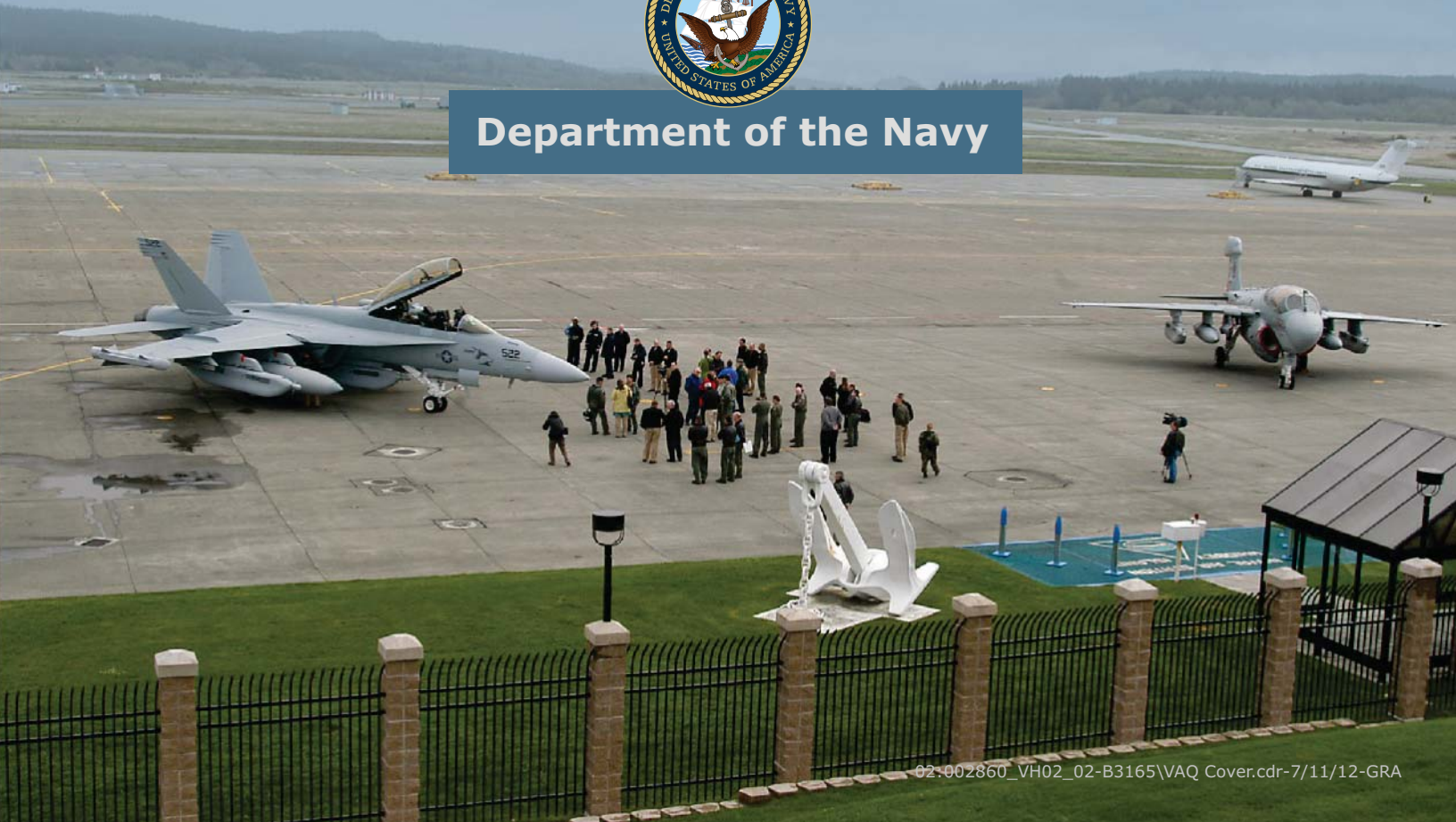
Environmental Assessment for the Expeditionary Transition of EA-6B Prowler Squadrons to EA-18G Growler at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Oak Harbor, Washington

Final

October 2012

Department of the Navy



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Environmental Assessment for the Transition of Expeditionary EA-6B Prowler Squadrons to EA-18G Growler at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Oak Harbor, Washington

Prepared by:

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

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Lead Agency:
Department of the Navy

In accordance with Chief of Naval Operations Instruction 5090.1C

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE TRANSITION OF EXPEDITIONARY EA-6B PROWLER SQUADRONS TO EA-18G GROWLER AT NAVAL AIR STATION WHIDBEY ISLAND, OAK HARBOR, WASHINGTON

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Abstract

The proposed action addressed in this environmental assessment (EA) is the transition of the Expeditionary electronic attack (VAQ) squadrons at Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey Island, Washington from the aging EA-6B Prowler aircraft to the newer EA-18G Growler aircraft. The EA evaluates the potential environmental effects of transitioning the Expeditionary VAQ squadrons at NAS Whidbey Island from the aging EA-6B Prowler to the newer EA-18G Growler in the 2012-2014 timeframe. The proposed action includes retaining the existing Expeditionary VAQ mission capabilities at NAS Whidbey Island; performing the in-place transition of three existing Expeditionary VAQ squadrons homebased at NAS Whidbey Island from the EA-6B aircraft to the EA-18G aircraft; potentially relocating one Reserve Expeditionary VAQ EA-6B squadron from Joint Base Andrews to NAS Whidbey Island and transitioning from the EA-6B aircraft to the EA-18G aircraft; adding up to 11 EA-18G aircraft to the Fleet Replacement Squadron (FRS) at NAS Whidbey Island to support the Expeditionary VAQ community; modifying certain facilities at Ault Field to provide facilities and functions to support the new aircraft type; and a modest increase in personnel to support the Expeditionary VAQ community. The purpose of the proposed action is to provide deployable land-based Expeditionary electronic attack community assets that meet Department of Defense requirements. The proposed action is needed to retain the Expeditionary VAQ mission and capabilities.

This EA describes and analyzes three action alternatives and a No Action Alternative. The three action alternatives differ in the number of aircraft and personnel. The proposed facility modifications for the three action alternatives are identical, except for Hangar 12, where the need for or size of the proposed addition to this hangar varies. Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no aircraft transition, Fleet Replacement Squadron aircraft addition, facility modifications, or additional personnel stationed at the installation. The No Action Alternative does not meet the purpose and need for the proposed action with regard to national defense requirements; however, it is carried forward in the EA to provide an environmental baseline for comparison. This EA analyzes the reasonably foreseeable environmental impacts of the alternatives on airspace and airfield operations, noise, land use, threatened and endangered species and other biological resources, water resources, air quality, cultural resources, socioeconomics, and environmental management.

Please contact the following person with comments and questions:

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAQS	ambient air quality standards
ACHP	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
agl	above ground level
AICUZ	Air Installations Compatible Use Zones
APE	area of potential effect
APZ	accident potential zone
ATC	air traffic control
ATSDR	Agency for Toxic Substances and Diseases
BASH	bird/wildlife aircraft strike hazard
bgs	below ground surface
BMP	best management practice
CAA	Clean Air Act
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CERCLA	Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CNATTU	Center for Naval Aviation Technical Training Unit
CO	carbon monoxide
CO_2	carbon dioxide
CVW	Carrier Air Wing
CY	calendar year
CZMA	Coastal Zone Management Act
dB	decibel
dBA	A-weighted decibel
dB re 1 µPa-m	decibels relative to 1 micropascal
DNL	day-night average sound level
DOD	Department of Defense
DON	Department of the Navy (or *the Navy*)
DPS	distinct population segment
EA	environmental assessment
EIS	environmental impact statement
EO	Executive Order

EOD	explosive ordnance disposal
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Endangered Species Act
ESOH	environment, safety, and occupational health
ESU	evolutionarily significant unit
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FCLP	field carrier landing practice
FEIS	Final environmental impact statement
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FLEDS	flight line electrical distribution system
FONSI	finding of no significant impact
FR	*Federal Register*
FRS	Fleet Replacement Squadron
GCA	ground control approach
GHG	greenhouse gas
Hz	hertz
ICRMP	Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan
INRMP	Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan
IRP	Installation Restoration Program
kHz	kilohertz
km	kilometer(s)
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
MCB	Marine Corps Base
MMA	Multi-mission Maritime Aircraft
MMPA	Marine Mammal Protection Act
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSA	metropolitan statistical area
msl	mean sea level
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NAS	Naval Air Station
NAVFAC NW	Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Northwest
NAVSEA	Naval Sea Systems Command
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act

NIPTS	noise-induced permanent threshold shift
nm	nautical mile
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NO_2	nitrogen dioxide
NO_x	nitrogen oxides
NOA	notice of availability
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NPS	National Park Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NS	Naval Station
NSR	New Source Review
NWAPA	Northwest Air Pollution Authority (now the NWCAA)
NWCAA	Northwest Clean Air Agency (formerly the NWAPA)
NWTRC	Northwest Training Range Complex
OLF	outlying landing field
OPNAVINST	Office of the Chief of Naval Operations Instruction
PCBs	polychlorinated biphenyls
PM_{10}	particles 10 micrometers or less
PESHE	Programmatic Environment, Safety, and Occupational Health Evaluation
POV	privately operated vehicles
PSD	Prevention of Significant Deterioration
RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
ROD	Record of Decision
SEL	sound exposure level
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SOH	safety and occupational health
SO_2	sulfur dioxide
SUA	special use airspace
T&G	touch-and-go
tpy	tons per year
U.S.C.	U.S. Code
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
VAQ	electronic attack (squadron)

VOC	volatile organic compound
WAC	Washington Administrative Code
WDFW	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
WDNRNHP	Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Natural Heritage Program