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U.S. Navy Marine Mammal Compliance and Mitigation Program in the Atlantic: A Review

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The U.S. Navy's Atlantic Fleet conducts training and testing activities within the Northwest Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico, including the use of active sonar and explosives. While training and testing activities have the potential to impact the environment, the Navy employs every means available, without jeopardizing the safety of Sailors or impacting military readiness, to mitigate the potential environmental effects of these activities. Prior to training and testing activities, the Navy consults extensively with environmental regulators to determine appropriate mitigations to protect marine species, particularly marine mammals. Additionally, in order to evaluate the impacts of Navy activities on marine mammals and other protected species, the Navy has implemented a monitoring program to collect data on baseline animal presence, as well as exposure and response to Navy training and testing activities. Passive acoustic monitoring remains a cornerstone of addressing revised long term objectives of the monitoring program, and continues to provide key data on marine mammal presence and behavior. Future work will focus on species classification and animal behavior before, during, and after exposure to potential stressors. This presentation will provide an overview of Navy environmental compliance in the Atlantic, including monitoring efforts. This presentation will also discuss the tools and processes that Navy uses to assess the potential impacts of activities, how mitigation is used to reduce those impacts, and protective measures such as the restrictions employed in the North Atlantic right whale critical habitat areas. The Navy remains committed to marine stewardship and responsible management of the potential impacts of training and testing activities on protected species.

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