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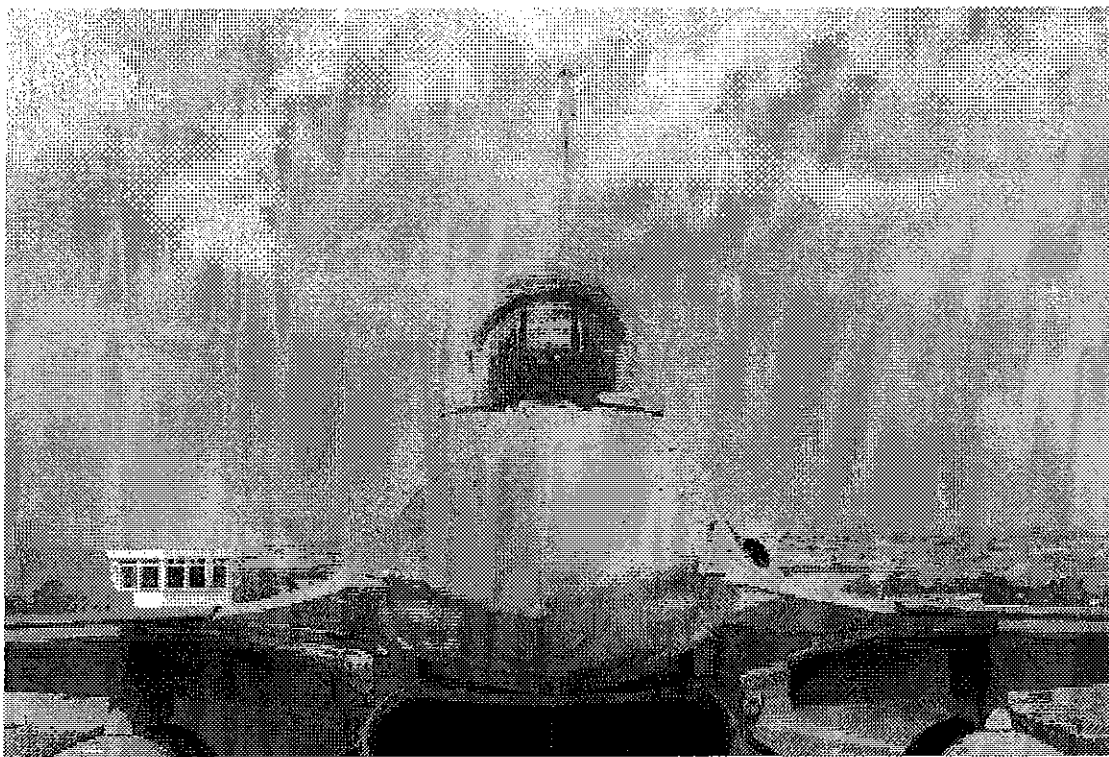
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Boon or Bane For Beaufort, SC? F-35B Jet Training

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The noise is getting louder in discussions regarding the impending F-35B training school at the Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Beaufort, South Carolina. As the designated training base for all Marine Corps F-35B pilots, there is a certain pride, for some, knowing that any F-35B pilot in the world will have first lived and trained in Beaufort County, South Carolina.

MCAS will receive two training squadrons and three operational squadrons of the F-35B Joint Strike Fighter. One report says each class will train eight to 12 pilots for each six to eight month training period – about 66 to 72 pilots a year. The first classes commencing in October of 2014, will be comprised of experienced pilots learning the new aircraft. New pilots will begin training at MCAS in 2015, with government negotiations underway to train pilots from other countries as well.

Six Marine squadrons of F-18's currently based at MCAS Beaufort reportedly generate a total impact of \$702 million for Beaufort's economy. A Beaufort Chamber of Commerce newsletter reports there are currently 60 new F-35 aircraft flying nationwide in the testing programs which already generate or support more than 125,000 jobs, creating an economic impact of nearly \$17 billion dollars. Proponents say Beaufort's F-35B training squadrons will produce a continuous flow of new families into the community and create more than 200 new jobs to support the training center. In other words, this program has a tremendous economic impact on the Beaufort, South Carolina area.

The number of flight ops authorized for the air station will increase from 62,000 a year to over 106,000 according to Troy Ward, the program manager for the MCAS Beaufort F-35 activation task force. The number of flights will vary based on the 'operational tempo' of the air station, says Ward. But, wait! Cool your jets – is this all good?

Although the Chamber of Commerce, state and local politicians, military officials and some residents overwhelmingly support the training program, others, both local and otherwise, have serious, significant and scientifically-supported concerns about the arrival of the F-35B's and what they portend.

According to Best4Beaufort, a coalition of concerned neighborhoods who opposed the training center, some reports state the noise level will be as much as four times higher than the current F-18's stationed at MCAS. This could be problematic since the F-35B training program will create a 71% increase in flight operations, which translates into 431 flight ops per day. Officials have no comment and the Navy still has not disclosed the F-35B noise decibel level since the center was announced in 2010.

But, what's a little increase in noise, especially in light of the projected increase in Beaufort's economic well being? Some 26 million adults have noise-induced hearing loss, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. **A Wall Street Journal article states that noise "is one of the great under-appreciated health hazards of our time – the secondhand smoke of our ears."**

Consider that a normal conversation is about 60 decibels. Anything above 85 decibels, such as a lawn mower, can cause permanent hearing loss according to statistics provided by the Marine Corps. A subway car entering a station reaches 110, and an M16 can register 150 decibels which can rupture an eardrum. Then, 431 flight ops a day for an F-35B jet at a decibel level the Navy will not disclose, equals – what did you say?



Since pre-historic times, noise signaled a threat, triggering the release of the stress hormone, cortisol, which raises blood pressure. In the first major study to estimate the association between residential exposure to aircraft noise and cardiovascular hospitalizations, Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH) and Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH) found people, age 65 years and older, exposed to high levels of aircraft noise may face increased risk for cardiovascular disease. A University of British Columbia study of 6,300 found people with noisy jobs have two to three times more heart problems; and a former World Health Organization official estimated 45,000 deadly heart attacks a year from noise-induced strain.

Noise is also bad for the brain. A landmark study at a public school in Manhattan, published in the journal of Environment and Behavior in 1975, found students in classrooms which heard the sound of an elevated train every five minutes were, by the sixth grade, nearly a full grade behind those in classrooms protected from the noise. Now, the effects of noise on concentration are widely known.

But noise is just one concern, there are more. The F-35B is a one pilot, one engine jet with student pilots and no room for error over residential areas. Gloom and doom, perhaps, but not without merit. The jet developed significant cracks in durability testing (including a severed bulkhead) and didn't pass muster on reliability in training flights last year, according to a report released in September 2013 by Michael Gilmore, director of operational testing and the Pentagon's chief tester of major weapons. Lockheed Martin delivered F-35 jets with "50 percent or less of the software capabilities as stipulated by its contract with the Pentagon," according to the 25-page report.

The disturbing report documented all reliability measures as below target goals for the current stage of development and the aircraft continues to be "immature" and rely heavily on "contractor support and workarounds". Air Force Lieutenant General Chris Bogdan, the Pentagon's F-35 program chief, told Reuters in a statement. "Of course, we recognize risks still exist in the program, but they are understood and manageable." (Is an inexperienced pilot and a software malfunction "workaround" over a populated area manageable?)

Whether or not you are for – or against the F-35B fighter jet, it's always important to make an informed decision if you are considering purchasing real estate, especially in an area near a flight installation such as Beaufort, SC. **For starters, the Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (ACUIZ) form is a mandated disclosure to the potential purchaser – so, ask for it.** And, conduct an independent investigation with the County Development Administrator to determine if any restrictions have been placed on a property.

Remember, due diligence on a real estate purchase is not just about its tangible assets. There may be health, environmental and safety hazards that are extremely important considerations that can be "glossed over" by real estate agents, or even by local government and tourism officials. For assistance on identifying these types of issues, contact Southeast Discovery and we will be glad to help. You can reach us at – info@southeastdiscovery.com or call **877.886.8388**.

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3 Responses to *Boon or Bane For Beaufort, SC? F-35B Jet Training*



February 25, 2014 at 11:34 pm **Lynne Morgan** says:

Thank you so much for publishing this information. It is unbelievable how many Beaufort residents don't know what's coming. They are leaving it up to the leaders of the town to make the decisions. I believe the arrival of the F35B will change the course of Beaufort & lower the number of those thinking of retiring here. Real Estate will be affected and the noise will be heard in places that have been peaceful up until now.

It will be interesting to see what the public does when windows shatter and walls crack and the outside BBQ goes away.....

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May 9, 2014 at 12:47 am **Linda Coe** says:

The ACUIZ forms are mandated as you said so you do not need to ask for them. This is a small community and the realtors who sell here also live here. We are not going to misinform our new neighbors for several reasons. First, we probably live down the street. Second, we could lose our license but most importantly, it is not ethical. Everyone is not intent on taking advantage. Your article was very informative and appreciated – until the last paragraph. Linda Coe ERA Evergreen Real Estate

[Reply](#)



September 13, 2014 at 10:14 pm **Chris in South Burlington** says:

This is an excellent article and I feel for the people of Beaufort County, SC. My brother went to college in South Carolina and we have enjoyed vacations in Hilton Head and Greenville areas. We now live in South Burlington, Vermont, where supposed “progressive” Senator Bernie Sanders has been among the foremost proponents of Lockheed-Martin’s F-35 fighter jet and basing it in Vermont. Currently the VT Air National Guard flies F-16s, which are already very loud. The Air Force has admitted that the F-35 is at least 3-4 times louder than the F-16s & will vastly expand the current “unsuitable for residential use” area, encompassing many 1,000’s of homes. This means that roughly 12-15,000 people will not only face the noise attacks every single day and feel like they are living in a war zone but their homes will also no longer qualify for federally-backed mortgages (which constitutes almost the entire mortgage market). Even if a buyer doesn’t care about the noise, the buyer is not going to go forward if they can’t get a mortgage. I find it very disturbing that politicians forced the Air Force to put these planes in dense residential areas when the Air Force themselves rated a rural Utah desert area as their top choice.

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