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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NAVY COMPLETES ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR HAWAII RANGE COMPLEX

The Navy today (June 26, 2008) completed and released the record of decision for the Hawaii Range Complex Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS/OEIS).

Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Installations and Environment B.J. Penn signed the record of decision in Washington, D.C., marking completion of the EIS/OEIS process for the Hawaii Range Complex. The ROD and the EIS/OEIS are available online at www.govsupport.us/hrc.

"The Navy must train its deploying forces in the most realistic manner possible," Penn said. "This record of decision will allow us to continue giving our young men and women the skills they need to be effective in combat."

Penn also commented on the Department of the Navy's commitment to its military and environmental missions: "A country worth defending is also worth preserving. It is only right that we take care to preserve the natural resources where we live, work and train."

Vice Adm. Samuel Locklear, commander of the U.S. Third Fleet, said, "The Hawaii Range Complex is a vital area for Navy training and research. Completion of the environmental impact statement and the record of decision will help the Navy continue to use the Hawaii range and to increase those activities as needed for the nation's security while we maintain our stewardship of the environment."

The Hawaii Range Complex EIS/OEIS is a comprehensive analysis of the environmental impacts of current and potential Navy training and research, development, testing and evaluation (RDT&E) activities around Hawaii.

"Most of these activities have been conducted in Hawaii for many years, and the Navy is not seeking any additional land, sea or air space with this environmental impact statement," said Capt. Dean Leech, environmental counsel for the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

The Hawaii EIS/OEIS is one of a dozen environmental impact statements the Navy is preparing for its major range complexes, which include Southern California, the Pacific

Northwest, Mariana Islands, the Gulf of Alaska and the East Coast. These efforts are part of a long-term program to ensure the Navy has the training ranges it needs to provide combat-capable forces ready to deploy worldwide in America's defense. The Hawaii EIS/OEIS is the first to be completed.

"The Hawaii EIS is the product of several years of work that included scoping meetings and two rounds of public hearings on each of the four main Hawaiian Islands," said Leech. "We received more than 4,500 comments from the public, and we thank everyone who took the time to review the documents and submit comments."

Public comments received since the final EIS/OEIS was publicly released on May 9 are also incorporated in the record of decision.

The Hawaii Range Complex EIS/OEIS includes a full discussion of sonar and its effects on marine mammals.

"The Navy can train with modern sonar, as it has for more than 30 years around Hawaii, without injuring or killing marine mammals," said Leech. "In fact, the Hawaii populations of some marine mammals have increased over the years.

"This EIS represents the most robust and detailed analysis of sonar effects on marine mammals the Navy has completed to date," Leech said. "The analysis is based on the best available science and is the result of extensive coordination with the National Marine Fisheries Service, which is responsible for regulating activities associated with potential effects on marine mammals, in accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act and Endangered Species Act."

The EIS examines four alternative scenarios, ranging from current levels of training and RDT&E activities to increased frequency and tempos of training and RDT&E.

With the record of decision, the Navy announces its selection of Alternative 3, the preferred alternative, which provides for upgrading and modernizing the capabilities of the Hawaii Range Complex. The preferred alternative also provides for an increase in training and RDT&E activities around Hawaii, while maintaining active sonar use at current levels.

More than 300 copies of the record of decision are being distributed to individuals who requested a copy of the final EIS/OEIS and to agencies and organizations that received a copy of the final EIS/OEIS.

Hard copies of the record of decision are available upon request via:

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