January 7, 2026

Ms. Lindsay Weaver
Director of Intergovernmental Programs
State Clearinghouse
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

Re: Support for Protection of the Eastern Gulf Test and Training Range

Dear Ms. Weaver,

The Eastern Gulf Test and Training Range (EGTTR) is one of the nation's most strategically vital military test and training assets. The EGTTR stands alone as a critical strategic advantage the United States possesses over our adversaries. This range is larger than all other training ranges inside the continental US combined, encompassing 180,000 square miles of Department of War (DOW) airspace and 17 miles of shoreline access. The range stretches from the Florida Panhandle down to Key West and covers most of the eastern Gulf of America.

Current federal actions present a significant encroachment threat that places this range, and therefore, our military installations, U.S. national security, maritime industry and $102.6 billion of our state's economy at risk.

With that understanding, the Florida Department of Commerce and the Florida Defense Support Commission strongly advocate for the continued protection of this strategically important, irreplaceable asset, either through Congressional action or Presidential Executive Order, by maintaining the restrictions from drilling east of the Military Mission Line.

The size and unique geographical features of the range support training that improves warfighter lethality and our ability to enact devastating, overwhelming force on adversaries, especially those with similar coastal geography. Examples of the training provided on the range include testing missiles, aircraft and other weapons systems through water-to-land transitions, subsurface training exercises, high-altitude supersonic air combat training, air-to-air missile testing, air-to-ground targeting, drone testing and targeting, and hypersonic weapons testing, among other activities, making this range an irreplicable asset to the DOW.

Despite the value the EGTTR provides to the nation, it has been under constant threat of encroachment from many different sources, and protecting the range has been addressed by state and federal means for the better part of thirty years. The most recent challenge to the EGTTR's safe and unimpeded functioning comes from a recent executive order on energy sufficiency and independence.

The President's Executive Order 14154 Unleashing American Energy would permit drilling on the outer continental shelf, including parts of the EGTTR. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management is already working on plans for oil drilling leases in areas 100 miles or more from Florida's coastline – a blatant encroachment on the EGTTR. These plans could come to fruition as early as 2032. The possibility of any energy production near the EGTTR should not be allowed as it undermines our national security and erases an unparalleled advantage the United States has in preparing for a large-scale combat operation.

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In recent times, America's military has been prepared to fight and defeat our nations adversaries, in the context of counter terrorism and counter insurgency operations. Looking towards the future, the United States is shifting towards large scale combat operations fought against a near peer adversary. With this in mind, and with the need to test and demonstrate the lethality of new weapons systems, this is an asset the Department of War cannot afford to lose.

For clarity, the threat we are referencing expands beyond traditional oil exploration. Proposed natural gas extraction could introduce surface infrastructure, vessels, and exclusion zones that could conflict operations. This energy production within or near the EGTTR is incompatible with the current military activities that take place in the range, such as missile flights, low-flying aircraft, live weapons testing, and training. Testing within the range is aerial, surface, and subsurface enabling maritime, air, and land based. Beyond the obvious risk testing ordnance already presents, the possibility of unintended impacts with any energy infrastructure would be catastrophic. The mere presence of these various facilities poses operational hazards to military activities and would reduce the usable area of the EGTTR dramatically.

Please support securing these permanent protections, either through legislative action (a Senate companion to H.R. 2673), or through an additional executive order that clearly protects the EGGTR by maintaining the restrictions from drilling east of the Military Mission Line, which you'll see in the attached maps. The consequences of inaction threaten not only Florida's military and economy but the nation's military readiness for years to come.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

J. Alex Kelly
Secretary of Commerce
Executive Director, Florida Defense Support Commission

attachments

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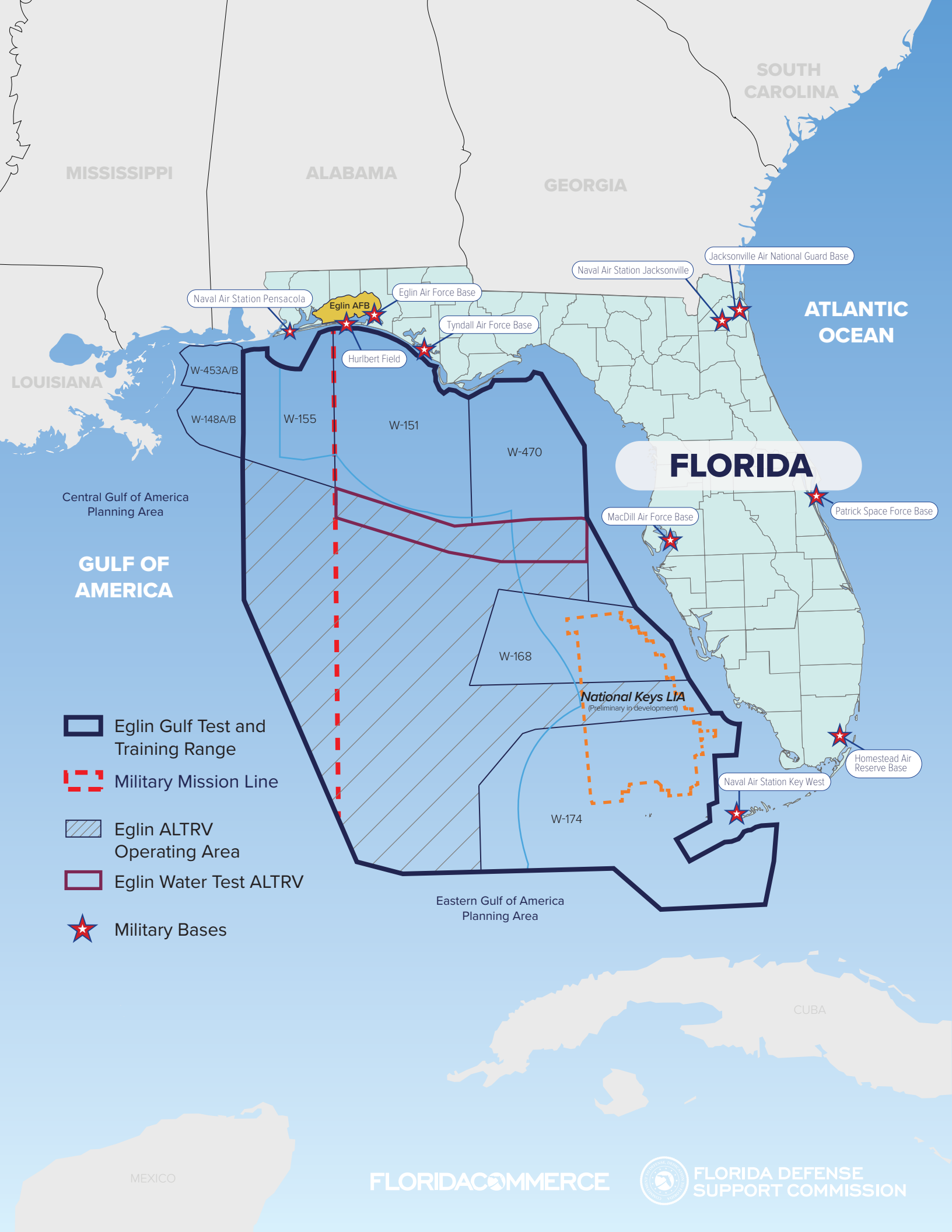

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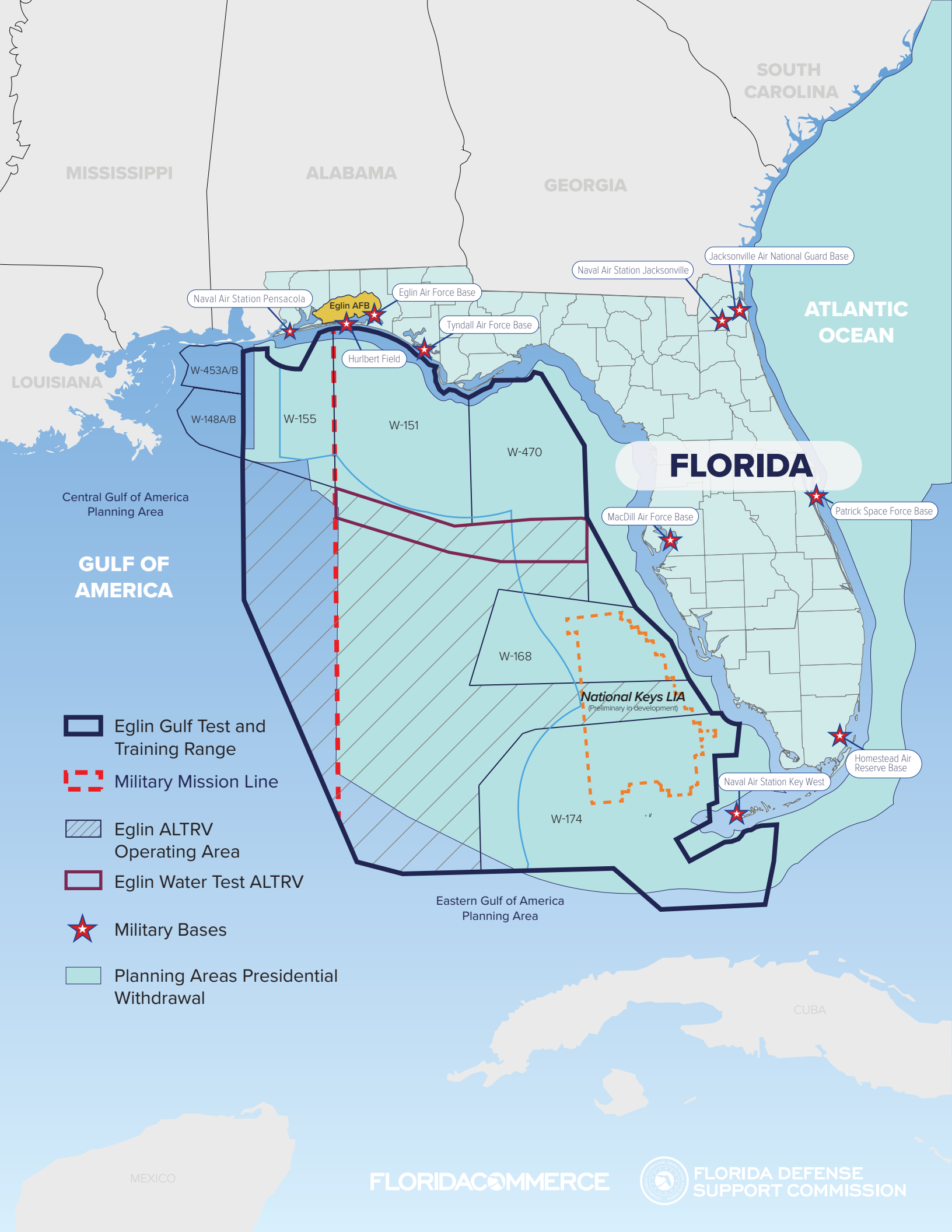

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