



2023 Secretary of Defense Environmental Awards Environmental Quality, Overseas Installation Award

Each year since 1962, the Secretary of Defense has honored installations, teams, and individuals for outstanding achievements in Department of Defense (DoD) environmental programs. These accomplishments include outstanding conservation activities, innovative environmental practices, and partnerships that improve quality of life and promote efficiencies without compromising DoD’s mission success. The 2023 Secretary of Defense Environmental Awards cycle encompasses an achievement period from October 1, 2020, through September 30, 2022 (Fiscal Years [FY] 2021-2022). A diverse panel of 54 judges with relevant expertise representing Federal and state agencies, academia, and the private sector evaluated all nominees to select one winner for each of the nine categories. These nine categories cover six subject areas including natural resources conservation, environmental quality, sustainability, environmental restoration, cultural resources management, and environmental excellence in weapon systems acquisition.

About the Environmental Quality, Overseas Installation Award

The Environmental Quality, Overseas Installation award recognizes efforts to ensure mission accomplishment and the protection of human health and the environment in the areas of environmental planning, waste management, and compliance with environmental laws and regulations (e.g., Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, Toxic Substances Control Act). Meeting or exceeding all environmental requirements not only enhances the protection of the nation’s environmental assets, but also sustains DoD’s ability to effectively train and maintain readiness. Enduring overseas installations of all types (industrial or non-industrial) and sizes (large or small) are eligible. The 2023 winner of the Environmental Quality, Overseas Installation award is *Osan Air Base, Republic of Korea*.

About Osan Air Base, Republic of Korea

Osan Air Base (AB) is located about 33 miles south of Seoul and 48 miles south of the Korean Demilitarized Zone in the northwest portion of the Republic of Korea. The AB occupies about 2,020 acres; employs about 9,800 people, including military, DoD civilians, and contractors; and has a resident population of about 7,430 people. It is home to the 51st Fighter Wing, which provides mission-ready Airmen to execute combat operations and receive follow-on forces while defending and sustaining the base and its personnel. The 51st Civil Engineer Squadron’s Environmental Element is responsible for Osan AB environmental stewardship, and ensures that the AB complies with environmental laws and regulations by integrating environmental management and pollution prevention principles; providing training for Airmen and civilians; and continuing to improve through assessments, root cause analysis, and implementation of corrective actions. The Environmental Element’s vision is to create synergy through communication and collaboration to enhance Osan’s mission.



Osan AB represented the 7th Air Force at the Environmental Joint Working Group that works to build trust between U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) and the Republic of Korea. Osan AB was selected by USFK to present Air Force’s Environmental Management Practices to the Republic of Korea Ministry of Environment, Ministry of National Defense, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Major Accomplishments in FY 2021-2022

- Osan AB published a Hazardous Materials Management Program and Hazard Communication (HAZCOM) Execute Order (EXORD). Signed by the Wing Commander, the EXORD directed a full review of all hazardous materials, hazardous material-using processes, and all HAZCOM programs. As a result, Osan AB accounted for 100% of all 6,000 hazardous materials and disposed of 40,000 pounds of expired or unnecessary hazardous materials.
- In FY 2022, Osan AB experienced a break in the sole sanitary sewer force main with the potential to release over 1 million gallons of raw sewage into the local Jinwi River. Osan AB immediately mobilized a 110-member spill response team to implement the Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasures Plan, which controlled the release of the raw sewage and allowed for repairs to remediate the spill within four days. All impacted areas were immediately and effectively sanitized.
- Osan AB ensured construction projects were reviewed for environmental impacts and that environmental requirements were incorporated throughout each project's life cycle, resulting in identification of 9,500 hazardous materials and prevention of erosion and silting of the stormwater system and infrastructure. Additionally, the AB programmed funding of \$2 million for sanitary sewer and \$2.5 million for stormwater system upgrades, and \$1.4 million for storm ditch cleaning. These vital repairs will reduce the likelihood of sewer overflow, minimize local flooding, and enhance the quality of local water.
- In FY 2021, the Tank Program Manager inspected each facility to establish an accurate tank inventory. The inspections allowed Osan AB to execute \$2 million in tank repairs and implement a recurring maintenance and inspection contract, which ensures licensed inspectors perform the inspections; inspectors identified 154 potential deficiencies, leading the Tank Program Manager to acquire an additional \$4 million for tank design and repair projects.
- Due to worsening air quality in the Republic of Korea, Osan AB elevated the priority of the Air Quality Program and re-built it from the ground up. The Air Quality Program Manager inventoried and reconciled the 300 regulated air emission sources for tracking, then implemented the Ozone Depleting Substance (ODS) Program. The program identifies and facilitates regulatory-driven repairs for ODS-using equipment. Additionally, the Program Manager inventoried 145 stationary engines, not historically managed by the Program, and entered 600 equipment specifications and air emissions standards into the system of record. This self-initiated effort saved the Air Force \$250,000 in contract costs, ensures systems operate within the established emission standards while addressing an environmental significant aspect. Osan AB is the first U.S. Forces Korea installation to complete this inventory.



Osan Environmental coordinated closely with the Operations Flight to contain the controlled release of one million gallons of raw sewage that allowed the necessary repair of the sewer main.



The Environmental Office partners with the Civil Engineering Office to ensure that over 200 annual construction projects conform to environmental requirements from start to finish.