

Draft

Finding of No Significant Impact
Finding of No Practicable Alternative
for
Improvements to Silver Flag Training Area at Tyndall Air Force Base

AGENCY: Department of the Air Force.

BACKGROUND: Detachment 1, 823rd Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineers (RED HORSE) Squadron proposes to modify the Silver Flag Training Area at Tyndall AFB, Florida to allow a broader range of training conditions for Explosive Ordnance Detonation (EOD) war fighters. The modifications are needed because the facilities, roads, and grounds at Silver Flag do not adequately meet all the requirements of the current training program.

PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES: Three action alternatives (Alternatives 1, 2, and 3) that would each meet the goals and intent of the Proposed Action, as well as the No-Action Alternative, have been analyzed in detail in the Environmental Assessment (EA) that has been prepared for the Proposed Action. Under Alternatives 1, 2, and 3, the following six new facilities would be constructed and operated within or in the immediate vicinity of the Silver Flag cantonment area: Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicle obstacle course, urban warfare village, Silver Flag entrance gate, MRAP vehicle parking area, latrine/shower/laundry facility, and bed-down training site. Each of these alternatives would also involve improvements to existing roads in the Silver Flag area that are used for MRAP vehicle training. The road improvements would primarily involve stabilization of existing roads, improvements to the drainage systems of existing roads, and upgrades to an existing bridge. In addition to the new facilities and road improvements, Alternatives 2 and 3 would involve new road/bridge construction. Under Alternative 2, a new route for MRAP vehicle training would be created in the northwestern part of the Silver Flag road network by constructing one of three new roads (Alternative 2a, 2b, or 2c). Under Alternative 3, a new route for MRAP vehicle training would be created in the north central part of the Silver Flag road network by constructing either a new vehicular bridge (Alternative 3a) or one of two new roads (Alternative 3b or 3c). Under the No-Action Alternative, the Silver Flag Training Area would not be modified in any manner in support of training conditions for EOD war fighters.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: Based on the findings of the EA, Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 would each have no effect or impacts that range from negligible to moderate in magnitude on air quality, noise, Air Installation Compatible Use Zone program, soils, wetlands, surface water, floodplains, vegetation, fish and wildlife, listed species, land use, recreation, cultural resources, environmental compliance, socioeconomics, and traffic flow. The impacts that each alternative would have on these resources would not be significant. Each alternative would not have disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low-income populations, and would not result in environmental health or safety risks to children. No adverse cumulative impacts would occur when each alternative is combined with past, present, or reasonably foreseeable actions. The No-Action Alternative would have no effect on any environmental resource.

Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 would each involve construction in jurisdictional wetlands/surface waters and the 100-year floodplain. Under Alternative 1, improvements to the drainage systems of existing roads and upgrades to an existing bridge are expected to result in only minor temporary impacts to jurisdictional wetlands/surface waters without loss of wetland/surface water area or function. Construction of the new road under Alternative 2a, 2b, or 2c would result in the permanent loss of 0.46 acre, 0.32 acre, or 0.10 acre of jurisdictional wetlands, respectively. Construction of the new road proposed under Alternative 3b or 3c would result in the permanent loss of 0.16 acre of jurisdictional wetlands. Construction of the new bridge proposed under Alternative 3a would result in only minor impacts to jurisdictional wetlands/surface waters without loss of wetland/surface water function; the impacts would result from the installation of a small number of support pilings and any

embankment stabilization that is conducted. Federal and/or state regulatory permits would be required for the jurisdictional wetland/surface water impacts that would result under Alternative 1, 2, or 3. Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 would each have a negligible impact on floodplains. Under each alternative, wetland/surface water and floodplain impacts would be avoided and minimized to the maximum extent possible. Each alternative would be implemented in strict compliance with the conditions specified in required regulatory permits, in coordination with the 325 CES/CEAN Environmental Element, and in accordance with all Tyndall AFB environmental plans and policies pertaining to the protection of wetlands/surface waters and floodplains. Based on the nature and extent of the impacts that would result, compensatory wetland mitigation would be required under Alternatives 2a, 2b, 2c, 3b, and 3c, and potentially under Alternatives 1 and 3a. The mitigation requirements of the alternative that may be selected for implementation would be determined during project permitting and the required mitigation would be provided by Tyndall AFB during the permitting phase of the project.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC REVIEW AND INTERAGENCY COORDINATION: A 30-day public review period is being held to solicit public comments on the draft EA. The public review period is being announced in a public notice in the *Panama City News Herald* of Panama City, Florida. Copies of the draft EA are being made available for public review at the Bay County Public Library, at the Tyndall AFB Library, and on the Tyndall AFB public website. Letters and copies of the draft EA are being sent to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Native American tribes who have expressed an interest in Tyndall AFB for their ancestral ties. Letters and copies of the draft EA are also being sent to the Florida State Clearinghouse, which will coordinate state agency reviews.

FINDING OF NO PRACTICABLE ALTERNATIVE: Pursuant to Executive Orders 11988 and 11990, and considering all supporting information, I find that there is no practicable alternative to the Proposed Action being sited in floodplains or wetlands as described in the attached EA. All reasonable alternatives analyzed would occur within floodplains and wetlands. The attached EA identifies all practicable measures to minimize harm to the existing environment.

GARY D. CHESLEY, Colonel, USAF
Deputy Director, Installations and Mission Support

Date

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT: Based on my review of the facts and analysis in the EA, I conclude that Alternative 1, 2, or 3 would not have a significant impact on the natural or human environment either by itself or considering cumulative impacts. Therefore, any of these alternatives may be considered for implementation. The requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations, and 32 Code of Federal Regulations 989 have been fulfilled, and an Environmental Impact Statement is not required and will not be prepared.

DAVID E. GRAFF, Colonel, USAF
Commander

Date