UNITED STATES NAVY AND MARINE CORPS BASES, DOMESTIC

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Greenwood Press
Westport, Connecticut • London, England

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IBERIA, LA., NAVAL AIR STATION, 1960–1964

NAS Iberia, ninety-five miles west of New Orleans, had the Navy's sole advanced antisubmarine squadron, VT-27, on board. With fifty-eight *Trackers*, seventy flight instructors and 350 ground personnel aided over 600 students and 105 Allied aviators complete the squadron's flight training syllabus. However, on 24 April 1964 Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara announced sixty-three actions to consolidate, reduce, or discontinue defense activities to be closed at home and overseas. One of the two air stations to be closed at home was that at Iberia, with its VT-27 transferred to NAS Corpus Christi, Tex. (q.v.).

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IMPERIAL BEACH, REAM FIELD, CALIF., NAVAL AIR STATION, 1943–1945, 1950–1974

Imperial Beach is located near the International Boundary Monument that marks the boundary between the United States and Mexico at its extreme southwest corner. The first use of the site for aviation was made by the Army, which established a station there and called it first "Aviation Field," then "Oneonta Flying Field." It was used for landing practice and aerial gunnery. On 5 October 1918 the name was changed to Ream Field in memory of Maj. William R. Ream, the first flight surgeon of the Army Air Services to be killed. When Jimmy Doolittle reported there early in 1918 for flight training he found only two dirt strips at a sub-field of Rockwell Field, which is now Naval Air Station, North Island. Following World War I the Navy leased the 140-acre field from private owners and during the 1920s and 1930s used it for practice and emergency landings. Just before the attack on Pearl Harbor, though there were no permanent facilities there for the maintenance and repair of aircraft and no quarters for personnel, the field was being used to train pilots in carrier landings.

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor the Navy decided to develop Ream Field into an air base, and rapid construction made it reasonably complete by mid-1943. Commissioning occured on 17 July 1943 of what was considered a unit of the Naval Air Center, San Diego. During the rest of the war years, as many as twenty-two air groups supported by Carrier Air Support Group 17 used the field, but with the end of the war it was deemed expendable and was decommissioned. In March 1950, however, it was recommissioned, designated an Auxiliary Landing Field with the address of San Isidro, Calif., and given the mission of maintaining facilities as necessary for the logistic support, operation, maintenance, and training of fleet units. The size of the installation meanwhile had increased to about 630 acres.

In October 1951 the first helicopter squadron reported on board, followed by others. In July 1955 the station was redesignated as a naval auxiliary air station with the address of Imperial Beach, Calif., but with no change in mission. At the same time it acquired administrative overview of an auxiliary landing field known as "Border Field," about 100 acres of land south of the station where target drones were provided for fleet training. These were launched by catapult and retrieved by parachute. By 1965 old Ream Field had become widely known as the "Helicopter Capital" because it was the home base for all Pacific Fleet Helicopter Squadrons. Supported were HU-1s, HS-2s, HS-4s, HS-6s, and HS-8s.

As had happened following World War II to Ream Field, in 1960 the outlying field at Border Field reverted to caretaker status, whereupon it was taken over by the Army and used for the testing of the SHORAN system. Although the citizens of Imperial Beach were interested in acquiring the property at Ream Field proper, the field was found useful for the support of the Vietnam War effort. Therefore, it was refurbished and funds were made available for new barracks and a new mess hall. As of 31 December 1966 there were 30 officers, 264 men, and 81 civilians on board, and flight operations during 1966 increased 26.6 percent over those of 1955. Additions were a photographic division, small arms range, and mirror landing system. An outline of the fantail of a DLG (destroyer leader fitted with missiles) made to scale was painted on a landing pad and was used to qualify Landing Signal Officers for destroyers. In addition the assembly and repair department was qualified to handle various engines, and a naval training center was established. Other appurtenances included fire, medical, and dental departments, weather service, and search and rescue. Attuned to the importance of public relations, the station gave Christmas parties for disadvantaged children and provided tours of the base.

Construction continued in 1967, when a new radio transmitting and receiving building, hangar, and airframes and hydraulics shops were built, a 500-man barracks was completed, and a contract was let for a new control tower. Given this situation, on 19 December the Secretary of the Navy announced that the station would be redesignated a naval air station on 1 January 1968, having a personnel allowance of 30 officers, 264 men, and 100 civilians; that attempts would be made to buy an additional 660 acres of land (in part to stop encroachment upon the station by the developers of a marina); and that only permanent structures would henceforth be built. During 1967, 184,759 flight operations occurred, and 4,102 ground control approaches. During the summer a summer youth recreation program was initiated. In 1969 the station was given accounting responsibility for various materials, and in 1970, in addition to supporting ten helicopter squadrons, the station acquired a Naval Air Maintenance Training Detachment, a Naval Air Reserve Training Detachment, a Naval Weather Service Detachment, and a Fleet Aviation Specialized Operational Training Group, Pacific Fleet Detachment. While it had on board 448 of its authorized strength of 457, total base population was 3,790. Moreover, the master plan that called for the complete replacement of World War II facilities had been completed, and the 4,000-foot runway had been extended by 1,000 feet. Two of its helicopter squadrons, incidentally, were involved in the recovery of Apollo 14 and 15. During fiscal year 1971 funds for public works operations were set at $2,030,000; for the maintenance of real property, $240,000; and for aircraft maintenance, $1,600,000.

The high tempo of operations continued throughout 1972, for 203,137 flight operations were completed, and 11,614 GCA landings. However, financial retrenchment in Washington and the nation's pulling out of the Vietnam War resulted in notification that as of 31 December 1974 the station would be disestablished.

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INDIANAPOLIS, IND., NAVAL AVIONICS CENTER, 1978–

In 1941 the Navy established a Naval Ordnance Plant at Indianapolis on a 163-acre plot at Twenty-first Street and Arlington Ave., on the east side of the city. In the main building, which had eleven and a half acres of floor space on one level, about 1,800 people during World War II engaged in the fabrication of equipment used in more than 1,400 individual projects. About 500 of the persons were professional, scientific, and engineering employees who performed research, design, development, and test and evaluation, with others in support, as in supply, public works, industrial relations, and other administrative matters. Although manufacturing capability was limited, some research, engineering, development, and test and evaluation work was done on avionics (the joining of aviation and electronics).

After World War II, NAF Indianapolis began to specialize in avionics, and in 1969 Capt. Justin A. O'Neill, its commanding officer, received an award for major contributions and significant developments made by NAFI in the successful introduction to the fleet of the *Walleye* missile, a TV-guided bomb that carries a TV camera in its nose. With his own TV set in the cockpit, a pilot can monitor