

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HR 1379 Gulf of Mexico Range Complex
SPONSOR(S): Rodrigues, R., Ponder
TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SR 1820

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
1) Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee	14 Y, 0 N	Renner	Miller
2) Energy & Utilities Subcommittee	11 Y, 0 N	Keating	Keating
3) State Affairs Committee	21 Y, 0 N	Renner	Williamson

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

The Gulf of Mexico Range Complex (GOMEX Range Complex) stretches from the Florida Panhandle (commonly referred to as the Military Mission Line) south to Key West and is the largest military testing and training range in the United States. Surrounding the GOMEX Range Complex are numerous Department of Defense (DoD) joint installations and multiple live-fire bombing ranges. Additionally, Florida's military bases, which help account for an \$85 billion state economic impact in defense-related spending, are dependent on access to the air and sea space the GOMEX Range Complex provides. Due to its capabilities of offering joint training exercises, access to sea and land, and close proximity to Florida's bases, the GOMEX Range Complex serves as a vital part to DoD's training strategies.

While offshore drilling and oil exploration have taken place in the Gulf of Mexico since the 1930's, the interest in new exploration and drilling technologies has caused drilling to increase over the last few decades. To ensure that drilling platforms and activities would not encroach on the GOMEX Range Complex, and thus jeopardize military training, the Gulf of Mexico Security Act (GOMESA) was signed into law on December 20, 2006. Among other things, the GOMESA implemented a moratorium on oil exploration in the Gulf of Mexico east of the Military Mission Line until 2022.

HR 1379 pronounces that:

- The State of Florida must maintain a unified front in supporting an extension of the current moratorium on drilling in the Gulf of Mexico east of the Military Mission Line;
- Drilling east of the Military Mission Line would mean loss of range areas and possible relocation of aircraft and bases to other unrestricted range areas; and
- The Florida House of Representatives supports an indefinite extension of the restriction, specified in the GOMESA, on oil and gas leasing in all areas east of the Military Mission Line established at 86°41' west longitude and indefinite extension of the GOMESA's ban on oil and gas leasing within 125 miles of the Florida coastline in the Eastern Planning Area and in a portion of the Central Planning Area.

Resolutions are not subject to action by the Governor and do not have the effect of law. In addition, they are not subject to the constitutional single-subject limitation or title requirements.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Present Situation

Gulf of Mexico Range Complex

Florida's 20 major military installations and defense-related business presence provide a nearly \$85 billion annual economic impact and account for roughly 800,000 jobs in Florida.¹ Additionally, Florida houses three of 10 unified combatant commands and hosts two of only four Navy deep water ports in the United States with adjacent airfields, the military's only east coast space launch facility, the Marine Corps' only maritime prepositioning force facility, and one of only three Navy Fleet Readiness Centers, as well as several critical research, development, training, and evaluation centers.²

Joint basing, joint usage, and joint training areas are vital to assessing the future of a military base. The Gulf of Mexico Range Complex (GOMEX Range Complex) is larger than all other training ranges inside the continental United States combined and has been in use for over 60 years. The GOMEX Range Complex stretches from the Florida Panhandle (commonly referred to as the Military Mission Line) south to Key West and encompasses 180,000 square miles in the eastern Gulf of Mexico.³ The GOMEX Range Complex supports Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola, NAS Whiting Field, Hurlburt Air Force Base, Duke Field, Eglin Air Force Base, NAS Panama City, Tyndall Air Force Base, MacDill Air Force Base, and NAS Key West missions, while also supporting joint live fire weapons and operational testing for the Air Force, Navy, and Marine units from around the world.⁴ The GOMEX Range Complex also contains multiple live-fire bombing ranges, including Pinecastle Range, Avon Park Air Force Range, and Eglin Bombing Range, which allow for simultaneous maritime, air, and land training exercises.⁵

New technology and the need for more integrated realistic training missions are constantly changing in order to keep up with ever changing global threats. Consequently, Air Force and Navy ranges within the GOMEX Range Complex must keep pace to ensure they will be capable of handling the new aircraft and weapons requirements.⁶ Due to its capabilities of offering joint training exercises, access to sea and land, and close proximity to Florida's bases, the GOMEX Range Complex serves as a vital part of the Department of Defense's (DoD) training strategies.

¹ Florida Defense Factbook, pg. 1 (December 2017), available at <https://www.enterpriseflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/Florida-Defense-Factbook-2017-1.pdf> (last visited March 22, 2019).

² *Id.* at pg. 5.

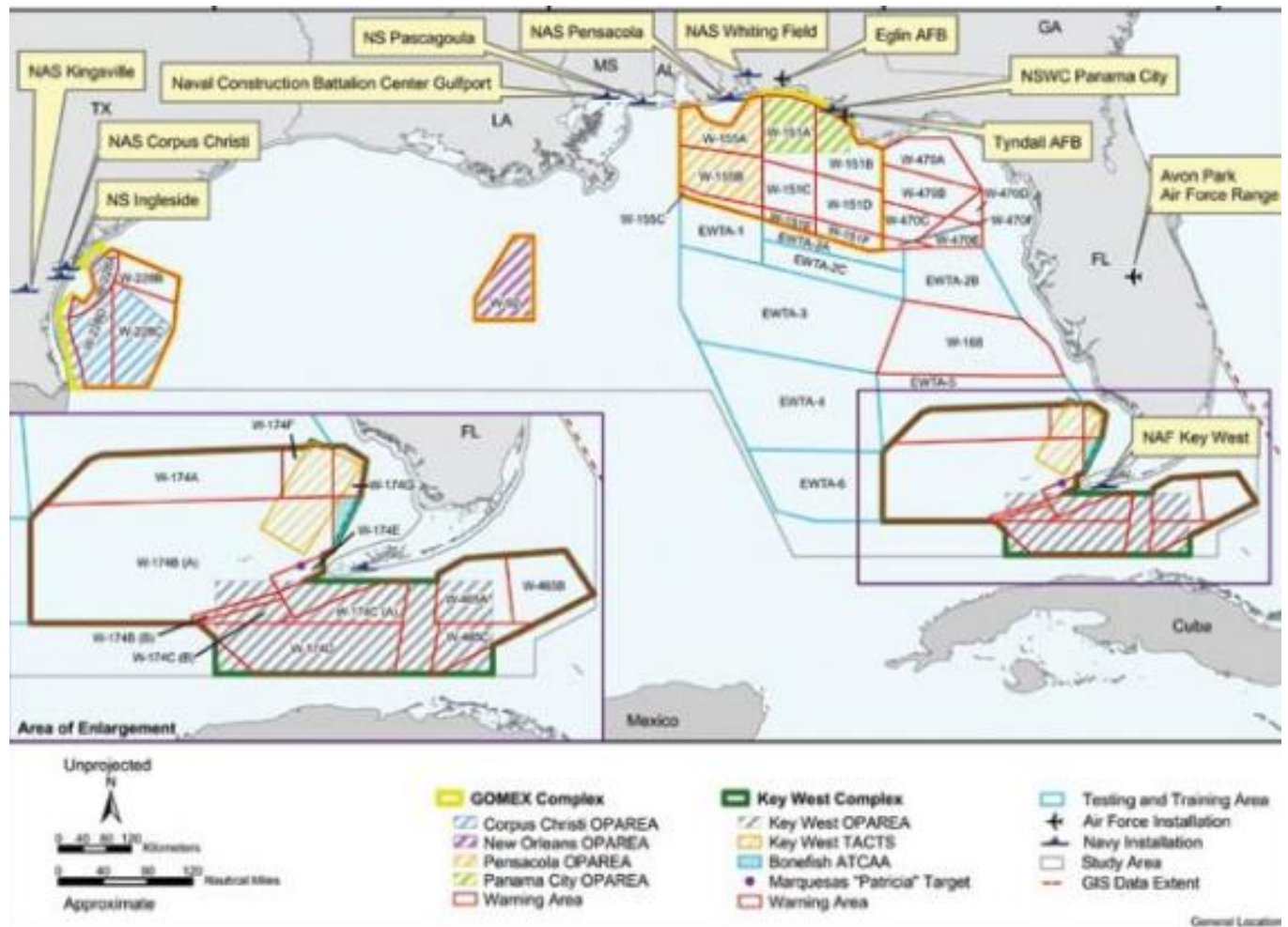
³ Florida Defense Support Task Force White Paper, *Oil Drilling & Military Mission Compatibility*, pg. 1 (January 2017), available at <https://www.enterpriseflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/FDSTF-White-Paper-Oil-Drilling-and-Military-Mission-Compatibility.pdf> (last visited March 22, 2019).

⁴ *Id.* at 2.

⁵ *Supra* note 2

⁶ *Supra* note 3, at 3

The following map represents the various bombing ranges and testing areas within the GOMEX Range Complex.



Oil Production in the Gulf of Mexico

Offshore drilling and oil exploration in the Gulf of Mexico began in the 1930s. Gulf of Mexico offshore production accounts for 17 percent of total U.S. crude oil production and 5 percent of total U.S. dry natural gas production.⁷

The federal government administers the submerged lands, subsoil, and seabed lying between the seaward extent of the state's jurisdiction and the seaward extent of federal jurisdiction. Florida's jurisdiction extends nine nautical miles seaward off the Gulf Coast.⁸ The Department of Interior's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management is responsible for administering the National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program for oil and gas lease sales proposed for planning areas of the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf. The program specifies the size, timing, and location of potential leasing activity that the Secretary of the Interior determines will best meet national energy needs.⁹

⁷ U.S. Energy Information Administration website, *Gulf of Mexico Fact Sheet*, available at https://www.eia.gov/special/gulf_of_mexico/ (last visited March 22, 2019).

⁸ Department of the Interior Bureau of Ocean Energy Management website, *Outer Continental Shelf*, available at <https://www.boem.gov/Outer-Continental-Shelf/> (last visited March 22, 2019).

⁹ Department of the Interior Bureau of Ocean Energy Management website, *National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program*, available at <https://www.boem.gov/National-OCS-Program/> (last visited March 22, 2019).

After the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) crisis in the 1970's¹⁰ and the attacks on September 11, 2001, an interest in energy production, particularly domestic oil and natural gas, grew. DoD was concerned about the possibility of an unchecked expansion of oil drilling platforms in the eastern Gulf of Mexico conflicting with military training and weapons testing in the GOMEX Range Complex. In 2005, the Secretary of Defense sent a memo to the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee stating the concern and said DoD would work with the Department of Interior to strike a balance between energy needs and national security goals.¹¹

Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006

The Secretary of Defense's memo led to legislation limiting oil and gas production in the Gulf of Mexico. On December 20, 2006, the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 (GOMESA)¹² was signed into law. GOMESA enhances Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas leasing activities and revenue sharing in the Gulf of Mexico by doing the following:

- Shares leasing revenues with Gulf producing states and the Land and Water Conservation Fund for coastal restoration projects;
- Bans oil and gas leasing within 125 miles off the Florida coastline in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico Planning Area, and a portion of the Central Planning Area until 2022; and
- Allows companies to exchange certain existing leases in moratorium areas for bonus and royalty credits to be used on other Gulf of Mexico leases.

Specifically, GOMESA restricts leasing activities that include portions of the Eastern Planning Area within 125 miles of Florida, all areas in the Gulf of Mexico east of the Military Mission Line (86°41' west longitude), and the area within the Central Planning Area that is within 100 miles of Florida until 2022.¹³

Efforts to Encroach on the Military Mission Line

In 2013, the "Offshore Energy and Jobs Act" was introduced to remove limits imposed by the GOMESA, including shortening the duration of the moratorium from 2022 to 2017. The bill passed the U.S. House of Representatives; however, it was never taken up in the Senate.¹⁴

Two years later a similar bill, the "Offshore Energy Jobs Act of 2015," was filed. Among other things, the bill reduced the exclusion area east of the Military Mission Line from 125 miles to 50 miles offshore and reduced the area subject to the moratorium in the Central Planning Area off the coastline of Florida. The bill was never heard in the Senate.¹⁵

On April 28, 2017, President Trump signed an executive order with the intent to expand offshore drilling in the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans, in addition to assessing whether energy exploration can take place in marine sanctuaries in the Pacific and Atlantic.¹⁶ The order also directs the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, to review "the schedule of proposed oil and gas lease sales...in the Western Gulf of Mexico, Central Gulf of Mexico, Chukchi Sea, Beaufort Sea, Cook Inlet,

¹⁰ See Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Oil Embargo, 1973-1974*, available at <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/oil-embargo> (last visited April 3, 2019).

¹¹ *Supra* note 3, at 4.

¹² Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006, Pub. L. No. 109-432, S. 3711, 109th Cong. (Dec. 20, 2006), available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/109th-congress/senate-bill/3711> (last visited March 22, 2019).

¹³ Department of the Interior Bureau of Ocean Energy Management website, *Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act*, available at <https://www.boem.gov/Revenue-Sharing/> (last visited March 22, 2019).

¹⁴ H.R. 2231, 113th Cong. (June 4, 2013). See <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/2231> (last visited March 22, 2019).

¹⁵ S. 1276, 114th Cong. (May 11, 2015). See <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1276> (last visited March 22, 2019).

¹⁶ Executive Order 13795, available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/05/03/2017-09087/implementing-an-america-first-offshore-energy-strategy> (last visited March 22, 2019).

Mid-Atlanta, and the South Atlantic.”¹⁷ The executive order does not require a review of oil and gas lease sales in the eastern Gulf of Mexico; however, the oil industry is pushing to drill in the region.¹⁸

Subsequently, in October 2017, former Department of the Interior Secretary Zinke announced that the department was proposing “the largest oil and gas lease sale ever held in the United States, 76,967,935 acres in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico, offshore Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida.”¹⁹ The proposed lease sale was scheduled for March 2018. The lease sale appeared to exclude all portions of the Gulf of Mexico east of the Military Mission Line, including the GOMEX Range Complex due to the GOMESA moratorium.

Additionally, in February 2019, the Department of the Interior announced that 78 million acres would be available for a lease sale in March 2019. Lease Sale 252 would “include approximately 14,696 unleased blocks, located from three to 231 miles offshore, in the Gulf’s western, central and eastern planning areas. However, the following areas are excluded from the lease sale: blocks subject to the congressional moratorium established by GOMESA; blocks adjacent to or beyond the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone in the area known as the northern portion of the Eastern Gap; and whole blocks or partial blocks within the current boundaries of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary.”²⁰

Expanding the Current Moratorium

Numerous bills have been introduced in Congress to either permanently extend the GOMESA moratorium or to extend it past its 2022 expiration date, including the following:

- The Protecting and Securing Florida’s Coastline Act of 2019²¹ by Representatives Rooney and Castor of Florida, which permanently extends the GOMESA moratorium; and
- The Florida Shores Protection and Fairness Act²² by Senator Rubio of Florida, which extends the GOMESA moratorium to June 30, 2027.

Additionally, county commissions, chambers of commerce, local economic development councils, and military affairs committees from the counties bordering the Gulf of Mexico have provided resolutions in support of the GOMESA to the Florida Legislature.²³

Effect of the Resolution

The resolution pronounces that:

- The State of Florida must maintain a unified front in supporting an extension of the current moratorium on drilling in the Gulf of Mexico east of the Military Mission Line;
- Drilling east of the Military Mission Line would mean loss of range areas and possible relocation of aircraft and bases to other unrestricted range areas; and
- The Florida House of Representatives supports an indefinite extension of the restriction, specified in the GOMESA, on oil and gas leasing in all areas east of the Military Mission Line established at 86°41’ west longitude and indefinite extension of the GOMESA’s ban on oil and

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ Timothy Cama, *Pentagon wants offshore drilling ban maintained in eastern Gulf*, THE HILL (May 2, 2017), <http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/331520-pentagon-wants-offshore-drilling-ban-maintained-in-eastern-gulf> (last visited March 22, 2019).

¹⁹ Department of the Interior Press Release, October 24, 2017, available at <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/secretary-zinke-announces-largest-oil-gas-lease-sale-us-history> (last visited March 22, 2019).

²⁰ Department of the Interior Press Release, February 13, 2019, available at <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/interior-announces-region-wide-oil-and-gas-lease-sale-gulf-mexico-0> (last visited March 22, 2019).

²¹ H.R. 205, 116th Cong. (Jan. 3, 2019). See <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/205/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22gulf+of+mexico%22%5D%7D&r=4&s=1> (last visited March 22, 2019).

²² S. 13, 116th Cong. (Jan. 3, 2019). See <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/13/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22gulf+of+mexico%22%5D%7D&r=1&s=1> (last visited March 22, 2019).

²³ *Supra* note 3, at 5.

gas leasing within 125 miles of the Florida coastline in the Eastern Planning Area and in a portion of the Central Planning Area.

Resolutions are not subject to action by the Governor and do not have the effect of law. In addition, they are not subject to the constitutional single-subject limitation or title requirements.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Not applicable.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

Not applicable. This resolution does not appear to affect county or municipal governments.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/ COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

None.