



Frequently Asked Questions & Answers

Q1. What is a Military Operations Area (MOA)?

A1. A MOA is a block of airspace where aircraft can perform military training activities (aircraft intercepts, turning and evasive maneuvers, and air combat maneuvers) separated from Instrument Flight Rule (IFR) traffic. Whenever a MOA is not actively in use, traffic may transient the MOA freely. If the MOA is in use, ATC (air traffic control) provides aircraft separation services.

Q2. What is an Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspace (ATCAA)?

A2. An ATCAA is airspace of defined vertical and lateral limits, assigned by Air Traffic Control (ATC), for the purpose of providing air traffic segregation between the specified activities being conducted within the assigned airspace and other IFR air traffic. Typically, these blocks of airspace start at Flight Level (FL) 180 or 18,000 feet and, in some cases, are contoured to the dimensions of the MOAs beneath them.

Q3. What role does the Federal Aviation Administration play in the proposal?

A3. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) manages the National Airspace System (NAS) and may review and comment on the draft environmental assessment.

Q4. How are altitudes measured or specified?

A4. Airspace altitudes are primarily defined in terms of Mean Sea Level (MSL), which is measured from the surface of the ocean. Where the height of the airspace floor above the ground or sea is important, the airspace floor can be measured in terms of Above Ground Level (AGL) or Above Sea Level (ASL). Airspace altitudes starting at 18,000 feet are defined in terms of FL.

Q5. Why are the current MOA altitudes deficient for training purposes?

A5. Student training requirements drive the need to operate at low altitude, 500' AGL. To conduct low altitude operations safely, students must be knowledgeable of aircraft handling and performance characteristics, tactical formation, intercepts, offensive maneuvering, defensive reactions and navigation. These training sorties and events develop essential skills for safe and effective tactical execution in a combat environment. The current altitude structure of the Crystal MOA allows aircraft to fly no lower than 6,000 feet.



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Q6. What has changed? Why was the previous airspace sufficient for training, but now it is not?

A6. Traditional airspace met the needs for previous generation's fighter training. Aircraft, tactics, and threats have significantly evolved but training airspace has remained unchanged for decades. Development of modernized airspace is required to ensure pilot training meets the demands of the current environment. In addition, an increase in the amount of training has saturated current low altitude airspace driving a requirement for alternative airspace solutions.

Q7. What happens if the current airspace is not expanded?

A7. No action would significantly hamper student training. Current airspace is inadequate to support the growth of student training and the advancement of fighter tactics. Student training will stagnate, adding to an already massive fighter pilot shortage in the United States Air Force.

Q8. What factors influenced the choice of the proposed altitude structure change and location?

A8. The 149th FW researched airspace options in the local area that would maximize student training and have least amount of impact to commercial and civilian aviation. Other low altitude airspace considerations were not practical due to interference with commercial and civilian aviation or prohibitive distance from the airfield.

Q9. What units and aircraft use the MOA?

A9. The 149th FW, flying F-16s, will have exclusive use of the low altitude airspace structure in order to limit MOA activation and reduce the impact to the local community.

Q10. How often and when will the MOA be used?

A10. Use of the low altitude MOA will be limited to student training cycles. Generally, the F-16s will use the MOA for one to two hours in the morning and in the afternoon. High use times would occur daily during some weeks in February. On rare occasions, the low altitude structure would be required at night or on weekends.

Q11. How many military aircraft will fly in the MOA at any one time?

A11. Generally, a maximum of four F-16s will use the airspace at once. On occasion, during Large Force Employment (LFE), there would be up to 12 aircraft in the airspace.



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Q12. What will be the impact of noise levels on the ground?

A12. There will be an increase in noise levels on the ground caused by the low altitude flying. Noise impacts will be minimized through proper scheduling of the airspace and only used when student training requirements dictate. In addition, the 149th FW will avoid cities and other populated areas to minimize noise levels. FAA recommendations and U.S. Air Force best practices entail aircraft using areas to avoid noise-sensitive areas to the maximum extent practical.

Q13. If citizens have noise complaints, how will they know whom to call?

A13. The ANG is a good neighbor and provides citizens an outlet for providing feedback about aircraft noise. The 149th FW actively maintains a Noise Complaint Hotline (210-925-7772) for community members. Unlike complaints about noise from commercial and general aviation, citizens have direct access to the 149th FW flight operations who can research and resolve noise issues as much as possible.

Q14. What effect will this action have on livestock feedlots in the affected area?

A14. The effects of noise on livestock have been studied for at least 50 years. Any effects are transient with many variables involved. Effects reduce over time as livestock get use to the noise. Based on noise study findings, unconfined livestock would tend to minimize any behavioral responses to low altitude overflights. There are no significant effects on livestock feedlots under the current training area.

Q15. What effect will this action have on commercial aviation in the affected area?

A15. The proposed airspace action has been vetted through meetings with the FAA's Houston Center. Impacts will be determined through further coordination with the FAA and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. Activation schedules are available 24 hours in advance at FAA's www.faa.gov web portal. Additionally, the 149th Operations Group airfield managers work with the FAA and military users in real time to adjust the top or bottom elevation of a block of airspace to facilitate a non-military transition above or below the airspace. Often, the military user can temporarily adjust their flight training profile or move from one block to another, freeing up the airspace for the non-military aircraft. These practices will continue with any new MOA airspace created in this action to minimize the impacts to commercial aviation. There will be times when transitions are not possible and the diversion around, under or over is required.



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Q16. What is the impact on general aviation?

A16. General aviation and military aircraft operate safely in the MOAs throughout the nation every day. During good weather, aircraft can operate under Visual Flight Rules (VFR) using “see and avoid” under conditions for deconfliction. When visibility is low, pilots operate under Instrument Flight Rules (IFR). These aircraft will either divert around the MOA or operate within the training airspace under FAA control. The proposed airspace will be scheduled only to facilitate low altitude training flights. This will greatly reduce the amount of time the airspace is activated and cause minimal impact to general aviation. In addition, the Notice to Airman (NOTAM) system can be used to monitor activation of the airspace. The 149th FW will also establish a hotline to the operations desk to provide deconfliction for general aviation.

Q17. How were the airspace modifications selected?

A17. The shape and location of the proposed alterations were selected based on dimensions of the existing military operational areas, which is designed to be located over sparsely-populated areas with low-volume of non-military flying operations.

POINTS OF CONTACT

Texas Air National Guard, 149th Fighter Wing Public Affairs:

Ms. Mindy Bloem (210) 925-7772, mindy.j.bloem.mil@mail.mil

Texas Military Department Public Affairs Office Manager:

Ms. Laura Lopez at (512) 782-5452, laura.lopez25.nfg@mail.mil