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Military Driving Economy in Santa Rosa County

MILTON, Fla.— TEAM Santa Rosa has once again identified the military as a dominant economic engine for the county. TEAM's Military Affairs Consultant Pete Gandy reports that several key initiatives in Santa Rosa County at NAS Whiting Field will continue to sustain the local economy as other areas continue to endure the recession.

Santa Rosa County Commissioner Don Salter stated, "Santa Rosa County has worked for years to protect the mission at NAS Whiting Field. During this time, not only have we created the Navy's model of mission protection, but we have also partnered with the Navy to create other economic development opportunities. This includes the recently signed Limited Access Use Agreement which will create a 1,600 ft taxiway from the Whiting Aviation Park to Whiting's South field 6,000 ft runway."

Other items on Gandy's report include that according to the UWF HAAS Center, in 2011, NAS Whiting Field will employ 1,710 active duty military personnel, 870 civilian personnel and that more than 1,500 flight students are trained there annually.

Additionally, the Army's Seventh Special Forces Group will attract more than 10,000 military personnel and dependents to the area and the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter training mission in 2010 will add an additional 4,885.

NAS Whiting Field is also currently preparing for the transition for the aging T-34C "Turbo Mentor" trainer to the new T-6B "Texan II" Joint Preliminary Aircraft Training System.

"With the transition of the new T6B, the importance of NAS Whiting Field to the Department of the Navy and the base's contribution to our national defense system is clear and demonstrates the Navy's commitment to the longevity and importance of NAS Whiting Field," stated Commissioner Salter.

The transition from the T-34C Turbo Mentor to the new T-6B Texan II will occur between now and 2013 for a total of 156 new aircraft. The first two T-6's were delivered to NAS Whiting Field in August. Older aircraft will be retired to the bone yard as new airplanes are received. The new replacement aircraft's instrumentation more closely resembles the operational aircraft now in use by the Navy and Marine Corps, such as the F/A18 Super Hornets, and will shorten transition time to those aircraft. The T-6 shortens the transition time for primary pilots to fleet operational aircraft.



While the military presence in Northwest Florida continues to grow, it is stabilizing the local economy as other regions in Florida and US are experiencing a recession.

TEAM Santa Rosa is charged with ensuring that the economic link between the military and the county is sustained, maximized and nurtured.

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