

**Coalition on Low Altitude Flights (COLAF) Collection,**  
**1.50 linear ft.**  
**Mss. Coll. No. 127**

**History**

COLAF is a social action group that was formed by private citizens in St Lawrence County, NY in January of 1989 in response to proposals made by the Strategic Air Command (SAC) to use the airspace above St. Lawrence County as a Low Altitude Flight training grounds. The plan was for B-52 bombers and FB-111 fighter-bombers to cross the Adirondacks and enter St. Lawrence County at altitudes as low as 500 feet above ground level. The jets were supposed to fly three times over the county in a racetrack loop during which they would practice low-altitude weapons delivery, dropping simulated bombs over the Fort Drum Weapons Range. Residents of the county would have been subjected to flights traveling as fast as 560 mph, producing noise levels of up to 114 decibels, 300 times a month.

The purpose of COLAF was “to educate the citizens of St. Lawrence County and their elected representatives about the effects of low-altitude military flights so they will take action on this important issue.” The steering committee for COLAF consisted of 13 people. Initially, the chair was Peter Van de Water, Vice Chair/Publicity was Suzanne McTaggart and Vice Chair/Volunteer Coordinator was Steve Molnar. Although COLAF still exists today and participates in discussions involving the Air Force, the main efforts were sustained for about two years opposing abusive low altitude flights above St. Lawrence County.

The culmination of COLAF’s efforts was an Ad Hoc Committee formed by Governor Mario Cuomo in July 1989 involving several local citizen groups and state agencies. The SAC agreed to mitigate their original proposals, which along with other cutbacks eventually led to the “race track loop” being dissolved by 1991. COLAF was a one of the first citizen action groups in the nation to have a seat at the table during the political dealings of the military.

**Scope and content**

This collection contains notes, printed materials, fliers, brochures, newspaper publications and correspondence pertaining to Low Altitude Flights and COLAF. Included is material about the Innu (Naskapi or Montagnais) people from Labrador-Quebec who were fighting legislation permitting NATO forces to conduct low altitude training over their traditional lands.

**Organization and arrangement**

This collection is arranged in 8 series:

1. Administrative
2. Background information
3. Correspondence
4. Innu (Naskapi-Montagnais) correspondence
5. Public awareness and campaign
6. COLAF-action
7. Miscellaneous
8. Air National Guard, Air Force and Army info

**Provenance**

This collection was donated to the St. Lawrence Special Collections along with the CAPP collection by Steve Molnar of Canton, NY on February 25, 2000. Additional materials were added by Neil Forkey, Canadian Studies Professor, in June 2022.

## **BOX 1**

### **Series 1: Administrative**

- 1.1 Constitution, Position Paper, Consensus
- 1.2 Untitled (Steering Committee)
- 1.3 Major Donor Workshop 8/89
- 1.4 Untitled (other concerned citizens, mailing list)
- 1.5 Untitled (volunteers)
- 1.6 COLAF notes

### **Series 2: Background Information**

- 2.1 General Flight Rules
- 2.2 Airforce info sheet July '89
- 2.3 Landowner rights
- 2.4 Forest service and national park service
- 2.5 Information Sheet Environmental Assessment
- 2.6 Noise
- 2.7 Research
- 2.8 Indiana crash
- 2.9 Children West Germany
- 2.10 DEC Blake Memo 4/20/89
- 2.11 Town of Rossie
- 2.12 Maps
- 2.13 Rev Bob Jones- Heu
- 2.14 Meeting with David McAfeer
- 2.15 Untitled (Rural alliance for military accountability)
- 2.16 Untitled (Newspaper Clippings)
- 2.17 Untitled (Material from Skyguard)
- 2.18 Untitled (Scrapbook)

## **BOX 2**

### **Series 3: Correspondence**

- 3.1 Letters out
- 3.1a Letters and information received by Louise Scarlett
- 3.2 Contacts AF St. Law Log
- 3.3 Untitled (with politicians, military)
- 3.4 Untitled (with law firms)
- 3.5 Griffiths Peace Community

### **Series 4: Innu (Naskapi-Montagnais) Correspondence**

- 4.1 NATO Airspace
- 4.2 Petitions

### **Series 5: Public awareness and campaign**

- 5.1 Newsletters/Brochures
- 5.2 Coalition Fliers

## **BOX 3**

### **Series 5: Public awareness and campaign**

- 5.3 Current: the journal of North Country Action; Steve Molnar
- 5.4 Bill in Congress

**Series 6: COLAF-Action**

- 6.1 Canton Meeting 5/10, notes
- 6.2 Air monitoring
- 6.3 Demands, Request, AF monitoring '89
- 6.4 Ad Hoc Commission
- 6.5 Public Comments Received by the St. Lawrence County Planning Office SAC Low-Altitude Flights
- 6.6 Staff Comments Received by the St. Lawrence County Planning Office SAC Low-Altitude Flights
- 6.7 St. Lawrence County (Board of Legislators, Environmental Management Council, Planning Board)

**Series 7: Miscellaneous**

- 7.1 Petitions
- 7.2 COLAF and IGNPPE
- 7.3 COLAF newsletter / brochure 1989
- 7.4 Additional Pamphlets, Newsletters, and Editorials Pertaining to Low Altitude Flight Testing

**BOX 4**

**Series 8: Air National Guard, Air Force and Army info**

- 8.1 Description of Proposed Actions and Alternatives: Aircraft Conversion, Bradley Air National Guard Base, Connecticut; Aircraft Conversion, Barnes Air National Guard Base, Massachusetts; Utilization of Special Use Airspace, Northeastern United States, July 1991
- 8.2 Errata Sheet for ^
- 8.3 Draft Environmental Impact Statement: Aircraft Conversions at the 103<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Fighter Group, Barnes Municipal Airport, Massachusetts; and Changes in Utilization of Military Training Airspace Volumes 1-5, January 1992
- 8.4 Errata Sheets for draft
- 8.5 Final Environmental Impact Statement: Aircraft Conversions at the 103<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Fighter Group, Barnes Municipal Airport, Massachusetts; and Changes in Utilization of Military Training Airspace Volume 1, July 1992
- 8.6 Airforce Information Kit
- 8.7 Tactical Fighter Group Fact Sheets