DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT / OVERSEAS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
FOR TRIDENT II (D5) LIFE EXTENSION/LIFE EXTENSION 2 (D5LE/LE2)
WEAPON SYSTEMS TESTING PROGRAM
AT SPACE LAUNCH COMPLEX 46, CAPE CANAVERAL SPACE FORCE STATION, FL

INTRODUCTION

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as amended by the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, the Department of the Air Force (DAF) is issuing this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). This action is taken pursuant to 32 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 989.15, which outlines the DAF's requirements for a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) determination. The DAF is aware of Executive Order (E.O.) 14154, Unleashing American Energy (revoking E.O. 11991 and amending E.O. 11514), and that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) rescinded its NEPA regulations on 11 April 2025.

Pursuant to the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and *Environmental Impact Analysis Process* (32 CFR 989); the DAF, United States Space Force (USSF), adopts the Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared by the Department of the Navy (DON). The DAF participated in the preparation of the EA/Overseas Environmental Assessment (OEA) as a cooperating agency to address the potential environmental impacts on the human environment, including the natural environment, associated with conducting land- and sea-based flight tests and fielding evaluations for the TRIDENT II D5LE/LE2 weapon systems testing program at Space Launch Complex 46 (SLC-46) at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station (CCSFS).

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to demonstrate weapon system effectiveness, test applicable design features, and to identify and validate effective operating procedures for deployment of the D5LE and D5LE2 weapon systems in both the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets.

The Proposed Action is needed to further the Navy's execution of its congressionally mandated role and responsibility under U.S.C. Title 10, Section 8062 to maintain mission readiness of the nation's submarine forces. To meet Title 10 requirements, SSP conducts flight testing throughout the service life of the TRIDENT II (D5) weapon systems to ensure that accuracy, reliability, and performance requirements continue to be met. Sea-based testing of both the D5LE and D5LE2 systems are needed in both the Atlantic and Pacific study areas because both the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets must acquire and maintain proficiency with all deployed weapons systems. Land-based testing for the D5LE2 only is needed to ensure that the technology is safe, reliable, and effective before being used on deployed submarines. D5LE and previous technologies were similarly subject to land-based testing before Fleet deployment.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Proposed Action

This FONSI applies solely to launches from CCSFS at SLC-46 with impact in the Atlantic Broad Ocean Area (BOA), as described below, and in Sections 2.1.2 and 2.4.2 of the EA/OEA.

The EA/OEA analyzes potential impacts from the Proposed Action occurring at SLC-46 on CCSFS. The activities at the CCSFS site include the SLC-46 launch area, the over-ocean flight corridor originating from SLC-46 and extending over the Atlantic, and the designated Atlantic BOA impact area for each test event. The program proposes and intends to launch a total of up to 10 inert D5LE2 weapon systems during CYs 2032 - 2036. Existing facilities, transportation routes, and infrastructure would be used at CCSFS; therefore, no new construction is associated with the proposal. The launch vehicle consists of a three-stage, solid fuel, guided missile with an additional equipment section that can carry up to seven independent non-tactical re-entry bodies (RBs) that do not carry any fuel. In a typical launch from SLC-46, the first stage motor would ignite at ground level, providing initial propellant, followed by the second and third stage motors in sequence. The weapon system would follow a calculated ballistic trajectory to the designated and pre-cleared target impact area. The RBs would be released during down-range flight and travel on a predetermined trajectory to the designated impact area for each test launch. After burnout of the solid propellant and separation of each stage, the three spent motor casings and the equipment section casing would land at various points in the Atlantic BOA and sink. All solid fuel propellant in the rocket motors would be consumed before the spent motor casings impact the ocean surface. The spent casings would not be recovered. No land areas would be overflown and all components would land at least 50 nautical miles (NM) from the U.S. shoreline and at least 200 NM from any other landmass or islands. Most test launches would occur during daytime, but nighttime launches may also occur.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would not occur. Critical flight testing needed to verify the operational performance and safety of the TRIDENT II (D5) weapon systems prior to deployment to the SSBN fleet would not be able to continue, and an essential mission component of the nation's nuclear deterrent capability would be reduced. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would not meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action.

Alternatives Eliminated from Further Consideration

NEPA requires agencies to identify "a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed agency action…that are technically and economically feasible, and meet the purpose and need of the proposal" 42 U.S.C. § 4332(C)(iii) (2024). The DON evaluated potential alternatives such as, other BOAs for testing, testing solely in the Pacific or the Atlantic, test launches from National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Wallops Flight Facility, and test launches from Vandenberg Space Force Station for reasonableness (see section 2.3). The aforementioned alternatives were considered, but not carried forward for detailed analysis in this EA/OEA because they did not meet the purpose and need for the project and/or did not satisfy the reasonable alternative screening factors presented in Section 2.2.

Therefore, only the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative were carried forward for further evaluation.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The EA/OEA evaluates in detail the potential environmental consequences from the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative in the following resource areas: air quality, biological resources (including noise effects on species), hazardous materials and waste management, and public health and safety (including noise effects on humans). Certain other environmental resources (i.e., cultural resources, water resources, geological resources, land use, visual resources, airspace management, infrastructure, transportation, and socioeconomics) were evaluated but not carried forward for detailed analysis in the EA/OEA because potential environmental effects were determined to be negligible or non-existent. Potential cumulative effects are also addressed in the EA/OEA. Based on the analysis, neither the Proposed Action nor the No Action Alternative would result in individual or cumulatively significant impacts to any resources.

The No Action Alternative would result in less impact than the Proposed Action; however, it would not meet the Action's purpose and need.

PUBLIC REVIEW

A Notice of Availability (NOA) was placed in several local newspapers and the Draft EA and FONSI were made available for public review and comment for 30 days. The documents were made available on the DON's website, https://www.nepa.navy.mil/TRIDENTII-EA and the Patrick Space Force Base Environmental Website, Environmental Information. In accordance with 32 CFR 989.9, the DAF released the Draft FONSI for specific actions affecting DAF property (described above). The Draft EA was also provided to the State Clearinghouse.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on my review of the facts and analyses contained in the attached EA, conducted per the NEPA, 42 U.S. Code 4321 et seq., and 32 CFR 989, I conclude that implementing the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required and this FONSI is appropriate. I decided this after considering all submitted information, including reviewing public and agency comments, and considering a range of reasonable alternatives. This analysis fulfills the requirements of NEPA and the signing of this Finding of No Significant Impact completes the Environmental Impact Analysis Process.

APPROVED BY:

MARCIA L. QUIGLEY, Col, USAF

Director, Space Force Mission Sustainment

(Engineering, Logistics, & Force Protection)

Date

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