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**FINAL  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE  
FALCON LAUNCH VEHICLE PROGRAM AT  
VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE**

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

An Environmental Assessment (EA) (see attached) has been prepared to evaluate the potential impacts associated with implementing the proposed Falcon Launch Vehicle Program at Vandenberg Air Force Base (AFB), California. The EA for the Falcon Launch Vehicle Program is incorporated by reference. The Falcon Launch Vehicle Program is a commercial venture by Space Exploration Technologies, Inc. (Space X). Space X is a privately held company that is developing the Falcon Launch Vehicle Program as a method to put small spacecraft into orbit with high reliability and low cost from launch facilities at Vandenberg AFB. The U.S. Air Force (Air Force) is the lead agency, and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Office of Commercial Space Transportation is a cooperating agency, in supervising the preparation of the EA.

The Commercial Space Launch Act of 1984 (Public Law 98-575) encourages the use of government infrastructure and resources, currently underutilized, in an excess capacity situation to promote commercial investment and use of space. The Falcon Launch Vehicle Program would also meet the National Space Transportation Policy's goal to significantly reduce space transportation costs in order to make continued exploration, development, and use of space affordable.

**2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

Space X proposes to operate its Falcon Launch Vehicle Program to provide commercial launch services at Space Launch Complex 3 West (SLC-3W) at Vandenberg AFB. Space X is developing the Falcon launch vehicle. The Falcon is a light-lift, two-stage vehicle that utilizes only liquid fuels. The Falcon Launch Vehicle Program is designed to require minimal time for vehicle assembly or payload processing on the launch pad. Much of the vehicle assembly would occur at the Space X facilities in El Segundo, California. A goal of the Falcon Vehicle Program is to launch within a few days to one week of payload arrival at the launch site.

A maximum of two to three launches would be conducted per year beginning with one to two in 2004, two to three in 2005, and three in 2006, after which continuation of the program would be reevaluated. No test flights are planned and all flights are expected to have payloads.

The Proposed Action is to launch the Falcon under the Falcon Launch Vehicle Program using a deluge water system for fire and noise suppression. Alternative 1 is to launch the Falcon vehicle without a deluge water system.

Under the No-Action Alternative, SLC-3W would remain undeveloped by Space X and the Falcon Launch Vehicle Program would disband and cease to exist. Space X would not use SLC-3W to meet the National Space Transportation Policy's goal of providing low-cost and reliable access to space. The Commercial Space Launch Act's goal to encourage the use of underutilized government infrastructure and resources to promote commercial investment and use of space would also not be realized at SLC-3W by Space X's usage.

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### **3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

The EA presents the analysis and description of potential environmental impacts that could result from the Proposed Action and Alternatives. As appropriate, the affected environment and environmental consequences of the Proposed Action and Alternatives are presented in terms of regional and site-specific descriptions for the following resource areas: land use/visual resources, noise, biological resources, cultural resources, air quality, hazardous waste/hazardous materials, water resources, geology and soils, transportation, utilities, solid waste management, health and safety, socioeconomics, and environmental justice.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Based on a careful review of the analyses and data in the EA, no significant impact to the natural or human environment would be expected from implementing the Proposed Action. Because no impacts or less than significant impacts would occur to the resource areas analyzed, no mitigation measures are recommended. Therefore, issuance of a Finding of No Significant Impact is warranted, and preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (Public Law 91-190) is not required.

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