

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE REALIGNMENT AND  
DEVELOPMENT OF A NAVAL INTEGRATED WEAPONS AND ARMAMENTS  
RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND ACQUISITION, TEST AND EVALUATION  
CENTER AT NAVAL AIR WEAPONS STATION CHINA LAKE, CALIFORNIA

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 United States Code [USC] §§ 4321-4370d [1994]), as implemented by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508 [1997]); the Department of the Navy (DON) Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Implementation Guidance; and the U.S. Navy Procedures for implementing NEPA (32 CFR 775), as described in Chief of Naval Operations Instruction (OPNAVINST) 5090.1B, the DON gives notice that an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared and that an Environmental Impacts Statement (EIS) will not be prepared for the implementation of the realignment and consolidation of seven facilities to create a Naval Integrated Weapons and Armaments Research, Development, and Acquisition, Test and Evaluation (W&ARD&AT&E) Center at Naval Air Weapons Station (NAWS) China Lake, California.

**Proposed Action:** The Proposed Action is in response to the BRAC Commission of 2005 recommendations for the realignment and consolidation of personnel and activities from seven facilities working in W&ARD&AT&E to NAWS China Lake to create a Naval Integrated W&ARD&AT&E Center. On 9 November 2005, the recommendations became law and the BRAC Commission recommendations must now be implemented as provided for in the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-510), as amended. This specific recommendation would result in the realignment of personnel and activities from the following locations to NAWS China Lake: Naval Weapons Station (NWS) Seal Beach, California; Naval Base (NB) Ventura County, Point Mugu, California; NB Ventura County, Port Hueneme, California; Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC) Crane, Indiana; NSWC Dahlgren, Virginia; NSWC Indian Head, Maryland; and Naval Air Station (NAS) Patuxent River, Maryland.

The Proposed Action is the implementation of the BRAC recommendations and will require the transfer and relocation of active duty and civilian Navy personnel (and

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE REALIGNMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF A NAVAL INTEGRATED WEAPONS AND ARMAMENTS RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND ACQUISITION, TEST AND EVALUATION CENTER AT NAVAL AIR WEAPONS STATION CHINA LAKE, CALIFORNIA**

equipment) and the construction of 14 BRAC Construction (BRACON) projects. The 14 BRACONS involve the construction of the following facilities:

- P-745V (construction of Weapons and Armaments Technical Center);
- P-754V (renovation of Buildings 01028, 01025, 02477, and 20210);
- P-755V (renovation of Buildings 00001, 00466, and 31567, and construction of Support Equipment Storage Facility and Support Equipment Storage Yard);
- P-701V (construction of modular aircraft hangar);
- P-710V (construction of three anechoic chambers associated with Integrated Battlespace Arena);
- P-749V (renovation of Buildings 10170 and 10173 in China Lake Propulsion Lab and construction of test facility for fuze systems associated with live and inert missiles and components);
- P-712V (construction of ordnance magazines and other RD&AT&E facilities);
- P-719V (construction of laboratory and other W&ARD&AT&E facilities);
- P-732V (renovation of Michelson Laboratory in support of relocation of W&A functions);
- P-747V (construction of public works warehouse);
- P-704V (renovation of Buildings 11510, 10690, 12143, 15560, 31562, 12042, 12170, 11570, 10520, 15800, 16079, 15790, and 12042 in support of relocation of W&ARD&AT&E functions);
- P-759V (renovation of three buildings previously used as general bulk warehouses);
- P-777V (construction of Weapons Dynamic Research Development, Test and Evaluation Center); and
- P-778V (construction of facilities for shipboard shock testing).

The Proposed Action meets each of the three planning criteria (meeting needs of incoming commands; locate new facilities in proximity to existing facilities on NAWS China Lake; and maximize use of existing facilities). In the Proposed Action, the Weapons and Armaments Technology Center (P-745V) would be surrounded by lawn areas, sidewalks, and a pedestrian plaza, and would have its own

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE REALIGNMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF A NAVAL INTEGRATED WEAPONS AND ARMAMENTS RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND ACQUISITION, TEST AND EVALUATION CENTER AT NAVAL AIR WEAPONS STATION CHINA LAKE, CALIFORNIA**

parking area to the south. In conjunction with creation of the pedestrian plaza, a portion of Blandy Avenue west of Knox Road would be closed to vehicular traffic in order to maximize use of the plaza. (See comparison in discussion of Alternatives 1 and 2, below.) These aspects of P-745V reflect essentially aesthetic options, and variation between the Proposed Action and Alternatives 1 and 2 with respect to such options does not impact the decision criteria *per se*.

**Alternatives Analyzed:** Two action alternatives (identified below) plus the No Action Alternative are considered in this EA.

**Alternative 1 - Redesign of BRACON P-745V**

Under this alternative, all the personnel and functional realignments would take place as set forth in the Proposed Action. All the BRACONS would take place as set forth in the Proposed Action with the exception of P-745V, the Weapons and Armaments Technology Center. This BRACON would still be sited near the base headquarters, in what is known as the Administrative Area, as under the Proposed Action; however, under Alternative 1, P-745V and its associated parking area would be sited on the southwest side of the intersection of Blandy Avenue and Knox Road along with its associated parking area, rather than on the southeast side of the same intersection under the Proposed Action. This would site the Weapons and Armament Technology Center closer to the facilities proposed for P-719V (W&ARD&AT&E facilities). In addition, no pedestrian plaza would be created as in the Proposed Action, and accordingly the portion of Blandy Avenue that would be closed under the Proposed Action would be left open under Alternative 1. Like the Proposed Action, Alternative 1 would meet all decision criteria.

**Alternative 2 - BRACONS P-745V and P-719V Combined**

Implementation of Alternative 2 would result in all the personnel and functional realignments taking place as set forth in the Proposed Action. Twelve BRACONS would be implemented as set forth in the Proposed Action. The Weapons and Armaments Technology Center (P-745V) and the proposed facilities for P-719V would be combined in a single facility. This combined facility would be in the Administrative Area (see above), as each BRACON would be if

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE REALIGNMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF A NAVAL INTEGRATED WEAPONS AND ARMAMENTS RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND ACQUISITION, TEST AND EVALUATION CENTER AT NAVAL AIR WEAPONS STATION CHINA LAKE, CALIFORNIA**

implemented separately under the Proposed Action; however, under Alternative 2, the combined version of P-745V and P-719V would be sited as one structure located northwest of the intersection of Blandy Avenue and Knox Road within the existing NAVAIR compound, and adjoining Building 00005, whereas under the Proposed Action only P-719V would be northwest of this intersection, while P-745V would be southeast of the intersection. The parking area for P-719V and P-745V would be combined and located southwest of the Weapons and Armament Technology Center. As with Alternative 1, no pedestrian plaza would be created, and the portion of Blandy Avenue that would be closed under the Proposed Action would be left open. Like the Proposed Action and Alternative 1, Alternative 2 would meet all decision criteria..

**No Action Alternative** - The No Action Alternative would not provide the necessary facilities to accommodate the BRAC action and would not provide for the realignment and consolidation directed by BRAC law. The No Action Alternative does, however, perform the important function of acting as an environmental baseline against which environmental consequences of other alternatives are measured.

**Existing Conditions:** NAWS China Lake is in the Upper Mojave Desert of California, approximately 242 kilometers (150 miles) northeast of Los Angeles. The NAWS, composed of the North Range and the South Range, covers approximately 1,700 square miles (4,402 square kilometers) and is located in three counties: Inyo, Kern, and San Bernardino. Existing facility configurations at NAWS China Lake cannot accommodate the workforce transfer mandated by the 2005 BRAC Commission's recommendation and ensuing legislation. Of the 14 BRACONs, only one (P-701V: the modular hangar) would involve construction outside a previously-disturbed area.)

**Environmental Effects:** The Navy has determined that of the 32 buildings affected by the Proposed Action (i.e., located in the project areas), the following 13 structures are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), either individually or as contributing elements to historic districts: Buildings 00001, 00005, 10520, 10690, 11050, 11570, 15560, 15790, 15800, 10170,

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE REALIGNMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF A NAVAL INTEGRATED WEAPONS AND ARMAMENTS RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND ACQUISITION, TEST AND EVALUATION CENTER AT NAVAL AIR WEAPONS STATION CHINA LAKE, CALIFORNIA**

10173, 12170, and 12160. The Navy also has determined that Buildings 00008, 00466, 02602, 01025, 01028, 01040, 01041, 01042, 02624, 02477, 11510, 12042, 12143, 16079, 20210, 31562, 31567, 12140, and 91042 are ineligible for NRHP listing.

In compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the Navy initiated a series of consultations with the Office of Historic Preservation of the California Department of Parks and Recreation (SHPO). In a letter dated 27 September 2006, the SHPO stated that it would agree to the finding of No Adverse Effects with Conditions for Buildings 00005 and 11050. These conditions would include the submittal to the SHPO of the design plans and specifications once they have been completed.

Subsequent to the initial SHPO consultation, the scope of the EA was further defined. Additional consultation was determined to be needed for additional historic-era buildings and resources that could be affected. In a letter dated 19 March 2007, the SHPO stated that it concurred with the Navy's determination of "ineligible for inclusion on the National Register" for an additional 17 buildings and two archaeological sites referenced in a letter sent by the Navy dated 15 February 2007 letter. The SHPO also stated that it would agree to a "No Historic Properties Affected" determination in lieu of a "no effect" determination for proposed interior renovations to four historic district buildings (10170, 10173, 12160, and 12170).

Informal consultation with the USFWS is required under the ESA if the Proposed Action would occur at locations likely to be inhabited by threatened or endangered plant and animal species. Federally listed species potentially present in the Proposed Action area include the desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*).

Two other federally listed species, the Mohave tui chub (*Gila bicolor mohavensis*) and California Inyo towhee (*Pipilo crissalis eremophilus*), are found on NAWS China Lake; however they are not found in proximity to any of the BRACON areas. The only state listed species that are known to be found or have the potential to be found in the Proposed Action area are the Mojave ground squirrel and the burrowing owl.

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE REALIGNMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF A NAVAL INTEGRATED WEAPONS AND ARMAMENTS RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND ACQUISITION, TEST AND EVALUATION CENTER AT NAVAL AIR WEAPONS STATION CHINA LAKE, CALIFORNIA**

NAWS China Lake has a Biological Opinion (BO) on the desert tortoise from the USFWS which is included in the EA as Appendix A. The BO was issued in 1995 and evaluates the impacts that the *NAWS China Lake's Desert Tortoise Habitat Management Plan* would have on desert tortoise critical habitat. It was the USFWS's opinion that the *NAWS China Lake's Desert Tortoise Habitat Management Plan* would not likely jeopardize the continued existence of the desert tortoise or adversely modify desert tortoise critical habitat. In this case, no consultation with the USFWS is required since: the Proposed Action area is not within the Desert Tortoise Management Area, is less than 20.2 hectares (50 acres) in total area, and biological surveys found no signs of desert tortoises; therefore NAWS China Lake would only be required to notify the USFWS concerning the Proposed Action in its annual report (Paragraph 1.h of the Terms and Conditions of the BO). With respect to the Mojave ground squirrel and burrowing owl, the EA sets forth a variety of measures designed to avoid or minimize the non-significant impacts that the Proposed Action might potentially generate with respect to these species.

The increase in personnel working on NAWS China Lake as a result of the Proposed Action would cause two intersections on NAWS China Lake to operate at LOS D or below during some or all peak hours absent mitigation (the Lauritsen Road/Sandquist Road intersection at LOS E during the morning peak hour; the East Inyokern Road/Bullard Road intersection at LOS F during the morning peak hour, LOS D during the midday peak hour, and LOS E during the evening peak hour). As mitigation, traffic lanes will be reconfigured so that all intersections on the installation would operate at LOS C or better in all peak periods, except one intersection operating at LOS D during the morning peak period.

Mitigation for the Lauritsen Road/Sandquist Road intersection would consist of separating the shared westbound left-through lane into an exclusive left-turn and through lane. This intersection would then operate at LOS D during the morning peak hour. Mitigation for the East Inyokern Road/Bullard Road intersection would consist of (1) converting the inside eastbound through lane into a left-turn pocket; (2) separating the southbound shared left-through-right lane into an exclusive left-turn and

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE REALIGNMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF A NAVAL INTEGRATED WEAPONS AND ARMAMENTS RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND ACQUISITION, TEST AND EVALUATION CENTER AT NAVAL AIR WEAPONS STATION CHINA LAKE, CALIFORNIA**

right-turn lane; (3) restricting the northbound approach along Bullard Road to right-in, right-out movements only by constructing a "pork chop" raised median; and (4) adding an acceleration lane for the southbound to eastbound movement along East Inyokern Road. With these improvements, the East Inyokern Road/Bullard Road intersection would operate at LOS C or better in all peak periods.

With respect to any off-base traffic-related impacts, the traffic study performed prior to preparation of the EA indicates that, as a result of the influx of new workers that would be associated with the Proposed Action, queues could form at gates entering NAWS China Lake during morning peak hour, as follows: 13 vehicles at the Sandquist Gate; 6 vehicles at the Richmond Gate; and 5 vehicles at the Inyokern Gate. Vehicles would potentially wait in such queues up to approximately one minute, which would represent an increase in time required to access the installation compared to current conditions. However, the increased wait time would be relatively minimal, and the traffic study also indicates that adequate storage exists for such queues, meaning that any increase in queues would not impact flow on or in surrounding streets and intersections. Therefore, traffic flowing on roads adjacent to the installation without entering the installation would not be impacted by any increase in vehicles entering NAWS China Lake as a result of the Proposed Action, and would either not be impacted or at most minimally impacted by any increase in vehicles exiting NAWS China Lake as a result of the Proposed Action, since roads adjacent to the installation have greater capacity than roads on/exiting the installation, and since the Navy does not anticipate that any queues will form in exiting the installation as a result of the Proposed Action. Additionally, as noted elsewhere in the EA (see 3.6.1), overall population in the vicinity of NAWS China Lake has decreased substantially since 1990, indicating that existing roadways and other infrastructure near the installation are capable of handling an overall increase in traffic associated with an influx of new workers/residents. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not significantly impact traffic or circulation outside NAWS China Lake.

Implementation of the Proposed Action would result in a maximum of 2,100 personnel being relocated to NAWS China

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE REALIGNMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF  
A NAVAL INTEGRATED WEAPONS AND ARMAMENTS RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND  
ACQUISITION, TEST AND EVALUATION CENTER AT NAVAL AIR WEAPONS STATION  
CHINA LAKE, CALIFORNIA**

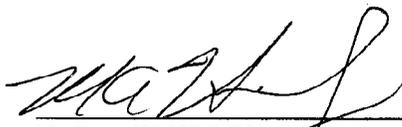
Lake. The EA gives an estimated maximum total increase in population in the vicinity of the installation as 8,400. This maximum increase in population would, in light of recent population declines in the area, represent only a 5% increase over 1990 population levels. Many personnel relocating to NAWS China Lake would be housed in existing off-base civilian housing, with other personnel likely finding residences through the private market. Census data indicates a single-family residence vacancy rate in the area of approximately 13 percent. Similarly, local schools presently have significant excess capacity to absorb additional students.

Air quality, water availability, and provision of utilities are not issues of concern with respect to the Proposed Action.

**Finding:** Based on information gathered during preparation of the EA, the Navy finds that implementation of the Proposed Action, including implementation of the mitigation and other impact minimization measures referenced herein and set forth in detail in the EA, will not have a significant impact on human health or the natural environment.

The EA prepared by the Navy addressing this action may be obtained from Commander, Naval Facilities Engineering Command Southwest, 1220 Pacific Highway, San Diego, CA 92132. Attn: Jo Ellen Anderson, Phone (619) 532 2633.

24 Apr 2008  
Date

  
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