



THE TAOS NEWS

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This is the second time we have had to say 'No!'

Anne L. MacNaughton

Esteemed Legislators: U.S. Sens. Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall; U.S.

Reps. Ben Ray Luján, Martin Heinrich and Harry Teague.

As my representation in Congress you are in the best position to remedy an imminent and dangerous situation.

Cannon AFB is planning to do LATN training over my house. The USAF has stated that these will be primarily nighttime overflights at altitudes as low as 200 feet above my house.

This is the second time we have had to say "No!" The previous time was in the late 1990s.

This is not a "low population" area. Not only are settlements scattered throughout these mountains and plateaus, there are even residences within the boundaries of National Forest, state land holdings and natural and Native reserves. The population is both clustered in villages and spread widely over forest and range land.

There are no flyways that would not impact more than one community, indeed dozens. Even with the restrictions concerning flyovers that are now in place, our area has been negatively affected.

This past summer my husband and myself were startled by a military aircraft fly over. Its trajectory was not that of the usual refueling flights, which are west to east, high over Taos Canyon; nor was it flying at as high an altitude as those, which are high enough that I'd need binoculars to see the ID numbers (however not so high that we didn't hear, and note them).

On the contrary, this jet flew so low and slowly (beneath the sound barrier) that the noise was intense — so loud that we couldn't hear each other in the backyard.

It's sudden loud, grey appearance, seemingly barely over our roof, was such a shock that I neglected to note the black ID numbers on it's side, although I could see a helmeted pilot in the cockpit.

Further, as it's trajectory was south to north, it was forced by the sudden rise of Pueblo Peak to bank west in order to avoid impact. That means that it was flying in airspace I had understood to be restricted from such flights.

When I contacted the various authorities (911, Taos Municipal Airport manager, *Taos News* and finally the director of military flights at Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque), I was told that the "legal" minimum altitude was 300 feet. If this is so, it's way too low already.

If the jet was indeed that "high" above me, and still seriously affected my daily life, then "200 feet" will be will be way, way, way too low. Further, how is there a "minimum" that low if indeed there are supposed to be no training overflights at this time?

Please keep this degradation of our lives — and of your state — from continuing. Hold hearings and grill the USAF brass.

Why must they do this to us when there are other options, including those with no population, wilderness, ranchlands to affect?

Anne L. MacNaughton is a resident of Taos.