

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Name of Action: Keesler Air Force Base Digital Airport Surveillance Radar

The Department of Defense (DoD) proposes to construct two Digital Airport Surveillance Radar (DASR) systems at Keesler Air Force Base (AFB) in Mississippi for training purposes. This proposed action is part of the DoD National Airspace System (NAS) Program, which involves the replacement of analog air traffic control systems with state-of-the art digital air traffic control equipment on U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, and U.S. Air Force (USAF) bases throughout the country. The implementation of the NAS program, which also includes the installation of DoD Advanced Automation Systems (DAAS) and Voice Communications Switching Systems (VCSS) at DoD bases, was previously evaluated in a programmatic Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) (1995).

Two DASR systems will be located at Keesler AFB for training purposes. The EA for Keesler AFB addresses the site-specific impacts of locating the two DASR systems on Keesler AFB, and evaluates the consequences of DASR system construction on both the natural and man-made environments. The DAAS and VCSS components of the NAS program at Keesler AFB would be located within existing buildings, and impacts are anticipated to be minor. The primary consequences of the DASR systems evaluated in the EA involve the construction and operation of two ASR-11 radar systems on Keesler AFB, as part of the base training curriculum, to replace the two existing AN/GPN-20 radar systems. The second ASR-11 radar will be installed approximately 18 months after the first.

The DASR system at Keesler AFB will be provided to enhance the existing technical training program at Keesler AFB. The ASR-11 systems are needed to eventually replace the existing AN/GPN-20 airport surveillance radars that currently comprise a majority of the curriculum. The new ASR-11 radar systems will allow personnel to be trained on the latest digital technology equipment for later deployment to bases currently using the ASR-11 radar system. The ASR-11 systems will take advantage of significantly increased capabilities of digital technology developed in recent years.

Four alternative sites (Site 2, Site 3, Site 4, and Site 7) were evaluated for location of the ASR-11 radar systems. Two sites will be chosen to contain one ASR-11 system each. All four sites feature characteristics that would generally make any of these locations an acceptable location for the radar facility from operational and environmental perspectives. Currently, the Air Force has chosen Sites 3 and 4 as the preferred alternative sites. The final site selection would occur during the design

process. No significant impacts to base operation would be anticipated at any of the four alternative sites. If Site 2 were chosen as the final site, the existing utility line that crosses above the area would require relocation; and, although land use would remain compatible with the surrounding area, the existing controlled access area crossing the site would require redefinition. If Site 7 were chosen as one of the two final sites, a sewer line and a cooling line may need to be re-routed depending on the depth of the pipelines.

During excavation at any of the four alternative sites, groundwater may be encountered. Excavation at Sites 3 and 4 may reveal fuels or fuel vapors in the soils. However, since the abandoned fuel line which may have contributed to contamination has been officially closed, no groundwater contamination is expected to be encountered, subsequently no treatment of groundwater would be required at this or any of the four sites.

Installation and operation of an ASR-11 facility at any of the four alternative sites would be generally compatible with the surrounding aircraft operations and maintenance, and technical training land uses. No substantial adverse impacts associated with land use, socioeconomics, utilities, transportation, noise, air quality, geology, surface water, groundwater, aesthetic resources, or cultural resources would be anticipated if any of the four sites were selected as the two preferred alternatives.

Installation of the two ASR-11 facilities at Sites 2 and 7 would not result in the permanent clearing of vegetation, due to the fact that both sites occur in areas with a concrete surface. Sites 3 and 4 are located in grassy areas, and an area of grass approximately 61-foot by 47-foot would be removed. Also, an area of grass approximately 16 feet by 10 feet would be lost due to an access road to Site 3. This limited clearing is anticipated to result in minimal long-term impacts for Sites 3 and 4. No tree removal is anticipated at any of the four alternative sites.

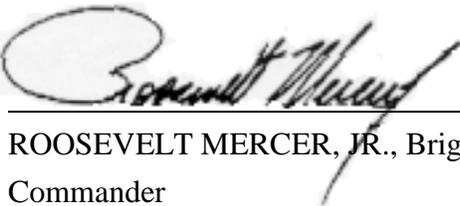
Operation of the DASR system is anticipated to have minimal long-term impacts to the natural and human environments. The radars would generate radio frequency radiation (RFR) while operating. However, the RFR generated would be safe to humans at ground level and is not anticipated to pose a harm to the general population. Due to the training nature of use, the new ASR-11 facilities will not require a backup power generator. Therefore, the only hazardous substances anticipated to be present at either of the two future ASR-11 sites would include oils and greases to facilitate operation of the systems.

In summary, construction and operation of the DASR system at Keesler AFB at any of the four ASR-11 sites would result in minimal short-term and long-term impacts to the environment. Currently the

Air Force has chosen Site 3 and Site 4 as the preferred alternative sites.

It is anticipated that few mitigation measures would be required during construction and operation of the facilities. During the construction period, sheeting or supports of some kind may be used in the areas excavated for the tower footings and utility trenches to prevent collapse of these excavated areas. Groundwater levels would be monitored and maintained as necessary. To minimize noise impacts during construction, mufflers would be used on construction equipment and vehicles. In addition, all equipment and vehicles used during construction would be maintained in good operating condition so that emissions are minimized, thus reducing the potential for air quality impacts. Noise barriers may also be used to reduce noise levels. These barriers would also have the benefit of providing a visual buffer. Dust would be controlled on-site by using water to wet down disturbed areas. Unpaved areas disturbed for the DASR system construction would either be loamed and seeded with a grass mixture or covered with a geotextile fabric and crushed stone to stabilize the disturbed soils; thus, minimizing the potential for erosion and sedimentation. All hazardous materials used during construction would be handled and disposed of in accordance with Keesler AFB policies and protocols and all applicable state and federal regulations. Traffic management measures would be developed to provide traffic flow and pedestrian access during and following construction.

Based on this summary of effects, along with the detailed description of the effects provided in the Environmental Assessment, I have determined that construction of an ASR-11 at Site 3 and Site 4, which I have selected, will not have a significant impact on the human environment. For this reason, no environmental impact statement needs to be prepared.



ROOSEVELT MERCER, JR., Brigadier General, USAF
Commander
81st Training Wing



Date