



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Proposed Modification of the Volk Field Special Activity Airspace

### **Background:**

The proposed action would modify the Volk Field Special Activity Airspace (VFSAA) for the Wisconsin Air National Guard's Volk Field Combat Readiness Training Center (CRTC) in Camp Douglas, Wisconsin, and provide a properly configured military airspace that meets requirements as an integrated, year-round, realistic training environment for combat aircraft to enhance combat capability.

Volk Field serves as a training location for multiple aircraft types and possesses the facilities required for most Department of Defense aircraft. The training needs of units utilizing the VFSAA and Hardwood Aerial Gunnery Range (R-6904 A/B on accompanying map) continue to evolve based on real-world roles, missions, and threats. As aircraft technology, capabilities and training needs evolve, Volk Field CRTC must modify current training airspace to continue to offer realistic training within the airspace.

### **1. What is a military operations area (MOA)?**

A MOA is a block of airspace where aircraft can perform military training activities (aircraft intercepts, turning and evasive maneuvers and air combat maneuvers) separated from Instrument Flight Rule (IFR) traffic.

### **2. What is an Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspace (ATCAA)?**

An ATCAA is airspace of defined vertical and lateral limits, assigned by Air Traffic Control for the purpose of providing air traffic segregation

between the specified activities being conducted within the assigned airspace and other IFR air traffic. Typically, these blocks of airspace start at Flight Level 180 or 18,000 ft. and, in some cases, are contoured to the dimensions of the MOAs beneath them.

### **3. What is a restricted area?**

A restricted area is airspace established within which the flight of aircraft, while not wholly prohibited, is subject to restriction, when determined necessary to confine or segregate activities considered hazardous to nonparticipating aircraft. These activities can include, but are not limited to, weapons employment, laser employment, and small arms fire.

### **4. What role does the Federal Aviation Administration play in the proposal?**

The Federal Aviation Administration manages the National Airspace System and may review and comment on the draft environmental assessment. The FAA is the final decision-making authority on how and when the airspace proposal is approved and depicted or charted on sectional maps.

### **5. How are altitudes measured or specified?**

Airspace altitudes are primarily defined in terms of Mean Sea Level, which is measured from the surface of the ocean. Where the height of the airspace floor above the ground or sea is important, the airspace floor can be measured in terms of Above Ground Level (AGL) or Above Sea Level (ASL). Airspace altitudes starting at 18,000 ft. are defined in terms of Flight Level.

## **6. Why are the current military operations area dimensions deficient for training purposes?**

The current VFSAA was designed for older technology, and VFSAA additions over the 60-year evolution of the airspace has resulted in non-optimal parcels of airspace which negatively impact both military and civilian aviation. The Volk Field CRTC airspace management, combat squadrons regularly using the airspace and the FAA reviewed and studied the current configuration. They published their findings in a document titled the “Volk Airspace Complex Joint FAA/ANG Special Use Airspace Review,” June 2008. They identified multiple shortfalls with the existing Volk Field SAA Complex and made several recommendations to improve/optimize the complex for the benefit of both civilian and military aviation assets.

The shortfalls include:

- The usable width, length and vertical structure of the current airspace structure are marginally adequate to support multiple required mission types for combat aircraft.
- The current airspace structure does not allow users to maximize the airspace activated for specific mission sets that might require less airspace, causing larger than required pieces of airspace to be activated.
- The inability to support tactically relevant stand-off, combat laser employment and weapons delivery at Hardwood Range due to the limited size of the R-6904 A/B complex.

## **7. What has changed? Why was the previous airspace sufficient for training but now it isn't?**

- Due to technological advances, airspace dimensions need to expand to fully exploit the capabilities of several combat aircraft (including fighters, bombers and tactical airlift) for aircrews to realistically train against emerging threats.

- Volk Field CRTC hosts multiple air-to-air and air-to-ground large force exercises each year, with aircraft and ground support elements from across the nation and multiple military services participating. The scale of these exercises, which have included up to 20 aircraft operating in the VFSAA at one time, has required annual temporary MOAs and ATCAAs to be established to ensure that participants can receive effective training safely. Without these temporary additions, safety has become a large concern. For this reason, the FAA requested that we make permanent these temporary MOA requests by proposing a permanent airspace modification.

- Combat aircraft utilizing the Volk Field airspace carry Advanced Targeting Pod systems for air-to-ground precision guided munitions deliveries. The increasing stand-off ranges and technological capabilities of these targeting pods and their combat lasers require training employment at longer stand-off from the impact area of the Hardwood Aerial Gunnery Range (located in R-6904 on accompanying map). Hardwood Range has the only precision guided munitions impact area (with the ability to drop both laser guided bombs and joint-direct attack munitions) within 250 nautical miles of Volk Field CRTC.

## **8. What happens if the current airspace is not expanded?**

No action would mean local and deployed units will continue losing adequate and realistic training opportunities. The current airspace will remain inadequate for military aircraft and tactics. Existing fighter and bomber units will be forced to deploy to more costly, limited access airspace venues elsewhere to fulfill training requirements thereby reducing the training provided to units and personnel limited by funding and availability for deployment.

## **9. What factors influenced the choice of the proposed military operations area shape and location?**

Volk Field CRTC has worked closely with other local and federal aviation stakeholders to find a redesign proposal that can be viewed as a “win-win” for military, commercial and civilian aviation. While eliminating the shortfalls associated with the current configuration, the improved design meets the training requirements for most military users and benefits general aviation.

## **10. Which units and which aircraft use the military operations areas?**

Volk Field CRTC hosts a large variety of aircraft that deploy to Volk Field CRTC specifically to take part in the training opportunities provided. These aircraft include fighters, bombers, tankers, tactical airlift, cargo, mobility, command and control platforms and helicopters. Volk Field CRTC hosts multiple air-to-air and air-to-ground large force exercises each year, with aircraft and ground support elements from across the nation and multiple military services participating.

The 115th Fighter Wing, which flies F-16s fighter aircraft, is located in Madison, Wisconsin. The 115th utilizes Volk Field airspace and Hardwood Aerial Gunnery Range almost exclusively due to its close proximity and available training assets on a daily basis. The 115th Fighter Wing schedules the Volk Field airspace for six to eight aircraft twice per day, for an average of an hour-and-a-half during each flight period.

The 148th Fighter Wing, located in Duluth, Minnesota, flies F-16 Block 50 fighter aircraft. One of the Block 50’s primary missions is suppression of enemy air defenses. The Volk Field CRTC operates and maintains five unmanned threat emitters, which are used to familiarize aircrews with realistic, relevant surface-to-air threats and tactics. The Block 50 F-16s require the use of the unmanned threat emitters to train to suppression of enemy air defense-specific tactics. The Volk Field airspace is the closest airspace to Duluth with suppression of enemy air defense training

capability. The 148th also utilizes the Volk Field airspace and Hardwood Range for its air-to-ground training requirements and regularly participates in Volk Field CRTC-sponsored large force exercises.

The 114th Fighter Wing, located in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, also flies the F-16. The 114th utilizes the Volk Field airspace and Hardwood Range primarily for its air-to-ground training requirements, but it also schedules the airspace as an air-to-air weather back-up to their primary mission. The 114th Fighter Wing also regularly participates in Volk Field CRTC-sponsored large force exercises.

### **11. How often and when will the military operations areas be used?**

Generally, operations conducted within the VFSAA require the use of airspace regularly throughout the daytime hours Monday through Friday. Night operations are periodically scheduled throughout the year. These operations and their duration widely vary due to several factors, such as participating units, type of training being conducted, mission complexity and other requirements.

### **12. Will there be an increase in the military's usage of the military operations area?**

Generally speaking, the number of aircraft using the airspace on a regular basis will largely remain unchanged. The purpose of Volk Field CRTC is that it serves as a deployable training location for the USAF and other Department of Defense agencies, as such utilization varies year-to-year, but in total, utilization is not expected to drastically change from previous patterns.

### **13. How many military aircraft will fly in the military operations areas at any one time?**

Between six and eight aircraft will regularly use the VFSAA at any given time. During Volk Field CRTC's semi-annual large force exercises, as many as 20 aircraft may use the complex at one time.

#### **14. What will be the impact on noise levels on the ground?**

By optimizing the airspace boundaries, the aircraft using the VFSAA will have less constrictive airspace, which will likely result in a small decrease in noise on the ground.

The proposed changes will actually decrease the probability of a military aircraft above a single point at low altitude.

FAA recommendations and U.S. Air Force best practices entail aircraft utilizing military operations areas to avoid noise-sensitive areas to the extent practical.

#### **15. If citizens have noise complaints, how will they know whom to call?**

The Air National Guard is a good neighbor and provides citizens an outlet for providing feedback about aircraft noise. Volk Field actively maintains a Noise Complain Hotline (608-427-1260) for community members. Unlike complaints about noise from commercial and general aviation flights, citizens have direct access to Air National Guard flight operators who can research and resolve noise issues.

#### **16. What effect will this action have on livestock feedlots in the affected areas?**

The effects of noise on livestock have been studied for at least 50 years. Any effects are transient with many variables involved. Effects reduce over time as livestock habituates. There are no significant effects on livestock feedlots under the current training area.

**17. What effect will this action have on commercial aviation in the affected area?**

The proposed airspace action has been vetted through meetings with the FAA's Central Service Center and Minneapolis and Chicago's Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspaces as well as the local Green Bay and Milwaukee Approach Control Centers. Impacts will be determined through further coordination with the FAA and the National Environmental Policy Act process.

**18. What is the impact on general aviation?**

General aviation and military aircraft operate safely in military operations areas throughout the nation every day. During good weather, all aircraft operate under Visual Flight Rules use the "see and avoid" concept for deconfliction. When visibility is low, pilots operate under Instrumental Flight Rules. These aircraft will either divert around the military operations area or operate within the training airspace under the control of the applicable air traffic control agency.

The design of the proposed airspace boundaries will minimize, and in fact, reduce impacts to commercial traffic operating around the VFSAA. The proposed altitudes and internal airspace divisions will allow military airspace schedulers to only schedule parcels of airspace required for a given mission set and turn back airspace when no longer needed for that period of time. This flexibility will help minimize impacts to private aviation in the surrounding area. Volk Field has a chartered airspace automatic terminal information service that provides real-time daily statuses of current and forecasted military activities in the operating areas. This allows general aviation users to safely plan and conduct their flights accordingly.