

**Community Relations Plan  
for the  
Former Eaker Air Force Base  
Blytheville, Arkansas**

July 2007



**U.S. AIR FORCE**

Air Force Real Property Agency  
San Antonio, Texas

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## **SECTION 1: OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS PLAN**

The Air Force Real Property Agency developed this community relations plan to facilitate two-way communication with the community surrounding the former Eaker Air Force Base and to encourage community involvement in site activities.

This CRP replaces the former Eaker AFB Community Relations Plan released in February 1996 and updated in July 1999, November 1999 and January 2006. The concerns identified in this plan show a decrease in community interest regarding environmental cleanup from earlier versions of the plan. This is expected since final cleanup systems were installed in 1999, and the area is currently in a monitoring stage. The Air Force will continue to keep the community informed of ongoing activities as needed, as well as any new environmental activities should they emerge. To achieve these goals, some broadly applicable approaches will be employed as standard practices in all specific activities:

This plan is organized to allow for ease of readability. This section presents an overview of the community relations plan. Section 2, Capsule Site Description, provides site history, description, and an overview of cleanup activities that have occurred at the former base. Section 3, Community Background, provides a community profile, history of community relations, key community concerns and summary of communication needs. Section 4, Community Relations activities, presents the projected activities intended to respond to community concerns and communication needs. The appendices provide information on available resources.

## **SECTION 2: CAPSULE SITE DESCRIPTION**

These subsections present an overview of the community and a general chronology of site activities during the active operations of the former Eaker AFB and during the follow-up cleanup operations to date.

### **2.1 Site History**

Eaker AFB was first activated in 1942 as a pilot training field. From 1942 to 1947, the base was the home to the AT-9, AT-70, and BT-13 fighter training planes. The base was closed in 1947 and turned over to the City of Blytheville for municipal use. Usage included manufacturing, fuels storage, and the landfilling of municipal waste. The Air Force reactivated Eaker AFB in 1955 for use as a bomber training base. The aircraft stationed at Eaker AFB included the B-57 bomber, KC-97 refueler, B-52G bomber, KC-135A tanker, T-33 jet fighter, and the T-37 jet fighter. Eaker AFB was selected for closure by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission in 1991. The base officially closed 15 December 1992.

During its time of operation, Eaker AFB was used for pilot training, aircraft and vehicle maintenance, fuels storage, and weapons storage. Aircraft and vehicle maintenance included degreasing, paint stripping, and corrosion control. Waste generated at the former Eaker AFB included solvents, paints, paint thinners, hydrocarbons, chlorinated hydrocarbons, batteries, sulfuric acid, and unexploded ordnance. Contaminants entered the soils and groundwater at the facility through leaks, spills and commonly used operating and disposal practices of the time.

All parcels that made up the former Eaker AFB have been transferred through the deeding process to the City of Blytheville for reuse through the Blytheville-Gosnell Regional Airport Authority, the local redevelopment organization. The primary reuse of the property has been for development of the Arkansas Aeroplex industrial park and the Arkansas International Airport. While the airport is civilian controlled, the National Guard is using the facility as the site for training maneuvers and as a landing site to pick up and drop off deployed troops.

### **2.2 Site Description/Location**

The former Eaker AFB is located in Mississippi County, Arkansas. Mississippi County is in the northeast corner of Arkansas, three miles south of the Missouri state line and eleven miles west of the Mississippi River. Significant population centers near Eaker include Jonesboro, Arkansas (50 miles southwest), and Memphis, Tennessee (75 miles south-southwest). During its years of operation, Eaker AFB covered 3,286 acres, of which approximately 3,261 acres were incorporated into the City of Blytheville and the remaining 25 acres were incorporated into the City of Gosnell. Downtown Blytheville is approximately two miles southeast of the base, while Gosnell borders the base on the west. The area surrounding the base is primarily cultivated agricultural fields, with some light and heavy industry. Residences are primarily within the two communities near the base, Blytheville and Gosnell.

There are two primary aquifers beneath the former Eaker AFB, the Quaternary and the Wilcox. The Quaternary, the shallow aquifer, is used primarily for irrigation and water wells for rural residences. The Wilcox is a deep aquifer and is used for the municipal water supply of both Blytheville and Gosnell. Runoff from rainfall on base flows to ditches and storm drains that discharge into the Pemiscot Bayou and then into the St. Francis River. The New Madrid Fault lies less than 50 miles from the base.

## **2.3 Site Inspection/Cleanup Activities**

The Air Force began its first environmental investigation and cleanup of the base in 1984 under the Defense Environmental Restoration Program. The Air Force investigation found the main chemicals of concern on the base were petroleum products, metals, volatile organic compounds, and polychlorinated biphenyls. These contaminants entered the soil and groundwater from sites such as storage tanks (both above and below ground), landfills, small arms ranges, trap and skeet ranges, and fire-fighting training areas. The Air Force also discovered unexploded munitions in former explosive ordnance disposal areas. The investigation, and the cleanup that followed, was accomplished in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations. It was overseen by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality.

In accordance with the BRAC environmental cleanup program, established when the base was selected for closure in 1991, the Air Force took the environmental cleanup steps necessary to make the installation acreage suitable for transfer to the local redevelopment authority. The following cleanup actions have been taken by the Air Force since the former Eaker AFB was selected for closure by the BRAC Commission in 1991:

- Closed more than 160 underground storage tank sites
- Closed more than 80 aboveground storage tank sites
- Closed more than 30 devices that separate oil from water
- Closed four landfills
- Removed contaminated soils
- Removed all unexploded ordnance
- Closed all shooting ranges
- Closed the aircraft JP-4 fuel hydrant system
- Closed fuel and weapons storage areas
- Installed 100 groundwater wells to monitor for groundwater contamination.

The last cleanup remedies, soil excavations at various sites on the former base, were accomplished in 1999. The Air Force continues to monitor groundwater at six sites to ensure fuel contaminants do not migrate to new areas and degrade naturally.

For complete, detailed information pertaining to environmental cleanup activities, visit the Information Repository or Administrative Record (locations listed in Appendix E).

## **SECTION 3: COMMUNITY BACKGROUND**

The subsections that follow present an overview of the community profile and a general chronology of Air Force community relations and communications to date.

### **3.1 Community Profile**

In the 2000 U.S. Census, the City of Blytheville population numbers 18,272 people. Of that population, 45% are Caucasian and 52% are African-American. The average household size is 2.57 and the average family size is 3.16. The median age is 33 years. There are 8,532 housing units, of which 63% are owner occupied and 37% are rented. The median household income is \$26,683. Of the total population, 29% are living below the poverty line. Of the people below poverty line, 42% are under the age of 18 and 17% are over the age of 65.

Also, in the 2000 Census, the City of Gosnell population numbers 3,968 people. Of that population, 80% are white or Caucasian and 15% are black or African-American. The average household size is 2.9 and the average family size is 3.29. The median age is 28. There are 1578 housing units, of which 52% are owner occupied and 48% are rented. The median household income is \$31,423. Of the total population, 17% are living below the poverty line. Of those below the poverty line, 17% are less than 18 years of age and 31% are over the age of 65.

There are no major colleges or universities located in the area. There is a two-year associate's degree program established as the Arkansas Northeastern College located in Blytheville. In a recent study conducted by the Blytheville-Gosnell Chamber of Commerce, it was noted that of the population over 25 years of age, approximately 67% have completed high school or higher.

The primary employment opportunities in the region are the Riverport Mill, the second-largest steel producing site in the nation; and the Arkansas Aeroplex, the second-largest industrial complex in the state. It should be noted that when the former Eaker AFB was selected for closure in 1991, the accompanying report stated that while the cost to close Eaker was low and the payback would be achieved in less than one year, the economic impact on the community from the closing would be among the most significant in the Air Force.

Both Blytheville and Gosnell have a mayor and city council form of government.

### **3.2 History of Community Relations**

Relations between the former Eaker AFB and the community have been cordial and strengthened by Air Force outreach. The following section outlines the various opportunities made available for community participation since 1992.

**Restoration Advisory Board.** The former Eaker AFB Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) was formed in August 1994. Historically, the RAB was the most active vehicle for public participation, providing a forum for the exchange of information regarding the cleanup program at the former base. The RAB met quarterly to discuss environmental issues, and all meetings were open to the public. During the RAB meeting held 26 October 1999, RAB members were informed the last cleanup system, a groundwater monitoring system, had been installed and was operating properly. Based on this information and declining community interest, the RAB members voted to adjourn.

The *Management Guidance for the Defense Environmental Restoration Program* requires the Air Force to periodically reassess community interest in reestablishing adjourned RABs. Consequently, a notice was placed 14 June 2004, in the *Blytheville Courier News*, which has a daily circulation of more than 6,000 area residents. The notice informed the public the last cleanup system was put in place in 1999, and the Air Force was continuing to monitor progress. The notice encouraged readers to contact the Air Force if they were interested in receiving more information on the cleanup and property transfer. The response rate was to be used to determine community interest levels in having regularly-scheduled meetings to discuss these issues. Only one community member responded to the advertisement, requesting basic information regarding the cleanup but expressing no interest in attending RAB meetings. Based on this negligible response, the Air Force chose not to reestablish the RAB. A memorandum for the record titled "Insufficient Sustained Community Interest to Pursue Reestablishing a Restoration Advisory Board" was placed in the Administrative Record.

**Information Repository and Administrative Record.** The former Eaker AFB Information Repository (IR) includes a variety of documents relating to the environmental program. In addition to final copies of technical reports, the IR includes copies of outreach publications, news releases and newspaper clippings, RAB meeting minutes, transcripts of public hearings and meetings, and copies of certain government regulations pertaining to the former Eaker AFB Installation Restoration Program.

The Administrative Record (AR) is required by the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act and the National Contingency Plan. The AR must include all documents forming the basis of environmental response actions. While cleanup at the former Eaker AFB was not a CERCLA cleanup, the Air Force made the decision to implement many of the requirements under CERCLA to facilitate involvement with the communities, including the keeping of an AR. Copies of the AR are available for public review at the former Eaker AFB IR located at the Blytheville Public Library. Locations are found in Appendix E of this plan.

**Publications.** Since 1992, the Air Force has developed fact sheets and newsletters, as well as a Web site, to provide information on specific environmental issues of concern to the community. The Web site created for the former Eaker AFB is located at [www.afropa.hq.af.mil/ols/eaker.htm](http://www.afropa.hq.af.mil/ols/eaker.htm).

### 3.3 Community Concerns

This section describes the methodology the Air Force used to collect community input in order to develop this CRP update. It also summarizes the communication preferences and concerns the interviewees voiced.

#### Methodology

The DoD, and thus the Air Force, follows the NCP Section 415 (n) 3 (iii), requirements for developing CRPs. The NCP requires interviews with a minimum of 10 to 15 community members. The purpose of the interviews is to obtain qualitative information about the community's level of familiarity with the cleanup, their concerns, and their preferences for receiving cleanup information. These interviews are not intended to extract quantitative information (that is, information that can be used for statistical analysis).

The Air Force conducted 11 community interviews. Interviewees represented the Blytheville-Gosnell Regional Airport Authority, elected officials, regulators, school district representatives, the Arkansas Department of Health, local church staff and the local Chamber of Commerce. By speaking with a wide range of stakeholders, the Air Force increased its awareness of the diversity of community concerns and preferences.

#### Overview of Findings

Interviewee comments and insights helped the Air Force determine the most effective methods of conducting community relations efforts. These interviews showed a marked decrease in community interest regarding the former Eaker AFB environmental cleanup program compared to what was found in the previous surveys.

#### Community Concerns

The primary concern expressed by interviewees was redevelopment of the former Eaker AFB. Many community members feel more could be done to bring additional industry to the community to occupy abandoned buildings. While people spoke very favorably of the Air Force as a good neighbor when the base was open, many felt the Air Force did not provide the community with resources needed to maintain facilities after base closure. Since this concern falls outside the purview of the Air Force's responsibility, AFRPA can only act as a conduit of information by channeling questions regarding redevelopment to the appropriate agency/organization.

Additionally, some concern exists regarding facilities on the former base that have degraded and may contain asbestos materials requiring abatement. These concerns have previously been voiced to the redevelopment authority, which is responsible for these facilities.

The public is generally pleased with the Air Force's environmental restoration efforts. Several interviewees expressed no concern about the existing cleanup program, and confidence in their ability to obtain information, if needed. One interviewee was unfamiliar with the cleanup program in general, which is understandable since final cleanup systems have been in place

since 1999. However, no cleanup concerns were expressed related to any specific current situation.

Interviewees suggested the Air Force maintain a relationship with the community by communicating any new environmental issues that may emerge regarding the former Eaker AFB.

#### Preferred Communication Methods

In order to obtain a general idea of the community's preferred communication methods, AFRPA also asked participants what methods of communication they prefer to obtain information in general. The responses clearly indicated direct mail and radio announcements were not a preferred communication channel for obtaining information. Communication methods which were most frequently used consisted of internet and email. However, the local newspaper (*Blytheville Courier News*) and general word of mouth also ranked high throughout the community.

Taking into consideration the majority of interviewees were community leaders which represented their respective constituency, it is likely their use of the internet and email is higher than that of the overall community. All things considered, the most effective approach to communicate any arising issues would be to communicate with community leaders directly, and supplement this communication with local newspaper announcements.

## SECTION 4: FORMER EAKER AFB COMMUNITY RELATIONS ACTIVITIES

The Air Force made the following observations after analyzing feedback from the community interviews discussed in Section 3:

- As the former Eaker AFB has transferred all properties and implemented all remedial actions, outreach to the community has been reduced. However, communication regarding the cleanup status may be useful to assure the community progress continues to be made and all systems are operating properly.
- The community should also be informed of any new developments that may emerge regarding the environmental restoration of the base in a timely, consistent and accurate manner.

The Air Force completed property transfer of the former Eaker AFB in 2002 and as a result, will not be participating in community events unless requested or required to do so. The activities below will be used as required. Note: Activities that allow the community open access to the Air Force, such as the toll-free phone line and Web site, will remain available regardless of the level of activity at the former Eaker AFB.

### Activities required by environmental regulations

#### Activity 1: Information Repository

**Objective:** To provide the community with access to all documents and resources related to the environmental cleanup.

**Description:** 40 CFR Part 300.415 and 300.430 required the establishment of an Information Repository. The Information Repository is located at the following location:

Arkansas Aeroplex  
4701 Memorial Drive  
Blytheville, Arkansas 72316  
Phone: 870-762-2431  
Hours of operation: 9:00-5:00 Monday - Friday

It includes hard-copies of documents contained within the Administrative Record (see below) and additional materials such as fact sheets, RAB meeting materials, and other general program information.

**Timing:** The Information Repository is updated when applicable documents become available.

## Activity 2: Administrative Record

**Objective:** To provide the community with access to the documents and resources used by the Air Force to reach decisions about the site cleanup.

**Description:** CFR Part 300.800(b) required the establishment of the Administrative Record (AR). Some Administrative Record documents are available in hard copy at the Information Repository, and all Administrative Record documents are available electronically on-line at <https://afarpaar.afarpa.pentagon.af.mil/ar/docsearch.aspx>

**Timing:** The Administrative Record is updated when draft final or final technical documents become available.

## Activity 3: Public Meetings, Comment Periods, and Notices

**Objective:** To give community members an opportunity to review and comment on cleanup milestones. This provides citizens with the chance to become actively involved in the cleanup process, while giving the Air Force valuable feedback to use in decision making.

**Description:** 40 CFR Part 300.415, 300.430, and 300.435 require these activities at various milestones in the restoration program. These three activities are interrelated.

Public meetings are held to allow the community opportunities to speak with the Air Force. AFRPA uses visual aids, such as fact sheets and posters to explain the cleanup and encourage discussion. Public meeting dates, times, and locations are announced in public notices for cleanup milestones. Most meetings are held during the lunch hour.

Public comment periods provide a specified timeframe in which the community can submit written comments on cleanup milestones. Public comment periods are usually between 30-60 days in length; beginning and ending dates are announced in public notices.

Public notices describe proposed actions and announce any associated public meetings and/or public comment periods. Notices are published in the newspaper of largest circulation in the area.

**Timing:** Milestone driven.

#### **Activity 4: Community Relations Plan Update**

**Objective:** To outline the Air Force's strategy for conducting community involvement activities that changes as site conditions change.

**Method:** 40 CFR Part 300.415, 300.430, and 300.435 required the preparation of this CRP.

**Timing:** Revised as needed.

#### **Inherently governmental activities**

#### **Activity 5: Responses to Requests for Information**

**Objective:** To provide interested stakeholders with a venue to submit requests for information and receive feedback directly from the Air Force.

**Description:** Requests for information are received in writing, through e-mail, or phone; responses are provided in the same format.

**Timing:** Responses will be provided within 21 days from the date of receipt. If circumstances will not allow this response timeline to be met, an explanation of the delay will be provided immediately.

#### **Activity 6: Media Affairs**

**Objective:** To encourage accurate media coverage of major events or milestones, and establish a stronger relationship with the media to communicate progress and success stories.

**Description:** News releases are distributed and/or a "Media Day" is hosted upon reaching major milestones. Also, any media requests for information are answered as quickly as possible.

**Timing:** Milestone driven.

#### **Supplemental activities**

### **Activity 7: Public Information Line**

**Objective:** To enable citizens to get the latest information available when they want it, rather than having to wait for a meeting or a fact sheet, and without incurring any cost.

**Method:** AFRPA has established and continually advertises the availability of this line. The line is answered during normal business hours, and it is checked daily for after-hours messages. The toll-free information line is (866) 725-7617.

**Timing:** Daily.

### **Activity 8: Public Web site**

**Objective:** To provide increased access to information about the Eaker cleanup in an electronic format accessible from any location with a computer and Internet connection.

**Method:** AFRPA will launch a public Web site which will include RAB-related materials such as agendas, minutes, transcripts, presentations and handouts; fact sheets; and maps. The Web site will also provide contact information for public affairs.

**Timing:** The website is currently being redesigned.

## **Appendix A: Regulatory Contacts**

### **Federal Regulatory Agency**

Henry Onsgard (6PD-NB)  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 1200  
Dallas, Texas 75202-2733  
(214) 665-8121  
FAX (214) 665-7263  
E-mail: onsgard.henry@epa.gov

### **State Regulatory Agency**

Erin Smart  
Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality  
Hazardous Waste Division  
P.O. Box 8913  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72219-8913  
(501) 682-0789  
E-mail: smart@adeq.state.ar.us

## Appendix B: Federal, State, and Local Elected Officials

### Federal Elected Officials

**The Honorable Mark Pryor  
United States Senate**

Washington Office  
257 Dirksen Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
Phone: 202-224-2353  
Little Rock Office  
The River Market  
500 Clinton Avenue  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201  
Phone: 501-324-6336

**The Honorable Blanche L. Lincoln  
United States Senate**

Washington Office  
355 Dirksen Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
Phone: 202-224-4843  
Jonesboro Office  
Federal Building  
615 South Main Street  
Jonesboro, Arkansas 72401  
Phone: 870-910-6896

**The Honorable Marion Berry  
United States House of Representatives**

1<sup>st</sup> District  
Washington Office  
2305 Rayburn House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515  
Phone: 202-225-4076  
Jonesboro District Office  
108 East Huntington  
Jonesboro, Arkansas 72401  
Phone: 870-972-4600 or 1-800-866-2701

### State Elected Officials

**The Honorable Mike Beebe  
Governor**

Office of the Governor  
State Capitol Room 250  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201  
Phone: 501-682-2345

**The Honorable Steve Bryles  
Arkansas State Senator**

Senate District 15  
514 West Main  
Blytheville, Arkansas 72315  
Phone: 870-762-1365

**The Honorable Tommy Lee Baker  
Arkansas State House of Representatives**

House District 55  
P.O. Box 361  
Osceola, Arkansas 72370  
Phone: 870-563-8277

**The Honorable Charlotte Wagner  
Arkansas State House of Representatives**

House District 77  
P.O. Box 909  
Manilla, Arkansas 72442  
Phone: 870-561-4600

### Local Elected Officials

**The Honorable Barrett E. Harrison  
Mayor, City of Blytheville**

1214 West Walnut  
Blytheville, Arkansas 72315  
Phone: 870-763-3602

**The Honorable Dick Reams  
Mayor, City of Gosnell**

201 South Airbase Highway  
Blytheville, Arkansas 72315  
Phone: 870-532-8544

**Blytheville City Council Members**

Ward 1  
John Singleton  
1409 Normandy Lane  
Blytheville, Arkansas 72315  
Phone: 870-762-2641

Ward 1  
James Sanders  
604 Riverbend  
Blytheville, Arkansas 72315  
Phone: 870-763-5614

Ward 2  
Shirley Overman  
1008 Montclair  
Blytheville, Arkansas 72315  
Phone: 870-763-4112

Ward 2  
Shirley Connealy  
1701 S. Wedgewood  
Blytheville, Arkansas 72315  
Phone: 870-762-1825

Ward 3  
Mylas Jeffers  
1209 Lee Circle S.  
Blytheville, Arkansas 72315  
Phone: 870-762-1020

Ward 3  
Ray Jones  
2022 Chickasawba  
Blytheville, Arkansas 72315  
Phone: 870-762-5532

**Gosnell City Council Members**

Ward 1  
Tammie Fulks  
530 Leigh  
Gosnell, Arkansas 72315  
Phone: 870- 532-2609

Ward 1  
Eric Blount  
141 Shields  
Gosnell, Arkansas 72315  
Phone: 870-532-5692

Ward 2  
Melissa Sellers  
362 Cottonwood  
Gosnell, Arkansas 72315  
Phone: 870-532-5944

Ward 2  
Bobby Trump  
355 Cottonwood  
Gosnell, Arkansas 72315  
Phone: 870-532-0450

Ward 3  
Terry Byrd  
110 Marti  
Gosnell, Arkansas 72315  
Phone: 870-532-2280

Ward 3  
Robert Charles  
700 Calumet Rd  
Gosnell, Arkansas 72315  
Phone: 870-532-2371

## **Appendix C: Associated Agencies**

### **Local Redevelopment Authority**

Blytheville-Gosnell Regional Airport Authority  
P.O. Box 166  
Blytheville, AR 72316-0166  
501-532-2100

### **Arkansas Department of Health**

4815 Markham Street  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72205-3867  
Phone: 501-661-2000

### **Blytheville Public Schools Administrative Office**

405 W. Park  
Blytheville, AR 72315  
870-762-2053

### **Gosnell Public Schools Administrative Office**

600 Highway 181  
Gosnell, AR 72315  
870-532-4000

## **Appendix D: Media Contacts**

### **Newspapers**

*Blytheville Courier News*

P.O. Box 1108

Blytheville, Arkansas 72315

Phone: 870-763-4461

<http://www.blythevillecn.com/>

### **Radio Stations**

KHLS-96.3 FM (Country)

P.O. Box 989

Blytheville, Arkansas 72315

Phone: 870-762-2093

KAMJ-93.9 FM (Adult Urban)

P.O. Box 989

Blytheville, Arkansas 72315

Phone: 870-838-9390

KDXY-104.9 FM (Country)

314 Union

Jonesboro, Arkansas 72401

Phone: 870-933-8800

KDEZ-100.5 FM (Classic Rock)

314 Union

Jonesboro, Arkansas 72401

Phone: 870-933-8800

### **Television Stations**

KAIT Channel 8 (ABC)

472 County Road 766

Jonesboro, Arkansas 72401

Phone: 870-931-8888

<http://www.kait8.com>

KTEJ Channel 19 (AETN)

350 South Donaghey

Conway, Arkansas 72034

Phone: 501-682-2386 or 1-800-662-2386

<http://www.aetn.org/>

## **Appendix E: Meeting and Repository Locations, and Other Local Resources**

### **Meeting Locations**

#### **Potential Public Meeting Location**

AP&L Hospitality Room  
405 Park Street  
Blytheville, Arkansas 72315  
Phone: 870-762-3568

#### **Information Repository Location**

Arkansas Aeroplex  
4701 Memorial Drive  
Blytheville, Arkansas 72316  
Phone: 870-762-2431  
Hours of operation: 9:00-5:00 Monday - Friday

#### **Administrative Record Website**

<https://afarpaar.afarpa.pentagon.af.mil/ar/docsearch.aspx>