



THE DEFENSE SUPPORT INITIATIVES
Okaloosa—Santa Rosa—Walton Counties

January 18, 2020

Senator Lisa Murkowski
Chairman, Senate Energy & Natural Resources
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Military Mission Line

Dear Senator Murkowski,

On behalf of the tri-county Defense Support Initiatives Committee representing community and business leaders, retired military personnel and Military Affairs Committees, we strongly express our desire to protect the Eastern Gulf Test & Training Range from drilling and related activities. While there can be agreement that energy independence is important, the critical questions are How and Where? Drilling and exploratory activities in the eastern Gulf of Mexico threatens our national security. This area is a military range essential to our military's success and critically important to delivering the required capabilities to our men & women deployed overseas. The Eastern Gulf Test & Training Range (EGTTR) connects test & training capabilities from NW Florida to Key West and is utilized by Eglin AFB, Tyndall AFB, other military branches, installations, government agencies, and private companies.

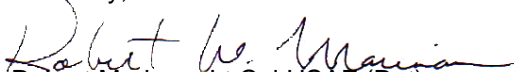
In a May 09, 2018 letter, the Under Secretary of Defense wrote "The eastern Gulf of Mexico continues to be a strategic national asset critical to the lethality of our weapon systems and the readiness of our Service members; hence it is a vital component to harnessing the power of the advanced technologies required to support our National Defense Strategy." In addition, a May 2018 Pentagon Congressional report (Preserving Military Readiness in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico) states, "The EGOMEX (eastern Gulf of Mexico) is an irreplaceable national asset. No other area offers the DoD a comparable combination of air space, water space, and existing infrastructure to support military activities."


The EGOMEX has long been recognized as a key location to train our warfighters, and to test the newest weapons, munitions, and armaments for all military services and many of our allies. Protection of this national asset was formally codified into Public Law 109-432 on December 20, 2006 with the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 (GOMESA 2006); thus creating the Military Mission Line encroachment buffering moratorium.

While drilling advocates have sited a potential economic impact resulting from drilling activities in the eastern Gulf as near 56,000 jobs and \$2.6 billion in annual revenue; the resultant loss would be much greater. The January 2020 Florida Defense Factbook sites Eglin Air Force Base in NW Florida as providing an impact of over \$9 Billion annually and over 78,000 jobs. The state of Florida offers \$95 Billion and 914,787 jobs! That economic impact would be at risk, not to mention our national security, if drilling and related exploratory activities were allowed in the EGOMEX military training range.

Oil drilling structures and associated exploratory activities east of the MML have been identified as incompatible with military activities, would negatively impact our military's readiness and compromise our nation's military superiority. We respectfully request your support to extend the Military Mission Line beyond 2022 by amending or replacing Public Law 109-432; the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006.

Sincerely,


Robert Marinan, Lt Col USAF (Ret)
Chairman


Kay Rasmussen, CEcD
Manager

CC: Senator Jack Reed Senator Marco Rubio Senator James Inhofe
 Senator Rick Scott Senator Doug Jones