

holder of the authorization with an explanation of why the report is being returned. If the authorization holder disagrees with the findings of the Assistant Administrator, the holder may request an independent peer review of the report. Failure to submit a complete and accurate report may result in a delay in processing future authorization requests.

(g) Results of any behavioral, feeding, or population studies, that are conducted supplemental to the monitoring program, should be made available to the National Marine Fisheries Service before applying for an incidental harassment authorization for the following year.

Subpart J [Reserved]

Subpart K—Taking Of Marine Mammals Incidental To Space Vehicle And Test Flight Activities

SOURCE: 74 FR 6242, Feb. 6, 2009, unless otherwise noted.

EFFECTIVE DATE NOTE: 74 FR 6242, Feb. 6, 2009, subpart K, consisting of §§216.120 through 216.129 were added, effective Feb. 7, 2009 through Feb. 7, 2014.

§216.120 Specified activity and specified geographical region.

(a) Regulations in this subpart apply only to the incidental taking of those marine mammals specified in paragraph (b) of this section by the 30th Space Wing, United States Air Force, and those persons it authorizes to engage in:

(1) Launching up to 15 missiles each year from Vandenberg Air Force Base, for a total of up to 75 missiles over the 5-year period of the regulations in this subpart,

(2) Launching up to 35 rockets each year from Vandenberg Air Force Base, for a total of up to 175 rocket launches over the 5-year period of the regulations in this subpart,

(3) Aircraft flight test operations, and

(4) Helicopter operations from Vandenberg Air Force Base.

(b) The incidental take of marine mammals on Vandenberg Air Force

Base and in waters off southern California, under the activity identified in paragraph (a) of this section, is limited to the following species: Harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*); California sea lions (*Zalophus californianus*); northern elephant seals (*Mirounga angustirostris*); and northern fur seals (*Callorhinus ursinus*).

[74 FR 6242, Feb. 6, 2009, as amended at 77 FR 4921, Feb. 1, 2012]

§216.121 Effective dates.

Amended regulations are effective from February 1, 2012, through February 6, 2014.

[77 FR 4921, Feb. 1, 2012]

§216.122 Permissible methods of taking.

(a) Under Letters of Authorization issued pursuant to §216.106 and 216.127, the 30th Space Wing, U.S. Air Force, its contractors, and clients, may incidentally, but not intentionally, take marine mammals by harassment, within the area described in §216.120, provided the activity is in compliance with all terms, conditions, and requirements of the regulations in this subpart and the appropriate Letter of Authorization.

(b) The taking of marine mammals is authorized for the species listed in §216.120(b) and is limited to Level B Harassment.

§216.123 Prohibitions.

Notwithstanding takings specified in §216.120 and authorized by a Letter of Authorization issued under §§216.106 and 216.127, no person in connection with the activities described in §216.120 may:

(a) Take any marine mammal not specified in §216.120(b);

(b) Take any marine mammal specified in §216.120(b) other than by incidental, unintentional harassment;

(c) Take a marine mammal specified in §216.120(b) if such taking results in more than a negligible impact on the species or stocks of such marine mammal; or

(d) Violate, or fail to comply with, the terms, conditions, and requirements of this subpart or a Letter of

§216.124

Authorization issued under §§216.106 and 216.127.

§216.124 Mitigation.

(a) The activity identified in §216.120(a) must be conducted in a manner that minimizes, to the greatest extent practicable, adverse impacts on marine mammals and their habitats. When conducting operations identified in §216.120(a), the mitigation measures contained in the Letter of Authorization issued under §§216.106 and 216.127 must be implemented. These mitigation measures include (but are not limited to):

(1) All aircraft and helicopter flight paths must maintain a minimum distance of 1,000 ft (305 m) from recognized seal haul-outs and rookeries (e.g., Point Sal, Purisima Point, Rocky Point), except in emergencies or for real-time security incidents (e.g., search-and-rescue, fire-fighting), which may require approaching pinniped haul-outs and rookeries closer than 1,000 ft (305 m).

(2) For missile and rocket launches, holders of Letters of Authorization must avoid, whenever possible, launches during the harbor seal pupping season of March through June, unless constrained by factors including, but not limited to, human safety, national security, or for space vehicle launch trajectory necessary to meet mission objectives.

(3) Vandenberg Air Force Base must avoid, whenever possible, launches which are predicted to produce a sonic boom on the Northern Channel Islands during harbor seal, elephant seal, California sea lion, and northern fur seal pupping seasons of March through June.

(4) If post-launch surveys determine that an injurious or lethal take of a marine mammal has occurred or there is an indication that the distribution, size, or productivity of the potentially affected pinniped populations has been affected, the launch procedure and the monitoring methods must be reviewed, in cooperation with NMFS, and, if necessary, appropriate changes must be made through modification to a Letter of Authorization, prior to conducting the next launch of the same vehicle under that Letter of Authorization.

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(5) Additional mitigation measures as contained in a Letter of Authorization.

(b) [Reserved]

§216.125 Requirements for monitoring and reporting.

(a) Holders of Letters of Authorization issued pursuant to §§216.106 and 216.127 for activities described in §216.120(a) are required to cooperate with NMFS, and any other Federal, state or local agency with authority to monitor the impacts of the activity on marine mammals. Unless specified otherwise in the Letter of Authorization, the Holder of the Letter of Authorization must notify the Administrator, Southwest Region, NMFS, by letter or telephone, at least 2 weeks prior to activities possibly involving the taking of marine mammals. If the authorized activity identified in §216.120(a) is thought to have resulted in the mortality or injury of any marine mammals or in any take of marine mammals not identified in §216.120(b), then the Holder of the Letter of Authorization must notify the Director, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, or designee, by telephone (301-713-2289), within 48 hours of the discovery of the injured or dead animal.

(b) Holders of Letters of Authorization must designate qualified, on-site individuals approved in advance by NMFS, as specified in the Letter of Authorization, to:

(1) Conduct observations on harbor seal, elephant seal, and sea lion activity in the vicinity of the rookery nearest the launch platform or, in the absence of pinnipeds at that location, at another nearby haul-out, for at least 72 hours prior to any planned launch occurring during the harbor seal pupping season (1 March through 30 June) and continue for a period of time not less than 48 hours subsequent to launching.

(2) For launches during the harbor seal pupping season (March through June), conduct follow-up surveys within 2 weeks of the launch to ensure that there were no adverse effects on any marine mammals,

(3) Monitor haul-out sites on the Northern Channel Islands, if it is determined by modeling that a sonic boom of greater than 1 psf could occur in