

Gulf of Mexico (GOMEX) Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement Public Hearing Proceedings (EIS/OEIS)

INTRODUCTION

Four public hearings were held 2-6 February 2009 to receive public comments on the GOMEX Draft EIS/OEIS. The hearings were held in Panama City, FL; Pensacola, FL; New Orleans, LA; and Corpus Christi, TX. There were no public comments submitted during the public hearings. The following are the proceedings from these public hearings.

Hearing February 2, 2009

PUBLIC HEARING
NAVY EIS/OEIS
BAY POINT MARRIOTT
PANAMA CITY, FLORIDA
FEBRUARY 2, 2009

IN RE: Environmental Impact Statement
Overseas Environmental Impact Statement

/

Public Hearing held February 2, 2009, at Bay Point
Marriott, Panama City, Florida from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00
p.m. Reported by Gertrude B. Downs, FPR

APPEARANCES

Lt. Commander Anderson

Greg Thompson
U.S. Fleet Forces Command
Norfolk, Va.

1 LT. COMMANDER ANDERSON: Good evening ladies
2 and gentlemen, may I have your attention please.
3 Welcome to the public hearings on the Navy's Draft
4 Environmental Impact Statement, DEIS, Overseas
5 Environmental Impact Statement, OEIS on the Navy's
6 proposed action of evaluating the potential
7 environmental impacts over a ten-year planning
8 horizon associated with Navy Atlantic Fleet
9 training, research development testing evaluation,
10 RDT&E, activities and associated range capabilities
11 enhancements within the existing Gulf of Mexico,
12 GOMEX, Range Complex.

13 The purpose for the proposed action is to,
14 one, achieve and maintain fleet readiness using
15 GOMEX Range Complex and support -- using the GOMEX
16 Range Complex and support and conduct current,
17 emerging, and future training operations in RDMT --
18 RDT&E operations; two, expand warfare missions
19 supported by the GOMEX Range Complex; and, three,
20 upgrade and modernize existing range capabilities
21 to enhance and sustain Navy training and RDT&E.

22 Let me begin by thanking each of you for your
23 attendance tonight. I am Lt. Commander Richey
24 Anderson, and my role is to serve as the hearing
25 officer for this public hearing. In order to

1 ensure everyone present can hear me and understand
2 what's going on, and out of respect for your fellow
3 citizens who will be speaking tonight, I ask
4 everyone to please take a moment now to ensure your
5 cell phones are in silent mode or turned off.

6 I am not nor have ever been affiliated with,
7 in any way with the Department of the Navy's
8 evaluation of the potential environmental effects
9 associated with the proposed action I previously
10 described to you. My job here tonight is simple.
11 It is to ensure that we have a fair, orderly and
12 impartial hearing.

13 Consistent with the tenets of the National
14 Environmental Policy Act, NEPA, all who wish to
15 provide comments will have the opportunity to do
16 so. I expect that there will be a wide range of
17 comments expressed this evening, maybe a few
18 because we don't have too many people tonight. And
19 I ask that we treat each other with respect --
20 courtesy and respect.

21 Throughout this hearing I ask that you keep in
22 mind that this is not an arena for debate. It is
23 not a popularity vote on the DEIS or OEIS,
24 hereinafter referred to as the document, and the
25 alternatives described herein -- and the

1 alternatives described herein, nor is it a hearing
2 in a question-and-answer format. This is a public
3 hearing -- this public hearing provides an
4 opportunity to express your views on the adequacy
5 or inadequacy of the document and to have those
6 comments made a part of the official record. This
7 hearing is part of the official record.

8 In order to orient those attending who might
9 not be entirely familiar with the document, this
10 public hearing will begin with a brief introduction
11 from Navy representative, Mr. Greg Thompson, from
12 U.S. Fleet Forces Command in Norfolk. Mr. Thompson
13 will present information concerning the purpose and
14 need for the proposed action and the three
15 alternatives analyzed in the document. The
16 briefing takes about 15 minutes and is required by
17 statute as a part of the National Environmental
18 Policy Act process.

19 Following the introductory presentation we'll
20 begin hearing your comments on the document. This
21 hearing is being held in accordance with the
22 provisions of the National Environmental Policy
23 Act, or NEPA, and the regulations that are
24 published by the Council on Environmental Quality.
25 The purpose of this hearing is to provide a public

1 forum to summarize the results of the document, and
2 more importantly to receive your comments on the
3 document. These comments will be part of the
4 official record and will be considered in
5 preparation of the Final EIS/OEIS. Your comments
6 and involvement in this hearing are very important
7 to the decision-making process. Your input
8 provides the decision makers with the benefit of
9 your knowledge of any environmental impacts that
10 you think might result in the proposed action.

11 This hearing is the venue that the Navy uses to
12 gather your concerns, whether they are through oral
13 or written comments, about the adequacy of the
14 environmental analysis and the environmental
15 impacts identified under the proposed action and
16 the alternatives.

17 We ask that you focus your comments on
18 environmental issues. Non-environmental issues
19 will take time away from those who came to comment
20 on the analysis and environmental concerns, and
21 comments are not (inaudible) and will not add to
22 the adequacy of the analysis used in the Final
23 EIS/OEIS.

24 As I said earlier, it's my job to ensure that
25 each of you has an equal opportunity to speak. The

1 Navy representatives will not be allowed to respond
2 to your comments, and that is important to know.
3 This is not a debate. This is a hearing. It is
4 your opportunity to speak. I will enforce the
5 individual time limits previously established at
6 three minutes so that all who wish -- who wish to
7 may have an opportunity to speak. Please do not
8 interrupt any speaker, whether you agree or
9 disagree with them. Interfering with the speakers
10 will simply reduce the amount of time available for
11 all those who deserve to be heard. Similarly,
12 applause or other outbursts will take valuable time
13 away from the speakers, and will hamper me in
14 trying to afford everyone a chance to speak.

15 The hearing is scheduled to adjourn at 9:00
16 p.m. If necessary, I will not consider the time
17 taken by the Navy representatives for their
18 presentation to count against the whole two hour
19 hearing time. I will add that time to the period
20 available for folks to speak. In other words, you
21 will have the full two hour hearing time that is
22 noted in the Federal Register.

23 If after everyone who desires to speak has had
24 an opportunity to do so and there isn't any time
25 left, I will permit speakers to use additional time

1 to continue to expand upon their earlier comments.
2 Again, there's only a three minute time limit, but
3 if you desire -- if you decide to speak, the
4 stenographer will record your comments. You are
5 also accorded -- encouraged to continue your
6 comments or elaborate on them through a written
7 submission.

8 If you do not wish to speak at this public
9 hearing, but you have comments that you would like
10 to be made a part of the public record, I encourage
11 you to submit these -- those documents. There are
12 a number of ways available for you to do so as
13 indicated on the projection screen behind you.

14 First you may submit your written comments
15 tonight at the comment table, or you may submit
16 your comments on line via the website. Is it up
17 there?

18 MS. STEWART: Yes.

19 LT. COMMANDER ANDERSON: Okay. I won't read
20 it if it's up there.

21 As an additional alternative, you may fax your
22 comments to 757-322-4894 and the fax number again
23 is 757-322-4894.

24 Finally, if you prefer, you may mail
25 additional comments to Naval Facility's Engineering

1 Command attention, is it up there too?

2 MS. STEWART: Yes.

3 LT. COMMANDER ANDERSON: Yeah, there it is
4 right there. I don't want to read that off because
5 it's right there.

6 Written comments will be accepted throughout
7 the comment period, which concludes on 16 February,
8 2009. Comments made at all the public hearings are
9 provided in writing. Anytime during the public
10 comment period or post marked by 16 February, 2009
11 will be given equal consideration. All comments
12 are part of the official record. Information is
13 available at the comment table on all of the
14 methods of submitting comments that I have
15 discussed.

16 When you came in tonight, you should have
17 signed in and received fax sheets. Also, you
18 should have been asked to indicate if you wish to
19 speak. Those who said they wish to speak sign
20 speaker cards at the registration table like the
21 ones -- I don't have them. Make sure you have one
22 present. Okay -- we have here. The speaker cards
23 will become part of the official record. If anyone
24 wishes to speak who has not yet signed a speaker
25 card, please raise your hand and a member of the

1 Navy staff will sign you up.

2 I will call five speakers at a time to come
3 forward when we get to that. Elected officials who
4 chose to talk will be given an opportunity to speak
5 first followed by officials representing government
6 organizations. Members of the public will then be
7 called up in the order of which they signed up to
8 speak.

9 When I ask for the first five speakers, all
10 five should come forward and take a seat in the
11 speaker staging area at the front of the room in
12 the order -- the order in which I call the speakers
13 to the staging will also determine the order in
14 which you will provide your comments at this public
15 hearing.

16 At the conclusion of your comments please
17 return to your seat in the speaker staging area.

18 After the first five speakers have completed their
19 comments, I will ask them to please return to their
20 seats in the audience. I will then call the next
21 five speakers to come up to the speaking -- speaker
22 staging area. It is important that you speak
23 clearly and slowly so the stenographer can do his
24 or her job. Please face the stenographer, which is
25 very important, because the stenographer is taking

1 down everything you say. We are also going to ask
2 that you state your full name and spell it so we
3 can report it correctly.

4 In addition, please provide the state of your
5 state of residence but do not provide any personal
6 information in your comments, such as your home
7 address, if you do not want that information to be
8 published in the Final EIS. If you're representing
9 someone or some group other than yourself, please
10 state that -- that as well and provide the address
11 of the group or organization.

12 Each person will be allotted three minutes to
13 speak. This applies to everyone, public officials,
14 spokespersons, and individuals. You do not have to
15 speak for the full three minutes, however if you
16 choose to speak for the three minutes, a green card
17 will be raised when there is one minute remaining.

18 A yellow card will be raised when there are thirty
19 seconds remaining to give you a cue that you
20 have -- have only thirty seconds to wrap up your
21 comments. When your three minutes is ended, a red
22 card will be raised. At that point, please end
23 your statement.

24 Out of respect for others who would like to
25 make comments I ask that you please honor the time

1 limit and request -- and any requests that I might
2 have for you to stop speaking should you exceed the
3 time limit. If you think you will have more
4 comments than you have time, I invite you to make
5 the most of the time allotted by saying your most
6 important comments first. Once again, as I stated
7 earlier, you can follow up your oral comments with
8 written comments, and I encourage you to do that.

9 If you do not have the opportunity to call --
10 to voice all of your comments, you can and should
11 submit them in writing. I can't overemphasize that
12 fact.

13 I will now turn the floor over to the Navy
14 representative, Mr. Greg Thompson, from the United
15 States Fleet Force Command in Norfolk, Virginia.

16 Thank you.

17 MR. THOMPSON: Good evening and welcome to
18 tonight's public hearing on the Gulf of Mexico
19 Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas
20 Environmental Impact Statement.

21 I'm Greg Thompson, and I want to thank you on
22 behalf of the United States Navy for attending this
23 hearing tonight. Here is an overview of tonight's
24 presentation on the Gulf of Mexico Range Complex
25 Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Overseas

1 Environmental Impact Statement. From now on, it
2 will be referred to as the document.

3 As part of the larger program where the Navy
4 will manage its training on broad geographic areas,
5 this document looks at training activities
6 occurring in the Gulf of Mexico Range Complex. The
7 document does not propose major changes to the
8 operations and training. Rather, the document
9 covers small scale critical enhancements. One
10 element of this larger program is the environmental
11 planning documentation, the document we are
12 discussing tonight.

13 The document has been prepared in accordance
14 with several environmental laws and regulations,
15 some of which are listed on this slide. The GOMEX
16 Range Complex represents a combination of air,
17 land, and sea space that provides realistic
18 training areas for Navy personnel. The GOMEX Range
19 Complex study area includes the air, land, and
20 offshore areas of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi,
21 Louisiana, and Texas. The two land ranges covered
22 in the document are Noxubee County Range and the
23 McMullen -- McMullen County Range.

24 The nature of modern warfare and security
25 operations has become increasingly complex.

1 Threats are global, and the tactics, weapons and
2 forces facing the U.S. military range from simple
3 to extremely sophisticated. To effectively counter
4 the wide range of threats, Naval forces bring
5 together thousands of sailors and marines, their
6 equipment, vehicles, ships and aircraft and often
7 use U.S. services or coalition partners, all of
8 which need to work together as a cohesive team to
9 achieve success. Therefore, the purpose of the
10 proposed action is to achieve and maintain fleet
11 readiness using the Gulf of Mexico Range Complex to
12 support and conduct current, emerging, and future
13 training operations and research, development,
14 tests and evaluation, RDT&E operations.

15 The Navy's mandate for training is found in
16 Title 10 of the United States Code, Section 5062.
17 This law requires the Navy to be organized, trained
18 and equipped primarily for prompt and sustained
19 combat incident to operations at sea.

20 The proposed action is to support and conduct
21 current, emerging, and future training and RDT&E
22 operations. Some examples of the types of training
23 that are currently conducted in the Gulf of Mexico
24 Range Complex are mine warfare, surface warfare,
25 air warfare, strike warfare, amphibious warfare,

1 electronic combat, and underwater detonations.

2 Three alternatives have been analyzed in this
3 document, each of which meets the Navy's purpose
4 and need. The Navy examined three alternatives in
5 the document: The no-action alternative, or the
6 continuing action, provides for current levels of
7 operations. This means training operations and
8 major range events would continue at the same level
9 and locations as they are today. Additional
10 exercises may be added if necessary to support Navy
11 search capability. The surge refers to the
12 capability to quickly deploy assets in response to
13 world events.

14 Under Alternative 1 the Navy proposes to
15 conduct all operations in the no-action alternative
16 plus eliminate mine warfare training events as a
17 result of BRAC actions, decreased underwater
18 demolition training, increased unit level bombing
19 and gunnery exercises, and increase the use of
20 commercial air services.

21 Alternative 2 is the Navy's preferred
22 alternative. In addition to the components of
23 Alternative 1, the Navy proposes to implement the
24 joint national training center which provides the
25 capability to train as a part of a large,

1 multi-platform group. Alternative 2 would also
2 minimize use of high explosive bomb use by
3 eliminating live bomb use during major training
4 exercises and reducing live bomb use during unit
5 level exercises.

6 Twenty resources and issues were described and
7 analyzed in this document. Among others these
8 include air quality, water quality, marine mammals,
9 sea turtles, fish, birds, and socioeconomic,
10 including recreational and commercial fishing. The
11 Navy used a screening process to identify and
12 evaluate aspects of the proposed action that could
13 act as stressors to these resource areas. These
14 stressors include vessel movements, aircraft
15 overflights, towed mine warfare devices,
16 non-explosive practice munitions, underwater
17 detonations, and high explosive ordinance of
18 military-expended materials.

19 The acoustic analysis focused on potential
20 effects to marine mammals, sea turtles, and fish
21 from explosives. Based on the review of the
22 literature and our findings of potential effects to
23 marine species the analysis focused on whales and
24 dolphins as well as sea turtles. In addition, the
25 impacts to fish were determined to be minimal.

1 Fish may exhibit a behavioral response, but the
2 response is likely to be short term and
3 biologically insignificant.

4 Furthermore, any effects from the use of
5 explosives will not result in a significant impact
6 to the population as a whole. The non-acoustic
7 analysis mainly focused on potential impact --
8 impacts, as a result of the expended training
9 materials and disruptions to commercial and
10 civilian activities and vessel movements. The Navy
11 concluded that there would be no significant impact
12 in territorial waters under the National
13 Environmental Policy Act, or significant harm in
14 non-territorial waters under Executive Order 12114
15 from these stressors.

16 The Navy is consulting with the National
17 Marine Fishery service for anticipated harassment
18 to marine mammals under the Marine Mammal
19 Protection Act. The Navy is also consulting with
20 National Marine Fishery Service and U.S. Fish and
21 Wildlife Service for species protected under the
22 Federal Endangered Species Act. The Navy is not
23 consulting with the National Marine Fishery Service
24 for essential fish habitat given that the limited
25 extent, duration, and magnitude of potential

1 impacts.

2 In addition to a significant reduction on live
3 bombing exercises, the Navy will also implement a
4 mitigation plan to further reduce the potential for
5 harassment or marine resources. For example, the
6 Navy will continue to use lookouts before, during,
7 and after exercises using explosives. The Navy
8 lookouts are highly trained in spotting
9 objectives -- objects in the water and also receive
10 marine species awareness training. This training
11 addresses the lookout's role in environmental
12 protection and includes general observation
13 information, including more detailed instruction
14 for spotting marine mammals.

15 It has been reviewed by the National Marine
16 Fishery Service and is considered suitable
17 training. If marine mammals or sea turtles are
18 seen, the exercises would be suspended or
19 relocated. The Navy establishes a 5,100 yard
20 radius buffer zone from the intended target when
21 conducting high explosives -- high explosive
22 bombing events and a 1,000 yard radius buffer zone
23 when conducting bombing events using non-explosive
24 practicing instruments.

25 As part of the Marine Mammal Protection Act,

1 and Endangered Species Act process, and in
2 coordination with the National Marine Fishery
3 service, the Gulf of Mexico monitoring plan for
4 marine species will be established. The monitoring
5 plan will describe the most effective logically,
6 logistically and financially feasible means to
7 monitor training events. The primary tools
8 available for monitoring are listed here. In
9 addition, the Navy is developing an integrated
10 comprehensive monitoring program for marine species
11 in order to organize, ensure consistency, and
12 compile among the various Range Complexes, and
13 geographic locations where the Navy training
14 occurs.

15 The Navy funded twenty-six million dollars in
16 2008 toward marine mammal research. For the past
17 several years, the Navy has provided ten to
18 fourteen million dollars to universities, research
19 institutions, federal laboratories, private
20 companies, and independent researchers around the
21 world to study marine mammals. In addition, the
22 Navy sponsors approximately seventy percent of all
23 research concerning the effects of human-generated
24 sound on marine mammals and approximately fifty
25 percent of such research conducted worldwide.

1 Major topics of Navy-supported research are
2 included on this slide. This slide concludes our
3 presentation on the information analysis contained
4 in the document.

5 Now I'd like to discuss the future steps in
6 the process related to this project. This slide
7 outlines the schedule beyond release of the Draft
8 document. The key characteristic of the entire
9 process is the public's opportunity to comment.

10 Four public hearings, including this one, are being
11 held throughout this week. Your comments on the
12 Draft document will be addressed in the Final
13 EIS/OEIS, the final step in the decision phase. A
14 decision will not be made until at least thirty
15 days after the distribution of the Final EIS/OEIS.
16 This decision will be summarized and published as a
17 record of decision in the Federal Register in
18 October of 2009.

19 In addition to providing oral comments
20 tonight, you may also make your comments in writing
21 if you wish to. There are three ways to do that.
22 You may submit prepared written comments to the
23 person at the registration table outside or place
24 them in the basket provided on the comment table.
25 Blank comment sheets are also available for use at

1 the comment table. You can submit written comments
2 on line through the project website, or you may
3 mail or fax written comments using the information
4 presented on this slide. Whichever option you
5 choose your written comments will be entered into
6 the formal record, and they will receive the same
7 consideration as the oral comments provided
8 tonight. If you choose to submit comments at a
9 later time, please be sure to send them by
10 February 16, 2009, which is the closing date for
11 the comment period.

12 With that I will now turn the hearing over to
13 Lt. Commander Anderson.

14 LT. COMMANDER ANDERSON: All right. Well, at
15 this time we would, normally I would call the
16 elected officials, but since I don't we still have,
17 we don't have anybody at this time to speak, so at
18 this time, we'll stand in recess and pending
19 anybody to, that arrives to speak, we'll just,
20 we'll stand by. And then if somebody arrives,
21 we'll open the meeting to hear them.

22 (Off the record. Meeting in recess at 7:25
23 p.m. Return to the record at 9:00 p.m.)

24 LT. COMMANDER ANDERSON: All right, ladies and
25 gentlemen, those that are still here, I'm just

1 going to call, reconvene here. It's 9 o'clock by
2 my watch here, Eastern Standard Time (sic). The
3 time has now expired. The public hearing is
4 closed. I'd like to remind you that written
5 comments may be submitted and will continue to be
6 accepted and made part of the public record until
7 16 February, 2009. Thank you very much for your
8 courtesy and for your participation this evening.

9 UNIDENTIFIED: Let's make that Central
10 Standard Time.

11 LT. COMMANDER ANDERSON: Oh, all right, for
12 the record, Central Time.

13 (Meeting concluded at 9:00 p.m., Central
14 Standard Time.)

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STATE OF FLORIDA
COUNTY OF BAY

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that I was authorized to, and did stenographically report the foregoing Public Hearing of the EIS/OEIS held on February 2, 2009, in Panama City, Florida, and that the transcript is a true and complete record of my stenographic notes.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not a relative, employee, attorney, or counsel of the parties, nor am I a relative or employee of any of the parties, attorney or counsel connected with the action, nor am I financially interested in the action.

DATED this 16th day of February 2009.

Gertrude B. Downs, FPR

IN RE: Gulf of Mexico Range Complex
EIS/OEIS Public Hearing

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Gulf of Mexico Range Complex EIS/OEIS Public
Hearing held at New World Landing, 600 South Palafox Street,
Pensacola, Florida, on Tuesday, the 3rd day of February,
2009, commencing at 7:00 p.m. and ending at 9:00 p.m.,
before Linda V. Crowe, Court Reporter Court Reporter and
Notary Public.

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APPEARANCES

HEARING OFFICER:

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER RICH ANDERSON

NAVY REPRESENTATIVES:

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER JOEL KELLEN
MR. GREG THOMPSON

REPRESENTATIVES OF PARSONS ENGINEERING

GENERAL PUBLIC

TAYLOR REPORTING SERVICES, INCORPORATED

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ANDERSON: Good evening,
3 ladies and gentleman. May I have your attention,
4 please? Welcome to the public hearing on the Navy's
5 Draft Environmental Impact Statement, DEIS/Overseas
6 Environmental Impact Statement, OEIS, on the Navy's
7 proposed action of evaluating the potential
8 environmental impacts over a 10-year planning
9 horizon associated with the Navy Atlantic Fleet
10 Training Research Development Testing and
11 Evaluation, RDT&E, activities and associated range
12 capabilities and hazards within the existing Gulf of
13 Mexico GOMEX Range Complex.

14 The purpose for the proposed action is to, one,
15 achieve and maintain fleet readiness using the GOMEX
16 Range Complex to support and conduct current,
17 emerging and future training operations and RDT&E
18 operations.

19 Two, expand warfare missions supported by the
20 GOMEX range complex.

21 And, three, upgrade and modernize existing
22 range capabilities to enhance and sustain Navy
23 training and RDT&E.

24 Let me begin by thanking each of you for your

Hearing February 3, 2009

25 attendance tonight. I am Lieutenant Commander Rich

1 Anderson and my role is to serve as the hearing
2 officer for this public hearing.

3 In order to insure everyone present can hear me
4 and understand what is going on and out of respect
5 for your fellow citizens who will be speaking
6 tonight, I ask everyone to please take a moment now
7 to insure that your cell phones are in a silent mode
8 or turned off.

9 I am not and have never been affiliated with
10 the Department of Navy's evaluation of the potential
11 environmental effects associated with the proposed
12 action I previously described to you. My job here
13 tonight is simple. It is to insure that we have a
14 fair, orderly and impartial hearing consistent with
15 the attendance of the National Environmental Policy
16 Act or NEPA.

17 All who wish to provide comments will have the
18 opportunity to do so. I expect that there will be a
19 wide range of comments this evening, if anybody
20 shows up. To that end, I ask that we treat each
21 other with courtesy and respect. Throughout this
22 hearing I ask that you keep in mind that this is not
23 an arena for debate. It is not a popularity vote on
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25 Document, and alternatives described therein, nor is

1 it a hearing in a question and answer format.

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3 express your views on the adequacy or inadequacies
4 of the Document and have those comments made a part
5 of the official record. This hearing is part of the
6 official record.

7 In order to orient those attending who might
8 not be entirely familiar with the Document, this
9 public hearing will begin with a brief introduction
10 from these Navy representatives: Mr. Greg Thompson,
11 U.S. Fleet Force Command, Norfolk, Virginia, and
12 Lieutenant Commander Joe Kellen, Requirements
13 Officer for the Chief of Naval Air Training, Naval
14 Station Corpus Christi. Mr. Thompson will present
15 information concerning the purpose and need for the
16 proposed action and the three alternatives analyzed
17 in the Document. The briefing takes about 15
18 minutes and is required by statute as part of the
19 National Environmental Policy Act process.

20 Following the introductory presentation, we
21 will begin hearing your comments on the Document.
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23 provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act,
24 or NEPA, and the regulations that are published by
25 the Council on Environmental Quality.

1 The purpose of this hearing is to provide a
2 public forum to summarize the results of the
3 Document and, more importantly, to receive your
4 comments on the Document. These comments will be
5 part of the official record and will be considered
6 in preparation of the final EIS/OEIS. Your comments
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8 to the decision making process. Your input provides
9 the decision makers with the benefit of your
10 knowledge of any environmental impacts you might
11 think that result from the proposed action.

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21 comments on nonenvironmental issues will not add to
22 the adequacy of the analysis used in the final
23 EIS/OEIS.

24 As I said earlier, it is my job to insure that
25 each of you has an equal opportunity to speak. The

1 Navy representatives will not be allowed to respond
2 to your comments and that is important to know.
3 This is not a debate. This is a hearing and it is
4 your opportunity to speak. I will enforce the
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6 three minutes so that all who wish may have an
7 opportunity to speak. Please do not interrupt any
8 speaker whether you agree or disagree with them.
9 Interfering with the speakers will simply reduce the
10 amount of time available for all those who desire to
11 be heard. Similarly, applause or other outbursts
12 will take valuable time away from speakers and will
13 hamper me in trying to afford everyone a chance to
14 speak.

15 This hearing is scheduled to adjourn at 9:00
16 p.m. If necessary, I will not consider the time
17 taken by the Navy representatives for the
18 presentation to count against the full two hour
19 hearing time. I will add that additional time to
20 the period available for folks to speak, in other
21 words, you will have the full two hour hearing.
22 That's the time that is noted in the Federal
23 Register. If, after everyone who desires to speak
24 has had an opportunity to do so, there is any time

25 left, I will permit speakers to use the additional

1 time to expand upon their earlier comments, again
2 observing the three minute time limit.

3 If you decide to speak, the stenographer will
4 record your comments. You are also encouraged to
5 continue your comments or elaborate on them through
6 a written submission. If you do not wish to speak
7 at this public hearing but you have comments that
8 you would like to be made part of the public record,
9 I encourage you to do so. I encourage you to submit
10 those comments. There are a number of ways for you
11 to be able to do so as indicated on the projection
12 screen behind me. First, you may submit your
13 written comments at the comment table or you may
14 submit your comments on line via the Web site at
15 <http://www.gomexrangecomplexeis.com>. As an
16 additional alternative, you may fax your comments to
17 (757) 332-4894. Again, that fax number is
18 (757) 322-4894.

19 Finally, if you prefer, you may mail additional
20 comments to the Naval Facilities Engineering Command
21 Atlantic, attention -- actually, I'll just have you
22 read the code there on the screen, but it's right
23 there on the screen for you.

24 Written comments will be accepted throughout
25 the comment period which concludes on 16 February

1 2009. Comments made at all the public hearings or
2 provided in writing any time during the public
3 comment or postmarked by 16 February 2009 will be
4 given equal consideration. All comments are part of
5 the official record.

6 Information is available at the comment table
7 on all of the methods of submitting comments I have
8 discussed. When you came in tonight, you should
9 have signed in and received fact sheets. Also, you
10 should have been asked to indicate if you wished to
11 speak. Those who said they wished to speak signed
12 speaker cards at the registration table like the
13 ones I have here. The speaker cards will become
14 part of the official record. If anyone wishes to
15 speak who has not yet signed a speaker card, please,
16 raise your hand and a member of the Navy staff will
17 sign you up. I will call five speakers at a time to
18 come forward. Elected officials who choose to
19 comment will be given an opportunity to speak first
20 followed by officials representing governmental
21 organizations. Members of the public will then be
22 called up in the order in which they signed up to
23 speak.

24 When I ask for the first five speakers, all

Hearing February 3, 2009

25 five should come forward and take a seat in the

1 speaker staging area at the front of the room. The
2 order in which I call the speakers to the speaker
3 staging area will also determine the order in which
4 you provide your comments at this public hearing.
5 At the conclusion of your comments, please, return
6 to your seat in the speaker staging area. After the
7 first five speakers have completed their comments, I
8 will ask them to please return to their seats in the
9 audience. I will then call the next five speakers
10 to come up to the speaker's staging area.

11 It is important that you speak clearly and
12 slowly so the stenographer can do his or her job --
13 her job, actually. Please face the stenographer,
14 which is very important, because the stenographer is
15 taking down everything you say. We're also going to
16 ask that you state your full name and spell it so we
17 can record it correctly.

18 In addition, please, provide your state of
19 residence but do not provide any personal
20 information in your comments such as your home
21 address if you do not want that information to be
22 published in the final EIS. If you are representing
23 someone or some group other than yourself, please,
24 state that, as well, and provide the address of the
25 group or organization.

1 Each person will be allotted three minutes to
2 speak. This applies to everyone, public officials,
3 spokespersons and individuals. You do not have to
4 speak for the three full minutes. However, if you
5 choose to speak for the three minutes, a green card
6 will be issued or raised when there is one minute
7 remaining, a yellow card when there are 30 seconds
8 remaining and a red card when you have 30 seconds
9 remaining so to give a cue that you have only 30
10 seconds to wrap up your comments. When your three
11 minutes is ended, a red card will be raised. At
12 that point, please end your statement.

13 Out of respect for the others who would like to
14 make comments, I would ask that you honor the time
15 limit and any request I have for you to stop
16 speaking should you exceed the time limit. If you
17 think you will have more comments than you have
18 time, I invite you to make the most of the time
19 allotted by saying your most important comments
20 first.

21 Once again, as I stated earlier, you can follow
22 up your oral comments with written comments and I
23 encourage you to do that. If you do not have the
24 opportunity to voice all your comments, you can and

Hearing February 3, 2009

25 should submit them in writing. I can't

1 overemphasize that fact.

2 I will now turn over the floor to Navy
3 representative Mr. Greg Thompson from the United
4 States Fleet Force Command, Norfolk, Virginia.
5 Thank you.

6 MR. THOMPSON: Good evening and welcome to
7 tonight's public hearing on the Gulf of Mexico Range
8 Complex Draft Environmental Impact
9 Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement.

10 I am Greg Thompson and I want to thank you on behalf
11 of the United States Navy for attending this hearing
12 tonight.

13 Here is an overview of tonight's presentation
14 on the Gulf of Mexico Range Complex Draft
15 Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas
16 Environmental Impact Statement. From now on it will
17 be referred to as the Document.

18 As part of a larger program where the Navy will
19 manage its training on broad geographic areas, this
20 Document looks at training activities occurring in
21 the Gulf of Mexico or GOMEX Range Complex. The
22 Document does not propose major changes to
23 operations and training, rather, the Document covers
24 small scale but critical enhancements.

25 One element of this larger program is

1 environmental planning documentation, the Document
2 we are discussing tonight. This Document has been
3 prepared in accordance with several environmental
4 laws and regulations, some of which are listed on
5 the slide.

6 The GOMEX Range Complex represents a
7 combination of air, land and sea space that provides
8 realistic training areas for Navy personnel. The
9 GOMEX Range Complex study area includes air, land
10 and offshore areas of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi,
11 Louisiana and Texas. The two land ranges covered in
12 this Document are Noxubee County and McMullen County
13 Range.

14 The nature of modern warfare and security
15 operations has become increasingly complex. Threats
16 are global and the tactics weapons and forces facing
17 the U.S. military range from simple to extremely
18 sophisticated. To effectively counter the wide
19 range of threats, Naval forces bring together
20 thousands of sailors and marines, their equipment,
21 vehicles, ships and aircraft and often other U.S.
22 services are coalition partners, all of which need
23 to work together as a cohesive team to achieve
24 success. Therefore, the purpose for the proposed
25 action is to achieve and maintain fleet readiness

1 using the Gulf of Mexico complex to support and
2 conduct current, emerging and future training
3 operations and research development and evaluation,
4 RTD&E operations.

5 The Navy's mandate for training is found in
6 Title 10 U.S.C. 5062. This law requires the Navy to
7 be organized, trained and equipped primarily for
8 prompt and sustained combat incident to operations
9 at sea.

10 The proposed action is to support and to
11 conduct current, emerging and future training and
12 RDT&E operations. Some examples of the types of
13 training that are currently conducted in the Gulf of
14 Mexico Range Complex are mine warfare, surface
15 warfare, air warfare, strike warfare, amphibious
16 warfare, electronic combat and underwater
17 detonations.

18 Three alternatives have been analyzed in this
19 Document, each of which meets the Navy's purpose and
20 need. The Navy examined three alternatives in the
21 Document. The no action alternative or the
22 continuing action provides for current levels of
23 operations. This means training operations and
24 major range events would continue at the same level
25 and locations as they are today. Additional

1 exercises may be added, if necessary, to support
2 Navy surge capability. Surge refers to the
3 capability to quickly deploy assets in response to
4 world events.

5 Under alternative one the Navy proposes to
6 conduct all operations in the no action alternative
7 plus eliminate mine warfare training events as a
8 result of BRAC action, decrease underwater
9 demolition training, increase unit level bombing and
10 gunnery exercises and increase the use of commercial
11 air services.

12 Alternative two is the Navy's preferred
13 alternative. In addition to the components of
14 alternative one, the Navy proposes to implement the
15 Joint National Training Center which provides the
16 capability to training as part of a large
17 multi-platform group. Alternative two would also
18 minimize the use of high explosive bomb use by
19 eliminating live bomb use during major exercises and
20 reducing live bomb use during unit level exercises.

21 Twenty resources and issues were described and
22 analyzed in this Document. Among others, these
23 include air quality, water quality, marine mammals,
24 sea turtles, fish, birds and socioeconomics,
25 including recreational and commercial fishing. The

1 Navy used a screening process to identify and
2 evaluate aspects of the proposed action that could
3 act as stressors to these resource areas. These
4 stressors include vessel movements, aircraft
5 overflights, towed mine warfare devices,
6 nonexplosive practice munitions, underwater
7 detonations and high explosive ordinance and
8 military expended materials.

9 The acoustic analysis focused on potential
10 effects to sea mammals, sea turtles and fish from
11 explosives. Based on the review of the literature
12 and our findings of potential effects to marine
13 species, the analysis focused on whales and
14 dolphins, as well as sea turtles. In addition, the
15 impacts to fish were determined to be minimal. Fish
16 may exhibit a behavioral response, but the response
17 is likely to be short-term and biologically
18 insignificant. Furthermore, any effects from the
19 use of explosives will not result in a significant
20 impact to the population as a whole.

21 The nonacoustic analysis mainly focused on
22 potential effects of expended training materials and
23 destruction to commercial and civilian activities
24 and vessel movements. The Navy concluded that there
25 would be no significant impact in territorial waters

1 under the National Environmental Policy Act or
2 significant harm in non-territorial waters under the
3 Executive Order 12114 from these stressors. The
4 Navy is consulting with the National Marine
5 Fisheries Service for anticipated harassment to
6 marine mammals under the Marine Mammal Protection
7 Act.

8 The Navy is also consulting with the National
9 Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife
10 Service for species protected under the federal
11 Endangered Species Act. The Navy is not consulting
12 with the National Marine Fisheries Service for
13 essential fish habitat given the limited extent,
14 duration and magnitude of potential impacts.

15 In addition to significant reduction of live
16 bombing exercises, the Navy will also implement a
17 mitigation plan to further reduce the potential for
18 harassment of marine resources. For example, the
19 Navy will continue to use lookouts before, during
20 and after exercises using explosives. Navy lookouts
21 are highly trained in spotting objects in the water
22 and also receive marine species awareness training.
23 This training addresses the lookout's role in
24 environmental protection and includes general
25 observation information including more detailed

1 instruction for spotting marine mammals. It has
2 been reviewed by the National Marine Fisheries
3 Service and is considered suitable training. If
4 marine mammals or sea turtles are seen, the exercise
5 will be suspended or relocated.

6 The Navy establishes a 5,100 yard radius buffer
7 zone for the intended target when conducting high
8 explosive bombing events and a 1,000 yard radius
9 buffer zone when conducting bombing events using
10 nonexplosive practice munitions.

11 As part of the Marine Mammal Protection Act and
12 Endangered Species Act process and in coordination
13 with the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Gulf
14 of Mexico Monitoring Plan For Marine Species will be
15 established. The monitoring plan will describe the
16 most effective, logistically and financially
17 feasible means to monitor training events. The
18 primary tools available for monitoring are listed
19 here. In addition, the Navy is developing an
20 integrated comprehensive monitoring program for
21 marine species in order to organize and insure
22 consistency and compile amongst the various range
23 complexes and geographic locations where Navy
24 training occurs.

25 The Navy funded 26 million dollars in 2008

1 towards marine mammal research. For the past
2 several years the Navy has provided 10 to 14 million
3 dollars to universities, research institutions,
4 federal laboratories, private companies and
5 independent researchers around the world to study
6 marine mammals. In addition, the Navy sponsors
7 approximately 70 percent of all U.S. research
8 concerning the effects of human generated sound on
9 marine mammals and approximately 50 percent of such
10 research conducted worldwide. Major topics of Navy
11 supported research are included on this slide. This
12 slide concludes our presentation on the information
13 and analysis contained in the Document.

14 Now, I would like to discuss the future steps
15 in the process related to the project. This slide
16 outlines the schedule beyond the release of the
17 draft Document. The key characteristic of the
18 entire process is the public's opportunity to
19 comment. Four public hearings, including this one,
20 are being held throughout this week. Your comments
21 on the draft Document will be addressed in the final
22 EIS/OEIS.

23 The final step in the decision phase. A
24 decision will not be made until at least 30 days
25 after the distribution of the final EIS/OEIS. This

1 decision will be summarized and published as a
2 record of decision in the Federal Register in
3 October 2009.

4 In addition to providing oral comments tonight,
5 you may also make your comments in writing if you
6 wish to. There are three ways to do that. You may
7 submit prepared written comments to the person at
8 the registration table outside and place them in the
9 basket provided on the comment table. Blank comment
10 sheets are also available for use at the comment
11 table. You can submit written comments on line
12 through the project Web site or you may mail or fax
13 written comments using the information provided on
14 this slide. Whichever option you choose, your
15 written comments will be entered into the formal
16 record and they will receive the same consideration
17 as oral comments provided tonight. If you choose to
18 submit comments at a later time, please, be sure to
19 send them by February 16th, 2009, which is the
20 closing date for this comment period.

21 With that I will now turn the hearing over to
22 Lieutenant Commander Anderson.

23 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ANDERSON: Well, since we
24 don't have any speakers at this time, we will stand

25 in recess. And if speakers do show up, we will then

1 have them. So we will be in recess until such time
2 as we have speakers.

3 (Recess taken.)

4 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ANDERSON: Ladies and
5 gentlemen, it is 9:00 p.m. Central Standard Time and
6 time has now expired. The public hearing is closed.
7 I would like to remind you that written comments may
8 be submitted and will continue to be accepted and
9 made part of the public record until 16 February
10 2009. Thank you very much for your courtesy and for
11 your participation this evening.

12 (The public hearing concluded at 9:00 p.m.)

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1 CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

2

3 STATE OF FLORIDA

4 COUNTY OF ESCAMBIA

5

6 I, LINDA V. CROWE, Court Reporter and Notary

7 Public at Large in and for the State of Florida, hereby

8 certify that the foregoing Pages 2 through 21 both

9 inclusive, comprise a full, true, and correct transcript of

10 the proceeding; that said proceeding was taken by me

11 stenographically, and transcribed by me as it now appears;

12 that I am not a relative or employee or attorney or counsel

13 of the parties, or relative or employee of such attorney or

14 counsel, nor am I interested in this proceeding or its

15 outcome.

16 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand

17 and affixed my official seal this 12th day of February,

18 2009.

19

20

LINDA V. CROWE, COURT REPORTER

21

Notary Public - State of Florida

My Commission No.: DD 386581

22

My Commission Expires: 02-05-09

23

24

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5

PUBLIC HEARING

6

7 NAVY ATLANTIC FLEET TRAINING RESEARCH

8 DEVELOPMENT TESTING and EVALUATION,

9 RDT&E, ACTIVITIES AND ASSOCIATED RANGE

10 CAPABILITIES AND HAZARDS WITHIN THE

11 EXISTING GULF OF MEXICO GOMEX RANGE COMPLEX

12

13

14

15 Proceedings held in the Marriott Hotel, 555

16 Canal Street, New Orleans, Louisiana, 70130,

17 on Wednesday, the 4th day of February, 2009.

18

19

20

21 REPORTED BY:

22 NANCY LAPORTE, CCR

23 Certified Court Reporter

24 State of Louisiana

1 PROCEEDINGS

2

3

4 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ANDERSON:

5 Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. May I

6 have your attention, please? Welcome to the

7 public hearing on the Navy's Draft

8 Environmental Impact Statement, DEIS/Overseas

9 Environmental Impact Statement, OEIS, on the

10 Navy's proposed action of evaluating the

11 potential environmental impacts over a 10-year

12 planning horizon associated with the Navy

13 Atlantic Fleet Training Research Development

14 Testing and Evaluation, RDT&E, activities and

15 associated range capabilities and hazards

16 within the existing Gulf of Mexico GOMEX Range

17 Complex.

18 The purpose for the proposed

19 action is to, one, achieve and maintain fleet

20 readiness using the GOMEX Range Complex to

21 support and conduct current, emerging and

22 future training operations and RDT&E

23 operations.

24 Two, expand warfare missions

25 supported by the GOMEX range complex.

Hearing: February 4, 2009

1 And, three, upgrade and modernize
2 existing range capabilities to enhance and
3 sustain Navy training and RDT&E.
4 Let me begin by thanking each of
5 you for your attendance tonight. I am
6 Lieutenant Commander Rich Anderson, and my
7 role is to serve as the hearing officer for
8 this public hearing.
9 In order to insure everyone
10 present can hear me and understand what is
11 going on and out of respect for your fellow
12 citizens who will be speaking tonight, I ask
13 everyone to please take a moment now to insure
14 that your cell phones are in a silent mode or
15 turned off.
16 I am not and have never been
17 affiliated with the Department of Navy's
18 evaluation of the potential environmental
19 effects associated with the proposed action I
20 previously described to you. My job here
21 tonight is simple. It is to insure that we
22 have a fair, orderly and impartial hearing
23 consistent with the attendance of the National
24 Environmental Policy Act or NEPA.
25 All who wish to provide comments

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1 will have the opportunity to do so. I expect
2 that there will be a wide range of comments
3 this evening, if anybody shows up. To that
4 end, I ask that we treat each other with
5 courtesy and respect. Throughout this hearing
6 I ask that you keep in mind that this is not
7 an arena for debate. It is not a popularity
8 vote on the DEIS or OEIS, hereinafter referred
9 to as the Document, and alternatives described
10 therein, nor is it a hearing in a question and
11 answer format.
12 This public hearing provides an
13 opportunity to express your views on the
14 adequacy or inadequacies of the Document and
15 have those comments made a part of the
16 official record. This hearing is part of the
17 official record.
18 In order to orient those
19 attending who might not be entirely familiar
20 with the Document, this public hearing will
21 begin with a brief introduction from Navy
22 representative Mr. Greg Thompson, U.S. Fleet
23 Force Command, Norfolk, Virginia.
24 Mr. Thompson will present information
25 concerning the purpose and need for the

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1 proposed action and the three alternatives
2 analyzed in the Document. The briefing takes
3 about 15 minutes and is required by statute as
4 part of the National Environmental Policy Act
5 process.
6 Following the introductory
7 presentation, we will begin hearing your
8 comments on the Document. This hearing is
9 being held in accordance with the provisions
10 of the National Environmental Policy Act, or
11 NEPA, and the regulations that are published
12 by the Council on Environmental Quality.
13 The purpose of this hearing is to
14 provide a public forum to summarize the
15 results of the Document and, more importantly,
16 to receive your comments on the Document.
17 These comments will be part of the official
18 record and will be considered in preparation
19 of the final EIS/OEIS. Your comments and
20 involvement in this hearing are very important
21 to the decision making process. Your input
22 provides the decision makers with the benefit
23 of your knowledge of any environmental impacts
24 you might think that result from the proposed
25 action.

Hearing: February 4, 2009

1 This hearing is the venue that
2 the Navy uses to gather your concerns, whether
3 they are through oral or written comments
4 about the adequacy of the environmental
5 analysis and environmental impact
6 alternatives. We ask that you focus your
7 comments on environmental issues.
8 Non-environmental issues will take time away
9 from those who came to comment on the analysis
10 of environmental concern and comments on
11 non-environmental issues will not add to the
12 adequacy of the analysis used in the final
13 EIS/OEIS.
14 As I said earlier, it is my job
15 to insure that each of you has an equal
16 opportunity to speak. The Navy
17 representatives will not be allowed to respond
18 to your comments and that is important to
19 know. This is not a debate. This is a
20 hearing and it is your opportunity to speak.
21 I will enforce the individual time limits
22 previously established of three minutes so
23 that all who wish may have an opportunity to
24 speak. Please do not interrupt any speaker
25 whether you agree or disagree with them.

Hearing: February 4, 2009

1 Interfering with the speakers will simply
2 reduce the amount of time available for all
3 those who desire to be heard. Similarly,
4 applause or other outbursts will take valuable
5 time away from speakers and will hamper me in
6 trying to afford everyone a chance to speak.
7 This hearing is scheduled to
8 adjourn at 9:00 p.m. If necessary, I will not
9 consider the time taken by the Navy
10 representatives for the presentation to count
11 against the full two-hour hearing time. I
12 will add that additional time to the period
13 available for folks to speak, in other words,
14 you will have the full two hour hearing.
15 That's the time that is noted in the Federal
16 Register. If, after everyone who desires to
17 speak has had an opportunity to do so, there
18 is any time left, I will permit speakers to
19 use the additional time to expand upon their
20 earlier comments, again observing the three
21 minute time limit.
22 If you decide to speak, the
23 stenographer will record your comments. You
24 are also encouraged to continue your comments
25 or elaborate on them through a written

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1 submission. If you do not wish to speak at
2 this public hearing but you have comments that
3 you would like to be made part of the public
4 record, I encourage you to do so. I encourage
5 you to submit those comments. There are a
6 number of ways for you to be able to do so as
7 indicated on the projection screen behind me.
8 First, you may submit your written comments at
9 the comment table or you may submit your
10 comments on line via the Web site at
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1 consideration. All comments are part of the
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3 also determine the order in which you provide
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17 everything you say. We're also going to ask
18 that you state your full name and spell it so
19 we can record it correctly.
20 In addition, please, provide your
21 state of residence, but do not provide any
22 personal information in your comments such as
23 your home address if you do not want that
24 information to be published in the final EIS.
25 If you are representing someone or some group

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1 other than yourself, please, state that, as
2 well, and provide the address of the group or
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2 Once again, as I stated earlier,

3 you can follow up your oral comments with

4 written comments, and I encourage you to do

5 that. If you do not have the opportunity to

6 voice all your comments, you can and should

7 submit them in writing. I can't overemphasize

8 that fact.

9 I will now turn over the floor to

10 Navy representative Mr. Greg Thompson from the

11 United States Fleet Force Command, Norfolk,

12 Virginia. Thank you.

13 MR. THOMPSON: Good evening and welcome

14 to tonight's public hearing on the Gulf of

15 Mexico Range Complex Draft Environmental

16 Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact

17 Statement. I am Greg Thompson and I want to

18 thank you on behalf of the United States Navy

19 for attending this hearing tonight.

20 Here is an overview of tonight's

21 presentation on the Gulf of Mexico Range

22 Complex Draft Environmental Impact

23 Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact

24 Statement. From now on it will be referred to

25 as the Document.

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1 As part of a larger program where
2 the Navy will manage its training on broad
3 geographic area, this Document looks at
4 training activities occurring in the Gulf of
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7 and training, rather, the Document covers
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11 documentation, the Document we are discussing
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17 represents a combination of air, land and sea
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19 for Navy personnel. The GOMEX Range Complex
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22 Louisiana and Texas. The two land ranges
23 covered in this Document are Noxubee County
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25 The nature of modern warfare and

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1 security operations has become increasingly
2 complex. Threats are global and the tactics,
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4 range from simple to extremely sophisticated.
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23 The proposed action is to support
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25 training and RDT&E operations. Some examples

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1 of the types of training that are currently
2 conducted in the Gulf of Mexico Range Complex
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14 same level and locations as they are today.
15 Additional exercises may be added, if
16 necessary, to support Navy surge capability.
17 Surge refers to the capability to quickly
18 deploy assets in response to world events.
19 Under alternative one the Navy
20 proposes to conduct all operations in the no
21 action alternative plus eliminate mine warfare
22 training events as a result of BRAC action,
23 decrease underwater demolition training,
24 increase unit level bombing and gunnery
25 exercises and increase the use of commercial

1 air services.

2 Alternative two is the Navy's

3 preferred alternative. In addition to the

4 components of alternative one, the Navy

5 proposes to implement the Joint National

6 Training Center which provides the capability

7 to training as part of a large multi-platform

8 group. Alternative two would also minimize

9 the use of high explosive bomb use by

10 eliminating live bomb use during major

11 exercises and reducing live bomb use during

12 unit level exercises.

13 Twenty resources and issues were

14 described and analyzed in this Document.

15 Among others, these include air quality, water

16 quality, marine mammals, sea turtles, fish,

17 birds and socioeconomics, including

18 recreational and commercial fishing. The Navy

19 used a screening process to identify and

20 evaluate aspects of the proposed action that

21 could act as stressors to these resource

22 areas. These stressors include vessel

23 movements, aircraft overflights, towed mine

24 warfare devices, nonexplosive practice

25 munitions, underwater detonations and high

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1 explosive ordinance and military expended
2 materials.
3 The acoustic analysis focused on
4 potential effects to sea mammals, sea turtles
5 and fish from explosives. Based on the review
6 of the literature and our findings of
7 potential effects to marine species, the
8 analysis focused on whales and dolphins, as
9 well as sea turtles. In addition, the impacts
10 to fish were determined to be minimal. Fish
11 may exhibit a behavioral response, but the
12 response is likely to be short-term and
13 biologically insignificant. Furthermore, any
14 effects from the use of explosives will not
15 result in a significant impact to the
16 population as a whole.
17 The nonacoustic analysis mainly
18 focused on potential effects of expended
19 training materials and destruction to
20 commercial and civilian activities and vessel
21 movements. The Navy concluded that there
22 would be no significant impact in territorial
23 waters under the National Environmental Policy
24 Act or significant harm in non-territorial
25 waters under the Executive Order 12114 from

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1 these stressors. The Navy is consulting with
2 the National Marine Fisheries Service for
3 anticipated harassment to marine mammals under
4 the Marine Mammal Protection Act.
5 The Navy is also consulting with
6 the National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S.
7 Fish and Wildlife Service for species
8 protected under the federal Endangered Species
9 Act. The Navy is not consulting with the
10 National Marine Fisheries Service for
11 essential fish habitat given the limited
12 extent, duration and magnitude of potential
13 impacts.
14 In addition to significant
15 reduction of live bombing exercises, the Navy
16 will also implement a mitigation plan to
17 further reduce the potential for harassment of
18 marine resources. For example, the Navy will
19 continue to use lookouts before, during and
20 after exercises using explosives. Navy
21 lookouts are highly trained in spotting
22 objects in the water and also receive marine
23 species awareness training. This training
24 addresses the lookout's role in environmental
25 protection and includes general observation

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1 information including more detailed
2 instruction for spotting marine mammals. It
3 has been reviewed by the National Marine
4 Fisheries Service and is considered suitable
5 training. If marine mammals or sea turtles
6 are seen, the exercise will be suspended or
7 relocated.
8 The Navy establishes a 5,100 yard
9 radius buffer zone for the intended target
10 when conducting high explosive bombing events
11 and a 1,000 yard radius buffer zone when
12 conducting bombing events using nonexplosive
13 practice munitions.
14 As part of the Marine Mammal
15 Protection Act and Endangered Species Act
16 process and in coordination with the National
17 Marine Fisheries Service, the Gulf of Mexico
18 Monitoring Plan For Marine Species will be
19 established. The monitoring plan will
20 describe the most effective, logistically and
21 financially feasible means to monitor training
22 events. The primary tools available for
23 monitoring training events. The primary tools
24 available for monitoring are listed here. In
25 addition, the Navy is developing an integrated

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1 comprehensive monitoring program for marine
2 species in order to organize and insure
3 consistency and compile amongst the various
4 range complexes and geographic locations where
5 Navy training occurs.
6 The Navy funded 26 million
7 dollars in 2008 towards marine mammal
8 research. For the past several years the Navy
9 has provided 10 to 14 million dollars to
10 universities, research institutions, federal
11 laboratories, private companies and
12 independent researchers around the world to
13 study marine mammals. In addition, the Navy
14 sponsors approximately 70 percent of all U.S.
15 research concerning the effects of human
16 generated sound on marine mammals and
17 approximately 50 percent of such research
18 conducted worldwide. Major topics of Navy
19 supported research are included on this slide.
20 This slide concludes our presentation on the
21 information and analysis contained in the
22 Document.
23 Now, I would like to discuss the
24 future steps in the process related to the
25 project. This slide outlines the schedule

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1 beyond the release of the draft Document. The
2 key characteristic of the entire process is
3 the public's opportunity to comment. Four
4 public hearings, including this one, are being
5 held throughout this week. Your comments on
6 the draft Document will be addressed in the
7 final EIS/OEIS.
8 The final step in the decision
9 phase. A decision will not be made until at
10 least 30 days after the distribution of the
11 final EIS/OEIS. This decision will be
12 summarized and published as a record of
13 decision in the Federal Register in October
14 2009.
15 In addition to providing oral
16 comments tonight, you may also make your
17 comments in writing if you wish to. There are
18 three ways to do that. You may submit
19 prepared written comments to the person at the
20 registration table outside and place them in
21 the basket provided on the comment table.
22 Blank comment sheets are also available for
23 use at the comment table. You can submit
24 written comments on line through the project
25 Web site or you may mail or fax written

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1 comments using the information provided on
2 this slide. Whichever option you choose, our
3 written comments will be entered into the
4 formal record and they will receive the same
5 consideration as oral comments provided
6 tonight. If you choose to submit comments at
7 a later time, please be sure to send them by
8 February 16th, 2009, which is the closing date
9 for this comment period.

10 With that I will now turn the
11 hearing over to Lieutenant Commander Anderson.

12 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ANDERSON: Well,
13 since we don't have any speakers at this time,
14 we will stand in recess. And if speakers do
15 show up, we will then have them. So we will
16 be in recess until such time as we have
17 speakers.

18 (Recess taken)

19 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ANDERSON: Ladies
20 and gentlemen, it is 9:00 p.m. Central
21 Standard Time, and time has now expired. The
22 public hearing is closed. I would like to
23 remind you that written comments may be
24 submitted and will continue to be accepted and
25 made part of the public record until 16

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1 February 2009. Thank you very much for your
2 courtesy and for your participation this
3 evening.

4 (The public hearing concluded at 9:00 p.m.)

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8 Nancy Laporte

9 Depobook Court

10 Reporting Services

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GULF OF MEXICO RANGE COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
STATEMENT/OVERSEAS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
PUBLIC HEARING

TAKEN AT: HOLIDAY INN, EMERALD BEACH
1102 S. SHORELINE BOULEVARD
CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS

TIME: 7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M.

DATE: FEBRUARY 6, 2009

The above entitled hearing, as set forth, was
reported by Sylvia Kerr, CSR, RPR, CRR, a Certified
Shorthand Reporter in and for the State of Texas.

Proceedings reported by computerized stenotype
machine; reporter's record produced by computer-assisted
transcription.

1 LCDR ANDERSON: May I have your attention
2 please. Ladies and gentlemen, at this time I'm the
3 public hearing officer Lieutenant Commander Rich
4 Anderson. At this time we do not have any speakers 07:00
5 present, and so we will stand at recess until such time
6 as we have folks present to add comments.

7 (A recess was taken.)

8 LCDR ANDERSON: All right. Ladies and
9 gentlemen, I have 9 p.m. central standard time. And as 08:59
10 there are no speakers at this time present and no
11 additional comments, this public hearing is closed. And
12 I invite you to submit your comments in writing by 16
13 February, 2009.

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1 THE STATE OF TEXAS:

2 COUNTY OF NUECES:

3

4 I, SYLVIA KERR, Certified Court Reporter in and for

5 the State of Texas, do hereby certify that the above

6 foregoing contains a true and correct transcription of

7 all portions of the proceedings requested in writing to

8 be included in this volume of the Reporter's Record in

9 the above-styled and numbered cause, all of which were

10 reported by me.

11

12 Subscribed and sworn to on this the 10th day of

13 February, 2009.

14

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16

17

18 SYLVIA KERR, Texas CSR #4776

Date of Expiration: 12/31/10

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