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CITY OF
CHULA VISTA

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Ans'd.....

September 6, 1991

The Honorable Leon Williams
Supervisor, District Four
County of San Diego
1600 Pacific Highway
San Diego, CA 92101

Dear Supervisor Williams:

The purpose of this letter is to make you aware of an issue in San Diego County involving a new regional airport site and its implication on the operation of NAS Miramar and the pending closure of George Air Force Base. The following will attempt to outline for you possible opportunities that will allow for the shift of NAS Miramar operations to George and the development of a new Regional Airport at Miramar. This is a viable and logical option and merits further consideration.

For the past three years, San Diego has examined various sites for a new regional airport. In 1989 the City of San Diego requested that another site selection study on a new air carrier airport be pursued by the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) rather than the City of San Diego, thereby allowing representation of all cities and county. The SANDAG Board agreed, obtained funds from the Federal Aviation Administration and completed the study based on the closure of Lindbergh Field (the present regional County airport). Naval Air Station Miramar was the number one site, Otay Mesa was an alternate as per study data enclosed.

Unfortunately, the City of San Diego and SANDAG staff (not the Board) of the regional planning agency, have limited their focus to a binational airport proposal on Otay Mesa with Mexico. Specifically, the binational proposal includes two runways, one on each side of the border, connected by a travelway which traverses the border. The proposal is fraught with environmental, economic and international treaty problems and also negatively impacts the City of Chula Vista, the South Bay and San Diego County in general. One reason that focus has shifted to this site is the belief that a better site, NAS Miramar, could never be obtained.

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This opinion was based on the assumption that the Navy does not want to abandon a key west coast base which includes priority facilities for carrier qualifications and training and that it would be too expensive to relocate and rebuild Miramar without requiring the Navy to reduce or eliminate other budgeted assets/programs in order to obtain Congressional approval for such a project.

We understand that for years the above was probably a reasonable position with no appropriate alternative. However, not many things in life are constant, least of all the Federal budget. Recent events regarding base closures, including the approved closure of George Air Force Base, have allowed the Navy's position to be reexamined. The following represent some pertinent observations:

1. George Air Force Base is a fighter base as is Miramar with all the necessary equipment and physical structures to support such an operation.
2. George is scheduled to close in 1992 by Department of Defense and Congressional action.
3. Miramar is a more appropriate site for a regional airport than the border and is supported by SANDAG.
4. Additional funds for relocating Miramar to George could be obtained through the use of funds allocated in the closure of George.
5. Flight Training:
   a. Flight time and associated fuel consumption would differ for carrier qualification. The San Diego base carrier could shift north sufficiently to offset most of this concern without undue impact to the carrier operation.
   b. Training grounds for George may well be closer than those utilized by Miramar.
6. The relocation of Miramar to George offers the Department of Defense positive public relations opportunities through the retention of jobs at George and the opportunity to develop new jobs in San Diego through the relocation of Lindbergh Field, thereby citing the county's regional airport in the choice location.

Chula Vista is very concerned with the Twin Ports alternative chosen by the City of San Diego. The present goal of the City of San Diego is to pursue a master plan choosing one of the alternate sites in lieu of the only "approved" site for an international air carrier airport at Miramar. The site selection is extremely close to and needs the support of, the Mexican government. The potential delay in reaching a conclusion of an international agreement may take years. The potential of a twin airport to the extreme end of San Diego county means that 90+% of all passengers, employees and logistics involving the airport would pass through Chula Vista. This would create a traffic service level of "F", gridlock or worse, on the present two, and even potential third, North/South interstate highways as noted by another study.

The binational airport, by vastly increasing the length of the average automobile commute to and from the airport, would needlessly accelerate an already unacceptable air pollution crisis in our region. Federal governmental officials have already expressed serious reservations about the border site. Therefore, the residents and elected officials have grave concerns.

This proposal more closely fits original SANDAG siting criteria than the so-called "Twin Ports", and clearly poses less insurmountable environmental, safety, traffic, air quality and economic concerns. Unfortunately, such options are rapidly being ruled out by the apparent failure to date of SANDAG staff to study all the reasonable airport siting options. While the City of Chula Vista does not believe the proposal outlined in this letter is the only possible siting option, it is on its face more worthy of serious consideration than "Twin Ports". It would be our hope that this and other reasonable siting proposals would be given the full consideration they deserve.

Sincerely,

Tim Nader
Mayor

cc: City Council
John D. Goss, City Manager