Fifth Generation Formal Training Unit Optimization

Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia Eglin Air Force Base, Florida

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS)

Purpose and Need for the F-35A FTU Squadron Beddown at Eglin AFB

The Air Force proposes to beddown a second F-35A FTU squadron at Eglin AFB, Florida. The devastation of Tyndall AFB cause by Hurricane Michael in October 2018 resulted in the interim beddown of the F-22 FTU mission at Eglin AFB. The ramp and hangar space previously vacated in 2014 by the U.S. Marine Corps training squadron was temporarily occupied as a result of the interim beddown of the F-22 FTU. Additionally, the full departure of the Navy's training squadron from Eglin AFB was completed in 2019. In September 2018, the USAF's Strategic Basing Executive Steering Group recommended approval to backfill facilities with a USAF F-35A FTU squadron. The proposed backfill action at Eglin AFB was effectively put on hold as a result of insufficient capacity due to the interim beddown of the F-22 FTU mission.

Now that the JBLE-Langley is proposed as the new permanent beddown location for the F-22 FTU mission, the USAF is proposing to backfill the F-35 spaces vacated by the Marine Corps F-35B squadron in late 2014 and vacated by the Navy F-35C squadron in 2019 with a second F-35A FTU squadron.

Purpose

The purpose of establishing an additional F-35A FTU squadron at Eglin AFB is to support continued training and production of combat ready F-35A pilots while optimizing the use of training, airspace, and range capacity for fifth-generation aircraft.

Need

The F-35A warfighting missions can only be accomplished by properly trained pilots and personnel with adequate base facilities, military airspace, and military ground ranges to support the training. The proposed beddown of an additional F-35A FTU squadron is needed to enable the Air Force to produce more F-35A fighter pilots to recover from the current pilot shortage and sustain the pilot training production necessary to operate the growing F-35A fleet critical for combat capability, mission readiness, and homeland defense.

The F-35 is a family of single-seat, single-engine, all-weather, stealth, fifth generation, multirole combat aircraft, designed for ground-attack and air-superiority missions. The F-35 has three main variants: the conventional takeoff and landing F-35A, the short take-off and vertical-landing F-35B, and the catapult-assisted take-off but arrested recovery, carrier-based F-35C. For this EIS, the aircraft being considered is the F-35A variant.