

## EDITORIAL

### **Air Force gives a little on low-altitude training**

■ **Let's face facts. Training is going to happen.**

Cannon Air Force Base says sending MC-130J and CV 22 aircraft over Northern New Mexico and southern Colorado would have no significant impact on its environment and the people living there.

Some results in the draft environmental assessment release last week are ludicrous — like how the Air Force knows we would wake up once per year if we sleep with our windows open and once per two years if they are closed. But we note Cannon plans to curtail its training area and make other concessions.

According to a map of the flight route populated areas (see below), including the corridor from Albuquerque to Taos, would be spared. The same goes for the eastern part of Colorado.

The Air Force said it would avoid tribal lands and other sensitive areas.

Those were areas of concern for public officials who issued resolutions last year opposing low-altitude training.

Another concession: pilots from the 27th Special Operations Wing would not fly lower than 300 feet; 200 feet was in the original proposal. Half of the 688 training flights planned per year would be over 1,000 feet.

However, we know these changes offer little consolation to those who live within the flight area — those “challenging environments that closely simulate conditions and terrain of actual combat” — and certainly those who feel these flights are a byproduct of warfare.

Critics like those in the local Peaceful Skies Coalition say the released environment assessment is a mockery. They say the military was hell-bent on having the training and ignored the opposition.

They worry about emissions regardless of where the pilots fly.

We, too, share these concerns, but as long as our nation continues to be engaged in war and national defense, those in the military will need to be trained. And, whether we like it or not, civilians will be affected by these kinds of operations.

Let's face facts. Training is going to happen. But those who have ideas on how to lessen the impact on the people living below should let Cannon know by submitting comments before the Nov. 5 deadline.

Cannon has made some concessions. It may be willing to make more.

### Taking credit

There's a saying among conservationists that the last crop for farmland is asphalt. In Northern New Mexico, we could also say over-priced houses.

The pressures to develop our best lands can be enormous for those who are land-rich and cash-poor, especially when times are tough.

But the New Mexico Conservation Incentives Act offers a way to help those who want to keep farming their land or leave it open. Those who permanently protect their land with a conservation easement are eligible for a state tax credit, which can be sold via a broker. The land stays undeveloped and its owner gets cash.

Of course, the process is more involved than that, so the Taos Land Trust is holding a free workshop Tuesday, Sept. 20, 6 p.m. at the Taos County Economic Development Corp. Those in the know will be there to answer questions.



Cannon Air Force Base released this map of the area proposed for low-altitude flight training.