FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
U.S. Air Force *atmospheric interceptor technology* Program

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing the Act (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1500-1508), Department of Defense (DoD) Regulation 5000.2-R and Air Force Instruction (AFI) 32-7061, which implements these regulations through the Environmental Impact Analysis Process (EIAP), the U.S. Air Force (USAF) has conducted an environmental assessment of the potential environmental consequences of the USAF *atmospheric interceptor technology* (*ait*) program. The No Action alternative was also considered. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) summarizes the results of the evaluation.

The USAF made its draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and draft FONSI available for public review and comment from October 3, 1997 through November 2, 1997. As the result of comments received from the public and interested government agencies with respect to the Draft EA (see Appendix E of the Final USAF *ait* EA), additional information has been included in the Final EA to address the concerns expressed in those comments.

Proposed Action and Alternatives: The attached Final EA is for the USAF *ait* program, which consists of two proposed sub-orbital missile launches. The United States Congress directed the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization (BMDO) to provide funds to support the USAF National Missile Defense (NMD) initiative. The USAF NMD initiative is to exploit existing missile and radar capabilities in support of the effort to develop a national missile defense system. The USAF plans to develop a target launch capability to realistically simulate inbound missile threat trajectories from potential Pacific Basin adversaries. In the interest of enhancing timely, economical national defense, this capability will be used to evaluate the performance and utility of existing radar systems to support potential low-cost, low-risk NMD architectures.

Two existing USAF radar systems have high potential for NMD application. The upgraded Precision Acquisition Vehicle Energy-Phased Array Warning System (PAVE PAWS) radar located at Beale Air Force Base (AFB), California is a wide-looking potential target detection element of a future NMD system. The HAVE STARE tracking radar located at Vandenberg AFB, California represents a candidate design to perform the narrow-looking target tracking radar role of a future NMD system. To fully understand the utility of these radar systems in an NMD role, the USAF plans to integrate and test these systems using realistic threat

scenarios. California is the only location where these radars are close enough to be tested together. The PAVE PAWS radar initially detects an incoming target and hands over specific tracking of the target to the HAVE STARE.

The proposed USAF *ait* program will consist of the preparation for and the launch of two sub-orbital test vehicles from the Kodiak Launch Complex (KLC) on Kodiak Island, Alaska. KLC will be the Alaska Aerospace Development Corporation (AADC) commercial launch site. Sub-orbital launches from this site can be detected and tracked by the PAVE PAWS and HAVE STARE radars in California. The USAF *ait* test vehicles consist of deactivated Minuteman II second and third solid rocket motor stages that have been modified to be used as boosters for the test launches. As part of the USAF *ait* program, the test vehicles would carry an instrumentation package. The two USAF *ait* sub-orbital launches are proposed for the period between July 1, 1998 to September 15, 1998 and in March 1999.

In addition to the proposed action, the USAF considered various other alternatives for launching the USAF *ait* test vehicles. These alternatives included sea and air launch systems; potential commercial launch sites; existing DoD launch sites; and sites in Alaska other than Kodiak Island. Based on the alternative selection criteria established by the USAF to meet the mission objectives of the USAF *ait* program, none of the alternatives meet all of the mission objectives. Therefore, the alternatives were eliminated from further detailed analysis.

Under the No Action alternative, the USAF *ait* program would not be conducted. Impacts associated with the processing and launch of the two sub-orbital USAF *ait* test vehicles would not occur. However, if the proposed action is not conducted, the existing operational, ground-based radar systems will not be tested regarding their capabilities to realistically detect, track, and evaluate simulated, inbound missile threat trajectories from potential Pacific Basin adversaries.

Anticipated Environmental Effects: The EA evaluated potential environmental impacts of the USAF *ait* test program. The two USAF *ait* test vehicles would be launched from KLC. The construction and operation of AADC's KLC site was the subject of an EA conducted by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The FAA EA analyzed an 18 month construction period for the five KLC facilities. It also evaluated at least 20 years of subsequent launch operations, involving up to nine orbital launches per year. The FAA EA was completed in June 1996 and a FONSI was signed by the FAA in October 1996. The FAA EA has been reviewed regarding potential impacts to the geology and soils, water, land use, socioeconomics,

environmental justice, recreation, visual and cultural resources of Kodiak Island and the KLC site. The USAF adopts the analysis and conclusions of the FAA EA for these topical areas. The FAA is a cooperating agency for the USAF *ait* EA.

To address potential impacts specific to the processing and launch of the sub-orbital USAF *ait* test vehicle from KLC, the USAF *ait* EA includes an analysis of air quality, biological resources, noise, health and safety, and hazardous materials and waste. The USAF analysis focused on those aspects of the USAF *ait* sub-orbital launch operations that were not analyzed in the FAA EA. In addition, the USAF analyzed those circumstances that have changed since the FAA EA was finalized in June 1996. These include the reduction of the construction period from 18 months to 9 months, the designation of the Steller's eider seabird as a "threatened species," and the redesignation of the Steller sea lion from "threatened" to "endangered." The EA demonstrates that the USAF *ait* test program would not result in significant impact relative to air quality, biological resources, noise, health and safety, or hazardous materials and waste.

Monitoring and Mitigation:

Impacts to the Steller's eider:

The Steller's eider, a seabird commonly found in this area during the winter, was recently listed as a federal threatened species. In accordance with the Endangered Species Act, the USAF has completed informal Section 7 consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for the first USAF *ait* launch. In a letter dated October 28, 1997, the USFWS concurred with the USAF conclusion that the first proposed USAF *ait* launch is not likely to adversely affect threatened or endangered species, and stated that further consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act is not required at this time. USFWS's concurrence is based upon a proposed first launch date no earlier than July 01, 1998, and upon an USFWS approved, fully funded, statistically valid USAF surrogate seabird monitoring plan being in place prior to the first USAF *ait* launch. The specific monitoring requirements are set forth in the October 28, 1997, USFWS letter in Appendix D of the EA. Consultation pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act will commence for the second launch (currently proposed for March 1999) within 30 days of the first launch, and will be based, in part, on the results of the monitoring efforts associated with the first launch. If the first launch is delayed past September 15, 1998, or if project plans change, additional information on listed or proposed species become available or new species are listed that may be affected by the project, the USAF will reinitiate consultation with the USFWS regarding the first USAF *ait* launch. Without the completion of the required additional consultation with, and approval by, the USFWS, the USAF will not conduct the first launch between September 15, 1998 and April 01, 1999 to avoid the

first launch occurring while the threatened Steller's eiders are present. The second launch will be conducted in accordance with the USFWS consultations regarding results of the monitoring that occurred prior to, during and after the first launch, so as to avoid adversely affecting threatened or endangered species.

Impacts to marine mammals, including Steller sea lions (a federally listed endangered species): In a letter dated October 24, 1997, and in subsequent conversations, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) concurred with the USAF's opinion that predicted launch and overflight noise from the USAF ait launches will not have significant effects on marine mammals. However, because this is based on predicted rather than measured noise levels, NMFS has requested and the USAF has agreed to perform NMFS approved monitoring of Steller sea lion haulout before, during and after the first USAF *ait* launch. This monitoring will be similar to that described above with regard to the Steller's eider. As with the Steller's eider, the second launch will be conducted in accordance with consultation with NMFS regarding the monitoring results from the first launch, so as to avoid adversely affecting threatened or endangered marine mammals. In addition, the USAF will not conduct either USAF *ait* launch during the peak gray whale migrating periods of April 01 through May 31 and November 01 through December 31 without prior consultation with, and approval by NMFS.

Finding: Following a review of the attached EA, I find that the USAF *ait* program, including the mitigation measures described above, will not result in significant environmental impacts. Therefore an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required for the USAF *ait* program. This document, and the supporting EA, fulfill the requirements of NEPA, CEQ regulations, and AFI 32-7061.

Approved:

Helmut Hellwig

HELMUT HELLWIG
Deputy Assistant Secretary
(Science, Technology and Engineering)

19 Nov 97
Date