

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FOR CONVERSION OF THE 939 RESCUE WING
PORTLAND AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, OREGON**

Introduction

The Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC) currently bases the 939th Rescue Wing (939 RQW) at Portland Air National Guard Base (ANGB), Oregon. Portland ANGB is located on Portland International Airport (IAP) land leased from the Port of Portland. The current mission of the 939 RQW is to organize, train, and employ a combat-ready Rescue Wing to execute worldwide peacetime and Combat Search and Rescue operations in support of humanitarian and national security interests. Recent decisions have been made to consolidate all pararescue aircraft at active duty installations due to the high operations tempo of their mission. The United States Air Force (USAF) proposes to replace existing pararescue aircraft (i.e., HC-130P and C-130E aircraft and HH-60G helicopters) with KC-135R Stratotanker air-refueling aircraft. The current AFRC primary pararescue mission would be converted to an air-refueling mission. As a result, the existing 939 RQW would be converted to the 939th Air Refueling Wing (939 ARW). However, AFRC intends to maintain a pararescue team presence at Portland ANGB through the establishment of a Pararescue Squadron.

Purpose of and Need for the Proposed Action

USAF pararescue functions worldwide are considered to be low-density, high-demand, meaning that there are very few assets to perform a large and consistent number of missions. Many of the missions are to overseas locations that are very demanding on equipment and personnel. USAF senior leadership has decided the pararescue function should be more centrally controlled and managed to create efficiencies in the use of equipment and the personnel deployments. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to maintain a mission at Portland ANGB while complying with the decision to consolidate pararescue assets.

National security objectives determine the military's force structure and the accompanying mission for AFRC units. There is an increased reliance on AFRC units to fulfill primary missions traditionally assigned to active duty USAF units. Since the number of overseas active duty units have been reduced, United States (U.S.) based forces, including AFRC units, now have a relatively greater responsibility to respond to overseas threats and humanitarian efforts. The increased need for homeland defense has also added more requirements on U.S. based forces. These missions have created an increase in training requirements for U.S. based forces to be

ready for any contingency. Aerial refueling is one of the many missions AFRC units accomplish to increase overall force readiness.

Proposed Action

The USAF proposes to replace existing pararescue aircraft (i.e., HC-130P and C-130E aircraft and HH-60G helicopters) with eight KC-135R Stratotanker air-refueling aircraft at Portland ANGB. The pararescue aircraft would be transferred to another stateside USAF base. The current AFRC primary pararescue mission would be converted to an air-refueling mission. The existing 939 RQW would be converted to the 939 ARW. As a result, AFRC operations at Portland ANGB would change. However, AFRC intends to maintain a pararescue team presence at Portland ANGB through the establishment of a Pararescue Squadron.

Eleven construction, renovation, and demolition projects totaling approximately 16 acres would be required to support KC-135R aircraft at Portland ANGB. These projects would involve the demolition of existing infrastructure, new construction, and the development of new impervious surface area.

The Proposed Action would require the KC-135R aircraft to use alternate training locations for touch-and-gos and closed pattern flights. These operations are necessary for pilots and crew to maintain the required proficiency in their particular specialty. The alternate training locations potentially include; Klamath Falls IAP, Oregon; Beale Air Force Base (AFB), California; and Grant County IAP, Washington. For planning and analysis purposes, it was assumed that KC-135R aircraft training operations would be evenly split among the three proposed alternate training locations.

Alternatives to the Proposed Action

Two alternatives to the Proposed Action were considered to determine their feasibility as a viable alternative to conversion to KC-135R aircraft. These alternatives were as follows:

Conversion to KC-135E aircraft

Conversion to C-130E aircraft

A preliminary and subjective analysis was conducted to aid in determining the feasibility of the alternatives. In addition, the feasibility of locating the 939 ARW at an airfield other than Portland ANGB was considered.

Conversion to KC-135E Aircraft. The KC-135E aircraft is a modified version of the KC-135A aircraft. The FAA classifies aircraft into three stages: Stage 1, 2, and 3 in order from loudest to the quietest. The KC-135E is equivalent to a Stage 1 aircraft. The current noise standard for civilian aircraft is Stage 3. As of January 1, 2000, all civil transport aircraft must comply with Stage 3 noise standards (Airport Noise and Capacity Act [ANCA] of 1990). ANCA allows civil airports to restrict or deny operations of non-Stage 3 compliant aircraft. The Port of Portland has developed an active noise reduction program in an effort to be sensitive to local community requests for noise abatement. The Port of Portland would likely require AFRC to adopt significant mitigation measures to minimize the noise impact of any aircraft stationed at Portland ANGB. The comparative analysis presented above led AFRC to determine that converting to KC-135Es is not a viable alternative.

Conversion to C-130E Aircraft. The C-130 Hercules is one of the USAF's most versatile tactical airlift aircraft. However, there are no C-130E aircraft available in the USAF inventory that could be relocated to Portland ANGB. Therefore, the conversion to C-130E aircraft at Portland ANGB is not a viable alternative.

Locating the 939 ARW at Another Airfield. The cost of relocation, infrastructure construction, movement of personnel and equipment, recruiting and retention, and loss to the local economy would not make this a viable option. In addition, personnel and the majority of facilities are already in-place at Portland ANGB. Therefore, locating the 939 ARW at another location is not a viable alternative.

No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, the flying assets of the 939 RQW would be transferred to another USAF base, no new aircraft would be assigned to Portland ANGB, and no construction projects would be undertaken. The only military aircraft operations that would occur at Portland ANGB under the No-Action Alternative would be associated with existing ORANG (F-15 aircraft) and transient aircraft.

Summary of Anticipated Environmental Impacts Associated with the Proposed Action

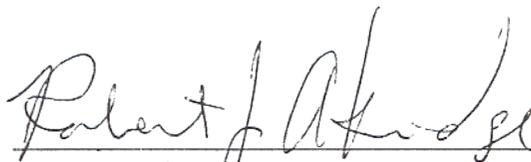
Analyses performed in the EA addressed potential effects on airspace management, safety, air quality, noise, safety, hazardous materials and waste management, transportation and circulation, geological resources, water resources, biological resources, land use, cultural resources, and

socioeconomics and environmental justice. The analyses revealed that implementation of the Proposed Action would have no significant direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on the quality of the natural or human environment.

The alternative location for the Fire/Crash Station (Project No. 7b) is on IRP Site 3. Site 3 – Hush House Area is located on the south side of O’Connor Way across from Building 270. The IRP Feasibility Study (July 2001) established remedial action objectives and evaluated remedial alternatives for groundwater contamination at this site. Currently, Oregon DEQ is reviewing these recommendations before reaching a final decision. This location will not be selected as the site for the Fire/Crash Rescue Station unless Oregon DEQ concurs with the proposed construction plans.

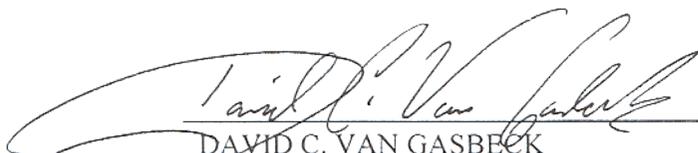
Finding of No Significant Impact

I conclude that the environmental effects of the proposed conversion of the 939 RQW are not significant, that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is unnecessary, and that a Finding of No Significant Impact is appropriate. The preparation of this EA is in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the Council on Environmental Quality regulations, and 32 Code of Federal Regulations 989, as amended (Environmental Impact Analysis Process).



ROBERT J. AKRIDGE
Executive Secretary
Environmental Protection Committee
Headquarters Air Force Reserve Command

11 Sep 02
Date



DAVID C. VAN GASBECK
Executive Secretary
ESOH Council
Air National Guard

4 Sep 02
Date