other medical conditions which could be adversely aggravated with the training effects; and,

WHEREAS, wildlife could be adversely impacted in migratory, mating and reproduction patterns contrary to numerous federal acts enacted for their protection such as the migratory and endangered species acts, especially affecting our National Wildlife Refuges located in Northern New Mexico, and,

WHEREAS, One of the aircraft to be utilized in the training, the CV-22 Osprey, has a record of crashes with loss of life and injuries, and the definitive causes of the crashes have not be definitively determined, and,

WHEREAS, there will be significant environmental and other impacts from the LATN plan, so an EIS (Environmental Impact Statement), which requires more rigorous scientific analysis, should be done rather than the proposed EA (Environmental Assessment); and,
WHEREAS, the economic impact could be significant due to the disturbance of the attractions that bring tourism to this area such as peace and quiet which provide a tranquil setting for recreation and relaxation; and,

WHEREAS, our local first responders, firefighters and regional hospitals are currently not trained or equipped to handle potential fire events and crashes rescues; and,

WHEREAS, the proposed deadline of October 4th, 2010 for comment is so soon as to not allow enough time for interested parties to analyze data and prepare their comments in a timely fashion; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNTY RIO ARRIBA THAT:

1. That it is opposed to the LATN proposal taking place in Rio Arriba County due to the aforementioned impacts and shortcomings and supports the no action alternative which is to utilize the existing local military routes be implemented instead.

PASSED, ADOPTED AND APPROVED this _____ day of ________, 2010.
RIO ARRIBA BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Alfredo L. Montoya, Chairman/Commissioner, District II

Elias Coriz, Commissioner, District I

Felipe D. Martinez, Commissioner, District III

ATTEST:

MOISES A. MORALES, JR, COUNTY CLERK

CERTIFICATE OF FILING

I, MOISES A. MORALES, JR, County Clerk, do hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution designated as Resolution 2011-003 was filed in my office on the_____ day of _____ in Book Number.

MOISES A. MORALES, JR, COUNTY CLERK

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What is the Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC)?

AFSOC, headquartered at Hurlburt Field, Florida, was established in 1990 to provide Air Force Special Operations Forces (SOF) for worldwide deployment and assignment to regional unified commands. AFSOC is composed of highly trained, rapidly deployable airmen who are equipped with highly specialized aircraft. These forces provide global ability to conduct special operations missions ranging from precision application of firepower, to infiltration, exfiltration, resupply, and refueling of SOF operational elements.

AFSOC is a Major Command (MAJCOM) and the Air Force component of U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), a unified command located at MacDill AFB, Florida. AFSOC is responsible to USSOCOM for the readiness of Air Force SOF for worldwide deployment. On August 20, 2007 a Record of Decision (ROD) approved the beddown of AFSOC personnel and equipment at Cannon AFB, New Mexico and created a new AFSOC Wing, the 27th Special Operations Wing (27 SOW). AFSOC's core tasks and the 27 SOW training requirements are grouped into four mission areas:

- Forward presence and engagement;
- Information operations;
- Precision employment and strike; and
- SOF mobility.

Why is AFSOC looking to terrain in New Mexico and Colorado to meet Training Requirements?

To meet SOF mobility training requirements, the Air Force is proposing that various types of C-130 and CV-22 Osprey aircrews, flying as low as 200 feet above-ground-level (AGL) with speeds below 250 knots indicated airspeed, train in the proposed LATN area. The proposed LATN area is necessary because the existing Military Training Routes (MTRs) controlled by 27 SOW at Cannon AFB are generally narrow corridors over flat terrain designed for use by F-16 aircraft previously flown from Cannon AFB. These MTRs do not provide the access to aircrew training opportunities over high mountainous terrain need to represent current real world taskings. No air drops are proposed in the LATN area and aircraft lights and communications systems will be used in the LATN area. These aircrews would hone unique skills by flying:

- At night
- In high altitude mountains
- With vertical terrain separated from large human populations.

This SOF mobility capability is a unique, national asset and proficiency at these skills are required for successful operations in ongoing global conflicts.

The northern New Mexico and southern Colorado area proposed for the SOF training meets these terrain requirements. This environment is very challenging for crews to keep the aircraft on the proper time schedule and course while avoiding simulated threats.
Proposed LATN Training Area

Under this proposal, the 27th Special Operations Wing (27 SOW), based at Cannon AFB, would use the proposed LATN area to accomplish unique Special Operations Forces (SOF) mobility training requirements. The SOF mobility training would consist of approximately three sorties (or training flights) per day, or approximately 688 annually, in the northern portion of New Mexico and the southern portion of Colorado (see map at right). This area was primarily selected due to the topography, proximity to Cannon AFB, and lack of a large civilian populations.

Low-level training is the sole objective to accomplish in the LATN area. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Air Force regulations require aircraft utilizing the LATN area to avoid airfields, towns, noise sensitive areas and wilderness areas by prescribed vertical and/or horizontal distances. The majority of training flights would take place after dusk with 95% taking place Monday through Friday.

Aircraft would fly as low as 200 feet above-ground-level (AGL). For each sortie, approximately three hours would be spent on training in the LATN area and the remainder of the five-hour flight would be spent training at Melrose Range or a local airfield.
Alternative 1

Create a LATN area smaller in size to the Proposed Action that is confined solely to the mountainous areas of New Mexico and Colorado. This area shares the same southern and eastern boundaries as the Proposed Action, but in some places the northern boundary would be moved south and the Colorado/New Mexico western border would be moved to the east (see map at right). This would reduce the area being affected by random low level flights. However, the disadvantages include reduction in the available training area which increases the likelihood that crews would fly the same route multiple times and that inclement weather would preclude training opportunities.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would be to use existing MTRs. The majority of local existing Military Training Routes (MTRs) belong to the 27th Special Operations Wing (SOW) or the 58 SOW based at Kirtland AFB near Albuquerque, New Mexico. The 27 SOW MTRs are limited in length and are over relatively flat terrain. The 58 SOW MTRs meet both various types of C-130 and CV-22 Osprey training requirements, but the number of routes are limited and the routes are already used heavily by the 58 SOW. If the 27 SOW training remains restricted to existing MTRs, aircrews would not develop the unique skills obtained by training in varied mountainous terrain and weather conditions.