

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
TEMPORARY SHELTER OF AFGHAN SPECIAL IMMIGRANTS
JOINT BASE McGUIRE-DIX-LAKEHURST (JB MDL),
NEW JERSEY

Pursuant to provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Title 42 United States Code (USC) Sections 4321 to 4347, implemented by Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations, Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §1500-1508, and 32 CFR §989, *Environmental Impact Analysis Process*, the Department of the Air Force (DAF) developed an Environmental Assessment (EA) to describe and evaluate the potential environmental consequences associated with the emergency temporary housing of Afghan Special Immigrants (ASIs) at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst (JB MDL). Furthermore, because the proposed action would not rise to the level of an environmental impact statement, the DAF used its discretion to advance special and emergency provisions pursuant to 32 C.F.R. §§ 989.34(a)-(b), 989.36 and in furtherance of 40 C.F.R. § 1506.12, *Emergencies* and CEQ guidance.¹

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to support U.S. government noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO), in accordance with Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 3025.14 (*Evacuation of U.S. Citizens and Designated Aliens from Threatened Areas Abroad*), Executive Order (EO) 12656 (*Assignment of Emergency Preparedness Procedures*) and the 13 August 2021 Planning Order (PLANORD) issued by the Joint Staff, to evacuate ASIs who supported the US mission and forces in Afghanistan for the past 20 years. On 21 August 2021 the Deputy Secretary of Defense directed use of JB MDL to provide support to ASIs. The DAF has been directed to coordinate with the Department of State (DoS) in support of the NEO on availability of military installations to furnish shelter for ASIs. The purpose of this Proposed Action is to support this effort by providing temporary sheltering of ASIs at JB MDL.

The need for the Proposed Action is to provide safe haven and shelter at JB MDL for ASIs, who assisted the U.S. and our allies, in response to an increasingly unstable and deteriorating security situation caused by insurgent Taliban operations in Afghanistan. Taking no action would likely result in a considerable humanitarian crisis and harm to those who have furthered U.S. and allied operations and interests in Afghanistan.

As detailed in Section 2.0, the Proposed Action is to provide temporary sheltering of ASIs at JB MDL. The purpose of the analysis in the EA is to assess potential effects associated with the Proposed Action. The affected environment and environmental consequences sections of the EA (Section 3.0) form the

¹ President's Council on Environmental Quality, Memorandum for Heads of Federal Departments and Agencies, *Emergencies and the National Environmental Policy Act Guidance - Environmental Assessments*, September 14, 2020, page 2,

scientific and analytic basis for the comparisons of alternatives including the “no action.” Alternatives considered but eliminated from further analysis are described in Section 2.4.

The EA carried forward potentially significant environmental issues and eliminated from further consideration insignificant issues (Section 3.0). The EA also considered reasonably foreseeable and environmental trends and planned actions in the Region of Influence (ROI) (Section 4.0), including potential impacts with a close causal connection to the Proposed Action.

Under the Proposed Action, the DAF would provide the following support to the ASI relocation to JB MDL:

- Existing facilities (hard billeting structures) for temporary shelter
- JB MDL land for temporary tent facilities

NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The No Action Alternative in the EA (Section 2.3.2) provides a baseline against which to contrast the impacts of the Proposed Action and alternatives current and expected future conditions and can be evaluated to identify impacts to the human environment in the absence of the Proposed Action or alternatives.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The analyses of the potential environmental consequences associated with implementing the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative are presented in Section 3.0 of the EA. No potential environmental impacts or mitigation measures associated with implementation of the Proposed Action were identified.

Federally recognized tribes historically affiliated with the JB MDL geographic region were invited for consultation on the Proposed Action. On 19 Aug 2021, DAF sent letters to the Delaware Tribe of Indians and the Delaware Nation. No responses were received from the tribes. The DAF sent a coordination letter the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). The SHPO responded with concurrence of no effect associated with implementation of the Proposed Action. The DAF also consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). USFWS replied with a response concurring *not likely to adversely affect*.

The DAF sent letters to the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife (NJ DEP) and Pinelands Commission requesting inputs on the Proposed Action. NJ DEP indicated they do not expect significant impacts to fish and wildlife resources as a result of the Proposed Action. The Pinelands Commissions responded requesting more information. DAF replied to their request for more information and will continue to correspond with the Pinelands Commission regarding the Proposed Action, as requested.

A Notice of Availability (NOA) for public review of the Draft EA was published in the Burlington County Times on 24 August 2021. The Draft EA was also made available for public review at the Burlington County Library Pemberton Branch (16 Broadway Street Brown Mills, NJ 08015). The NOA invited the public to review and comment on the Draft EA during the public review period ending on 28 August 2021. The Draft EA was also made available for public review electronically on the JB MDL Public Affairs website at <https://www.jbmdl.jb.mil/Home/Public-Affairs/>. No Public or Agency responses were received.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on my review of the analyses in the attached EA, I conclude that the Proposed Action of the Temporary Shelter of Afghan Special Immigrants on JB MDL would not result in significant environmental impacts, either by itself or in combination with reasonably foreseeable environmental trends and planned actions in the Affected Environment. Accordingly, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The signing of this FONSI completes the environmental impact analysis process.

DAVID A JOKINEN, Colonel, USAF Commander

30 Aug 2021

Date