

**COMMENTARY**

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**Guard minimizes low level flights' impact**

By David Guernsey

The Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Condor low level Military Operations Area is now available on the Department of Transportation Web site.

It concludes that lowering the floor of the existing 3,600-square-mile area from Greenville to Bethel from 7,000 feet to 500 feet above the ground will "not have a significant impact on the quality of the human or natural environment." The rationale is that low level military routes now exist over 53 percent of the area, so they are merely spreading things out a bit.

The EIS glosses over the fact that the aircraft will be conducting unanticipated extreme flight maneuvers over the entire area rather than direct level flights over a specific route as is now the case. Safety and noise impacts are significantly different in these two regimes, yet the EIS clings to the old Military Training Route methodology in its analysis. Those who have experienced scary encounters in the past can expect much worse.

Complaints thus far have fallen on deaf ears.

The EIS was prepared by the 104th Fighter Wing in Massachusetts and states that "The Proposed Action will not typically result in flights at night, on weekends or during holidays." The 104th, however, will not control the airspace. That will be vested in the Eastern Air Defense Sector which does not appear to be a party to the EIS.

Condor is currently is available 24/7 all months of the year. All other low level Military Operations Areas in the northeast have stringent time of operation constraints; generally they are available only on weekdays during daylight hours or less. One low level area in the Adirondacks is closed completely from May 1 through Oct. 31. If the military has needs beyond these constraints, the missions will have to be flown up here. Why should we not be closed from May through October? Perhaps the Air National Guard has a bit more respect for New York's political leadership than it has for Maine's.

*David Guernsey is a Kingfield resident.*