



ATLANTIC FLEET TRAINING AND TESTING

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT/ OVERSEAS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT for Activities in 2018 and Beyond



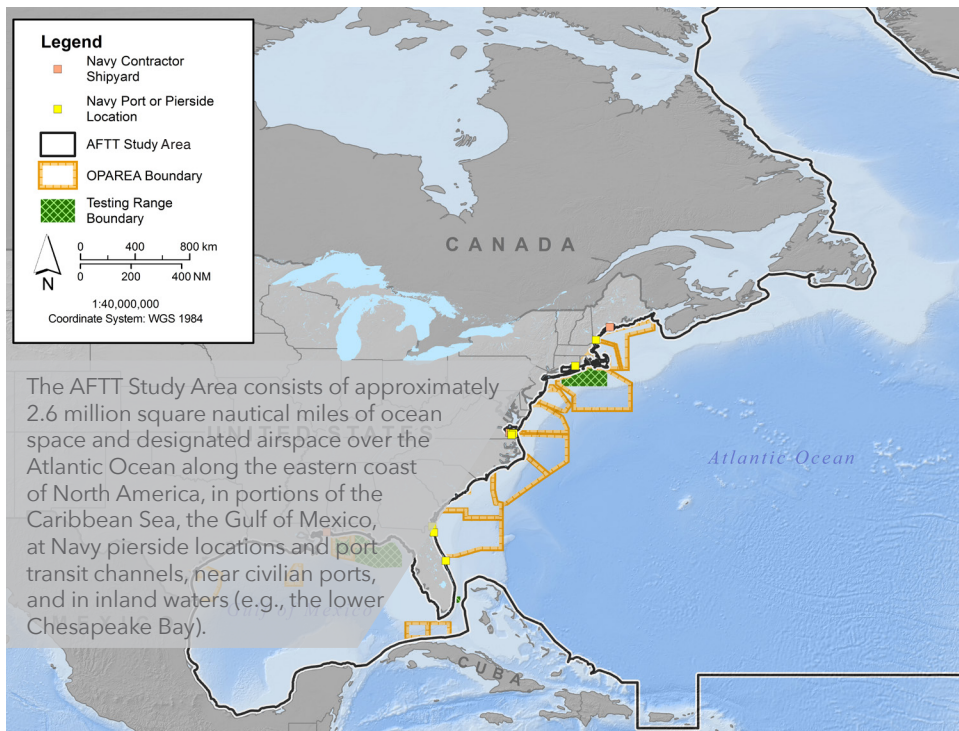
NAVY TRAINING AND TESTING IN THE AFTT STUDY AREA

For more than 240 years, the U.S. Navy has been operating on, over, and within the world's oceans. These waters are not only the workplace of America's Sailors, but also their home.

The Navy's mission is to maintain, train, and equip combat-ready naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression, and maintaining freedom of the seas. Naval forces must be ready to respond to many different situations, in different settings, often under crisis conditions. From large-scale conflict to maritime security to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, Sailors must be fully trained and prepared to perform these various and demanding duties at a moment's notice.

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Navy is using best available science and methods of analysis to assess the potential environmental impacts associated with conducting naval training and testing activities within the Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing (AFTT) Study Area, including activities that involve the use of active sonar and explosives. Most of these training and testing activities have been previously analyzed and authorized under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and are similar to the types of activities that have been occurring in the Study Area for decades. Throughout the NEPA process, the Navy invited the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to participate as a cooperating agency in preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS/OEIS).

Proposed Navy training and testing activities are similar to the types of activities that have been occurring in the AFTT Study Area for decades in a manner that accounts for the Navy's responsibility as a steward of the maritime environment.



MISSION OF THE U.S. NAVY

To maintain, train, and equip combat-ready naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression, and maintaining freedom of the seas.

NAVY TRAINING AND TESTING IN THE AFTT STUDY AREA

For decades, Navy training and testing areas within the AFTT Study Area have provided a safe and realistic environment for training Sailors and testing systems. The proximity of these areas to naval homeports allows for:

- Greater efficiencies during training and testing
- Reduced fuel use, costs, and emissions
- Shorter transit times
- Reduced wear and tear on vessels, submarines, and aircraft

Training Sailors close to home also maximizes their training time and reduces time away from their families.



IMPORTANCE OF REALISTIC TRAINING AND TESTING

Naval forces must be ready to respond to many different situations. The skills needed to achieve military readiness are challenging to master and perishable without constant practice. Training activities must therefore be diverse and as realistic as possible to prepare Sailors to complete their mission and ensure their success and survival. While simulators provide early skill repetition and enhance teamwork, there is no substitute for live training in a realistic environment.

Training and testing activities must be as realistic and diverse as possible to prepare Sailors for deployment and ensure they maintain the highest level of readiness and capability for their success and survival.

The AFTT Study Area provides a range of realistic training environments and sufficient air and sea space necessary for safety and mission success.

In addition to training Sailors for the real-world missions they will encounter when deployed, continued military readiness requires providing Navy personnel with the military assets necessary to support their missions and gives them a technological edge over adversaries.

The AFTT Study Area provides the air and sea space necessary to conduct Navy research, development, testing, and evaluation activities ("testing activities") to ensure vessels, aircraft, and weapons systems operate as intended. Conducting testing activities in varying marine environments, such as differing water depths, seafloor types, salinity levels, and other ocean conditions, and in replicated warfighting environments allows for accurate evaluation of systems before use by Sailors during deployment.

TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN THE AFTT STUDY AREA

The Navy must maintain a rigorous, comprehensive training regimen to ensure ships are prepared to deploy on schedule and Sailors are ready to carry out their duties as required. Sailors participate in four levels of at-sea training, from learning basic skills to working with other military services. This training includes:

- Basic level training, consisting of individuals, small groups of personnel, or a single crew (ship, submarine, or aircraft) training on its own.
- Advanced level training, which hones tactics, techniques, and procedures with other units for mission-specific training.
- Integrated training, combining individual units and staffs into strike groups or other combined-arms forces. Integration testing concludes with certification for deployment.
- Sustainment training, which allows strike groups to maintain their highest level of readiness and proficiency.

TACTICAL SKILLS TRAINING

Training activities in the AFTT Study Area provide Sailors with the opportunity to learn and practice skills they need to operate machinery or weapons. These activities provide realistic experience and include:

- Operating aircraft, ships, and submarines
- Conducting weapons training
- Detecting and locating submarines
- Finding and removing in-water practice mines and other explosive ordnance disposal
- Practicing vessel searches and interdiction

TESTING ACTIVITIES IN THE AFTT STUDY AREA

Testing activities conducted in the AFTT Study Area are important for maintaining readiness. Research and development of new technologies by the U.S. Department of Defense occurs continually to ensure the U.S. military can counter new and emerging threats. These technologies must be tested and evaluated before use by the fleet. Testing activities may include:

- Basic and applied scientific research and technology development
- Testing, evaluation, and maintenance of sensors and systems, such as missiles, torpedoes, radar, active and passive sonar systems, vessels, submarines, and aircraft
- Acquisition of technologically advanced vessels, aircraft, and systems to support Navy missions

Although simulation is a key component in the development of vessels, aircraft, and systems, it does not provide critical data on how they will perform or whether they will be able to meet performance and other specification requirements in the environment in which they are intended to operate. For this reason, vessels, aircraft systems, and system components must undergo at-sea testing.



Testing vessels, aircraft, and systems in the varying marine environments of the AFTT Study Area allows for accurate evaluation before use by Sailors during deployment.