

September 20, 2019

The Honorable Richard Spencer  
Secretary of the Navy  
1000 Navy Pentagon, Room 4D652  
Washington, DC 20350

Dear Secretary Spencer:

I appreciate you taking the time to meet with the local leaders surrounding Naval Air Station Whidbey. Port Townsend lies across Admiralty Inlet, southwest of OLF Coupeville. The City was established in 1851 and contains two U.S. National Historic Landmark Districts as well as the Fort Worden Historic District.

While we greatly appreciate our armed forces and their need to be adequately trained, we also represent residents who deeply care about the impacts they experience from Navy operations in and around the community. We routinely hear from constituents and our many visitors about their negative experience of jet noise, their fears of onshore warfare training and concerns for sea life.

Since 2007, the City of Port Townsend has consistently expressed concerns that the Navy routinely separates the ground, air, and sea-based activities on and around the Olympic Peninsula into different public processes. We do not view the impacts of electronic warfare testing, sonar testing, flight training and onshore warfare training as separate.

Since 2014, the Navy has opened at least six Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements in and around the Puget Sound Region. These numerous and segmented public processes undermine the intent of the NEPA process to measure cumulative impacts and are cause for serious and long-term concerns about human and environmental health in our community.

Additionally, we were particularly dismayed to have been excluded from the Area of Potential Effect for the 400% increase in Growler operations, especially when that decision was based on an outdated noise simulation model that a DoD-commissioned study found inappropriate for Growler engines (as cited in our Section 106 Comments – EA-18G Growler Operations dated 8/16/16).

Like other areas of Jefferson County, Port Townsend endures multiple impacts from Navy activity without enjoying the commensurate economic or community-supporting advantages the Navy provides to neighboring communities. We have historically been good and patient neighbors, not only about the fourfold increase in Growler fly-overs, but also the increased tempo of Hood Canal Bridge openings over the years and Naval Magazine Indian Island operations that affect navigation in the bay - such as the JLOTS drill during Cascadia Rising, right at the height of Crab season.

I appreciate the increased level of communication from the Commanding Officers of both NAS Whidbey and NAVMAG Indian Island during my tenure in office and believe ongoing communication is key to maintaining good relations. Again, I thank you for visiting and ask that you keep our concerns in mind when making future operational decisions that impact the Puget Sound region.

Finally, I cordially invite you to visit Port Townsend whenever your schedule allows so that you can see for yourself why we are so passionate about stewarding this special place for generations to come.

Sincerely,



Deborah S. Stinson  
Mayor

cc:

Rear Admiral Scott Gray  
Commander, Navy Region Northwest

Captain Matt Arny  
Commanding Officer, NAS Whidbey Island  
Commander, Northwest Training Range Complex

Commander Donald Emmerson  
Commanding Officer, Naval Magazine Indian Island

U.S. Senator Patty Murray

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

U.S. Representative Derek Kilmer

