

ELECTRONIC WARFARE NON-HEARING (Transcript of *KPTZ Compass* for November 10, 2014))

[INTRO MUSIC]

Narration (Steve Evans): This is the KPTZ Compass ... your local news magazine for the northeast Olympic Peninsula.

This week on the Compass, angry citizens confront representatives of the U. S. Navy and U. S. Forest Service over plans to turn the Olympic National Forest into an electronic warfare training range.

So now let's go inside the Compass:

[MUSIC]

Randy Meyer: ...My question is, why is the National Park Service and Forest Service even considering this? It's...[interrupted by applause, shouts of approval] ...why would the Navy think that they can ["MONEY," someone shouts] increase the noise? It's ridiculous and they're, like...no, it's like they're sticking their foot in and it's just going to get worse. It's been getting worse for fifteen years! [Several voices saying "Thank you!"]

Pacific District Ranger Dean Millett: As I've said, we've received a request, we're considering it...[interrupted by shouts: "WHY are you considering it? etc."] ...because, as I said earlier, we have a—this is an appropriate use of National Forest System land [mocking laughter, argument from crowd] and this is covered by a memorandum of understanding between the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Defense [garbled protests; "the people OBJECT!"]...and the laws that govern our National Forest system. [General uproar]

Protester: ...The Forest Service does not involve any other agency. It says so quite clearly on...

Moderator: Please—let us have more time for questions [more shouting: "You're breaking the law!"] The next questioner is Cheryl Morgenstern.

Narration: Representatives of the U. S. Navy and U. S. Forest Service faced a very tough crowd at a public meeting held in the Port Angeles City Council Chambers on the evening of Thursday, Nov. 5. People had come in droves from as far away as Oak Harbor, Port Townsend, and Sequim, and there were rumors that a large contingent from Forks had not shown up only because there were trees down, blocking the highway over by Lake Crescent that stormy night.

It's probably just as well they couldn't make it, though, because as it was, every seat in the large hall was filled, people were sitting on the floor and standing wherever they

could find room at the back, and the crowd extended out into the foyer all the way to the front doors. There was no more room.

Many of them had purposely arrived as much as two hours early so they could hold a rally to protest plans by the Navy to turn a vast swath of the Western Olympic Peninsula into an electronic warfare training range. The subject of the meeting was a Navy application for a Forest Service permit to use remote logging roads for mobile electromagnetic emitter trucks that Growler aircraft from Naval Air Station Whidbey Island would seek out in cat-and mouse war games for up to 16 hours a day on as many as 260 days a year.

The rally was forced inside the hall by rain, and so the protesters stood around in the entryway, holding their signs and singing protest songs and talking to each other as they waited for the proceedings to begin. I went around and talked with a few of the protesters:

[Live song: *This Land is Your Land*]

Harvey Kalan: My name is Harvey Kalan, and I'm here because militarizing the National Forest and the Park is contrary to—it's not a compatible usage, so...they need to take their military activities and take them to a military base. So that's my perspective. I happen to be married to a Quileute, and the Native Americans don't need to have this kind of thing happening in their back yard. It's just one more thing they don't have to have happen.

Evans: What is your name?

Mary Anderson: Mary Anderson. I'm from Oak Harbor.

Evans: You came all the way out from Oak Harbor?

Anderson: Yes. We couldn't come on the ferry because of the weather, but, um...I'm concerned about the military expansion and how they're militarizing our whole area, turning it into a war zone. And most of all, as a child I always enjoyed going to the Olympic National Forest. I loved it. We went out there every summer, and it's just...I just can't believe that the military wants to come here and take over, and destroy the pristine nature of the forest. It's just unconscionable.

Evans: Have you lived in Oak Harbor for all of your life, or for a long time?

Anderson: My family moved to Oak Harbor in 1909—my grandfather, and uh...

Evans: I would guess that's your whole life then.

Anderson: Yes. Yes. [laughs] and uh...we're just so devastated with the Growler jets. They are so loud. They fly over our house at less than 150 feet, just at the tree level. They are loud, it's...

Evans: How loud?

Anderson: One hundred and forty decibels. Eighty-five is considered safe by OSHA, and it's causing all kinds of health problems. You know, you can lose your hearing, permanently, and uh...

Evans: Like how loud is 140 decibels? Is that like a gasoline lawnmower?

Anderson: It's much louder than that. It's probably ten times as loud. For each ten decibels, the sound level doubles. So it's really loud.

Narration: Thursday night's meeting had been requested by Sixth District Congressman Derek Kilmer when citizens contacted him to object to the lack of opportunity for public input after the Forest Service initially quietly rubber-stamped the plan in mid-September. The comment period was at first extended to October 31st and a crowded public hearing was held in Forks, but so many people requested another extension that this meeting had been scheduled, and the comment deadline set back to November 28. And so it was that there were loud expressions of dismay and even threats to walk out when the following announcement was made:

Moderator: ...uh, one other thing: the, uh...there are not going to be any comments recorded at this forum. If you have comments on the range, concerns, those need to be submitted formally to the Forest Service.

Narration: Here is what Denise Joy, among many others, thought of that policy:

Denise Joy: One of the things I want to just say is I find this a travesty. I think that it's absolutely absurd that this whole thing is not recorded and sent to the Forest Service and to the Navy, so that...This is democracy. And democracy is messy, and often ugly. And I don't understand and I would like a REAL answer as to why we're not actually practicing it in the way that we should be, where we don't have to write letters. There are some people who don't have website availability.

Narration: To which Navy spokesperson John Mosher responded:

John Mosher: From the Navy's perspective, this is an informational meeting. We came here responding to a request that several elected officials, several different organizations, uh, to specifically address your comments, uh, to clear the air of a lot of misconceptions around this. We are listening to what you are saying, we are taking this information back. We are communicating with the different decision makers in the Navy that are associated with this activity.

Narration: Here was how another speaker regarded the policy:

Andy Stahl: Thank you. My name is Andy Stahl. I am the Executive Director of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics, and I join you here today from Eugene, Oregon [cheers, applause] Um, one of the reasons the Forest Service wants your comments in writing is that only those who submit comments in writing have standing to object. So in fact the Forest Service is trying to protect your rights.

My question is, in 1987 the Forest Service wrote a Forest Plan that is binding on the agency, and it requires that, before issuing a Special Use Permit, if the activity can reasonably be accommodated on private land, it MUST be. My question to the Navy is, did you consider private land, and if so, who? And to the Forest Service, have you asked the Navy to consider private land?

Mosher: So, we considered all potential areas that this training could be conducted. As mentioned, the other resources that are critical to this are already in place. So the airspace itself is a critical factor. That is the airspace that has been assigned to the military for these training activities. So that is in place. To establish new airspace, to do this somewhere else, is virtually impossible—a very very difficult process right now, because there are...

Stahl: Excuse me, sir, you are not seeking a permit for airspace. You are seeking a permit to use land. My question is about land.

Mosher: And the land is associated with the airspace, so if [interrupted by derisive comments from crowd] we are to use the airspace that has been assigned to us, the land has to be accessible, it has to be in the environments of the, uh, uh, the different, uh, sites that we've selected, and so we simply have not identified private land.

Narration: So, the answer was no, private land had not been considered. There were other questions about the Forest Service's process in coming to its earlier decision to approve the Navy's permit application, which had been based on only two letters from the public after minimal notification--several involving similar intimate knowledge of Forest Service regulations and procedures that had been ignored:

Moderator: Our next questioner is Anita Mathay.

Anita Mathay: The Forest Service's own Land Management Regulations, page 55, states that in considering whether to grant such a Special Use Permit, quote: "the needs and the desires of the general public should be given precedence over those of the applicant." The general public is speaking loudly and clearly what their needs and desires are. Question for the Forest Service: Why are the needs and desires of the Navy being given preference over those of the general public? [Applause]

Pacific District Ranger Dean Millett: We have not issued any permits yet. We are aware of that part of our bound, and that is part of our decision-making process. As I've

said, we have not completed this process and we are in the comment-collecting portion of our analysis at this time.

Narration: But if it wasn't clear enough already, the answer from Pacific District Ranger Dean Millett to the next question made it clear that neither the obviously unanimous opposition of this public hearing or any other gauge of public opinion would be used in making the decision:

Catherine McComber-Hilden: I'll just be totally transparent here. One of the things that has come to my attention in my own world in my own work is that I am taking a stand for being in alignment with creating a more beautiful world that our hearts know is possible. And in that, I'm really curious what it would take, what information you would need, in order to not issue the permit. What would cause you to make that kind of decision. What would you need from people that are citizens or what would you need from colleagues, coworkers, or anyone that is bring their concerns to bear on your decision?

Millett: I need the public to make substantive comments to the process that addresses the, the EA that is proposed. I'm not 'sensing' the public's opinion. I'm looking for substantive comments that display factual errors or...within the document itself.

(Audience members: Like what? You didn't answer the question. Etc.)

McComber-Hilden: So what might constitute "substantive" to you?

Millett: Something that addresses the NEPA document itself. I'm not looking for, "I don't think this is a good idea." That is not [interrupted by audience cries of "Why not?" etc.]

McComber-Hilden: Could you let him answer what he's needing to operate within here?

Millett: You need to address the EA itself and the analysis contained within that document.

McComber-Hilden: All right. Thank you.

Moderator: The next questioner is Mike Wallace.

Mike Wallace: I'm a recent new resident in Port Townsend. I had been living in Hawaii and I moved here because of all the incredible natural resources: The rain forest, the fishing, the hiking, all of the things that are important to me. I have just a little copy of the mission statement of the Forest Service. I'd like to read that:

"The mission of the Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations."

There's the mission statement. My question: If, in fact, the forest service is making a final decision for this project to continue, how many Forest Service members are going to be involved in that process, and who are they going to be?

Audience: Good question. Hoo! Etc.

Millett: The decision space is mine. The people that will be part of the team will be Greg and other staff members on the Olympic National Forest.

Wallace: So you personally have the hammer?

Millett: I am the line officer of the decision authority.

Wallace: Now we know! It's clear! [General ruckus among audience.]

Narration: In case you didn't catch that, the answer was that, in the end, the one person who will ultimately decide whether or not to issue the permit will be Pacific District Ranger Millett, the same man who decided in September that the Environment Assessment, or EA, showed that there would be no significant environmental impacts from the plan, and therefore approved the project.

Many of the speakers openly scoffed at the idea that a plan that would bring untold numbers of additional over-flights of pristine natural areas by noisy Navy Growler aircraft would have no environmental impact, arguments that the officials fended off by arguing that the effects were outside the narrow scope of the proposal, which only had to do with the operations of the emitter trucks. Any increase in air traffic, and they were very reluctant to admit there would be any, came under the purview of other environmental impact statements that established the Northwest Training Range:

Moderator: All right. Our next questioner is Janet Welch.

Janet Welch: There are any number of comments and questions that could be made. This EA is totally, um – glosses over any number of appropriate ways to respond. It says the alternatives were examined to see if there were a substantial increase in the number or intensity of nearby sound events on nearby public or private land.

None.

If you want to do an EIS on building an airport, you talk about the jets flying. You don't just talk about the backhoes building the airport. This is an absolute – it's a joke. It's a travesty when it comes to environmental assessment. But what I keep hearing, and my question to you is that I keep hearing: this is not about the flights, this is not about the training. That's all in the EIS. So the Northwest training and testing EIS, if I understand it, the supplemental is due out in December and then you will have forty-five days to comment. My question is: Is that schedule still appropriate and is that a place for us to actually shoot down this crap? [Laughter, applause]

Mosher: The supplement that you are referring to was just announced on the 24th of October and, yes, we expect in early December the actual release of the supplement the the EIS would, uh, would be made publicly available. I will say that that supplement is adding to the existing Draft Environmental Impact Statement that was released in January of this year. Uh, the supplement is addressing two very specific topics. Those are not electronic warfare. So what you would see in the supplement are two very specific training activities that occur at sea, in the ocean, uh, and are not specifically what we are discussing here tonight, electronic warfare training. It will be a relatively small document, we think about 9200 pages to address those two activities, but again it is not what we are here talking about tonight.

Welch: So the EIS was where we would have addressed all this added traffic?

Mosher: Yes.

Welch: So it addresses the added traffic?

Mosher: What added traffic?

Welch: of the expanded—of this whole—would you like me to read it to you? (reading from the document) “The continued training supported by the installation of the EW range that is covered in this EA is being addressed in the NWTT EIS.” So that’s talking about the “enhancement,” which you talk about, that “the purpose of this proposed action is to sustain and enhance the level and type of training and to accommodate growth in future training requirements.”

Mosher: That’s not increase of activities, that’s growth in training so it adds an enhanced capability [drowned out by audience laughter]...is currently occurring, we’re already doing it, we have already analyzed the aircraft operations, with analyzing the impacts...

Welch: So the number of flights is not changing?

Mosher: We did address that there would be increased activities in the area [drowned out by groans, noise from the audience] The number of over-flights does fluctuate from year to year. We do anticipate and we do address a potential approximately twenty, I’m sorry, ten percent increase in flights. So a very low level increase would be expected for the number of flights as based on the aircraft using the airspace. We would have an increased capability on the ground, so an increase in flight time associated with that. Not additional aircraft, not a...not a substantial increase in the number of flights.

Narration: It should be noted here that the Navy has recently announced plans to add up to 36 additional Growler aircraft to its fleet at Whidbey Island Naval Air Station, and that the motivation cited in the EA for the installation of the new Electronic Warfare Training Range is to begin conducting closer to home exercises that are currently taking place 400 miles to the east in the Okanogan and Roosevelt training ranges.

In the course of the two-hour meeting, at one minute per question and three minutes per answer, only a small fraction of the number who wished to make their voices heard got the opportunity. But of those who did speak, none were in favor of the proposal. Here are a few more comments and questions:

Julia Cochrane: My name is Julia Cochrane, and I'm from Port Townsend, Washington. The Olympic Peninsula is the proud home of One Square Inch of Silence, which is the quietest place in the United States. It's in the Hoh Rain Forest, 3.2 miles from the visitors' center above Mt. Tom Creek Meadows on the Hoh River Trail. It's marked at 47° 51.959N and 123° 51.22W. It was designated on Earth Day, 2005, to protect and manage the natural soundscape in Olympia Park's backcountry wilderness. The Growlers that will accompany these exercises will destroy the One Square Inch of Silence. I want to know what the Forest Service is doing to protect this national resource. Thank you. [audience responses: "Good question," etc.]

Millett: The site you refer to down on the Hoh is not a Forest Service site. That's a DNR site. [Audience groans]

Cochrane: So the Forest Service has no obligation to protect this national resource?

(Audience member: So what's the DNR doing?)

Millett: That is not...our decision space.

Moderator: Our next questioner is Tim Lambert.

Tim Lambert: I have a direct question for the Forest Service--and I daresay that you're not going to answer honestly, but it's probably a good one for the audience to hear: Have you received any money from the Navy, and are you aware of any money that has been given to the tribes to this purpose? And at what point – to my second question – have each of the human beings and all this space that we call "our world" become nothing more than a resource? I am not a 'resource' unless you think you're a 'resource.' You are not a resource. You are a person. And your life counts. We are not resources. We do not want to be expended or utilized or experimented on. Will you please tell me, have you received or been given any money for this purpose? I object to this process. It's obscene. [Lengthy applause]

Millett: We are in the process of doing a cost recovery agreement with the Navy. We need to cover our costs and [drowned out by audience reaction]...analysis. As far as money to the tribes, I'm not aware of any at this point. [Audience: "Thank you for being honest," "How much money do you get?"]

O'Neill Louchard: Who are you thinking that you are protecting by doing all of this? I don't feel particularly protected by all of this stuff! I feel the opposite. Absolutely the opposite.

Mosher: I think it's a...you're asking policy level questions. This is something directed to people far above our level. Our elected officials, our government are the ones that determine...the Navy is obligated to train to be prepared to do a mission it is directed to do. So we're simply obeying the regulations and laws of our country and preparing ourselves, uh, for the various missions that we have as a Navy.

Gretchen Brewer: Hello. I'm Gretchen Brewer, a citizen. My question is about the airplanes--technical questioning, and I'd like to get some clarity about the interaction with the planes and this weapons system. First, the approximate number of planes per day or the average number that you expect, and then is it that they'll fly from Whidbey to the western Olympic Forest, interact with the mobile units and then fly back? And also how low will they be allowed to fly? What's the lowest that they'll be allowed to fly? And then what's the nature of this interaction? Will it be involved with something like scrambling something on the plane? Disabling the equipment? And so on. If you refer to regulations, we'd appreciate it if you'd recite them so that we can look them up. Thank you.

Mosher: Thank you. Just to reiterate, the aircraft are currently flying on the Olympic Peninsula as well as the Okanogan and Roosevelt, so that is not going to change. What we are proposing here is to introduce mobile emitter systems on the ground to help simulate the aircraft in the air and improve the training scenarios the crews are currently doing out there.

Moderator: Our next questioner is Jeff Eichen.

Jeff Eichen: We've already asked the question to the Forest Service: Why is the Forest Service rubber-stamping the, um, this permit here? Is it for money or is it, um...what is the truth behind all of this? Why are you considering this? Because, um, for me I think the idea is very simple. In the '60s...since the '60s, we've been trying to have no more war. None. Zero. No more war. And to raise that vibration and to get back to the love center in everything and just be better as human beings. No more war is not even contemplated, so my question is: rubber-stamping. Is it for dollars? Or why even consider it, because that's escalating war as a concept.

Moderator: Connie Segal...are you ready?

Connie Segal: Thank you for being here. So, one of the questions is: How come we're only having this hearing? Or—we've only had a few hearings [woman in audience interjects: "It's not a hearing!"] Not a hearing...but, a meeting. Why is there a cap on it, I mean...are there going to be more discussions? [Audience member: "May we have more formal hearings, maybe in Port Townsend or Sequim?"]

Moderator: They have heard you, thank you.

Cheryl Morgenstern: Hi. I live in Port Townsend. One of the things that you stated before in your presentation was that if you determine that there is any wildlife or human nearby that you will cease your operation, and my questions is: Are you planning on keeping a wildlife biologist on retainer at all times to make that that person scours the area to count all of the numerous nematodes, fungi, pollinators, large mammals, fish, and rodents as well as human. I mean how are you actually going to determine and decide which wildlife counts and how much of it there is prior to turning on these devices? I don't see how that's actually practical or even doable. And I'd like a real answer and not just a hedging answer.

Mosher: Okay, so one of the questions was would there be wildlife biologists, and the answer is, no, it would be the operators of the vehicle. These are the operators of the equipment. Their duty and their responsibility would be to, uh, to be aware of what's in the surroundings in these different sites [Audience: "Oh God!" ; "How are they qualified?"]...so their responsibility is to observe what is around them and to –whether it's people or wildlife—now I said generally speaking wildlife, but there are limitations to that, of course: we are looking for easily observable wildlife. We're not expecting our operators to go out there and look for salamanders or some of the other, uh [Audience: "But they're all sentient beings!" "But they're all wildlife," etc.] There are a number of safety factors that are incorporated into these areas that I mentioned earlier, these exclusion areas, so, in addition to us not operating if there are people or wildlife in these areas, uh, I also mentioned the parameters of the antenna equipment itself. So it's not directing its signal towards the ground. So it's directing it up. So in fact there is no hazard below the antenna.

Narration: The deadline for commenting on the Electronic Warfare Plan is November 28. The full Pacific Northwest EW Range Environmental Assessment is available by searching the web for that title. Comments should be addressed to Greg Wahl, Forest Environmental Coordinator, Olympic National Forest, 1835 Black Lake Blvd SW, Olympia, WA 98512, or can be sent by email gtwahl@fs.fed.us. (repeat email)

This is Steve Evans reporting for KPTZ Compass.

[MUSIC]

This week's KPTZ Compass was written and produced by Steve Evans.

The Compass airs Mondays and Saturdays at noon, Tuesdays at 5 p.m., and Wednesdays at 10 a.m. ... exclusively here on KPTZ, the home of eclectic, authentic community radio.

For the news team here at KPTZ, 91.9 FM, Port Townsend, I'm **Steve Evans**.

[MUSIC OUTRO]