

November 12, 2009
235 Toothaker Pond Road
Phillips, ME 04966

To: Federal Aviation Administration
Attn: AJ02-E2B.9
Atlanta, Georgia 30320

RE: Comments concerning the proposed Condor LOWAT

Greetings,

I'm a private pilot, SEL and SES rated and has been flying in the proposed Condor LOWAT for 22 years. I have 2 light airplanes that I fly on wheels, skis and floats. I'm also an officer of Sandy River Flying Club (SRFC), located in Phillips, Maine at Lindbergh Airport (08ME), a grass airstrip recently purchased by the SRFC. We have 8 light certified airplanes, 1 ultralight, and 4 powered parachutes in hangars on the field.

Since other MOA's already exist where the F-15's can train, I am in agreement with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that a new MOA is not necessary and should not be approved. I am concerned with the change of airspace usage for safety, quality of life, detrimental economic impacts, and environmental reasons with websites references as specified. As you will see, there are many reasons not to implement Condor LOWAT as follows:

- Due to the mountainous terrain and distance to FAA resources, radar and radio coverage are poor or non-existent at low altitudes. This makes the addition of low fast flying military aircraft very dangerous to other aviation and is reason enough not to allow them. The EIS did not meet criteria to prove there would be no significant impact.
- Maine is different from other states in that any natural water body larger than 10 acres is open for all recreational use. Basically, this means any water body large enough to land an aircraft in is open to their use. Maine had 247 floatplanes or amphibious airplanes registered in 2006. In wintertime many of these and a lot of land-planes are converted to ski-planes. These and many from outside Maine use many of these bodies of water as places to recreate or work. There are numerous flying services that have commercial activities on and between these waters. Many times these aircraft will go to a lake or pond, on floats or skis, staying for an extended period of time before departing. There is no telephone coverage or radio coverage in these outback locations, making it impossible to check NOTAMS before taking off and gaining significant altitudes. For this reason, it is unsafe to add high speed military aircraft to the area. If Condor LOWAT was implemented, these numerous waterways need to be treated the same as airports (1500 feet and 3 NM separation). After

responsibly avoiding these, the desired 60 by 40 nautical mile area will not be available. The EIS erroneously assumes all pilots will have telephone and radio coverage before flying. Due to this error, the EIS did not meet criteria to prove there would be no significant impact.

- Onboard radar systems are not guaranteed to be able to pick up light aircraft or to even be operational. In a recent flight with an AOPA writer, the radar on 1 of 2 F-15's was non-operational and the mission went on. I understand the radar is meant to see larger, faster moving targets. Gliders, Piper Cubs, and other small aircraft may not have enough metal in them to even return a signal. Again, the mountainous terrain can prevent radar from seeing craft not in a clear line of sight. The EIS erroneously states "On-board radar can detect civilian pilots outside of 60 miles and the ANG would terminate training or move to different areas of the airspace if civilian aircraft are detected." Since this statement is so excessively false, the EIS did not meet criteria to prove there would be no significant impact.
- Collision avoidance by visual contact cannot be guaranteed. The mountainous terrain can easily hide other aircraft from F-15's. Even with radar coverage, accidents like the November 16 midair collision between an F-15 and a Cessna 172 near Sarasota, Florida killing 57 year old Jacques Olivier, a flight instructor, charter pilot and AOPA member will happen. (ref. 1 below) Near misses, like when the F-15 crossed in front of the Boeing 757 within 125 yards without knowing, will happen. (ref. 2 below) In the case of Condor LOWAT, closing at 480 knots, there is only 15 seconds at most from visual contact until collision, assuming visual contact is made at 2 miles. This assumes the pilot is in fact watching and not doing other cockpit duties, watching other mission aircraft, or otherwise distracted. (ref. 3 below) A National Transportation Safety Board safety recommendation dated July 7, 1994 discusses 3 accidents involving 3 military jets and GA aircraft on MTR's. In the case of the A-6E/Ag-Cat collision, they indicated 12.5 seconds of advance visual contact was needed to prevent collision when only 8.5 seconds were geometrically possible. These accidents happened under VFR conditions on clear days when pilots only had to be concerned with a route, not a MOA where the 480 knot aircraft can come from any direction. The recommendation goes on to say that there had been 51 Near Mid Air Collisions reported from 1986 to 1994 involving the MTR's and military aircraft. Additionally in the same period, 46 pilot reports were made to NASA's Aviation Safety Reporting System. For these reasons, the addition of fast low flying military aircraft must not be allowed. The EIS did not meet criteria to prove there would be no significant impact.
- Even if a collision is avoided, wake turbulence from the fighters can take down a light aircraft. It is likely that an F-15 or other military plane could be on the same path or near the same path after entering from the other

side of the terrain, leaving behind wake turbulence that could send the light plane to the ground. The light plane could easily not even know that the dull colored military plane had even been thru, since they will be moving at 8 nautical miles per minute and wake turbulence can last for up to 3 minutes. According to the FAA Circular on Wake Turbulence Recovery, the only way to avoid or recover is to be above the turbulence (ref; 4. below) this is great if you know in advance where the turbulence is. The pilot of the Maule MX-7 that wandered under the path of an F-16 in Florida received minor injuries and structural damage to the airframe just from the turbulence from the lead ship of a 4 ship F-16 formation. (ref; 5. below) Even more shocking is the case of the Mitsubishi MU-2 that was sent to the desert by wake turbulence, killing the pilot and seriously injuring the co-pilot. (ref ; 6. below) In 200, an F-15 nearly crashed from wake turbulence while landing behind 3 other F-15's. Applying the afterburners is all that saved him. This alone is enough reason to forbid the additional fast low flying military aircraft. Since the EIS did not even consider these accidents, the EIS did not meet criteria to prove there would be no significant impact.

- Unlike areas with MTR's, the proposed Condor LOWAT area is both departure and destination for many flights. Avoiding the area would be a significant impact to flights, decreasing the number possible and delays to remaining flights. Sightseeing flights, fire patrols, fish and wildlife surveys, air taxi operations, and flight training would all suffer. The economic impact is reason enough to prohibit the change to Condor LOWAT. The EIS erroneously compares Condor 1 & 2 with the proposed Condor LOWAT without considering the different floor altitudes. Airplanes operating under Condor 1 and Condor 2 can fly for years without going as high as 7000 feet. For this omission, the EIS did not meet criteria to prove there would be no significant impact.
- Recreation is a major economic activity of this area. This area is a vacation destination for many with a large portion of the population relying on income from vacationers. Adding F-15's at 480 knots with noise levels above 140 db will make the area much less desirable with word of mouth advertising and repeat clients all suffering. Again, the economic impact is reason enough not to prohibit the change to Condor LOWAT. The EIS assumes the upper noise levels to be 38.5 dBA, totally unbelievable! The EIS also admits "The areas outside the MTR's would experience them more than under current conditions; however, total operations within the MOA's would remain approximately 2 hours per week during daytime weekday hours." Since the EIS does not realistically consider the real impacts of this noise increase, the EIS did not meet criteria to prove there would be no significant impact.
- Fighter jets doing this training have historically had accidents in this area. AN F-101B that crashed after a mid-air collision with a squadron mate lies

on top of Mt. Abram, 3 miles from the regional High School. A T-33/F-102 mid-air collision put both airplanes into Flagstaff Lake. A KC-97 sits atop a mountain in Newry. Remains of a jettisoned full B-52 fuel tank corrode in the woods of Madrid twp. No effort has ever been made to clean up these crash sites. For a partial list of Maine crash sites, please see Aviation Archaeology in Maine-Visit some crash sites. (ref; 7. below) The environmental impact is reason enough to stop the change to Condor LOWAT. Since the EIS did not consider the real accident history in the area, the EIS did not meet criteria to prove there would be no significant impact.

- From October of 1975 until March of 2001, at least 38 F-15's were involved in mid-air collisions with 33 of these crashing and another 75 crashing for other reasons. Thankfully, only 2 were lost to combat in that period. (ref; 8. below) With limited research, I am aware of an October, 2004 mid-air collision off the coast of Japan. (ref; 9. below) It appears the EIS used chosen data for their own conclusions. Because the data used was carefully selected, the EIS did not meet criteria to prove there would be no significant impact.
- If Condor LOWAT is approved and implemented, allowing any military aircraft to use, we may well have the same environment as Rachel, Nevada does. They put out a list of crashes in town and close by, including 12 crash sites, 3 of which are F-15's (ref; 10. below). For safety and environmental reasons, Condor LOWAT must not be implemented. For some reason, the EIS does not refer to Rachel, Nevada. This would be very important information. Due to omitting this information, the EIS did not meet criteria to prove there would be no significant impact.
- Maine is home to many large birds that fly the same air space Condor LOWAT is planning to use. Bald Eagles and their nests are located all through the area. Ospreys are even more numerous. Turkey Vultures have inhabited the area. These birds all fly at the same altitude the F-15's are planning to use. Since bird strike avoidance can't be guaranteed and bird strikes do take down F-15's, the addition of Condor LOWAT must not be approved. The EIS assumes "Most birds fly at below 500 feet AGL except during migration." This may be a near truth in flat and plains areas. When the terrain changes as fast as in the mountainous areas where Condor LOWAT is proposed, the rule is out the window. An Eagle flying across rough terrain does not follow the contours to stay under 500 feet. I personally have witnessed many birds flying at my altitude, well above 500 feet AGL. Since the EIS does not consider the real effect of bird flight in mountainous areas, the EIS did not meet criteria to prove there would be no significant impact.
- Maine has a fledgling wind power industry in this area. Maine's Governor has set a goal of 3000 Mega Watts of wind power by the year 2020. The

implementation of Condor LOWAT could feasibly put this goal in jeopardy if the FAA is required to permit wind power facilities. Since the EIS did not consider future wind power facilities, the EIS did not meet criteria to prove there would be no significant impact.

As can easily be seen, I have given twelve examples of the EIS not meeting criteria to prove there would be no significant impact. Your required action is obvious. The change to Condor LOWAT must be firmly rejected.

Sincerely,

Allan C. Haggan

References:

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