

**Helicopter Community Forum**  
**Wednesday, September 22, 2010**  
**7:00 pm – 9:00 pm**  
**Arlington County Board Room**  
**Facilitator: The Honorable Mary Hynes, Arlington County Board**

*To view a video from the event, please [click here](#).*

*Summary*

About 50 residents from Northern Virginia, primarily from Arlington and Fairfax Counties, City of Alexandria along with residents from Montgomery County and the District of Columbia attended the Helicopter Community Forum which focused on what many regard as the excessive and disruptive noise from military helicopters in the area. The forum, which was organized by Arlington County Board Member Mary Hynes and Fairfax County Supervisor Gerry Hyland, included presentations from the Federal Aviation Administration's Regional Administrator Carmine Gallo, Commander of the Air Operations Command for the Military District of Washington, Col. Scott Sandborn, as well as a panel discussion that included several Community Civic organizations directly impacted by helicopter flyovers.

Board Member Hynes opened the forum by explaining that the session would focus on military helicopters because 51 per cent of the region's helicopter traffic is related to military aircraft. She said although the area's residents understand there are important reasons why helicopters are moving around the area, they also want people to know that their lives are disrupted routinely by the noise. Ms. Hynes then said the evening's program would include two presentations from guests, and a panel discussion focused on policy and regulation. If time allowed, questions could be taken from the audience.

Supervisor Gerry Hyland said many of his constituents have complained of loud helicopter noise from flights that are only minutes apart, most of them occurring at night. He said residents want to know if military flights must be over residential areas, and, if so, must they be at altitudes that impact children and family routines.

Bob Laser, FAA operations manager for the air control tower at Reagan National Airport, gave the attendees a detailed explanation of a system of "routes and zones" that is used to manage both fixed wing airplanes and helicopters near the airport. He told the audience that military flights in the area are bona fide missions, some of which can't be discussed. He mentioned that the FAA does receive and investigate helicopter complaints for non-compliance with FAA directions. However, no feedback loop exists to the complainant – often because the

helicopter is on a security-related mission. Air traffic control at DCA does have access to records of all entities that fly through its airspace. Mr. Laser offered to bring together all the necessary parties for that conversation.

Col. Sandborn discussed the hours when military flights are allowed, the traffic patterns in the area and how helicopter crews are trained and certified. He explained that he is new to his job and the area, but expressed interest in working with the community. He explained, however, that it's not realistic to expect helicopters to follow a certain highway route perfectly every time they fly.

Lt. Col. Rob Manning, director of public affairs for the Military District of Washington, assured the panelists that his office is aware of all the complaints submitted to his office and said his staff follows-up on each complaint. He said his office is careful to find out if a military helicopter was flying or not at the time of the complaint. "Nothing is lost in a circular file," he assured the panelists. He did note that the Military District of Washington only had authority over helicopters controlled by the Army; when possible, they share information with other branches of the military, but it is not systematic and is done as a courtesy.

Board Member Hynes and Supervisor Hyland continued to press for a "snapshot" of military flights over a two-week period. FAA Regional Administrator Gallo agreed that it would be valuable to "get all the right people to the table in order to make a difference." Ms. Hynes requested that "we identify the right set of people to look at the overall flight scenarios in the region and identify "hot spots" where helicopters regularly fly too low, or veer off course into residential neighborhoods."

Rick Hostetler, Group Manager for Special Operations Security at the FAA, told the group there are a tremendous number of non-military flights in the area, including everything from state and local police authorities to medical evacuations to flights for the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA.) Near the end of the meeting, he promised to get in touch with all the appropriate contacts for each agency conducting helicopter flights in the area to coordinate a dialogue about helicopter noise.

In summary, consensus was reached on three major next steps:

- The FAA will conduct an approximately two week snapshot analysis of helicopter travel in the region and compare it to known noise complaint "hotspots". This information will be presented at a meeting that Mr. Laser, with assistance from Mr. Hostetler, will convene of all helicopter users of the Metropolitan Washington region and COG representatives.

- The FAA agreed to continue discussing how best to handle helicopter complaints so that patterns of variance can be identified and addressed in a way that could be helpful to elected officials who often field complaints.
- Regular communications will be established between the military users of the airspace, the FAA, and elected officials.

Board Member Hynes thanked all the participants and said she would contact attendees about the next steps in the process.

### **Participants and Organization Representation**

1. Hon. Mary Hynes, Arlington County
2. Hon. Gerry Hyland, Fairfax County
3. Carmine Gallo, FAA Regional Administrator
4. COL Scott Sandborn, Commander Air Operations Command
5. CDR Bryn Henderson, Joint Operation Command Director, Air Operation Domain
6. Arnie Claudio, JFHDNCR
7. Don MacGlashen, CAAN
8. Ed Hilz, Fairlington Citizens Association
9. Gloria Bannister, Fairfax County
10. Mat Thorp, Palisades Citizens Association
11. Don Carr, US-Fort Belvoir
12. Rick Hostetler, FAA
13. LTC Rob Manning, JFHQNCR
14. Bob Laser, FAA
15. Harold Summers, HIA
16. Yvonne Leifert, Park Fairfax Condominium
17. AL Warner, Arlington Wood Civic Association
18. Denis O’Sullivan, CAAN
19. Brett Spence, AHCA
20. Janet Dunkelberger, AHCA
21. Cory Giacobbe, AHCA
22. Mary Ann Cannon, Congressman Frank Wolf’s Office
23. David Schultz, WAMU
24. David York, Helicopter Association International
25. Mili William, AOG, DAAF
26. David Annoyo, AOG, DAAF
27. Michelle Mesack, Donaldson Run Civic Association
28. Rick Barry, Williamsburg Citizens Association
29. Larry Mayer, Arlington County Civic Federation
30. Rebecca Cooper, TBD

31. Susan Carpenter, Gangplank Slipholders Assoc.
32. J. Nickerson, Gangplank Marina
33. Jason Hall, The Grove at Arlington Condo Association
34. Jackie Marcello, FAA
35. James Viola, FAA
36. Gary Munroe, FAA
37. Brian Langdon, FAA
38. Gregg Kurasz, Rock Spring Civic Association
39. Erica Bannerman, City of Alexandria
40. Sharon Annear, Office of Councilwoman Alicia Hughes, City of Alexandria
41. Andrew Edgerton, Fairfax County Police
42. George Nichols, COG Consultant
43. Jeanne Saddler, COG
44. Kari Doyle, Arlington County
45. Ed Hilz, Fairlington Citizens Association
46. Gloria Bannister, Fairfax County
47. Steve Geiger, Arlington County Civic Federation
48. Rick Frisbee, Chain Bridge Forest Civic Association
49. Brenda Kriegel, , Fairlington Citizens Association