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ARIZONA

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Pentagon: Luke AFB 1st choice for F-35s **Final decision depends on environment study**

by David Madrid and Cecilia Chan - Jul. 30, 2010 12:00 AM
The Arizona Republic

Luke Air Force Base leaped into front-runner status Thursday in its bid to become a new training site for the military's next generation of fighter jets and ensure that it would remain one of the state's largest employers for years to come.

Air Force officials all but anointed Luke, saying it is a preferred choice for training for the F-35 Lightning II.

The final hurdle will be an environmental-impact study that will now focus on the Glendale base.

Gary Strasburg, an Air Force spokesman at the Pentagon, said the Air Force would prefer to place the Joint Strike Fighter at Luke, likely starting in three years.

"We have to go through the environmental analysis before we can designate it as the final decision," Strasburg said. "It's believed that when we complete the environmental analysis it will still be the right choice for us."

The new training program would be a coup for the region, bringing an infusion of federal funds to a state battered by a dismal economy.

It also would halt concerns that Luke, the only Phoenix-area military base, could close when the military phases out the aging F-16 planes now housed there.

State and local leaders celebrated the news.

"We have gone from a situation where we were working to become their first choice to where something would have to happen to make us lose it," Glendale Mayor Elaine Scruggs said.

Republican Sen. John McCain vowed to see the process through to the end, saying he will ensure a "fair, transparent and comprehensive" environmental study that addresses legitimate concerns.

The study will look at factors including noise, land use and safety. Once the draft is released, public hearings will be held. A final decision is expected by next summer.

If Luke wins the F-35, it would start with two planes in 2013. Eventually, it would reach three squadrons totaling 72 planes.

The plane is designed to be used, in modified forms, by all branches of the military, eventually replacing various fighter jets now in use.

Fueling an economy

Luke is a \$2.2 billion economic engine for Arizona. Its 7,000 military and civilian workers bolster businesses, schools and thousands of military retirees.

Gov. Jan Brewer said the F-35 could initially bring in as much as \$125 million in construction money to prepare the base for the aircraft.

"It's going to be huge, and it's going to be a big part of the Arizona (economic) comeback," she said.

The governor said the economic effects of the F-35 will be felt locally in businesses, schools and employment.

"It's that trickle-down effect that's going to make that change, and it's a huge change," she said.

Mike Pfent, owner of Glendale-based A-List Sedan, a luxury taxi service, said about 20 percent of his business is from Luke Air Force Base.

"I'm ecstatic," he said. "I'm so looking forward to (the F-35). Some of my neighbors are Air Force, and they want to see it, too. Everybody wants it out here. You would have to be an idiot not to."

A 2008 economic-impact study of the state's military installations by two Phoenix-based consultant groups shows that total payroll connected to Luke, including active duty personnel, civilians and military retirees is almost \$517 million annually.

Luke spokesman Capt. Jerry Gonzalez said the base is popular with military retirees who use base services including the medical clinic, pharmacy, commissary, fitness center and gas station.

He said about 70,000 military retirees use the base throughout the year, but between November and April, that number jumps up to nearly 120,000.

Environmental study

El Mirage and some West Valley residents have raised concerns about noise, fearing the F-35s will be louder than the jets now at Luke.

Definitive noise studies have not been conducted but some experts have said that the F-35 is louder than the F-16.

The base regularly receives some resident complaints that the F-16s are noisy as they fly over neighborhoods.

Noise concerns are at the crux of concerns expressed by El Mirage elected officials. City leaders first caused a stir when they flew to Washington, D.C., more than a year ago to ask for \$400 million in federal compensation because encroachment limits had stymied economic growth in the land-locked city.

Federal officials did not respond, and El Mirage later raised a public discussion about a possible increase in noise. El Mirage officials did not return phone calls on Thursday.

Scruggs and others enticed Brewer to help them put together Luke Forward, an educational campaign to drum up support for the F-35.

Proponents said that community support is crucial to a final decision.

"This puts us on top of the pile and we have got to make sure we stay on top," said Steve Yamamori, executive director of Fighter Country Partnership, a base support group.

"We are the team to beat."

WV leaders thrilled Luke is Air Force's preference for F-35 training

*by Cecilia Chan - Jul. 31, 2010 07:40 AM
The Arizona Republic*

West Valley leaders were ecstatic Thursday to learn that Luke Air Force Base is the Air Force's preferred site to train pilots of the new F-35 fighter jet.

The decision is not set in stone. The Glendale base still must undergo an environmental-impact study. Two other Air Force bases could come back into contention pending results.

The draft report is expected in October. A decision is expected in late spring 2011.

Luke supporters say F-35 training would keep the base open after it phases out aging F-16s. The base pumps \$2.17 billion a year into Arizona's economy.

West Valley leaders' reactions:

- Glendale Mayor Elaine Scruggs: "We have gone from a situation where we were working to become their first choice to where something would have to happen to make us lose it. We went from three alternatives to us. And that is a critical step, a milestone, a huge accomplishment. We knew all along Luke should be the site. We did a lot to earn that decision that was announced today."
- Peoria Mayor Bob Barrett: "Luke Air Force Base is a real economic driver in the West Valley. The F-35 mission ensures Luke's viability for the next 40 years. This is the best news we could have hoped for at this point. The city of Peoria will continue to strongly support the mission and Luke AFB throughout this process."
- Goodyear Mayor James Cavanaugh: "Today's decision by the Air Force marks a major milestone in the F-35 site-selection process. Luke Air Force Base is now poised to transition from its current F-16 training mission to become the Air Force's F-35 pilot-training center, bringing jobs and many other economic benefits to the West Valley, and the region as a whole."
- Avondale Mayor Marie Lopez Rogers: The city of Avondale is thrilled with the announcement that Luke is the preferred location for the F-35. This is truly a significant long-term economic accomplishment for the West Valley by getting this new mission at Luke. Without the leadership and collaboration of so many people like the governor, attorney general, state legislators, our congressional members and all the local leaders, this would not have been possible."

- Maricopa County Supervisor Max Wilson: "This Air Force decision wasn't caused by just luck. There was a lot of hard work and sacrifice that went into this and the West Valley should be very proud. I'm extremely excited to have the F-35 coming to Luke. Let's keep moving Luke forward."

- Jack Lunsford, Westmarc chief executive "Two things come into play: One, the F-35 coming to Luke continues the strong economic role that Luke plays in our economy. Second of all . . . we can look at the expansion of training from more jets coming in for training, and that probably expands the economic impact. So one, it sustains it, and two, it expands it. One of Westmarc's key initiatives for years has been to support and preserve the mission of Luke Air Force Base . . . so it's great news for us."

- Steve Yamamori, executive director of Fighter Country Partnership:

"It's Luke unless the completely unthinkable happens. This is big, big news. In my opinion this is a culmination of tens of thousand of people supporting Luke in the community. It's just a great, great day for the future of Luke Air Force Base and the future of Arizona. This is a major step in the right direction."

Landing F-35 jet would brighten Arizona's future

Opinion

Aug. 4, 2010

The Arizona Republic

The Air Force got it exactly right in naming Luke Air Force Base its preferred location to train pilots to fly the new F-35 fighter jet. There is no better place for it.

And there's no better time for good news from Washington.

The Air Force announced Thursday that Luke, at this point in the military's analysis, is the optimum training location for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. The F-35 replaces the aging F-16, for which Luke has been the premier training site in the world.

This is a major step in securing Luke's future. Landing the F-35 is expected to have a positive impact for decades. In the short term, the F-35 could initially bring in as much as \$125 million in construction money to ready the base for the aircraft.

Throughout its 69-year history, Luke has played a vital role in the nation's defense and in Arizona's development. The base has made a major imprint on the Valley's growth and has a \$2.2 billion annual effect on the state economy.

Its presence is well-known and treasured, which is why Arizona's political and business leaders and other Luke supporters waged an impressive campaign to tout the base's virtues to the Defense Department.

Luke was on a short list for the F-35 with training bases in Idaho, Florida and New Mexico. Now Luke is no longer a contender for the new fighter jet; it is the training mission location to beat.

Barring an unexpected adverse finding during an upcoming environmental impact study, Luke should get final approval for the F-35 before next summer.

In a bright future, Luke remains an important part of Arizona's economy and the nation's defense system.

F-35 training a step closer to flight at Luke

Thursday, August 5, 2010

By Elizabeth Jackman
The Glendale Star

Valley leaders reacted last week with excitement to an announcement by Sen. John McCain that the Department of Air Force has selected Luke Air Force Base as its preferred training base for stationing of the F-35 Lightning II (Joint Strike Fighter).

“The Air Force has recognized that the unparalleled capabilities inherent to Arizona - from the Barry M. Goldwater Range, to great flying weather, and strong support from state and local governments and communities, serve to provide the best environment and the finest quality of life for our military personnel training in the Air Force's next generation fighter,” McCain said. “In return, Luke AFB offers the West Valley and the state of Arizona a strong economic engine, contributing more than 8,000 jobs and \$2.17 billion annually to the state's economy.”

With the decision, Luke is now poised to transition from its current F-16 training mission to become the Air Force's “school house,” subject to the completion of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process that is currently underway.

Glendale Mayor Elaine Scruggs said she was happy and relieved.

“Obviously, they did the right thing for the Air Force, national defense, the state of Arizona and the West Valley,” Scruggs said. “This represents a major milestone and the most critical stage in the F-35 site-selection process. Although we realize there is more work ahead of us, we are extremely grateful to our state's congressional delegation, the Arizona Legislature, Gov. Jan Brewer, Attorney General Terry Goddard and citizens and businesses for working closely with us to champion and support the F-35 coming to Luke Air Force Base through our Luke Forward campaign.”

The campaign was developed to send a clear, strong message to the Department of Defense that Arizona supports Luke AFB continuing to serve as one of the country's premier fighter pilot training facilities and to raise awareness of the critical role Luke plays in our national defense and state's economy.”

Brewer called the selection a testament to Arizona's great team effort.

“Having Luke selected as the F-35 training center was personal for me. Luke is in my back yard, and I was a founding member of Luke's Fighter Country Partnership,” said Brewer, who is a resident of Glendale. “In a letter to Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley before the selection, and in leading a delegation of Arizona officials to meetings at the Pentagon, I noted Luke is the perfect location for this advanced fighter aircraft

given the fact that Arizona has state statutes in place to manage growth around our military installations that protect their missions. I reminded him of Luke's unique assets - including its proximity to the 2.7-million acre Barry M. Goldwater Range, key to air-to-ground combat training, along with 57,000 cubic miles of airspace overhead where pilots practice air-to-air maneuvers and engage targets on the ground.”

Fighter Country Partnership (FCP) Chairman Charley Freericks, who is co-chairing the Luke Forward Campaign with Scruggs, credits community support for the decision.

“Local community support of military bases is very important back in Washington, and we know the tremendous Valley and statewide support for Luke Air Force Base really helped us,” said Freericks, a senior vice president at DMB Associates. “We reached literally tens of thousands of Arizonans through our citizen and business outreach initiatives, and community support for Luke AFB was overwhelming. There is no question that this strong level of support was a significant factor in the Air Force's decision to site F-35 at Luke.”

Peoria Mayor Bob Barrett called Luke AFB a real economic driver in the West Valley.

“The F-35 mission ensures Luke's viability for the next 40 years,” Barrett said. “This is the best news we could have hoped for at this point. The City of Peoria will continue to strongly support the mission and Luke AFB throughout this process.”

The announcement that Luke was a preferred base was made prior to the Air Force's draft F-35 basing EIS document, which is anticipated to be published in the next 30 days.

The Air Force is required to conduct an environmental assessment of each potential F-35 site before making its final basing decision.

The federally mandated assessment, which is referred to as the EIS process, allows individual citizens and communities around candidate bases to provide input during the formal evaluation of each base.

The Draft EIS will serve as the Air Force's notice of intent to proceed. Once the Draft EIS is released, in which Luke will be identified as the Air Force's preferred site, public hearings will be held later this year.

Once the public hearings are held and the comment period concludes, the Air Force will release its final EIS document that will provide responses to comments received from the public.

After the Final EIS document is published, there will be an additional 30-day public review period. After reviewing comments and after considering any environmental impacts, the Air Force will make its final decision.

It is anticipated the Air Force's final “Record Decision” which will conclude the environmental impact process, will be made in early 2011.

Goddard, county supervisor, legislator and business leaders salute selection of Luke AFB

Attorney General Terry Goddard commended the selection of Luke Air Force Base as a training base for the next generation of Air Force jets, the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

“The Air Force's choice of Luke is terrific news for the citizens of Arizona,” Goddard said. “Since its opening in 1941, Luke has played a vital role in our nation's security and our state's economy. It has earned its status as one of America's premier air bases. Its choice for the F-35 promises to continue its prominent mission far into the future.”

Goddard has been one of the state's strongest advocates for Luke's selection. In addition to making several trips to the Pentagon to promote the base in meetings with senior Defense Department officials, he led the legal fight against residential encroachment that had placed Luke's chance of being chosen in jeopardy.

Maricopa County Supervisor Max Wilson joined other elected officials and community business leaders in praising the Air Force recommendation.

“This Air Force decision wasn't caused by just luck. There was a lot of hard work and sacrifice that went into this and the West Valley should be very proud,” said Wilson, whose district encompasses Luke Air Forces' main base and Auxiliary Field 1. “I want to thank Gov. Brewer for her leadership in stepping up to protect the taxpayers of Maricopa County and bringing this follow on mission to Luke Air Force Base.”

After serving in the Air Force and working on Luke's flight line, Wilson has been a resident of Litchfield Park for more than 30 years. The F-35 Fighters will replace the aging F-16 models.

“I have personally worked on the F-16 and they have served us well,” Wilson said, “but I'm extremely excited to have the F-35 coming to Luke. Let's keep moving Luke forward.”

“This is exciting news for the West Valley, and the state,” said Sen. John Nelson, whose district includes Luke AFB. “There is no doubt the strong community support we saw leading up to this decision played a key role.

“This has been a real team effort, from my colleagues at the Arizona Legislature, to our congressional delegation, Gov. Brewer, local leaders and Fighter Country Partnership.

“While not being able to pre-judge the final decision, the proximity of Barry M. Goldwater Range, great community support and flying conditions certainly supported this preferred decision.”

Greater Phoenix Economic Council joined the list of those applauding the Air Force decision to recommend Luke as a base for an F-35 pilot training center.

GPEC led a delegation of 60 state and local elected officials and business leaders to Washington, D.C. in April to lobby for the F-35 training in addition to jobs in other sectors.

GPEC President and CEO Barry Broome and Arizona Cardinals President Michael Bidwill, who is also GPEC's chairman, joined the effort.

“Today's announcement demonstrates the impact Greater Phoenix and state leaders have when they work together to improve Arizona's economy,” Broome said. “This shows that the mission to Washington, which was led by GPEC and Gov. Brewer, was a great success.”

The decision is a testament to the leadership of GPEC's board, the dedication of Gov. Brewer and Attorney General Terry Goddard, and the tireless efforts of Greater Phoenix's city leaders, Broome said.

“The GPEC mission was unprecedented in uniting so many high-level Arizona government and business leaders to lobby on behalf of the state in one trip,” Bidwill said. “The Washington trip was just the beginning. We will continue working together to bring more jobs to Arizona.”

CALIFORNIA



206-Acre Security Zone Established Off Coronado

August 4, 2010

Jack Innis

SAN DIEGO -- Boaters venturing south of San Diego Bay's Zuniga Jetty should be on alert for red flags, strobe lights, screaming sirens and VHF radio broadcasts. Failing that, they should watch out for bullets ricocheting off the water.

The attention-getting devices will be used to alert boaters to a new 206-acre "naval danger zone" designated July 7 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The fan-shaped danger zone south of Zuniga Jetty is off-limits to boaters when a small arms firing range on North Island Naval Air Station is in use.

The danger zone is only active when the firing range is in use. Boaters may still navigate and fish in the area -- but when notified that firing range activities are about to commence, boaters must leave the area immediately. Anchoring anywhere within the danger zone is prohibited regardless of whether the range is in operation, according to the Navy.

The 12-lane pistol range and 10-lane rifle range was built in 1958, but the combined facility was closed by the Navy in 2008, pending establishment of the danger zone. The range is surrounded by large dirt berms to contain bullets, but the agency had concerns that bullet ricochets might endanger boaters. However, the likelihood of ricochet is extremely slight, according to a Corps of Engineers bulletin.

The range is used for basic small arms qualifications of sailors, security personnel and law enforcement agencies. Firearms used here include 9mm, .38 caliber, .40 caliber and .45 caliber pistols; 12 gauge shotguns; and 5.56mm rifles.

Currently, the main firing range hours of operation are 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. However, the range may be opened on weekends, evenings or other times.



Navy Seeks Public Opinion On Sonar Training

Natural Resources Defense Council Claims Sonar Harms, Kills Marine Mammals

August 4, 2010

SAN DIEGO -- Environmentalists say the Navy's way of tracking submarines is killing and wounding marine life but on Wednesday the Navy asked for the public to weigh in.

To answer the nation's call, the Navy has to have hands-on training, and a good portion of it is done 75 miles west of San Diego around San Clemente Island.

"The aircraft carriers mostly operate down in this area," said Alex Stone of Pacific Fleet Environmental told 10News.

As they put together an environmental impact study, Stone and other experts want public opinion on the impact this kind of training may have. By far, the use of sonar causes the most concern.

"We understand the use of sonar is controversial and that's one of the reasons why we're doing this study to use the best available science to determine the impacts of sonar," said Stone.

Several years ago, the Navy showed firsthand the steps they take when marine mammals, especially whales, are spotted.

When a whale is spotted, power levels are reduced or turned off.

A group called the Natural Resources Defense Council claimed sonar was harming and kill marine mammals. The group filed a lawsuit to stop it, but the Supreme Court disagreed.

In a statement to 10News, the Los Angeles-based group said they're still concerned the Navy is still not doing enough, which is the reason behind the public meetings.

"I was just concerned about some of the safety aspects and protection of the animals," said Virginia Silverman, a Point Loma resident.

"Do you think they're doing enough?" asked 10News reporter Bob Lawrence.

"I'm not sure; we'll find out I guess," said Silverman.

The Navy is required to do these environmental studies every five years.

Concerned citizens can weigh in on the U.S. Navy's environmental impact statement on San Clemente Island by visiting www.hstteis.com.

FLORIDA

nwfdailynews.com
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Tyndall wins F-22 lottery

July 30, 2010 1:42 PM

Daniel Carson

Florida Freedom Newspapers

TYNDALL AFB — It was the news Bay County officials were hoping for: A new mission — and jobs — are headed to Tyndall Air Force Base.

Tyndall's future will include the addition of a new F-22 Raptor squadron, officials announced this week. The base will receive 21 new fighter jets as part of the Air Force's consolidation of its F-22 fleet.

Rep. Allen Boyd, D-Monticello, said the Air Force's decision to add an operational squadron to the base's existing F-22 combat training mission will mean almost 600 more personnel at the base. The new squadron stemmed from government and local civic leaders' continued efforts to secure Tyndall a follow-on mission, Boyd said.

The announcement Thursday comes months after Tyndall started to draw down its two F-15 squadrons as part of an Air Force-wide restructuring plan.

"I'm very pleased today that we can celebrate achieving this very important goal," Boyd said during a conference call.

He praised the work of the Bay Defense Alliance and other Bay County officials to bring the squadron to Tyndall.

Boyd said the first F-22s will arrive toward the end of 2012. He said it would take about six months to get all of the F-22s on the base.

Bay County leaders, as well as U.S. Sens. Bill Nelson and George LeMieux, welcomed the news. Panama City Mayor Scott Clemons called it a needed shot in the arm to the area's economy.

"I was hoping we were going to hear this," Clemons said.

The addition of another F-22 squadron secures Tyndall's future for a long time, Bay Defense Alliance officials said.

"I can't tell you how much this means for the community," said member Glen McDonald.

Boyd first announced in May that Tyndall was one of four bases in the running for additional F-22 Raptors.

Boyd said Thursday that Tyndall had received the maximum number of jets possible and the most of any of the bases under consideration, as the Air Force looks to consolidate F-22 facilities from six to five.

An Air Force announcement Thursday listed Holloman Air Force Base, N.M.; Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska; Langley Air Force Base, Va.; and Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., as other bases affected by the F-22 consolidation.

Holloman will deactivate one F-22 squadron and redistribute that squadron's aircraft to other units, while relocating a remaining F-22 squadron to Tyndall, according to the Air Force. Elmendorf and Langley each will pick up six F-22s, with Nellis receiving two.

The moves are contingent on completion of appropriate environmental analyses.

Nelson and Boyd said they thought Tyndall's proximity to the Gulf of Mexico training range played a significant part in the Air Force's decision.

"I'm very glad to see that that mission is not only going to be continued, but is also going to be substantially enhanced," Nelson said of Tyndall, referring to the 29 F-22 Raptors already assigned to the 325th Operations Group's 43rd Fighter Squadron.

In July 2009, Bay Defense Alliance President Tom Neubauer said the base originally was supposed to get up to 60 Raptors, but that number was reduced as production levels for the F-22 fighter were lowered.

Efforts to obtain another F-22 squadron at Tyndall intensified in late 2009 after the Air Force announced that Tyndall did not make the Air Force's first group list of candidate locations for the F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighter.

Boyd repeated Thursday that Tyndall and the Gulf of Mexico testing range were more suited for the F-22 than the F-35, which is an air-to-ground fighter jet.



Commander: Eglin Air Force Base to be limited to 59 F-35's

August 01, 2010 7:49 PM

MONA MOORE

EGLIN AFB – The Air Force will limit the number of Joint Strike Fighters based at Eglin to the 59 aircraft that were assigned to the base in last year's Record of Decision.

In a press conference this afternoon, Maj. Gen. C. R. Davis, Air Armament Center Commander, said Eglin is out of the running for the 48 F-35's that were not guaranteed by BRAC.

Okaloosa County Commissioner Wayne Harris, a member of the Eglin Installation Growth Committee, disagreed with the Air Force's decision.

"This is a bittersweet decision, bitter that we're only getting 59 as opposed to 107. But I'm a believer that half a loaf is better than no loaf at all," Harris said in a phone interview after the announcement.

Davis said additional aircraft would interfere with current missions. Losing the 48 planes would mean a 52 percent drop in projected operations.

"It was a decision based on the congestion of the airspace," Davis said.

Harris suspected other events factored into the Air Force's decision. He noted that the base did not mention a problem with airspace in its initial environmental study.

"(Airspace) wasn't a problem before and now there is a problem. What happened in one short year?" Harris said.

After Valparaiso filed the Freedom of Information Act lawsuit and threatened to file a second suit, the Air Force issued a Record of Decision for only 59 aircraft, a squadron each for the Navy, Air Force and Marines.

"Yes, the community issues have always been in the background," Davis conceded, but insisted the main reason was the airspace. "These folks just ran out of light in the day at anything much above the 59 aircraft level."

Davis said congestion became apparent once the base obtained additional data and the right data took a long time to acquire.

The base has been working on models that would include 107 aircraft but the models had JSF operations competing with the base's current installations. If that were to happen, Eglin would lose missions.

"It was easier losing 40 aircraft than risking missions," Davis said.

Harris said he was concerned about the taxpayer dollars that had been spent preparing Eglin for 107 planes.

“I’m wondering what’s the return investment on that,” Harris said.

In 2005, the Economic Development Council of Okaloosa County commissioned the University of West Florida’s Haas Center for Business Research and Economic Development to study the economic and population impacts of the arrival of 107 F-35s. The study was updated this year to measure the impact of losing 48 aircraft.

The total economic impact of bringing 107 F-35s to Eglin was estimated at \$2.15 billion between 2010 and 2016. However, the Haas Center’s report estimates that number will drop by as much as \$613 million without the 48 additional F-35s.

The total impact of 107 aircraft on the population would have been 6,300 people. The region will lose between 1800 and 2200 of those new residents. Employment will drop from the projected 6,000 new jobs to as much as 2500 less.

Davis also announced the base’s preferred location for the JSF flight operations. The alternatives were introduced at last year’s public scoping meetings.

Eglin’s preference is to make no changes to the Eglin Main runway configuration and use Duke and Choctaw as outlying fields for training operations.

Davis shared the news with area officials shortly before the press conference. Valparaiso Mayor Bruce Arnold said the news was great.

“They said they would base everything at Eglin Main but they would eliminate the noise over our city,” Arnold said after the meeting.

He said Eglin officials promised to use the north/south runway “very, very sparingly” and that 50 percent of the missions would be in the auxiliary fields.

“They’re addressing the noise and the safety problems that our city’s concerned about and they seem to be addressing it in a positive manner,” Arnold said. “I’m elated. But the proof of the pudding will be ... in the Supplemental EIS in September.”

At the press conference, Eglin officials made it clear that the north/south runway would be used as soon as the new Record of Decision was signed. When the first aircraft is delivered this fall, it will not be flown on the runway. The current Record of Decision does not allow it.

“We know that’s not an option in the long-term life (of the program),” Davis said, adding that the 33rd Fighter Wing does prefer Eglin Main’s other runway and will use it as much as they can. “We’re going to fly off of runway 1-9 when and if we need to.”

By the time the 59th aircraft is to be delivered, additional F-35 bases will be operational. The 48 aircraft will be assigned to one or more of the new locations.

Davis said the Air Force will announce the new F-35 bases in the next two days.

August 5, 2010

EDITORIAL

Okaloosa's \$1.5 billion windfall

Figure this out: Tyndall Air Force Base is in line to get a new F-22 squadron and about 600 jobs, and Bay County folks are celebrating. Eglin Air Force Base is slated to receive 59 new F-35 fighters and almost six times the number of new jobs Tyndall's getting, and Okaloosa County residents seem disappointed, even angry.

"This is a bittersweet decision," said Okaloosa County Commissioner Wayne Harris, "bitter that we're getting only 59 (planes) as opposed to 107."

Some of the anger is directed at Valparaiso, which sued the Air Force over noise the F-35s were expected to generate. A contributor to our July 30 Spout Off column said Valparaiso's mayor and lawyers "must answer to all the people without jobs and the builders and their employees who were counting on new residents."

We understand why area planners had hoped Eglin would receive all 107 (or 113, as the numbers fluctuated) Joint Strike Fighters that once were discussed. But we've known for more than a year that Eglin's share probably would top out at 59. People who were "counting on" more F-35s, as the Spouter put it, weren't paying attention.

In February 2009, the Daily News reported: "The Air Force will bring 59 F-35s to (Eglin) by 2016 but makes no promises to bring the additional 54 aircraft originally slated." That was 18 months ago. In August 2009, we noted in an editorial: "Clearly, the Air Force has backed away from the idea of 'bedding down' 100 or more F-35s at Eglin." That was a year ago. The July 28 announcement that Eglin's F-35s will be limited to 59 should have surprised no one. Happily, the 59 aircraft promise an economic bounty. UWF's Haas Center for Business Research and Economic Development has projected: An economic impact from 2010 to 2016 of at least \$1.53 billion. A population surge of 4,100 to 4,500 new residents. At least 3,500 new jobs. Sure, 48 more planes would've meant still more people and more jobs. But the numbers above are impressive. Okaloosa County, like Bay, ought to celebrate its good fortune.

WASHINGTON



Navy Plans Could Affect More Marine Mammals

August 4, 2010

Peter Eisler

WASHINGTON — The Navy plans to increase ocean warfare exercises, conduct more sonar tests and expand coastal training areas by hundreds of square miles — activities that could injure hundreds of thousands of marine mammals or disturb their habitats, federal records show.

Training areas already are established along most of the continental U.S. coastline, so the Navy is seeking federal permits to broaden an existing range off the Pacific Northwest and dramatically expand exercises and sonar use in the Gulf of Alaska. The service also plans to increase training substantially in the Pacific around the Mariana Islands.

The Navy estimates in federal permit applications that its activity in those areas will impact about half a million sea mammals each year, including seals, sea lions and whales, some of which are endangered. The effects range from brief interruptions in normal feedings to significant injury and, in very rare instances, death.

That's more than a 20% increase over the 2.3 million marine mammals that are affected similarly each year by the Navy's training on its ranges on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, Navy studies show.

The studies find that the vast majority of the animals will suffer only a "temporary" disturbance from the training, which can include live-fire exercises, and anticipate no long-term impact on overall marine mammal populations.

However, the Navy's plans have ignited a debate with environmental groups that say the service underestimates the long-term impact of its activities and fails to restrict training sufficiently in marine sanctuaries and other areas where it is likely to affect sensitive species. The plans to expand training off the Pacific Northwest, where the service's exercise areas reach into the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary, have drawn about 3,500 public comments, most in opposition.

Critics of the Navy's plans point to its use of new sonar systems that can disrupt marine mammals' brain function and behavior, noting that even brief disorientation or other "temporary" effects can have serious consequences, such as changes in reproductive activity. Among the most serious concerns is the potential for whales to strand themselves on beaches: Since 2000, there have been at least four instances in which mass

strandings of whales have been associated with the Navy's sonar use, federal records show.

"There's been significant growth in the number of hours of exercises and significant expansion into new areas ... but the Navy is doing a very little to understand what wildlife they may be affecting," says Michael Jasny, senior policy analyst at the Natural Resources Defense Council. "The Navy says it knows enough to analyze impacts, but it doesn't know enough to recommend any areas within these hundreds of thousand square nautical miles for avoidance."

Navy plans reflect the need for flexibility to train in areas that offer a wide variety of ocean environments, particularly along the seafloor, says John Quinn, deputy director of the service's Energy and Environmental Readiness division.

The Navy tries hard to ensure that its activities have minimal impacts on marine life, Quinn says. He notes, for example, that training is restricted off Florida in areas frequented by endangered Wright whales during their calving season.

OVERSEAS—AUSTRALIA



'Me too' on RAAF policies

BY NIKKI TAYLOR

04 Aug, 2010 12:00 AM

EVEN thinking voters could be forgiven if they saw little difference in the mainstream Paterson candidates over aircraft noise.

Contenders, Liberal's Bob Baldwin and Labor's Jim Arneman, have announced almost "me-too" policies to tackle the noise challenges when Defence's Joint Strike Fighter comes into use.

Mr Arneman this week followed the lead of incumbent Paterson MP Bob Baldwin announcing a three-point plan to tackle the controversial JSF noise issue.

Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Mike Kelly joined Mr Arneman for the announcement.

Mr Baldwin has pledged a runway extension and a second instrument landing system if the Coalition wins government while Mr Arneman has backed a feasibility study into the idea.

Both support new committees to investigate ways to reduce aircraft noise, a recall of Defence's 2025 ANEF maps, and a moratorium on the proposed Kings Hill estate.

While the plan is almost identical to that recently released by Mr Baldwin, Mr Arneman said a December deadline separated the two.

"The back of an envelope announcement that Bob Baldwin made last week, with no time frame is unlike this which has a time frame for the end of the year," Mr Arneman said. Mr Baldwin said Mr Arneman had no understanding of the issue.

"Mr Arneman has no idea about the issues and has placed his faith in Mike Kelly who has already said he doesn't believe there is anything more that can be done to help residents," Mr Baldwin said.

OVERSEAS—JAPAN



Japan's PM Alludes To Delay Of Final Futenma Plan

August 3, 2010

David Allen and Chiyomi Sumida

GINOWAN, Okinawa — Construction details for the relocation of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma to rural northeast Okinawa could be delayed until after the election of Okinawa's governor in November, according to Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan.

During his first appearance in the Diet since taking office in June, Kan said gaining support from Okinawa for the new base is of paramount importance.

"Including securing understanding from Okinawa, I recognize that several more processes will be needed," Kan said Monday, commenting on the agreement made with the U.S. in May to decide on the exact location of runways and other construction details for the new air facility by the end of August.

"A certain level of conclusion will be drawn at the expert-level talks," Kan said. "However, it is not that we will promptly carry out the decision, in particular, by starting construction."

Kan, however, avoided setting a date.

"I am fully aware that there are many factors that need to be considered," he said. "In November, President Obama will visit Japan to attend the APEC (Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation), and there are various issues on the political calendar. The situation does not allow me to say by when or how we will do it. I can only say that we will tackle the issue wholeheartedly."

Added Kan: "I have no intention of settling the issue without regard to the will of people of Okinawa."

The prime minister and his party are closely watching two elections on Okinawa. The first is the Nago city council election in September. Camp Schwab is in Nago.

The second is the Nov. 28 election for governor. The governor must approve any project that involves reclaiming land in Okinawan waters. Plans being considered for the air facility on Camp Schwab include building either one or two runways that would extend onto landfill in Oura Bay.

Two Okinawa officials are expected to officially announce their candidacy for governor this weekend.

Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima is set to run for re-election with the backing of the Liberal Democratic Party and other members of the ruling coalition that Kan's Democratic Party of Japan defeated a year ago. Nakaima supported the 2006 agreement to move Futenma units to Camp Schwab until the DPJ began reviewing the project in September.

The other candidate is expected to be Yoshi Iha, the mayor of Ginowan, where Futenma is located. Iha wants the base closed immediately and the Marine air units moved outside Okinawa.

"The biggest problem is the U.S. bases occupy too much valuable space on our small island, and we need that space for economic development," Iha said recently.

He's supported by the Social Democratic Party, the Social Mass Party and the Communist Party.