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Cannon comment deadline on low-altitude training Nov.15

By Chandra Johnson

The Taos News, November 11, 2010

As the deadline for the first public comment period regarding the proposed low-altitude air force trainings approaches (Nov. 15), the Taos-based Peaceful Skies Coalition says it's not giving up.

"I want to urge people to make comments before the deadline," coalition coordinator Clifton Bain said Tuesday (Nov. 9). "We've got to stay involved as we await the draft of the environmental assessment from the Air Force."

So far, Capt. Lawrence van der Oord of Cannon Air Force Base said, the air force has received some 1,200 comments.

"It's important to note that there will be another public comment period after the draft environmental assessment is published," van der Oord said.

Van der Oord said he was not sure when the draft would be published.

Cannon said in a public notice published in *The Taos News* that it would be performing an environmental assessment of Northern New Mexico and southern Colorado to determine its viability as a training area for low-altitude flight training for tilt-rotor Osprey and Hercules aircrafts.

The majority of the training flights would take place after dusk with 95 percent taking place Monday through Friday, the website reads. Aircraft would fly as low as 200 feet above ground level.

But not over towns and congested areas, the air force stresses.

The notice states that pilots must avoid towns, wilderness, noise-sensitive and other specific areas. The plan is to conduct about three LATN trainings each day or nearly 700 flights a year, according to the air force's website.

To issue a comment to Cannon Air Force Base on the proposal, call 575-784-4131 or e-mail 27SOWpublicaffairs@cannon.af.mil.