

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
Department of the Navy

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE HOME BASING OF THE
MQ-25A STINGRAY CARRIER-BASED UNMANNED AIR SYSTEM AT
NAVAL BASE VENTURA COUNTY POINT MUGU, CALIFORNIA**

Pursuant to Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations Parts 1500-1508) implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), United States (U.S.) Department of the Navy (Navy) Regulations (32 Code of Federal Regulations part 775), and the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations Instruction 5090.1, the Navy gives notice that an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared, and an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for the Home Basing of the MQ-25A Stingray Carrier-based Unmanned Air System (Stingray CBUAS) at Naval Base Ventura County (NBVC) Point Mugu, California.

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action is to establish facilities and functions at NBVC Point Mugu, California to support West Coast home basing and operations of the MQ-25A Stingray CBUAS. Under the Proposed Action, the Navy would home base 20 Stingray CBUAS; construct a hangar, training facilities, and supporting infrastructure; perform air vehicle (AV) maintenance; provide training for AV operators and maintainers; conduct approximately 960 Stingray CBUAS annual flight operations; and station approximately 730 personnel, plus their family members.

Under the Proposed Action, the West Coast home basing of the Stingray CBUAS would require new facilities and infrastructure. In particular, the Stingray CBUAS would require a new squadron hangar; parking apron for AVs; parking for government and privately-owned vehicles; taxiways; utilities and supporting infrastructure; training facilities for AV operators; and training facilities for maintainers. These construction elements are included in proposed Military Construction projects P-025 (hangar and battery shop), P-026 (training facility), and Special Project RM 19-1368 (Building PM508 renovations).

The Proposed Action would station approximately 730 military and civilian personnel at NBVC Point Mugu to support Stingray CBUAS squadrons. A small number of personnel would locate to NBVC Point Mugu as base housing becomes available, but most personnel and family members would live in the surrounding areas of Ventura County, California. Personnel would be added in phases over three to five years.

Stingray CBUAS flight operations are anticipated to total approximately 960 annual operations when at full capacity. Annual operations are anticipated to begin with fewer flights and increase over several years before reaching 960. These operations would consist of departures and arrivals. Closed pattern operations (i.e., multiple take-offs and landings without leaving the vicinity of the airfield) are not anticipated for the Stingray CBUAS.

Purpose and Need: The purpose of the Proposed Action is to base a new West Coast squadron designed to enhance aircraft carrier capability and versatility for the Joint Forces Commander through the integration of a persistent, sea-based, multi-mission aerial refueling and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance unmanned aerial system into the carrier air wing (CVW). The need for the Proposed Action is primarily to extend the range and reach of the CVW on the West Coast to meet and pace current and future threats, with secondary recovery refueling and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities, in support of national defense objectives and policies.

Alternatives Considered: In developing the proposed range of alternatives to meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action, the Navy considered mission characteristics; geographic requirements; logistics, operational, administrative, and facilities synergies; existing special use airspace; training requirements; and existing Navy infrastructure. Based on this review, the following factors were considered when exploring alternatives for the Proposed Action: alternatives must be in proximity to aircraft carrier-operating areas; alternatives must involve minimal potential conflicts with other aircraft within the National Airspace System; alternatives must be compatible with existing airfield operations; alternatives must accommodate the Stingray CBUAS accelerated schedule; alternatives should utilize operational and administrative synergies; alternatives must use existing runways; alternatives must provide shore sailor and family support. Based on these factors, several alternatives were considered but eliminated from further consideration in the EA. In addition to the No Action Alternative, the Navy evaluated one Proposed Action alternative.

No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative the Navy would not home base the Stingray CBUAS at NBVC Point Mugu. The infrastructure upgrades necessary to accommodate the Stingray CBUAS would not occur. The No Action Alternative would not meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action.

Action Alternative. The Proposed Action is the only action alternative considered by the Navy to meet the purpose and need to support the West Coast home basing and operations of the Stingray CBUAS. Under the Proposed Action, the Navy proposes to establish facilities and functions at NBVC Point Mugu, California. The Navy would home base 20 Stingray CBUAS; construct a hangar, training facilities, and supporting infrastructure; perform AV maintenance; provide training for AV operators and maintainers; conduct approximately 960 Stingray CBUAS annual flight operations; and station approximately 730 personnel, plus their family members.

Environmental Effects: No significant direct, indirect, or cumulative environmental impacts would occur from implementing the Proposed Action. Certain environmental resources (i.e., cultural resources, geological resources, land use, visual resources, and environmental justice) were not analyzed in detail in this EA because potential impacts were considered to be negligible or non-existent. Potential environmental impacts on air quality, water resources, noise (qualitatively), biological resources, airspace and airfield operations, infrastructure, transportation, public health and safety, hazardous materials and wastes, socioeconomics, and cumulative impacts are summarized here.

Air Quality. Total air pollutant emissions associated with construction activities and operations under the Proposed Action would be minimal or *de minimis*. The Proposed Action is exempt from General Conformity requirements. The Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts to air quality.

Water Resources. Implementation of the Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts to groundwater, surface water, wetlands, or floodplains at NBVC Point Mugu. The construction of the hangar, parking apron, taxiway, vehicle parking lots and roads under P-025 would result in a 35.6 acre increase in impervious surfaces. The P-026 training facility would increase impervious surfaces by an additional 0.6 acres. With implementation of low impact development methods and best management practices in the project areas, no significant net reduction of infiltration and recharge capacity is likely to occur.

Two taxiway connections would be constructed from the northwest side of the proposed parking apron to existing Taxiway B via box culverts over a jurisdictional wetland referred to as Taxiway B Drainage Ditch. The culverts would be designed to maintain the

existing hydrologic flow of the drainage ditch. Depending on final location and engineering design, construction of the taxiways would have the potential to impact from 0.93 to 1.40 acres of jurisdictional wetlands. Bridge deck crossings would accommodate vehicular and pedestrian crossings over the Oxnard Drainage Ditch No. 2A, which is a jurisdictional wetland on the southeast portion of the site. The bridges would be designed as open metal grated deck bridges to minimize impervious surfaces and to avoid wetland impacts. Consultation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and California Regional Water Quality Control Board would occur, as appropriate, to obtain the necessary permits (i.e., Sections 404 and 401 of the Clean Water Act) prior to implementation of the Proposed Action. The Navy has determined that there is no practicable alternative to implementing the construction activities associated with the Proposed Action within wetlands, and all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands would be implemented. All potential impacts to wetlands and waters of the United States would be mitigated by the Navy to ensure wetland functions within the watershed would not be appreciably affected. Therefore, the project would be consistent with Executive Order 11990, *Protection of Wetlands*.

The Proposed Action would be constructed within the 100-year floodplain. The Navy has determined that there is no practicable alternative to implementing the construction activities associated with the Proposed Action in the floodplain. There are no alternative project areas available at NBVC Point Mugu that are not within the 100-year floodplain that could meet the requirements of the Proposed Action. Measures associated with flood proofing and flood protection would be implemented at the proposed project location, such as elevating critical equipment (e.g., electrical supply and hazardous materials and wastes) 1-2 feet above the base flood elevation (10.5 feet) for flood protection and stormwater management according to Section 438 of the Energy Independence and Security Act and Ventura County's stormwater management regulations. Stormwater management facilities would be designed to maintain or improve upon the pre-development drainage runoff characteristics. Stormwater detention would be sized for the 100-year storm event per Ventura County stormwater management requirements. These measures, in addition to existing storm drains, retaining walls, and berms on Point Mugu, would minimize flood hazards.

Noise. Construction activities from the Proposed Action would not be expected to cause a significant increase in ambient noise levels off-base in noise sensitive areas. No significant impacts from noise related to airfield operations would occur. Based on a 2.4 percent increase in annual airfield operations proposed for the Stingray CBUAS, noise analysis results show a 0.1 dB increase or less in the Navy's primary noise metric, Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL), and a relatively low single-event noise level.

Biological Resources. Implementation of the Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts to biological resources at NBVC Point Mugu. The Proposed Action would have no significant impacts to vegetation, wildlife, or special-status species.

The Navy determined that the Proposed Action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) and conducted informal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The USFWS concurred with the Navy's finding on November 12, 2020. There would be no effect on other federally listed species. Removal of disturbed scrub and non-native grass habitats from a former golf course site (38.5 acres) would occur outside of the avian nesting season (March through September) to avoid impacts to nests or nesting birds, including least Bell's vireos. NBVC Point Mugu also continues to restore habitat on base for a variety of sensitive species, including least Bell's vireo.

Similarly, based on the negligible effects from operations, and with implementation of impact minimization measures for nests and nesting birds, there would be no take of migratory birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Removal of three or four large pine trees on the P-025 project area would be coordinated with the NBVC Point Mugu Environmental Division to avoid impacts to tree-nesting owl species.

Although not federally listed, the western pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*) is currently under review for listing by the USFWS. With the implementation of conservation measures for the western pond turtle, in coordination with the NBVC Point Mugu Environmental Division, project-related construction activities would avoid effects to western pond turtles.

Airspace and Airfield Operations. The Proposed Action would have no significant impacts to the airfield, airspace, or civilian users of airspace. Stingray CBUAS flight operations would result in a 2.4 percent increase in total airfield operations at NBVC

Point Mugu. The increase would be well within the typical fluctuations in annual operations at military airfields from one year to the next and would not be significant. Stingray CBUAS flight operations would be conducted in existing controlled airspace in the vicinity of NBVC Point Mugu.

Infrastructure. The Proposed Action would have no significant impacts to potable water, wastewater, stormwater, solid waste management, or energy. Existing utility systems have sufficient capacities to support the Proposed Action.

Transportation. The Proposed Action would have no significant impacts on transportation. The Proposed Action would result in a short-term, minor increase in construction delivery trucks and construction worker vehicles at NBVC Point Mugu, which would have a temporary impact on Ventura County and NBVC Point Mugu roadways. An additional 730 personnel would add 880 average daily trips, resulting in a 7 percent increase in traffic on State Route 1 in the vicinity of NBVC Point Mugu. This small increase, along with the dispersed nature of routes to the gates, would not be expected to have a significant impact on roadway levels of service.

Public Health and Safety. The Proposed Action would have no significant impacts to public health and safety. The flight operations for the Stingray CBUAS would be conducted in existing controlled airspace at NBVC Point Mugu and in adjacent Class D and Class E airspace. The 2.4 percent increase in airfield operations with Stingray CBUAS would not necessitate changes to the airfield Accident Potential Zones because the existing flight paths at Runway 03/21 would be used. Stingray CBUAS AV operators receive extensive training prior to controlling actual flights. This includes extensive practice of emergency procedures to minimize the potential for mishaps. Implementation of existing Bird/Animal Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) avoidance procedures would minimize BASH risks to negligible levels.

In accordance with Executive Order 13045 *Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks*, the EA analysis has determined that the Proposed Action would not result in environmental health risks or safety risks that may disproportionately affect children.

Hazardous Materials and Waste. The Proposed Action would have no significant impacts related to hazardous materials and wastes. Hazardous wastes generated by construction activities would be managed in a manner that would prevent these materials from leaking, spilling, and potentially polluting soils or ground and

surface waters, and in accordance with applicable federal, state, and Navy regulations. Minor long-term increases in hazardous material use and hazardous waste generation from operations would not exceed current management and disposal capacities. Construction of bridges and culverts over Oxnard Drainage Ditch No. 2A and Taxiway B Drainage Ditch would avoid potential impacts on Environmental Restoration Program Site 11 or would be coordinated with the NBVC Point Mugu remedial project manager and performed in accordance with applicable federal regulations and Navy instructions.

Socioeconomics. There would be both short- and long-term minor beneficial economic impacts resulting from an increase in employment, income, and tax revenue during construction and operations under the Proposed Action. The increase in population with 730 employees and an estimated 876 family members under the Proposed Action over the course of five years would have a minor but insignificant impact to schools in Ventura County due to increased enrollment, and a minor but insignificant impact to housing due to increased demand.

Cumulative Impacts. Based on the analysis of each resource potentially impacted by the Proposed Action, implementation of the Proposed Action combined with the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects, would not result in significant cumulative impacts at NBVC Point Mugu.

Coastal Consistency. The Navy has determined that implementing the Proposed Action would not have an effect on any coastal use or resource of the state's coastal zone. The California Coastal Commission concurred with the Navy's Coastal Consistency Negative Determination on January 7, 2021.

Mitigation Measures: Based on the analysis in the EA, no mitigation measures were identified as necessary to reduce or avoid potentially significant adverse effects.

Public Involvement: A Notice of Availability of the Draft EA was published in the weekly Spanish publication *La Vida* on October 29, 2020 and in the *Ventura County Star* on October 30, October 31, and November 1, 2020. The Draft EA was made available for a 33-day review period from October 29 to November 30, 2020. The Draft EA was posted on the Navy's website, <https://www.nepa.navy.mil/stingray>, and paper copies were available at two local libraries. Fourteen public comments were received on the Draft EA. Five comments expressed support for the Proposed Action. Primary concerns identified by the commenters included: alternative basing locations, aircraft

noise and air pollution, transportation, hazardous materials/hazardous wastes, water resources, wetlands and floodplains, energy, and biological resources. These primary concerns were considered and addressed in the Final EA, and revisions or clarifications were made in the applicable sections of the Final EA, as needed.

Finding of No Significant Impact: Based on analysis presented in the EA, which has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of NEPA and Navy policies and procedures (32 CFR Part 775), and in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Coastal Commission, the Navy finds that implementation of the Proposed Action will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

Findings of No Practicable Alternative: Pursuant to Executive Order 11990, *Protection of Wetlands*, authority incorporated into Navy regulations and the written re-delegations accomplished pursuant to the Order, the Navy finds that there is no practicable alternative to implementing the Proposed Action within wetlands, and the Proposed Action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands environments. Pursuant to Executive Order 11988, *Floodplain Management*, because there are no alternative project areas available at NBVC Point Mugu that are not within the 100-year floodplain, there is no practicable alternative to implementing the Proposed Action within the floodplain.

The EA prepared by the Navy is on file and interested parties may obtain a copy by downloading the EA from the project website: <https://www.nepa.navy.mil/stingray>. Electronic copies of this EA and Finding of No Significant Impact may also be obtained by written request to: Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command, Atlantic (ATTENTION: Code EV21JB), 6506 Hampton Boulevard, Norfolk, Virginia 23508.

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Date



T. RIKER
Fleet Installations and Environment and
Deputy Chief of Staff
U.S. Fleet Forces Command