

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE REALIGNMENT AND  
DEVELOPMENT OF A WEAPONS SURVIVABILITY COMPLEX (WSC) 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 Impact Statement (EIS) will not be prepared for the implementation of the realignment of Wright Patterson Air Force Base's (AFB) Fixed Wing Live Fire Test and Evaluation (LFT&E) to 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 of fixed wing related LFT&E to NAWS China Lake. 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 activities from the following locations to NAWS China Lake: Wright Patterson Air Force Base (AFB), Ohio.

The Proposed Action is the implementation of the BRAC recommendations and would encompass one BRAC Construction (BRACON) project D-700V that would take place over a two-year period. The BRACON would involve the construction of the following facilities north of the existing Aircraft Survivability Storage and Preparation Area and in the Plate Storage Area:

- LFT&E Center
- Special test facilities; and
- Ordnance storage facilities.

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The Proposed Action meets each of the three planning criteria (meet facility needs and requirements of incoming commands; locate realigned Live Fire Test and Evaluation activities and required new facilities, to the extent practicable, in proximity to existing Live Fire Test and Evaluation facilities and activities for aircraft; and maximize the use of existing facilities).

**Existing Conditions:** NAWS China Lake is in the Upper Mojave Desert of California, approximately 242 kilometers (150 miles) northeast of Los Angeles. NAWS China Lake, composed of the North Range and the South Range, covers approximately 4,402 square kilometers (1,700 square miles) and is located in three counties: Inyo, Kern, and San Bernardino. The BRACON would not involve construction outside of a previously disturbed area.

**Alternatives Analyzed:** Various alternatives were considered but not ultimately carried forward for full analysis; therefore, the only alternatives evaluated in this EA are the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.

Two alternative sites were considered as potential sites for further analysis, but were not carried forward. The Navy determined that the first of these two sites, located on a dry lakebed south of the area ultimately evaluated for the Proposed Action, would be an unreasonable option due to: (1) the unsuitability of the alternative location relative to Executive Order 11988, "Floodplain Management"; (2) the construction and operational constraints associated with building the WSC at the alternative location; (3) the additional costs associated with construction at the alternative location; and (4) the loss of proximity to existing facilities relative to the Proposed Action site.

The second such site, on a range near the existing aircraft LFT&E facilities, was found to be an unreasonable option due to access problems and other operational constraints which would compromise efficiencies with respect to both the proposed Action and operations at the other range. Additionally, the Navy considered renovation and/or modernization of existing facilities in lieu of new construction; however, due to a lack of sufficient existing facilities with the capability to meet all the needs of the Proposed Action, this alternative was not carried forward.

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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 the proposed action are measured.

**Environmental Effects:** The Proposed Action would have no significant impacts to geology and soils due to the incorporation of measures set forth in the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and other best management practices (BMPs) as required by a general construction activity stormwater permit issued by the California State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), and through utilization of NAWS China Lake soil erosion and sediment control measures. There would be no significant impacts to surface water, groundwater, or water quality through incorporation of anti-erosion and pollution-prevention measures in compliance with the SWPPP and the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permits for construction and industrial activities, and through incorporation of EMPs as discussed in the EA. The Proposed Action area is not located within a 100-year floodplain.

The Proposed Action will not significantly impact any threatened or endangered wildlife species, sensitive plant species, or wetlands. The desert tortoise is the only federally-listed threatened or endangered wildlife species that might potentially be found at the Proposed Action project site. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has issued a Biological Opinion (BO) for the desert tortoise (which is an appendix to the EA). The Proposed Action project site is considered potential desert tortoise habitat; however, it is not USFWS-designated critical habitat, it is not within the NAWS China Lake Desert Tortoise Management Area, and recent surveys indicate it is very unlikely that any desert tortoise would actually be found at or near the site. The Proposed Action therefore would not adversely affect or otherwise have a significant impact on the desert tortoise. Nonetheless, in order to avoid or minimize any potential impact on individual members of the species in the unlikely event any desert tortoise should be found on the project site, the Navy would follow the guidance set forth in the USFWS's BO for the desert tortoise.

The Proposed Action will not significantly impact cultural resources. There were four archaeological sites which the Navy initially believed might have the potential to expand scientific

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knowledge of Holocene era land uses in the area, and which thus might potentially merit listing in the National Registry of Historic Places; however, after investigating these sites, the Navy determined that none of the sites contained significant archaeological resources. None of the Native American groups consulted concerning these archaeological sites commented or otherwise expressed concern with respect to the sites or the Navy's investigation of such sites.

The Proposed Action would be consistent and compatible with all relevant federal, state, or local land use plans or policies, and would not change current land use in the project area. No significant land use impacts would occur. No significant impacts would occur with respect to population, housing, employment, or environmental justice. Traffic impacts on the installation and in the surrounding community would be negligible during both construction and operations.

Neither construction-related emissions nor post-construction emissions associated with the Proposed Action will result in any significant impacts to air quality. Pollutant emissions would be below de minimis levels, and the Proposed Action therefore would not require a conformity determination under the Clean Air Act's General Conformity Rule. Any increase in operations-related emissions due to the expected increase in testing events at the site would be relatively insignificant, as evidenced by the fact that anticipated increases in testing events will still leave total testing efforts well below currently-authorized levels pursuant to permits issued by the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District. Although construction-related air quality impacts would be minor, dust control measures would be utilized to minimize air quality impacts from the Proposed Action.

No significant noise impacts would occur from project construction and operation. Standard noise-reducing construction measures would be utilized—and construction operations would be scheduled—so as to minimize noise.

The Proposed Action would not obstruct designated scenic viewsheds or public views of areas of natural beauty. The project area is hidden from public view, and facilities associated with the Proposed Action would be similar in scale and appearance to structures currently in the project area. Therefore, no significant impacts to aesthetics would occur. The Proposed Action would not impact the availability, quality,

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or reliability of public services or utilities. Given that operations associated with the Proposed Action will be consistent with historic uses at the project area, and given the remoteness of the project area, the Proposed Action does not have the potential to have significant impacts on public health and safety.

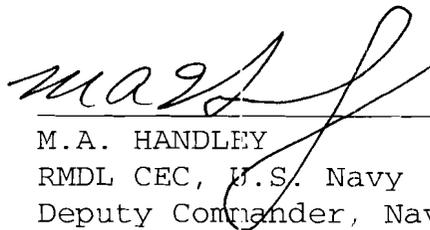
The Proposed Action would not contribute to the generation of any cumulatively significant impacts in conjunction with other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future projects in the vicinity of the project area.

**Finding:** Based on information gathered during preparation of the EA, the Navy finds that implementation of the Proposed Action, including implementation of the impact minimization and/or avoidance 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: JoEllen Anderson, Phone (619) 532 2633.

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Date



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