

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
TAURUS STANDARD SMALL LAUNCH VEHICLE PROGRAM
VANDENBERG AFB, CA

AGENCY: United States Air Force, Headquarters Space and Missile Systems Center (SMC)

COOPERATING AGENCIES: Advanced Research Projects Agency
(ARPA)
United States Air Force Space Command
(AFSPACECOM)

ACTION: Proposed Taurus Standard Small Launch Vehicle Program as described in baseline Environmental Assessment, modified as described under Background.

BACKGROUND: The baseline Environmental Assessment (EA) for the launch program of the Taurus Standard Small Launch Vehicle (SSLV) at Vandenberg AFB was prepared in 1991-92. The FONSI was signed by 30th Space Wing (30SPW) on 14 August 1992 and by SMC on 20 August 1992.

Subsequent to the preparation of that document, and prior to the first planned launch, certain changes to the program have occurred which have potential environmental impact. The attached supplement is to assess these program changes and their environmental impact.

The changes documented and reviewed in the supplement are as follows:

- (1) It is now planned that the launch vehicle processing will occur in the Missile Assembly Building (MAB) on North Vandenberg AFB.
- (2) The final EA stated that Taurus would not be launched during the least tern nesting season from mid-April to the end of August. Since then, the Western Snowy Plover has been added to the federal Threatened list under the Endangered Species Act, and its nesting season is from mid-March to mid-September. Formal consultations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) have resulted in a no jeopardy opinion, stating that Taurus is allowed to launch once during the combined nesting period, subject to compliance with certain mitigation requirements.
- (3) The final EA presented a detailed route for the placement and routing of a fiber optics cable from Facility 576E to Facility 1762, and an alternate route to Facility 1681. The use of Facility 1681 has been abandoned, and the routing of the cable to Facility 1762 has been redefined as one of two routes.
- (4) The launch stand design is being modified to provide relief from a predicted severe acoustic environment. The approach is to increase the height of the launch stand.
- (5) Due to schedule conflicts, the payloads may not be processed in Building 1610, which was covered in the baseline EA.

Facility 1559 is being considered as an alternative, as is the Payload Processing Room (PPR) at SLC-6. The hydrazine cart planned for use also may be replaced with a different cart borrowed from CCAFS.

SUMMARY:

The implementation of the Taurus program changes described in this EA Supplement will not significantly impact the natural or man-made environment.

The Taurus launch vehicle processing activities planned in the MAB were approved by a Categorical Exclusion (CATEX) which is included in the supplemental EA as Appendix A. This was approved on the basis that there will be no facility modifications to accommodate the program, and that the Taurus vehicle stages contain less propellant than the Peacekeeper stages previously processed safely in the MAB.

The launch of the Taurus vehicle during the least tern and snowy plover nesting season is not anticipated to cause significant effects on these species. As requested by USFWS, certain mitigation steps will be carried out. These are:

- (1) Noise measurements will be performed during, and exhaust plume deposition monitoring after, the first launch.

NOTE: Noise measurement is also a requirement of National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and will be coordinated with both agencies. NMFS also requires behavioral monitoring of pinniped colonies at Purisma Point and Rocky Point.

- (2) Launch during the nesting season will not be performed when the wind is blowing toward the Purisma Point colony (wind direction from 90 to 150 degrees true) to minimize the possibility of acid deposition from the exhaust gases in the colony area. Wind direction will be monitored from SLC-2 or a closer location.
- (3) Visual monitoring of the Southern sea otter population will be performed at the otter colony near Facility 576E shortly before and after the first launch.
- (4) Provide least tern decoys and habitat shelters (roof tiles), and support a USDA Animal Damage Control study of least tern predation and a non-lethal predator control program. Also, a wooden pole used by avian predators will be removed.
- (5) USAF will support a USFWS study into the impacts of noise on avian species, and the least tern/snowy plover monitoring program will be increased in frequency.
- (6) Fencing will be erected around the Purisma Point nesting area prior to the beginning of the 1993 nesting season.
- (7) A western snowy plover monitoring program will be prepared and carried out.

Fiber optics cable will be laid on top of the ground, not trenched in. Therefore, the two fiber optics cable route options do not significantly impact the environment. However, both fiber optics cable routes result in some increase in risk to an archaeological site in the area. To protect the site from disturbance, a qualified Base archaeologist will witness the above ground emplacement and removal of the fiber optics cable.

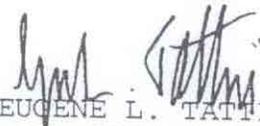
The increase in launch stand height would have no significant environmental effect.

The processing of the payloads is now planned for the SLC-6 Payload Processing Room. Based on the completion of air quality permitting and safety requirements, a review of this facility and its equipment, as well as alternate facilities 1610 and 1559, has identified no significant environmental impacts.

FINDINGS: Based on the findings of this Supplemental Environmental Assessment, and mitigation steps undertaken as a result, a finding of no significant impact is made. A Supplement to the Taurus Environmental Assessment describing the proposed action is on file at:

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HQ Space and Missile Systems Center/CEV
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Los Angeles Air Force Base, CA 90009-2960

APPROVED: SMC Environmental Protection Committee (EPC)


EUGENE L. TATTINI
Brigadier General, USAF
Chairperson, Environmental Protection Committee

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
CONCURRENCE PAGE

Taurus Standard Small Launch Vehicle, Vandenberg Air Force Base, California

April 1993

I concur with the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI):

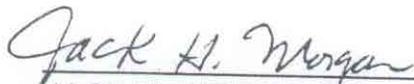
Environmental Protection Committee Approval:



ALEXANDER A. ABELA, Colonel, USAF
Chairman, Environmental Protection Committee
Vandenberg AFB, CA

14 May 1993
Date

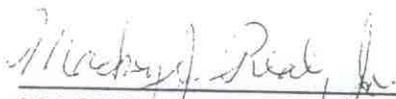
Judge Advocate Approval:



JACK H. MORGAN, Colonel, USAF
Staff Judge Advocate, 30 SPW/JA
Vandenberg AFB, CA

7 May 93
Date

Organization Approval:



MACKEY J. REAL, JR., GM-15
Chief, Environmental Management
Vandenberg AFB, CA

10 May 1993
Date