

1 **UNITED STATES SPACE FORCE**
2 **DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

3 **Falcon 9 Launch Cadence Increase at Vandenberg Space Force Base, California**

4 This DRAFT Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) hereby incorporates by reference and
5 attaches hereto the *Draft Environmental Assessment (EA), Falcon 9 Cadence Increase at*
6 *Vandenberg Space Force Base (VSFB), California*. The EA considered all potential environmental
7 impacts of the Proposed Action (Alternative 1) and the No Action Alternative, and identified
8 management protective measures to avoid, prevent, or minimize environmental impacts.

9 **PROPOSED ACTION (ALTERNATIVE 1)**

10 The Proposed Action (Alternative 1) is to increase the Falcon 9 annual launch cadence from 36 to
11 50 launches per year at Space Launch Complex 4 (SLC-4) on VSFB, increase Falcon 9 first stage
12 and fairing recovery activities, and expand the recovery area in the Pacific Ocean. Up to 12
13 boosters per year would continue to land at SLC-4.

14 The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide greater mission capability to the Department
15 of Defense (DOD), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and commercial
16 customers by increasing Falcon 9's flight opportunities. This is in furtherance of U.S. policy to
17 ensure capabilities necessary to launch and insert necessary national security payloads into
18 space. The current launch capacity is insufficient to meet critical DOD and key commercial launch
19 missions.

20 The need for the Proposed Action is to ensure United States Space Force (USSF) Assured Access
21 to Space without compromising current launch capabilities and fulfill (in part) the United States
22 (U.S.) Congress's grant of authority to the Secretary of Defense, pursuant to 10 United States
23 Code Section 2276(a), "Commercial space launch cooperation," that the Secretary of Defense is
24 permitted to take action to:

- 25 (1) Maximize the use of the capacity of the space transportation infrastructure by the DOD
26 by the private section in the U.S.
27 (2) Maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of the space transportation infrastructure of
28 the DOD.
29 (3) Reduce the cost of services provided by the DOD related to space transportation
30 infrastructure and launch support facilities and space recovery support facilities.
31 (4) Encourage commercial space activities by enabling investment by covered entities in the
32 space transportation infrastructure of the DOD.
33 (5) Foster cooperation between the DOD and covered entities.

34 By increasing VSFB launch capacity, the Proposed Action allows continued fulfillment of the
35 National Space Policy goals of promoting a "robust commercial space industry and strengthen
36 U.S. leadership as the country of choice for conducting commercial space activities." The
37 Proposed Action ensures that U.S. space launch capability is not reduced or limited, and that the
38 U.S. remains the space launch technology leader. The Proposed Action also supports Space

1 Launch Delta 30's (SLD 30's) vision to become the "world's most innovative space launch and
2 landing team."

3 **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

4 The Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ's) Regulations for Implementing the Procedural
5 Provisions of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA; 40 Code of Federal Regulation [CFR] Parts
6 1500–1508) require federal agencies to use the NEPA process to identify and assess the
7 reasonable alternatives to the Proposed Action that would foster informed decision making. The
8 Department of the Air Force (DAF) evaluated existing facilities at VAFB for reasonableness. Non-
9 SpaceX sites at VAFB would not be able to readily provide infrastructure requirements without
10 substantial construction activities, which would result in additional impacts and would not
11 support the future launch schedule requirements at VAFB. Thus, non-SpaceX sites at VAFB were
12 therefore not considered. The DAF evaluated SpaceX's existing leased facilities at Cape Canaveral
13 Space Force Station (SLC-40) and Kennedy Space Center Launch Complex [LC]-39A for
14 reasonableness. SpaceX currently launches Falcon 9 from SLC-40 and LC-39A, including crew
15 missions. SLC-40 and LC-39A were dismissed from consideration as they predominantly support
16 a different range of trajectories than launches from VAFB. Therefore, SpaceX only carried forward
17 the Proposed Action (Alternative 1) and No Action Alternative for further evaluation.

18 **NO ACTION**

19 Under the No Action Alternative, DAF would not increase the annual cadence for Falcon 9
20 operations from SLC-4 on VAFB, increase Falcon 9 first stage and fairing recovery activities, or
21 expand the recovery area. DAF would not meet the DOD requirements for Assured Access to
22 Space nor fully meet the National Space Transportation Policy goals of providing low-cost reliable
23 access to and from space. Access to space would be negatively affected, as would the shorter
24 term need to meet the increase in current and future manifest demands. Therefore, the No
25 Action Alternative does not meet the Purpose and Need. The No Action Alternative is the
26 environmentally preferable alternative.

27 **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

28 The attached EA analyzed the potential environmental consequences of activities associated with
29 the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative. Based on the analysis, neither the Proposed
30 Action nor the No-Action Alternative would result in individual or cumulatively significant impacts
31 to any resources. However, potential adverse impacts were noted for the Proposed Action to the
32 following resources: air quality, climate, sound (airborne), biological resources, water resources,
33 Coastal Zone management, Department of Transportation Act Section 4(f) properties, utilities,
34 socioeconomics, transportation, human health and safety, hazardous materials and waste
35 management, and solid waste management. That said, the impacts from current Proposed Action
36 will be included in an upcoming increased launch Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as a past
37 action in the cumulative impacts analysis section to further analyze the potential impacts of the
38 Proposed Action combined with foreseeable future proposals. The No-Action Alternative would
39 result in impacts less than the Proposed Action; however, it would not meet the Proposed
40 Action's purpose and need. Environmental protection measures that are incorporated into the
41 Proposed Action would be implemented to avoid and/or minimize the potential adverse impacts.

1 **PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT**

2 Following publishing the Notice of Availability (NOA) in the *Lompoc Record*, *Santa Maria Times*,
3 *Ventura County Star*, *Ojai Valley News*, and *Santa Barbara Independent*, the Draft EA and FONSI
4 was made available for public review and comment for 30 days. SLD 30 also distributed the Draft
5 EA and FONSI per VSFB’s NEPA Distribution List, including the State Clearinghouse. Appendix K
6 contains copies of the Notice of Availability for Public Review. Following public review, proof of
7 publication, proof of library deliveries, a NEPA distribution list, public comments, and responses
8 will be included in Appendix K of the Final EA.

9 **MITIGATION**

10 Consultations with the relevant agencies will result in prescribed mitigation and/or minimization
11 measures to ensure no significant impacts occur because of the Proposed Action. Those
12 measures are/will be provided in detail in the EA (Appendix L) and appended correspondence
13 with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and
14 California Coastal Commission (CCC), and include the following:

- 15 • SLD 30 and SpaceX will comply with their respective requirements that will be outlined in
16 the USFWS biological opinion to monitor and mitigate potential adverse effects to listed
17 animal species (see EA Section 3.3.2 and Appendix A).
- 18 • SLD 30 and SpaceX will comply with their respective minimization, monitoring, and
19 avoidance requirements outlined in the NMFS Letter of Authorization (see EA Section
20 3.4.2 and Appendix B).
- 21 • SLD 30 and SpaceX will comply with their respective minimization, monitoring, and
22 avoidance requirements outlined in the Consistency Determination to ensure full
23 consistency with the Coastal Zone Management Act (see EA 3.7.2 and Appendix D).

24 **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

25 Based on my review of the facts and analyses contained in the attached EA, conducted per the
26 NEPA, 42 U.S. Code 4321 et seq., CEQ’s implementing regulations, 40 CFR Parts 1500–1508, and
27 32 CFR Part 989, Environmental Impact Analysis Process, I conclude that implementing the
28 Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative) will not have a significant effect on the quality of the
29 human environment. Therefore, further analysis with an Environmental Impact Statement on this
30 Proposed Action is not required and this FONSI is appropriate. I decided this after considering all
31 submitted information, including reviewing public and agency comments, and considering a
32 range of reasonable alternatives.

33 _____

34 MARCIA L. QUIGLEY, Col, USAF _____
35 Director, Space Force Mission Sustainment Date
36 (Engineering, Logistics, & Force Protection)
37

38 Attachment: Draft Environmental Assessment Falcon 9 Cadence Increase at Vandenberg Space
39 Force Base, California