

2005 BRAC COMMISSION REGIONAL HEARING

AFTERNOON SESSION

SATURDAY, AUGUST 20, 2005

1:30 PM

106 DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, D.C.

SUBJECT: EAST COAST MASTER JET BASE/NAVAL
AIR STATION OCEANA

COMMISSIONERS PRESIDING:

ANTHONY PRINCIPI, CHAIRMAN;

JAMES BILBRAY;

PHILIP COYLE;

ADMIRIAL HAROLD GEHMAN, U.S. NAVY (RET.);

JAMES HANSEN;

GENERAL JAMES HILL, U.S. ARMY (RET.);

GENERAL LLOYD NEWTON, U.S. AIR FORCE (RET.);

BRIGADIER GENERAL SUE TURNER, U.S. AIR FORCE (RET.);

SAMUEL SKINNER

CHAired BY:

ANTHONY PRINCIPI

WITNESSES:

GOVERNOR JEB BUSH (R-FL);

CAPTAIN JOHN LEENHOUTS, UNITED STATES NAVY (RET.);

JOHN CRAIG, FORMER F-18 HORNET PILOT;

ADMIRAL STAN ARTHUR, UNITED STATES NAVY (RET.);

ADMIRAL ROBERT NATTER, UNITED STATES NAVY (RET.);

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA MAYOR JOHN PEYTON (R)

SENATOR BILL NELSON (D-FL);

SENATOR MEL MARTINEZ (R-FL);

REPRESENTATIVE ANDER CRENSHAW (R-FL);

REPRESENTATIVE CLIFF STEARNS (R-FL);

GOVERNOR MARK WARNER (D-VA);

STEVE MONDUL, DIRECTOR OF SECURITY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES,

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION;

VIRGINIA BEACH MAYOR MEYERA OBERNDORF (D);

DELEGATE TERRY SUIT (R-VA);

REPRESENTATIVE THELMA DRAKE (R-VA);

DCN 11517

CAPTAIN GRANFIELD, UNITED STATES NAVY (RET.);

SENATOR GEORGE ALLEN (R-VA)

CERTIFIED

MR. PRINCIPI: (In progress) -- hearing of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission. This afternoon the commission will hear sworn testimony that will assist us in reaching a decision on an East Coast master jet base for the Navy. The commission is mandated to consider whether the Department of Defense substantially deviated from the statutory BRAC selection criteria and the force structure plan in failing to recommend closure or realignment of an installation.

On July 19, 2005, the commission voted in accordance with the process established by law to consider whether failure to recommend closure of NAS Oceana and move East Coast naval aviation to another base constitutes such a substantial deviation.

There are eight statutory selection criteria. However, the DOD and this commission are required to give the most weight to the four criteria measuring military value.

There are few military values higher than the safety and proficiency of the men and women who accept the responsibilities and the risks of service in our armed forces. Naval aviators landing high performance aircraft on a carrier deck should be able to practice that maneuver realistically before they face the unforgiving environment of a career at sea. If conditions at a

naval air station compromise the quality of training operations, then continued operation at that base compromises military values. Testimony in prior commission hearings confirms the existence of serious encroachment issues compromising the military value of training and operations at NAS Oceana. These issues are of critical importance in assessing the impact of this BRAC round on operational readiness and training.

However, I must make it very clear that the commission, collectively and individually, has not reached a decision. The commission's goal is to ensure our Navy provides Atlantic Fleet naval aviators with a location and condition for training, whether at NAS Oceana or at another location like those they will face when they fly and fight while deployed.

The commission must explore every possible option to ensure the best possible opportunities and environment for naval aviation operations and training, and sometimes compromises can be mitigated. This hearing will contribute to the commission's assessment of the options and costs of moving the installation or leaving it as is and trying to mitigate the problems.

We are directed to the maximum extent feasible to base our decisions on certified data and sworn testimony. Today we will hear sworn testimony from Governor Bush and representatives of the Florida delegation, as well as the Virginia delegation, later this afternoon, on possible alternatives that we should explore. That

testimony will become a part of the body of evidence considered by the commission on August 24. Our deliberations and decisions on that day will be based on force structure and military value and other selection criteria. No other factors will be considered.

At this time, I ask our witnesses to stand for the administration of the oath required by the Base Closure and Realignment Statute. The oath will be administered by Rumu Sarkar, the commission's designated federal officer.

MS. SARKAR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

(The witnesses were sworn.)

MS. SARKAR: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. PRINCIPI: Thank you. Well, again, welcome, Governor and members of the delegation. We have allotted one hour for this, your testimony. I'd very much appreciate it if you could adhere to that time limit, as we need to get on with other business. Thank you.

You may proceed, sir.

GOV. BUSH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and we will try to also make sure that there's 20 minutes of questions and answers time as well. We appreciate the chance to make our presentation about Cecil Field. We believe the case for Cecil Field is a compelling one, both from the business perspective, as well as from the military value perspective.

I also appreciate the fact that you all are committed patriots. You volunteered somehow for being on the BRAC commission. I appreciate that a lot. It's a lot of hard work, and I appreciate the fact that this process, which is intended to take politics out of a very difficult decision-making process is the right one for our country, and I appreciate your service to our country.

With respect to the business case, I want to make five very quick points. One, the state of Florida and the city of Jacksonville's prepared to provide a clear base. That would be a base of clean title, to the Department of Defense, 17,668 acres with all the capital improvements. There have been \$133 million of additional capital improvements since 1999 when Cecil Field was closed.

The property, as valued by the city of Jacksonville, is \$1.66 billion. In addition to that, the state and the city is prepared to spend up to \$200 million to cancel all of the leases and relocate every lease that is on the base and, in the interim, the Navy would have the opportunity to do all of its construction in preparation of reopening Cecil Field.

Secondly, we are accelerating a \$130 million road project that would connect the front gate of Cecil Field directly to I-10 to the north. That is already in our work plan, and it'll be accelerated to be completed by 2009.

Third, the Florida Housing Corporation is committed to, and has already allocated, \$500 million in tax-exempt mortgage revenue bond proceeds for low-interest mortgage loans for affordable rental housing to support Cecil Field, and I intend to seek \$100 million of support in a special session this fall for additional incentives so as to assure that there is a robust public-private venture for housing, should Cecil Field be reopened.

Fourth, encroachment protection is something that the mayor and I have been working on long before the BRAC process -- and you'll have a discussion about that -- but we have a long history of protecting of our natural environment. The largest land purchasing programs in the United States are in Florida. Three hundred million dollars a year over the last 15 years have been allocated for this.

We have committed to making sure that the properties inside the areas, the noise buffer areas, will continue to be part of our strategic approach to purchase these environmentally sensitive lands.

In addition to that, we will prioritize these spendings. They're already in our prioritized ecosystem strategy of purchases, and we will continue to make sure that those purchases occur on a timely basis, as they have in the past.

And then finally, we are confident that we can meet the deadline that you would impose on us. We believe that we could

get this done within the six-year time frame required by the BRAC process.

I am now pleased to introduce to you Captain John Leenhouts, who is United States retired pilot, to continue our presentation.

CAPT. LEENHOUTS: Thank you very much, Governor. Commissioners, if you would please allow me to stand, and I'll give a presentation from the charted area over there.

First of all, it's very important for you all to understand who I am so that my credibility will be established. I know who you are, and so it's clear in your minds, I'm a retired 27-year veteran of the United States Navy. I was a commodore of the strike fighter wing for the last three and a half years that I was in the Navy. I have flown over 6,000 tactical jet hours, encompassing A-7 Corsairs, F-14 Tomcats, and lastly the F/A-18 Hornet. Of those, about 100 hours were flown in combat in Desert Storm. Additionally, I have extensive carrier landing experience and hold the record today for the most carrier landings in the history of the United States, with over 1,645 off of 16 different carriers.

So with that as my background, what I would like to impart to you is my perspective as a naval aviator in looking at what it's like to fly out of Oceana, which I did for over four years, and have flown out of there since 1975, and in the last two years of my Navy career, I did fly out of there exclusively.

If you'll look to my left, this chart on my left indicates a city map, Rand McNally, of Virginia Beach. Imbedded within that great population, the largest city in Virginia, is NAS Oceana. If you look to my right, you will see that Jacksonville, Florida, is set close to the coast as well, but to the west of it, in the wide open spaces, is what used to be Naval Air Station Cecil, now Cecil Field Commerce Center, as well as Outlying Field Whitehouse.

The circles that you are looking at indicate the five-mile range of the typical air traffic control zone in which airplanes operate in. Around those air fields, as we well know in Oceana, is an extensive amount of encroachment. The charts in front of me here, numbers three and four, will show you the difference -- not in the AICUZ -- because the AICUZ, as important as it is, which is the noise zone we equate to the 65-decibel level range, that at Oceana we have in excess of 145,000 people living in that, the real crutch (sic) of the matter is the accident potential zones.

At Cecil Field right now you have less than 10,000 people in the AICUZ 65-dB line, but when you get to the accident potential zones, you've got over 3,600 people living where the airplanes fly and operate right around NAS Oceana. At Cecil Field, you have zero. No one lives in the accident potential zones. No one. Additionally, in the APZs, you have schools and churches and commercial buildings around NAS Oceana. There are none of those in the APZs around NAS -- what would have been NAS Cecil Field.

Those combined create problems. The combination of ground encroachment, right up to the fence line, and you double that with the encroachment of air space, which over NAS Oceana is extensive and causes us great challenges. So the two of those place hindrances on our ability to do our mission.

Let me talk specifically right now about the potential, as we've already discussed, for encroachment around Cecil Field. We saw that there has been extensive encroachment on Oceana, but at Cecil, if you'll look to the right, to chart number seven, you will see that the green, the dark green area, is land that is currently owned by the government. That encompasses -- the base itself is over 17,000 acres, compared to 5,000 at NAS Oceana. Couple with that -- and you can see the black line which indicates where the AICUZ line of 65 decibel levels is, you'll see the light green area. That land has been offered up for potential purchase by the government to ensure that there will be no encroachment.

And the reality is, to the west side and the north and south of Cecil is what we could term a greenbelt. It's preserved land that can never be encroached upon, and the city and the state are actively engaged in acquiring even more of that land to ensure there will be no replication of what we have had to endure at NAS Oceana.

Well, once you take those two combined, both the ground clutter and the airborne traffic that precludes rapid launching

out of Oceana, you end up with what we term right now a very congested area, on the ground and the air. Getting airborne out of Oceana, numerous times -- yes sir, that's right; we had to taxi out, hold short, wait for launch, unable to make it, turn around because our target time was unable to be met, and taxi back. If you do get airborne, then you have restrictive flight paths that limits you to 4,000 feet for 15 to 20 miles, then you're allowed to climb. Not the same at Cecil Field, and why is that? Because the airspace is not congested, and you can climb rapidly to your fuel efficient altitudes of 15 (thousand) to 20,000 and go directly to your target areas.

Now, let's talk about those target areas. You can look to my left, you'll see chart number six right here. This is a comparison between Virginia Beach operating area and the Jacksonville operating area. If you'll look to the bottommost, you'll see that you have one tactical range out there. There's a TACs range for recreation of tactical maneuvering, but you also have the massive air warning area that gives you 112,000 square miles. That's excellent airspace, but you have to share that with the Air Force out of Langley. You also only have two targets; you have their target, and you have BTs-9/11. Those, coupled with two MOAs, limit the ability you have to go train every day.

You compare that directly to what happens in Florida when you have two major tactical ranges which encompass over 220,000 square

miles of uninterrupted airspace, from the surface to 43,000 feet. And we can actually work those areas any time we want, because they're so massive. And yes, they do allow us to do joint work with the Air Force, as well as the Guard units that are located over at Eglin and at Jacksonville International.

Additionally to that, there are six different MOAs -- military operating areas -- associated within a single-cycle sortie of the aircraft, giving yourselves an hour and 15 cycle, or an hour and 30, you can fly to all those ranges. You could fly to the targets, which are six different targets in four different target complexes. There's live target ranges; two of them, both at Eglin and at Pinecastle, with the additional one going in live in January of '06 at Avon Park -- all of them within a single cycle of the Hornet. Those afford us the opportunity to fly anywhere you want, any day, and actually target over 100 different tactical aim points and live targets, and electronic warfare range, and the tactical range, and the ability to do tactical training with our sister services in the Air Force and the Army and the Marine Corps, out of Buford and out of Fort Stewart. And we did this regularly, both day and night.

Now, if you're going to be able to exploit the capability of naval aviation and train to fight, you've got to do it in the most unusual and demanding world you ever imagined, when you have to do this at an aircraft carrier at sea. So no matter how good my

training is in the air in putting a bomb on a target or fighting an airborne threat, I have to be able to come back and land on board the aircraft carrier. The most volatile skill of a naval aviator is his ability to constantly land, consistently, every time, in the pitching deck, nighttime environment, on an aircraft carrier, and the only way you're going to get there and ensure that success, that you can actually land every time you come from -- approach that ship, is you have to practice, practice, practice, practice.

What do you have at NAS Oceana? We have Fentress Field that, due to the encroachment, has caused the pattern to be flown in a dogleg fashion at altitudes of 200 feet higher than you normally would. What does that cause? That causes excessive rates of descent off the approach pattern from the 180-degree position, if you come in to land. So that rate of descent now becomes locked into your brain, and when you go out to the ship, and when you're under stress, you revert back to what you've been trained to do, and unfortunately, that causes problems for the young aviators.

Does it cause a problem for the exceptionally experienced aviator? Absolutely not. I tell you, I personally could go to train out at Fentress and do just fine. But I have over 1,600 carrier landings. The guy I'm worried about is that young man or that young woman who's got less than 100 traps -- 200 or 300 -- and they have to repeat their training every time to make it work.

If you try to do that at NAS Oceana, you can't do it. Those altitudes are 400 feet higher at the abeam position and have excessive rates of descent to get to the start point. And we say in the landing signal officer world, you have to get a good start when you start at the 180. If you can't do that, you'll never get aboard the ship every time.

Conversely, at Naval Outlying Field Whitehouse -- totally wide open; same pattern at the ship, 800 feet into the break, 600 feet on the downwind, 450 feet going through the 90, 375 through the 45, and you roll into the groove, and you can fly that past the same way every day, day and night, the same way you will do it at the ship. Repetition, repetition, repetition. At Navy -- what used to be Navy Cecil, now Cecil Field -- you have the ability to do the same identical pattern. Not only can you do that same pattern every day and at night, but you can do it concurrently with operations going on on the adjacent runway. And we did this regularly, all through the '80s and '90s, where you would do touch-and-go field carrier landing practice, right there with the exact patterns at Cecil Field, and concurrently having airplanes come in and doing full-stop landings on the adjacent runway.

Now, another one of the luxuries, if I say you have to practice like you're going to train, train like you're going to fight, then you have the ability at Whitehouse to do what we call the overhead marshalling stack, stacking them up to 6 (thousand),

8 (thousand), 10,000 feet overhead the field, circling down, simulating helicopter operations exactly like the ship, and then you come in and make your landings just like you would if you're at the ship and you're making your approach. That is not replicated at Fentress.

Additionally, when you go out to Cecil Field, we were able to put together what we called USS Ship Cecil Field, lining the airplanes up 15 miles behind the base, stacking at 5,000 feet all the way up to 15,000 feet, one minute apart push-out, replicating the carrier approach procedures all the way to touchdown. Every single time, that guy got to practice what he was going to see when he went to the ship, with no limitations. No limitations. All day, all night, and you didn't have to do -- you didn't have to do at Cecil the way they have to do it today at NAS Oceana. You can't do touch-and-gos after 10 o'clock in the evening, you can't do FCLPs -- field carrier landing practice -- unless they've filled up the pattern till 2:30 in the morning out at Fentress. Those are limitations that are very challenging.

So, in closing, what I'd like to make sure you walk away from, is the fact that we have in Florida, in essence, a Fallon training range, a myriad of targets in airspace with which to practice all of the strike warfare capabilities of naval aviation as it has to offer today; all the altitudes, no restrictions, because the FAA works closely in a real-time basis with us to

allow high-altitude weapons delivery. All of those training things that we do out at Fallon, we can do right there in Florida.

And then lastly, but most importantly, if you're going to be able to have strike power from the aircraft carrier, you have to get aboard. And we can practice just the way we're at the ship. The only difference between Outlying Field Whitehouse and Cecil Field is those two are not underway, but everything else is the same.

So when you consider all this, please remember that not only is this the ideal place to train, but it has the chance to give all those young men and women a chance to train like they're going to fight and fight to win. And if we want to think about savings, let's think about saving their lives when they go out and do their job.

With that, I would like to turn it over to another naval aviator, no longer in the service, Mr. John Craig.

MR. CRAIG: Good afternoon. My name is John Craig, and I appreciate your time. I recently left the Navy just two years ago as a commander with over 16 years of active service in order to care for my disabled son. My last job was the operations officer at Strike Fighter Weapons School Atlantic at NAS Oceana, where we were responsible for the training and combat readiness for all F-18 and F-14 squadrons as they prepared for deployment.

I'm a Naval Academy graduate with over 4,000 hours of flight time, including 2,000 hours operating from the NAS Oceana and NAS Cecil Field complexes. I have completed four combat deployments, have over 650 carrier landings.

I asked to participate today due to my ongoing concerns regarding the degraded training environment and the safety issues that exist at NAS Oceana as it exists today.

There is no doubt that combat readiness suffers due to the operations at Oceana and Outlying Field Fentress. Commercial and military flight restrictions; persistent instrument flight conditions, including severe icing in the winter time; and severely restricted arrival and departure procedures due to the encroachment, all increase the time, fuel and money needed to fulfill training requirements.

Additionally, that Dare County training complex in northern North Carolina is just simply inadequate for today's precision weapons delivery techniques. We need to practice in an environment that allows us to replicate exactly what we do on the battlefield, and there is no live bombing capability at Dare County.

As the officer in charge responsible for the strike fighter advanced readiness program, part of the interdeployment training cycle, I consistently was forced to compromise training objectives, waive individual flight events for pilots, and

eventually, squadrons were sent on deployment without completing the CNO-directed training.

Fentress continues to be a severe detriment to our training and, as Captain Leenhouts adhered to -- or talked about, the lack of the proper carrier environment simulation, especially at night, is a severe safety issue.

In contrast, we did not have to face those issues while flying at Cecil Field and Outlying Field Whitehouse. Airspace and flight patterns allowed us to train as we fight. The close proximity to both over-water ranges and superb inland bombing complexes at Pinecastle and Avon Park in central Florida gave tactical aviators all the tools they needed to be successful in combat.

Strike fighter advanced readiness program and that interdeployment training cycle portion never suffered when we were training out of Cecil Field. And, in fact, in the spring of 2002 while I was the operations officer at the weapons school, several senior leadership -- TAC Air leadership -- at Oceana explored the possibility of taking five squadrons back down to Cecil Field in order to make sure that we got the requisite combat training during that time. Unfortunately, money did not allow us to do that.

In conclusion, I've just come today to give you the perspective of the current fleet aviator. I know the issues

surrounding Cecil Field and at Oceana, and I know that we have an opportunity to secure premier training facilities at Cecil Field and allow our warriors today and in the future the ranges and the ability to train to the best of their ability so they can go and fight and win. I endorse that option completely, and I appreciate your time.

Now, it's my privilege to introduce one of my personal heroes, a man with over 500 combat missions in Southeast Asia, in Vietnam, Admiral Stan Arthur.

ADM. ARTHUR: It's a pleasure to be here today with you. I am Admiral Stan Arthur, Navy Retired. I spent 38 years on active duty as a naval aviator and spent most of my operational time aboard our wonderful carriers.

The issue of pilot training is a very important one to me. I know how critical it is for our young aviators to be able to train realistically before we ask them to risk their lives flying from the decks of our carriers.

When bad habits are allowed to grow, mistakes happen. Tiger Woods knows this; except for him, it results in a bogey. But in the carrier environment, it can often result in a fatality. I have seen this more often than I care to. When you are under stress, you must rely on your instincts to make the right choice. Instinct and habit patterns are honed through realistic, repetitive training. This is why I want our young aviators to

have the best training possible, so they can continue to contribute to our national security and live to a ripe old age.

Are they getting what they need? Let me read some statements from Oceana aviators as taken from a 13 September, 2004 article from "The Virginian-Pilot." I quote Lieutenant Commander Mark Sullivan, an F-14 pilot and veteran landing signal officer, referring to carrier landing practice at Outlying Field Fentress, "The difference in approach is dramatic. The whole neighborhood is off limits to us," pointing to a map of Fentress. "So we fly around this farm on this side; we stay outside the road here, cut back in on this side so we don't cross the Intracoastal, go all the way out here, and now drive over to get on line."

Captain Mark Mills, who commands Air Wing One at Oceana, said, "Flight patterns are a half-mile wider than those used at the carriers." Captain Tom Keeley, Oceana's commanding officer, "The Navy is out of alternatives. We are at the limit."

This article went on to say that Oceana pilots say they can see the advancing encroachment every time they return from an extended deployment. I would comment here that it is almost impossible to roll back encroachment.

In another article dated 30 June, 2004, the same Virginia newspaper reported on a five-page affidavit submitted by Admiral William J. Fallon, then U.S. Atlantic Fleet commander. When speaking about the operations at Outlying Field Fentress, "The

first time an aviator actually lands at sea on a dark night will be more difficult than it has to be if he had to do his night training at Fentress." In my mind, this is unacceptable risk when there is an alternative.

In summary, it boils down to whether this great nation, through you nine commissioners, is going to provide the best and safest training available to our young aviators. I am convinced it is available. You certainly have a tough job, but I believe the choice here is easy.

Thank you very much. And now, Admiral Bob Natter.

ADM. NATTER: Thank you, Admiral. I'm Bob Natter, a resident

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(Direction off mike.)

ADM. NATTER: Thank you. I'm a resident of the state of Florida. I'm also a consultant for the state on military issues. I'm proud to say that I had the great honor of serving for 41 years in the Navy. I'm even prouder still to be able to say I have three daughters in the Navy today, one of whom is a naval aviator.

I retired about a year and a half ago. My last three years in the Navy were as commander of the United States Atlantic Fleet based in Norfolk, Virginia. During my three-year tenure there, I worked very closely with the chief of naval operations, Vern Clark, on issues associated with Oceana and Fentress.

Additionally, I met with the commanding officers of Naval Air Station Oceana about the issues of noise abatement and training. I also met on two occasions with the air wing commanders out at Naval Air Station Oceana to talk about deployment training, readiness and the ability to attain those readiness levels around Oceana and Fentress.

As an example of the encroaching -- the encroachment problems around Oceana that was a problem for training, I have to note that the commanding officer of NAS Oceana wrote the city council of Virginia Beach on 70 occasions, offering his strong objections to specific building projects around Oceana. In 51 of those appeals, the city council voted to go ahead with the construction in spite of those objections.

The CNO and I looked at alternatives. Oceana is a very valuable air station. But we knew we needed relief from the ability to train around Oceana and around Fentress.

The result of that effort was to find a location for an additional outlying field. That location is currently in North Carolina. The Navy, with the support of the United States Congress, has appropriated \$180 million to build this additional outlying field if the courts don't block it. I believe that a \$180 million problem is not just an inconvenience, but a very serious problem.

Subsequently, the CNO testified before this very commission that -- and the vice chief testified just last month before this commission that the Navy had to look for an opportunity to build another master jet base 10 to 12 years from now.

The plan to build an additional outlying field to relieve the pressure and a determination if they wanted to invest another \$2 billion 10 years from now to help alleviate the training problems around Oceana, I think, are indicative.

Now, let me talk about Cecil Field. To me, the Navy's opposition to this is befuddling, primarily because they've never bothered to go down to Cecil Field to look at what's there. They strictly have said that there's an encroachment problem, an FAA problem and an investment problem.

The reality -- and the facts don't support that. Let's look at the numbers. Here's what one gets for the return of Naval Air Station Cecil Field to the Department of Defense: 17,600 acres, all government land -- federal government DOD land -- around the air strip, as opposed to 5,000-some acres around Oceana; all existing infrastructure there. There's actually more hangar space at Cecil Field today than there is at Oceana. The idea that this is going to cost the Navy \$1.6 billion, to me just flies in the face of reality.

The acreage, the infrastructure, to which has been improved to the tune of \$130 million, is all for free. The value of this

real estate and the infrastructure there is assessed at \$1.66 billion.

In addition to the great facilities at a bargain, I think the military value of Cecil Field and the Navy outlying field there is obvious. The 1993 BRAC actually assessed the military value of Cecil Field at a score of 8.14. NAS Oceana was assessed at a score of -0.95. And I would argue that with the ensuing encroachment around Oceana today that that -0.95 would go even lower. Those are not our numbers. Those are not the commission's numbers. Those are the U.S. Navy's numbers and the BRAC effort in '93.

I want to address a couple of operational issues. Number one, the load-out for deployments has been mentioned; the close proximity of the ships, the carriers in Norfolk and the short distance to Oceana. In reality, this is the way a load-out for deployment works, of which there are about 1.5 deployments per coast per year. Trucks go out to Oceana. The squadrons and the wings load their files, load their ground equipment into trucks. They drive across the city about 45 minutes down to the piers and they load them aboard the carriers.

The same thing happens at Cecil Field. You load your equipment and it's a day's drive up to Norfolk. Now, if that's such a serious issue for the Navy, I would ask the question, why is that done at Lamore, California, where there are no aircraft at

the master jet base located anywhere near the coastline? It's 320 miles from NAS Lamore down to San Diego. During my entire time in the Navy, and certainly as a flag officer, I never heard one complaint from the Pacific fleet about the distance from Lamore to the ships.

The second issue I think is worthy of mention is this issue about a classified mission at Oceana. As commander of the Atlantic fleet, I obviously had purview over what happened at Oceana. I was cleared into that classified program. And I can assure you that that mission can be moved to another naval air station in the Norfolk area. And with that, I won't discuss it anymore, but I'm happy to discuss it in private with the commission.

In summary, let me just say this is all about mitigating risk; number one, risk to our pilots, the ability to come aboard the carriers; secondly, the risk of the people who live around this base. I can tell you that Norfolk and Virginia Beach are outstanding, wonderful communities, wonderful people. But there are too many of them living next to the fence line at Oceana. That restricts our operations and in my view endangers the citizens.

Also, it's about mitigating risk to the future of naval aviation in the Atlantic fleet. If we're going to buy another master jet base 10 years from now at the tune of \$2 billion and

the Navy says they don't have the money today, where are they going to get it 10 years from now?

Secondly, where are you going to find a place that's going to take a master jet base and get all the environmental permitting done that's necessary to put it there? And lastly, how are you ever going to do it outside of BRAC process? Impossible, in my opinion.

The bottom line is that Cecil Field, in my opinion, is the right decision for the taxpayers today, as you will hear from Mayor Peyton in just a second. Most importantly, it's the right decision for our young naval aviators, who deserve the opportunity to train the way we ask them to go to war.

With that, let me turn it over to Mayor John Peyton, mayor of Jacksonville, Florida.

MAYOR PEYTON: Thank you, Admiral. And Mr. Chairman, members of the commission, we appreciate your time. And on behalf of the citizens of Jacksonville, we appreciate being part of this discussion.

My name is John Peyton. I have the distinction of serving as mayor of Jacksonville, Florida. You have heard the aviation case for Cecil Field. Now I'd like to present to you the business case for Cecil Field. But first, let me repeat, our commitment is clear: We will return Cecil Field to the Navy as a master jet base, a base that is clear -- that is in better condition than it

was found and clear of commercial tenants and the promise that encroachment will never interfere with Navy operations.

Cecil Field is a unique asset with a great history and an unmatched potential. It is the largest of four master jet bases created by congressional action in 1951. It is three times larger than NAS Oceana, with direct access to unrestricted air space in the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico. In fact, this unrestricted air space is one of the reasons the military value of Cecil was significantly higher than Oceana when analyzed by the Department of Defense in 1993.

Since acquiring the property in 1999, Jacksonville has been a good custodian of Cecil. The city has been improving the base to accommodate a first-tier aviation commerce center. Our investments include \$133 million in infrastructure enhancements, demolition of antiquated buildings, and environmental remediation. In fact, 70 percent of the base is intact and upgraded.

The city did all of this to attract one large aviation enterprise. We've been very close to landing two significant anchor tenants and believe that we are probably the most marketable aviation facility in the country.

In short, Cecil Field is in better shape today than it was in 1999 when it was transferred by the Navy. And because of this value, we have every reason to believe that the window of opportunity for making Cecil available to the Navy is narrow.

There are several things you should know about Cecil Field. There is more hangar space on the flight line at Cecil than there is at NAS Oceana. The hangars have been refurbished and expanded. There is six miles of new roads at Cecil Field, and funding is in place, thanks to our governor, for a \$130 million project to connect Cecil Field to Interstate I-10. Environmental problems have been remediated.

Now, I'd like to speak a moment about encroachment. Encroachment is and will not be a problem at Cecil Field. There are no, I repeat no, improper uses of the accident probability zone -- no schools, no churches, no shopping areas. You will never have the same encroachment problems at Cecil that are currently existing at Oceana. I think this chart up here expresses that contrast.

Currently there are 145,000 people living in the ACUIZ of NAS Oceana, while only 10,000 live in the ACUIZ of Cecil Field. The densely populated ACUIZ in NAS Oceana is, in fact, restricting training and hindering flight operations. There are no such limitations at Cecil, and the air strip can be used 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

The Jacksonville municipal code lays out clear and detailed restrictions on land use in the ACUIZ, which our city government strictly adheres to. We regulate the sale or lease of property with the ACUIZ through disclosure statements in the deeds.

The threat of future encroachment is virtually impossible due to the major greenbelt that bounds Cecil Field. This is an extraordinary feature of this facility. This permanent buffer prevents encroachment to the north, south and west of the runways. This greenbelt is the result of a successful state and city partnership to preserve land and manage growth.

Jacksonville has the largest park system in America, with over 100 square miles of publicly-owned land. And the state of Florida boasts the most aggressive land acquisition program in the union. We can and will control encroachment. And between the land we own, the land we are scheduled to acquire and the land that we can restrict, encroachment is not and will not be a problem at Cecil Field.

On the business side of this commitment, the city has made a comprehensive effort to estimate cost necessary for re-establishing Cecil Field as a master jet base. We provided construction estimates and capacity data to your staff. Our business experience at Cecil Field gives us a validated number for the square-foot costs of administration buildings, barracks, aviation-related infrastructure.

We believe the cost to re-establish Cecil Field as a master jet base is one-quarter of the amount estimated by the Navy. This large cost discrepancy results from the failure of the Navy to

account for the existing infrastructure currently in place at Cecil.

On August 19th, yesterday, our city council passed a unanimous resolution that calls for the immediate transfer to the Navy the title to Cecil Field. We estimate the monetary value of the land and the buildings of this transfer to be \$1.6 billion. And this is depicted in chart nine.

We commit to transfer the base clear of all commercial tenants no later than December 2009. Additionally, we will support the state's commitment to public-private housing to accommodate Navy arrivals.

We have also included a time line for your view. This conversion of Cecil Field to a master jet base can be completed in four and a half years. We expect the environmental impact study to be a seamless process that will run concurrently with the construction and conversion planning. Construction should take three years. And because Cecil has never stopped operating as a jet base, the EIS will not be a problem.

In summary, let me restate, Jacksonville will turn over Cecil Field free of tenants and environmental problems to the Navy. Encroachment is not and will not be a problem. And all reports that encroachment, commercial leases, air space restrictions or exorbitant costs we have found to be incorrect and not based on facts.

The facts are compelling, and the contrast between Cecil and NAS Oceana is clear. This is a unique opportunity with near-providential timing. This mayor and this governor will pledge to make this work. Cecil Field is the largest and best master jet base in the world. We recognize that the highest and best use of this community asset is to return Cecil to the Navy.

Jacksonville was entrusted with a jewel in the form of a master jet base. We've been good custodians of this jewel. She has been cared for. She is polished. And, quite frankly, she has never looked better. We now seek to return this jewel to its rightful owner, the naval aviators that train diligently to keep us safe.

Now it's my privilege to introduce the senior senator from Florida, Bill Nelson.

SENATOR BILL NELSON (D-FL): Mr. Chairman and commissioners, we're united as an entire congressional delegation. And as you can tell from the testimony thus far, Florida has put its bottom line up front, and that is that Cecil Field and northeast Florida still has its military value, and Cecil should be reoccupied by the Navy.

The evidence that has been presented to you over the last several weeks has been objective, it's been measurable, and it's been compelling. Cecil can give the nation the air, sea and land ranges necessary to achieve the most realistic combat training at

the lowest risk. We don't just have that restricted air space off of the northeast of Florida. We've got almost the entire Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Florida that is restricted.

We're here to demonstrate the Florida delegation's solidarity in support of the re-establishment of the Navy at Cecil. And we're here to demonstrate our total commitment as members of Congress to do whatever is necessary for Cecil. We're here to pledge that the Navy will have the federal resources to make this happen efficiently, effectively, affordably and on time.

Mr. Chairman, I'm a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. And over the last four years, we have examined over and over the need and for the purpose of this BRAC round. And our direct intent has always been that this commission should objectively examine the value of our national military infrastructure, without limitation, and act in the ways that you judge appropriate and necessary to preserve and increase the readiness of our forces and those forces into the future.

We support you to give the men and women of our armed forces exactly what they need, without any limitation, no limitations day and night, without compromises on training and operations, without having to have extraordinary management, and without additional risk, so that they can remain the most capable and ready force the world has ever known.

