

# Naval Air Station Key West AICUZ

January 15, 2008  
Key West, Florida  
Town Hall meeting with  
Senator Bill Nelson

Commander John Hammerstrom  
USNR-Retired  
Aeronautical Engineering Duty Officer  
former Senior Engineering Test Pilot  
Grumman Aerospace Corporation  
current Captain - major international air carrier

The author is a strong supporter of the U.S. Navy's mission, having served over 25 years as an enlisted machinist, a carrier-based pilot and an Aeronautical Engineering Duty Officer. It is the author's strong belief that the current policy of obscuring facts - like those that will be presented here - threatens the future of the long and proud relationship between the Navy and the Florida Keys

▶ The goal should be fulfillment of the name:  
Air Installation *Compatible* Use Zones (AICUZ)

- ▶ The U.S. Navy has a vitally important national defense mission. It also has a valid expectation that new development will not encroach on its existing operations
- ▶ Similarly, the Navy should expect that even patriotic military supporters will object when **THEY** have been encroached upon - in this case by the introduction of a much louder airplane:  
the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet

▶ Existing AICUZ created in 1977 - 30 years ago

▶ 2004 AICUZ update created, but not codified

▶ In 2007 another AICUZ update was required because noise and accident zones were moved away from Key Haven\*

\*NAS Key West 2007 AICUZ Update -  
Section 1.5 "Changes that Require an AICUZ Update," p.1-4

- ▶ Federal law - specifically the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that . . .
- ▶ “Proposed Actions” - such as replacing the F-14 Tomcat with the much louder Super Hornet - require . . .
- ▶ an Environmental Assessment (EA) to determine if there will be . . .
- ▶ “significant impacts” on the human environment

## Facts

- ▶ The Navy replaced the F-14 Tomcat with the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet
- ▶ According to the Navy, the Super Hornet is as much as 27 decibels louder than the Tomcat\*
- ▶ A ten decibel increase is twice as loud. Twenty decibels is *four times as loud*

\* Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Introduction of the F/A-18E/F to the East Coast of the United States (Table 6-13, page 6-29)

## According to the NAS Key West 2007 AICUZ Update (Table 3-2)

- ▶ Tomcat Operations in 2001  
12,648
- ▶ Super Hornet projected Operations for 2007  
**15,953**  
a 25% increase!

## 2003 Environmental Assessment (EA)

This is the 232-page document about dredging and support facilities that the Navy claims addresses the question of the impacts of the Super Hornet on the community around Key West

However, although the dredging and support facilities are detailed, the Super Hornet is  
**NOT MENTIONED** in the Table of Contents  
**NOT MENTIONED** in the Proposed Actions  
**NOT MENTIONED** in the Alternatives

## 2003 EA - continued

- ▶ The Super Hornet is only discussed on *three pages*, with no mention of the greater loudness!

- ▶ Those three pages are curiously unrelated and unconnected to the rest of the document

*It bears repeating - although the dredging and support facilities are discussed in detail, the Super Hornet is not mentioned elsewhere in the remaining 229 pages of the Environmental Assessment*

## EIS . . . or . . . FONSI?

- ▶ After an Environmental Assessment, if impacts are expected, the government agency (Navy) is required to produce an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

. . . or . . .

- ▶ If no impacts are expected, then a “Finding of No Significant Impact” (FONSI) letter is generated.

## FONSI

- ▶ The Navy issued a “Finding of No Significant Impact” letter on April 14, 2003, which the Navy claims fulfilled their legal obligations to assess the impacts of the Super Hornet on the community surrounding NAS Key West

And yet . . .

- ▶ That FONSI letter, which supposedly exonerates the Super Hornet from environmental-impact scrutiny, *DOES NOT MENTION The Super Hornet*

## How is it possible . . .

for a much louder airplane, flying 25% more operations to have “No Significant Impact”

and to have satisfied the National Environmental Policy Act when it is not *mentioned* in the Environmental Assessment’s

Table of Contents,  
nor the Proposed Actions,  
nor the Alternatives,  
nor in the FONSI letter?

## Unresolved Issues

- ▶ What are the results of the GAO\* and DOD Inspector General\*\* inquiries?

\*Government Accountability Office (800)424-5454 - Control #51428

\*\* DOD Inspector General (800)424-9098 - Case #105900

## Conclusions

- ▶ The Navy should prepare a valid Environmental Assessment to determine the impacts of the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet on the community surrounding NAS Key West
- ▶ Monroe County should defer judgment on the AICUZ until after the facts are presented