

# Roswell Tower survives, for now

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Roswell International Air Center's air traffic control tower will remain open for the near future and commercial flights will continue. Federal Aviation Administration and airline officials confirmed Wednesday.

The tower is the only site on FAA's New Mexico elimination list to be pulled off. Military use and its federal staffing may have factored into the decision to keep Roswell's airport controlled, but the decision may not be

permanent.

"Roswell has a lot of military training that goes on there," said Lynn Lunsford, FAA regional spokesman. "But to say that (Roswell's tower is) totally out of the woods would be inaccurate. The federal towers are remaining open for the foreseeable future."

Federal spending cuts that kicked in March 1 with the sequestration will still affect control tower. The federal employees will be forced to take one day off without pay every two weeks.

The FAA may still elimi-

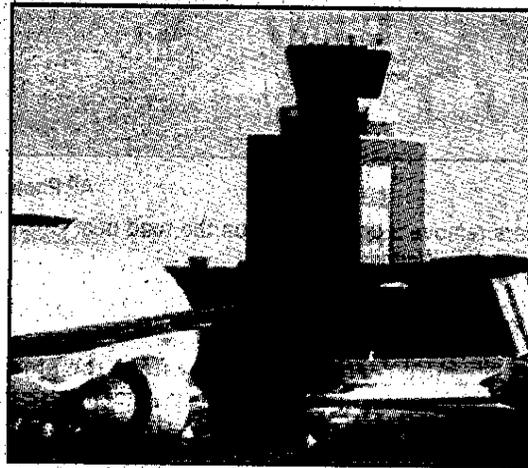
nate funding the control towers at Double Eagle in Albuquerque, Lea County Regional in Hobbs and Santa Fe Municipal. Unlike Roswell's tower, contract air traffic controllers man these sites.

Plans to cease funding 173 air traffic control towers beginning April 7 have changed in the past few days. If airports can justify reasons to remain open, the list could change again.

"We don't have a final list yet," Lunsford said.

The FAA sent letters to

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Jill McLau

The Federal Aviation Administration has suspended to close the Roswell Tower. Military and general flights continued regular operations, Wednesday.

## Tower

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these airports Wednesday. The letters ask cities or entities that own the airports to submit reasons why the FAA should continue funding operations.

"Between now and March 13, 2013, the FAA is reviewing its list of locations where it plans to discontinue air traffic control services to identify any

locations where the national interest would be adversely affected by tower closure," FAA Administrator Michael Huerta and David Grizzle, chief operating officer for the Air Traffic Organization wrote in the letters.

Negative impact on the national interest is the only factor the FAA will use for deciding to continue services to an airport. The FAA is asking cities and airports to submit reasons why the administration should keep

each tower open.

Backing off from its initial statement, the FAA is now offering to allow airports to operate control towers by paying for services.

"We are going to cease funding these facilities, but it does not preclude the local municipality from funding the company currently providing these services," Lunsford said.

Roswell will continue to be served by American Eagle Airlines, according to

an airlines spokesman. American Eagle, the only commercial airline company to operate out of the airport with flights to Dallas/Ft. Worth for American Airlines, will continue flights for the "next few months."

"It's too soon to discuss what, if any, impact the sequestration issue will have on American's operations — in Roswell or elsewhere," said American Air-

lines spokesman Matt Miller.

American Airlines is monitoring the situation, he said.

"We kind of have to see how it all plays out," Miller said. "We don't have any plans to do anything different in the next couple of months."

RIAC is a municipal airport, allowing general aviators to use the facilities at no cost. The military also

utilizes the field for flight training and the tower — which has approach and departure, and air control capabilities — is used as a training facility by Eastern New Mexico University-Roswell.

Roswell's control tower was put on the FAA's elimination list as it had fewer than 10,000 commercial operations and fewer than 150,000 total operations last year.