

SUNNYVIEW FARM

Thomas E. Eastler, Susan E. Eastler
300 Mosher Hill Road, Farmington, ME 04938
207-778-6703(H); 207-491-9584 (C); eastler@maine.edu

TO: Massachusetts Air National Guard

October 27, 2009

CC: Governor Baldacci and the Maine Congressional Delegation

RE: CONDOR Military Operations

1. I am a retired USAFR Colonel (O-6).
2. I am an active farmer in Farmington.
3. I am a professor of Geology at the University of Maine at Farmington.
4. I am a private pilot who has flown over western Maine for decades with my college students.

In the course of 35 years of activities in and around Franklin County, I have come to understand the nature of farming, flying, teaching, and business economics in Western Maine. When I first started all four of these activities in Farmington in 1974 I used to report to Air Traffic Control whenever I intended to fly at elevations of 7,000 feet above sea level over the landscape in Western Maine, because CONDOR Military Operations Area was often active, and I was concerned for my safety. I made it a point not to fly at those elevations any more than necessary. I never flew my students anywhere near the lowest elevation in the CONDOR sector. Thus there was never a threat to my activities, especially to the safety of my passengers or anyone else flying below 7,000 feet.

The proposed lowering of the flight ceiling to 500 feet AGL in this section of Maine is just not justified under any circumstances short of domestic military emergencies. The low ceilings threaten the safety of all private flight operations in the area, and put at risk anyone, like myself and my students, that might be conducting terrain analysis projects over the local Western Mountains terrain, or any private or commercial air activities in this area. Even though I no longer pilot the planes that I fly in, I still rent small aircraft and a pilot and take my students into the air to conduct image data gathering missions. Should the lower ceilings be approved I, and others like me, would be disenfranchised and would cease such operations immediately for safety purposes.

As a farmer and a businessman I am also aware of the negative impact overall, not only from the stress imposed on farm animals, but also on many other aspects of our 4 seasons economy, as shaky as it already is. As such I ask that the Massachusetts ANG withdraw their proposal and if they don't then I urge the FAA not to approve it. I see no compelling military reason for conducting these low ceiling activities over our terrain at this time. I urge Governor Baldacci and the Maine Congressional delegation to reject the CONDOR proposal.

Dr. Thomas E. Eastler, Col. USAFR (Ret.)
Professor of Environmental Geology, UMF
Sunnyview Farm Bovine Maternity Center