

Majority says jet noise 'not very loud'

Residents weigh in on local base issue

Do you mind the jet noise at Naval Air Station Oceana? According to a recent survey of 500 randomly selected residents conducted by the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce, 66 percent said the jet noise is "not very loud" or "not loud at all" where they live. And an overwhelming 90 percent said Oceana is "good for the people of Virginia Beach."

The poll, conducted by Bennett, Petts & Blumenthal, a Washington-based market research firm, spent February interviewing 500 residents. Of those polled, about 22 percent were active duty military or had a family member in the military and 41 percent were veterans or related to a veteran.

The results were delivered Feb. 27 in which city and business leaders explained that the survey was done to measure public opinion on Oceana, including the air station's impact on the local economy.

"We've believed all along that the citizens of Virginia Beach support Oceana Naval Air Station," said Nelson Adcock, co-chairman of the chamber's Oceana Task Force. "Now we have the documentation to support that."

Though most residents (66 percent) said jet noise isn't bothersome, 33 percent did consider it "very loud" or "somewhat loud" where they live. More than one quarter of Virginia Beach's 425,000 residents live in zones where jet noise is considered high.

Nearly half of those polled - 46 percent - live in western Virginia Beach, away from Oceana.

About 39 percent live in the central part of the city, closer to the air station. About 60 percent of respondents rated the Navy's attempt to minimize jet noise "excellent" or "good."

The poll is timely because the federal Base Realignment and Closure commission will decide in 2005 which bases to close, said former U.S. Rep. Owen B. Pickett, co-chairman of the state's commission to protect Virginia bases.