



# GULF of ALASKA

## NAVY TRAINING ACTIVITIES

SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT/OVERSEAS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

## March 2022 Project Update

On Feb. 1, 2022, the U.S. Navy announced its intent to prepare a Supplement to the 2020 Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS/OEIS). The Supplement addressed a change in the Study Area and the addition of a new Continental Shelf and Slope Mitigation Area. On March 18, 2022, the Navy released the Supplement for public review and comment.

Since the release of the Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS in December 2020 and completion of the Northern Edge 2021 exercise, the Navy recognized that the size and shape of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Temporary Maritime Activities Area (TMAA) no longer provides sufficient space for the realistic maneuvering of vessels and aircraft during training exercises. Proposed changes to the Study Area include additional airspace and sea space to the west and south of the TMAA. The area is referred to as the Western Maneuver Area and adds approximately 185,806 square nautical miles to the Study Area (see Figure 1). This additional space would enable Navy personnel and units to practice more realistic, complex training scenarios in a safer, more efficient manner that would better prepare them to respond to real-world incidents. The TMAA (approximately 42,146 square nautical miles) would remain unchanged and any activities involving active sonar or explosives would, as in the past, occur in this area only.

The Navy is not proposing new or increased number of training activities in the Western Maneuver Area, only an expansion of the area the Navy may use for vessel and aircraft maneuvering purposes during exercises. The number of vessels, aircraft, underway steaming hours, events, and flight times remains the same. Although the Study Area has expanded, the conclusions regarding potential impacts have not significantly changed from the 2020 Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS.

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## New Continental Shelf and Slope Mitigation Area

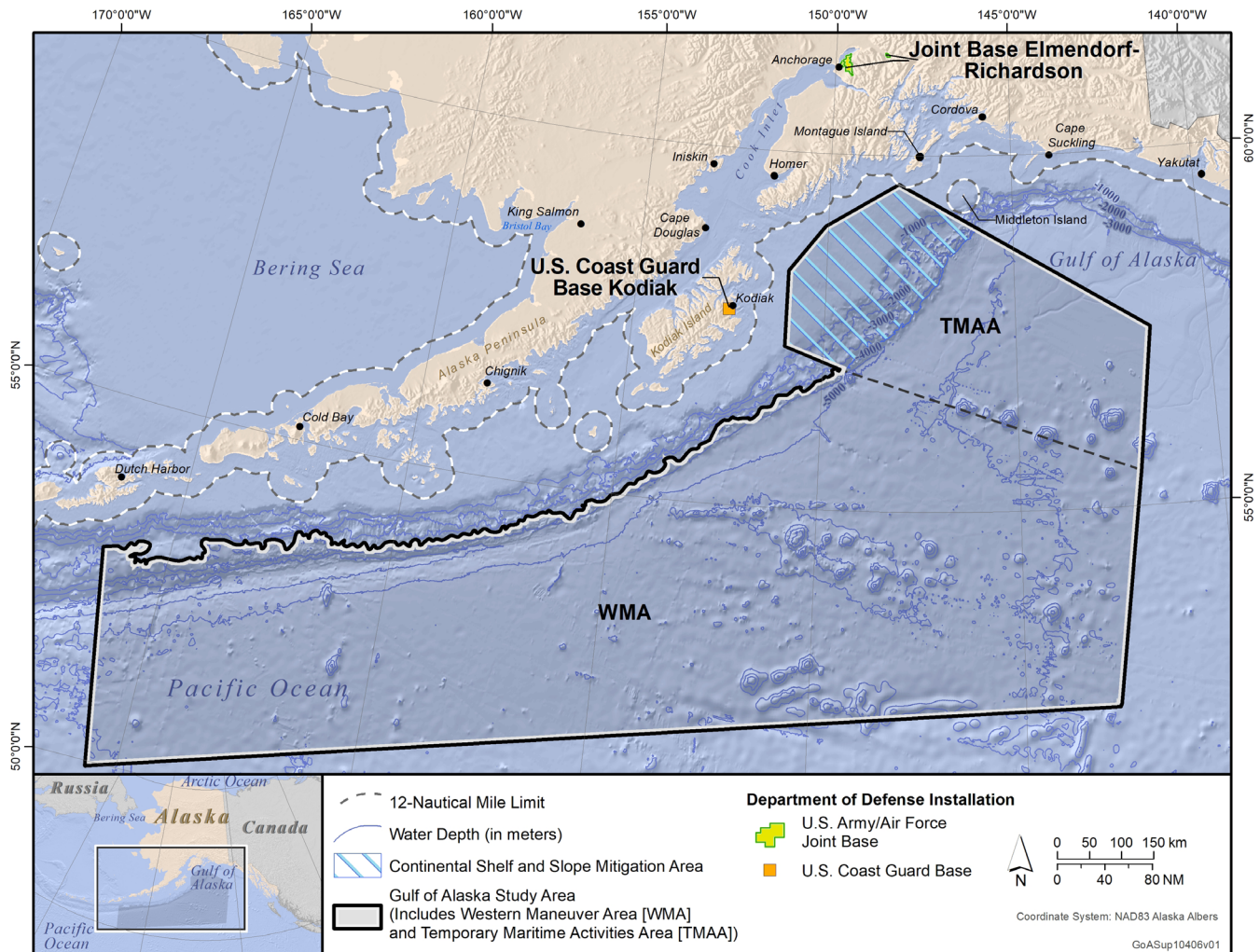
In direct response to agency, tribal, and public comments, the Navy also proposes implementing a new mitigation area within the continental shelf and slope area of the TMAA (approximately 14,600 square nautical miles). The Navy would expand its mitigation measures for explosives detonated at or near the surface and prohibit the use of explosives during training (up to 10,000 feet altitude) in areas of less than 4,000 meter depth to protect marine species and biologically important habitat. The Navy anticipates the implementation of the proposed mitigation area would reduce impacts on marine mammals, fishes, and marine birds.

The implementation of the Continental Shelf and Slope Mitigation Area would reduce impacts on marine mammals, fishes, marine birds, and important habitat.

# Training in the Gulf of Alaska

The addition of the Western Maneuver Area is needed for the Navy to practice the maneuvering of vessels and aircraft during training exercises as they would need to maneuver in real-world situations. The activities conducted in the Western Maneuver Area would be limited to vessel movements and aircraft training, and several events associated with these movements. Although the Study Area is larger, the type and number of training events would not change. The vast majority of training activities would still occur only in the TMAA.

The Navy would not use sonar or explosives in the Western Maneuver Area.



**Figure 1: Gulf of Alaska Study Area.** The Gulf of Alaska Temporary Maritime Activities Area is established only during exercises and provides an ideal location for training. The Western Maneuver Area provides sufficient space for realistic maneuvering of vessels and aircraft during training exercises. Training activities are conducted far enough offshore of coastal areas to reduce impacts on Alaska Native, commercial, and recreational fishing.

