

The mission of South Georgia Military Affairs Council is to develop a regional approach that will strengthen the relationship between Moody Air Force Base and our regional community, resulting in the continued presence of Moody AFB in our region. Therefore, our sole obligation as SGMAC is to support the best interest of Moody AFB in order to preserve its presence in our community into the future.

Valdosta and Lowndes County have, for many decades, worked to develop a unique and very beneficial relationship with the USAF that has resulted in the continued, vibrant presence of Moody Air Force Base in our community. These efforts include the work of the City and County, Parker and Lucy Green, Moody Support Group, Red Carpet of South Georgia, Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce, Berrien County Chamber of Commerce, Lakeland-Lanier County Chamber of Commerce, Adel-Cook County Chamber of Commerce, South Georgia MOAA and South Georgia Military Affairs Council. As a result, the relationship we have with Moody and the USAF is unmatched anywhere in the country and coveted by other communities.

Nearly ten years ago, Lowndes County, in an insightful and forward thinking move, helped to solidify this relationship between our community and Moody when, in a cooperative effort with the base, they implemented the Moody Activity Zone (MAZ). The entire purpose of this zoning effort was to protect the base from encroachment and put in place procedures to make certain future development occurred with noise issues in mind to protect future missions at the base. At the time, there was not another Air Force base that enjoyed this type proactive measure of protection by a community. This act, although restrictive to property owners in the area, recognized the importance of Moody’s place in our community and the significant impact any loss of mission at the base or the base itself would have on our region. The implementation of the MAZ garnered the attention of the USAF all the way up to the highest ranking officers within the Air Force and has been used as a “model” at other bases throughout the country. In addition, SGMAC has pointed to Lowndes County’s MAZ to encourage other close neighbors of Moody to adopt anti-encroachment standards within their county as well. On numerous occasions this zoning has been mentioned as a significant positive attribute of Moody Air Force Base in discussions with high level decision makers regarding the base. This action certainly was a huge contributor to developing the relationship we now enjoy.

Our community must absolutely not lose sight of the reason the SGMAC and other groups exist to support and strengthen Moody Air Force Base – its economic impact in our County and Region. Moody makes a direct economic impact on a six county area of $460,000,000. Of this, the direct economic impact of Moody on Lowndes County is $441,600,000. The economic activity related to Moody supports 7,344 jobs and approximately 11% of the population of Lowndes County is directly associated with Moody AFB. The children affiliated with Moody who attend school in the region support an estimated $34,600,000 in gross regional product and 528 education related jobs and represents another $27,000,000 in labor income impact in addition to the direct economic impact.

It is a clear reality from our and other stakeholder’s conversations with the Air Force and our Congressional representatives that there is likely to be a new Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) process within the next 3-5 years. Every Base in the Country, including Moody, will be reviewed as a part of this process and is at risk of diminished activity or closure. In this process, and before it occurs, Mission is critical to the ongoing presence of Moody in our community. With the budget pressure that the Air Force faces, hard decisions are being forced. One of those decisions involves the retirement of the A-10, one of the primary Missions at Moody. We do not know when this will happen; however, we are being told that the A-10 will eventually go away. When the A-10 is retired, Moody must be ready to receive the mission or missions that the Air Force brings to the table. These could include Missions which require additional land area usage, have additional noise requirements or other impacts benefitted by the current MAZ and Noise Attenuation Standards in place.

Our community, as a cohesive group is working tirelessly to make Moody and our community as attractive as possible to the Air Force for new, long term missions which would ensure the long term viability of Moody Air Force Base. Thus, the effort to weaken the current MAZ and noise protections without any significant request from the community to do so is perplexing and very hard to understand. It does not fit with the stated desire of County leadership to support, defend and enhance the viability of Moody Air Force Base. It also does not support the economic engine which drives a large portion of the economy of our Region and County.

**SGMAC action:**

Our sole consideration with regard to any change to the current MAZ is the best interest of Moody AFB and its future in our community. This consideration likewise will benefit our community, its citizens and its economy. As the community cooperates to enhance our relationship with Moody and keep our good reputation intact with the Air Force, understanding the immense economic impact of the base and the critical nature and timing of efforts to attract future missions, the South Georgia Military Affairs Council opposes the text amendments as proposed to the MAZ restrictions.