

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA)
SPACED BASED INFRARED SYSTEMS (SBIRS)
MISSION CONTROL STATION FOR
DEFENSE SUPPORT PROGRAM CONSOLIDATION
BUCKLEY AIR FORCE BASE, COLORADO**

AGENCY: United States Air Force, Space and Missile Systems Center (SMC), 2nd Space Warning Squadron.

BACKGROUND: The Space Based Infrared System (SBIRS) High Program is a “system of systems” approach to integrate space assets in multiple orbit configurations with a consolidated ground segment for more effective integration of data and better information to the warfighter. The SBIRS architecture will consist of four satellites located in Geostationary Earth Orbit, two satellites orbiting in Highly Elliptical Orbits, and a constellation of greater than 20 satellites in Low Earth Orbit to provide global coverage in support of the SBIRS missions. The SBIRS missions include enemy missile warning, missile defense, technical intelligence, and battlespace characterization. The SBIRS High Program will provide an enhanced follow-on capability to the current Defense Support Program system using state-of-the-art, highly flexible, tasking infrared sensor technology to combat emerging threats. This technology will allow the SBIRS to detect and track shorter-range missiles with greater accuracy. The benefit to the warfighter will be improved missile launch point and impact point predictions in support of offensive and defensive operations, and reduced impact and disruption to the fighting readiness of deployed forces. Construction and operation of the SBIRS Mission Control Station (MCS) facility was previously analyzed in an environmental assessment (EA) that resulted in a FONSI in April 1996 (USAF SMC, 1996). Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing the Act (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508), Department of Defense Directive 6050.1, Regulation 5000.2-R, and Air Force Instruction 32-7061, *The Environmental Impact Analysis Process* as promulgated in 32 CFR Part 989, and other applicable federal regulations, the USAF conducted an assessment of the potential environmental consequences of the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.

PROPOSED ACTION: The Air Force proposes to construct and operate two 10 meter diameter SBIRS radio frequency (RF) antennas to support the mission at Buckley Air Force Base (AFB), Colorado. These antennas would be part of the SBIRS MCS facility located on the western portion of Buckley AFB. This Proposed Action is supplemental to the SBIRS MCS EA which already describes the SBIRS MCS (USAF SMC, 1996). The antennas would be operated by existing SBIRS personnel; no additional manpower would be required.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: The following paragraphs summarize findings of the attached environmental assessment for the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative.

Air Quality. Analysis of air quality data indicates that the overall ambient air quality within Air Quality Control Region 36 would be slightly affected by construction of the Proposed Action. Increased emissions from construction activities would produce slightly elevated air pollutant concentrations. However, the increases would be minimal (not exceeding a 0.13 percent increase for any criteria pollutant) when compared to baseline AQCR 36 emissions. Since the estimated emission for criteria pollutants does not exceed 10 percent of the air emission baseline and does not exceed the *de minimis* level, the Proposed Action is not considered regionally significant and does not violate the Colorado state implementation plan (SIP).

Due to the small percentage of increase in operational emissions associated with the backup power generator compared to baseline conditions, the Proposed Action is not anticipated to significantly impact air quality at Buckley AFB.

Biological Resources. The Proposed Action would not likely have any adverse effects on biological resources with the exception of the black-tailed prairie dogs present at the SBIRS site. Biological resources at the site are markedly absent, with no native vegetation and only sparse noxious weed cover (field bindweed) on the predominantly barren site. The Proposed Action would not have an effect on any federally- or state-listed species.

Prior to commencing construction activities on the SBIRS site, the black-tailed prairie dogs would be live-captured by vacuuming their burrows and transferred to a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service facility for use in the black-footed ferret captive breeding program, which is an integral part of the endangered species recovery program. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service indicates this would be an acceptable and preferred method of dealing with the prairie dogs at the SBIRS site. This would be a minor adverse effect to the prairie dogs because their numbers are low, the probability for persistence of this ward (a subgroup of the larger colony) is low, and resources are very limited. When considered in the context of the black-tailed prairie dog population and the very low habitat quality at the site, loss of these individual prairie dogs would be minor.

The SBIRS site would be monitored following the relocation to determine that all the prairie dogs have been removed. The prairie dog burrows will be destroyed to prevent recolonization by prairie dogs or other species. The action would be taken prior to March 1, 2001 to avoid interference with prairie dog reproduction activities and to preclude potential effects to burrowing owls returning from migration beginning in March. Precautions would be taken to protect the prairie dogs during live-capture and transport, and to ensure the health and safety of the persons handling the animals.

Non-ionizing Energy. According to the results of the SBIRS System Safety Hazard Analysis Report prepared by Lockheed Martin, the energy hazard assessment performed by the Joint Spectrum Center, and a study conducted by the Aerospace Corporation, the radio frequency energy emitted from the SBIRS antennas is below the IEEE standards (1.2 mW/cm² for S-band transmitting power and 30 mW/cm² for Q-band) for maximum permissible exposure for uncontrolled environments at all ground and air levels. Additionally, the power density level emitted from the SBIRS antennas is much less than 5,000 mW/cm², which is the level established for the safe operating distance for fuels; therefore, no potential fuel ignition hazard exists.

Utilities. The electrical and natural gas utility distribution systems have adequate capacity to accommodate planned activities.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT: Based on requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, the Council on Environmental Quality, and CFR Part 989, I conclude that the environmental effects of the Proposed Action are not significant, and therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. An availability notice for public review was published in the Denver Post, a Denver, CO newspaper, on February 10, 2001 for a 15-day review period. A hard copy of the Supplemental EA and Draft FONSI was placed in the public library in Aurora, CO and placed on the SMC/AXFV web site at <http://ax.laafb.af.mil/ax/> for dissemination. There were no comments received during the review period. The signing of this FONSI completes the Air Force Environmental Impact Analysis Process (EIAP).


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Installation Commander

13 Mar 01
Date