



Mission Sustainability- Related Articles

25 June 2010

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Center of Excellence



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an exclusive biweekly report on defense policies for cleanup, compliance and pollution prevention

06/22/2010

EPA, Activists Concerned Over Plan To Increase Army Training In Alaska

The Army's plan to resume year-round live-fire training at an Alaskan range is hitting up against significant concerns from both EPA and activists, the latter of which is charging that the proposal will effectively violate a settlement agreement reached in a landmark case that contended Army training practices were breaching federal waste and water laws.

The 2004 settlement had restricted the Army to using an impact range at Fort Richardson's Eagle River Flats (ERF) seasonally, but the Army now wants to return to full training contending the restrictions jeopardize troops' ability to be combat ready. The Army outlined its plans in a draft environmental impact statement (EIS), which the military released in March.

EPA Region X in recently submitted comments lists "serious concerns" with the potential impacts stemming from two different proposals analyzed under the draft document, particularly citing issues over water impacts, Superfund cleanup requirements and environmental justice impacts. At the same time, activists are raising issues over the plan's compliance with the 2004 settlement agreement that effectively limited live-fire training to certain seasons, and are specifically raising issues over water quality and endangered species.

"We are particularly concerned with the potential impacts to water quality, wetlands, Cook Inlet beluga, salmon stocks, shorebirds, other waterfowl, wildlife, recreation, visual resources, environmental justice (EJ), sensitive human populations, and commercial, recreation and subsistence fishing activities associated with the action alternatives," EPA Region X says in June 10 comments. Relevant documents are available on InsideEPA.com.

Live-fire training at ERF - a marshy area that has been used as a primary munitions impact area of Fort Richardson - has long been a contentious issue. In 2002, the Alaska Community Action on Toxics (ACAT) filed suit, alleging violations of the Clean Water Act and state and federal waste laws at the base, which is on the National Priorities List, the list of the nation's most hazardous waste sites. The suit alarmed high-level DOD officials, who worried that a damaging precedent could be set if the plaintiffs won and forced the military to stop training on an operational range, thereby impeding military readiness. Prior to the settlement, the military often cited the case as proof it needed Congress to relax environmental legal requirements in order to preserve military training.

Under the 2004 settlement, the Army halted live-fire training at ERF during summer and fall waterfowl migratory periods, which aimed to prevent the Army from stirring up white phosphorous in the sediment. White phosphorous had previously been used in smoke-generating munitions and was responsible for the deaths of numerous wild birds who ingested it. Firing is also only allowed if a certain level of ice thickness covers the water bodies in ERF.

In addition, under the settlement, the Army must conduct numerous other activities, including monitoring for migration of munitions constituents off-range, monitoring endangered beluga whales, analyzing environmental impacts of alternative training options upon remediation of the white phosphorous and before lifting any restrictions; documenting chemical constituents of munitions used, and applying for a Clean Water Act permit for the operational range.

But in the draft EIS notice, the Army says that it has undertaken cleanup of the white phosphorous under Superfund law, which will be completed this year, and that given ERF's importance as an environmental resource, it would adopt a set of new restrictions to protect valued resources under the expanded training plan (Defense Environment Alert, March 16). These would include following prohibitions against using munitions containing phosphorous in wetlands such as ERF, using environmentally-friendly training rounds when possible, and barring certain live-fire exercises during spring and fall waterfowl migration periods, among other measures.

In addition to a no-action alternative, the Army's draft EIS examines both its preferred alternative - to resume year-round training at the existing munitions impact area at ERF - and a third alternative - to do such training at a newly created impact area.

The Army says the current restrictions on training have created a shortage of indirect live-fire training opportunities for units stationed at the base, jeopardizing their ability to achieve adequate combat readiness throughout the year.

EPA says in its comments that the preferred alternative would cause moderate impacts, but says it is preferable to alternative three, which would create a new range in a relatively pristine area. "In general we recommend that a rigorous monitoring program be implemented to clearly identify the actual impacts associated with the implementation of approved activities, along with a comprehensive adaptive management strategy to provide clear direction and flexibility to adjust the program based on the results of monitoring and mitigation implementation," EPA says.

More specifically, EPA cites concerns over water impacts, saying it has previously told the Army to determine whether indirect discharges of material due to impacts from munitions could be subject to dredge-and-fill permitting requirements under the Clean Water Act (CWA) section 404. The draft EIS does not discuss this matter; the final EIS should address it, the agency says, and should include a draft CWA section 404(b)(1) analysis.

EPA also raises water quality issues with both options, saying alternative 3 could potentially impact a secondary drinking water source for Anchorage, and alternative 2 could potentially redistribute white phosphorous and add munitions contaminants and sediments to Eagle River and its tributaries. It recommends that the final EIS make clear

that both alternatives will comply with antidegradation requirements of the CWA and demonstrate they will not exceed drinking water quality standards.

EPA also raises concerns about ensuring that cleanup goals under an existing record of decision (ROD) are upheld should year-round live-fire training resume. "We believe rigorous monitoring is also needed in order to demonstrate continued compliance with the [Superfund] ROD goals and Remedial Action Objectives (RAOs)," EPA says. EPA wants more specifics in the final EIS on a monitoring schedule and frequency, on coordination with the Fish and Wildlife Service in determining waterfowl migration periods, and wants stepped-up monitoring for all target areas, not just those with white phosphorous.

Further, EPA raises EJ issues, asking for more analysis on impacts to low-income or minority persons, and noting that alternative 3 would likely have greater impacts on EJ populations than alternative 2.

Meanwhile, activists say resuming year-round live-fire training would "violate the spirit and intent of the settlement agreement," and cite a slew of issues with the draft EIS, alleging deficiencies in various analyses, threats to the beluga whale, an endangered species, and cite outstanding issues over compliance with the settlement terms.

Activists last year informally challenged the Army's implementation of the settlement accord, and have since been in negotiations over it, an ACAT source says in an e-mail response to questions. Some issues the group says are outstanding include the Army's failure to obtain a CWA permit and a water quality and beluga whale monitoring program that the group believes is "grossly inadequate," the source says. The group is "keeping the option open to re-litigate depending on the outcome of the final EIS," the source says.

Specifically the activists' comments note the impact they believe the plan would have on beluga whales. "Given that the ERF is likely to be designated critical habitat for the Cook Inlet beluga whale, the preferred alternative is the most environmentally damaging to this endangered species and should not be pursued for that reason alone," they say.

Further, on the contamination side, they say that "[i]n many cases the evaluation of environmental contamination present at ERF has been incomplete or improper." They add: "Many of the studies used to characterize the present state of ERF have made conclusions based on faulty data."

"White phosphorous and [unexploded ordnance] are still present at ERF, and live-fire munitions activities without a protective ice layer are likely to disturb these buried contaminants," they say. The activists' comment letter was sent by ACAT, Alaska Center for the Environment and Cook Inletkeeper.

An Army spokesman in Alaska did not respond to questions on the comments.

ARIZONA

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Luke Air Base to get F-35, McCain says

Incumbent candidate expresses 'confidence'

by **David Madrid** - Jun. 19, 2010 12:00 AM

The Arizona Republic

On Friday, U.S. Sen. John McCain told West Valley leaders in Litchfield Park that he is confident Luke Air Force Base will land the F-35 Lightning II, a new generation of stealth aircraft.

The F-35, also called the Joint Strike Fighter, has long been regarded as the savior of Luke, a base in Glendale where F-16 pilots are trained. McCain was addressing Westmarc, a West Valley consortium of business, government and community leaders.

"I can say with great confidence, we will have the F-35 at Luke Air Force Base where training for every Air Force pilot will take place," he said.

The Air Force is in the midst of an environmental-impact study to determine the aircraft's effect on such things as air quality and noise. A first draft is expected in September.

Although the decision where to base the F-35 isn't McCain's, he is the ranking Republican member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. He is also running for re-election in a Republican primary campaign against challenger J.D. Hayworth, a former six-term Arizona congressman and conservative radio talk-show host.

Glendale Mayor Elaine Scruggs and Peoria Mayor Bob Barrett were thrilled at McCain's prediction.

"What jumped out at me is the F-35 is coming to Luke Air Force Base," Scruggs said. "I liked that certainty and assuredness and no questions about it."

Barrett said the most important economic issue facing the West Valley is the acquisition of the F-35 at Luke. Luke's economic impact on the state is almost \$2.2 billion.

"For the senator to stand up there and say he is confident that we're going to secure the F-35 is exhilarating," Barrett said.



Tucson Forward



Defending our Community from the F-35

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Mounting Opposition to High Performance Jets

[Excerpt from website, <http://tucsonforward.com>]

Accessed: June 21, 2010

TUCSON FORWARD WALL OF SHAME

This summer the Tucson Forward Team will be working to update and improve your website. One of our new features will be “A Wall of Shame”. It will feature primarily, but not exclusively, elected officials who say or do anything related to the F-35 that is irresponsible or lacking in consideration of the health and welfare of the Tucson community. Lack of action counts toward qualification for the Wall of Shame. Large university presidents are eligible, along with car dealers, the Mayor of Tucson and other elected officials.

An example would be a City Councilmember who tells constituents that it would be premature for him/her to do anything about the F-35 because they won't be coming to Tucson for a long time. (Best we all sit on our hands.)

FACT: The Air Force will be making the decision (ROD) where to base the F-35 next year and the decision will basically be irreversible.

Another candidate for the Wall of Shame might be a Councilmember who tells constituents that he/she doesn't have to do anything yet because they will be developing quieter engines for the F-35.

FACT: A retired Eglin AFB civil engineer tells us, “You can tell people there that there will be no quieter engine for the F-35. I have personal word that the AF is beginning basic research on reducing fighter engine noise but, even if successful in the future, the noise reductions **will not be significant**. The requirement for fighters is lots of thrust in a small package and the ability to produce supersonic flight, which means noisy turbojet engines. Going to quieter high bypass fan jet engines (like the airlines use) is not an option for fighters.”

If you would like to nominate someone for the Tucson Forward Wall of Shame, send us the name of the candidate and your reason for the nomination. (50 words or less) The criteria for eligibility must take into account any action or lack of action directly related to the F-35. The nominee's ability to spin counts. One nominee per person. The deadline will be August 31, 2010. Send your nominations to info@TucsonForward.com

FLORIDA



June 21, 2010

County Wants Say in Noise Study

Timothy O'Hara

The Monroe County Commission will create an oversight committee to draft its list of concerns about military jet noise and other base operations issues for inclusion in the Navy's ongoing environmental impact study.

The committee will make recommendations to the County Commission, which will relay them to the Navy, and keep the commission abreast of developments with the study.

The committee will include Commissioner Kim Wigington, a county staffer and two community members, including retired Navy pilot John Hammerstrom and an as-yet unchosen member of the M10 Coalition, a Lower Keys group that advocates for property owners associations.

"The stakes are very high for both the military and the people who live within the AICUZ," M10 member Don Riggs told the County Commission at its meeting Wednesday, referring to the Air Installation Compatibility Use Zone. "The citizens and the government should be brought directly into the process. ... We the citizens have the right to know the impact of these aircraft on the human and natural environment of the Keys."

In its "public scoping" phase of the study, the Navy asked community groups what they wanted included and what questions they wanted answered. The Navy extended the public comment period to give the County Commission more time to submit its concerns and questions.

Wigington, who represents the areas most affected by Naval Air Station Key West on Boca Chica Key, wants the study to include jet noise's affect on people's health, as she has seen studies that say it can cause hypertension and heart disease, she said. She also wants the Navy to use models and technology that most accurately depict noise levels, she said.

County Mayor Sylvia Murphy demanded the Navy answer all of the county's questions, she told base manager Ron Demes at Wednesday's meeting.

"I want answers," Murphy said. "They don't get to pick and chose. If we list 15 questions, we want 15 answers, including ones that say 'none of your damn business.' "

U.S. Fleet Forces embarked on the environmental impact study (EIS) in part to determine the effects of a new jet it plans to use at Boca Chica Field by 2015, the F-35C Joint Strike Fighter. It expects to release a draft in summer 2011 and take more public comment before finalizing it, project manager Joe Vlcek has said.

Fleet Forces then will report to the secretary of the Navy its findings and recommendations, which could include keeping base operations the same, introducing new aircraft and keeping activity at the same level, or adding new aircraft and allowing more flights.

Homestead moves to limit buildings near air base

June 23, 2010

BY LAURA MORALES

In 2005, a Marine Harrier jet slammed into an Arizona suburb on its way back to the Marine Corps Air Station in Yuma. No one was seriously hurt.

In 2008, an F/A-18 Hornet crashed in a California neighborhood close to a Marine Corps Air Station, killing four and destroying two homes.



These are the scenarios Homestead Air Reserve Base and city officials are trying to prevent by updating a 1991 ordinance restricting height, density and land use in areas along the base's flight path.

However, a group of investors who own land in the affected zone says the restrictions would infringe on its right to build a big commercial and industrial park that could, when complete, become a strong economic hub.

City council members tentatively agreed Monday night, voting 6-0 to pass the measure while exempting one major site -- the 270-acre Homestead Park of Commerce. Councilwoman Wendy Lobos was absent.

The land sits in the city's 1,000-acre Foreign Trade Zone, created to attract foreign businesses with tax breaks.

Over the past few years, the city has been selling the land off to investors with the understanding that it could be developed for offices and light industrial use, and the city could face a lawsuit if it now changes those rules.

The new rules, which stem from studies conducted around the base in 2007, spell out what uses, and at what density, are allowed near the air base to avoid encroachment.

"Public safety is what the Department of Defense and the Air Force are concerned with. We're all part of the community," base spokesman Col. Mike McCully told the council.

Accident Potential Zone I, which is close to airplanes' flight paths, restricts the number of people regularly on the property to 25 per acre.

The 100 acres slated to become ParkSouth, a planned commercial and industrial complex within the Park of Commerce, sit within the less dangerous Accident Potential Zone II, which allows 50 people per acre.

Attorney Juan Mayol argued that such a restriction would prevent A&H Commerce Park, a consortium of investors who paid the city \$17.5 million for the land in 2007, from getting a maximum return on its investment.

City Manager Sergio Purriños agreed and asked that the council exempt the 270-acre Park of Commerce property from the restrictions.

“We sold the property with the rights to develop,” he said. “We could be subject to a lawsuit.”

City attorney Richard Weiss acknowledged there were “some concerns about curbing the property rights.”

Another owner of a large tract within the area complained, as well.

Attorney Amanda Quirke said her client, longtime Homestead farmer John Alger, and others who own land within the Military Zone Overlay area would “bear a disproportionate share of the burden of this regulation.”

Unlike the Park of Commerce, however, Alger's land is zoned only for farming or residential development on lots of at least five acres.

Councilman Stephen Shelley balked at exempting the Park of Commerce, saying the base -- the county's second-largest employer -- is a proven, dependable economic engine, while the POC is still years from completion.

The tanking economy has thrown a wrench in the works at the Park, making it difficult for developers to find tenants.

Mayol noted that A&H Commerce Park has already spent nearly \$3 million in fees and on the initial stages of development of its planned 1.4 million square feet of warehouse and office space.

Eventually, the council decided to pass the item on first reading but agreed to schedule a workshop -- where the city, base officials and area landowners can hash out differences and reach a compromise -- before the second reading on July 19. The workshop date has not yet been set.



[Excerpt from website: <http://www.keywestnoise.com>]

Accessed: June 24, 2010

OUR MISSION

A Community Effort Seeking Jet Noise Mediation Through Positive Dialogue and Understanding. Our focus is the protection of abutting neighborhoods and residents from health damaging noise and safety concerns of the F-18 Super Hornet and the soon to be deployed F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. Due to years of unabated encroachment and the introduction of today's HIGH NOISE EMITTING aircraft, NAS Key West's Mission is justifiably at odds with human habitation and our fragile FL Key's environment.

The support for our troops in harms way is paramount to all of us and continues to be unwavering during this critical time of seeking dialogue and solutions with military officials to this national encroachment issue.

ATTENTION!

We have found a firm which is interested in exploring the viability of a suit against the Navy. Their Website is keywestjetnoise.com

NEW MEXICO



Goals discussed at joint land use study meeting

June 21, 2010 9:01 PM

Sharna Johnson

During a Monday policy committee meeting for the Joint Land Use study, Kit Roupe, project manager, gave members samples of goals and objectives the study could produce.

Roupe gave the two-hour presentation at a meeting held at the Curry County Courthouse.

The Joint Land Use Study is a cooperative land-use planning effort between Cannon Air Force Base and surrounding communities.

The presentation stemmed from a May 17 committee meeting where Roupe suggested going over the goals of the project with members.

Giving samples of possible goals, Roupe said some of the issues could be lighting and its impact on Cannon aircraft, noise from the planes, and encroachments or items located off of base property that can interfere with flights (i.e. wind turbines, solar panels)..

One suggestion she made was for Cannon's neighbors to create a regional advisory board that, "brings together all the stakeholders," and would have membership from Cannon and Curry and Roosevelt counties.

The board could address issues that arise and make recommendations to the board of commissioners in the relevant community, who would then vote.

One example of a potential issue committee members brought up that could cause conflict would be a private property owner wanting to build a wind turbine.

Vice-Chairman Hoyt Pattison pointed out a situation at Dyess Air Force Base in Abilene, Texas, where numerous wind turbines had to be removed because they fell inside a flight pattern that was changed after the turbines were built.

"The effect on an individual's finances has an extreme effect on the whole picture," Pattison said, stressing that any study needs to account for economic impact.

Members also expressed concern for upcoming energy projects in the community, namely the Tres Amigas power superstation planned for north Curry County and other renewable energy projects that are expected to follow.

"Tres Amigas is just as important (as Cannon) or more vital to the community," Wendell Bostwick said. "We have to coexist."

Roupe said she is making efforts to talk with Tres Amigas and discuss plans for the superstation as they may relate to Cannon.

“I think we can (coexist),” she said, explaining the superstation will be far from the base, but it’s the transistor lines entering the station that planners are concerned about.

Roupe said the study deadline has been pushed from expected completion in early fall to an expected date of October.

The next public meeting is planned for 3 p.m. July 19 in the Melrose School Board Room

NORTH CAROLINA

Sun Journal

.Much support for F-35B, but many questions remain

June 19, 2010 8:20 PM

Sue Book

Sun Journal Staff

Strong support for the Navy's Joint Strike Fighter "next generation aircraft" was shown in three public hearings in the region around Cherry Point air station last week. But questions — about the noise of the aircraft, when and if squadrons are based at Cherry Point, and the number of planes the military can afford to buy — remain unanswered.

About 400 people total turned out in Bayboro, Havelock and Emerald Isle to comment on the Navy's plan for basing squadrons of the newest state-of-the-art fighter attack jets, now in development, the F-35B Lightning II. Civilians and politicians, including Gov. Bev Perdue, and some state legislators, had positive reactions to the Navy's plan for the aircraft, which would not begin to arrive in this area until 2015 at the earliest. The military's preferred basing alternatives show them coming even later.

The last public hearings before work begins on the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) planned for the fall are Tuesday in Beaufort, S.C., and Thursday in Ludowici, Ga. A decision on basing the squadrons is expected in December.

By military standards, the Joint Strike Fighter is not large — 51 feet long, with a 35-foot wing span, a weapons payload of 15,000 pounds — and travels 900 miles on a tank of gas. Aircraft builder Lockheed Martin describes its "stealth" as "a quantum leap in combat capability." It is expected to travel at Mach 1.6, or 1,200 mph.

At Fred A. Anderson Elementary School in Bayboro on Thursday, one person walked into the EIS hearing and immediately asked staff manning the entry desk, "Where do I sign to say I'm in favor?"

It was not about having the jets here, but the "noise" that people might hear that most attending the hearing wanted to know about.

Fred Pierson, a Navy noise expert, said the noise estimate for the short take off, vertical landing plane (STOVL) has up to now been mostly calculated with data from the F-35A, the plane to be used by the Air Force.

Harry Blot, a retired Marine Corps lieutenant general and formerly with Lockheed on the project, said the plane is quieter in STOVL mode than the F/A-18 Super Hornet or the AV-8B Harrier. Quieter or not, Pierson said it gets out of the way faster and is thereby less invasive to the community.

The footprint for accident potential or noise for the Navy's preferred eight squadrons, or the 11 squadrons that Allies for Cherry Point's Tomorrow and Perdue say they prefer, doesn't differ much from the one of the planes they would replace. The presence of Navy Fleet Readiness Center-East and strong community support for 68 years were listed as added incentive for a larger contingent of aircraft at Cherry Point.

With the country nearing a decade at war and in challenging economic times, many attending hearings also heard the voices of their neighbors. In at least six counties, including Craven, Pamlico, Jones and Carteret, many of those neighbors earn a living at Cherry Point, where a Marine Corps or FRC-East paycheck goes to more than a fourth of the households.

Many left comments with a hearing stenographer or at the comment table and others may comment for the record until July 12 at the Marine Corps draft EIS site at usmcjsfeast.com/Comments.aspx. The full text of the draft EIS is at area libraries and online.

Plain-spoken Mike Deichmann of Trent Cadillac-Buick-Pontiac-GMC in New Bern summed it up well: "This is a big deal. It's the biggest deal in these parts right now."

Perdue submitted a three-page letter to the Marine Corps "on behalf of the State of North Carolina" and made its case for the 11-squadron alternative.

Both Perdue and U.S. Sen. Kay Hagan, D-N.C., say they would support some way of adding more protected land around the base.

"The Marine Corps has expressed an interest in land acquisitions in the accident potential zone," said Hagan, who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee. "I'm willing to help in whatever way I can with all stakeholders to mitigate any encroachment concerns that the Marine Corps may have."

Base officials, working with Havelock and Emerald Isle, and Craven and Carteret counties have accomplished a solid working agreement during the last decade for growth planning with an Air Installation Compatibility Use Zones program for Cherry Point and Bogue fields.

It was Craven County's first real zoning and restricts development in accident and noise zones while the Marine Corps takes planning action to mitigate noise and accident potential.

"The excellent work that the City of Havelock and Craven, Carteret, Pamlico, and Jones counties have done to address land use and development issues is a big advantage for Cherry Point," Hagan said. "I've emphasized that collaborative and constructive work in my comments to the Marine Corps and will continue to do so. I absolutely believe it should be fully reflected in the final EIS."

Advocates for the Navy's preferred alternative and Alternative 2, which places all 11 fighter squadrons at Cherry Point and two training squadrons in Beaufort, S.C., express concern that the first F-35B East Coast fighter squadrons won't begin to arrive before 2020. That might be after the legacy aircraft they are to replace are no longer air worthy, and leave the base vulnerable to a Base Realignment and Closure.

The concern has been heightened by budget constraints expected for the Department of Defense and the escalating development cost of the plane. Many wonder if the military will buy as many F-35s as first expected and there's some concern that the aircraft may not come at all if they don't come fast. The Lockheed CEO told reporters Thursday that the defense industry faces "a new reality" regarding defense spending.

Hagan said, "I understand the concerns regarding the schedule for delivering F-35Bs. I have expressed those concerns to the Marine Corps and will continue working with them to accelerate delivery of planes to Cherry Point. I am concerned about Marine Corps readiness in terms of tactical aviation capability with the current delivery schedule of F-35B aircraft."

Perdue's letter asks that "the first six operational squadrons" be assigned to Cherry Point because of the phase-out of the Harriers.



Sen. Hagan Contrasts Two Different Proposed Military Expansions In N.C.

June 22, 2010

Bruce Ferrell and David Horn

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- It is a case of apples versus oranges. Sen. Kay Hagan is stating strong support for adding jets to Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station, while opposing an Outlying Landing Field in the northeastern part of the state.

Hagan said the Outlying Landing Field would provide very little benefit to North Carolina, but adding F-35B's would substantial economic benefit. "We're getting the jets. We've got the maintenance facilities. We've go the civilians that will be coming in with an additional 1,200 military personnel will be joining those additional 128 strike fighters," said Hagan.

She said the OLF does not have a real economic impact component for the state. "What we've got right now from an OLF is strictly a landing strip where the planes would do practice take-off and landings, not be based there and go back to Oceana where they are based," added Hagan. Oceana is located in Virginia.

She said allowing the OLF in northeastern North Carolina is like Virginia getting the goldmine and North Carolina getting the "shaft".

Support and questions surround basing of new jets

June 23, 2010 5:30 AM

From staff and Freedom ENC reports

The majority of area residents expressed strong support for the basing of new F-35B Joint Strike Fighter squadrons at Cherry Point during public hearings last week.

Gov. Beverly Perdue and U.S. Sen. Kay Hagan, D-N.C., were among the elected officials who backed plans to base either eight or as many as 11 of the new squadrons at Cherry Point.

But despite the efforts, questions about the noise of the aircraft, when and if squadrons are based at Cherry Point, and the number of planes the military can afford to buy remain unanswered.

About 400 people turned out in Havelock, Bayboro and Emerald Isle during last week's hearings to comment on the Navy's plan for basing squadrons of the newest state-of-the-art jets.

Similar public hearings are planned in South Carolina and Georgia this week, where Beaufort, S.C. is also being considered as a home base for the jets.

The Navy is expected to review comments and issue a report in the fall and make its final decision on how the 13 squadrons of new jets will be divided in December.

"This is a big deal," said Mike Deichmann, a car dealer in New Bern who attended last week's meeting in Havelock. "It's the biggest deal in these parts right now."

The Navy prefers to base eight of the squadrons at Cherry Point, but area officials are pushing for the second alternative, which would bring 11 squadrons to the base and, according to local officials, guarantee the future of Cherry Point for the next 50 years.

The new jets will eventually replace all current Marine Corps jets.

"If upgraded aircraft is what they need, I'm all for it," Bill Flynn said at last week's meeting in Emerald Isle.



[enlarge](#)

Ken Buday/Havelock
Gov. Beverly Perdue, right, greets Eva Sermons, former Havelock commissioner, during last week's F-35B public hearing at the Havelock Tourist and Event Center. Perdue looked at charts detailing the Navy's basing options for the new jets, talked to officials and residents, and delivered a letter of support for Cherry Point.

Some residents did raise concerns about the noise of the new jets. The noise footprint around Cherry Point is slightly expanded, according to charts at the public hearings.

Those supporting efforts to base the planes at Cherry Point say that footprint doesn't differ much from the one of the AV-8B Harriers that the new jets would replace.

"I believe from what I've been seeing that the hours for the sound are not going to be invasive, it's not going to be in the middle of the night and that it's actually not a whole lot different than the Harrier," Perdue said at the Havelock hearing on June 15. "I've always felt comfortable that we weren't being inundated and that there was no danger to the quality of life in eastern North Carolina."

Harry Blot, a retired Marine Corps lieutenant general and formerly with Lockheed Martin on the project, said the plane is quieter in its short take-off and vertical landing mode than the F/A-18 Super Hornet or the AV-8B Harrier.

Quieter or not, Fred Pierson, a Navy noise expert, said it gets out of the way faster and is thereby less invasive to the community.

Noise concerns were louder at the Emerald Isle meeting, where residents live right across the sound from the auxiliary landing field at Bogue where Marine Corps pilots train.

Teresa Schneider, who attended the Emerald Isle meeting with her husband, Joe, said they already deal with significant jet noise from Bogue.

However, under the Navy's preferred plan, operations out of Bogue Field would be cut.

"What it amounts to is the aircraft will be a little noisier, but there will be less operations than are currently authorized," Pierson said of Bogue Field.

Perdue submitted a three-page letter to the Marine Corps on behalf of the state making a case that the Navy go beyond the preferred alternative of eight squadrons at Cherry Point and put 11 of the squadrons here.

Both Perdue and Hagan said they would support some way of adding more protected land around the base to prevent civilian encroachment.

"The Marine Corps has expressed an interest in land acquisitions in the accident potential zone," said Hagan, who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee. "I'm willing to help in whatever way I can with all stakeholders to mitigate any encroachment concerns that the Marine Corps may have."

Base officials and officials in Havelock and Emerald Isle, and Craven and Carteret counties have accomplished a working agreement during the last decade for growth planning with an Air Installation Compatibility Use Zones program for Cherry Point and Bogue Field.

"The excellent work that the city of Havelock and Craven, Carteret, Pamlico, and Jones counties have done to address land use and development issues is a big advantage for Cherry Point," Hagan said. "I've emphasized that collaborative and constructive work in my comments to the Marine Corps and will continue to do so."

Officials did express concern that Navy plans don't call for the F-35Bs to arrive at Cherry Point until 2020. Cherry Point's Harrier training squadron is expected to be deactivated in

2011 as the Harriers are phased out of the Marine Corps arsenal. Officials believe that could leave the base vulnerable to a Base Realignment and Closure process should one arise.

Officials also worry that budget concerns and the escalating cost of the new jet, estimated at \$89 million according to reports, could reduce the number of jets planned for Cherry Point as well as delay the arrival of the jets, also leaving the base vulnerable.

"I understand the concerns regarding the schedule for delivering F-35Bs," Hagan said. "I have expressed those concerns to the Marine Corps and will continue working with them to accelerate delivery of planes to Cherry Point. I am concerned about Marine Corps readiness in terms of tactical aviation capability with the current delivery schedule of F-35B aircraft."

Though public hearings have passed, residents have until July 12 to review the Navy's environmental report and make comments.

The report is available at local libraries and can be viewed online at www.usmcjsfeast.com, where comments can be made.

Those wishing can also mail comments to USMC F-35B East Coast Basing EIS, P.O. Box 56488, Jacksonville, FL 32241-6488.

SOUTH CAROLINA



Let officials hear support for fighter squadrons

Published Sunday, June 20, 2010

It is important for residents to turn out for a few minutes anytime between 4 and 7 p.m. Tuesday at the Beaufort Holiday Inn to share with the Department of Defense why we want five squadrons of the F-35B Joint Strike Fighter.

Here is a brief summary of what our community has done to preserve the important military presence in Beaufort in recent years:

- Beaufort County's Rural and Critical Lands Program purchased development rights for 719 acres around Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort, protecting the air station from construction that might affect or intrude on air operations
- In partnership with MCAS, the Beaufort County Open Land Trust purchased development rights protecting 520 acres
- Beaufort County, the city of Beaufort and the town of Port Royal are planning to employ a transfer of development rights program to help mitigate encroachment around MCAS. This program is viewed by the Department of Defense as a model project like no other in the country.
- Beaufort County and all its municipalities, in concert with six neighboring counties, passed resolutions supporting bringing the F-35B to MCAS Beaufort.
- And we are encouraging a discussion about auxiliary landing fields to improve training and to mitigate any potential for noise.

Please drop by the "listening session" next Tuesday to learn the facts and support bringing the new jets and the new and even better jobs to Beaufort County.

Mayor Billy Keyserling

Beaufort

Comment Sought On F-35's Future In Beaufort

June 20, 2010

Patrick Donohue

Marine Corps and Navy officials are seeking input from Beaufort-area residents about the proposed arrival of the Corps' \$90 million fighter jet at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort.

The air station will host a public meeting Tuesday at the Holiday Inn on Boundary Street to answer questions and gather public comment about the possibility of bringing Joint Strike Fighter squadrons to the base.

Gunnery Sgt. Chad McMeen, air station spokesman, said information booths and tables will be set up in the hotel's conference room, and a panel of experts will be on hand to discuss subjects such as noise and the Air Installation Compatible Use Zone, or AICUZ. "There is no better time for residents to come out and ask whatever questions they might have about the Joint Strike Fighter," McMeen said.

McMeen said officials from Lockheed Martin, the defense contractor building the fighter jet, also will bring a cockpit simulator to allow residents to experience what it's like to sit in the Joint Strike Fighter, also known as the F-35.

The meeting comes on the heels of the release last month of the Navy's draft environmental impact statement detailing how 11 operational JSF squadrons and two pilot training squadrons would be divided between MCAS Beaufort and MCAS Cherry Point, N.C.

The report recommended MCAS Beaufort receive two pilot training squadrons and three active duty squadrons. MCAS Cherry Point would receive eight active-duty squadrons. If approved, MCAS Beaufort would receive 88 new fighter jets to replace its F-18 Hornets. Under that option, the report estimated the base would need \$351.8 million in infrastructure improvements in the next five years, creating nearly 4,400 temporary construction jobs.

The annual takeoffs and landings at MCAS Beaufort also would likely increase from 55,000 to 98,000, which would expose 8,725 residents living in 2,731 homes near the base to noise levels higher than 65 decibels, the report said.

In addition to hosting Tuesday's meeting in Beaufort, base officials will conduct a meeting Thursday in Georgia to get comments from residents who live near Townsend Bombing Range, which is used by air station pilots. MCAS Beaufort owns the 5,182-acre range in McIntosh County, Ga., and will hold the meeting in nearby Ludowici, Ga.

The Navy is expected to finalize the report in November and make its final decision on where to place the new squadrons by the end of the year. The Joint Strike Fighter is expected to arrive in Beaufort in 2014 or 2015.

IF YOU GO

What: Joint Strike Fighter public meeting

When: 4 to 7 p.m. Tuesday

Where: Holiday Inn on Boundary Street, Beaufort

HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

The Marine Corps is seeking public comment on the possibility of basing the Joint Strike Fighter at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort. Any public comment must be received by July 12 and may be submitted by filling out a comment card at public meetings this week, by e-mail at www.usmcjsfeast.com or by mail at USMC F-35B East Coast Stationing EIS, P.O. Box 56488, Jacksonville, FL 32241-6488.

Hundreds show up in Beaufort to talk with Navy, Marines about new fighter jet

By PATRICK DONOHUE

June 22, 2010

Some came to ask questions. Others came to make their opinions known in no uncertain terms.

More than 670 Beaufort-area residents filed into a conference room Tuesday at the Holiday Inn in Beaufort to sound off on a Navy report released last month detailing how 13 new Joint Strike Fighter squadrons will be divided between Marine Corps Air Station



Mouse over the photo to enlarge

What's next

- **Thursday:** Public meeting in Ludowici, Ga., near air-station-owned Townsend Bombing Range.
- **July 12:** Public comment period ends on draft environment impact statement.
- **November:** Final environmental impact statement published in the Federal Register.
- **December:** Navy and Marine Corps makes final decision on where to base 13 new Joint Strike Fighter squadrons.

Mike Glaister of Lady's Island said he did not support the Navy's preferred alternative, which would increase annual takeoffs and landings at the base from 55,000 to 98,000 and expose 8,725 residents living in 2,731 homes near the base to noise levels higher than 65 decibels. More than 7,170 residents living in 1,867 homes near the base are currently exposed to noise levels higher than 65 decibels, the report said.

Beaufort and MCAS Cherry Point. Military experts were on hand to discuss the next-generation fighter jet's impact on noise and the Air Installation Compatible Use Zone, or AICUZ.

The report recommended MCAS Beaufort receive two pilot training squadrons and three active-duty squadrons. MCAS Cherry Point would receive eight active-duty squadrons.

The report included three other alternatives -- two assigning more planes and military personnel in Beaufort, another assigning fewer -- but all four plans would assign JSFs to Beaufort.

The Navy will make its final decision on where to place the new squadrons in December, according to Corps officials. The Joint Strike Fighter is expected to arrive in Beaufort in 2014 or 2015.

"My quality of life and the value of my property will be adversely affected by this," Glaister said. "It looks like everyone has made up their mind already, and this whole meeting is just for show."

Beaufort County Council Chairman Weston Newton said concerns about jet noise from those who live near the base are understandable.

"No one is (insensitive about) those noise impacts," Newton said. "Those are issues we can work to address, but it is essential that we show unified support for the deployment of these squadrons to Beaufort," Newton said. "The economic impact of the military's presence in Beaufort County, particularly in northern Beaufort Cannot, cannot be overstated."

Many questions remain about how the noise from the Marine Corps' variant of the JSF, known as the F-35B, will compare to the F-18 Hornet currently flown by air station pilots because extensive noise testing on the jet has yet to be done by Lockheed Martin, the defense contractor building the \$90 million fighters.

Fred Pierson, a Navy noise expert, said jet noise depend largely on how the jet is being flown.

"It may be louder in some cases, and may be quieter in others," Pierson said. "It's a very high performance aircraft. It gets up off the ground and gets out of the area quicker (than other jets.) It's got the most powerful engine of any jet fighter ... (so) the higher it gets, the less impact it has on the ground and the community."

Lon Hoover of Burton said the sound of fighter jets is part of life in the Lowcountry.

"I've been in Beaufort since 1970, so I'm used to the noise," Hoover said. "If there is a jet flying overhead, you wait a few minutes and it's gone. I think there is a small contingent of people who still want Beaufort to be like it was in 1970."

In addition to hosting Tuesday's meeting in Beaufort and three meetings last week near MCAS Cherry Point, base officials will travel to Georgia on Thursday get comments and field questions from residents who live near Townsend Bombing Range, which is used by air station pilots.

MCAS Beaufort owns the 5,182-acre range in McIntosh County, Ga., and will hold the meeting in nearby Ludowici, Ga.

HAVELOCK NEWS

Beaufort 'happy to share' F-35B squadrons with Cherry Point

June 22, 2010 8:04 PM

Drew C. Wilson

Freedom ENC

BEAUFORT, S.C. — If Havelock residents and officials thought they were in competition with Beaufort to score F-35B squadrons, they might think again. Residents of Beaufort seem ready and willing to share.

More than 450 officials and local residents turned out Tuesday night in the South Carolina city for a public hearing to support the placement of two training squadrons and three operation squadrons of the Joint Strike Fighters at Beaufort air station.

It's the Navy's preferred alternative, and it includes having eight operational squadrons based at Cherry Point air station.

"We know what our community can handle and we know what's best for us," said Carlotta Ungaro, president and CEO of The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce. Ungaro said the Chamber has mounted a campaign since January 2009 to support that alternative.

"We feel that the training squadrons are a good strategy for us for economic reasons and that the three operational squadrons will continue the mission here."

The training facility would bring up to 200 high-paying civilian jobs, Ungaro said.

"The combination of the training squadrons with the operational squadrons will make MCAS Beaufort a unique operation, less vulnerable during the next Base Closure and Realignment Commission proceedings, Ungaro said.

Ungaro has finalized a \$70,000 deal with The Rhoades Group, a Washington, D.C., lobbying group that will be attempting to sway officials from the Navy and put Beaufort's best foot forward when it comes to placement of the F-35B squadrons.

Like Havelock, officials at Beaufort see the preservation of their local Marine air station as vital to the success of their community.

Ungaro said the community was not interesting in asking for more squadrons than the five.

"The military should not be treated like an appropriations request. We've been working on this for 18 months. The military is clear. 'Ask for what you want.'" Ungaro said.

Beaufort Mayor Billy Keyserling agreed.

“We’re not greedy. We’re happy to share with Cherry Point. You always want more but we can share the wealth,” Keyserling said.

“I think alternative one is suitable. Some say ask for more but the reality is Alternative One works,” Keyserling said. “Two and three (training and operational). It’s a nice mix. What would be new would be the training part. That would be a new mix and better for us and for jobs,” Keyserling said.

Weston Newton, chairman of the Beaufort County Council, said that despite the waterfront community’s vast history and valuable tourism industry, the maintenance of Beaufort air station and the nearby Parris Island Marine Corps recruiting center are vital to the economy of the region.

“The economic impact exceeds a billion dollars a year,” Newton said.

The county, state and local government have partnered over the last five to six years with the Department of Defense to protect encroachment around the airbase by securing development rights and construction easements to more than 2,229 acres around the base.

“It is extraordinarily important to us,” said Donnie Beer, a member of the Beaufort city board. “We love our bases and we support our bases and we want the F-35Bs. We have the capability. We have the air space. We’ve done everything we could do to protect the air station. We have an almost perfect atmosphere here and will continue the strong relationship with the bases. The military here is ingrained in our society.”

Beer said she remembered how devastating it was to the community when the squadrons shipped out during the first Gulf War and how the economy was affected.

“It was a huge impact on the area. I remember it clearly,” she said.

Fred Washington, chairman of the Beaufort County School Board, said the base is a supplement to the tourism economy and shouldn’t be taken for granted.

“It helps us diversify the economy. Tourism is not the only thing. It is a vital part of our national defense,” Washington said.

Jim Davis, executive director of the Craven County Economic Development Commission, attended Tuesday’s meeting in Beaufort.

“I’m impressed with the turnout and with the badges, posters and the beverages and snacks,” Davis said. Davis congratulated Ungaro for her campaign, which included various billboards around the community voicing support for the F-35s and other promotional materials headlining “Support the Sound of Freedom.”

Ungaro said her group spent about \$5,000 on promotions for the squadrons.

“It’s raised a lot of awareness. It’s been a real big community effort,” Ungaro said.

If the Navy goes forward with its preferred alternative, Beaufort air station would receive 88 F-35Bs that would ultimately replace the aging fleet of F/A-18 Hornets. Beaufort has seven Marine Corps squadrons of the jets.

The alternative would require infrastructural improvements on the air station to the tune of \$351 million over five years and 4,400 construction jobs to demolish three hangars, construct five new hangar modules, new ground support equipment and storage areas,

new aviation armament and engine shops, new training/instruction/ simulation facilities and airfield pavement.

Beaufort air station would have an increase in the number of takeoffs and landings from 55,000 to 88,000. The air station sits on some 6,900 acres of land and is home to Marine Air Group 31 and its 3,400 personnel.

Like Cherry Point, Beaufort's roots go back to World War II, when it was established as Naval Air Station Beaufort by the Civil Aeronautics Authority on June 15, 1943.

Like Havelock, Beaufort County and the city of Beaufort have had a long-standing effort to protect MCAS Beaufort from encroachment.

Beaufort County and all of its municipalities, along with six neighboring counties, have passed resolutions in support of placing five F-35B squadrons at MCAS Beaufort.

"We can't let this opportunity pass us by. It's not going to. Beaufort is blessed," said resident Nancy Ficnerski. "I see Beaufort as caretaker for the air station."

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

GrandForksHerald.com

Published June 20 2010

State agency hears concerns about wind farms near air base

The wind might blow forever in North Dakota, but there's no guarantee it can be turned into an environmental and economic resource in northern Grand Forks County.

By: Kevin Bonham, Grand Forks Herald

The wind might blow forever in North Dakota, but there's no guarantee it can be turned into an environmental and economic resource in northern Grand Forks County.

That's because the giant wind turbines could interfere with radar used to track both manned and unmanned aircraft at Grand Forks International Airport, currently the 21st busiest airport in the nation, and Grand Forks Air Force Base, which is developing a strategic mission of hosting Predator and Global Hawk unmanned aircraft.

The North Dakota Public Service Commission held an informal meeting in Grand Forks on Wednesday to hear concerns over a proposed wind farm — with as many as 70 wind towers, each containing 2-megawatt turbines — in the vicinity of Niagara and Petersburg, N.D., in western Grand Forks and eastern Nelson counties.

“We are not opposed to wind generation,” said Col. Joe Douez, from Grand Forks Air Force Base. “We are just concerned about wind turbines and how they might interfere with our radar operations. It's a safety issue. We'd like to analyze any development within 25 miles of the base before it is approved.”

Al Palmer, director of UND's unmanned aerial systems center, said UND would oppose any development that would limit its ability to develop UAS programs. In March 2011, UND plans to start a full-scale UAS training program at the air base.

In addition, he said, currently, a manned aircraft either takes off or lands at the Grand Forks airport every 1.8 minutes, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

“There's an issue not just with UAVs, but with UND Aviation,” he said.

PSC Commissioner Tony Clark said the state regulatory agency likely will draft legislation to address issues such as where wind farms can be sited near air bases and airports.

“I think the issue of radar already is on the radar screen of the wind industry around the country,” he said. “These things will be discussed as a part of public policy in the next few years.”

PSC Commissioner Brian Kalk is skeptical of any wind farm development near the air base. He said air bases in metropolitan areas throughout the nation already face UAS airspace restrictions.

“Why would we want to allow any encroachment within the airspace of Grand Forks Air Force Base?” he said. “We could use our open space as a draw for potential future missions for the base.”

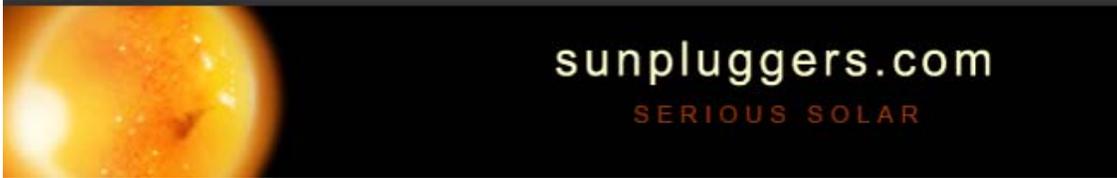
That doesn’t sit well with some Niagara-area residents, who could profit from having wind turbines on their property.

“We live on a hill,” Patsy Strand said. “We don’t have people rushing out to build homes or to put up factories where we live. We’ve had missile sites here. Our taxes have gone up to provide roads and services to support them.

“If a company comes to me and wants to put up a wind turbine on my land, so I might benefit, I want to be able to say yes.”

PSC commissioners said it important to get the issues on the table, before it is asked to decide whether to approve a wind farm in western Grand Forks County, adding that the issue has statewide significance.

“We’re here to try to find a balance, and we’re ahead of the game and take some time to find that balance,” PSC Commissioner Kevin Cramer said.



Navy Setting A Course Toward Solar In Central California

June 23, 2010

John Lindt, Sierra2theSea News Service

The U.S. Navy is considering the potential for large-scale solar power production at an air base in Central California's San Joaquin Valley.

A "request for information" was released in May to explore opportunities for renewable and alternative energy development on about 1,300 acres of Navy-owned land in the southwest quadrant of Naval Air Station Lemoore, said Capt. James Knapp, commanding officer at the base.



PHOTO CREDIT: U.S. NAVY

The U.S. Navy, which is considering installing large-scale solar power at a Central California air base, has been putting up photovoltaic modules at facilities throughout the nation and the world. Above, contractors install panels recently at a Navy base in Sasebo, Japan.

Additional sites with less acreage also are being offered for potential energy production. The properties total 2,900 acres in all. Some solar companies have already told Capt.

Knapp they may want to build solar farms at the air station. Responses are due by the end of June.

“I was surprised to see how much interest there was from solar energy developers,” Mr. Knapp said, “considering our Tule fog in the winter.” The thick fog can sometimes blanket parts of the famous farming valley for days at a time in late fall and winter. Photovoltaic modules can continue to generate electricity, but at a reduced rate, in foggy or cloudy conditions.

The San Joaquin Valley, a major source of fruit, nuts and other agricultural products for the United States, has become a focus of possible solar power development on former farmlands with limited usefulness for crops because of high salinity and a water shortage. Mr. Knapp said developing some of the air station's land, currently leased to farmers, for solar use makes sense “because we don’t know how much water will be available in the future” for farming in the part of the valley where the station is located, about 30 miles west of Visalia.

That’s a key reason offered by environmentalists, farmers and regulators for why the valley’s west side may be ripe for solar development. Another is its location along the main north-south electrical corridor in the state.

“Solar development is compatible” with the military mission for the base, which sprawls over 30,000 acres in Kings County, Capt. Knapp said. He noted that large fields of solar panels at other military bases have proved to be no problem for aircraft landings, saying, “It’s not like they are mirrors – they are black to absorb the sun.”

Although a widely held public perception is that solar photovoltaic panels reflect bright sunlight, the glass and the solar cells are manufactured with anti-reflective materials because the equipment works by absorbing as much sunlight as possible and converting it into electricity. Any reflected light would be lost and would reduce the panels' efficiency. Mr. Knapp said the U.S. Department of Defense “is a huge energy user. We need to do our part to help get the nation off of fossil fuels.” He added that the Navy “needs to lead—not just follow” the growing move toward renewable energy sources.

Ray Mabus, secretary of the Navy, said in a speech last spring that “changing the way we use and produce energy, and the fallout from climate change, are fundamentally issues of national security.” The Navy and all other branches of the military have been installing solar PV equipment at bases and other facilities throughout the nation for more than a year.

At Edwards Air Force Base, in Southern California's Mojave Desert, officials are working toward an agreement under which the base would rent out property for solar power production and perhaps gain revenue, while the private sector builds the project in the hope of profiting. A 500-megawatt solar project is proposed for Edwards. The Fort Irwin National Training Center, also in the Mojave, is planning a solar installation that could reach 1,000 megawatts of production capacity.

Mr. Knapp said “several solar companies have come to visit me and expressed interest in erecting solar farms.” He said the Navy also wishes to learn whether there is interest in developing a renewable-energy project at the base's landfill, where methane may be available.

He said that if the Navy request results in strong interest, a company may be selected to construct a test plot on Navy land over a period of time, perhaps six months, to determine whether a solar farm would make sense on the valley's west side.

Many companies appear to have already decided that solar in the region does make sense, considering the volume of applications and announcements by firms for both small and very large solar power projects in the nearby Westlands Water District and on farmland elsewhere in Kern, Tulare, Fresno and Kings counties.

Developers with calling cards from all over the globe have descended on the San Joaquin Valley in recent months with proposals for solar projects. One project proposed by a Chinese company would build a 500-megawatt solar farm in Kings County, although no site has been announced. That huge solar farm might cover as much as 5,000 acres. The largest single parcel that may be made available for solar at Naval Air Station Lemoore is 1,292 acres, divided into eight subparcels that have "relatively high levels of alkali and salts," according to the Navy's published request for information.

In nearby Mendota, the valley's first utility-size solar farm was dedicated in May. Owned by Meridian Energy, it consists of more than 50,000 solar panels covering almost 50 acres and generates 5 megawatts of zero-emission solar electricity. The electricity is being sold to Pacific Gas and Electric Co. under a long-term power-purchase agreement. The New Zealand-based company now has a U.S. subsidiary, like many of the foreign companies that have rushed to the Golden State to be part of the green-energy makeover being promoted by state officials, from Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on down.

Increasingly, the U.S. government is offering lands to carry out this makeover as well, with the federal Bureau of Land Management recently issuing guidance that could help jump-start processing of at least 175 recent applications for large-scale solar power arrays on federal land. Director Robert Abbey issued a June 10 memorandum to field officials establishing rental rates the bureau will charge companies for placing solar energy facilities on federal land.

Mr. Knapp said the Lemoore air base received federal stimulus money in the past year to put up solar panels on four buildings, which he expects to make a small dent in the air station's power consumption. The base also is getting digital "smart" meters to assess its energy consumption.

"Our power use goes up and down, with April averaging 28,000 megawatt-hours, up to 44,000 megawatt-hours in the summer," he said. A megawatt-hour is 1,000 kilowatt-hours. A typical California household uses about 600 to 700 kilowatt-hours of electricity per month as a year-round average.

When the site for Naval Air Station Lemoore was chosen in the mid-1950s, the remote location in the Central Valley of California served several key strategic purposes. The location was close enough to the Navy's seaport facilities for logistical support, but far enough from major population centers to allow for frequent air operations and possible expansion.

Now it happens to be close to big high-voltage transmission lines that connect the large urban areas of Northern and Southern California, making it easier for new power plants

to connect to the grid.

And it happens to be in the state's new solar hot spot, on some lands that may not have much of a future for farms producing food, but perhaps for harvesting a new kind of crop – solar energy.

OVERSEAS—AUSTRALIA



Joint Strike Fighter strafes thousands of homes with noise

June 22, 2010

by Ben Sandilands

Before it has even fired a shot in anger, the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) has destroyed the value of thousands of homes in the Port Stephens area through revised noise exposure boundaries imposed last week by local government following secret negotiations with the Department of Defence.

The result in recent weeks has been a Plane Truth movement, driven by the Medowie Progress Association and a local councillor Geoff Dingle.

The Williamstown RAAF base and the nearby Salt Ash Air Weapons Range near Newcastle will be major centres of activity for the JSF when Australia takes delivery of up to 100 of currently troubled aircraft from 2018.

It has been officially acknowledged for the past four years that the JSF will be blisteringly noisy, beyond the acoustic intensity associated with the RAAF's FA 18 Hornets and Super Hornets.

However, this isn't a story about the capabilities of the JSF but the injustice of arbitrary decisions that destroy the value of private property.

The Port Stephens Council and the Department of Defence have been accused of conspiring to keep those who would be severely compromised by the noise issues out of the loop until consultation is irrelevant.

Public meetings have also queried the peculiar exclusion of a new "flagship" residential development at Kings Hill near Williamstown from the severely affected zones in the new noise exposure maps published by the Port Stephens Council,

It wouldn't matter what future fighter choice Defence made. This is being argued by Plane Truth supporters as being about Defence and local government indifference to working with the community, in an area where Defence generates a significant proportion of direct and indirect economic activity, and de facto, sees itself as the inviolable authority on planning issues impacting on its plans for Williamstown and the weapons range.

The declaration of new noise zones based on an ANEF 20 or above noise energy exposure contour has wiped out the current and future value of thousands of properties in the Port Stephens area, according to Plane Truth and Geoff Dingle.

At above these levels these homes are predicted to become uninhabitable beyond 2020-2025 without costly insulation or modification, and with no outdoor amenity. The publication of the new noise zones shrinks the valuations of existing homes, with serious consequences for the lenders and owners who are party to existing mortgages, destroys resale values and renders unoccupied land unsuitable for if not prohibited from, subdivision for new homes.

Dingle, and others, have suggested that part of the problem of the new noise energy exposure maps could be solved by extending the existing 8200 feet long Williamstown runway by a further 8000 feet eastwards, which could favourably shift the predicated levels away from many of the properties now affected.

Although not mentioned in the current debate, Williamstown also faces the further issue of strong growth in airliner activity from the civilian section of the facility, which includes the Newcastle Airport terminal area.

One of the many ironies of the Sydney airport crisis is that Newcastle and the lower Hunter doesn't have any clear alternative to its future airport needs other than Sydney, while the delusion persists at a state government level that Newcastle is the solution, via a very fast train, to Sydney's problem.

Business fears as RAAF moves out

MEAGAN DILLON

June 23rd, 2010

SMALL businesses in the Winnellie shopping complex fear they will be forced to close because 400 RAAF families will be moved due to the high noise level of new fighter jets.

Territory Friendly Winnellie Supermarket owner Alan Morris said 105 of the 395 houses on the RAAF base Darwin are already empty.

"That's 105 families out of my business area."

He said 395 families will be leaving the area because the Defence Department bought noisy jets.

The noisy jets are F-35 Joint Strike Fighters (JSF) and the Australian government is committed to buying 14 of them - at a cost of \$3.2 billion - in what will be Australia's biggest Defence purchase.

Solomon MHR Damian Hale said the houses will be decommissioned and families moved away once the new jets arrive. "The jets will arrive in four years," he said.

"Obviously we don't want to see businesses suffer but the RAAF base will be - first and foremost - the home of the jet fighters."

Winnellie Newsagency owner Andrew Snodgrass said he will be closing his store before Christmas.

"We can't afford to run a business - you take away the sole reason for being there and what do you get? Nothing," Mr Snodgrass said.

Mr Morris' son - Wayne Morris - received a letter from Defence Personnel Minister Alan Griffin regarding the Defence Department reviewing the long-term future of housing at RAAF Darwin.

The letter stated: "It is anticipated that the current housing area will be exposed to increased levels of noise associated with the planned introduction of new aircraft," and "it is likely that the number of houses at RAAF Darwin will be reduced."

Mr Snodgrass said the government was supposed to have a community consultation for interested parties on December 9 of last year.

"We were never told," he said.

"Clearly businesses at the front of the base are interested parties. We're in a situation where we are toothless."

OVERSEAS—OKINAWA



Japan's PM Faces Test Over U.S. Base On Okinawa

by Mike Shuster

June 21, 2010

In Japan, the problem that led to the dissolution of former Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama's government now is vexing the new government.

Earlier this month, Hatoyama resigned over the controversy about the continued presence of thousands of U.S. troops stationed on the Japanese island of Okinawa. He promised but failed to bring about their relocation.

The new government in Tokyo is facing the same problem with little prospect of a solution.

Many of the 18,000 U.S. Marines based in Japan are located at the Marine Corps Air Station Futenma on Okinawa. Over the years, Okinawans have pressed harder and harder to move the base away from their island.

After the opposition Democratic Party of Japan pulled off a historic electoral victory last year, Hatoyama got caught by promises to close the base that he couldn't keep. He resigned after only eight months in office.

His successor, Naoto Kan, took office earlier this month. It is not clear how he will deal with the problem of Okinawa, says political analyst Masatoshi Honda of the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies.

"He hasn't made any clear statement about Futenma before and even right now. He just said he will follow the decision of the previous prime minister. So we cannot see what he really wants to do on this issue," Honda says.

U.S. Presence A Sore Point

The Marine base at Futenma has been a sore point between the U.S. and Japan for years. The noise of the base's aircraft and the rowdy and drunken behavior of some Marines have made the base unpopular in Okinawa and elsewhere in Japan.

Several times in recent years, the U.S. offered a proposal to solve the problem, but it would still leave much of Futenma intact, says Koichi Nakano, a political analyst at Sophia University.

"The U.S. government [has] repeatedly said that [it wants] to relocate to a place where [it] will be welcome. That welcome is simply not there in Okinawa at the moment," Nakano says.

The U.S. says it will transfer 8,000 Marines to Guam and move a portion of the base to another part of Okinawa.

Kan, the new prime minister, has pledged to seek a solution that is in line with this offer, but he still faces overwhelming opposition on Okinawa, Honda says.

"So far mayors, governors and local politicians in Okinawa, everybody [is] against the proposal of the new government. So he will be completely blocked by this," he says.

Seeking A More Equal Relationship With U.S.

Last month, 17,000 Okinawans formed a human chain around the base in protest.

Part of the problem is the feeling on Okinawa that its people bear a disproportionate burden of the continued American military presence in Japan. The small island represents less than 1 percent of Japan's population, but it maintains some three-quarters of the U.S. military forces in Japan.

Last year the Democratic Party of Japan overturned decades of political control by the Liberal Democratic Party, in part by pledging to seek a new, more equal relationship with the United States.

But when Hatoyama became prime minister, the U.S. treated him arrogantly, Nakano says.

"Initially, the American government came across as very high-handed and, in fact, even contemptuous of the change of government that took place in Japan, the historical alternation in power," he says. "So it came across as if it was neglecting the democratic will of the Japanese, and treating it as basically a dependency of the United States."

A Sensitive Matter Of Self-Defense

The U.S. has maintained bases on Okinawa since the World War II battle there in the spring of 1945. It was the bloodiest land battle of the war in the Pacific. The U.S. kept military control of Okinawa until 1972, 20 years after the rest of Japan regained its sovereignty.

That history has a lot to do with the sensitivity of all sides in the current controversy. The Futenma affair has sparked a debate in Japan about the ongoing presence of U.S. forces.

In a recent interview with the BBC, the current Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada, speaking through an interpreter, pointed out that Japan's constitution limits how its self-defense forces can be used, and how the continued presence of U.S. forces acts as a deterrent to potential conflicts with North Korea or China.

"For Japan's own security and to maintain peace and stability in Asia as well, we do need U.S. forces in Japan, and that position is not going to change, even with the change in government," Okada said.

But this is not a position that all Japanese support.

In order to handle the matter successfully, Kan, the new prime minister, will have to explain that need better to the Japanese people, say some analysts.

Narushige Michishita, a specialist in strategic and defense studies at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, says Kan needs to address the issue of defending

Japan. Michishita is sympathetic to the U.S. position, but he believes it will be difficult for Kan to convince the Japanese, especially the people of Okinawa, of the dangers Japan may face that require a large U.S. military presence.

"In a way he has been a little bit exaggerating the need for U.S. troops in Okinawa for the defense of Japan at the current moment," Michishita says.