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February 23, 2017

Ms. Lisa Padgett
EA-18G Growler EIS Project Manager
Naval Facilities Engineering Command Atlantic
6506 Hampton Boulevard
Norfolk, VA 23508
ATTN: Code EV21/SS

Dear Ms. Padgett:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comment on the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for EA-18G Growler Airfield Operations at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island Complex. This letter contains my response to the potential impacts of the proposed actions. Detailed comments from several state agencies under the authority of the governor will be submitted through separate correspondence.

The capabilities provided by the aircraft stationed at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island (NASWI) are an integral component of our national defense strategy. We recognize that the United States Navy requires additional EA-18G Growler aircraft and that any of the proposed alternatives would bring an additional 35 or 36 aircraft to NASWI. These proposed alternatives will result in a predicted 30 percent increase in activity along training routes and a 45 percent increase in activity at Ault Field and Outlying Landing Field (OLF) Coupeville. The increase from 82 Growlers to a possible 117 or 118 aircraft will have an impact on the surrounding community and necessitates comment:

1. We commend the Department of Defense for evaluating thirty off-station points of interest to assess the aircraft noise impact to residential areas, schools, parks and recreational areas in the surrounding community. The potential effects of noise on sleep, classroom learning, and recreation is one of the principal concerns of the proposed action.

The noise exposure analysis presented in the draft EIS was computed with the Department of Defense (DOD) NOISEMAP suite of computer programs that can account for the effect of ground elevation and impedance on the propagation of sound. While computer modeling is a viable method of determining noise impacts, actual sampling with acoustic measuring devices at the 30 points of interest measuring sound over an extended period of time to better understand the effects of routine flight operations on the community is preferred. Please conduct a more thorough sound study using actual acoustic measuring devices.

2. Washington is experiencing a tremendous rate of growth, both to our economy and to our population. By Office of Financial Management (OFM) estimates, Island County experienced a




2.87 percent population growth between 2015 and 2016. NASWI has been a part of this growth with the arrival of six squadrons of the P8 Poseidon aircraft. The proposed action to increase the number of EA-18G Growlers would continue this growth trend. This growth necessitates planning and capital investments to expand infrastructure.

We request the Navy through the Office of Economic Adjustment provide technical assistance to counties and local jurisdictions to analyze the full impact to affordable housing, public education, emergency services, transportation, and sewer and water systems. Any decision to proceed with the proposed alternatives must include the requisite federal funding for capital investment and ongoing operating costs.

3. As identified in the draft EIS, the proposed action will have an effect on the surrounding community. A principal concern is that the proposed action will result in both an increase in the frequency of flight operations as well as an expansion of the area exposed to noise. We request the Navy consult with local officials and subject matter experts on sound mitigation to develop and implement a strategy to alleviate the impact of airfield operations based on associated levels of risk.

I appreciate your consideration of these comments and those from state agencies and members of the surrounding community as part of the public comment period for the draft EIS. My staff and our state agencies are available should you require any further assistance on these items of concern. Our state is proud of and looks forward to continuing to host installations for our Armed Forces. Washington is honored to support our military communities and the nation's defense.

Very truly yours,



Jay Inslee
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