



# NEWS RELEASE

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October 30, 2008  
Release #08-31

## **Military Construction Awarded for Air Force Research Laboratory Battlespace Environment Laboratory**

KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, N.M. – On October 22, 2008, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Albuquerque District, awarded Burns & McDonnell Engineering Company a contract for \$53.5 million to construct the 145,000 square foot Battlespace Environment Laboratory to be located on the west side of Kirtland Air Force Base, N.M. The new Air Force Research Laboratory facility will be positioned within the Phillips Research Site of the Kirtland Technology Park. The BEL will be a state-of-the-art facility used for tests in high vacuum environments, environmental calibration, chemistry and spectrometry, computer modeling, processing of space data, space operations, remote sensing, and quantum computing. It will be the largest Air Force laboratory on the installation's west side.

Construction of the BEL is a result of the congressional 2005 Base Realignment and Closure decision, which directed the relocation of the AFRL's Battlespace Environment Division from Hanscom Air Force Base, Mass., to Kirtland AFB. The BRAC designated 2011 as the date for the completion of the BEL and the relocation of the Battlespace Environment Division. The Battlespace Environment Division, once known as the Air Force Geophysics Laboratory, is one of the Air Force's oldest laboratories. The organization consists of the Space Weather Center of Excellence, which studies solar effects in the space and ionospheric environment to forecast and mitigate these disturbances, and the Battlespace Surveillance Innovation Center, which develops space-based detection capabilities.

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In addition to new construction and an annual operating budget of nearly \$89 million, the relocation of the Battlespace Environment Division to Kirtland AFB will add 25 military, 152 government civilian, and as many as 50 contractor positions to the Albuquerque area. Many scientists and engineers, currently with the Battlespace Environment Division will remain in Massachusetts, presenting great employment opportunities in Albuquerque. In order to fill these vacancies, AFRL intends to create a new and diverse workforce for the future of Air Force space research and will be recruiting from college undergraduates up to senior scientists and engineers. Many of the job opportunities at AFRL will become available as early as June 2009.

The addition of the Battlespace Environment Division will strengthen AFRL's already close relationships with state universities, the local scientific community and the Los Alamos and Sandia national laboratories. The presence of this world-class organization will enhance New Mexico as a national and global center for space science and technology.

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***EDITOR'S NOTE:*** *Steve Watson, Air Force Research Laboratory, Space Vehicles Directorate, Technology Outreach Branch, authored this news release.*