

October 6, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

My home is located just east of the mouth of Cave Creek Canyon near the community of Portal, Arizona. Please consider my following concerns regarding the proposed changes to the Tombstone MOA:

**-Bird Strikes**

For years I have been concerned about the possibility of military aircraft colliding with large birds in the vicinity of Cave Creek Canyon. Many, many times I've watched jets enter or exit Cave Creek Canyon beside or even below the active Prairie Falcon, Peregrine Falcon, Golden Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, and Turkey Vulture cliff nests adjacent to the canyon mouth or just upcanyon from the mouth. I've also experienced A-10s literally skimming the treetops down in the canyon bottom. What concerns me most is the fact that these aircraft are also flying adjacent to or below a significant Turkey Vulture roost that at some points during the year I can count over 120 vultures using at once.

Moments ago I did an internet search on the topic of military aircraft and bird strikes to see if my concerns had merit. Here's the first item that came up: *Between 1995–2019, the Air Force sustained more than 100,000 bird strikes, leading to 27 deaths, 13 losses of aircraft and \$817,546,884 in financial costs, Air Force Times reported in 2019.* Statistics like these reinforce my strong belief that military flights within Cave Creek Canyon need to stop, not increase. A significant bird strike within the narrow canyon below the cliffs may not only lead to loss of life, aircraft, and money, but at the wrong time of year it would also lead to the loss of biologically critical habitat due to fire.

**-Flares**

I have watched A-10s release flares near my home and it deeply concerns me. The most upsetting occurrence was about 4 years ago when two A-10s came out of the canyon flying well below the cliffs, turned over my house, then one began releasing flares. I followed the flares with my binoculars. Some glowed brightly until just before reaching the ground. It was May. The humidity was in the single digits and the grass and brush below the flares was dry. I believe that flare release was utterly irresponsible, endangering my home, my neighbors, and the nearby National Forest lands. There must be better areas to engage in flare training than areas of the Tombstone MOA that are covered in dense grass, brush, and forest. Dramatically increasing the frequency of flare use and lowering the above ground level altitude from 5,000 feet to 2,000 feet are both totally unacceptable alternatives for this area.

**-Other Concerns**

In addition to the above I would also like to go on record as being opposed to the following proposed changes to the Tombstone MOA:

- expanding the MOA
- lowering the flight floor to 100 feet AGL

- increasing the annual number of flights
- decreasing supersonic flights to 5,000 feet AGL

John Roser