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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 3, 2021

Major General Mahoney
P.O. Box 452038
San Diego, CA 92145

Dear MajGen Mahoney:

First and foremost, I write to express my sincere gratitude to the men and women of the United States Marine Corps for their faithful service in defense of our nation. I recognize San Diego's critical role in the national defense, and it is my honor to represent MCAS Miramar and many active and retired Marines in the U.S. Congress.

Over the years I have served in Congress, dozens of constituents and community groups have reached out to me regarding noise and safety concerns due to fixed wing and rotary flight operations from MCAS Miramar, MCB Camp Pendleton and other nearby bases. These complaints have escalated markedly during the COVID-19 pandemic, as routines have changed, and many constituents have shifted to remote work. As their congressional representative, I have been, and continue to be, concerned for the safety and quality of life of the people I represent, while remaining supportive of Marine Corps operations necessary to fulfill national security objectives.

In response to constituent communication, my staff and I have met with local Marine Corps and FAA leadership several times to elevate these concerns, request that pilots adhere to established flight paths, and to strongly urge the Marines to be good neighbors to San Diegans impacted by flight operations. Encouragingly, the Marine Corps and FAA leadership have reaffirmed their commitment to routinely follow pre-established flight paths to minimize impacts to affected communities and take appropriate corrective action if pilots fail to follow procedures. Additionally, the Marine Corps and the FAA have reminded squadrons to follow guidelines, and provided extensive policy clarifications in response to congressional inquiries, many of which my staff have passed along to constituents. Despite these actions, I continue to receive numerous complaints about frequent loud, low Marine Corps flights over residences in my district.

The residents who have reached out to my office are very concerned about deviations from established flight paths. Specifically, constituents from University City and La Jolla routinely contact my office with concerns regarding low overflights of their neighborhoods by MCAS Miramar and other Marine and Navy aircraft, which present safety, noise and environmental concerns. Constituents from coastal areas, including Sunset Cliffs and La Jolla, report frequent low-level helicopter and Osprey flights alarmingly close to the beaches and coastal or cliffside residences, with flights we believe often originate from MCB Camp Pendleton and Naval Air Station North Island. Constituents from Carmel Valley and Torrey Hills bring forth concerns about low, loud overflights of their neighborhoods, often originating from MCAS Miramar. Many reports include descriptions of rattling windows and excruciating noise levels. These constituents frequently request my assistance to ensure military aircraft adhere to established flight paths and avoid neighborhood areas to the greatest extent possible.

I well understand that some overflights of certain communities are inevitable given the volume of operations, the complexity of the airspace and weather conditions, and mission requirements in support of our nation's defense. At the same time, it is my job as a congressional representative to do whatever I can to ensure my constituents' complaints are heard, evaluated and addressed. I am requesting the Marine Corps take additional, measurable steps to address these ongoing complaints.

I understand that military personnel regularly rotate, and that as recently as December 2020, all USMC helicopter squadron pilots were required to read and initial the 1996 MOU, which established flight paths to minimize disturbances and maximize safety. I appreciate this important step from the highest levels of leadership to set clear expectations, prioritize pilot adherence to course rules, and ensure meaningful oversight and accountability.

I strongly urge you to ensure that all squadrons within 3rdMAW, as well as visiting squadrons, comply with the helicopter course rules agreed upon under the 1996 MOU developed by the Marine Corps. My understanding is that this agreement commits all Wings to fly at least one nautical mile from the shore, or if closer, no lower than 3,000 feet. Additionally, I urge you to ensure that all Marine aviators and pilots from visiting squadrons are briefed on and adhere to aviation course rules and avoid unnecessary overflights of neighborhood areas, especially at low altitude.

I am confident that the Marines will work in good faith on a meaningful solution. I will continue to work with the Marine Corps and the FAA to facilitate communication with the people I represent, and I pledge my support to do whatever I can to help ensure that 3rdMAW operations prioritize public safety and quality of life while supporting critical military missions. Please let me know how I can best support you in this endeavor.

Sincerely,



Scott Peters
Member of Congress