

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Environmental Assessment, prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality NEPA regulations at 40 CFR 1500-1508, and Air Force Regulation 19-2 defining the Environmental Impact Analysis Process for the Air Force, evaluates the proposed phaseout and subsequent conversion of Minuteman (MM) II missiles to MM III missiles at Malmstrom Air Force Base (AFB), Montana. The purpose of and need for the proposed action is to remove the oldest system from the intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) force, while retaining the most cost-effective strategic deterrence in the context of the budget and resources available to the Department of Defense. The MM III system has improved accuracy and is more reliable than the MM II system.

The 341st Missile Wing (MW) operates and maintains the MM II missile system at Malmstrom AFB. The system includes 150 launch facilities (LFs) with one missile per LF, and 15 launch control facilities (LCFs) located throughout an extensive deployment area outside of the missile support base (MSB). The U.S. Air Force proposes to deactivate 150 MM II missiles from the LFs in the deployment area of Malmstrom AFB and replace them with 150 MM III missiles. A slight adjustment to the missile umbilical would be made and the suspension system would be checked and adjusted, if necessary, to handle the slightly heavier MM III missile. Software for use with the MM III system would be substituted for the existing software and loaded into each LF and LCF. Conversion under the proposed action would proceed sequentially from one missile squadron to another over a 6-year period starting in October 1991. A possible alternative to the proposed action is to continue maintenance of the existing system without conversion, also known as the no action alternative.

Under the proposed action, the missiles would be removed from the LFs using the same procedures as under current maintenance operations. The removal and transport of the missiles from the LFs would not introduce any new procedures or techniques; the same methods applicable to current operations would be applied to the proposed action. The procedures are proven and would involve experienced personnel. An average of two MM II missiles would be removed each month and replaced with the MM III missiles; however, weather conditions, equipment breakdown, personnel schedules, and holidays would cause the missile removal and transport rate to vary.

Once removed, the missile components would be transported to Malmstrom AFB. The rocket motors would be shipped from the missile support base to Hill AFB, Utah, and the guidance system would be shipped to Hill AFB, Newark Air Station, Ohio or to Pueblo Army Depot, Colorado. The procedures for shipping missile components are routinely followed as Minuteman II missiles are continually being refurbished and modernized. The MM system safety programs extend from concept development and system design, through deployment, operation, and transportation. In nearly 30 years of operating the Minuteman ICBM system, the Air Force has never experienced a mishap leading to a fire or explosion. The Air Force Logistics Command (AFLC) has prepared an

environmental assessment on the handling, transportation, and storage of rocket motors. Based on the results of the study, a finding of no significant impact has been made.

The RVs are transported to Department of Energy (DOE) locations using safe, secure transport assets. The risk of impacts resulting from handling, transporting, and decommissioning reentry vehicles is negligible. The potential for a serious transportation accident is remote. The probability of a release of radioactive material is even less than the probability of an accident occurring. In the unlikely event that a serious transportation would occur, the predicted environmental impacts would be significant within the immediate accident vicinity. The risk of an accident, which is influenced by both the probability and consequences, is negligible.

The transport, maintenance, and support vehicles and facilities of the MM II system would be used for the same purposes to implement the proposed action as they are currently used. Adequate storage and handling facilities exist to facilitate the conversion. During the conversion process, the usage of particular vehicles would increase from approximately 20 missile recycles (removing one missile and emplacing another) per year to approximately 26 missile recycles per year (an increase of roughly 25 percent). Other missions in support of the MW, such as communications and operations, would incur a negligible increase in vehicle usage. Activities at each LF involving missile removal and emplacement would occur within the fenced security area.

The same Missile Handling Teams handle both the MM II and MM III systems; therefore, no additional training for these teams would be required if the MM II system was converted to a MM III system. However, two other groups that work with either the MM II or the MM III systems would need to undergo further training to perform their missions: the MM II missile combat crews would have to undergo a training program to monitor and operate the MM III system; and the Missile Maintenance Teams would require some training for maintenance of the MM III system.

The following areas of concern were included in an initial evaluation of the affected environment: air quality; geological resources; water resources; biological resources; archeological and cultural resources; health and safety/hazardous materials; noise; transportation; and socioeconomics. For these areas of concern, potential environmental consequences associated with the proposed action are evaluated and where applicable, mitigation measures are suggested. The no action alternative, continued operation of the MM II system, would not result in any new significant impacts. Other alternatives considered but eliminated from further evaluation include: changing the MW selected for conversion and/or phaseout, shortening the conversion process, lengthening the conversion process, or only converting one or two MSs. These alternatives were considered unreasonable because of the existing infrastructure at Malmstrom AFB to support a MM III conversion, the age of the MM II missiles, ranging and targeting capabilities, system hardness, Congressional direction, and the need to maintain strategic deterrence within the constraints of the DoD budget.

The evaluation of implementing the proposed action resulted in overall insignificant, if not negligible, impacts to the biophysical and human environment of Malmstrom AFB and throughout the deployment area. Any potential impacts to the geological, water, biological, and cultural resources, and to noise receptors would be negligible. A small number of security police (less than a one percent increase in personnel each year for two consecutive years) would be added to aid in the conversion process. Adequate housing and service capacity exist for the projected personnel increase. Thus, the local social and economic environment would not experience any significant impacts.

The local air quality along 10th Avenue South in Great Falls, MT would be insignificantly affected from a slight increase in the number of trips by the transporter-erector, maintenance, and support vehicles. Fugitive dust at the LFs may potentially increase from additional activity at the sites, but this would be an insignificant impact to the air quality.

Exposure to hazardous materials, particularly sodium chromate solution, during the proposed action could affect worker health and safety. However, the likelihood of this impact is negligible because of the low quantities of hazardous materials handled, the mechanics of the handling process, and the requirement to wear safety gear.

Adverse, yet insignificant impacts are anticipated to the transportation network, particularly along 10th Avenue South. The average number of trips by the transport, maintenance, and support vehicles would increase from approximately 20 missile recycles per year to approximately 26 missile recycles per year. However, other missions in support of the MW, such as communications and operations, would incur a negligible increase in vehicle usage. Although the number of trips would increase, the accident rate is expected to remain relatively constant with a negligible increase in accidents occurring. To minimize the potential of any impacts to local traffic, the majority of vehicle trips associated with the proposed action would occur during non-peak hours.