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Legislative Update: Airspace EIS needs another look

By [Tom Saviello](#) • Oct 9th, 2009 • Category: [Opinion](#)

For the last few weeks many of you have been closely following the proposed changes in the use of the airspace above the Western Mountains.

The air space is known as Condor 1 and 2 military operations area. The proposed changes would allow for the Massachusetts Air National Guard (ANG) to conduct “dog fight” simulations flying over our area. In order to do this the ANG needs permission from the Federal Air Administration (FAA). The FAA first requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) be completed before such a request will be heard by the FAA.

Approximately two years ago, the EA was developed and presented to the public. In that presentation many deficiencies were identified requiring more work to be done by the ANG. Last spring the ANG corrected the deficiencies and came back to hold a public session. After that public session, I, along with other local legislators including then Representative Janet Mills and Senator Walter Gooley, the governor’s office and the congressional delegation requested a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be completed. Reluctantly the ANG agreed.

I, along with my colleagues, pushed for the EIS so that the full effects on the air space utilization change were completely evaluated. In the last months I have been in direct contact with the ANG to ensure the hearing was going to be held in Farmington and not in Augusta. I worked diligently to make sure someone in the Governor’s office was going to take the lead and made sure our concerns were fully vetted to the Governor prior to the hearing. I along with Mike Wells of Wilton presented our concerns to the Western Maine Municipal officers. I, as do my colleagues, want the EIS to be done right before a final decision was made by the FAA. We all want to support our soldiers.

The EIS was finally released for review in early August. The work was poor to say the least. Thanks to a local group of Western Maine citizens which included two veteran military pilots with over 40 years of military flying experience, Tom Mauzaka of Strong and Mike Wells of Wilton, clearly identified the errors and poor workmanship.

A few weeks ago this group of citizens, other local legislators (Representative Lance Harvell and Representative Jarrod Crockett) and I met with the State Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Attorney General’s representative. During that meeting the Western Maine citizens clearly pointed out the flaws and errors in the EIS.

Simply put, the ANG simply took the EA and changed the name to an EIS. This is not what was supposed to be done. The last time this air space change was proposed the EIS was seven or eight volumes long! The work was really an insult to us living in the area and to those who want to support our military. The AG and the Governor agreed as the DOT reported on the poor report and its deficiencies. The Governor wrote a letter and requested the hearing be postponed until all the questions were answered.

As a result, the hearing scheduled for Sept. 2 was postponed until Nov. 14. The ANG tried to address the Governor’s concerns without real substance. The Guard did agree that the economic impact was not fully addressed and would be in the next iteration of the EIS. We have yet to see this.

On Sept. 9, I wrote a letter to Senator Collins asking for help to get some answers. One question asked was what the qualifications for the EIS authors were and what the cost to complete it was. I also asked if the

FAA had already decided this was a done deal and given approval to the air space change. The text of the EIS indicates this is maybe true. Lastly I asked when the economic impact would be addressed. Would we have this information before the hearing on Nov. 14? It is the least we can expect as we all want what is right to protect this country and train our armed forces. Stay tuned!

If you have questions about this or anything else please call me at 645-3420 or e-mail me at drtom16@hotmail.com. As always it my pleasure to serve the people of District 90 and the surrounding area.

Tom Saviello is the state representative for District 90, which includes the towns of Avon, New Vineyard, Phillips, Strong, Temple and Wilton, plus the unorganized territories of Freeman, Perkins, Salem (part) and Washington Townships.

1. *A Vet* on [October 10th, 2009 at 10:16 am](#):

I am having trouble understanding the economic impact is. A jet flies over and is gone in two seconds.

How does that hurt the enviroment? Will the jets suck off the leaves from trees?

I bet if the ANG offered money to the State, they would get to fly over anytime!

Please explain to the troops on the ground, how your rediculus concerns over losing money from tourists will help them! Is the report poorly written. Probably. Any govt report is written poorly.

2. *Peg Lang* on [October 10th, 2009 at 8:41 pm](#):

Please forgive my lack of knowledge. Does Maine have an Air National Guard? If so where do they fly?

Is the Massachetts ANG going to come protect us if there is a need, or will they stay in Massachetts?

When I lived in Maryland, near a Navy base, a plane would fly over our house day and night. Their lights would very brightly shine in our bedroom window. Has your smoke detector ever gone off when you are in a deep sleep? Those planes were just as jarring. I used to tell friends that I could stand on the roof of the house with a paint brush, and paint a stripe down the fuselage. I don't know how I feel about this without hearing others comments. How many times have they postponed the hearing?

(Check back for more responses...)