# DRAFT
# FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
# FOR EGLIN A AND B RANGES
# (TEST AREAS A-73, A-77, A-78, A-79, A-90, B-7, B-12, B-70, B-71, B-75, AND B-82)
# AT
# EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA

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In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 United States Code, Section 4321-4347) and Department of Defense NEPA Procedures (as of June 30, 2025), the Department of the Air Force (DAF), as the lead agency, has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) analyzing the impacts associated with a continuation of current activity levels at Test Areas (TAs) A-73, A-77, A-78, A-79, A-90, B-7, B-12, B-70, B-71, B-75, and B-82 at Eglin Air Force Base (AFB) previously analyzed under NEPA and additional testing and training activities, test area expenditures, test area and road maintenance, and new construction that have not been previously analyzed under NEPA.

## PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

**Purpose of the Action and Need for the Action (EA Sections [§§] 1.2 and 1.3, pages 1-1 to 1-4)**: The purpose the Proposed Action described in this EA focuses on three priority mission requirements: (1) continue mission access and scheduling, (2) ensure environmental compliance, and (3) conduct NEPA-required analysis. The DAF has conducted comprehensive NEPA analysis for testing and training missions for many of the subject test areas and test sites but not for others, particularly those with changing requirements or emerging usage. Environmental analysis is needed to account for potential mission- and environment-related changes to test areas/test sites, conditions, and missions that have occurred since completion of prior Range EAs (REAs). Analysis of an authorized level of activity streamlines priority mission processes and ensures that environmental impacts and compliance with environmental regulations are fully considered.

## ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

**Proposed Action Alternative and Alternative 1 (Current Plus Future) (EA §2.1 and §2.3, pages 2-1 and 2-14)**: The Proposed Action is to continue mission access and scheduling, ensure environmental compliance, and conduct NEPA-required analysis. In the EA, two options for meeting the purpose and need for the Proposed Action are presented: the No Action Alternative and Alternative 1 (Current Plus Future). The No Action Alternative is a continuation of current activity levels at test areas/test sites previously analyzed under NEPA. Alternative 1 consists of all activities included in the No Action Alternative, two new radar systems at TA A-73, and future construction, demolition, improvement, and maintenance activities that may occur at all test areas/test sites evaluated in the EA.

There are no major construction projects planned for the test areas addressed in the EA. Alternative 1 includes typical minor future construction, demolition, renovation, and facility modifications that could potentially occur within the Eglin A and B Ranges over the next 7 years. These activities would be located within existing range profiles, and all management actions described in the EA would be followed (refer to the *Management Actions* subsection of each respective resource section within the EA). Individual projects would generally be under 2 acres and presumed to include impervious surface additions. These types of actions would be reviewed for environmental concerns through the Environmental Impact Analysis Process using Air Force Form 813 (Request for Environmental Impact

Analysis). Under the EA, the total area of disturbance authorized over the 7-year period would not exceed 250 acres, which is approximately 0.05 percent of the Eglin AFB land area.

**No Action Alternative (EA §2.2, pages 2-1 to 2-14)**: The No Action Alternative is a continuation of current activity levels at TAs A-73, A-77, A-78, A-79, A-90, B-7, B-12, B-70, B-71, B-75, and B-82 previously analyzed under NEPA.

**Alternatives Eliminated (EA §2.4, page 2-15)**: Historically, REAs have often used a surge scenario as an alternative basis, which means establishing some new major percent increase in the number of test events or expendables. Because no stakeholders indicated a desire to increase capacity of testing or training missions for the EA, this type of alternative was not carried forward.

## AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Analysis was conducted to determine the potential impacts to the human and natural environment resulting from the Proposed Action and alternatives. Environmental analysis focused on the following resource areas: air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, hazardous materials/waste and debris, noise, safety, and water resources. No significant impacts to resources were identified (EA Chapter 3, pages 3-1 to 3-178).

**Air Quality (EA §3.2, pages 3-4 to 3-11):** Under Alternative 1, emissions would result from munitions expenditures, construction, and maintenance activities. These activities have been analyzed to assess potential impacts on air quality within the regional region of influence. Annual emissions, including those associated with munitions use, construction, and maintenance activities under Alternative 1 would remain below all insignificance indicator thresholds. Therefore, activities under Alternative 1 are not anticipated to result in significant air quality impacts.

**Biological Resources (EA §3.3, pages 3-11 to 3-80)**: Biological resources, including protected species, could potentially be affected by direct strikes, habitat alteration, noise and other disturbance, and the introduction or spread of invasive species. Target locations generally consist of cleared areas or areas of maintained vegetation, and the potential for direct strike of wildlife or sensitive habitats by ammunition, ordnance, and electromagnetic radiation (radar) is small. Vehicles and other equipment are unlikely to strike wildlife and would generally not be operated in sensitive habitats. Mission-generated wildfires would impact a small number of animals relative to population numbers and could result in potentially adverse or beneficial habitat impacts. Munitions, C-4 explosives, pyrotechnics, and other explosive components are generally used in areas of exposed soil or maintained vegetation, which provide little habitat value for most species. Substantial effects related to erosion would not be expected. Deposition of metals, explosives, explosives by-products, and chemical and biological simulants would probably have little overall potential to degrade soil and water quality to a level that would adversely impact organisms, with the exception of heavily used target areas. Such areas likely support comparatively low wildlife occurrence. Wildlife would likely hear and potentially react to impulsive sounds produced during testing and training activities. Some species display tolerance or habituation to noise levels on Eglin.

Wildlife could be struck during maintenance activities, but due to animals' keen senses, many animals would likely be aware of such activities and would move from the affected area. Similarly, wildlife (e.g., cottontail rabbit, great horned owl, white-tailed deer, and other animals identified in Table 3-5, Section 3.3.1 of the EA) and protected species (e.g., reticulated flatwood salamander, red-cockaded woodpecker, and eastern indigo snake) would likely move away from affected areas during herbicide application. Injury or mortality could potentially occur from prescribed fires but would likely affect a relatively small number of animals. Noise and general disturbance could cause wildlife to leave or avoid certain areas, but such impacts would generally be intermittent and short-term in duration. Prescribed fire, herbicide

application, tree removal, and mowing and bush hogging would represent ongoing habitat alteration. Some maintenance activities could result in erosion. The potential for introducing or spreading invasive plant species would be reduced by management practices. Herbicide use would occur in accordance with Eglin requirements.

Although there would be adverse impacts to biological resources, with implementation of management practices, significant impacts would not be expected as a result of testing and training activities or maintenance activities. Minor construction, demolition, renovation, facility modification, and land clearing would potentially result in direct strikes, habitat loss and alteration, and noise and other disturbance. A relatively small number of animals would likely be affected, and habitat impacts would not result in detectable population-level effects to any species. The effects of radar use at TA A-73 would be like those described for similar activities under the No Action Alternative and would not likely result in population-level effects on wildlife, including protected species.

**Cultural Resources (EA §3.4, pages 3-80 to 3-99)**: No additional impacts would occur as a result of the No Action Alternative beyond the impacts already occurring in the ranges analyzed in the EA. National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-eligible or potentially eligible cultural resources are required to be avoided per the Integrated Cultural Resource Management Plan. NRHP-eligible or potentially eligible buildings are required to be maintained for the structure to continue to be eligible for NRHP status. Therefore, no NRHP-eligible or potentially eligible site or building is expected to be degraded. Potential degradation of cultural resources is only anticipated in locations without cultural surveys. Range activities in some of these areas may be too unsafe due to unexploded ordnance (UXO) to perform additional cultural surveys. In addition, any new construction, demolition, improvement, and maintenance activities will need to be evaluated if impacts are anticipated to NRHP-eligible cultural resources or structures. No new groundbreaking activities or modification to NRHP structures are anticipated in TA A-73 under Alternative 1. Therefore, no impacts to cultural resources are anticipated beyond those indicated in the No Action Alternative.

**Geology and Soils (EA §3.5, pages 3-99 to 3-121)**: There would be no significant impacts associated with geology and soils. Management of soils and surface vegetation, clearing, and construction on test areas within the study area would continue to be conducted in accordance with all applicable environmental compliance regulations and Eglin environmental management plans. Management restrictions would ensure that any additional ground-disturbing activities would follow best management practices and current regulations. Test area and road maintenance activities would follow management practices regarding erosion prevention.

**Hazardous Materials/Waste and Debris (EA §3.6, pages 3-121 to 3-132)**: There would be no significant impacts associated with hazardous materials/waste and debris. Management of hazardous materials/waste and debris on test areas within the study area would continue to be conducted in accordance with all applicable environmental compliance regulations and Eglin environmental management plans. Management restrictions would ensure that no ground-disturbing activities occur in Environmental Restoration Program or Legacy Debris Pit sites, and test/training areas would continue to be policed, and debris removed. Test area and road maintenance activities would follow management practices regarding transport, storage, use, and disposal of hazardous materials and waste.

**Noise (EA §3.7, pages 3-132 to 3-145)**: Activity levels and associated noise levels would not change. There would be no additional noise impacts. Noise generated during construction and maintenance activities would be temporary, lasting only for the duration of the project, and localized to the vicinity of construction activity. Off-installation sensitive locations would not be affected. Time-averaged noise levels at off-installation sensitive locations would not change relative to levels associated with ongoing

testing and training. Noise impacts would not be significant.

**Safety (EA §3.8, pages 3-145 to 3-158)**: Controlled access of test areas/sites and surrounding areas would minimize the potential for direct impacts resulting from munitions, electromagnetic radiation, and UXO. Eglin has extensive expertise in managing wildfires that could be caused by range activities. Vegetation maintenance would decrease the potential for wildlife/aircraft strikes. Test area/site maintenance, road maintenance, debris removal, and UXO removal would result in increased safety.

No significant health and safety risks have been identified that would result in disproportionate environmental health or safety risks to children and elderly populations.

**Water Resources (EA §3.9, pages 3-158 to 3-177)**: Adverse impacts to water resources may include sedimentation, contamination, and hydrologic alteration from mission expenditures and improper/inadequate maintenance, primarily at stream crossings. Implementation of permit requirements and management actions would minimize the potential for such impacts. Although there could be adverse impacts, overall effects to water resources would not be significant.

## AGENCY AND PUBLIC COMMENT

The DAF prepared a Draft EA to inform the public of the Proposed Action and allow the opportunity for public review and comment. The Draft EA 30-day review period began with a public notice published in the *Northwest Florida Daily News* on July 8, 2025. The notice described the Proposed Action, solicited public comments on the Draft EA and Proposed Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), provided public comment review dates, and announced that a copy of the Draft EA would be available for review on the Eglin AFB website: https://www.eglin.af.mil/About-Us/Eglin-Documents/https://www.eglin.af.mil/About-Us/EglinDocuments/. *TBD* comments were received.

## FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on my review of the facts and analyses contained in the attached EA, conducted under the provisions of NEPA, I conclude that implementation of the Proposed Action or Alternative 1 would not have a significant impact on the human or natural environment. Accordingly, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The signing of this FONSI fulfills the requirements of NEPA. Following the issuance of this signed FONSI, the DAF will select either the Proposed Action or Alternative 1.

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