



Aircraft Operations in Western Training Area Brief to Texas Compatible Use Forum

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Title: Aircraft Operations in WTA Brief to TCUF

Aircraft Ops in WTA Brief to TCUF

Purpose

- To provide the Texas Compatible Use Forum (TCUF) an overview of the issues the Fort Cavazos aviation community is experiencing in the Western Training Area (WTA)
- To solicit recommendations for mitigation from TCUF personnel

Agenda

- Fort Cavazos Special Use Airspace
- Western Training Area
- Background
- Current Issues
- Mitigation Action Plan

Attendees

- Fort Cavazos Directorate of Aviation Operations personnel
- TCUF members

Outcome

Increased understanding of the challenges associated with rotary wing aircraft operations in the WTA and recommendations to mitigate



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Fort Cavazos Special Use Airspace

Fort Cavazos Special Use Airspace (580 Square Miles) consists of:

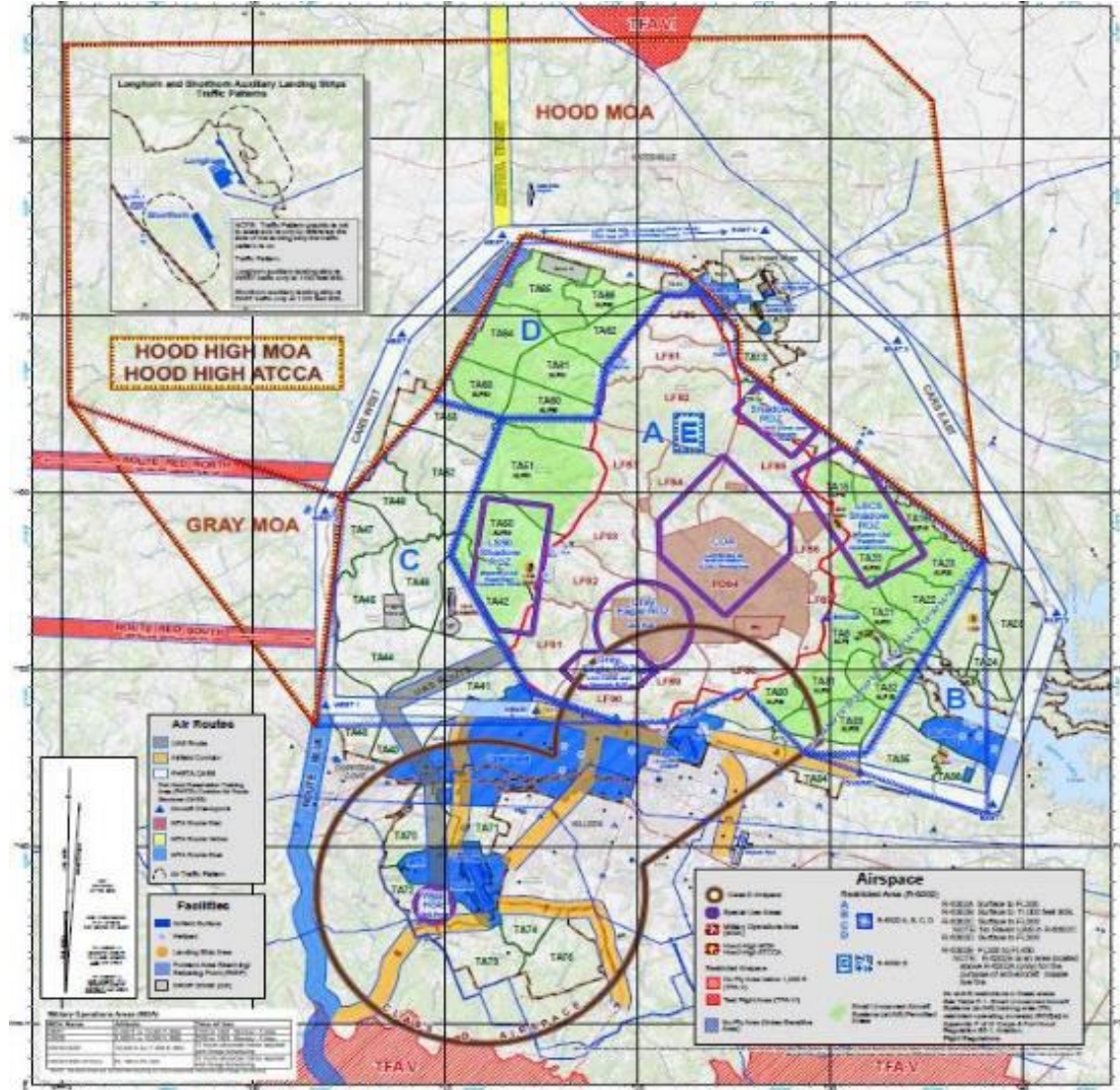
- 5 Restricted Areas (R) (235 Square Miles):
 - R-6302A – Surface to 30,000’ MSL
 - R-6302B – Surface to 11,000’ MSL
 - R-6302C – Surface to 30,000’ MSL
 - R-6302D – Surface to 30,000’ MSL
 - R-6302E – 30,000’ MSL to 45,000’ MSL

- 3 MOA's (345 Square Miles):
 - Gray MOA – 2,000’ MSL to 10,000’ MSL
 - Phantom MOA – 2,000’ MSL to 10,000’ MSL
 - Phantom High MOA – 10,000’ MSL to 17,999’ MSL

- 1 ATCAA (2,850 Square Miles):
 - Phantom ATCAA – 18,000’ MSL to 22,000’ MSL (Phantom ATCAA associated with the Phantom High MOA)

- Robert Gray ATC Tower – 4.7 mile radius, 3,500’ MSL and below (Class D airspace)

- Yoakum-Defrenn ATC Tower – 3.8 mile radius, 3,500’ MSL and below (Class D airspace)



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Western Training Area

- The Western Training Area (WTA) is a training space for American and NATO forces at Fort Cavazos in Texas. The WTA is more than 150 miles west of the installation and provides access to 15,900 square miles of airspace. The WTA is used for realistic training, including AH-64 Apache transition unit training and combined arms live fire exercises.



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- Fort Cavazos aviation units operate AH-64, CH-47, and UH-60 “low and slow” rotary wing aircraft
- Fort Cavazos Special Use Airspace alone is insufficient to meet Fort Cavazos aviation training and operational requirements
- US Army aviation training manuals include requirements for terrain flight operations at or below 200” AGL
- The WTA was originally established due to it including wide open expanses of sparsely populated land. Present day, the WTA has experienced population expansion and significant increases in livestock and exotic animal ranches
- Fort Cavazos aviation units typically operate in the eastern portion of the WTA due to aircraft refuel considerations
- Fort Cavazos has instituted “No Fly Areas” in the past, however, the administration of the process as well as the associated impact on the aviation training mission were significant



14 Code of Federal Regulations: § 91.119 Minimum safe altitudes:

Except when necessary for takeoff or landing, no person may operate an aircraft below the following altitudes:

- (a) Anywhere. An altitude allowing, if a power unit fails, an emergency landing without undue hazard to persons or property on the surface.
- (b) Over congested areas. Over any congested area of a city, town, or settlement, or over any open air assembly of persons, an altitude of 1,000 feet above the highest obstacle within a horizontal radius of 2,000 feet of the aircraft.
- (c) Over other than congested areas. An altitude of 500 feet above the surface, except over open water or sparsely populated areas. In those cases, the aircraft may not be operated closer than 500 feet to any person, vessel, vehicle, or structure.
- (d) Helicopters, powered parachutes, and weight-shift-control aircraft. If the operation is conducted without hazard to persons or property on the surface—
 - (1) A helicopter may be operated at less than the minimums prescribed in paragraph (b) or (c) of this section, provided each person operating the helicopter complies with any routes or altitudes specifically prescribed for helicopters by the FAA





Present Fort Cavazos Altitude Criteria:

5-9. Altitudes

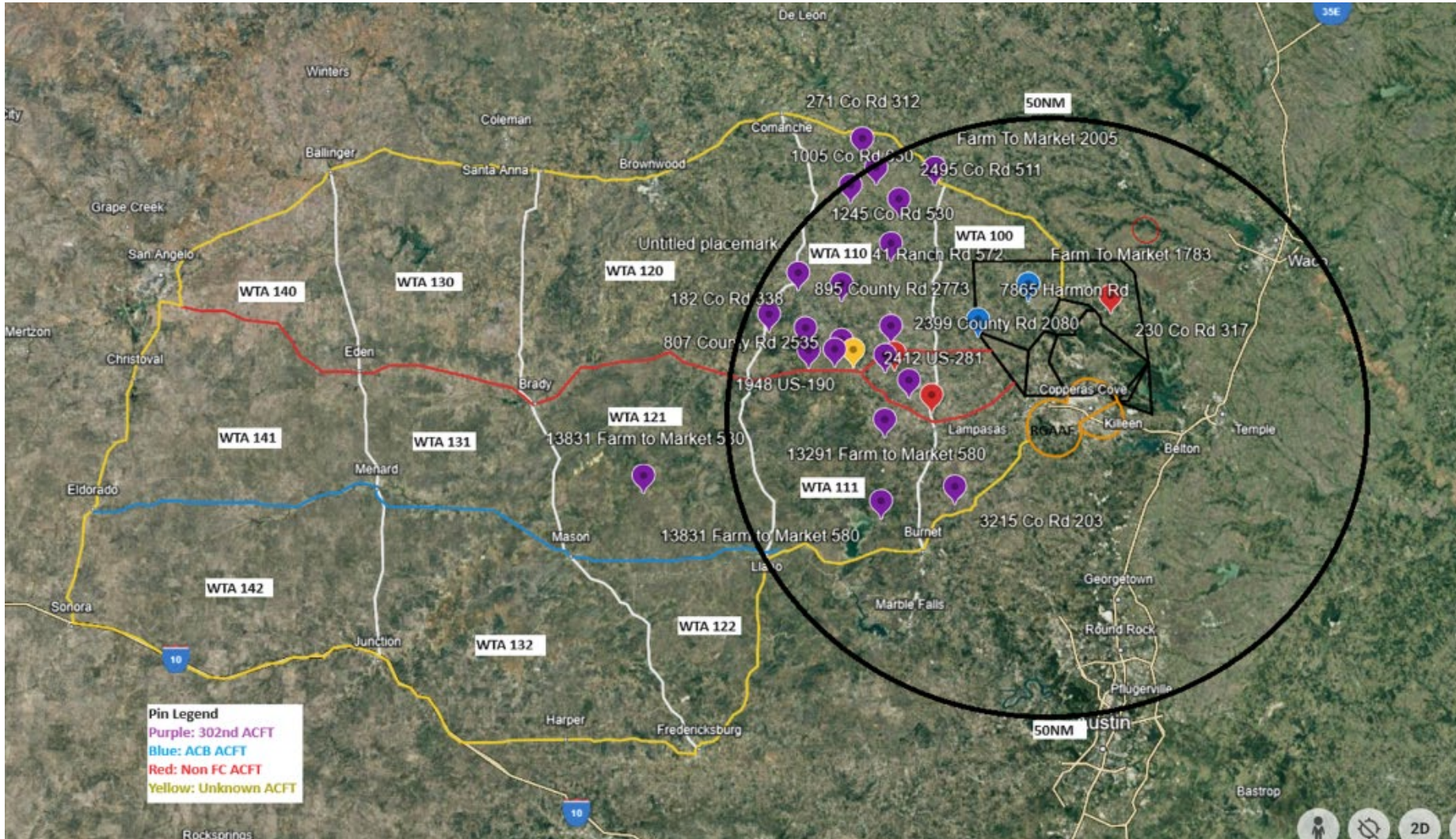
- a. Unless operations are in an approved under wire flight area, flights off the Fort Cavazos reservation will maintain a minimum altitude of at least 500 ft AGL with a 500 ft slant range from buildings, livestock, or other man-made obstructions.
- b. In WTAs 100, 110, and 111, tactical training below 500 ft AGL is discouraged due to the amount of civilian population. Battalion/Squadron/Squadron commanders or higher, may authorize tactical flight training below 500 ft AGL.
- c. During WTA terrain flight operations at or below 200 ft AGL, aviators will not intentionally fly within a 500 ft slant range of buildings, livestock, or other manmade obstructions, except while performing an instrument approach or departure, during takeoff or landing, or when mission requirements dictate.
- d. Aided night operations below 200 ft AGL outside the FCRTAs require a day light reconnaissance of the intended flight route within 3 days of use.





- Low Flying Aircraft / Noise Complaints within the WTA are on an upward trend commensurate with the level of aircraft operations in the WTA
- There is a heightened level of volatility and organization amongst citizens in the WTA
- Complainants within the WTA have filed high dollar claims for damage reimbursement and contacted local political leaders.
- Many Low Flying Aircraft / Noise complainants believe they “own” the airspace above their property

- FY24 Low Flying Aircraft/Noise Complaints



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Questions Raised by Complainants:

- What authority does Fort Cavazos have to fly helicopters over non-federal land?
- Fort Cavazos is supposed to be one of the largest Army installations, so why can't you do the training over your own land? How much land/space is required?
- Why would your pilots deliberately target livestock? Why are they doing their maneuvers in an area when they can see livestock/homes/buildings, etc.? If they see livestock, can't they just go to another area?
- Why do they have to fly so low as to disrupt the livestock in the first place? Can't they practice at a higher altitude?
- These flights are happening at all times of the day and night – why?
- They should have narrower flight corridors and conduct training out in West Texas or over the Gulf of Mexico where no one will be bothered. Why can't they use areas that are less populated?
- The government is impacting my livelihood. What are you going to do about that? I should be compensated for my loss.

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Action Plan to Mitigate



- Initiate community townhall / aircraft static displays in order to answer questions, discuss importance of aviation training, and ultimately foster relationships with WTA citizens. Gain Senior Commander guidance and intent prior to event
- Conduct holistic review of Fort Cavazos 95-1 Local Flying Regulations to ensure WTA altitude and operational criteria encompasses “Fly Friendly” initiatives while ultimately enabling commanders to training and prepare their units for combat operations
- Identify other training areas in the vicinity of Fort Cavazos to potentially “take the pressure off” WTA training areas 110 and 111.
- Develop an installation Noise Hazard / Low Flying Aircraft complaint standard operating procedure specifying procedures, roles, and responsibilities
- Determine the feasibility of “controlling” the level of aircraft operations in WTA 110 and 111 by means of a scheduling system



QUESTIONS/COMMENTS



