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From: Sound Defense Alliance (SDA)

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Fidalgo Island, WA - Right now, the number one priority for our state and nation is to defeat COVID19. Gov. Jay Inslee announced Friday he would extend Washington's stay-home order through May 31, as he and state officials try to keep the new coronavirus from roaring back. "If we stick together for a while longer, we don't lose the gains we've already made," Inslee said, acknowledging that restrictions on daily life have been challenging for many Washingtonians. "It's so frustrating, we don't want to do this twice."

Across Northwest Washington and the Salish Sea (Island, Jefferson, Skagit, San Juan and Clallam Counties), over 337,000 people are sequestered in their homes. "This state-wide "shelter in place" order by the Governor means that families sheltering at home all over our region are suffering incredible noise from the Growler overflights, adding severe stress to an already stressful situation. "The skies above our homes are not sheltered from this egregious noise and we would like the Navy to reduce their noise, or flights, or both while we are confined," concluded Lundsten, chair of the Sound Defense Alliance (SDA). "We all need to work together to stay healthy and save lives, both military and civilian," stated Mark Lundsten.

Jet noise has real health impacts and Washington's State Department of Health has declared noise a public health issue. SDA's efforts to *Restore the Balance* in NW Washington between military and civilian goals means that everyone is in this together. SDA is hearing reports from throughout the region from people suffering from illness and anxiety over loss of jobs and security and lives compromised or lost – who are now in physical and mental distress from the impacts of jet noise, too. "Adding jet noise on top of the medical crisis of our lifetime has added a huge strain to people's lives and is making staying in our homes unbearable," commented SDA Board member Anne Harvey.

SDA stepped forward on behalf of the communities of Northwest Washington at the beginning of the State's "shelter-in-place" directives when the Navy chose not to cease or mitigate jet overflights. SDA asked the Navy to consider alternatives to their flight schedules. The Navy has not responded to any of SDA's letters or phone calls on behalf of the communities underneath the Growlers jet noise – continuing a multi-year pattern of silence. After a call from the Governor's office, however, the Navy did cease jet flights during Thursday and the Good Friday before Easter. The Governor has now extended his Stay-at-Home directive until May 31st.

The Navy has had a five-day full-throttle jet training schedule for low-level flights for most of April. "The first week of May will be the 5<sup>th</sup> week in a row that the Navy has blasted Central Whidbey with ear-shattering noise in successive five day schedules. Mission readiness could be achieved by moving low-level jet training to areas where people are not sequestered at home," commented SDA Board member Paula Spina.

Elsewhere, the Navy has mitigated their schedule of planned activities. According to national news, the virus has prompted the military to cancel exercises, briefly halt the process of bringing in recruits, and put the USS Roosevelt back in port after more than 800 sailors tested positive and one died after an outbreak on board. The USS Kidd, whose homeport is Everett, was at sea in the Eastern Pacific and is now heading toward an undisclosed port with at least 33 cases aboard. More than 40 Navy warships have now had one or more sailors test positive.

“So, risks are high and the coronavirus is taking a toll on all of us. Essential workers and business are all doing their part. SDA expects the military and military personnel to be doing their part too, to reduce risks and increase safety. NASWI could, as a good neighbor, provide immediate alternative jet training in areas less likely to disrupt civilian communities on the ground,” concluded Lundsten.

According to a recent interview with General Mark Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he suggested the pandemic means the nature of threats to the US are changing. “We've got to take a hard look at how we as a military, we as a Department of Defense conduct operations in the future,” he added. Former Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel was quoted, “You constantly have to review what you are doing, how you have been doing it, and match that with the challenges of the day,” Hagel said.

“That's today's challenge,” commented Maryon Attwood, Legislative Chair of SDA. “We want the Navy to hear us, be agile, and be responsive to our communities who host them. We don't think that's too much to ask. People are suffering. The Navy's readiness does not depend on Growler jets practicing at OLF Coupeville. The Navy could, as we have asked, moderate or move their FCLP trainings to alternative locations until the Governor lifts his Stay-at-Home directives on May 31<sup>st</sup>,” said Attwood.

“There is nothing unique about an OLF runway. It's just a runway with the portable landing light system, the LSO facility (also portable), and a carrier deck outlined with paint. Moses Lake, Boardman Training Range and Yakima Training Range are all nearby alternatives,” commented Neal Simms, retired Air Force and Board member of COER, which is a group member of Sound Defense Alliance.

“SDA considers the health and welfare of our Northwest communities a priority, and we will continue our efforts to restore balance to our region,” concluded Lundsten, chair of SDA.

The Sound Defense Alliance (SDA) is a coalition of groups throughout Northwest Washington and the Salish Sea representing thousands of Washingtonians. SDA has become a recognized advocacy group working toward a balance of military and civilian goals in Northwest WA. SDA was successful in getting Real-Time Noise Monitoring into the National Defense Authorization Act, passed last year by Congress. For more information about SDA, visit <https://sounddefensealliance.org/>.

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