

STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
ON
LAND WITHDRAWALS
13 APRIL 1999

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. I am Rear Admiral Tim Beard, Commander of the Naval Strike and Air Warfare Center (NSAWC) located at Naval Air Station (NAS) Fallon, Nevada. I appreciate this opportunity to speak with you today concerning the land withdrawals the Navy is proposing to the 106th Congress.

My statement covers several areas:

- * The role of NSAWC and NAS Fallon in Naval aviation training,
- * A description of the Fallon Range Training Complex (FRTC),
- * A review of NSAWC's training requirements,
- * The Range Safety and Training land withdrawal, and
- * The Bravo 20 (99-606) land withdrawal renewal.

NAVAL STRIKE AND AIR WARFARE CENTER

The Naval Strike and Air Warfare Center (NSAWC) was formed in July 1996 by the BRAC-driven consolidation of the Naval Strike Warfare Center (NSWC or "Strike University"), the Naval Fighter Weapons School (NFWS or "Top Gun") and the Carrier Airborne Early Warning Weapons School (CAEWWS or "Top Dome"). The Center is an "echelon two" command reporting directly to the Chief of Naval Operations, and is the primary authority for graduate level aviation tactical development and training. NSAWC assets include 40 aircraft and over 1,000 personnel including contract range and aircraft maintenance personnel.

NAVAL AIR STATION FALLON

Naval Air Station (NAS) Fallon is located in Churchill County in northwestern Nevada, approximately 70 miles east of Reno and six miles southeast of the City of Fallon. The Army Air Corps established the original facilities in 1942 and the Navy took possession in 1943. The facility was commissioned as a Naval Auxiliary Air Station (NAAS) in 1944 and established a training range complex in the same year. NAAS Fallon was reclassified as a major command and upgraded to a Naval Air Station (NAS) in 1972, with a primary mission of supporting unit level training. The establishment of the Naval Strike Warfare Center (Strike University) in 1984 signalled in a move toward integrated carrier air wing training. NAS Fallon is the only Navy facility that can support, train, and house an entire carrier air wing for integrated strike warfare training (a

carrier air wing consists of 70 to 80 aircraft and between 1,500 and 2,000 personnel).

THE FALLON RANGE TRAINING COMPLEX

The Fallon Range Training Complex (FRTC) is enclosed within a Military Operating Area (MOA) which overlays 6.5 million acres. Embedded within the MOA are four separate training ranges: Bravos 16, 17, 19, and 20; an integrated air defense system comprised of 37 real or simulated radars throughout the Dixie Valley area; and a supersonic flying area. The four ranges and various electronic warfare sites comprise 84,000 acres of withdrawn land (1.3% of the MOA). The entire FRTC is instrumented with a Tactical Aircrew Combat Training System (TACTS).

FALLON TRAINING

The FRTC is the focal point for all Navy, and some Marine, graduate level aviation strike warfare training. This training is under the cognizance of NSAWC, which develops realistic combat training scenarios for military aircrew flying high performance jet aircraft and helicopters, employing state of the art military equipment and tactics. The FRTC offers a unique configuration of land, airspace, targets, and instrumentation which allows for levels of combat training not available elsewhere. Specific training conducted within the FRTC includes:

(1) Carrier Air Wing Training. NSAWC and Fallon host four to six carrier air wings per year conducting an intensive four-week training program approximately six months prior to their deployment aboard aircraft carriers. This integrated training focuses on combat tactics and team building by allowing aircrew to plan and execute realistic air-to-air and air-to-ground scenarios in a complex threat environment. Fallon training is essential to our combat readiness before our air wings can deploy.

(2) Advanced Instructor Training. These flying courses of instruction are tailored to individual aircraft communities (e.g., Top Gun, which is for strike fighter aircrew) and consist of six to ten weeks of personalized instruction to develop a tactics and training expert for each of our aviation units.

(3) Fleet Replacement Squadron Training. Initial air-to-air and air-to-ground instruction in the F/A-18 and F-14 aircraft is conducted at Fallon in the form of 14 to 16 two-week detachments from either Lemoore, CA; Cecil Field, FL; or Oceana, VA (the home bases of the fleet replacement squadrons).

(4) Integrated air-to-air and air-to-ground unit level training. This training is conducted by individual aviation units which deploy to Fallon for one to two week deployments approximately 18 to 20 times per year.

(5) Additional flight activity includes joint exercises and tactics development.

Fallon training is essential to Navy readiness. The 38,000 sorties flown and 76 per cent utilization rate of the range in calendar year 1998 are on a par with Nellis Air Force Base activity. Of the 1,310 Navy aircrew who participated in Desert Storm, 1,298 flew at Fallon. The challenge at Fallon is to upgrade our existing facility, training techniques, and scenarios to react to a threat which is increasing in complexity, is more mobile, and requires increased coordination with ground forces. Both of our land withdrawal initiatives will allow us to keep pace with this threat.

RANGE SAFETY AND TRAINING

The first action the Navy is bringing before Congress is the withdrawal of Public Lands for Range Safety and Training purposes (RST). This proposal will withdraw 127,365 acres of federally administered lands (BLM) around existing ranges in order to accomplish two objectives: increase public safety and improve training.

The Navy will manage the land in two different categories: Category "A" lands will have limited access to ensure public safety, while Category "B" lands will be managed for joint public and military use.

Category A: Several Navy studies have identified potential safety hazards associated with three of the ranges. These studies include the 1995 Hazard Analysis Mitigation Report, off-range ordnance sweeps in 1989/1990, and the Range Air Installation Compatible Use Zones (RAICUZ) studies in 1982, 1995, and 1997. These studies identified lands which must have limited access to ensure public safety in the event of an off-range ordnance delivery. The total acreage in Category "A" land is 40,280 acres, including 24,464 acres currently closed to the public due to the presence of off-range ordnance. Specifically, the land that will be managed as Category "A" includes:

- 640 acres east of B-16,
- 33,400 acres primarily south of B-17, and
- 6,240 acres north and east of B-19.

Category B: The remainder of the withdrawal will be designated as Category "B" land. It will be managed by the Navy and will remain open to the public with the exception of fenced Electronic Warfare (EW) sites.

Category "B" land will provide the necessary area to adapt and maintain realistic operational and strategic combat training scenarios. This land will be used to support integrated Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR), Close Air Support (CAS) training, visual cueing, integrated ground forces support, and the installation of Electronic Warfare and tracking systems.

The Joint Tactical Combat Training System (JTCTS), which is the follow-on system to the current tracking systems used by DoN and DoAF, and is due to be installed in 2001, will provide a greatly enhanced tracking capability with significantly fewer ground sites.

As the activities in these areas pose little or no risk to the public, the majority of the land will be open access under certain conditions (mining, grazing, and transit across). Land to be managed under Category "B":

- 9,760 acres north and southeast of B-16,
- 5,960 east and west of B-19,
- 2,765 acres at the Department of Energy Shoal Site, east of B-17, and
- 68,600 acres north of B-17.

As part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was completed on this withdrawal in April, 1998. During the public hearings and comment period, the majority of the applicable comments received dealt with existing mining claims, grazing rights, and noise. The Navy is prepared to explore compensation for the former and continuation of the latter under the Taylor Act. The withdrawal will not bring an increase in flight activity or noise. The EIS did not find any adverse impact to endangered and threatened species, and the final version was positively endorsed by the Nevada State Director of the Bureau of Land Management in March of this year.

BRAVO 20

The second withdrawal action being brought before Congress is the renewal of the Bravo 20 range. The Military Lands Withdrawal Act of 1986 (Public Laws 99-606) reserved lands for

use by the Secretary of the Navy for "testing and training for aerial bombing, missile firing, tactical maneuvering, and air support; and other defense related purposes," and requires a renewal of the withdrawal by 6 November 2001. The range itself has been operational since 1944 and is composed of 41,007 acres. B-20 is a combination of 21,576 acres of land withdrawn in 1986 in a checkerboard pattern with 19,431 acres of land the Navy acquired from the Southern Pacific Land Company in 1982. The range sits in the Carson Sink drainage, a large alkali lake bed, which is partially flooded depending on the amount of annual rainfall.

The B-20 range is used for a large percentage of Navy and Marine Corps training, including air-to-ground bombing, strafing, and laser ranging and targeting. The range contains basic infrastructure, including two bull's-eyes, two strafing banners, a mock submarine target, run-in lighting, and scoring system. The range also provides a high explosive impact target area for up to 2,000 pound weapons. It is the only Navy range authorized for use with 2,000 pound laser guided weapons and is the primary site for live ordnance training in the FRTC. In addition to the 14 million dollars in infrastructure development completed in 1989, the Navy is seeking programming for an additional 20 million dollars over the next six years to further enhance our training capability. This is in response to a multitude of tactical target requirements, including weapons of mass destruction and urban target sets which grow increasingly complex, as well as to reduce operational pressure to allow maintenance and clean-up on the other tactical target in the complex.

The renewal of B-20 withdrawal will support what is essentially a continuation of ongoing actions. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Impact Statement process has been uneventful. Public hearings on the B-20 renewal were held in July of 1998, with the comment period ending in September 1998. A total of 11 comments were received, with no significant environmental issues raised. The Final Environmental Impact Statement was positively endorsed by the Nevada State Director of the Bureau of Land Management in March of this year.

SUMMARY

Support for NSAWC, NAS Fallon, and these two withdrawals is critical to the maintenance of Navy and Marine Corps combat readiness. We need the capability to flex our training

scenarios in response to a worldwide threat which, although decreasing in total quantity, is growing more sophisticated. I ask for your full support of these two initiatives and invite you to visit our facilities at any future date.

This concludes my statement. I appreciate the support that this committee and its staff have given us in the past, and I look forward to continued close cooperation in the future.