

**Finding of No Significant Impact
for the Ground-Based Midcourse Defense Next Generation Interceptor
Environmental Assessment/Overseas Environmental Assessment**

Agency: Missile Defense Agency

Action: Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

Background: The Missile Defense Agency (MDA), in cooperation with the United States (U.S.) Department of the Air Force (DAF) and Department of the Army (DA), prepared an Environmental Assessment/Overseas Environmental Assessment (EA/OEA) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts from the proposed test, deployment, and operation of a Next Generation Interceptor (NGI) to enhance the defense of the U.S. against intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) attack. The NGI would be an advanced interceptor (missile) fully capable of integration into the current MDA Ground-Based Midcourse Defense (GMD) system. The attached EA/OEA, which is hereby incorporated by reference, was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended; Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500–1508); MDA NEPA Implementing Procedures (79 *Federal Register* 46410–46419); DAF Environmental Impact Analysis Process (32 CFR Part 989); and U.S. Army Regulation (AR) 200-1, Environmental Protection and Enhancement (32 CFR Part 651).

Within the Department of Defense (DoD), the MDA is responsible for developing, testing, and fielding an integrated ballistic missile defense system to defend the U.S. and its deployed forces, allies, and friends against missile attacks in all phases of flight. Since 2004, the GMD system has been the principal defense of the U.S. homeland against ballistic missile threats. The GMD system uses multiple sensors, communications systems, fire control capabilities, and Ground-Based Interceptors (GBIs) to detect, track, and destroy intermediate- and long-range ballistic missiles in space during the middle, or midcourse, phase of flight. GBIs are currently emplaced at Fort Greely, Alaska (FGA) and Vandenberg Space Force Base (VSFB), California.

The DoD is pursuing advanced capabilities to continue providing effective protection of the nation, including modernizing the GMD system with a more innovative interceptor to meet emerging threats. The NGI, if deployed, would improve system survivability and provide increased performance against current and projected ICBM threats. In March 2021, the DoD awarded two contracts to support development of the NGI. Each contracted team was tasked to design an interceptor that meets the requirements set forth by the MDA. The two conceptual designs progressed from the technology development and risk reduction phase to the product development phase, which includes ground testing of the interceptor with inert payloads. A design was selected in April 2024. As the final NGI design is forthcoming, this EA/OEA includes a range of design specifications for impact analysis.

Description of the Proposed Action: The Proposed Action is to test, deploy, and operate the NGI to update and enhance the current GBI fleet. The proposed NGI would be tested at the current GBI test site at VSFB and deployed and operated at the current deployed GBI sites of VSFB and FGA. Operation refers to long-term facility operation and not potential use of the interceptors for active national defense.

The proposed NGI would be similar in function to the GBI, intercepting incoming ICBMs outside the Earth's atmosphere and destroying them by force of impact. No nuclear or conventional explosive warheads would be used. The NGI would integrate fully into the existing GMD system and utilize the existing GBI silos.

The NGI would require the use of existing facilities at VSBF and FGA, and new facilities may be constructed at FGA. The existing GBI silos at VSBF and FGA would require minor internal modifications to accommodate the NGI. Buildings 1555 and 1819 at VSBF and Building 663 at FGA may also require modification. Potential new facilities at FGA include a Missile Assembly Building, a kill vehicle oxidizer storage facility and fuel storage facility, and Interceptor Storage Facilities. If required, all new facilities at FGA would be constructed inside the current Missile Defense Complex footprint. Facility modifications at VSBF could begin as early as 2024, and facility modifications and new facility construction at FGA could begin in 2026.

The proposed NGI would be tested at the existing GBI test facilities at VSBF. The testing phase would include transportation of the NGI components or preassembled missiles to VSBF; assembly and integration of NGI components (if required); storage, final inspection, and checkout prior to testing; ground testing; and flight testing, which also includes all pre- and post-flight activities. Ground tests and flight tests would be conducted at VSBF. Up to three flight tests of NGIs would be conducted from VSBF each year beginning as early as 2026.

Test launches of the NGI would be the same as previous GBI flight tests and would consist of single and dual interceptor launches fired to intercept one or multiple ground- or air-launched targets over the Pacific Ocean. Air launched target missiles would be launched by aircraft flying from Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, or staged from Pacific Missile Range Facility Barking Sands on Kauai, Hawaii. Ground-launched target missiles would be launched from Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site, located at the U.S. Army Garrison-Kwajalein Atoll in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The target missiles used would be within the Flexible Target Family (FTF), which consists of common missile boosters, front sections, and components that can be used to assemble a variety of different target configurations. The MDA analyzed the preparation, assembly, integration, testing, transportation, and use of FTF missiles in the Flexible Target Family Environmental Assessment and prepared a FONSI with respect to the FTF in support of the ballistic missile defense system, both of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

Following initiation of the flight test program, tactical interceptors would be deployed to and subsequently operated at VSBF and FGA. Operation refers to long term facility operation, including initial testing of the system once the tactical interceptors are emplaced and maintenance of an on-alert system.

Alternatives Considered: Under the No Action Alternative, the NGI would not be tested, deployed, and operated. NGI launch facilities at VSBF and FGA for initial defensive operations would not be established, and the MDA would not plan for or use the NGI to enhance the defense of the U.S. against the threat of a limited strategic ballistic missile attack.

The necessity to utilize existing GMD infrastructure and procedures limits the test location for NGI to VSBF. The current deployed locations for the GBI at VSBF and FGA are threat-driven. Because the intent of the NGI is to update and enhance the current GBIs, the locations for the deployed NGIs would also be

VSFB and FGA. Alternative sites could have been considered, but they would not be reasonable given the existing infrastructure and national security needs of these locations. Thus, there are no other reasonable action alternatives that meet the purpose and need.

Summary of Environmental Consequences: In assessing the environmental impacts of testing, deploying, and operating the NGI, the MDA determined that implementation of the Proposed Action would result in no significant impacts to the following environmental resources: air quality, biological resources, coastal zone management, cultural resources, environmental justice, hazardous materials and hazardous wastes, health and safety, noise, and water resources. Resources were analyzed as applicable for each proposed location, including the Broad Ocean Area (BOA) of the Pacific Ocean. The extensive use of existing facilities, minimal new construction, and consistency with ongoing activities would minimize the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Action.

Following a review of the Proposed Action, in combination with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions at VSFB and FGA, the MDA also determined that no significant cumulative impacts would occur.

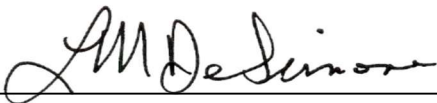
Public Review and Comment: A Notice of Availability of the Proposed Final EA/OEA and unsigned Proposed FONSI for public review and comment were published in local newspapers. Copies of the documents were placed in local libraries and posted on the MDA and VSFB public websites. The 42-day public comment period closed on July 8, 2024. The MDA reviewed and considered the comments received prior to making a decision on whether or not to sign the FONSI.

During the public comment period, MDA received two comment letters. The first letter shared California air permitting advisories and applicable regulatory requirements for the project's review and consideration. The comments in the first letter did not result in changes to the EA/OEA or FONSI. The second letter generally recommended preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement and requested the analysis of cultural resources for the BOA. Additionally, the letter requested the EA/OEA include links to references and identified an error with a reference used in the analysis of biological resources for the BOA. MDA researched previous NEPA documents that included the BOA of the Pacific Ocean and determined that additional cultural analyses were not warranted. The EA biological section was updated to include the appropriate reference and includes updated information on the potential impacts to marine mammal populations in the BOA.

Conclusion: An analysis of the Proposed Action of testing, deploying, and operating the NGI concluded that implementation would not have a significant environmental impact on the human and natural environment, either by itself or cumulatively with other actions. After thoroughly considering the facts herein, the undersigned finds that the Proposed Action is consistent with existing environmental policies and objectives set forth in NEPA and its implementing regulations. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact.

APPROVE:



Laura M. DeSimone, SES
Executive Director
Missile Defense Agency

11/01/24

DATE

APPROVE:

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MARCIA L. QUIGLEY, Colonel, USAF
Director, Space Force Mission Sustainment
(Engineering, Logistics, & Force Protection)

DATE

APPROVE:

MARSHALL.KEITH
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Lieutenant Colonel Keith A. Marshall
Commander, U.S. Army Garrison Fort Greely

DATE

Marin Audubon Society v FAA - Litigation

The MDA and cooperating agencies are aware of the November 12, 2024 decision in *Marin Audubon Society v. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)*, No. 23-1067 (D.C. Cir. Nov. 12, 2024). To the extent that a court may conclude that the CEQ regulations implementing NEPA are not judicially enforceable or binding on this agency action, the MDA and cooperating agencies have nonetheless elected to follow those regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500–1508, in addition to MDA’s and the cooperating agencies’ corresponding procedures/regulations implementing NEPA at 79 Federal Register 46410, 32 CFR Part 989, and 32 CFR Part 651, to meet the agencies’ obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.