

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
Department of the Navy

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE HOME BASING OF THE MQ-25A STINGRAY CARRIER-BASED UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM AT NAVAL STATION NORFOLK, VIRGINIA**

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, the Navy gives notice that an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared, and based on this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared for the home basing and operation of a new MQ-25A Stingray Carrier-Based Unmanned Aircraft System (CBUAS) squadron at Naval Station (NAVSTA) Norfolk, Virginia. The analysis and information presented in the EA is incorporated by reference into this FONSI. This concludes the NEPA process for the Proposed Action.

**Proposed Action:** The Proposed Action is to home base and operate a new MQ-25A Stingray CBUAS squadron at NAVSTA Norfolk, Virginia. The Proposed Action includes home basing up to 20 Stingray CBUASs; renovating an existing hangar; constructing supporting infrastructure; performing air vehicle maintenance; providing training for air vehicle pilots and maintainers; conducting approximately 960 Stingray CBUAS annual flight operations; conducting up to 2,880 chase aircraft annual flight operations; and stationing approximately 600 personnel, plus their family members at NAVSTA Norfolk, Virginia. The Proposed Action would involve facility construction and renovation between approximately fiscal year (FY) 2026 and FY 2029, followed by a phased occupancy of the facilities by aircraft and personnel between FY 2031 and FY 2035.

**Purpose and Need:** The purpose of the Proposed Action is to home base a new East Coast squadron designed to enhance aircraft carrier capability and versatility for the Joint Forces Commander through the integration of a persistent, sea-based, multi-mission aerial refueling and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance unmanned aircraft system into the carrier air wing (CVW).

The need for the Proposed Action is to further the Navy's execution of its congressionally mandated roles and responsibilities under section 8062 of title 10, U.S. Code.

**Alternatives Analyzed:** Several alternatives were evaluated against screening factors to determine whether they met the purpose and need for the Proposed Action. The screening factors required that an alternative must (1) be in proximity to aircraft carrier operating areas; (2) present minimal potential conflicts with other aircraft within the national airspace system; (3) be

compatible with existing airfield operations; (4) accommodate the Stingray CBUAS accelerated schedule; (5) present operational and administrative synergies; (6) use existing runways; and (7) provide shore Sailor and family support.

Based on the screening factors, only one action alternative, the Proposed Action, was identified as meeting the purpose of and need for the project. Accordingly, the Proposed Action was the only action alternative carried forward for detailed analysis. In the Proposed Action, NAVSTA Norfolk is close to aircraft carrier operating areas (all East Coast carriers are homeported at NAVSTA Norfolk); NAVSTA Norfolk is located on the Atlantic Coast close to Special Use Airspace (SUA); the Stingray CBUAS would be compatible with existing NAVSTA Norfolk airfield operations (including UASs with Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 22 MQ-8B/C Fire Scout); and NAVSTA Norfolk has the capacity to accommodate a Stingray CBUAS hangar, ramp, and other supporting infrastructure. NAVSTA Norfolk also has Airborne Command and Control Squadrons (VAWs), CVW squadrons, and Fleet Readiness Centers. Co-locating Stingray CBUAS squadrons with VAWs at NAVSTA Norfolk would leverage personnel and maintenance administration, share work center spaces, and reduce span of control challenges for the Airborne Command and Control and Logistics Wing. Finally, NAVSTA Norfolk has an adequate runway and sufficient Navy resources for Sailors and their families.

**No Action Alternative:** Under the No Action Alternative, the Navy would not home base the Stingray CBUAS at NAVSTA Norfolk and infrastructure upgrades necessary to accommodate the Stingray CBUAS would not occur. The No Action Alternative does not meet the purpose of and need for the project; however, the No Action Alternative is carried forward for analysis in the EA to establish a comparative baseline for analysis.

**Alternatives Considered but not Carried Forward for Detailed**

**Analysis:** The Navy considered various alternatives in the early planning of this project. However, the following alternatives were dismissed and not carried forward for analysis in the EA.

The Navy considered home basing at other Navy airfields including: Naval Air Station (NAS) Key West, NAVSTA Mayport, NAS Oceana, NAS Patuxent River, NAS Pensacola, NAS Jacksonville, and NAS Joint Reserve Base New Orleans. These airfields were eliminated from further consideration, as they would not meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action because they did not satisfy the screening factors. Specifically, NAS Patuxent River, NAVSTA Mayport, and NAS Jacksonville, although in proximity to the aircraft carrier operating areas, lack available real estate for construction and offer little to no synergies with other CVW squadrons that require refueling, or with the VAWs with whom the

Stingray CBUAS squadron would share maintenance personnel and facilities when at sea. NAS Key West, NAS Pensacola, and NAS Joint Reserve Base New Orleans are not in proximity to the aircraft carrier operating areas, lack available real estate for construction, and do not offer the required synergies with other CVW squadrons that require refueling or with VAWs with whom the Stingray CBUAS squadron would share maintenance personnel and facilities while at sea. As a result, these alternative airfields were not carried forward in the EA for detailed analysis.

Given its geographic proximity to NAVSTA Norfolk, NAS Oceana was also considered as an alternative home basing location; however, NAS Oceana does not have available airfield and hangar space and, therefore, does not satisfy the existing airfield operations screening factor. Furthermore, NAS Oceana does not have VAWs and, therefore, does not satisfy the operational and administrative synergies screening factor. For these reasons, NAS Oceana was eliminated from detailed consideration in the EA.

The Navy considered alternatives that would home base the Stingray CBUAS at other DoD airfields, other federal non-DoD airfields, and civilian airfields. However, these other airfields would not be able to accommodate the CBUAS accelerated schedule, did not present operational and administrative synergies (such as the co-location with VAWs or with existing Fleet Readiness Centers), and would not be technically or economically feasible. In addition, the Stingray CBUAS has no commonality with other Service's UASs and, for some airfields, was incompatible with existing airfield operations. Non-DoD airfields, such as National Aeronautics and Space Administration operated airfields, and civilian airfields would offer minimal or no Sailor and family readiness, medical, or housing support commensurate with Navy standards for the deployable units needed to support the Stingray CBUAS program and, therefore, would not meet the shore support requirement. Due to the policy established by Commander, Naval Air Forces—which directs Naval UAS to operate primarily from non-joint-use military airfields and restricts the use of joint civil/military airfields to mission-critical circumstances—operations at civilian airfields are not permitted. Consequently, these alternatives were excluded from detailed consideration in the EA.

**Environmental Effects:** No reasonably foreseeable significant environmental impacts would occur from implementing the Proposed Action. Certain environmental resources (land use, geological resources, visual resources, hazardous materials and wastes, surface waters, emergency services, airspace, and infrastructure) were not analyzed in detail in the Final EA because potential impacts were negligible or non-existent. Potential environmental impacts to public health and safety, noise, transportation, air quality, water resources, biological resources, and cultural resources are summarized below.

Public Health and Safety: The Proposed Action will not result in reasonably foreseeable significant impacts to public health and safety. Construction activities would be conducted in accordance with established Navy policies for ensuring the health and safety of the general public. Construction would take place entirely within the secured perimeter of NAVSTA Norfolk, and construction areas would not be accessible by non-construction personnel or the public.

Runway clear areas, accident potential zones, and airspace would not be affected by Stingray CBUAS operations. There would be no changes to existing airspace. Operations would occur in several offshore SUA areas. A Certificate of Authorization that would allow the Stingray CBUAS to fly in the National Airspace System would be obtained from the Federal Aviation Administration prior to operations. A Ground-Based Detect and Avoid (GBDAA)/Lightweight Surveillance and Target Acquisition Radar (LSTAR) tower would be installed and/or chase aircraft would be employed to provide detect and avoid functionality to actively search for potentially conflicting air traffic during phases of Stingray CBUAS flight outside of SUA. The Proposed Action would result in a negligible increase in mishap risk at the airfield proportionate to the increase in operations (2% for the Stingray CBUAS and 6% total increase overall when including chase aircraft).

Noise: The Proposed Action will not result in reasonably foreseeable significant impacts from construction-related or airfield operations noise. Impacts to the noise environment from the Proposed Action would primarily result from the operation of construction equipment and aircraft.

No long-term changes to the noise environment in and around NAVSTA Norfolk are expected under the Proposed Action. Noise-sensitive locations, such as the closest off-installation residences, would be exposed to intermittent periods of increased noise during construction activities occurring sporadically during daytime working hours over a period of two years. Noise levels from proposed construction may be noticeable at times during light traffic on area

roads and/or when aircraft are not operating nearby but would not be expected to cause meaningful changes to the existing noise conditions.

Given the small overall increase in annual air operations (which results in an imperceptible increase in day-night average sound level) and the comparatively low single-event noise level sound exposure levels from overflights (which are quieter or as quiet as existing aircraft operating out of NAVSTA Norfolk), there would not be a perceptible change from existing noise conditions from Stingray CBUAS and chase aircraft operations.

Transportation: The Proposed Action will not result in reasonably foreseeable significant impacts to transportation. Impacts to transportation from the Proposed Action would primarily result from increased traffic during construction and operations. During the construction period, there would be a short-term increase in trucks traveling to and from NAVSTA Norfolk to deliver construction materials Monday through Friday. The additional truck and other construction vehicle traffic would be temporary and minor and would not be expected to affect the current level of service on area roadways.

Additional traffic from Stingray CBUAS personnel would represent a minor increase in average daily traffic (ADT) on area roads. This would result in a 4.5 percent increase in the annual ADT traveling on Bay Avenue (Gate 4) and an approximate 0.3 percent increase in the annual ADT traveling on Interstate 564 between the Intermodal Connector and Admiral Taussig Boulevard. These minor increases, along with the dispersed nature of routes to the gates, would not be expected to have a significant effect on roadway level of service.

Air Quality: The Proposed Action will not result in reasonably foreseeable significant impacts to air quality. Impacts to air quality from the Proposed Action would primarily result from construction ground disturbance, and combustion exhaust from the operation of vehicles, equipment, and aircraft. Due to the intermittent nature of construction emission sources and their relatively low strengths, combined construction emissions would result in ambient effects that would not contribute to an exceedance of a National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS).

Criteria pollutant emissions from Proposed Action air operations would occur intermittently over the larger NAVSTA Norfolk airfield and adjoining airspace below 3,000 feet above ground level. This pattern of activity would substantially disperse operational emissions to the point that they would result in ambient effects that would not contribute to an exceedance of a NAAQS. While emissions would occur in an area that is an "orphan" maintenance

area for ozone, emissions would be below the applicable General Conformity de minimis thresholds and therefore a Clean Air Act General Conformity Determination is not required. A General Conformity Record of Non-Applicability has been completed.

Water Resources: The Proposed Action will not result in reasonably foreseeable significant impacts to groundwater, surface water, or floodplains. Impacts to water resources from the Proposed Action would primarily result from ground disturbance. The Proposed Action would not affect the quality of groundwater resources at the project site. A small area of wetland adjacent to the GBDAA/LSTAR tower site would be affected temporarily during installation of underground utilities. Permits would be obtained prior to construction and permit conditions will be followed. Minor construction associated with installation of underground utilities connecting to the GBDAA/LSTAR tower would occur within a small portion of the 100-year floodplain; however, construction would not cause any upstream or downstream flooding and would not affect off-installation areas.

Biological Resources: The Proposed Action will not result in reasonably foreseeable significant impacts to biological resources. Impacts to biological resources from the Proposed Action would primarily result from ground disturbance, noise, and strike. The Proposed Action would occur in a developed area mainly devoid of natural habitat areas or plant communities. No impacts to habitats and vegetation would be expected as a result of construction and operations under the Proposed Action.

The Navy has determined that the flight operations under the Proposed Action may result in the "take" of up to two additional migratory birds per year. As a military readiness activity, the Proposed Action would not result in unauthorized "take" of migratory birds or result in significant adverse effects on a population of a migratory bird species per the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The Navy has determined that implementing the Proposed Action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, the tricolored bat. Therefore, as required by section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, the Navy informally consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) requesting concurrence with this determination for the tricolored bat. The USFWS concurred with the Navy's finding on June 25, 2025.

Cultural Resources: The Proposed Action will not result in reasonably foreseeable significant impacts to cultural resources. The Navy has determined that the Proposed Action would not result in adverse effects to historic properties. The Navy consulted with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, which concurred with the Navy's determination that the undertaking would result in no adverse effect to historic properties in an email dated May 30,

2025.

**Coastal Zone:** The Navy determined that the Proposed Action is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the Virginia Coastal Management Program. The Navy prepared and submitted a Coastal Consistency Determination to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, which manages the Virginia Coastal Management Program, and they concurred with the Navy's determination in a letter dated June 23, 2025.

**Cumulative Impacts:** Based on the analysis of each resource potentially impacted by the Proposed Action, implementation of the Proposed Action combined with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects, will not result in significant cumulative impacts. Cumulative impacts to all resources under the Proposed Action will be minor or non-existent.

**Mitigation Measures:** The analysis contained in the EA determined the Proposed Action will not result in significant environmental impacts. Therefore, no major mitigation actions are needed. However, several impact avoidance and minimization measures are incorporated into the Proposed Action as Best Management Practices; these are discussed in Tables 2-3 and 3-13 of the Final EA.

**Public Involvement:** The Navy prepared a Draft EA to inform the public of the Proposed Action and to allow the opportunity for public review and comment. Input from the public, federally-recognized Tribal Nations, and from regulatory agencies was incorporated into the analysis of potential impacts, as appropriate. A Notice of Availability of the Draft EA, including information about where the Draft EA was available for review, the announcement of a 30-day public comment period, and date and location of one public open-house meeting was published May 8, 9, and 10, 2025, in *The Virginian-Pilot*. The notice was mailed to local and state elected officials; federal, state, and local agencies; and community groups and organizations. NAVSTA Norfolk posted the notice on social media. The Draft EA was available on the Navy's website, <https://www.nepa.navy.mil/MQ25-East> and at local libraries (Mary D. Pretlow Anchor Branch Library and Tidewater Community College and City of Virginia Beach Joint-Use Library). The public was invited to submit comments on the Draft EA during the public comment period from May 8, 2025, through June 7, 2025, and during the public open-house meeting held on May 20, 2025. The public was invited to submit comments on the Draft EA via comment form at the public meeting; electronically on the project website; or by mail. Two comments were received during the public comment period; both were supportive of the Proposed Action.

**Finding of No Significant Impact:** Based on analysis presented in the EA, which has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of NEPA, and in consideration of comments received during public review of the Draft EA and coordination with federally-recognized Tribal Nations, the USFWS, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, the Navy finds that the Proposed Action will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. This concludes the NEPA process for the Proposed Action.

The EA prepared by the Navy is on file, and interested parties may obtain a copy by downloading the EA from the project website, <https://www.nepa.navy.mil/MQ25-East>. Electronic copies of the Final EA and FONSI may be obtained by written request to: Environmental Planning (EV22DS) Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Atlantic, 6506 Hampton Boulevard, Norfolk, Virginia, 23508.

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