

Miramar CLF Report January 17, 2008

The monthly Community Leaders Forum was held on January 17 in the Commanding Officers conference room onboard MCAS Miramar.

The base commander, Col Chris O'Connor welcomed the group and had the following comments:

Due to a pending deployment of Marine forces, operations at Miramar will be reduced in the months ahead. We may notice decreased air activity.

The air station was awarded the distinguished Dirkstrom Award for Community Relations. This is a very prestigious award and the CO was justifiably proud. The air station's superb handling of the 2007 air show was a major contributing factor in the selection.

The 2008 Miramar Air Show will be in the 1st week of October. The Blue Angels will again perform after an absence last year.

Gunnery Sergeant Dave Lopez spoke to the group. He is the Marine Corps Drill Instructor of the Year. He briefed the group on what it takes to become a Drill Instructor, and described the duties. Gs Lopez was very impressive as a speaker and he had the booming voice of a Drill Instructor. The group really enjoyed his professional presentation.

The air operations report highlighted the fact that operations were lower in December due to the holiday season. This December, 4,360 air operations were conducted from the air station. Noise complaints were only ten (10) with Rancho Bernardo filing one noise complaint.

There is not a complete correlation between noise complaints to the air station and intrusive noise experienced by residents. This is largely because residents are reluctant to complain about air station noise when the nation is at war. On the other hand, I have had several people ask me: "Why are the jets making so much noise over Rancho Bernardo?"

The answer to this lies largely with the Julian Standard Instrument Departure routing and the Air Traffic Controllers (ATC). Below 10,000 feet and within a roughly 15 mile radius of Miramar, jet aircraft are under positive control from the ATC. This means that the pilots are flying headings and altitudes that are directed by the ATC. In other words, the pilots are simply following orders from the ground control people.

The disconnect here is that for some reason, ATC controllers are not following the published departure patterns for the jet aircraft. The published instrument departure routing directs the aircraft to make a climbing right turn after take-off and fly directly north following the 360 degree radial from the Mission Bay navigation facility until they reach the western edge of Lake Hodges. Then the pilots are to turn right and fly across the northern edge of Lake Hodges heading directly for Julian. This heading is East North East or 065 degrees. The aircraft are quite a bit north of Rancho Bernardo and at an altitude of 11,000 feet or more as they fly north of Lake Hodges enroute to Julian. Under most atmospheric conditions, Rancho Bernardo residents will not even hear the aircraft under this scenario.

In many cases, however, once the pilots complete their right turn after take off, they contact ATC who then directs them to disregard the published departure and instead, fly straight to Julian. This routing places the aircraft about 7 miles south of the published routing and at a much lower altitude. We often see (and hear) jet aircraft fly over the Pomerado Road/Poway Road intersection heading straight for Mt. Woodson, all the while climbing at high power settings.

This should not be happening. I met with Mr. Tony Guinn the Assistant Air Operations Officer and spoke at length on the phone with the Operations Officer, LtCol Jackson, regarding this issue. They have promised to address the flight path issue with ATC. While neither Ranch Bernardo residents nor the Marine Corps have any authority over Air Traffic Control, we appreciate the Marine Corps' willingness to help and to work with ATC to alleviate this situation.

The next CLF meeting will be in February, but a definite date has not yet been assigned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey C. Frederick