

**482nd Fighter Wing
Air Force Reserve Command**

**Environmental Assessment
for Construction of a New Entry Gate Complex
at Homestead Air Reserve Base,
Miami-Dade County, Florida**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The 482nd Fighter Wing, Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC) of the United States Air Force (USAF) assessed the potential environmental impacts that may result from construction of a new entry gate complex at Homestead Air Reserve Base (HARB) in Miami-Dade County, Florida. An environmental assessment (EA) was prepared in accordance with the regulations set forth by the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1500-1508) for implementing the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as well as Air Force Instruction (AFI) 32-7061, *The Environmental Impact Analysis Process*, as codified in Title 32, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 989. The EA is incorporated into this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) by reference.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide a new permanent entry gate complex for Homestead ARB that would accommodate the current mission/tenants and anticipated future increases in gate traffic. Two entry control points to Homestead ARB currently exist; both are located off of SW 288th Street, approximately 1400 feet (ft) apart, but only one is fully operational. The Old Main Gate on Coral Sea Boulevard was closed when it was determined to be highly vulnerable to antiterrorism/force protection concerns due to the proximity of base lodging. The current Homestead ARB entry gate on Westover Street (herein referred to as the Contractor Gate) serves as the only fully operational gate for the base. This gate was not designed to handle the current volume of base traffic, the configuration is constricted and the design is inadequate to maintain acceptable traffic flows through the gate and onto SW 288th Street.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action includes the construction of new integrated facilities on the North Gate Site including, a covered gatehouse, pass and identification (ID) inspection office, commercial vehicle inspection area (CVIA), associated parking lots, a static aircraft display, and realignment of SW 288th Street. The preliminary design of the Proposed Action was modeled after the current control gate complex at MacDill AFB in Tampa, Florida. MacDill AFB has a modern six-lane entry control point which is considered safe from both traffic and anti-terrorism standpoints, as well as aesthetically-pleasing. Due to the preliminary status of the configuration of the Proposed Action, changes would be

expected once the design is finalized; however, these changes would be minor and would likely not affect major defining features of the project. The primary features of the proposed action include re-routing SW 288th Street to a new intersection with SW 127th approximately 1,000 ft north of the current intersection; a single traffic circle connected to an extended Coral Sea Boulevard; and the closure of the direct connection between SW 127th Avenue and Bougainville Boulevard.

Under the Proposed Action, a one-story, approximately 300-gross square foot (gsf) covered gatehouse would be constructed on the North Gate Site to serve as the new control gate for Homestead ARB. The approximate 300-gsf area does not include the vehicle area under the canopies. Canopy elevations would likely range from 16 ft to 24 ft (exact canopy elevations would be determined during the design phase). The small control station building would house security personnel and equipment. The attached canopies would cover the guarded entry and inspection areas.

The pass and ID inspection office would be constructed less than 300 ft northwest of the gatehouse and would have an approximate area of 2,000 gsf. The current badging and ID office at Homestead ARB is situated inside the Contractor Gate, requiring many visitors who have not received their security badges, to be escorted from the gate to the ID office. The proposed pass and ID office's location outside (north) of the entry gatehouse would allow contractors and other visitors to obtain base entry passes prior to reaching the security gate, which would help prevent traffic jams and back-ups at the gate. Functions of the pass and ID office include issuing military and civilian line badges, fingerprinting related to security clearance, issuing temporary visitor passes and contractor badges, processing entry access lists, and providing general base information.

A CVIA would be built adjacent to the pass and ID office; the two buildings would be connected by a sidewalk. A separate CVIA does not currently exist at Homestead ARB; therefore, this new facility would streamline entry control procedures for commercial vehicle drivers entering the base. All commercial vehicles (tractor-trailers, delivery trucks, buses, etc.) attempting to enter a USAF installation must be carefully inspected in accordance with Department of Defense and USAF guidelines. Inspections include the interior of the vehicle cab, bed/box, trunk, trailer, under the hood, and underside of the vehicle. The inspection process can be lengthy, and would contribute to traffic back-ups if not performed in an area separate from the main gatehouse.

Paved parking areas totaling approximately 0.3 acres would also be included under the Proposed Action. The exact size and arrangement of the parking lots would be established during the design phase; however, initial site plans indicate that there would be at least two parking lots north of the pass and ID office and a small row of parking spaces near the CVIA.

In addition to the proposed gate complex buildings/canopies and parking areas, a permanent road realignment of SW 288th Street would be required. The North Gate Site is located north of the current Homestead ARB boundary and existing Contractor Gate, across SW 288th Street. Under the Proposed Action, Homestead ARB intends to acquire

ownership of the North Gate Site from Miami-Dade County and construct the new entry gate complex on the property, resulting in a necessary extension of the perimeter of Homestead ARB. Should the North Gate Site be transferred from the County to the AFRC, as is proposed by means of a deed or long-term lease, SW 288th Street would have to be re-routed in order to connect to SW 127th Avenue and avoid new base boundaries. The initial road realignment would require construction of approximately 6 acres of roadway, including a traffic circle, and the new portion of SW 288th Street would be approximately 1870 ft in length. The proposed road realignment would connect SW 288th Street with SW 127th Avenue approximately 960 ft north of the current intersection in front of the Old Main Gate creating a new four-way intersection at St. Nazaire Boulevard.

The Proposed Action would also require the permanent closure of small portions of both SW 127th Avenue and Bougainville Boulevard in order to accommodate the realignment of SW 288th Street. The road closures would affect vehicles attempting to reach destinations located along Bougainville Boulevard east of that intersection of SW 288th Street and SW 127th Avenue. Motorists would be detoured from SW 127th Avenue, east onto St. Nazaire Boulevard, and south onto Ramey Avenue, which intersects Bougainville Boulevard.

A flashing light is currently in place in front of the Contractor Gate at the intersection of SW 288th Street and Westover Street. This flashing light would remain in place as part of the Proposed Action in order to slow traffic and allow the ingress and egress of select commercial vehicles, particularly fuel trucks, which would continue to use the Contractor Gate due to its proximity to the fuel tanks.

In total, the new structure footprints and associated road realignment described for the Proposed Action would permanently occupy approximately 0.3 acres and 6 acres, respectively, of the 33-acre North Gate Site. Additionally, temporary construction equipment and material staging areas would be established adjacent to the Proposed Action footprint, but these areas would be returned to their original condition upon completion of construction. Construction of the Proposed Action would be phased such that vehicular access to SW 288th Street would be maintained. Existing roadways on the North Gate Site would be left in place, new perimeter fencing would be constructed, and minor landscaping may be performed. Also, the portions of SW 127th Avenue and Bougainville Boulevard which would be permanently blocked would be left in place.

DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

Identifying and analyzing alternatives is an important part of the NEPA decision making process. As part of the alternatives analysis, a range of preliminary alternatives are identified. These alternatives are then screened against the project purpose and need as well as other screening criteria. Through this process, some alternatives are eliminated from further consideration and the remaining alternatives are studied in detail as part of the NEPA review process. All of the preliminary alternatives were assessed against the

criteria for meeting the identified purpose and need. In addition to the proposed action described above, the following alternatives were retained for detailed analysis.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no construction of a new entry gate complex at HARB. The existing conditions would continue. The need for enhanced control gate facilities to accommodate the volume of traffic related to the current and future mission and tenants would remain unmet.

Alternative #2

Alternative #2 consists of the construction of a new entry gate complex and road realignment on the south half of the North Gate Site. Early-stage design plans of Alternative #2 illustrate that this alternative would have a more compact, east-west oriented footprint and the gate complex would include two buildings, a combined covered gatehouse/CVIA and a pass and ID inspection office totaling 0.1 acre. The design also includes a traffic circle on the realigned SW 288th Street at the new entry gate, a single 0.3 acre parking lot, and a small drainage pond. A separate lane would be installed within the realignment that would allow large commercial vehicles to avoid navigating the traffic circle. Under Alternative #2, SW 288th Street would be re-routed through the North Gate Site around the new entry gate complex. The realigned segment of SW 288th Street would be less than 1,500 ft long and would have a permanent footprint of approximately 3.5 acres. Due to the permanent closure of portions of SW 127th Avenue and Bougainville Boulevard included in this alternative, vehicles attempting to access locations east of the SW 288th and SW 127th Avenue intersection on Bougainville Boulevard would be detoured onto existing roads (St. Nazaire Boulevard and Ramey Avenue).

Alternative #3

Under Alternative #3, a new control gate complex and road realignment would be constructed on the North Gate Site. The gate complex for this alternative would consist of two structures (totaling 0.1 acre), a combined gatehouse/CVIA building and canopy, and a pass and ID office, as well as a 0.3-acre parking lot and a small drainage pond. Alternative #3 has a similar interior configuration as Alternative #2, with a rotated alignment (north-south rather than east-west). As in Alternative #2, a traffic circle, with a large vehicle bypass, would be installed on the realigned SW 288th Street at the new entry gate. The required relocation of SW 288th Street would follow a similar path as the Proposed Action design, a north-south oriented alignment, but would re-connect with SW 127th further south, directly across from St. Nazaire Avenue. The road realignment would require the addition of 4.4 acres of paved roads on the 33-acre North Gate Site.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The EA contains the results of a systematic evaluation of the potential environmental consequences associated with the Proposed Action, the No Action Alternative, and two other alternatives, including potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts. Fourteen resource categories were addressed to identify potential impacts: land use, infrastructure, socioeconomics, environmental justice, cultural resources, physical resources, coastal zone resources, water resources, biological resources, transportation, air quality, hazardous materials and waste management, safety, and noise. Consistent with CEQ regulations, the cumulative impacts of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions were considered, regardless of whether those actions were initiated by governmental entities or private parties. Potential impacts were concluded to be no more than negligible to minimal for land use, infrastructure, cultural resources, physical resources, coastal zone resources, water resources, biological resources, air quality, hazardous materials and waste management, and noise. Resources for which potential impacts were determined to be more substantial were socioeconomics, environmental justice, transportation, and safety. The impacts associated with these four resources are discussed below.

Socioeconomics

Socioeconomics includes both population and employment and earnings considerations. No adverse impacts to the population would be expected as a result of the Proposed Action. There are no residential areas on or immediately adjacent to the project area and the scale of the Proposed Action is small enough that impacts to the population would not be felt beyond the immediate vicinity. There may be temporary or minor adverse impacts to earnings for the 1st National Bank of South Florida and the Homestead Job Corps as a result in the roadway realignment and Metrobus route changes. The re-routing of two roads would facilitate the inflow and outflow of employees at Homestead ARB potentially resulting in a positive indirect impact to base employment. Temporary beneficial impacts could result from increased employment opportunities in the area associated with hiring construction personal during gate installation. There would be potential temporary adverse impacts to the local economy if Miami-Dade County has to absorb the cost of installation of new signals at the new entry gate, and road improvements or new road construction in association with the closure of the intersection of SW 127th Avenue and Bougainville Boulevard. There may also be potential adverse impacts to Miami-Dade Transit in association with the need to develop and advertise a modified route for Metrobus Route 70, in through income lost should that segment of the route be closed.

Potential cumulative impacts related to socioeconomics for the Proposed Action would include indirect impacts to the County's plans to develop the BX Mart as an emergency supply distribution center. Should the County choose to build a new road through the current BX Mart parking lot to accommodate Metrobus Route 70, there could be either beneficial or adverse indirect socioeconomic impacts depending on how this road would

affect the County's original plans for the BX Mart parking lot in association with the planned emergency supply distribution center.

Additional, indirect cumulative adverse impacts to socioeconomics associated with the Proposed Action may occur if road improvements to St. Nazaire Boulevard and other streets are necessary when the County develops the planned fleet storage and maintenance facility and/or when the new SOCSOUTH HQ is completed. Traffic for both of these facilities would need to travel roadways east of SW 127th Avenue and the traffic volumes may require roadway improvements as a result of the closure of the SW 127th Avenue/Bougainville Boulevard intersection. Therefore, St. Nazaire Boulevard and other local streets may need to be improved and/or expanded to accommodate the new traffic associated with these facilities, and as stated above, such improvements are not currently covered in the County plans or budgets. Therefore, there could be temporary cumulative adverse socioeconomic impacts to the county as a result of these combined actions.

Environmental Justice

The majority of students at the Homestead Job Corps are minorities, an environmental justice community of concern; therefore, potential adverse impacts to environmental justice could occur under the Proposed Action. Construction of the new entry gate complex would have the potential for adversely impacting these students by extending the distance they would have to walk to reach locations west of Homestead ARB, and by eliminating or altering their access to Metrobus Route 70. Impacts to the route which students would have to walk to reach retail locations west of the base would be minor. Impacts to students' access to public transportation could potentially be significant. These impacts could be mitigated by establishment of a revised bus route that maintains access to public transportation. There would be no anticipated cumulative impacts to environmental justice associated with the Proposed Action.

Transportation

Beneficial impacts such as reducing congestion and traffic delays at the Homestead ARB entrance and adjacent roads would result from the Proposed Action once construction is complete. Impacts from the Proposed Action would depend on whether the final design includes a traffic signal (beneficial impact), a two-way stop (adverse impact), or an all-way stop (negligible impact) at the new intersection of the realigned SW 288th Street and Coral Sea Boulevard. There would be minor adverse impacts in the form of increased travel times for area drivers due to permanent road closures. In addition, there may be significant adverse impacts to public transportation from these road closures unless a re-route option for Miami-Dade County Metrobus Route 70 is identified.

There would be potential adverse impacts to transportation should Miami-Dade County be unable or unwilling to construct roadway improvements or new roads to accommodate the Metrobus 70 Route in association with the closure of the intersection of SW 127th Avenue and Bougainville Boulevard. There may also be potential adverse impacts to

Miami-Dade Transit in association with the need to develop a modified route for Metrobus Route 70.

Potential cumulative impacts related to transportation for the Proposed Action would also include indirect impacts to transportation associated with the County's plans to develop the BX Mart as an emergency supply distribution center. Should the County choose to build a new road through the current BX Mart parking lot to accommodate Metrobus Route 70, there could be either beneficial or adverse indirect impacts to transportation depending on the County's original plans for the BX Mart parking lot and the changes in traffic circulation in association with the planned emergency supply distribution center.

Additional, indirect cumulative adverse impacts associated with the Proposed Action may occur if road improvements to St. Nazaire Boulevard and other streets are necessary when the County develops the planned fleet storage and maintenance facility and/or when the new SOCSOUTH HQ is completed. Traffic for both of these facilities would need to travel roadways east of SW 127th Avenue and the traffic volumes may require roadway improvements as a result of the closure of the SW 127th Avenue/Bougainville Boulevard intersection. St. Nazaire Boulevard and other local streets may need to be improved and/or expanded to accommodate the new traffic associated with these facilities, and as stated above, such improvements are not currently covered in the County plans or budgets.

Safety

No impacts to general public safety are anticipated for the Proposed Action. There would be anticipated beneficial impacts for the Homestead ARB and the surrounding area due to increased safety from the installation and operation of a redesigned entry control complex. There could be potential cumulative adverse impacts related to safety if construction of the new entry gate complex occurs at the same time as the planned expansion at the HAC, particularly if road closures are included in both construction projects. These potential impacts would be temporary and should be minor.

CONCLUSION

As a result of the analysis of impacts in the EA, summarized and incorporated by reference herein, it is the conclusion of the 482nd Fighter Wing, AFRC, USAF that the Proposed Action would not have a significant adverse impact on human health or the environment. Therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required.



WILLIAM B. BINGER, Brig Gen, USAFR
Commander



Date