

BASE VISIT REPORT

Cecil Field, FL

19 August 2005

COMMISSIONERS: Commissioner Hill, Commissioner Newton, Commissioner Skinner

COMMISSION STAFF:

William Fetzer, Senior Navy/Marine Corps Senior Analyst

LIST OF ATTENDEES:

Governor Jeb Bush, State of Florida

Mayor John Peyton, City of Jacksonville

Dr. Pam Dana, Florida - Director Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development

ADM Bob Natter (USN- Ret), Consultant, State of Florida

CAPT John Leenhouts (USN - Ret), Northrop Grumman

CAPT Dan McCarthy (USN – Ret), City of Jacksonville

David Korn, City of Jacksonville

Andy Eckert, BHR-Arcadis Project Engineer

Bob Simpson, Jacksonville Airport Authority

CECIL FIELD MISSION:

- NAS Cecil Field was closed by the 1993 BRAC to remove excess capacity from the Naval Air Station inventory. Cecil Field's aircraft (F-18's), personnel and support were re-distributed to MCAS Cherry Point, NC, NAS Oceana, VA and MCAS Beaufort, SC. At the time NAS Cecil Field had a higher Military Value than NAS Oceana, but the Department of Defense rationale for closing Cecil vice Oceana stated that "NAS Oceana was the only F-14 Air Station supporting the Atlantic Fleet and had to be retained to support military operations of these aircraft. Oceana's excess capacity was merely utilized to absorb the remaining aircraft."
- Since Cecil Field closed in 1999, the property was turned over to the state and local governments for redevelopment. The runways, hangars, ramps and many maintenance and administrative support buildings were preserved, refurbished and upgraded to OSHA standards. Antiquated buildings were demolished. Utilities were upgraded and relocated underground. Highway access roads were significantly upgraded with wide boulevards leading to the field. The state and city have invested \$133M to upgrade the present infrastructure and a major road program to connect Cecil Field to Interstate 10 is funded (at \$130M) and will begin in 2006. The environmental problems have been remediated. The state and city governments have committed to turn over all property to the Department of Defense at no cost, free and clear of all leased tenants and non-DoD activities.
- Many of the Cecil Field facilities have been leased to commercial and industrial customers in a comprehensive redevelopment program. Those leases have escape and relocation clauses

that the city and state governments will execute if Cecil Field is selected as the site for the east coast Master Jet Base. Tenant activities presently located at Cecil Field include:

- Signature of Cecil Field (FBO)
- The Boeing Company
- Defense Security Services, DSS
- Division of Forestry
- Florida Army National Guard
- Florida Community College at Jacksonville
- Florida Highway Patrol
- Information Spectrum
- Jacksonville Fire & Rescue
- Jet Turbine Service, Inc.
- Logistic Services International, LSI
- Naval Air Depot (F-18 Depot Level Maintenance)
- Resource Consultants, Inc. (RCI)
- Robinson Van-Vuren & Associates, RVA (ATC)
- Titan System Corporation
- SEMCOR, Inc.
- US Coast Guard

NAS OCEANA ADDS CONSIDERATION:

- Close NAS Oceana and establish a Master Jet Base at another suitable location (Site X).
- Close base operations at NAS Oceana.
- Relocate all VFA squadrons, station aircraft, and VR-46 to Site X to include required personnel, equipment and support.
- Disestablish the Naval Medical and Dental Centers.
- Relocate AIMD to Site X to include required personnel, equipment and support.
- Relocate Naval Air Maintenance Training Unit to Site X.

JUSTIFICATION:

- The primary reason to consider NAS Oceana for closure is to establish a facility that is not encroached and to enable the single siting of all F/A-18E/F aircraft squadrons.
- Provide the BRAC Commission with options to realign or close the base.

MAIN FACILITIES REVIEWED:

- Cecil Field facilities
- Whitehouse Outlying Field

KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED:

- Operations at NAS Oceana are encroached limiting the ability of the aviators to “train as they fight” by flying the same landing and takeoff patterns as they would at sea. (est. 145,000 people live within the 65 dB average Day/night Noise Level curve). 24/7 flight operations are limited by courtesy of Base CO to nearby residents.

- Operations at Cecil Field and Whitehouse OLF have minor encroachment due to the proactive measures taken by the city and state governments to protect the airfields from encroachment. (est. 10,000 people live within the 65dB DNL boundaries). 24/7 flight operations can be conducted at Cecil and Whitehouse with exact landing patterns as CV operations at sea.
- Navy plans to build new outlying field in Washington County, NC to relieve noise issues at Oceana and Fentress are on hold due to environmental litigation.
- No new OLF is required for operations at Cecil Field.
- Costs of moving Oceana operations to Cecil Field:
Certified Navy COBRA did not account for the 70-75% of the Master Jet base infrastructure existing at Cecil Field.

INSTALLATION CONCERNS RAISED:

- Relatively minor encroachment exists.
- Crews can train as they fight at Cecil and Whitehouse OLF without noise or pattern restrictions
- Aircrews have significant training ranges and airspace conveniently located within minutes of takeoff. According to the FAA there was (and will be) no airspace encroachment related to Cecil Field Naval Aviation operations.
- The Navy did not consider Cecil Field as a potential new Master Jet Base because it was closed by BRAC 93.
- The Jacksonville Metropolitan Area is an excellent cultural and recreational center with a large concentration of Navy support facilities and outstanding quality of life benefits.
- The City of Jacksonville voluntarily applied the AICUZ overlay maps on the areas around NAS Cecil and NAS Jacksonville (located 10 miles east of Cecil field) to limit noise exposure and control encroachment.
- Cecil Field has upgraded and maintained 70% of the facilities that were left by the Navy. Significant improvements were made as outlined in the Cecil Field Mission paragraph above.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS RAISED:

- The community has made significant investment (\$266M) in upgrading the infrastructure in and around Cecil field.
- The City of Jacksonville and the State of Florida have offered to return to the Department of Defense all of the former NAS Cecil Field property, improved and unencumbered – free and clear.
- The local governments are prepared to absorb and support the approximately 11,000 personnel that would be associated with the location of the Navy's Master Jet Base at Cecil Field.
- All required base conversion activities, including a new or updated EIS, can be completed within 4.5 years, allowing the Navy to establish and occupy a new Master Jet Base within the BRAC timeframe.