

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Raymond A. Mendez and I am a 38 year resident of Cave Creek Canyon in Arizona. My business and home are located at 5,390' in elevation approximately 5 miles from the town of Portal in the Chiricahua Mountains. I wish to voice my objection to the Air Force designating our area as suitable for the training of any jet fighters, especially the F35 fighters.

I have experienced F16 fighters flying low in the canyon - below my windows - and then accelerating as they travel NE out over the town of Portal. The effects were 1. to almost blow me off a ladder as I attempted to install a window and 2. flying so low over our home as to have dangerous results with our livestock, including spooking a horse which nearly flipped over backwards with my wife sitting on it. The F35 aircraft is, according to your own statistics, 10X as loud as the F16. This would definitely be a safety hazard in our canyon.

The idea of a Tombstone MAO to create a military training ground over the Chiricahua mountains with jets descending down to 100 feet, with supersonic flight at 5,000 feet, authorizing for the use of chaff, and lowering the release of flares to 2,000 feet will endanger our forest which for most of the year are dry and easily ignitable. This will affect many species of critical wildlife and rare species that are present in the area and that would negatively affect the birding and nature tour industries that are another main source of income for our area. The jet fighters actions might also endanger our livestock from the sound which could lead to livestock bolting accidents in a high-risk area.

To dramatically increases the size of the Tombstone MOA by 1/3 adding almost 1,000 square miles and "squaring" off the northern side of the MOA and in so doing encompassing both the town of Portal, the community of Cave Creek, and the critical birding habitat of Cave Creek Recreation Area is unacceptable. The military has thousands of acres and several historic mountain ranges already dedicated to use for the testing of munitions and aircraft. The Air Force's own comments are: The Air Force has conducted faster-than-sound test flights since 1947, and today most Air Force fighter aircraft are capable of supersonic speed. Consequently, supersonic training flights that simulate actual combat conditions are necessary to ensure the success and survival of aircrews during wartime. However, Air Force procedures require that, whenever possible, flights be over open water, above 10,000 feet and no closer than 15 miles from shore. Supersonic operations over land must be conducted above 30,000 feet or, when below 30,000 feet, in specially designated areas approved by Headquarters United States Air Force, Washington, D.C., and the Federal Aviation Administration.

Furthermore, I will add, as a former VP to Portal's Fire and Rescue organization, that your proposed expansion will conflict directly over the route (and altitude) that all our medical helicopters take to get from Trauma 1 hospitals to the Portal Rescue helipad where we do all our evacuations. We have been informed that helicopter service will turn around or not come due to hazards created by your training. This would mean that we can only send our patient off for a long journey via ambulance by way of Douglas. Timely air transport means the difference between life or death for our stroke, cardiac, and some trauma cases. We fly 30% of our calls. When we told the airmen at the Animas, NM, "meeting" that their proposed expansion completely covered this critical Medevac route, the airmen stated the Air Force had no idea we

even had a helipad and seemed at a loss for a response besides “well the helicopters could listen for us on the radio.” This comment matches the level of response from the flight officer when I called to ask about the F16 flying low under my window, “Did you get the serial number?” These are unacceptable responses from a branch of the service that is suppose to protect its citizens. Also sending lawyers instead of well informed officers to our meeting in Animas left us feeling less than safe in your care.

I have no doubt and totally support that in today’s world we need to protect our country. But developing testing areas for these planes whose very sound level is a weapon needs to be well considered. We are not the enemy nor should we be treated as test subjects. Once again in the rush you have put the cart before the horse. I strongly oppose your MOA.