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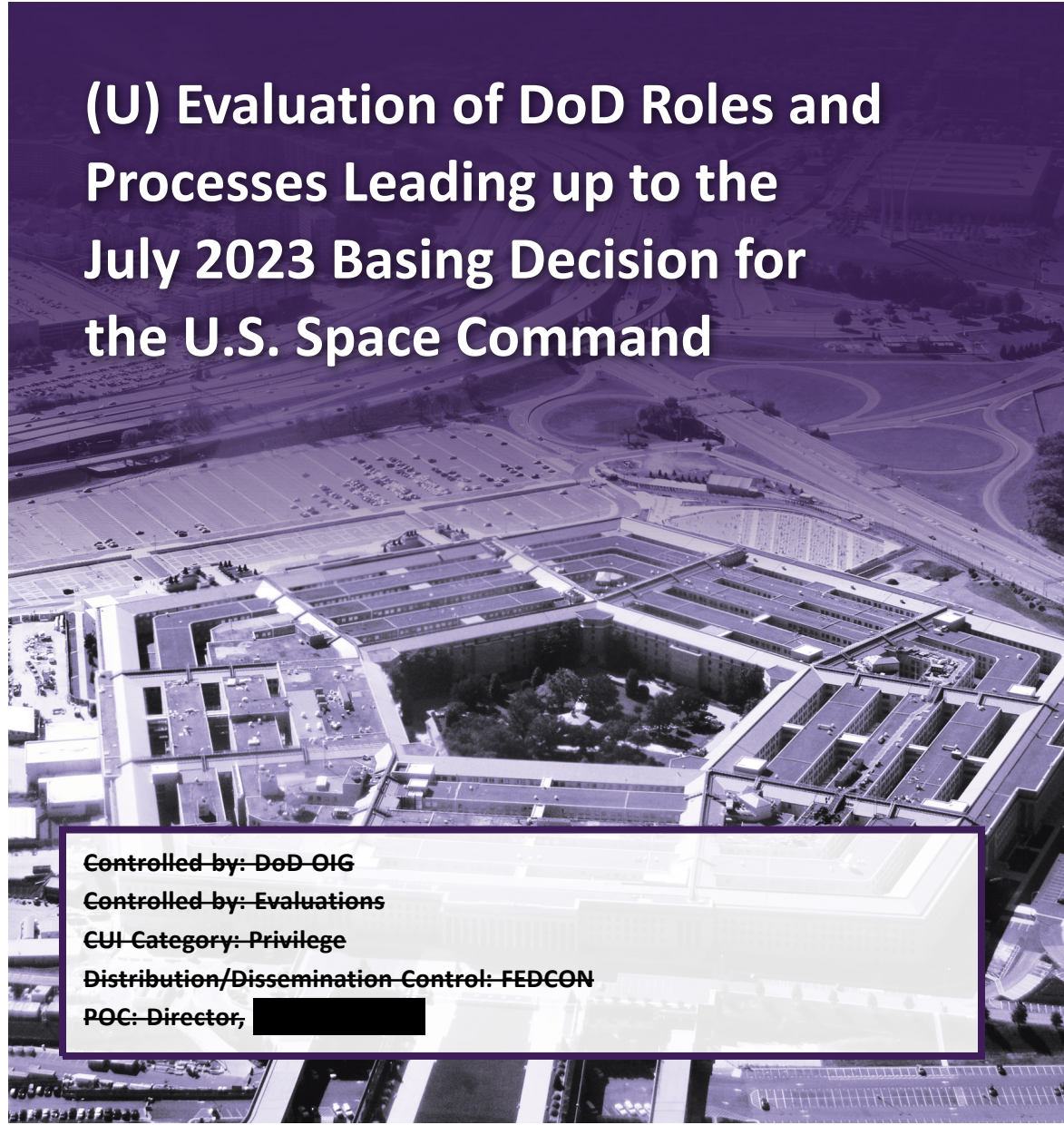
INSPECTOR GENERAL

U.S. Department of Defense

APRIL 11, 2025



(U) Evaluation of DoD Roles and Processes Leading up to the July 2023 Basing Decision for the U.S. Space Command



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(U) Results in Brief

(U) Evaluation of DoD Roles and Processes Leading up to the July 2023 Basing Decision for the U.S. Space Command

April 11, 2025

(U) Objective

(U) The objective of this evaluation was to determine the roles and processes of DoD leadership prior to the decision to base the U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM) headquarters in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

(U) Background

(U) On January 13, 2021, the Secretary of the Air Force (SECAF) announced Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama, as the preferred location for USSPACECOM's permanent headquarters, pending an environmental assessment. Although the Department of the Air Force (DAF) completed the assessment on September 30, 2022, the SECAF never announced a final decision regarding USSPACECOM's permanent headquarters location.

(U) On July 31, 2023, the DoD Press Secretary announced that the President decided, after consulting with the Secretary of Defense and with the input of senior military leaders, that USSPACECOM's permanent headquarters would be at the site of its provisional headquarters in Colorado Springs. In December 2023, the DoD Office of Inspector General received a request from the House Committee on Armed Services to "conduct an investigation" of this decision and was formally tasked in the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2024.

(U) Observations

(U) Between June 2022 and June 2023, the DAF conducted four reviews related to the January 13, 2021 USSPACECOM basing decision. The DAF examined the long-term cost savings of relocating the USSPACECOM headquarters to a permanent location at Redstone Arsenal, as well as the risks to USSPACECOM's readiness during the transition.

(U) Although the SECAF never announced a final decision, DAF documents show that Redstone Arsenal remained the DAF's preferred location for USSPACECOM's permanent headquarters. Additionally, the DAF asserted that USSPACECOM could mitigate the risk to readiness from losing civilian personnel by hiring additional personnel at Redstone Arsenal and phasing the transition to the permanent headquarters.

(U) However, according to officials at Redstone Arsenal and information technology leaders at USSPACECOM, constructing temporary operational facilities with the same capacity, connectivity, and security as those already in use in Colorado Springs would take 3 to 4 years.

(U) The USSPACECOM Commander expressed concerns to the Secretary of Defense and the SECAF about risks to USSPACECOM's readiness. Based on these concerns, the USSPACECOM Commander advised the SECAF and the Secretary of Defense that the USSPACECOM headquarters should permanently remain in Colorado Springs.

(U) While awaiting a decision from the SECAF about the final headquarters location, construction at Redstone Arsenal could not begin, and USSPACECOM continued to approach full operational capability at its provisional headquarters in Colorado Springs. Citing the need to maintain "peak readiness in the space domain," the DoD announced in July 2023 that the President decided the USSPACECOM headquarters would remain permanently in Colorado Springs. On December 15, 2023, the USSPACECOM Commander declared that USSPACECOM achieved full operational capability.

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April 11, 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE
COMMANDER, U.S. SPACE COMMAND

SUBJECT: (U) Evaluation of DoD Roles and Processes Leading up to the July 2023 Basing Decision for the U.S. Space Command (Report No. DODIG-2025-084)

(U) This final report provides the results of the DoD Office of Inspector General's evaluation of the roles and processes of DoD leadership that led to the former Presidents decision in July 2023 to base the U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM) headquarters (HQ) in Colorado Springs, Colorado. We performed this evaluation at the request of the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee and a requirement in section 2889 of the FY 2024 National Defense Authorization Act. We determined:

(U) On January 13, 2021, after a 1-year selection process, the SECAF announced the Redstone Arsenal (RSA) as the preferred location for the USSPACECOM HQ, pending the required environmental assessment (EA), which the (former) SAF/IE signed on September 30, 2022.

(U) In addition to the EA, the (former) SecDef and (former) SECAF directed the DAF to perform additional reviews of the impacts of a relocation on USSPACECOM's HQ, none of which changed the DAF's recommendation to the (former) SECAF for RSA as the permanent HQ location.

(U) Because the (former) SECAF did not make an announcement decision for the transition to RSA to commence, USSPACECOM continued to accelerate its approach of FOC at its provisional HQ location in Colorado Springs.

(U) On July 31, 2023, the DoD Press Secretary announced that the (former) President decided USSPACECOM HQ would permanently remain in Colorado Springs, citing the need to maintain "peak readiness in the space domain."

(U) As discussed in this report, we could not determine why the (former) SECAF did not make an announcement decision for the transition of USSPACECOM HQ from Colorado Springs to RSA.

(U) We appreciate the cooperation and assistance received during the evaluation. If you have any questions, please contact me at [REDACTED]. Thank you and very respectfully,



Randolph R. Stone
Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations
Space, Intelligence, Engineering, and Oversight

cc:

Director, Joint Staff

Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Installations, Environment, and Energy

Secretary of the Air Force Inspector General

Auditor General, Department of the Army

Auditor General, Department of the Navy

Auditor General, Department of the Air Force

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I. (U) Introduction

A. (U) Objective

(U) The objective of this evaluation was to determine the roles and processes of DoD leadership prior to the decision to base the U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM) headquarters (HQ) in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

B. (U) Abbreviated Timeline

(U) On January 15, 2020, the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) established USSPACECOM's provisional HQ in Colorado Springs while the Department of the Air Force (DAF) worked to identify a permanent HQ location. Figure 1 shows USSPACECOM's provisional HQ building at Peterson Space Force Base.



(U) On January 13, 2021, at the conclusion of a second basing action that began on March 25, 2020, the Secretary of the Air Force (SECAF) issued a press release announcing U.S. Army Garrison–Redstone Arsenal (RSA) in Huntsville, Alabama, as the preferred location for the USSPACECOM HQ, pending the completion of an environmental assessment expected in spring 2022.¹ On September 30, 2022, the DAF completed its environmental assessment, which found no significant environmental impact would occur at the RSA or any of the other alternative HQ locations. However, after the DAF completed the environmental assessment, the SECAF did not announce a final decision about USSPACECOM’s permanent HQ location.

(U) On July 31, 2023, the DoD Press Secretary announced that the President decided, after consulting with the SecDef and with the input of senior military leaders, that Colorado Springs would be the permanent location of USSPACECOM HQ. In the announcement, the DoD Press Secretary stated that USSPACECOM HQ remaining at its provisional location in Colorado Springs would ensure “peak readiness in the space domain for our nation during a critical period.”

(U) On December 12, 2023, the DoD Office of Inspector General (DoD OIG) received a letter from the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee requesting that the DoD OIG conduct an “investigation” into the decision to make Colorado Springs the permanent USSPACECOM HQ location instead of the previously announced preferred location of RSA. Section 2889 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024, P.L. 118-31, December 22, 2023, stated that “the Inspector General of the Department of Defense and the Comptroller General of the United States shall complete reviews of the selection announced in July of 2023.” The FY 2024 National Defense Authorization Act further prohibited the DoD from obligating or spending funds to “acquire, construct, plan, or design a new headquarters building for the United States Space Command until June 30, 2024.”²

(U) On February 29, 2024, the DoD OIG announced this evaluation.

¹ (U) The DAF basing decision process is composed of four phases: (1) develop enterprise definitions and criteria, (2) select potential locations, (3) select a preferred location, and (4) make the final decision. Selecting a preferred location is not a final decision; an environmental assessment must be completed before a final basing decision is reached. Air Force Instruction 10-503, “Strategic Basing,” June 12, 2023, provides additional information about selecting a preferred location.

² (U) In a December 12, 2023 email to the DoD OIG, the General Counsel of the House Armed Services Committee clarified the June 30, 2024 deadline in the FY 2024 National Defense Authorization Act. The General Counsel wrote that the deadline was intended to mark the end of the prohibition on USSPACECOM HQ spending. This deadline was not intended to dictate when the DoD OIG should publish this report or complete the evaluation.

C. (U) SecDef and SECAF Interview Requests and Presidential Executive Privilege

(U) As part of this review, we requested to interview the SecDef and SECAF. However, the Office of White House Counsel and DoD Office of General Counsel would not agree to make these officials available for interview without DoD legal counsel present, citing concerns about potentially confidential communications with White House officials or the President that could implicate presidential executive privilege. The former DoD Inspector General decided not to conduct interviews with DoD legal counsel present because the provision of information to the DoD OIG does not constitute a breach of any such privilege and because it might have negatively impacted the DoD OIG's unfettered access to such confidential information. Although we were not able to conduct all of the interviews we requested, we were able to draw conclusions about DAF and USSPACECOM priorities that led to the announcement of the President's decision to select Colorado Springs for the permanent location of USSPACECOM HQ.

II. (U) Background

(U) This part of the report provides background on USSPACECOM's history and its mission, as well as current, real-world threats in space.

A. (U) USSPACECOM: 1985 to Present

(U) USSPACECOM's history in Colorado Springs and as a unified combatant command began 40 years ago. From 1985 to 2002, USSPACECOM HQ was located at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, Colorado. During this time, USSPACECOM was responsible for space-based command and control, communications, surveillance and intelligence, navigation, and weather systems. On October 1, 2002, USSPACECOM was deactivated as a unified combatant command and merged with the U.S. Strategic Command at Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska.

(U) On December 18, 2018, the President re-established USSPACECOM as a unified combatant command. USSPACECOM's mission is to conduct operations in, from, and through space to:

- (U) deter conflict,
- (U) defeat aggression,
- (U) deliver space combat power for the joint and combined force, and
- (U) defend U.S. vital interests with allies and partners.

(U) The Armed Forces depend on space capabilities for global communication, command and control of nuclear forces, and precision targeting and attack.³ In addition, space capabilities also provide the military with global navigation, missile defense, and persistent battlefield awareness.

(U) DoD Directive 3100.10, "Space Policy," assigns the USSPACECOM Commander responsibility for formulating, implementing, and conducting space-related activities that support national security objectives and policies established by the President.⁴ DoD Directive 3100.10 further states that the USSPACECOM Commander executes space-related responsibilities across the DoD to ensure consistency with national space policies. DoD and DAF policies do not define a role for the USSPACECOM Commander in the basing decision process or the corresponding environmental assessment.

³ (U) U.S. Space Force, "Space Force 101," accessed October 28, 2024, https://www.spaceforce.mil/Portals/2/Documents/SF101/ussf_101_glossy_FINAL_e-version.pdf.

⁴ (U) DoD Directive 3100.10, "Space Policy," August 30, 2022.

B. (U) DAF Basing Actions for USSPACECOM: 2019 to 2020

(U) On December 19, 2018, the DAF initiated a basing action to determine USSPACECOM's permanent HQ location, in accordance with the DAF's strategic basing process. The SECAF approved six candidate locations, including RSA and Peterson Space Force Base (then known as Peterson Air Force Base). According to the DoD OIG's "Evaluation of the Air Force Selection Process for the Permanent Location of the U.S. Space Command Headquarters," (USSPACECOM 2022) this 2019 basing action did not result in the announcement of a preferred location.⁵

(U) In an April 15, 2019 memorandum, the official performing the duties of the Deputy SecDef designated the SECAF as the interim combatant command support agent for USSPACECOM, responsible for providing USSPACECOM with administrative and logistical support.⁶

(U) The USSPACECOM 2022 report further stated that on March 25, 2020, at the direction of the SecDef, the SECAF initiated a second basing action that was based on what the SecDef described as a "different approach." Specifically, the SecDef stated that this new approach was intended to "earn the public's confidence in the site selected for the USSPACECOM permanent HQ."⁷ On January 12, 2021, the SECAF identified RSA as the preferred permanent location for USSPACECOM HQ and described five other candidate locations, including Peterson Space Force Base in Colorado Springs, as reasonable alternatives. The SECAF issued a press release the next day announcing this decision. The DoD OIG concluded in its USSPACECOM 2022 report that this decision process, which resulted in the selection of RSA as the preferred location, was reasonable.

⁵ (U) DoD OIG, "Evaluation of the Air Force Selection Process for the Permanent Location of the U.S. Space Command Headquarters," Report No. DoDIG-2022-096, May 11, 2022.

⁶ (U) Air Force Instruction 25-202, "Support of the Headquarters of Unified Combatant Commands and Subordinate Unified Combatant Commands," April 20, 2023, defines a combatant command support agent as the Military Department secretary, assigned by either the SecDef or the Deputy SecDef, who provides the combatant command's administrative and logistical support in accordance with DoD Directive 5100.03, "Support of the Headquarters of Combatant and Subordinate Unified Commands," February 9, 2011 (Incorporating Change 1, September 7, 2017).

⁷ (U) DAF personnel stated in their comments to this report that they viewed the process as a single basing action that was revised at a specific time based on then-SecDef direction. The DAF does not view that process revision as a separate basing action.

C. (U) DAF Environmental Assessment: 2021 to 2022

(U) According to the official website of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Energy, Installations, and Environment)(SAF/IE), the SAF/IE has overall responsibility for the installation strategy and strategic basing processes of the DAF. The Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Installations)(SAF/IEI), who is subordinate to the SAF/IE, leads the Installations Directorate. According to Department of the Air Force Instruction 10-503, the SAF/IEI is responsible for providing the DAF with strategic basing policy and guidance.⁸ This instruction also states that the SAF/IEI ensures the DAF strategic basing process is standard, repeatable, transparent, and deliberate. Additionally, the SAF/IEI coordinates and presents basing actions to the SECAF or their delegated approval authority for approval as required.

(U) Department of the Air Force Instruction 10-503 requires that an environmental assessment immediately follow the preferred location selection. The strategic basing process also includes a cost comparison, including any cost growth not documented in the preferred location phase. The SECAF, or delegated authority, can announce a final basing decision after reviewing the environmental assessment and cost comparison and considering additional information, such as the commander's best military advice.

(U) According to the USSPACECOM 2022 report, the DAF previously initiated an environmental assessment of candidate locations as part of the 2019 basing action and concluded on November 7, 2019, that five candidate locations could serve as permanent HQ locations.⁹ As part of the 2020 basing action and following the selection of RSA as the preferred location, the DAF completed a second environmental assessment, which was finalized in September 2022.

(U) In July 2021, the DAF completed its preliminary draft of the environmental assessment and issued a Finding of No Significant Impact on the environment resulting from the proposed construction.¹⁰ USSPACECOM personnel provided the draft to RSA personnel on August 4, 2021.

⁸ (U) The 2023 Department of the Air Force Instruction 10-503 supersedes the 2020 version of the same instruction, which was in effect during the USSPACECOM basing actions. The responsibilities of the SAF/IE and SAF/IEI and the requirement for an environmental assessment, as outlined in the 2020 instruction, were the same as described here and remain the same in the 2023 instruction.

⁹ (U) The USSPACECOM 2022 report details this environmental assessment.

¹⁰ (U) According to 32 C.F.R. part 989, the Finding of No Significant Impact provides the environmental assessment and briefly describes why an action would not have a significant effect on the environment.

(U) On January 10, 2022, RSA officials received email notification about the environmental assessment suspension. According to the DAF Deputy General Counsel (Installations, Energy, and Environment), the SAF/IE suspended the environmental assessment while awaiting publication of the USSPACECOM 2022 report and a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report.¹¹

(U) In a May 4, 2022 memorandum from the SecDef to the SECAF, the SecDef stated that, as the combatant command support agent for USSPACECOM, the SECAF was responsible for selecting a permanent location for USSPACECOM HQ. In accordance with DoD Directive 5100.03, unresolved concerns about the HQ would be elevated to the SecDef.

(U) In a June 30, 2022 memorandum, the SECAF directed the SAF/IE to conduct a review of the impacts of relocating USSPACECOM HQ on USSPACECOM's pursuit of full operational capability (FOC) and to validate the DAF Basing Office's analysis of childcare, housing affordability, and access to military and veteran support at the locations being considered for USSPACECOM HQ. In the memorandum, the SECAF established a suspense date of August 31, 2022, for the SAF/IE to complete the review. Additionally, the SECAF stated in the memorandum that, on completion of this review and the environmental assessment due on September 30, 2022, they would decide the permanent location for USSPACECOM HQ.

(U) In a July 12, 2022 email, the DAF Director of Strategic Basing, on behalf of the Deputy SAF/IE, requested that the installation commanders of RSA (and the commanders of the other five alternate locations) provide an update on infrastructure and facilities available to support USSPACECOM HQ. In that July 12, 2022 email, the Director of Strategic Basing wrote that the SAF/IE anticipated that the SECAF would make a final decision about the permanent location of USSPACECOM HQ in fall 2022.

(U) On September 30, 2022, the SAF/IE issued the report, "Final Environmental Assessment: U.S. Space Command Establishment of Permanent Headquarters" and a Finding of No Significant Impact to the environment. The report stated that establishing USSPACECOM HQ would not have a significant environmental impact at any of the six sites included in the assessment.¹² The SECAF did not announce a final decision on the USSPACECOM HQ permanent location following the completion of the environmental assessment.

¹¹ (U) GAO, "U.S. Space Command Air Force Should Develop Guidance for Strengthening Future Basing Decisions," Report No. 22-106055, June 2, 2022.

¹² (U) According to 32 C.F.R. part 989, the Air Force must analyze reasonable alternatives to the proposed action and the "no action" alternative in all environmental assessments. Reasonable alternatives are those that meet the purpose and need for the proposed action, in this case hosting USSPACECOM's permanent HQ.

(U) The six sites included Huntsville, Alabama (RSA); Albuquerque, New Mexico (Kirtland Air Force Base); Bellevue, Nebraska (Offutt Air Force Base); Colorado Springs, Colorado (Peterson Space Force Base); San Antonio, Texas (Port San Antonio); and Brevard County, Florida (Space Coast Spaceport).

D. (U) Real World Threats in Space

(U) USSPACECOM's mission includes defending U.S. vital interests with allies and partners. The 2023 DoD Annual Report to Congress states that the goal of the People's Republic of China (PRC) is to modernize its military by 2027.¹³ The annual report states that the PRC "views space superiority, the ability to control the space-enabled information sphere and to deny adversaries their own space-based information gathering and communication capabilities, as critical mechanisms to conduct modern warfare."

(U) In an April 25, 2023 memorandum to the SECDEF, the USSPACECOM Commander stated:

(U) We are in a critical and strategic competition; especially with our pacing threat, the People's Republic of China (PRC). The PRC is working toward overmatch in space to gain military and economic benefits we have enjoyed for decades. The overall goal of the PRC is to field a military by 2027 designed to deter United States intervention in a future cross-Strait crisis. The PRC's space program has been a personal focus for President Xi and a symbol of their great power status. We cannot afford to lose any time or effectiveness against this threat.

¹³ (U) DoD Annual Report to Congress, "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China: 2023," October 26, 2022.

III. (U) Chronology of Events

(U) Table 1 provides a chronological list of events related to the USSPACECOM permanent HQ location decision, beginning with the announcement of RSA as the preferred location for USSPACECOM's permanent HQ on January 13, 2021, through the DoD's July 31, 2023 announcement of the President's decision that USSPACECOM HQ would permanently remain at its provisional location in Colorado Springs.

(U) Table 1. Chronology of Events: January 13, 2021, Through July 31, 2023

(CUI) Date	Event
(U) January 13, 2021	(U) The SECAF announced RSA as the preferred location for USSPACECOM's permanent HQ.
(U) August 1, 2021	(U) USSPACECOM opened the first additional leased facility in Colorado Springs (Newport).
(U) August 24, 2021	(U) USSPACECOM announced it achieved initial operational capability at its provisional HQ in Colorado Springs.
(U) February 20, 2022	(U) USSPACECOM opened a second leased facility in Colorado Springs (Bayfield).
(U) May 4, 2022	(U) The SecDef directed the SECAF to conduct a review of concerns about USSPACECOM achieving FOC, consistent with the recommendation in the May 2022 DoD OIG USSPACECOM report.*
(U) May 11, 2022	(U) The DoD OIG issued the USSPACECOM 2022 report.
(U) June 2, 2022	(U) The GAO issued "U.S Space Command, Air Force Should Develop Guidance for Strengthening Future Basing Decisions," Report No. 22-106055.
(U) June 21, 2022	(U) RSA officials received an updated draft environmental assessment and a Finding of No Significant Impact.
(U) June 30, 2022	(U) The SECAF directed the SAF/IE to conduct the reviews that the DoD OIG and GAO recommended.
(U) August 17, 2022	(U) The DAF completed a sensitivity analysis of cost variables (GAO recommendation) and determined that the overall decision was not sensitive to those particular variables.
(U) August 22, 2022	(CUI) [REDACTED]
(U) September 20, 2022	(U) The DAF completed the environmental assessment and issued a Finding of No Significant Impact for all proposed alternative sites for USSPACECOM HQ.
(U) September 30, 2022	(U) The SAF/IE signed the completed environmental assessment. (CUI)

(U) Table 1. Chronology of Events: January 13, 2021, Through July 31, 2023 (cont'd)

(CUI) Date	Event
(U) December 5, 2022	(U) The SAF/IE prepared a briefing for the SECAF recommending RSA as the permanent USSPACECOM HQ and accepting relocation-related risk.
(U) January 2023	(U) The SAF/IE initiated a review of economic trends at alternative locations.
(U) January 27, 2023	(U) Communications between USSPACECOM and RSA about HQ construction stopped.
(U) February 16, 2023	(U) The SAF/IE completed the review of economic trends at alternative locations.
(U) April 3, 2023	(U) The SecDef met with the SECAF and USSPACECOM Commander and suggested evaluating the USSPACECOM Commander's concerns about the risk of relocating from Colorado Springs.
(U) April 7, 2023	(U) The SECAF requested updated HQ facility requirements from the USSPACECOM Commander.
(U) April 13, 2023	(CUI) [REDACTED]
(U) April 25, 2023	(U) The USSPACECOM Commander sent a memorandum to the SECAF recommending that Colorado Springs be named the final permanent location for USSPACECOM HQ.
(U) May 18, 2023	(U) The SECAF sent a memorandum to the SAF/IE to review the USSPACECOM facility requirements, potential risk mitigation measures, and USSPACECOM's projected operational readiness during a transition.
(U) June 11, 2023	(U) The SAF/IE sent a memorandum to the SECAF about the USSPACECOM HQ basing decision, stating that Huntsville, Alabama, is the recommended location for the permanent USSPACECOM HQ.
(U) June 12, 2023	(CUI) [REDACTED]
(U) June 2023	(U) The SECAF briefed the SecDef and National Security Advisor of the results of the DAF's review.
(U) June 30, 2023	(U) The DAF produced the "HQ USSPACECOM Basing Decision Update" presentation, which states that RSA remained the preferred location based on previously approved decision criteria.
(U) July 31, 2023	(U) The DoD announced that the President selected Colorado Springs as the permanent location of USSPACECOM HQ. (CUI)

* (U) DoD OIG, "Evaluation of the Air Force 2020 Basing Action Process for the Permanent Location of the U.S. Space Command Headquarters," Report No. DODIG-2022-096, May 11, 2022.

(U) Source: The DoD OIG.

IV. (U) Summary of DAF Reviews of the Location Selection Criteria for Permanent Headquarters

(U) Between June 2022 and June 2023, the SAF/IE conducted four reviews—two concurrently with the environmental assessment and two after the environmental assessment was completed and signed.¹⁴ The SECAF directed the four reviews to address concerns raised by DoD stakeholders, including the SecDef and USSPACECOM Commander, and recommendations from the DoD OIG USSPACECOM 2022 report and GAO USSPACECOM report.¹⁵ In each of these four reviews, RSA remained the DAF's preferred location for USSPACECOM HQ. While awaiting a final basing decision from the SECAF, USSPACECOM continued to approach FOC at its provisional HQ in Colorado Springs, achieving FOC in December 2023.

(U) The SAF/IE performed the following reviews.

- (U) Impact of Relocation on USSPACECOM FOC
- (U) Sensitivity Analysis of Cost Variables
- (U) Economic Trends and Community Impact¹⁶
- (U) USSPACECOM Facilities Requirements and Relocation Risk Mitigation

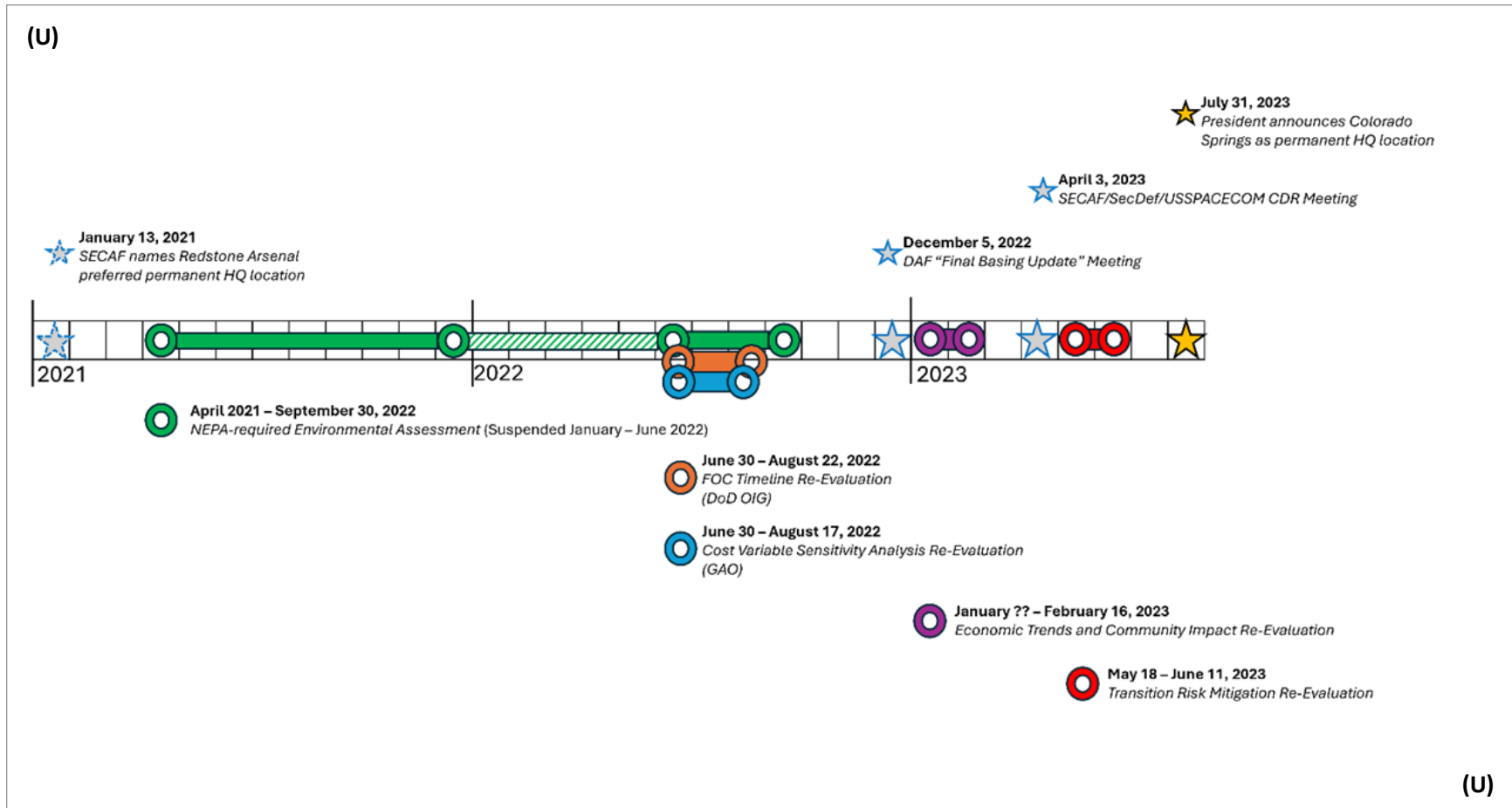
(U) Figure 2 shows the overlapping timelines of these reviews.

¹⁴ (U) The DAF characterized these reviews as occurring in three phases, not four as described in this report.

¹⁵ (U) In this report, we discuss reviews that the SAF/IE conducted at the SECAF's request and on behalf of the DAF (referred to as DAF reviews).

¹⁶ (U) We were unable to verify if the SECAF directed the economic trends and community impact review that the SAF/IE conducted in January 2023. DAF personnel did not provide a memorandum, and the SAF/IE described this review as additional information gathered and reviewed in one of the three phases of reviews.

(U) Figure 2. Timeline of DAF Reviews



(U) LEGEND

(U) CDR Commander

(U) NEPA National Environmental Policy Act

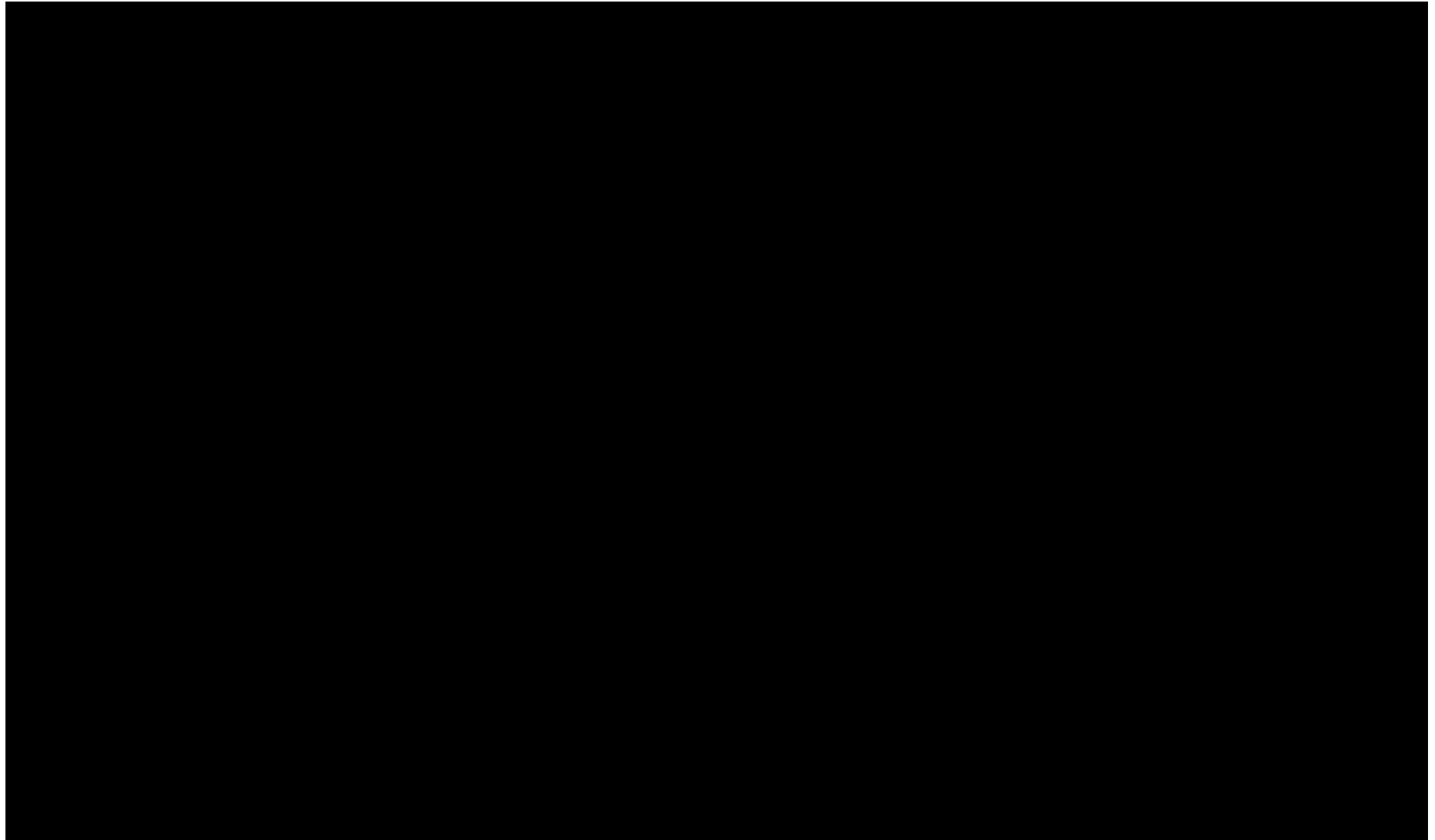
(U) Source: The DoD OIG.

A. (U) Impact of Relocation on the Full Operational Capacity of USSPACECOM

~~(CUI)~~ In the first review, which focused on the impacts to FOC directed in a May 4, 2022 memorandum from the SecDef to the SECAF (see Figure 3), [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] However, the one-time cost for moving to RSA was \$426 million less than remaining in Colorado Springs because of lower personnel costs and construction savings.

(U) Figure 3. DAF Assessment of Tradeoffs Between Costs, Timelines, and Considerations



(U) LEGEND

(U) CIVPERS Commander

(U) MILCON National Environmental Policy Act

(U) Source: The DAF.

B. (U) SAF/IE Sensitivity Analysis of Cost Variables

(U) The second SAF/IE review, completed on August 17, 2022, was a sensitivity analysis recommended in the GAO's June 2022 USSPACECOM report. The SAF/IE tested the sensitivity of the overall ranking of alternative locations to changes to three variables: (1) daily drive time for personnel, (2) differences in one-time costs, and (3) annually recurring costs.

(U) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]¹⁷

(U) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

C. (U) Economic Trends and Community Impact

(U) The SAF/IE's review, "USSPACECOM HQ Final Decision 2023 Supporting Materials," summarized the third review, which was an additional review of costs, including one-time and recurring costs, and community impacts.¹⁹ The SAF/IE's review found that the presence or absence of right-to-work laws and the long-term community forecasts appeared to have little impact on cost considerations associated with the USSPACECOM HQ basing action.²⁰ The document reiterated that RSA was the highest-scoring location based on the weighted analysis of decision factors, citing specifically that RSA presented the lowest one-time and recurring costs.

¹⁷ (U) The DAF sensitivity analysis included the use of a "Monte Carlo simulation" to test the impact of changes to the values of specific variables for each alternative location on the overall ranking. The GAO Cost Estimating and Assessment Guide defines a Monte Carlo situation as a technique that randomly generates values for uncertain variables multiple times to simulate a model and repeats this random selection thousands of times to generate a range of possible program costs.

¹⁸ (U) [REDACTED]

¹⁹ (U) [REDACTED]

²⁰ (U) These six alternative communities are the same as those assessed for the environmental assessment: Colorado Springs, Colorado; San Antonio, Texas; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Bellevue, Nebraska; and Brevard County, Florida.

D. (U) USSPACECOM Facility Requirements and Relocation Risk Mitigation

(CUI) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

(U) The USSPACECOM Commander told us that on April 3, 2023, he met with the SECAF and later that day with the SecDef and the SECAF. He told us that in the meeting with the SECAF, the SECAF stated to him that the DAF was “moving forward with Huntsville [RSA] as the recommendation.” The USSPACECOM Commander told us that he advised the SecDef that “the USSPACECOM HQ should remain in Colorado Springs.” The USSPACECOM Commander told us that the SecDef said, “We need to look into what he [the USSPACECOM Commander] is talking about.”

(CUI) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

(CUI) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

- (CUI) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- (CUI) [REDACTED]d
- (CUI) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

(U) That same day, the SECAF sent a memorandum to the SecDef informing him that he ordered this additional review to “delve further” into the risks to operational capability related to relocating from Colorado Springs and the availability of measures to mitigate those risks.

(U) In a June 11, 2023 memorandum from the SAF/IE to the SECAF, the SAF/IE documented a staff visit to Colorado Springs from May 30, 2023, to June 2, 2023. The SAF/IE informed the SECAF that they completed their review of USSPACECOM’s requirements, risks to relocation, and potential mitigation measures. The SAF/IE noted that USSPACECOM’s analysis indicated significant operational risk with a relocation. However, the SAF/IE stated that USSPACECOM could significantly reduce the negative impact on operational capability during a transition to the permanent location by implementing the SAF/IE-proposed mitigation measures. Lastly, the SAF/IE Principal Deputy Assistant stated that they recommended RSA as the permanent location for USSPACECOM HQ.

(U) In a testimony before the House Armed Services Committee on September 28, 2023, the SECAF stated, “After being informed that the President would make the final decision, I briefed the Secretary of Defense and the National Security Advisor on the results of the DAF’s review in June 2023.” The SECAF further stated, “My assessment was that the projected cost savings, together with the availability of potential mitigation measures, outweighed the operational risks that had been identified. As the Combatant Commander for USSPACECOM, General Dickinson assessed these considerations differently.” The following section contains our analysis of the DAF and USSPACECOM risk assessments associated with moving USSPACECOM to RSA and the DAF’s proposed approach to mitigate that risk.

V. (U) Analysis of the Relocation Risk Assessments of the DAF and USSPACECOM

~~(CUI)~~ The DAF and USSPACECOM differed in their risk assessments and risk mitigation approaches for the relocation of USSPACECOM HQ. USSPACECOM risk assessments focused on maintaining FOC, whereas the SAF/IE, on behalf of the DAF, stated [REDACTED]. Although USSPACECOM considered the SAF/IE risk mitigation measures, it did not agree with the SAF/IE's analysis and continued its progress towards FOC at its temporary HQ while awaiting a final decision on relocation. In assessing the risks to moving USSPACECOM HQ, the DAF considered the status of temporary facilities and USSPACECOM concerns about the impact on operational capabilities of a relocation given the real-world threats in space mentioned in Part I.

A. (U) USSPACECOM Temporary Operational Facilities

~~(CUI)~~ [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

(U) Achieving the same functionality at RSA would take significantly more time. The Director of Public Works at RSA stated that RSA made 316 workstations available in existing RSA facilities for USSPACECOM HQ personnel when RSA was named the preferred location in January 2021, but these workstations were intended for transition planning and did not have the access to classified networks required to perform mission operations. Similarly, the RSA Director of Public Works told us RSA had planned for the construction of temporary operational facilities for USSPACECOM while awaiting the construction of its permanent building, but construction would take 16 to 18 months following a final decision that RSA would be the permanent HQ location.²¹

²¹ (U) The DAF estimated the completion of military construction of permanent HQ facilities to occur in 2031 for all potential sites, including Colorado Springs and RSA.

(~~CUI~~) USSPACECOM Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Cyber Directorate (J6) personnel told us that, [REDACTED]

(U) We concluded that, based on information the RSA Director of Public Works and USSPACECOM J6 personnel provided us, building temporary operational facilities and mission-critical information technology networks at RSA could take 3 to 4 years after a final permanent HQ location decision.

B. (U) Relocation Risk Assessment and Proposed Mitigation Measures

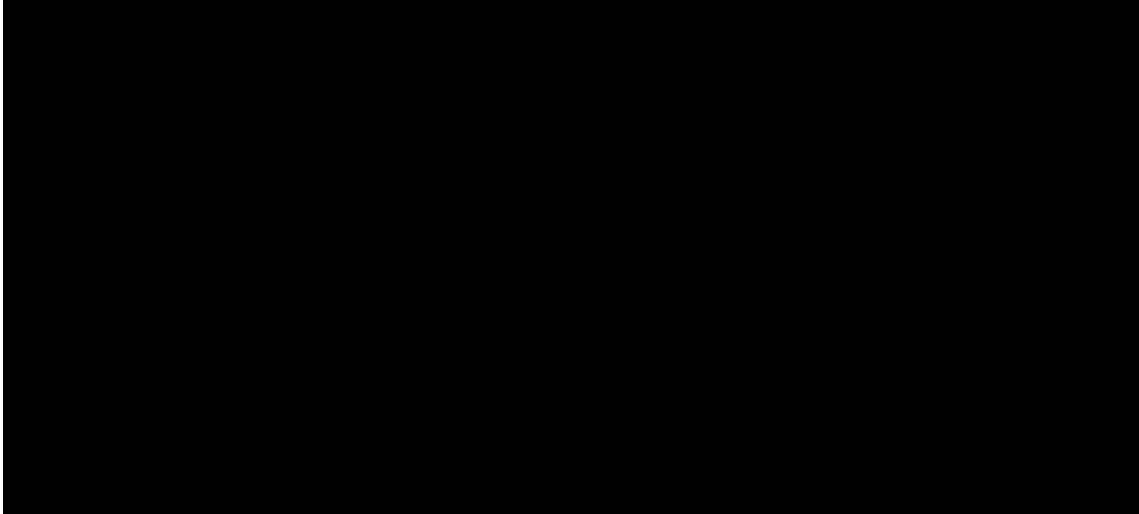
(~~CUI~~) In its risk assessment, USSPACECOM focused on maintaining FOC and avoiding the loss of civilian personnel in Colorado Springs while the DAF developed an approach to mitigate the operational risks associated with moving USSPACECOM HQ. [REDACTED]

1. (U) USSPACECOM Relocation Risk Assessment

(~~CUI~~) On June 3, 2022, USSPACECOM personnel presented to the USSPACECOM Commander a document titled "USSPACECOM HQ FOC Criteria and Assessment."

(~~CUI~~) [REDACTED]

(U) Figure 4. USSPACECOM Projected Impact of Headquarters Relocation on USSPACECOM Readiness



(U) LEGEND

(U) IOC Initial Operational Capability

(U) Source: USSPACECOM HQ FOC Criteria and Assessment, March 31, 2023.

(U) In an April 25, 2023 memorandum from the USSPACECOM Commander to the SECAF, the Commander advised that the USSPACECOM HQ should remain in Colorado Springs and laid out the considerations that drove his recommendation. The USSPACECOM Commander stated, “Mission success is highly dependent on human capital and infrastructure,” and he noted, “there is risk that most of the 1,000 civilians, contractors, and reservists will not relocate to another location.” However, according to the director for the USSPACECOM Human Capital Directorate (J1), to avoid frightening USSPACECOM employees, USSPACECOM did not conduct any formal surveys to determine how many civilian personnel would relocate to a different HQ location.

(U) A division chief within the USSPACECOM Plans and Policy Directorate (J5) told us in a May 2024 interview that their worst fear was that the announcement of a relocation would accelerate staff departures and that the USSPACECOM J5 could potentially lose 90 percent of its best people for other opportunities in Colorado Springs. Echoing this fear, a representative of USSPACECOM’s Satellite Communications Directorate (J36) told us in a May 2024 interview that, based on conversations with their team, they could say “with certainty” only 1 of 25 civilian employees in the J36 would relocate to a new HQ location.

2. (U) The DAF-Proposed Relocation Risk Mitigation Measures

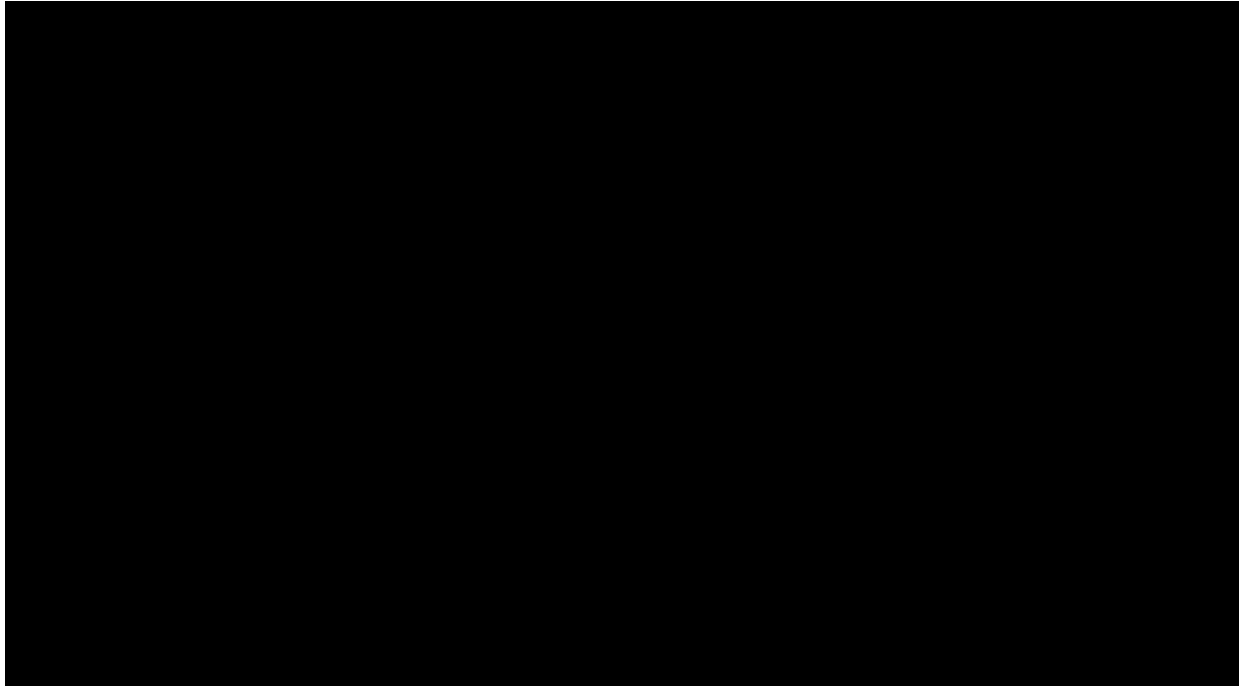
(U) In a May 18, 2023 memorandum, the SECAF directed the SAF/IE to evaluate concerns about operational capability presented in the USSPACECOM Commander's April 25, 2023 memorandum to the SECAF. In a June 11, 2023 memorandum from the SAF/IE to the SECAF, the SAF/IE summarized their site visit to the USSPACECOM provisional HQ in Colorado Springs. In this memorandum, the SAF/IE stated that USSPACECOM did not consider available mitigation measures to minimize impact to operational capability during a transition from its provisional location to its permanent location.

(CUI) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

- (CUI) [REDACTED]
- (CUI) [REDACTED]
- (CUI) [REDACTED]
- (CUI) [REDACTED]
- (CUI) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

(CUI) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

(U) Figure 5. DAF-Projected Impact of Headquarters Relocation on USSPACECOM Readiness



(U) LEGEND

(U) IOC Initial Operational Capability

(U) MILCON Military Construction

(U) RC Reserve Component

(U) UMD Unit Manpower Document

(U) USSTRATCOM U.S. Strategic Command

(U) Source: The DAF.

3. (U) USSPACECOM Considered the DAF Risk Mitigation Measures

(U) In the June 11, 2023 memorandum, the SAF/IE told the SECAF that USSPACECOM's assessments of the risks of relocating USSPACECOM HQ from its provisional location did not include a consideration of the DAF's proposed risk mitigation measures. The SAF/IE's proposed measures assumed that USSPACECOM would not experience significant civilian personnel loss until the actual relocation to RSA began in 2030. However, based on interviews we conducted in April and May 2024, we determined that USSPACECOM leaders did consider the SAF/IE's proposed risk mitigation measures. USSPACECOM leaders differed with the SAF/IE's assumption that civilian personnel would wait for the actual relocation to RSA to begin before leaving their positions. USSPACECOM leaders predicted that civilian personnel would leave their positions as soon as the SECAF announced RSA as the permanent HQ location, which would impact USSPACECOM's ability to perform its mission.

(U) The DAF proposed that USSPACECOM could mitigate the loss of civilian personnel by authorizing overhires in both Colorado Springs and at RSA. However, the director of the USSPACECOM Human Capital Directorate told us that hiring additional staff would be challenging considering the difficulties USSPACECOM experienced filling its authorized civilian positions. USSPACECOM personnel reports show that USSPACECOM's HQ civilian staff grew by only 287 employees over 3 years, from 126 civilian employees in January 2021 to 413 employees in July 2023. The Chief of Staff of the USSPACECOM Operations Directorate (J3) told us that USSPACECOM struggled to recruit candidates with the specific skills it needs most and attributed that, at least in part, to the possibility of relocation.

(U) The USSPACECOM J1 told us that USSPACECOM could replace employees vacating their positions in Colorado Springs with RSA new hires in a phased transition. However, as discussed earlier in the report, temporary facilities with full access to the same mission-critical networks available in Colorado Springs would not be ready for 3 to 4 years at RSA.

VI. (U) Conclusion

(U) On January 13, 2021, after a 1-year selection process, the SECAF announced RSA as the preferred location for the USSPACECOM HQ, pending the required environmental assessment, which the SAF/IE signed on September 30, 2022. In addition to the environmental assessment and a SecDef-directed review of the impacts of a relocation on USSPACECOM's achievement of FOC, the SECAF directed reviews of costs and risks associated with relocating to the preferred location and revalidated the functional requirements underlying the basing action. These reviews confirmed the SAF/IE's preference for RSA as the permanent HQ location. In these reviews, the DAF acknowledged risks to readiness inherent to moving the HQ from its provisional location to RSA but balanced that risk, which they proposed could be mitigated, against the \$426 million cost advantage of RSA.

(U) DAF officials described the cost to the taxpayer as the "primary driver" of its preference for RSA as the permanent location for USSPACECOM's permanent HQ while USSPACECOM leadership prioritized minimizing the risk to readiness. Both the DAF and USSPACECOM acknowledged that the 2025 to 2029 timeframe represents a critical period relative to the threat in space the PRC poses. The DAF acknowledged that relocation from USSPACECOM's provisional HQ location presented a risk to readiness if civilian personnel did not relocate with the Command. However, the DAF asserted that USSPACECOM could mitigate that risk.

(U) The USSPACECOM Commander told us that he prioritized operational risk when providing his best military advice to the SecDef and SECAF. USSPACECOM assessed that its readiness would begin to be negatively affected by a loss of civilian personnel following the announcement of a relocation from Colorado Springs. USSPACECOM leadership anticipated that the loss of civilian personnel might occur much sooner than the DAF predicted and that USSPACECOM would be unable to secure the manpower investments needed to mitigate the impact of that loss on the Command's readiness. Further, based on information from RSA and USSPACECOM officials, constructing temporary operational facilities and re-establishing secure, mission-critical networks at RSA would take 3 to 4 years following a final basing decision.

(U) From the SECAF's announcement of RSA as the preferred location on January 13, 2021, through June 30, 2023, RSA remained the DAF's preference for USSPACECOM's permanent HQ location. However, following the required environmental assessment and subsequent additional reviews of decision criteria, the SECAF did not announce a final location decision.

(U) A final location decision by the SECAF would have allowed USSPACECOM to begin the process of relocating to RSA. However, USSPACECOM continued to accelerate its approach of FOC at its provisional HQ location in Colorado Springs. On July 31, 2023, the DoD Press Secretary announced that the President decided USSPACECOM HQ would permanently remain in Colorado Springs, citing the need to maintain “peak readiness in the space domain.” On December 15, 2023, the USSPACECOM Commander declared that USSPACECOM achieved FOC.

(U) As discussed earlier in the report, we did not interview the SECAF and SecDef because the Office of White House Counsel and DoD Office of General Counsel would not agree to make these officials available for interview without DoD legal counsel present, citing concerns about potentially confidential communications that could implicate presidential executive privilege. The former DoD Inspector General rejected this proposed restriction and declined to permit DoD legal counsel to participate in the interviews because the provision of information to the DoD OIG does not constitute a breach of any such privilege and because it might have negatively impacted the DoD OIG’s unfettered access to such confidential information. Without interviewing the SECAF, we could not determine why he did not use the authority delegated to him by the SecDef to make and announce a final decision on the permanent location of USSPACECOM HQ. Lastly, without interviewing the SecDef, we were unable to fully determine his role in the USSPACECOM HQ relocation decision process. Although we were not able to conduct all of the interviews we requested, we were able to draw conclusions about DAF and USSPACECOM priorities that led to the announcement of the President’s decision to select Colorado Springs for the permanent location of USSPACECOM HQ.

(U) Appendix A

(U) Scope and Methodology

(U) We conducted this evaluation from February 2024 through December 2024 in accordance with the “Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation,” published in December 2020 by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. Those standards require that we adequately plan the evaluation to ensure that objectives are met and that we perform the evaluation to obtain sufficient, competent, and relevant evidence to support the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. We believe that the evidence obtained was sufficient, competent, and relevant to lead a reasonable person to sustain the findings and conclusions.

(U) To accomplish the objective, we reviewed September 28, 2023 House Armed Services Committee testimony from the SECAF and former USSPACECOM Commander.

(U) We reviewed documentation, including draft and other pre-decisional presentation slides, of DAF-conducted decision analyses, reviews, and re-evaluations, some of which the House Armed Services Committee provided. We also reviewed readiness reports and status updates produced by USSPACECOM personnel on USSPACECOM’s pursuit of FOC and communications between the RSA’s Director of Public Works and the DAF related to the conduct of the National Environmental Policy Act-required environmental assessment. In addition, we interviewed the following DoD officials.

- (U) Deputy General Counsel, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Installations and the Environment)
- (U) USSPACECOM Commander (former)
- (U) USSPACECOM Deputy Commander
- (U) directors, chiefs of staff, and division and branch chiefs from six USSPACECOM joint directorates

(U) We requested but were unable to conduct (for reasons discussed in the report) interviews with the:

- (U) Secretary of Defense,
- (U) Secretary of the Air Force, and
- (U) then Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Energy, Installations, and Environment).

(U) We conducted site visits to USSPACECOM HQ in Colorado Springs and to RSA in Huntsville, Alabama, to observe the facilities USSPACECOM and two of its subordinate commands use. We also gained an understanding of their facility requirements and saw the spaces allocated for military construction of permanent HQ facilities at both locations. Specifically, we visited:

- (U) Peterson Space Force Base, Colorado Springs, Colorado;
- (U) Schriever Space Force Base, Colorado Springs, Colorado;
- (U) USSPACECOM's "Newport" facility, Colorado Springs, Colorado;
- (U) USSPACECOM's "Bayfield" facility, Colorado Springs, Colorado; and
- (U) RSA, Huntsville, Alabama.

(U) Use of Computer-Processed Data

(U) We assessed the reliability of computer-processed data USSPACECOM provided, specifically staffing reports detailing the number of USSPACECOM employees over time, through interviews with USSPACECOM staff who were responsible for producing those reports and accountable for personnel acquisition, development, and retention.

(U) Prior Coverage

(U) During the last 5 years, the DoD OIG and GAO issued two reports discussing the permanent HQ location for USSPACECOM. Unrestricted DoD OIG reports can be accessed at <http://www.dodig.mil/reports.html>. Unrestricted GAO reports can be accessed at <http://www.gao.gov>.

(U) DoD OIG

(U) "Evaluation of the Air Force Selection Process for the Permanent Location of the U.S. Space Command Headquarters," Report No. DODIG-2022-096, May 11, 2022

(U) The DoD OIG determined that the 2020 basing action process, directed by the SecDef, was reasonable and complied with Federal law and DoD policy. Additionally, the DAF complied with the SecDef's requirements for the 2020 basing action. However, basing office personnel did not fully comply with DAF record-retention requirements in Air Force Instruction 33-322, "Records Management and Information Governance Program."²²

²² (U) Department of the Air Force Instruction 33-322, "Records Management and Information Governance Program," March 23, 2020 (Incorporating Change 1, July 28, 2021).

(U) GAO

(U) “U.S. Space Command Air Force Should Develop Guidance for Strengthening Future Basing Decisions,” Report No. GAO-22-106055, June 2022

(U) The GAO determined that, from December 2018 through early March 2020, the Air Force largely followed its established strategic basing process to determine the preferred location for USSPACECOM HQ. From early March 2020 through January 2021, the DAF implemented a revised, three-phased process at the direction of the then SecDef, culminating in the selection of RSA in Huntsville, Alabama, as the preferred location.

(U) Appendix B

(U) Management Comments

(U) On March 21, 2025, personnel from the SecDef's office informed the DoD OIG that they reviewed the draft report and had no comments.

(U) The Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Energy, Installations, and Environment), responding on behalf of the DAF and the DoD Office of General Counsel, submitted technical comments. We reviewed the technical comments and made adjustments to our report where appropriate.

Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Installations, Energy, and Environment)

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NUMBER	COMMENTOR	PAGE / LINE(S)	COMMENT
1	DAF	i / 1 st para.	<p>Critical comment.</p> <p>“On January 13, 2021, the Secretary of the Air Force announced Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama, as the preferred location for USSPACECOM’s permanent headquarters, pending an environmental assessment, which the Department of the Air Force (DAF) completed on September 30, 2022. However, the Secretary of the Air Force (SECAF) never announced a final decision regarding USSPACECOM’s permanent headquarters location.”</p> <p>These sentences are correct, but they do not provide the complete context for what transpired. As drafted, the inference is that SECAF and the DAF did nothing between completion of the environmental assessment and the President’s final decision in July 2023. The DAF undertook additional analyses during this period of time that were necessary to (1) validate the preferred location and (2) assess whether the longstanding functional requirements for the basing action had changed based upon USSPACECOM’s substantial acceleration of FOC.</p> <p>SECAF did not decide because President Biden as Commander in Chief and the Chief Executive exercised his authority to make the decision.</p>

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2	DAF	i / 3 rd para.	Administrative comment: DAF has consistently characterized its post-May 2022 reviews as occurring in three phases. The initial definition and assessment of FOC was part of Phase 1 per SecDef's written direction to SecAF of 04 May 2022.
3	DAF	i / penultimate para.	Critical comment: Since 2019, the basing action was consistently premised on USSC HQ achieving FOC at the newly constructed permanent facility. Moreover, the underlying functional requirements (i.e., square footage, staff size, and commensurate parking) for the permanent headquarters never varied. The substantial acceleration and pending declaration of FOC in August 2023 represented a change in the proposed action which required DAF to review whether those functional requirements had changed and determine if new construction was still needed. This particular review was necessary to comply with the procedural requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the implementing regulations promulgated by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) then in effect.
4	DAF	1 / Background	Management comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DAF initiated the basing action in 2019 months before the provisional headquarters was established. Fundamentally, the provisional headquarters was never contemplated to be the location for the final decision. It was a bridging solution pending a final decision and the eventual construction of the permanent headquarters. It was

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			<p>anticipated that FOC would be declared at the permanent HQ. Source: 2019 Environmental Assessment.</p> <p>• Roles and responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ In 2018, President Trump directed the establishment of USSPACECOM.◦ On 15 April 2019, the SECDEF designated the SECAF as the Interim Combatant Command Support Agent, thereby making DAF responsible for the basing action.◦ In accordance with DoDD 5100.03, unresolved concerns of the headquarters are to be elevated to the SECDEF.◦ Subsequently, in July 2023 President Biden exercised his authority as Commander in Chief and the Chief Executive and selected Colorado Springs the permanent location of the USSPACECOM headquarters.
5	DAF	1 / Background	<p>Critical comment:</p> <p>The preparation of the second Environmental Assessment analyzing the alternative locations selected via SECDEF's revised basing process was deferred and delayed until completion of the DoDIG and GAO inquiries in May/June 2022. Those inquiries and the associated conclusions and recommendations (e.g., a cost sensitivity analysis) necessitated that the DAF re-validate its preferred location before finalizing the Environmental Assessment and Finding Of No Significant Impact.</p>

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6	DAF	2 / 3 rd para.	Administrative comment: DoD and the DAF have interpreted section 2889 of the FY24 NDAA as prohibiting the obligation or expenditure of funds on the permanent headquarters until the DoD IG and GAO evaluations were completed.
7	DAF/DoD	2 / 4 th para	Critical comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DAF defers to the White House Counsel's Office regarding whether there was ever an assertion of Executive Privilege. DoD and DAF have noted that certain information pertaining to the selection of USSPACECOM Headquarters implicates longstanding Executive Branch confidentiality interests, including internal DoD and White House deliberations and presidential communications. The request for DoD counsel to be present during the interviews was to alert the DoD IG and the interviewees when a question sought such information. • DoD: Neither Secretary of the Air Force Kendall nor Secretary of Defense Austin were interviewed by DoD OIG staff in connection with this review because the former DoD IG would not permit agency counsel to be present at these interviews. Agency counsel was needed due to the executive branch confidentiality interests involved here, including those that implicated presidential decision-making and presidential communications. DoD is unaware of any assertion or claim of executive privilege by the Office of the White House Counsel. Should DoD OIG

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			have evidence of any assertion of privilege, it should be cited and detailed in a footnote.
8	DAF	2 / FN 1	Administrative comment: See Comment 2 above regarding three vs. four phases.
9	DAF	2 / FN3	Administrative comment: Congress did not advise the DAF of Congress' intent regarding section 2889. The plain language of section 2889 stated that no funds were to be obligated or expended until the final reports were completed by a certain date. Moreover, there is no language in section 2889 stating that the prohibition expires on a specific date if that date is not met by GAO or DoD IG.
10	DAF	3	Administrative comment: The background states that there were two distinct basing actions. DAF's view is that there has been a single basing action and that the process was revised at a specific point by then Secretary Esper's direction in March 2020. DAF does not view that process revision as a separate basing action.
11	DAF	3 / Final Sentence section B	Procedural comment: Suggested edit: "The DoD OIG concluded in the USSPACECOM I evaluation that this decision process, resulting in the selection of RSA as the preferred location, <u>complied with Federal Law and DoD policy</u> and was reasonable."

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			Identification of the preferred location is a statement of the what the agency wants to do. The agency remains free to select another reasonable alternative. Therefore, it is important to recognize that the preferred location and the other five candidates remained viable alternatives for the permanent headquarters location.
12	DAF	5/ 2 nd para.	<p>Procedural comment:</p> <p>“(U) AFI 10-503 requires that an environmental assessment immediately follow the preferred location selection. The environmental assessment process includes a cost comparison, to include any cost growth not documented in the preferred location phase. After reviewing the environmental assessment and cost comparison, the SECAF, or delegated authority, announces a final basing decision.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategic basing process is nested within the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. An Environmental Assessment results in a Finding Of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The FONSI does not include a cost comparison. The draft Environmental Assessment is made available for public review and comment. The decision-maker considers the Environmental Assessment, the FONSI, and public comments on the draft documents. The decision-maker may also consider additional information, such as the Commander’s best military advice, in making a final decision. The decision document must identify any such information and articulate a rational basis for selection of the final location.

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13	DAF	5 / para. 3	Procedural comment: The DAF did not update the 2019 environmental assessment. It completed a superseding second environmental assessment finalized in September 2022 based on the revised basing process implemented in March 2020. An updated document would have been identified as a supplemental environmental assessment in accordance with NEPA.
14	DAF	5 / para. 4	Procedural comment: An environmental assessment does not include the FONSI. They are separate documents. Per DAF regulations, drafts of both are made available for public review and comment.
15	DAF	5 / para. 6	Critical comment: The May 4, 2022, SECDEF memorandum also directed SECDEF to conduct a review of the concerns regarding full operational capability (FOC) for USSPACECOM. This was identified as Recommendation 2 in the 2022 DoD IG report directed to SECDEF.
16	DAF	6 / para. 3	Procedural comment: The FONSI is a separate stand-alone document. An environmental assessment can result in two decisions: (1) a FONSI, or (2) preparation of an environmental impact statement because of the potential for significant environmental impacts from the proposed action.

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17	DAF	8-9 / Chronology	<p>Substantive and procedural comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend including May4, 2022. The SecDef memorandum directed DAF to assess concerns with FOC. • Revise: September 20, 2022, "The DAF completes the environmental assessment and a finding of no significant impact for the preferred location and all 5 reasonable alternative sites. • (CUI) The timeline does not capture the communication in Spring 2023 which reflect the acceleration of FOC at the interim provisional HQ. Ultimately, the USSPACECOM Commander advises that USSC will achieve FOC in August 2023 at its provisional HQ doing so with a smaller staff located in non-contiguous rented facilities and without new construction. This triggered the May-June 2023 analysis by SAF/IE to determine whether the functional requirements (i.e., square footage, staff size, and commensurate parking) for the basing action had changed. Had they changed, DAF would likely have had to re-open the basing process and supplement the environmental assessment in accordance with NEPA's procedural requirements.
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18	DAF	10 / 1 st para.	<p>Critical comment:</p> <p>“However, the delay in announcing a basing decision resulted in USSPACECOM continuing to approach FOC while at its provisional HQ in Colorado Springs, achieving FOC in December 2023.”</p> <p>This sentence infers that if a decision had been made earlier there was the possibility that USSC would have achieved FOC at its newly constructed permanent HQ. This is misleading. Fundamentally, USSC’s acceleration of FOC was a substantial contributing factor resulting in FOC being declared at its provisional HQ. This comment should not be interpreted as criticism. Rather, USSC’s effort is impressive. However, given the timing associated with the MILCON process, with this acceleration USSC would have achieved FOC at its interim HQ even if SecAF’s final decision had not been delayed.</p>
19	DAF	11 / Timeline	<p>Administrative comment:</p> <p>The decision to hold preparation of the environmental assessment and FONSI in abeyance was made in the fall of 2021.</p>
20	DAF	14 / 1 st para	<p>Administrative comment:</p> <p>DAF views the May 2023 review as the third phase.</p>
21	DAF	16-17	<p>Critical comment:</p> <p>USSC’s estimate of a decline in FOC during transition to a permanent HQ did not account for mitigation.</p>

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22	DAF		<p>Critical comment:</p> <p>Recommend revising the first paragraph as follows:</p> <p>“(U) On January 13, 2021, after a two-year selection process, the SECAF announced RSA as the preferred location for the USSPACECOM permanent HQ, pending the required environmental assessment. The DAF anticipated making a final decision after completion of the required environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact. Completion of the environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact was eventually held in abeyance pending completion evaluations initiated in March 2021 by the GAO and DoD IG. After the GAO and DoD IG reports were issued in May/June 2022, the SECAF directed four reviews to address the deficiencies identified in the reports. SECDEF also directed SECAF to review the concerns regarding FOC as discussed in the 2022 DoD IG report. The DAF completed these reviews in February 2023 and determined that the identification of RSA as the preferred location remained valid. of costs and risks associated with relocating to the preferred location, which all resulted in SAF/IE preferring RSA for the permanent HQ location. In these reviews, the SAF/IE acknowledged risks to readiness inherent to moving the HQ from its provisional location to RSA but balanced that risk against the availability of mitigation and the \$426 million cost advantage of RSA. After the USSPACECOM Commander advised in April 2023 that USSPACECOM would declare FOC at its provisional headquarters in August 2023, years ahead of schedule, the DAF completed an additional review in May-June 2023 to</p>
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			<u>re-validate the functional requirements underlying the basing action. That review confirmed that USSPACECOM could not remain permanently in its provisional headquarters and required new construction for its permanent headquarters.”</u>
23	DAF	21 / penultimate para.	Critical comment: The final sentence infers that SecAF delayed making a final decision for some indeterminate reason. In fact, SecAF could not decide until the May/June 2023 review by SAF/IE was completed. Before making a final decision, he was informed that the President as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive would make the decision.
24	DAF	21 / final para.	Critical comment: USSPACECOM began accelerating its estimate for declaring FOC as early as the late fall of 2022, eventually determining in April 2023 that it would declare FOC in August 2023 at its provisional HQ. This determination triggered the need for another evaluation regarding whether the functional requirements underlying this basing action had changed, including the need for new construction and the size of the permanent staff. Shortly after that evaluation was completed and the SECAF briefed SECDEF and key members of Congress, the President determined he would make the final decision. SECAF stated that he supported the President’s decision.

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25	DAF	22 / 2 nd para.	<p>Critical comment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DAF: Please re-confirm your interview records. SAF/IE (Mr. Oshiba) was interviewed early in the evaluation process. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Regarding whether White House Counsel asserted executive privilege, please see Comment 7 above. Certain information pertaining to the selection of the USSPACECOM Headquarters implicates longstanding Executive Branch confidentiality interests, including internal DoD and White House deliberations and presidential communications. The request for DoD counsel to be present during the interviews was to alert the DoD IG and the interviewees when a question sought such information. • DoD: As noted above at Comment 7, neither Secretary of the Air Force Kendall nor Secretary of Defense Austin were interviewed by DoD OIG staff in connection with this review because the former DoD IG would not permit agency counsel to be present at these interviews. Agency counsel was needed due to the executive branch confidentiality interests involved here, including those that implicated presidential decision-making and presidential communications. DoD is unaware of any assertion or claim of executive privilege by the Office of the White House Counsel. Should DoD OIG have evidence of any assertion of privilege, it should be cited and detailed in a footnote.
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(U) Acronyms and Abbreviations

DAF	Department of the Air Force
FOC	Full Operational Capability
GAO	Government Accountability Office
HQ	Headquarters
PRC	People’s Republic of China
RSA	Redstone Arsenal
SAF/IE	Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Energy, Installations, and Environment)
SAF/IEI	Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Installations)
SECAF	Secretary of the Air Force
SecDef	Secretary of Defense
USSPACECOM	U.S. Space Command

(U) Glossary

(U) Combatant Command Support Agent: The Secretary of a Military Department to whom the SecDef or the Deputy SecDef assigned administrative and logistical support of a combatant command HQ or subordinate unified command. The nature and scope of the combatant command support agent responsibilities, functions, and authorities are defined at the time of assignment or in keeping with existing agreements and practices, and they remain in effect until the SecDef modifies them.

(U) Initial Operational Capability: According to the USSPACECOM Commander, initial operational capability for USSPACECOM included the ability to address threats from competition while also protecting and defending the interests of the United States.

(U) Full Operational Capability: According to the USSPACECOM Commander, FOC for USSPACECOM has five criteria: (1) accomplishing the unified command plan mission, (2) having the right numbers of employees, (3) having the needed facilities, (4) having command processes and functions in place, and (5) being able to set the conditions for the future fight.

(U) National Environmental Policy Act: This act requires agencies to evaluate the potential environmental impacts resulting from the construction and operations of a permanent facility.

(U) Sensitivity Analysis: An assessment of how information values fluctuate based on changes to key assumptions.

(U) Unified Command Plan: The document that defines authorities and relationships between combatant commands.



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