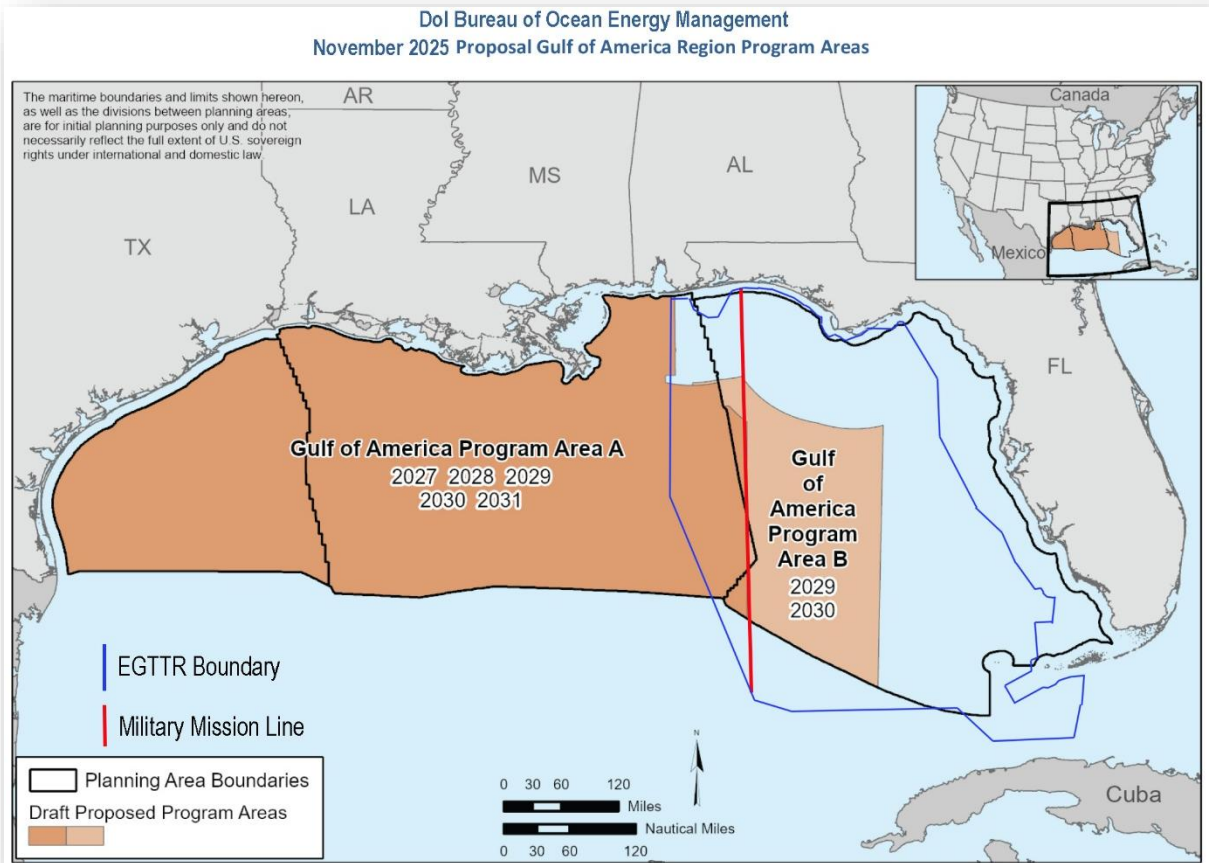




Eastern Gulf Test & Training Range Military Mission Line Sustainment Position Paper



Prepared by

DEFENSE SUPPORT INITIATIVES COMMITTEE
OKALOOSA - SANTA ROSA - WALTON COUNTIES
FLORIDA, USA

January 23, 2026

www.militaryfriendlynwf.com

Cover Photo:

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
11th National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program
Eastern Gulf of America Program Area B Map;
Eastern Gulf Test & Training Range boundary superimposed

The Defense Support Initiatives Committee (DSI) is a military installation advocacy group sponsored by the Economic Development Council of Okaloosa County; DBA One Okaloosa EDC. It is comprised of 25 select retired military personnel, defense contractors and representatives of the seven Military Affairs Committees from Santa Rosa, Okaloosa and Walton Counties. The mission of the DSI is to support and promote the local military installations and missions, and their positive economic contributions to the tri-county area. As an issues focused advocacy group, the DSI interfaces at the local, state and Federal levels on topics of regional and national interest and is recognized by the State of Florida as the lead agency for military initiatives in the Okaloosa region.

Continual sustainment, operation and expansion of military installations, ranges and their missions is critical to our region's economic foundation and our National security.

Eastern Gulf Test & Training Range

The U.S. Department of War (DoW) ensures military superiority to protect Americans against threats to their national security. The Major Range and Test Facility Base (MRTFB) is a designated set of DoW facilities, ranges, and their associated workforce that provide the foundation, or base, for the Nation's Test and Evaluation (T&E) capabilities critical to maintaining America's military readiness. The MRTFB is a national asset consisting of broad-based test and evaluation military ranges—one of which is the Eglin Air Force Base complex, managed by the 96th Test Wing, and includes the Eastern Gulf Test & Training Range (EGTTR; aka Eglin Gulf Test & Training Range). The EGTTR is the largest military range in the continental United States and connects capabilities across the eastern Gulf of Mexico/Gulf of America extending from NW Florida to Key West, and supports varying surface and subsurface exercises. It provides for water-to-land transitions, high-altitude supersonic air combat training, air-to-air missile testing, air-to-ground targeting, drone testing and targeting, hypersonic weapons testing, space launches and recoveries, and other activities. The EGTTR is vital for testing the next generation of air armaments, and for training in realistic combat-surrogate conditions. The EGTTR complex is an integral part of DoW's Training Resources Strategy. The military range of the future must provide for demanding, high-fidelity, next-generation environments for the development of relevant joint warfighting capabilities.

The EGTTR is necessary for ensuring America's security. The military uses the EGTTR airspace from the surface up to 60,000 feet for high speed flying and maneuvering. The sea surface and subsurface areas are used by ships and submarines. Military operations, conducted day and night, utilize live ammunition and missiles—the result can be large debris fields of dangerous objects. Energy and oil drilling structures and associated exploratory activities are incompatible with military activities, would restrict military capabilities and would compromise military readiness. Without unrestricted access to the range, the DoW would be required to piece out missions and move them to other locations. The DoW identified that drilling and related infrastructure east of -86o 41' W would be detrimental to operations in the range. Using those coordinates, the 2006 Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA) codified the north-south Military Mission Line (MML) to protect the EGTTR by preventing oil and gas exploration and production east of the MML.

GOMESA encroachment protections provided for the EGTTR from oil drilling activities east of the Military Mission Line expired June 30, 2022. In preparation of that expiration, in September 2020, then President Trump utilized the U.S. Code 43, Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) authorization to withdraw the coastal areas of Florida, Georgia and South Carolina from oil and gas leasing and development for an additional ten years through June 30, 2032.

Beginning his second term in January 2025, President Trump initiated his Unleashing American Energy Executive Order #14154. This EO aims to boost fossil fuel and mineral production and specifically identifies outer continental shelf lands for energy exploration and extraction. Trump's 2020 OCSLA protection through 2032 is still valid, however, his Unleashing American Energy Executive Order directs DOI/BOEM to move forward with offshore drilling where outer continental shelves reside.

While the EO does not reference the EGTRR outer continental shelf specifically, this OCSL reference does open the eastern Gulf for drilling interpretation. As such, in response to President Trump's Unleashing American Energy EO, BOEM released their draft five-year plan for oil drilling in November 2025; which includes Outer Continental Shelf Lands and a large portion of the military range in the eastern Gulf.

The EGTRR is an irreplaceable national asset utilized to develop and maintain readiness of our combat forces. No other area in the world provides the U.S. military with ready access to highly instrumented, network-connected, surrogate environments for military preparation operations.

THE MILITARY RANGE OF THE FUTURE
MUST PROVIDE FOR DEMANDING, HIGH-
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Military Economic Impact

As identified in the Florida Defense Factbook, northwest Florida installations contribute an annual economic impact exceeding \$22 Billion and generate over 209,000 jobs. Okaloosa County in Northwest Florida houses the largest Air Force installation in the Department of War; Eglin Air Force Base. Team Eglin contributes \$10B annually to the local economy and provides nearly 79,000 jobs. The 96th Test Wing, Eglin's host wing, is the test and evaluation center for Air Force air-delivered weapons, navigation and guidance systems, Command and Control systems, and AF Special Operations Command Systems.

Hurlburt Field is a component of the greater Eglin geographic footprint and is Headquarters for Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) with the 1st Special Operations Wing, the USAF Special Operations School (USAFSOS), the 24th Special Operations Wing, the 492nd Special Operations Wing, and the 919th Special Operations Wing. The Eglin complex supports multi-service combat ready forces while delivering full spectrum support to DoW.

As a result of Team Eglin's collective missions and the EGTRR, Okaloosa County installations provide half of the total Northwest Florida region's military impact. In addition, Team Eglin's direct defense spending topped \$4.2 Billion in 2022, providing the highest economic contribution in Northwest Florida. Of note, Northwest Florida's defense sector provides 22% of the state's total defense economy—the largest economic contribution among Florida's eight regions—including the highest concentration of defense contracting jobs of all eight state regions.

According to the Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation, in 2024 Okaloosa County ranked #1 in the state of Florida for total defense personnel spending—measured at \$2.2 Billion. That's wealth generation circulating in the local economy by military families.

Defense contracting is an added benefit sustaining military communities. Approximately 300 private defense contracting companies surround the Eglin Test & Training Complex. Okaloosa's contracting value exceeded \$2.1 Billion in 2024—more than double that of the other regional counties combined, and at 81% for the region. Additionally, with nearly 5,000 contract awards, the County secured over 50% of all defense contract awards in the region. Eight of the Nation's Top 10 defense contractors have a presence in Okaloosa County.

The DSI supports the 2020 Presidential memorandum protecting the EGTTTR up through 2032 and opposes any oil drilling or related activities east of the Military Mission Line in the Eastern Gulf Test & Training Range.

EGTTR Military Support

The EGTTR, the largest test and training range in the continental United States, and is identified by Department of War Directive as a *national asset* that cannot be replicated anywhere in the U.S.

As weapon systems and aircraft become more sophisticated and long-reaching, test and training ranges take on even greater importance in military capabilities and national security. The EGTTR is a unique resource offering tremendous capabilities for joint test and training exercises. National security deterrence requires credibility; you cannot credibly deter conflict with capability and capacity that does not exist.

Elimination of the MML protections would decrease U.S. military capabilities and capacities; threatening our National security. Oil drilling and associated exploratory activities are incompatible with the complex and sensitive nature of military training and testing. They would harm military readiness, reduce our ability to maintain military superiority, and risk national security.

This regional position paper (consisting of 29 civic, private sector and public sector letters and resolutions) supports the United States military and National Defense Strategy by advocating to sustain the Military Mission Line moratorium protections and opposing any activities east of the MML that are deemed incompatible to the military mission. The DSI opposes oil drilling leases and related activities east of the Military Mission Line in BOEM's draft Proposed Program Area B in the Eastern Gulf Test & Training Range.

Respectfully Submitted,



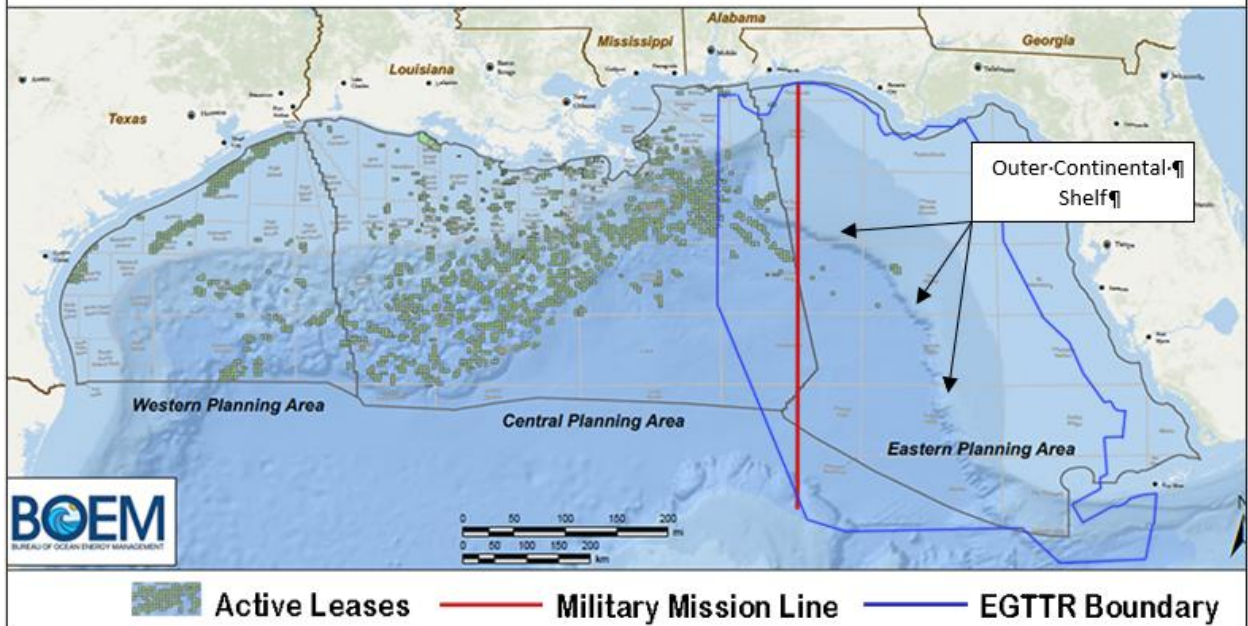
Garry Haase, Col USAF Ret
DSI Chairman



Kay Rasmussen, CECD
DSI Manager

Attachments

**BOEM Gulf of America Region
Blocks and Active Leases by Planning Area
December 2, 2025**



EGTTR Letters of Support

Public Sector

1. 96th Test Wing Brig General Mark Massaro, Commander
2. Escambia County Board of County Commissioners
3. FloridaCommerce / Florida Defense Support Commission
4. Florida Defense Alliance
5. Florida Department of Environmental Protection
6. Florida Department of State
7. Florida Department of Transportation
8. Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission
9. Florida Governor DeSantis Public X Post
10. Northwest Florida League of Cities / Okaloosa League of Cities
11. Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners
12. Santa Rosa County Board of County Commissioners
13. Walton County Board of County Commissioners
14. U.S. Florida House Representatives
15. U.S. Florida Congressional Representatives

Private Sector

16. Defense Support Initiatives Committee
17. Crestview Chamber of Commerce
18. Destin Chamber of Commerce
19. Emerald Coast Association of Realtors
20. Emerald Coast Military Affairs Council
21. FastSigns
22. First Place Partners
23. Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce
24. HSU Educational Foundation
25. Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape
26. One Okaloosa EDC
27. Santa Rosa County Chamber of Commerce
28. Scott Unlimited
29. Technology Coast Manufacturing and Engineering Network

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