

Military Brief

An Armed Services Update

Courtesy of:
TEAM Santa Rosa Military Affairs Committee (MAC) &
TEAM Santa Rosa Economic Development Council

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A Message from the MAC Chairman

Dear Reader,

On May 11 – 13, 2010, several members of the TEAM Santa Rosa Military Affairs Committee participated in the annual Washington DC trip as part of the five county NW Florida Defense Coalition. The purpose of the annual trip is to meet with our Congressional representatives and Pentagon leaders to discuss military and economic related issues concerning the military presence in our area and to keep the lines of communication open. Several of our MAC members visited the Pentagon on May 12th to meet with Mr. John Conger, Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Installations and Environment and with Mr. James Leary who oversees all real estate for the Department of the Navy. Both meetings were productive in that they afforded us the opportunity to update them on our Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) implementation and our continuing efforts to buffer NAS Whiting Field and its six Navy Outlying Landing Fields (NOLFs) in Santa Rosa County from encroachment. Both were very complimentary of the partnership that has evolved between Santa Rosa County and the Navy and stated that they consider what we are doing here as "The Model" for other Navy installations throughout the Nation. We also updated them on our progress with the Whiting Aviation Park and thanked them for their support of the Limited Access Use Agreement which permits tenants in the aviation park access to the runway and taxiways at South Field. The following day, we received military briefings on the status of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter which will begin arriving at Eglin AFB later this year as well as an update on the Air Force Tanker contract which will be awarded later this fall. All in all it was a very successful trip and an opportunity to tell our story to top decision makers in Washington DC. □



Don Salter, Chairman, Military Affairs Committee



KC-X Tanker Request For Proposal

The Request For Proposal (RFP) was released by the Air Force on February 24, 2010. The proposals from prospective bidders are due to the Air Force on or before the July 9, 2010 deadline. Currently there are two firms expected to submit bids – EADS and Boeing. Should EADS be selected, that would mean thousands of jobs would be coming to Mobile and the Gulf Coast. The Air Force is expected to award the tanker contract by December. □

May is Military Appreciation Month in Santa Rosa County

May was designated as Military Appreciation Month in Santa Rosa County. The month was dedicated to recognizing our active duty military and their dependents. The highlight was Military Appreciation Day held at NAS Whiting Field on May 14th. Several hundred attended the event including area VIPs and eight WW II veterans. Tours of the base, games, food and entertainment were provided by NAS Whiting Field and the Military Appreciation Day Committee which was chaired by Robin Punyko, Manager of Gulf Power for Milton. Proclamations honoring our military were delivered by a representative from Congressman Jeff Miller's office and by Representative Greg Evers. Don Salter presented proclamations on behalf of the Santa Rosa County Board of Commissioners recognizing the 50th Anniversary for Training Squadrons VT-2, VT-3 and VT-6 at the base. Major sponsors for the event included TEAM Santa Rosa, Santa Rosa Medical Center and Penn Air Federal Credit Union. □

Emerald Coast Honor Flight

To date, the Emerald Coast Honor Flight has sponsored 715 WW II veterans from the 1st Congressional District to travel to Washington DC, free of charge, to see their WW II Memorial. The next flight will depart Pensacola in November once an exact date is determined. Currently there are 102 WW II veterans on the waiting list for the next flight. Despite the publicity given this program, applications have dropped off. Part of the reason is due to the fact we are losing WW II veterans nationally at the rate of 1,200 per day and many more are medically unable to make the trip. We need more applications to continue this program. If you know of a WW II veteran that has not gone on a previous flight and would like to go to Washington DC to see their Memorial, please contact Cinnamon Holderman, Emerald Coast Honor Flight Executive Director at 939-4050. □

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7th SPECIAL FORCES GROUP

Everything remains on schedule for the arrival of approximately 8,000 military and dependents to Eglin AFB by September 2011. The move of the 7th Special Forces Group from Fort Bragg, North Carolina to Eglin AFB was mandated by the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Recommendations. □



First of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter's to Arrive in December

The first three aircraft of the initial 59 F-35's approved for Eglin AFB are scheduled to arrive by December according to Lt. General Mark Shackelford, Assistant to the Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisitions. While the delivery date and production numbers have slipped for the operational fleet, the delivery of the JSF training aircraft for Eglin AFB remains pretty much on schedule. The Supplementary Environmental Impact Study (SEIS) to determine the basing location for the second increment of 48 aircraft is due to be completed soon and a final decision made this fall. Eglin AFB is being considered along with four other Air Force and Air National Guard bases. □

The Mission of the TEAM Santa Rosa Military Affairs Committee is to support, protect and enhance the value, efficiency and sustainability of the military bases and outlying landing fields and their missions as well as the interests of military families in Santa Rosa County and the region.