

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)  
FOR ESTABLISHING THE 24-HOUR ACCESS GATE AT  
HANSCOM AIR FORCE BASE  
BEDFORD, LEXINGTON, AND LINCOLN, MASSACHUSETTS**

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Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508), Department of Defense Directive 6050.1 and the Air Force Environmental Impact Analysis Process regulations 32 CFR Part 989, the Air Force has prepared an environmental assessment to identify potential effects associated with transitioning 24-Hour Gate Access from Ruiz Gate (Gate 4) to Sartain Gate (Gate 1) at Hanscom Air Force Base (AFB), in Bedford, Lexington, and Lincoln, Massachusetts.

**PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION (EA §§ 1.1 through 1.6, pages 1-1 to 1-7):** Hanscom Air Force Base (HAFB) seeks to improve its understanding on the potential environmental consequences associated with establishing a 24-hour access gate at an existing gate other than Ruiz Gate (Gate 4/Hartwell Avenue Entrance Gate) at HAFB. An environmental impact analysis must be performed for each federal action that has the potential to impact the environment. The United States Air Force (USAF) implements compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) through its Environmental Impact Analysis Process (EIAP). This Environmental Assessment (EA) analyzes potential environmental impacts of relocating the 24-hour access gate to an existing gate other than the Ruiz Gate at HAFB. The intent of this EA is to address the Proposed Action and Alternatives associated with selecting a 24-hour access gate location that will allow HAFB organizations, most importantly Security Forces, to meet mission requirements safely and more efficiently. This EA is prepared in accordance with NEPA (42 United States Code [USC] 4321-4347), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulation for Implementing the Procedural Provision of NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] §§ 1500-1508), and the USAF EIAP regulation codified at 32 CFR 989 et seq.

Hanscom Air Force Base (HAFB) is a controlled access federal facility located approximately 15 miles northwest of downtown Boston in Middlesex County, Massachusetts (Figure 1-1). The base occupies approximately 846 acres and is located in the towns of Bedford, Lexington, and Lincoln. The 66th Security Forces Squadron (66 SFS) at HAFB operates five entry gate control points in order to protect people, land, resources, infrastructure, and the Air Force mission from potential adversaries. These five entry gate control points permit authorized personnel to enter HAFB via pedestrian, bicycle, or vehicular traffic. The five entry gate control points include (Figure 1-2):

1. Gate 1 (Sartain Gate) – Accessible from Route 2A, Hanscom Drive, and a segment of Old Bedford Road; it is the main gate for HAFB visitors, commercial vehicles, and DoD personnel. Normal hours of operation are 0530 to 1900 (5:30 AM to 7:00 PM) daily (please see commentary below on situational operational conditions during COVID-19).
2. Gate 2 – Located off Marrett Road and Route 2A, is closed except in cases of emergency.
3. Gate 3 and 3A (Schilling Gate) – Gate 3 is accessible from Wood Street, while Gate 3A is accessible by Schilling Circle and is located on the boundary between MIT LL and HAFB. Gate 3A serves as access/egress for vehicles traveling between the MIT LL campus and HAFB. Gate 3 remains active and is controlled and operated by MIT LL contractors, and it is primarily utilized by MIT LL employees trying to access the MIT LL campus, while Gate 3A has been temporarily closed since 2018.

4. Gate 4 (Ruiz Gate) – Adjacent to and north of the MIT LL campus, it is accessed via Hartwell Avenue (becomes Barksdale Street within HAFB) and provides access to Routes 4/225. Normal hours of operation are 24 hours a day daily (please see commentary below on situational operational conditions during COVID-19).

Please note that the information discussed in this EA pertains only to normal operational conditions and does not reflect the situational operational conditions of the COVID-19 timeframe. The situational operational conditions from COVID-19 are based on the most current guidance provided from Federal, state, and local agencies.

Sartain Gate and Ruiz Gate are the main control points for entry and egress on HAFB. In general, personnel who reside south and west of HAFB travel through the Sartain Gate and personnel who reside north and east of HAFB travel through the Ruiz Gate. During daytime hours (5:30 AM to 7:00 PM) both the Sartain Gate and Ruiz Gate are open for access to HAFB. During the overnight hours (7:00 PM to 5:30 AM), the Sartain Gate is closed, and the Ruiz Gate becomes the only means of access to HAFB. Due to limitations in infrastructure at the Ruiz Gate, the 66th Security Forces Squadron (SFS) at HAFB has requested that the 24-hour access gate be changed to one of the other gates at HAFB in order to provide improved Anti-Terrorism Force-Protection (AT/FP), and enhance public safety.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is for HAFB to provide 24-hour base access through an entry control point that best meets 66 SFS mission and AT/FP requirements. The 66 SFS mission statement reads, “Continuously develop superior/competent civilian and military defenders, and effectively utilize provided infrastructure to protect and defend personnel and resources of Hanscom AFB and worldwide expeditionary locations by dominating, detecting, denying and defeating enemy forces to enable mission operations from a safe, secure and uncontested environment.” From Air Force Instruction (AFI) DoDIO-2000.16V1\_AFI10-245-O, Antiterrorism (AT), “The AT Program is a high priority, comprehensive program which focuses on defensive measures to reduce the risk to AF personnel and property to terrorist acts.” Currently, base access after normal daytime hours (7:00 PM to 5:30 AM) is only possible through the Ruiz Gate.

The Proposed Action is needed because infrastructure limitations at the Ruiz Gate do not allow 66 SFS to meet AT/FP requirements and mission needs. Ruiz Gate is limited in physical space inside and outside the lanes of traffic. Vehicular traffic backing up at the Ruiz Gate (more than 15 vehicles per lane) tends to hinder civilian traffic on Wood Street in Lexington, MA and increases the overall congestion. Because Ruiz Gate does not have commercial vehicle inspection stations, 66 SFS cannot permit commercial vehicles to enter through Ruiz Gate between the hours of 7:00 PM and 5:30 AM, and because there is inadequate space for a commercial vehicle to turn around and leave, this causes congestion and potential AT/FP problems.

## **DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES**

**ALTERNATIVE 1 - PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE (EA § 2.4.1, pages 2-3 to 2-4):** This alternative includes changing the times of operation of Sartain Gate and Ruiz Gate (Figure 2-1). This alternative would change the designation of Sartain Gate from operating as the “5:30AM to 7:00 PM” gate to the “24-hour a day” gate. This alternative would also change the designation of Ruiz Gate from operating as the “24-hour a day” gate to the “5:30 AM to 7:00 PM” gate. This alternative meets the purpose and need. Sartain Gate is located within HAFB’s Commercial Vehicle Search Area (CVSA) and Visitor Control Center (VCC), and there is less interference with civilian traffic. Sartain Gate allows 66 SFS to use the space adjacent to the entry control point to stage deliveries, process visitors, give directions, and control situations that develop at the entry control point. Traffic and potential threats are more visible in

the immediate and distant points of sight. There is also ample area for commuter and commercial vehicles to turn around if they are not granted access into the base.

**NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE (EA § 2.4.2, page 2-3):** Under the No-Action Alternative, HAFB would not undertake any transitioning of 24-Hour Gate Access. Without such action, the Ruiz Gate would remain as the 24-hour access gate. The No Action Alternative is used as the baseline from which the impacts of all other alternatives are compared.

**ALTERNATIVES ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION (EA § 2.5, page 2-5):** Two other alternatives were initially considered during the environmental impact analysis process: Alternative 2 (Establish Gate 2 (Marrett Street/Airport Road/Route 2A Gate Entrance) as the 24-hour Access Gate); and Alternative 3 (Establish Gate 3 and 3A as the 24-hour Access Gate). These alternatives were eliminated from further consideration because they did not meet all of the criteria for the selection standards posted on page 2-5.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The Environmental Assessment (EA), incorporated by reference into this finding, analyzes the potential environmental consequences of activities associated with transitioning the 24-hour access gate designation on HAFB, and provides environmental protection measures to avoid or reduce adverse environmental impacts. The EA considers all potential impacts of Alternative 1 and the No-Action Alternative. The EA also considers cumulative environmental impacts with other projects in the Region of Influence. The analyses of the affected environment and environmental consequences of implementing the Preferred Alternative presented in the EA concluded that by implementing standing environmental protection measures and operational planning, the Air Force would be in compliance with all terms and conditions and reporting requirements stipulated by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and with the conditions stipulated in the Programmatic Agreement (PA) between the Hanscom Air Force Base and the Massachusetts State Historic Preservation Office regarding the management of historic properties in the Air Force Cambridge Research Laboratory (AFCRL) Historic District at Hanscom Air Force Base, Massachusetts dated February 25, 2015. The Air Force has concluded that no significant adverse effects would result to the following resources because of the Preferred Alternative:

**Socioeconomics / Environmental Justice (EA § 3.2, page 3-6; § 4.1, pages 4-1 to 4-3):** HAFB employs nearly 7,000 people and includes approximately 740 housing units on the base. The workforce at HAFB includes military (active-duty), military (reservists), Department of DoD civilians, non-DoD civilians, and contractors. From a social perspective, HAFB has limited impacts on surrounding communities due to the small number of residents who reside on the base and the self-contained nature of the facility. While it is possible that there may be some disruption to the operations of the businesses presented in Table 3-4, this would generally be short-lived as the Proposed Action is solely an operational change and not a construction undertaking. Work on Sartain Gate is anticipated to begin in the near future, while the planned reconfiguration of the Ruiz (aka Hartwell) Gate Complex is planned for FY 2023. The change in gate hours may result in inconvenience to some visitors to the base who currently utilize Ruiz Gate during the overnight hours, otherwise access to HAFB is not hindered. The proposed change in the hours of operation for Sartain Gate and Ruiz Gate is not considered to significantly impact the businesses (those not specific to military personnel), as several are closed on Saturday and/or Sunday and, with the exception of Pizza Mia, the businesses have limited hours of operation, typically closing at 5 PM or earlier. Similarly, while the two businesses offering delivery services (presumably off-base), Pizza Mia and Froots, may require a re-routing of their off-base

delivery services, access to off-base customers is not otherwise hindered. Employees, residents and visitors who utilize Ruiz Gate between 10 PM and 5 AM may be inconvenienced from the Proposed Action, requiring a marginally longer time to access Route 95 or to reach locations north of HAFB in Bedford or Lexington. Review of the traffic data provided for Hartwell Avenue on either side of Ruiz Gate indicates very little traffic activity during the overnight hours. In summary, outside of a possible short-lived inconvenience factor, any potential economic impact to businesses on the base is considered to be insignificant. The Proposed Action is an operational change and not a construction and infrastructure undertaking. As such, the Proposed Action would not result in any measurable or significant environmental justice impacts with respect to changes in population, either in total or race/ethnicity specific. Similarly, the Proposed Action would not impact area household and family incomes or the level of English fluency within the four Towns.

**Transportation (EA § 3.3, pages 3-6 to 3-7; § 4.2, pages 4-3 to 4-9):** Hanscom AFB is currently evaluating potential operational changes to their primary gate entrances in Bedford, MA and Lexington, MA. Currently, Sartain Gate (otherwise known as the Gate 1) is the primary entrance to HAFB, which is accessible via Route 2A and Hanscom Drive in Bedford, MA. Although the visitors center is currently located at this entrance, the hours of entrance are limited between 5:30 AM and 7 PM. Ruiz Gate (otherwise known as the Gate 4) is the secondary, yet heavily travelled, entrance to HAFB, which is accessible from Route 4, Route 225, and Hartwell Avenue in Lexington, MA. This secondary entrance currently operates on a 24-hours/day, 7-days/week policy. Given the new facilities planned for the Sartain Gate, HAFB seeks to make the Sartain Gate the primary gate operational 24-hours/day and 7-days/week. Accordingly, the hours of the Ruiz Gate would be limited from 5:30 AM to 7 PM. Based on the existing and projected capacity analysis conducted within this report, there are no operational issues present at the study area intersections. Given the low demand of the overnight hours in this study area, the proposed operational changes to the aforementioned gates at HAFB will have negligible impacts on traffic in the surrounding area and should not impede the flow traffic at the study area intersections. Delays associated with this change will be de minimis. The two alternate routes for visitors to the installation that arrive at the Ruiz Gate and are diverted to the Sartain gate during overnight hours have very different characteristics. Alternate route 1, which requires visitors to use I-95/Route 128, is better suited to accommodating this traffic due to the geometric and functional characteristics of the roadways on the route. Alternate route 2 involves travel on Wood Street, which is more rural in context, with narrow roadways and significant vertical and horizontal curvature. This route is not suitable for heavy vehicle traffic. To encourage I-95/Route 128 traffic to use the Sartain Gate, especially overnight commercial vehicles, appropriate signage on I-95/Route 128 to advise motorists of the appropriate gate to be used is recommended.

**Noise (EA § 3.4, pages 3-8 to 3-9; § 4.3, page 4-9):** Currently, the ambient noise environment at HAFB primarily results from normal operation of MassPORT's Hanscom Field airport, ground-based vehicle operations, and use of privately-owned vehicles and government vehicles. The privately-owned cars are used by regular daily employees and contractors. Government-owned vehicles include on-road maintenance and utility vehicles and off-road equipment, such as sweeper vacuums, cranes, lawn mowers, and forklifts. Noise generated from maintenance and shop operations, ground traffic, and construction, is generally comparable to the noise generated in the surrounding community. Construction and demolition activities associated with the Preferred Alternative are anticipated to result in short-term localized increase of sound impacts in the area. Noise attenuation measures would be integrated into the design and construction of the structures to minimize adverse effects. No significant long-term noise impacts would be experienced as a result of the Preferred Alternative.

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**Air Quality (EA § 3.5, pages 3-9 to 3-12; § 4.4, pages 4-9 to 4-10):** Per 40 CFR 81.322, current as of March 2021, Middlesex County, Massachusetts has met all but one of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. The county is currently in maintenance for ozone. The primary stationary emission sources at HAFB are the boilers at the central heating plant. The base's Title V permit also imposes monitoring and record keeping requirements for various "emission units," such as the heat plant, but also for large emergency generators, gas-driven chillers, aboveground and underground storage tanks, and fuel dispensing equipment. The primary mobile sources of emissions in the vicinity include aircraft operation at MassPORT's Hanscom Field, along with ground vehicles on local and/or base roadways and small combustion engines (e.g. lawn mowers, leaf blowers). The Air Force's Air Conformity Applicability Model (ACAM) was used to perform an analysis to assess the potential air quality impact/s associated with the action in accordance with the Air Force Manual 32-7002, *Environmental Compliance and Pollution Prevention*; the EIAP (32 CFR 989); and the General Conformity Rule (GCR) (40 CFR 93 Subpart B). None of estimated emissions associated with this action are above the conformity threshold values established at 40 CFR 93.153 (b); Therefore, the requirements of the GCR are not applicable. None of the emissions are expected to reach or exceed the air quality indicator threshold; therefore, no adverse impacts to the air quality are expected. There are no construction activities involved with the Preferred Alternative, and thus there are no construction equipment emissions concerns.

**Safety and Occupational Health (EA § 3.6, pages 3-12 to 3-13; § 4.5, page 4-10):** The Proposed Action is not expected to have any significant impact on public safety. As requested by public health and safety departments, prior notice of the gate operational switch should be communicated to allow the various departments to adjust their operations as needed. There are no construction activities involved with the Preferred Alternative, and thus there are no construction related safety and occupational health concerns.

**Public Safety (EA § 3.7, page 3-13 to 3-25; § 4.6, page 4-11):** The base is served by police and fire departments located within the base as well as local municipal agencies, including Lincoln, Bedford, and Lexington Police. Emergency calls are first directed to on base emergency responders before enlisting the help of off base emergency departments. Responders access the base through either Sartain Gate or Ruiz Gate. The Proposed Action is not expected to have any significant impact on public safety. Local emergency responders, including police, fire, and ambulance, will continue to be able to access the base. Based on the transportation study, the change in nighttime access would not significantly impact response times or the time needed to reach local hospitals. Likewise, consultation with off base police departments suggests that Sartain Gate is primarily used to access the base and that the Proposed Action would not significantly impact their operations and response times. The various departments would adjust their operations as needed provided that prior notice of the gate operational switch is communicated.

## **PUBLIC REVIEW / INTERAGENCY COORDINATION**

A notice of availability was published in the The Hansconian, Bedford Minuteman, Lexington Minuteman, and Concord Journal on MONTH DATE, YEAR, inviting the public to review the draft EA and draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for a 30-day comment period. In addition, the Air Force issued a press release on MONTH DATE, YEAR announcing the availability of the Draft EA & FONSI. Copies were posted to the HAFB public facing website for download and review. The public comment period closed on MONTH DATE, YEAR and (comments/no comments) were received. In consideration of lengthy closures of local public libraries and other public meeting places as well as challenges associated with an increasingly-overburdened internet due to the coronavirus (COVID-19)

pandemic had on the traditional methods of releasing documents for public review, the Air Force encouraged members of the public and all interested stakeholders to contact HAFB directly by email or telephone to discuss and resolve issues involving access to the Draft EA & FONSI or the ability to comment. (Include summary of Public Comments here).

### **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

Based on my review of the facts and analysis summarized above and contained within the findings of the EA, I find the proposed decision to implement the Preferred Alternative will not have a significant impact on the natural or human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. This analysis fulfills NEPA, the President's Council on Environmental Quality 40 CFR §§1500 – 1508, the Air Force regulation 32 CFR §989 and Executive Orders 11988, Floodplain Management and 11990, Protection of Wetlands.

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SIGNATORY

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DATE