

Finding of No Significant Impact

Ballistic Missile Defense Organization Cooperative-Engagement-Capability/PATRIOT (CEC/PATRIOT) Interoperability Test

Proposed Action, Purpose and Need

As part of its program to develop technologies to protect against ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and high-performance aircraft, BMDO proposes to conduct a test of equipment designed to detect, track and target these kinds of threats. However, no missiles would be used in conducting the test. The proposed test, termed the “Cooperative Engagement Capability/PATRIOT Interoperability Test” would continue the development of an innovative technology that would enable U.S. Army and U.S. Navy radar systems to work together to jointly track and counter air threats at longer ranges than is now possible.

The technology to be tested uses a network of radars with overlapping coverage to create a combined, larger, more detailed detecting, tracking, and targeting capability. This Cooperative Engagement Capability (CEC), a system developed by the U.S. Navy, will link radars from multiple platforms, including ships and aircraft and land, into a network to produce a single, composite picture of radar tracks.

The proposed test would link land-based Navy radar systems, a Navy AEGIS cruiser at sea, an airborne P-3 Orion aircraft, and an Army PATRIOT radar at a separate site. The test would simulate with computers the “cooperative” acquisition, tracking and engagement of various “threats” by combining the capabilities of several radars at once. This would be a test of radar, communications and computer capabilities only; there would be no actual missiles or missile launches involved in this test in any way. Although a PATRIOT radar would be involved, this unit is physically completely separate from PATRIOT missiles, which would not be present at any of the test sites, nor involved in the test in any way.

PURPOSE. The general purpose of this testing is to determine and demonstrate the capability of several radar systems, from different services, to jointly detect, track and target ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and high-performance aircraft at longer ranges than is now possible. As the ability to detect, track and target incoming threats is improved this would ultimately enable defensive systems such as the PATRIOT system to be employed more effectively not only in the aircraft defense role it was originally designed for, but also in an increasingly effective missile defense role.

NEED. Changing and increasing threats to the U.S., particularly from ballistic missiles, potentially carrying weapons of mass destruction, give rise to the need to develop improved capability to detect, track and target such threats, so that they can be more effectively countered than is presently possible.

Environmental Assessment

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality Regulations, 40 CFR parts 1500-1508, and E.O. 12114, an Environmental Assessment (EA) of the BMDO proposed action was developed through review of available technical and environmental documentation, analysis of impacts by an interdisciplinary staff of environmental professionals, and consultation with Federal, state, and local authorities.

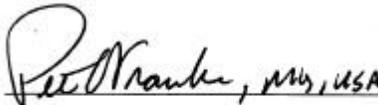
The EA addresses the environmental impacts of deployment of all of the test elements, focusing on the impacts at one non-military test equipment location, Ocean City Municipal Airport. NEPA analyses for the other test elements are documented in categorical exclusions (CATEX) and are incorporated by reference in the EA. The EA evaluated impacts at the Airport to geology, topography, and soils; water resources; biological resources, including protected species and habitats; land use; recreation; air quality; airspace and air traffic; health and safety, including radar emissions safety; noise; hazardous materials and waste; socioeconomics, including environmental justice; and cultural resources.

For each environmental resource, the assessment found that there would be either no impacts at all or minimal impacts that could be readily mitigated. In particular, potential health effects from exposure to radar emissions would not be a concern because the site would be secured during the entire test period and the distance at which effects might be of concern would be limited to a zone immediately in front of the radar, lying entirely within the secured area. Noise and air emissions from test equipment and power generators would not exceed environmentally acceptable levels. No protected species or sensitive habitats would be affected. No recreational or business activities at or near the Airport would be disrupted. No cultural resources would be affected and no issues of environmental justice were found to be of concern.

Decision

The decision, supported by this FONSI, is to conduct the test, using either of the alternative PATRIOT deployment sites, at the Ocean City Municipal Airport, or at Wallops Island, and the Wallops Island-based fixed radar, AEGIS cruiser, and test aircraft elements as specified in the proposed action.

APPROVED:



for RONALD T. KADISH
Lieutenant General, U.S. Air Force
Director, BMDO

2 Aug 00

Date