EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Air National Guard (ANG) is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) of the proposed modification to the Condor 1 and 2 Military Operations Areas (MOAs) used by the 102nd Fighter Wing (102 FW) of the Massachusetts ANG (MAANG). The 102 FW is based at Otis ANG Base in Falmouth, Massachusetts and currently conducts a portion of its training missions in the Condor 1 and Condor 2 MOAs, located in southwestern Maine and northeastern New Hampshire. The 102 FW provides vital support to the United States' war on terrorism and homeland security.

As currently defined, the floors of Condor 1 and 2 MOAs are too high to allow for the effective and efficient completion of low altitude awareness training (LOWAT), Low Slow/Visual Identification intercept training, or Slow Shadow intercept training missions. The 102 FW currently conducts all of its LOWAT training events in Visual Route (VR)-840/1/2, but VR-840/1/2 is not configured to allow two-way traffic, reversing directions on the route, or high to low altitude intercepts, which are critical aspects of LOWAT. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to rectify these deficiencies and provide the 102 FW with sufficient training opportunities in a safe training environment to fulfill its mission.

The 102 FW proposes to combine the Condor 1 and 2 MOAs, divide the combined MOA into Condor Low MOA and Condor High MOA, and lower the flight floor of the proposed Condor Low MOA from 7,000 feet mean sea level (MSL) (between approximately 2,800 to 6,300 feet above ground level [AGL]) to 500 feet AGL. Specifically, Condor Low MOA would extend from 500 feet above ground level (AGL) up to, but not including, 7,000 feet MSL. Condor High MOA would extend from 7,000 feet MSL up to but not including flight level (FL) 180, or 18,000 feet MSL.

This EA considered one alternative to the Proposed Action for providing the 102 FW with ready access to low-altitude training airspace: "Lower Condor 1 MOA with Condor 2 MOA Unchanged." This alternative would lower the flight floor of the Condor 1 MOA from 7,000 MSL to 500 feet AGL. The flight floor of the Condor 2 MOA would remain 7,000 feet MSL and the flight ceiling for the Condor 1 and 2 MOAs would remain at FL

180. This alternative would address the deficiency in LOWAT training opportunities; however, this alternative would restrict lateral defensive tactics due to the insufficient lateral boundaries of the Condor 1 MOA (60 nautical miles (NM) by 40 NM) when compared to the Proposed Action (60 NM by 60 NM). The Proposed Action is the only course of action that would fully address the 102 FW's need for low altitude training airspace.

The "Use of Other Airspace" alternative was eliminated from the list of reasonable alternatives because there are no MOAs or Warning Areas within 200 NM of Otis ANG Base that are available for LOWAT training on a day-to-day basis. The "Deployment for LOWAT Training" alternative, which would involve deploying to other bases with access to suitable airspace to complete the required LOWAT training, was also eliminated from the list of reasonable alternatives due to the prohibitive cost of this alternative.

This EA evaluated the potential environmental effects associated with the modification of the Condor 1 and Condor 2 MOA on ten resource areas. The Proposed Action would have no effect on geological resources, water resources, land use, socioeconomics, and cultural resources. The Proposed Action would have the potential to affect airspace management, biological resources, and safety, but would have no significant impacts on these resources. To mitigate potential impacts to bald eagles, the ANG would maintain buffer areas from surface to 1,000 ft AGL within a radius of 0.25 mile from known bald eagle nests, and refrain from flying within these buffers from 1 February through 31 August.

Modification of the Condor 1 and Condor 2 MOAs would have minor negative impacts on air quality and noise, but these impacts would not be significant. When the Proposed Action is combined with the effects on ongoing Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) actions, the cumulative effects on air quality and noise in the area underlying the proposed Condor MOAs would be beneficial. The cumulative effects on air quality and noise would be beneficial because the BRAC action would reduce the number of users in the proposed Condor MOAs; thereby decreasing the number of annual sorties. The sortie

decrease would reduce the occurrence of noise events of 65 dBA. Additionally, the decrease in sorties would decrease the emissions in the proposed Condor MOAs.

Implementation of the Proposed Action would not have a significant impact on the quality of the human or natural environment or generate significant controversy.