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# Fighter Jet Noise Targeted

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The only request it approved was to increase runways used from two to four. The committee declined to rule on closed pattern landings since it is a safety issue, said Philip Stenstrom, manager of the Port of Portland's Aviation Noise Program.

The Guard was at the meeting and is aware of the committee's decision, Stenstrom said, and the next step is a formal response that he will send to the Guard in a couple of weeks.

“None of it is binding, but it can help the Guard decide what flight elements to include in their operational procedures,” he said.

Stenstrom noted that the Guard, which has been at the airport since 1940, and the Port of Portland go back a long way and will continue to work together on noise issues for a long time to come.

“They signed a 50-year lease and are only in their third year,” he said. “They're going to be around for a long time.”

Stenstrom said people periodically complain about noise from jets, but this time it seems to be focused on the rapid descent landings.

So, who decides? The Port controls the airspace for about five miles around the control tower, Stenstrom said, but “the pilot in

command is the ultimate authority for keeping the aircraft safe.”

Under Federal Aviation Authority rules, air traffic controllers can overrule a pilot if safety rules are being violated, but noise abatement is not considered a safety concern.

“The FAA approves for safety,” Stenstrom said. “They don't care about noise.”

But the noise is bone-shattering when you're right under it, Pritchard said, as he described the testing period last year.

“It was awful and was bad enough to cause me to want to do something about it,” he said. “It shook the house, it shook the dishes, and it was so loud my roommate and I couldn't even talk for a few minutes.”

The flights were so frequent and intense that Pritchard said he felt traumatized, and says military planes shouldn't be flying over civilian areas at all.

“The key point is that I don't think they should be practicing military maneuvers over civilian areas,” he said. “We wouldn't tolerate ground troops using our neighborhoods and this is just as bad, it's just 2,500 feet up.”

Pritchard says the Guard uses the continuous descent approach because it saves them time and money, and Stenstrom agrees. But the Port of Portland representative stressed that the airport

is trying to work with the Guard to be responsive to people's complaints.

One thing that makes Oregon Air Guard different is that it is in the middle of a major city. Most Air National Guard facilities are not, Stenstrom said. When the Guard first started using the continuous descent approach back in 2008, it responded to the public and modified the procedure until it was much quieter.

“We are the only place in the country where modification procedures were implemented, of all the co-located military bases,” he said. “My guess is that they generally are not near populated areas.”

Just when or how the Guard will respond to the recommendations of the noise committee is unknown, said Steven Coughlin, spokesman for the Oregon Air National Guard 142 Fighter Wing. He said he would try to find out just who from the Air Guard attended the recent committee meeting, but had not responded by press time.

Regardless of the response, however, the Guard can do whatever it wants, Stenstrom said.

“Because the FAA already approved (the landings) as safe, it's up to the Guard,” he said. “They can listen to (the committee) but they can ignore it and fly whenever they like.”



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