

2009

Florida Base Commanders Forum Summary

24 February 2009

Eglin Air Force Base, Florida
Colonel Bruce H. McClintock, Host



Introduction

On 24 February 2009, Dr. Dale Brill, Director of Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development (OTTED), and Col Bruce H. McClintock, 96th Air Base Wing Commander hosted the Florida Base Commanders Forum at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. The purpose of the meeting was to share information between state and military leaders. These leaders identified, discussed and addressed issues that create challenges and/or unintended consequences which make it difficult for military leaders across the state to conduct their missions. The state officials expressed their interest in candid dialogue and the importance of knowing how the state could help remove unnecessary obstacles. The dialogue was rich and all walked away with a greater understanding of common issues. The forum was attended by high ranking state officials and 17 base commanders. The forum included representatives from Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines as well as the National Guard.

This document reflects the overarching issues that were addressed in the afternoon breakout sessions which covered the following four areas:

- Encroachment/Land Use
- Transportation,
- Energy
- Quality of Life

In each area, the document offers the current status, impact(s) on military missions and prudent ways the state and military (what we need) could partner to help minimize those issues. Only issues that would mutually benefit all installations are noted below. The commanders agreed to refrain from local issues that would not meet the aforementioned criterion.

The draft of this document was provided to all military attendees for feedback and corrections.

Encroachment / Land Use

Current Status: While each installation has completed a Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) or is in the process of completing one, encroachment continues to impact the ability to perform the mission.

Impact: This information aids installation commanders and community leaders plan for growth and make informed decisions when used properly. Florida Statute 163.3175 is helpful but application varies by community.

What We Need:

- Amendment to Florida Building Codes
 - Support Florida Defense Alliance Initiatives
 - Real Estate Disclosure

- Building Codes to accommodate noise attenuation
- Broaden definition of encroachment to include land, water and airspace
- Identify baseline(s) to implement regulations to protect military missions
- Engage local sponsors to facilitate pushing required changes through legislation
- Open communication between military and community
- Enforcement of existing ordinances
 - Bring in Department of Community Affairs (DCA) early
- Continue to fund the Florida Forever Program which assists military bases in creating conservation easements around bases, thus reducing encroachment
- Strengthen the Growth Management Act
 - o Prevent encroachment in crash/accident potential zones
 - o Prevent growth in incompatible noise areas
 - o Protection of training/over flight routes
 - o Required notification to buyers and developers of nearby military activities and impacts
- Funding to help purchase incompatible land use areas

Transportation

Current Status: Currently no mechanism for meaningful coordination between State and Military officials on transportation issues.

Impact: As missions grow, the increase of personnel and traffic on state roads can quickly result in a decline in service conditions—an example: Okaloosa County upon arrival of the 7 SFG(A) .

What We Need:

- A mechanism to include military in regular regional meetings and a seat at the table for 15/30 year planning meetings
- State to fund critical transportation projects in support of military and local community growth
 - Broadened application of mass transit systems across the state
- Strategic Intermodal System (SIS): Designation of roadways near military installations

Energy

Current Status: The Florida Public Service Commission adopted a proposed rule for a Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS).

Impact: The RPS forces Florida utilities to support renewable energy project development, which is good for the Department of Defense. However, military installations cannot achieve the federal mandates for renewable and alternative energy development without partnerships with utilities and private developers.

What We Need:

- Ratification of proposed rule for Florida Renewable Energy Portfolio
- Renewable energy projects and markets
- Investment and production tax credit extensions along with accelerated depreciation schedules
- Establishment of Public Benefit Funds to support renewable energy development

Quality of Life

Issue: Licensing / Reciprocal Privileges

Current Status: Florida requires additional education and/or fees for various careers which require licensing.

Impact: Spouses/dependents who transfer on military orders to another state find it difficult to continue in current working in certain field because their credentials are not accepted in Florida. This can be very costly to DoD families.

What We Need:

- Elimination or reduction of any reciprocity barriers for family members on military orders and eliminate or minimize associated fees

Issue: Education

Current Status: In-State tuition rates are only granted to active duty military and their dependents while they actually reside within the state. In addition, dependents of active duty who are Florida residents must graduate from a Florida High School to be eligible for Bright Futures Scholarships.

Impact: This creates an undue burden on military members who are residents of the state. This issue is particularly problematic for those who move during or before their senior year.

What We Need: Changes that permit any active duty and/or dependent to qualify for in-state resident tuition rate regardless of physical location and permit Florida (military) resident dependents, regardless of assignment location to qualify for Bright Future Scholarships.

Issue: Controlled Substances

Current Status: Controlled substances (Spice/Dream/Lettuce, etc.) are being sold by off base establishments—labeled as “not for human consumption” which is used to circumvent the law.

Impact: These substances are being sold to military members/dependents and are a threat to our community as a whole. Military members who use these drugs and get caught are discharged—very expensive proposition for the military (the stated cost to recruit members, send them to boot camp and requisite training is approximately \$100K per recruit).

What We Need:

- Banning of these and like substances

Issue: Childcare

Current Status: State currently uses three agencies for childcare facility/agency accreditation. The Department of Defense only recognizes one of the agencies—off-base childcare facilities do not meet DoD standards.

Impact: State currently forfeiting possible Federal subsidies, training and facility funding since it doesn't meet DoD standards; therefore, many of our members will not use off-base facilities—when Federal subsidies are provided, it saves our members money and aids state as noted above (win/win).

What We Need:

- State accreditation standards to mirror those required by DoD

Other Comments for Consideration

With the new BRAC missions, there is a need for a trauma center in Eglin AFB area

Consider bringing back the helmet law for the State of Florida

Huge concern for military members in Tampa (MacDill AFB) is toll relief

- Service members/employees/families who must commute from eastern suburbs to MacDill can pay approximately \$5/day round trip on tolls

-- Would appreciate any consideration the state officials might grant affected members on those expenses.



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Document Prepared by: Mr. Robin Bailey Jr., 96 ABW Director of Staff
850.882.9600