Proposal to expand Military Operating Area in New Mexico

Source: http://www.hollomanafbairspaceeis.com/alternatives.aspx

One of the primary missions at Holloman AFB is to train F-16 pilots. The F-16 pilot training syllabus requires that pilots accomplish a series of training missions in a specific order. Each training mission must occur in airspace that is appropriately sized and approved for the training activity. When appropriate airspace is not available at the required time, training is delayed, increasing training expenses and disrupting pilots' progress in the program. Incomplete training causes reductions in the number of qualified pilots ready to conduct combat operations.

The existing training airspace in southern New Mexico was developed for legacy aircraft more than 30 years ago. Most of the airspace has not evolved with the technology and capabilities of the F-16 aircraft. The existing training airspace, including Military Operations Areas (MOAs) and overlying Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspace (ATCAA), do not have the optimum volume, proximity to the base, or attributes to efficiently support the training mission of today's fighter aircraft.

The Air Force is proposing to change existing MOAs or create new MOAs in southern New Mexico to support F-16 training activities including:

- Nonhazardous military aircraft training such as air combat maneuvers, air intercepts, and basic fighter maneuvers
- Use of chaff and flares with restrictions
- Limited supersonic flight above 30,000 feet
- Return underutilized MOAs to the National Airspace System

The Air Force evaluated several alternatives to determine which ones met the selection criteria. To be considered, alternatives had to meet the following criteria:

- Utilize Air Force scheduled airspace
- Maximize training time/minimize transit time
- Meet airspace size and configuration requirements
- Modifications would have limited impacts to civil aviation

Based on these criteria, three action alternatives were identified to be evaluated in detail in the EIS. The No Action Alternative is also addressed. Please review the EIS for a full description of the Alternative Selection Process as well as detailed descriptions of the Alternatives.

No Action Alternative

There would be no airspace modifications in support of F-16 training missions at Holloman AFB. The Air Force would continue to use existing training airspace as it does currently. The pilot training program would continue to have disruptions and delays in producing pilots ready for combat. This alternative does not meet the selection criteria or the purpose and need but is carried forward in accordance with NEPA regulations.

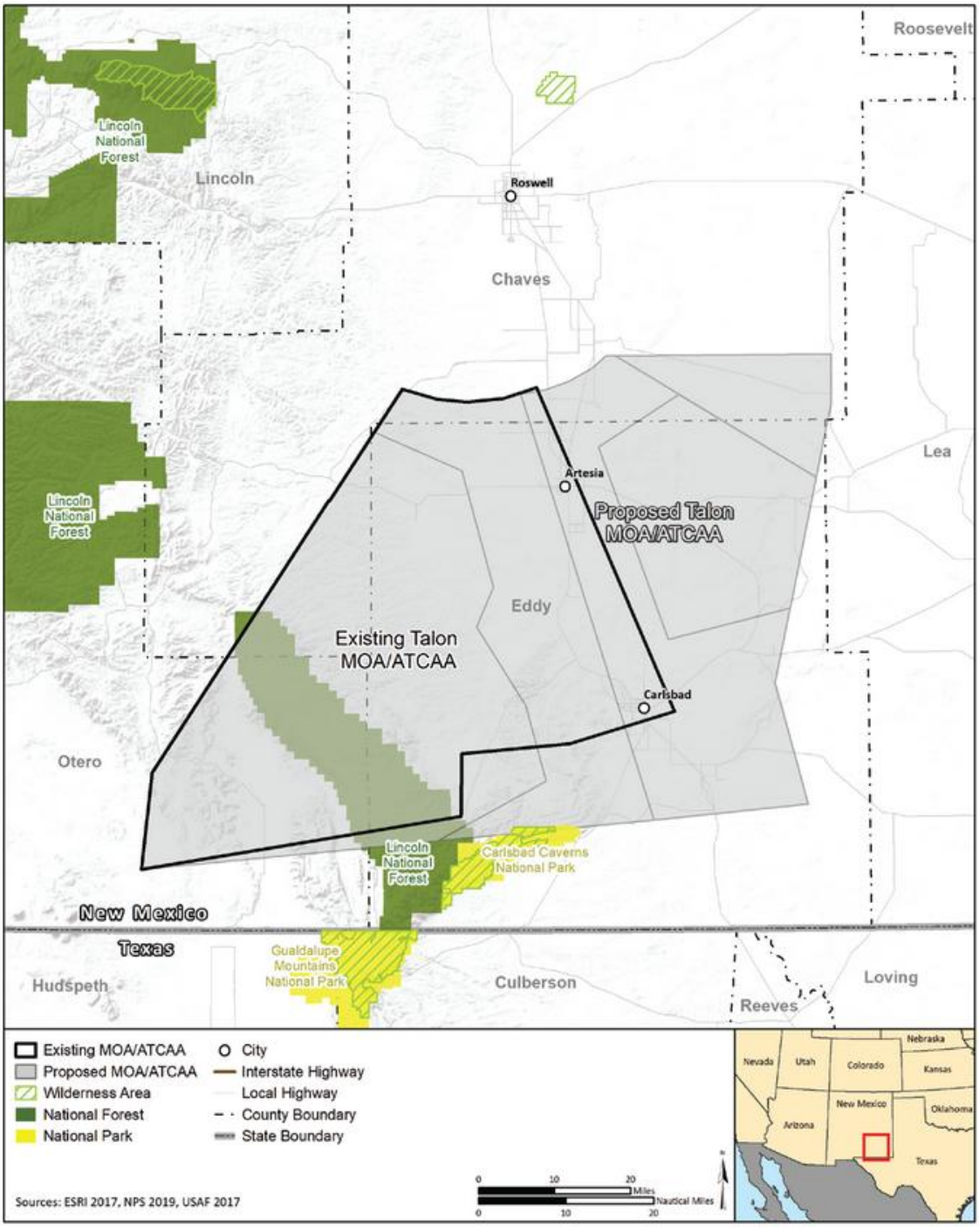
Alternative 1: Talon MOA

Talon MOA would be reconfigured and expanded to the south and east. Airspace changes include:

- Low A, B MOAs 500 to 12,500 feet
- High A, B, C MOAs 12,500 to 18,000 feet
- ATCAA above MOA expanding training airspace when required

Operations in the MOA:

- Up to 10,000 sorties annually (3,700 in Low MOAs, 6,300 in High MOAs/ATCAA)
- Approximately 10% of sorties would include supersonic flight (in ATCAA, above 30,000 feet)
- Chaff and flare use with restrictions



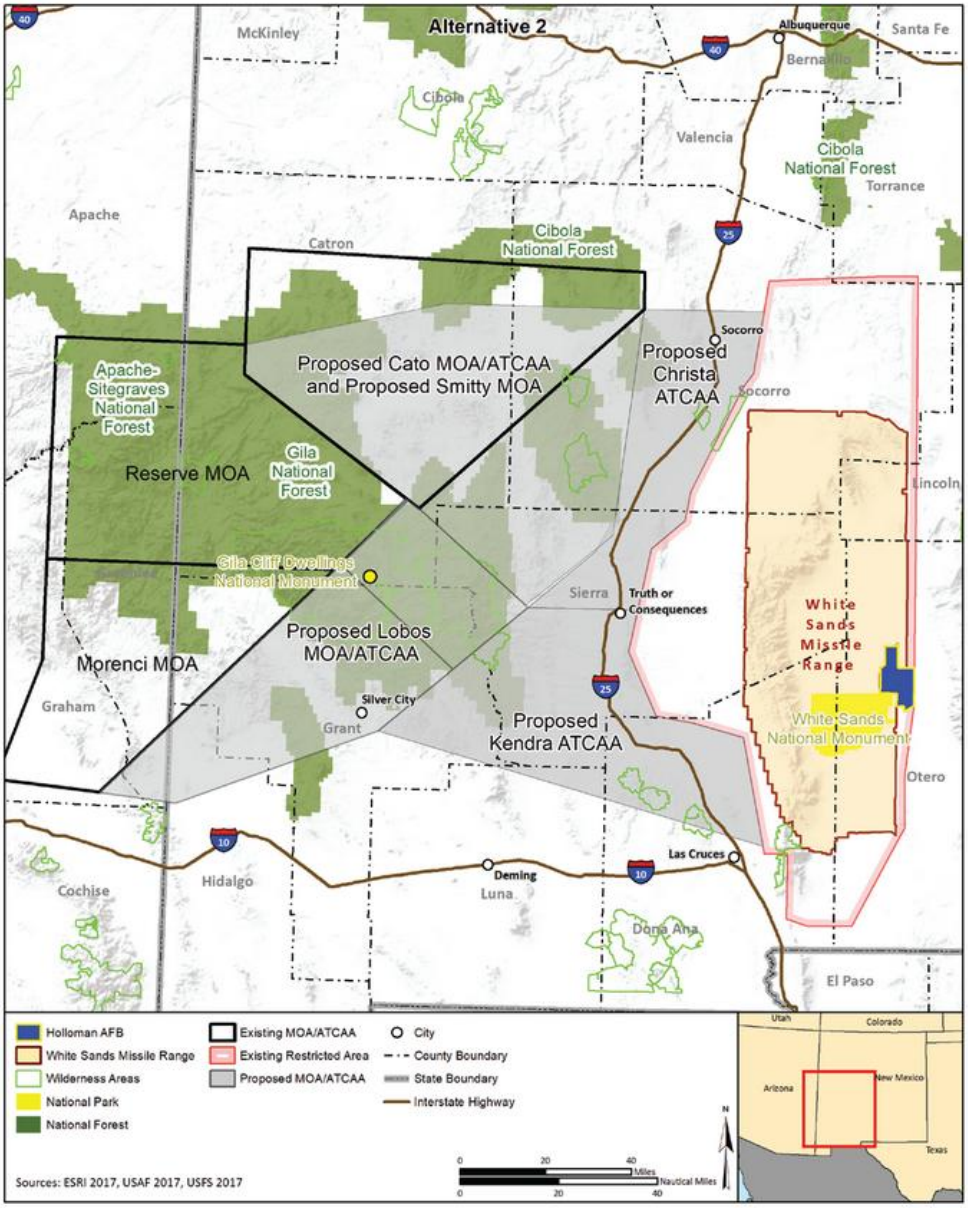
Alternative 2: Cato/Smitty and Lobos MOAs

The Cato MOA and overlying Smitty MOA would be reconfigured and expanded to the southeast and Lobos MOA, would be created. Airspace changes include:

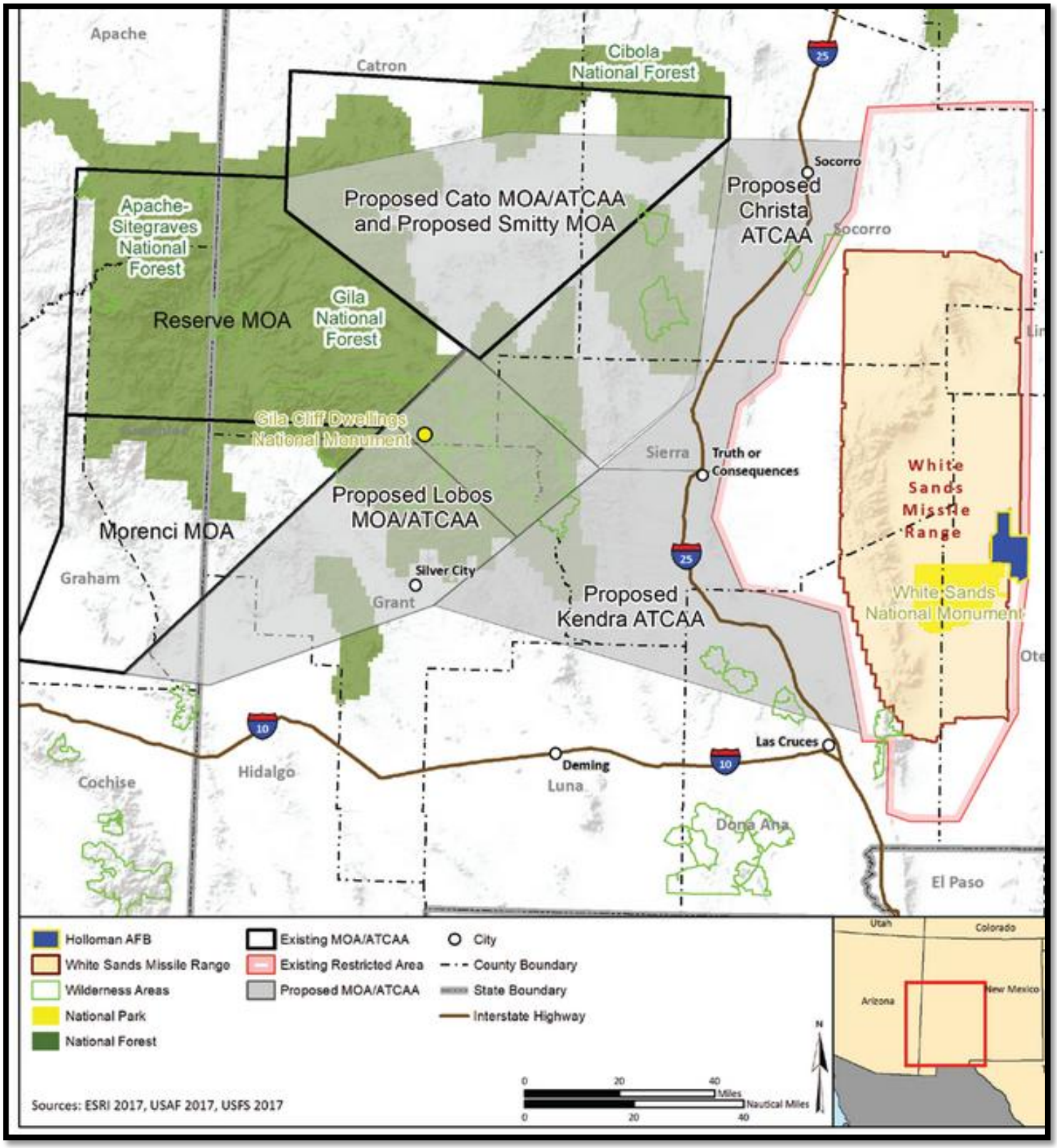
- Smitty MOA 500 to 13,500 feet (same as current)
- Cato MOA 13,500 to 18,000 feet (same as current)
- Lobos Low MOA 500 to 13,500 feet
- Lobos High MOA 13,500 to 18,000 feet
- ATCAA would be assigned above the MOAs to expand training airspace when required
- Christa and Kendra ATCAAs to act as temporary bridges to restricted areas above White Sands Missile Range

Operations in the MOAs:

- Up to 9,100 sorties annually (3,600 in Lobos Low and Smitty MOAs and 5,500 in Lobos High and Cato MOAs/ATCAAs)
- Approximately 10% of sorties would include supersonic flight (in ATCAAs above 30,000 feet)
- Chaff and flare use with restrictions



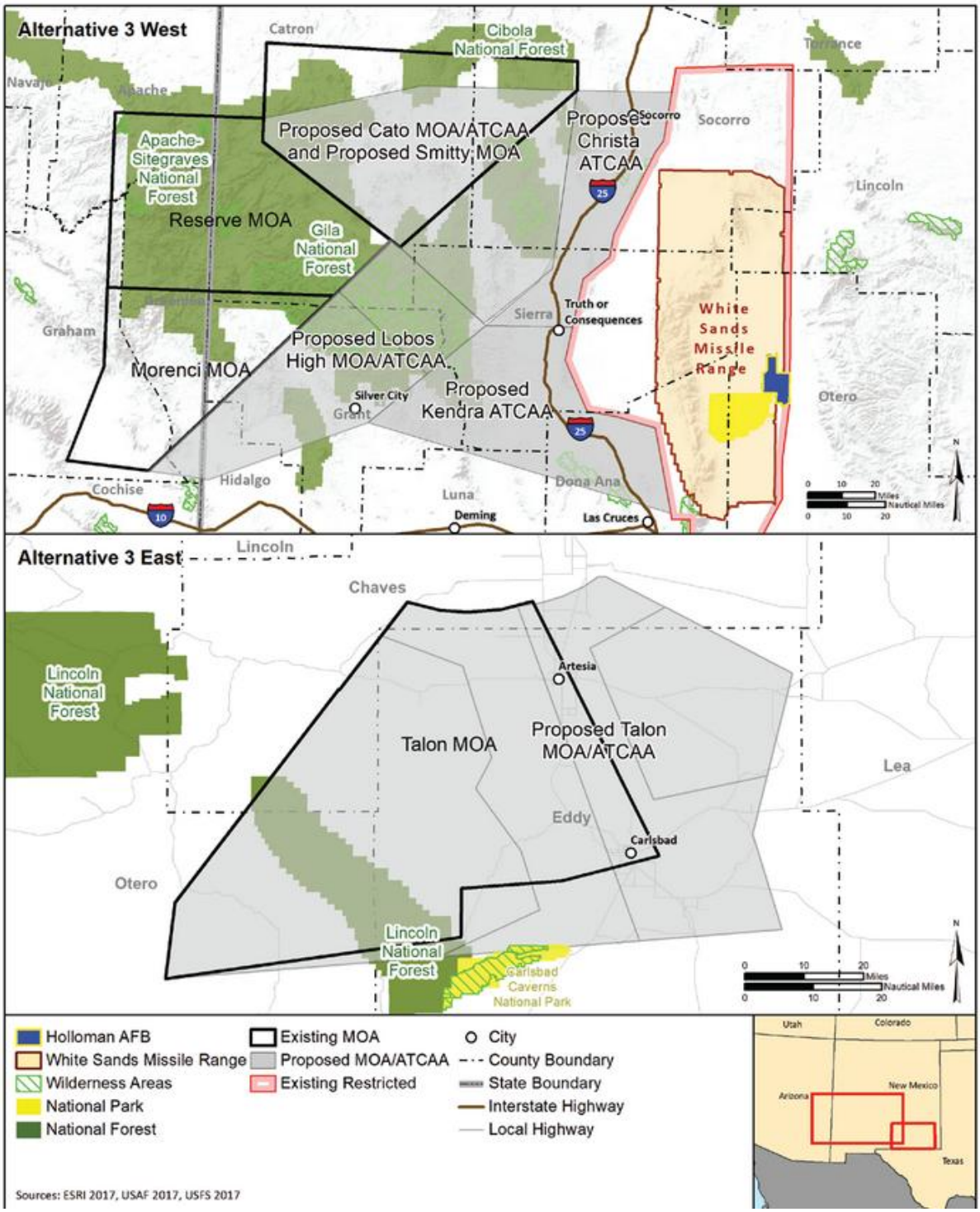
Close Up of Proposed Military Operating Areas, (MOA) north and west of Las Cruces



Alternative 3: Talon, Cato/Smitty and Lobos MOAs

Combination of Alternatives 1 and 2 with the following exceptions:

- Talon High MOA would be smaller
- There would be no Lobos Low MOA, only High MOA
- Would split aircraft operations and chaff and flare use among all MOAs
- Talon - 2,600 in Low MOAs, 4,200 in High MOAs/ATCAAs
- Cato/Smitty and Lobos - 1,100 in Smitty MOA (low), 2,100 in Cato, Lobos High MOAs/ATCAAs



Las Cruces Sun News, 12-17-2017

As your lieutenant governor these past seven years, I have made it a priority to preserve and promote our state's military bases and defense investment in New Mexico. As a member of the Military Base Planning Commission, I have made numerous trips to the Pentagon fighting for the priorities important to so many of our communities.

It has been a precious honor to advocate for all of the airmen, soldiers, civilians, maintainers, administrators and support personnel.

New Mexico's unique role in securing America's national security stands at a crossroad regarding our military training airspace. The Special Use Airspace (SUA) has remained virtually unchanged for decades despite major leaps forward in military aircraft technology and tactics. Larger parcels of airspace are required to effectively train current and future pilots for combat. Optimizing southern New Mexico's SUA is crucial for the state's economy, as well as the defense of the nation.

Holloman currently trains approximately 170 new and re-qualifying F-16 pilots per year before sending them to their operational units. In the midst of a severe fighter pilot shortage, Holloman has been chosen to play the pivotal role.

Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson recently selected Holloman as the interim location for 45 additional F-16s to augment the 55 F-16s currently at the base, resulting in nearly half of all Air Force fighter pilot production occurring in New Mexico. Availability of adequate airspace is critical to the selection process, as the Air Force evaluates other bases to determine the permanent location for these F-16s.

The FAA Military Operations Areas (MOA) allow participating military aircraft the freedom and safety to maneuver without having to de-conflict from traffic, such as commercial airliners.

The FAA cautions traffic, not on instrument flight plans, to remain clear of active MOAs. MOAs do not encroach on or limit any activities on the ground below them, even when military aircraft are operating within their boundaries.

Military aircraft in a MOA do not drop live or inert bombs, launch rockets or missiles or shoot guns. They operate at high speeds and conduct aggressive maneuvers.

This mission at Holloman AFB brings over 600 direct jobs, thousands of regional employment opportunities and currently over $412 million in economic impact to our state. Combined with the Remote Piloted Aircraft operations, we are in position to become the nation's fastest growing mission.

The benefit to our entire state is substantial and real. Now is the time to embrace this opportunity and secure the future of defense and national security aviation right here in New Mexico.

John Sanchez, R, is lieutenant governor of New Mexico.

Public Info & Comment Meetings –

Truth or Consequences:
3-4:30 pm November 18
St. Paul's Episcopal Church Fellowship Hall, 407 N Cedar St.

Las Cruces:
5:30-7 pm November 21,
Thomas Branigan Public Library, 200 E Picacho Ave.

Silver City:
6-7:30 pm November 25,
Murray Hotel, 200 West Broadway

Socorro: 5:30-7 pm November 26,, Socorro Public Library, 401 Park St.

FAA Definition of a Military Operating Area (FAR-AIM Pg 144)

3−4−5. Military Operations Areas

a. MOAs consist of airspace of defined vertical and lateral limits established for the purpose of separating certain military training activities from IFR traffic. Whenever a MOA is being used, nonparticipating IFR traffic may be cleared through a MOA if IFR separation can be provided by ATC. Otherwise, ATC will reroute or restrict nonparticipating IFR traffic.

b. Examples of activities conducted in MOAs include, but are not limited to: air combat tactics, air intercepts, aerobatics, formation training, and low−altitude tactics. Military pilots flying in an active MOA are exempted from the provisions of 14 CFR Section 91.303(c) and (d) which prohibits aerobatic flight within Class D and Class E surface areas, and within Federal airways. Additionally, the Department of Defense has been issued an authorization to operate aircraft at indicated airspeeds in excess of 250 knots below 10,000 feet MSL within active MOAs.

c. Pilots operating under VFR should exercise extreme caution while flying within a MOA when military activity is being conducted. The activity status (active/inactive) of MOAs may change frequently. Therefore, pilots should contact any FSS within 100 miles of the area to obtain accurate real-time information concerning the MOA hours of operation. Prior to entering an active MOA, pilots should contact the controlling agency for traffic advisories.

d. MOAs are depicted on sectional, VFR Terminal Area, and Enroute Low Altitude charts.