FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE THEATER BALLISTIC MISSILE TARGETS PROGRAM AT VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE, CALIFORNIA

This environmental assessment (EA) analyzes the environmental impacts of launching up to 30 target missiles per year from Vandenberg Air Force Base (AFB) using mobile launchers and one fixed rail launcher. Both solid- and liquid-fueled target missiles are under consideration.

PURPOSE AND NEED: The purpose of this proposed action is to expand the capabilities of the Western Range to provide launches of small, mobile theater, and larger rail-launched targets from Vandenberg AFB to be intercepted over the open ocean of the Western Range off the California coast.

Expanded target launch capabilities need to be available at Vandenberg AFB to support future Navy, Air Force, and Army operations in the Western Range. Flight tests are needed to provide targets to fully validate system design and operational effectiveness of theater defensive missiles and other defense systems utilized by the various services in the Department of Defense.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES: The proposed action is to expand the launch capability at Vandenberg AFB to support future Navy, Air Force, and Army missile testing operations in the Western Range. These operations include realistic test situations for intercepts by defensive missile systems. Up to approximately 30 target launches per year are anticipated. An average of five launches could occur every 2 months, with up to five launches occurring in a 3-day period for a particular exercise. Some launches may occur simultaneously. No major construction would be required. There would be no overflight of the islands off the coast of California.

The U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command (USASMDC), in cooperation with Vandenberg AFB, proposes to launch small liquid and solid propellant theater ballistic missiles (TBMs) from mobile launchers on several sites on Vandenberg AFB. Examples of these missiles include the Lance (and Lance-like missiles), HERMES, PATRIOT as a Target (PAAT), and sounding rockets. Larger target missiles, such as the Hera, Storm, and ARIES, would be launched from an existing rail launcher to be located at Space Launch Complex (SLC)-5.

The target missiles and sounding rockets could be launched from mobile launchers and existing launch pads at any of the following locations:

- North Vandenberg AFB
  - Group A: Launch Facility (LF)-06, LF-07, LF-09, LF-25, LF-26
  - Group B: LF-21, LF-22, LF-23, LF-24
  - Group C: Test Pad 01; Rail Garrison Peacekeeper; Advanced Ballistic Re-entry System (ABRES) A, sites 1, 2, and 3; 576-E
- South Vandenberg AFB
  - Group D: SLC-3W, SLC-5
  - Group E: V-33

Defensive missile systems would be launched from aboard ships, aircraft, or ground sites as analyzed in the Theater Missile Defense (TMD) Extended Test Range Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Flight testing requires collection and analysis of flight data by means of optical sensors, telemetry receivers, and radar. Most of the data collection systems are existing and would not need to be constructed to support theater missile testing.

In addition to the proposed action alternative, the no-action alternative was evaluated. The no-action alternative is to continue current operations at Vandenberg AFB and the Western Range without adding the capability to launch theater ballistic missile targets and participate in intercept operations.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (40 CFR 1500-1508), Department of Defense Directive 6050.1, the USASMDC has conducted an EA of the potential environmental consequences of expanded target missile launch capabilities at Vandenberg AFB, California.

The TMD Extended Test Range EIS, completed in November 1994, analyzed the impacts of launching target missiles from ships located in the Pacific Ocean and interceptor missiles launched from various launch sites on Vandenberg AFB and the associated Western Range Candidate Test Area. However, the Record of Decision signed on 21 March 1995 did not select Vandenberg AFB as a site for TMD testing because sea-launch capabilities were not available. Vandenberg AFB is now being considered for launches of small, TBM, mobile-launched targets and larger rail-launched target missiles.

SUMMARY OF THE ANTICIPATED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS: To assess the significance of a decision to expand the target launch capability of Vandenberg AFB, the affected environment and all activities with the potential for causing environmental impacts were

identified. Twelve broad environmental resources were evaluated to determine the potential effects of the proposed action. The 12 broad environmental resources include, as appropriate: air quality, airspace, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soil quality, hazardous materials/waste, health and safety, infrastructure, land use, noise, socioeconomics, and water resources. Launches of small target missiles from mobile launchers would result in a potential for impacts similar to or less than those discussed in the TMD Extended Test Range Final EIS for airspace, geology and soils, infrastructure, socioeconomics, and water resources. Impacts were determined to be not significant in the EIS for these resources; therefore, these resource areas were not reevaluated in this EA.

The results of this analysis were based upon the estimation of potential environmental consequences of up to 30 target missile launches per year occurring on Vandenberg AFB. An average of five launches every 2 months, with up to five launches in a 3-day period for a particular exercise, were assessed.

Air Quality. Santa Barbara County does not meet federal and state air quality standards for ozone and PM-10 criteria pollutants. Emissions of ozone precursors, nitrogen dioxide, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are of great concern to the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District (SBCAPCD). Launch and pre-launch support activities, while not yet defined in detail, would likely result in low emissions of VOCs from activities such as use of cleaning solvents, oil and lubricants, and paints or thinners. Launch preparation and support activities would likely require some air quality permits and associated mandated offsets. The emissions would be regulated in accordance with te existing Memorandum of Agreement between the SBCAPCD and Vandenberg AFB. An air quality conformity analysis has been completed and a conformity determination is not required.

Biological Resources. No construction or overflight activities are proposed that would impact vegetation, wildlife, endangered species, water quality or wetlands. Impacts that can result from launch-related activities include debris impacts, launch noise, sonic booms, and missile emissions. Launch scheduling will be coordinated with wildlife agencies to minimize disruption to the pinniped pupping season and to roosting or nesting sites of sea birds. Launches will avoid overflights of Points Arguello and Pedernales if possible, specifically during the nesting season. Night launches will be avoided where possible, however, some missions may require night time or early morning (predawn) launches in order to accomplish specific mission objectives. On site monitoring will be conducted for specific areas of concern as determined by Vandenberg AFB, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and in accordance with the mitigation and monitoring set forth in the Programmatic Marine Mammal Take Authorization submitted by Vandenberg AFB

Cultural Resources. Ground disturbance would only occur as a result of debris strikes from a missile failure or flight termination, and off-road recovery of debris items. Program activities to reduce the potential for environmental impacts have been included as part of the proposed action. These activities include training of personnel, limiting the off-road recovery of debris, and consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer and The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

Hazardous Materials and Hazardous Waste. Hazardous materials and hazardous waste generation from the proposed action would not increase substantially from current operations. Procedures and materials storage and disposal infrastructure at Vandenberg AFB are sufficient to accommodate all hazardous waste produced by the proposed test operations. The current system for storage, handling, and disposal of hazardous materials at Vandenberg AFB is capable of meeting the requirements of hazardous materials and hazardous waste without incident.

Health and Safety. Health and safety issues associated with the proposed action involve hazardous emission products, explosive safety, and transportation safety for TBM systems. The explosive devices and materials proposed for use with target missile operations are very similar to those currently in use at Vandenberg AFB. Implementation of standard safety procedures and reviews that are similar to current operations would serve to reduce the potential for explosive hazards.

To provide protection for mission-essential personnel, all launch activities would require the base to establish a Launch Hazard Area (LHA) for each flight test mission. The LHA provides a designated area from which personnel are cleared based on potential hazards from any missile debris that may result from launch or near-launch activities. The LHAs for some proposed launch sites may extend beyond the Vandenberg AFB boundaries. Landowner agreements exist which permit control of these areas during launch activities. Implementing the LHA procedures allows for protection of the population that could be affected by the launch and minimizes hazards associated with unplanned flight termination. Impact zones for successful or unsuccessful intercepts would be completely over open sea waters or contained within the limits of the Western Range Area.

Land Use. The use of existing Vandenberg AFB facilities to launch target missiles would not change the overall land use and management of the base. Potential impacts to off-site land use (coastal access, recreation, commercial and sport fishing industries) may occur under conditions where LHAs for each flight test mission extend outside the boundaries of Vandenberg AFB. These impacts can be minimized by scheduling launches during weekdays and with sufficient notice of offshore LHAs so that fishing boats can schedule their trips to avoid the LHA. Closure

of Jalama Beach is not under consideration for any of the proposed launches.

Noise. The proposed action includes provisions to launch up to 30 target missiles per year. At close distances, maximum noise levels for some types of missiles exceed the levels allowable by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. These maximum sound pressure levels would last for several seconds and then quickly taper off as the launch vehicle moves away. Personnel with exposure to noise would be required to wear hearing protection (ear plugs) and follow established procedures to reduce noise exposure.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION: The resulting environmental analysis shows that no significant impacts would occur from the proposed TBM Targets testing program. Based upon the information contained within this assessment, a Finding of No Significant Impact is made. The preparation of an EIS, therefore, is not required.

POINT OF CONTACT: Submit written comments or requests for a copy of the Theater Ballistic Missile Targets Program EA to:

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