

Navy's Offshore 'Top Gun Towers' to be Renovated

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The Marine and Offshore Structures Division of the Naval Facilities Engineering Service Center (NFESC) will rehabilitate eight Navy Tactical Aircrew Combat Training System (TACTS) offshore towers at Beaufort, Oceana and Key West. The offshore platforms are in the Atlantic Ocean and are used in training operations for Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Air National Guard fighter pilots.

The first set of towers to be repaired is located at the Beaufort Range, approximately 60 miles off the coast of Georgia. Towers R2 and M2R6 are scheduled to be completely refurbished in the coming months, replacing a corroded boat landing, removing rust and painting from the waterline to the top of the antenna towers.

Many of the horizontal and diagonal members on the antenna tower at R2 have corroded so severely that there is a danger of catastrophic collapse. Range personnel anticipate the refurbished Towers R2 and M2R6 to be in use for the next 20 years. Because Tower R2 is considered the Achille's heel of the system, its corroded parts will be completely replaced during the renovation.

The remaining six towers at Beaufort are projected to be in service for only the next 10 years and so don't require the same level of effort. Those towers will be spot-blasted and spot-painted as required to eliminate the rust. In lieu of replacing entire boat landings, which are no longer necessary, swim ladders will be installed to allow for a second form of egress in the event of an emergency.

The contractor will prepare some of the towers for work to be performed at a later time. At this writing, the contractor has removed gratings on the boat landings at Towers R7 and R8 in preparation for the installation of the new swim ladders. Since funding is limited this fiscal year, the work will be continued during the summer of 2004.

Funding will be provided for the next several years to complete the required repairs. Upon completion of the repairs at the Beaufort Range, required repairs at Oceana and Key West will also be addressed. 🌐



Approximately 60 miles off the coastlines of Beaufort, Ga., Virginia Beach, Va., and Key West, Fla., are training ranges for jet jocks. The U.S. Navy operates the Tactical Aircrew Combat Training System (TACTS) range here, primarily to monitor and track fighter pilots engaged in air combat — dog-fighting — training. The planes are equipped with extensive sensor packages that relay real-time information on location, speed, heading, etc. about each plane to a number of TACTS communications platforms spread over the range. The platforms, in turn, relay the flight data to an onshore station connected to the TACTS computers at a Navy or Marine Corps station on shore. At the conclusion of a training mission, the pilots get a review to see how they performed, what they did wrong and how they can improve their flying.