

# Send in the Marines to End Argument Over an O.C. Airport



Three reports have recommended Camp Pendleton as a viable site for an international airfield.

By JOHN GRAHAM

**I**nternational trade brings Southern Californians unparalleled prosperity and peace. But the gateway to our trade, Los Angeles International Airport, is now beginning to resemble a bad Three Stooges routine: Moe, Larry and Curly all trying to walk through a door at the same time. This bottleneck to trade is not just a problem for Orange County commerce. San Diego/Tijuana is in the same fix. Neither Brown Field nor Miramar have proved to be viable options there; and here, neither has El Toro.

The El Toro airport distraction has amazing legs. I thought it was dead with the passage of Measure F. Of course, the law involved was and is debatable. However, you'd think the Orange County supervisors would read something from the huge majority expressing its disdain for an El Toro airport.

I've learned that apparently Orange County supervisors (at least three of them) have a long history of not reading things. Take for example the reports presented them written by the Southern California Assn. of Governments. Separate reports in 1972, 1982 and 1990 recommended the southern part of Camp Pendleton as a viable site for an international airport.

What killed the discussion of the Camp Pendleton option? After consulting directly with the mayor of Newport Beach, Orange County supervisors nixed it in June 1990. They can't actually have read the SCAG reports. And now El Toro is back on the table, again and again and again. I think it's time to reconsider Camp Pendleton.

Let's say you've been called to a meeting in New York, Paris, or Tokyo. If you live in Irvine, that means an hour (if you're lucky) car ride up to that mess of LAX. If you live in Del Mar, that means a 30-minute (if you're lucky) ride down to the San Diego airport of steep thrills, a 30-minute flight up to LAX and whatever time it takes to make your connection there. I've done the Irvine trip many times; it's not fun.

Now imagine the same flights leaving from southern Camp Pendleton—let's call it Pendleton International. You drive over to the Irvine (or So-

lana Beach) train station, check your bag, and start your novel on the fast train ride down (or up) to Pendleton International. I suggest a seaside seat for the 35-minute, 89-mph trip to/from the Irvine depot. This is how things are done in civilized places like Amsterdam/Schiphol, Osaka/Kansai and London/Heathrow. Fast trains run from those cities to their respective airports.

The rail line is already there. And let's not forget that one rail line can carry the same traffic as 15 lanes of freeway. Recall the nightmare traffic at LAX during the holidays. In fact, if done right, all the employment contracts for the service providers would include train passes. The clerks, cooks, controllers, mechanics, and pilots also would have easy commutes, even from north Orange County.

You say the Marines won't give up the space? That's what they said about El Toro. I've worked with Marines before. In the 1970s, my Navy unit supported practice amphibious landings along that 15 miles of coastline. However, beach landings (the best argument against a joint-use airport there) haven't been used since the Korean War. The Marines don't need big beaches anymore.

Indeed, perhaps more relevant in the years to come will be securing or assaulting airports in foreign lands. Pendleton International might provide a unique training venue on occasion. Did you know that on Sundays the links at St. Andrews in Scotland are opened to the public for recreational uses other than golf—walks and picnics and such? Perhaps Pendleton International might be closed to civilian use on the last day of each month and made available for military training exercises. There are all kinds of joint-use possibilities if we think and negotiate creatively.

Look at a map of Southern California: Square in the center between LAX and San Diego is Camp Pendleton. A major international airport at Pendleton would serve both San Diego and Orange counties and 6 million citizens well. An airport there would relieve much of the coming pressures on John Wayne Airport and LAX. Recently, we sat outside at Sage, a trendy East Bluff (Newport Beach) restaurant where I'm sure supervisors have supped before. The jet noise was distracting. May I suggest that those same supervisors review those old reports (they're at the UCI library), take a drive down to the southern end of Camp Pendleton and look around with their San Diego counterparts.

*John Graham is a professor of international business at the Graduate School of Management at UC Irvine. He recently was the Democratic candidate for Congress in the 47th congressional district.*

# Is Pendleton option back on the table?

*Remarks by Coad and Silva suggest the time may be ripe to reconsider southern airport option to El Toro*



**JOHN GRAHAM**

► Mr. Graham is a professor of international business in the Graduate School of Management at the University of California, Irvine. Editor's note: The land that is now Camp Pendleton was actually privately held until World War II, when the War Powers Act was invoked to take it over for military use. The original deal, according to local historian George Grupe, called for the owners to have the option to re-purchase the land after the war. Instead, the government kept it and compensated the owners.

Something very interesting happened last Thursday at a special session of the Orange County Board of Supervisors. The meeting had been called to approve spending some \$1.4 million of county funds on Washington lobbyists to move along federal government approvals for the El Toro airport. The vote was a predictable 3-2 split - Supervisors Chuck Smith, Cynthia Coad and Jim Silva in favor, Todd Spitzer and Tom Wilson opposed.

The interesting part is that Supervisors Coad and Silva made comments regarding the long-dead option of building an international airport at the south end of Camp Pendleton.

An airport at Pendleton has been off the table for discussion since way back in June of 1990 when

a different set of supervisors opted for El Toro. This action was taken despite the fact that the Pendleton site had received positive reviews from three different Southern California Associations of Government in 1972, 1982 and 1990. The decision to nix Pendleton more than 10 years ago was made with written consultation from the mayor of Newport Beach, but no other Orange County cities.

Details regarding this decision can be found in file #3055 in room 469 at the County Hall of Records. It makes for fascinating reading.

Spitzer eloquently argued last week that county money shouldn't be spent on Washington lobbyists because the decision about El Toro is a local one in which the federal government shouldn't interfere.

Coad promoted a "regional" view of the problem, thus bringing the federal government into the picture. That is, inadequate transportation services are a national problem and a stalled El Toro airport option will bring federal attention no matter what. She also added that the lobbyists might also reconsider the Pendleton site as part of a broader regional approach to the problem.

Silva volunteered that he had actually talked with the commandant of the Marine Corps about joint use of Camp Pendleton and the commandant resolutely refused.

We should be pleased to hear that the topic was broached recently with the military. However, what Supervisor Silva needs to understand is that Marines are taught to speak with resolve whether the resolve is really there or not. Indeed, recall their resolve about not giving up El Toro in the 1980s.

The Marines actually have a long

history of giving up territory for the public good. They've already relinquished training airspace at Camp Pendleton to commercial aircraft, and they've recently lost parts of both their San Diego and Twentynine Palms training centers.

Perhaps Newport Beach Congressman Christopher Cox explains the Washington hierarchy best: "The Navy [and Marines] is ... unshakable. So we get around that by passing a law" (as quoted in the Register on June 10, 2000, Local News, page 1).

The folks who study conflict resolution at UCI speak about the notion of ripeness. That is, oftentimes agreements finally come about because the two sides are tired of the confrontation and environmental events offer new paths for good compromises. The time is ripe for a solution to our Southern California airport problems.

The 67 percent vote for Measure F demonstrated the insurmountable political obstacles facing the El Toro airport. Similar obstacles face other options in San Diego County such as NAS Miramar or Brown Field/Tijuana.

The inadequacy of Lindbergh Field in San Diego prompted Dick Murphy, San Diego's new mayor, to say back in October,

"The Camp Pendleton idea is to operate what I would call Southern California International Airport on a piece of Camp Pendleton. Now, we're not talking about shutting down Camp Pendleton ... But the new airport could be a joint venture with Orange County. Orange County has the same problems with John Wayne Airport that we have. I would envision that airport being primarily an international-transcontinental airport like Dulles. So, basically, anybody out of San Diego County or Orange County or Riverside County who wanted to fly overseas or to Washington, D.C. could fly out of that airport." Dick Murphy is the kind of ally Orange County needs.

An international airport at Camp Pendleton is a sound idea because of its geographic centrality, its distance from heavily populated residential areas, and its juxtaposition to an active rail line.

To the extent that international trade (made possible by our ports and airports) promotes international peace and understanding, Marines' lives will actually be saved.

Yes, perhaps an airport at Camp Pendleton will take the proverbial act of Congress. But, that's why we have elected officials in Washington.

## ABOUT THE GUEST COLUMN:

Guest columnists are local writers with a point of view about local, state or national issues. We're looking for good writing, familiarity with the issue, a fresh perspective - all in about 800 words. Send submissions to Guest Column, Commentary, The Orange County Register, P.O. Box 11626, Santa Ana, Calif., 92711; fax: 714-796-3657; email: letters@link.freedom.com

**AN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AT CAMP PENDLETON IS A SOUND IDEA BECAUSE OF ITS GEOGRAPHIC CENTRALITY, ITS DISTANCE FROM HEAVILY POPULATED RESIDENTIAL AREAS, AND ITS JUXTAPOSITION TO AN ACTIVE RAIL LINE.**

# Pendleton's mission precludes an airport



I would like to respond to UCI Professor John Graham's recent commentary on the ability of the Marine Corps Base at Camp Pendleton to serve as the location of a major international airport ["Is Pendleton option back on the table?" Guest Column, Commentary, Jan. 7].

As the base commander of Camp Pendleton, I take exception to his notion that a civilian airport should be put here. Those who understand Camp Pendleton's mission and the full extent of daily military training operations, including hazardous live-fire activities by both ground and aviation forces, are aware that the siting of a civilian airport on this base does not make sense and would be incompatible with the Marine Corps' mission.

This base serves as home to 35,000 Marines and Sailors of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force. It is one of the busiest Department of Defense installations in the country and serves as a cornerstone of the Marine Corps' amphibious training and war-fighting capabilities. While Camp Pendleton may appear to an unfamiliar citizen as possibly large enough to accommodate a civilian airport facility, those who really know this base well clearly grasp just how infeasible that notion is.

This base serves as a valuable training resource for not just the Marines but for all service components. Our ordnance impact areas and training ranges stay active approximately 360 days a year in support of the over 45,000 training events annually scheduled here.

Those areas of the base not used for military training purposes provide land in support of other required facilities and infrastructure needs for 1) the 18 different camps housing our assigned military organizations and 2) the 15 separate neighborhoods of family housing, six public schools, six child-care centers and other family support facilities scattered throughout the base. Including the 17,000 civilians who reside on the installation, we have a full-time resident population of 42,000. And on any given day our average daytime population can range from anywhere between 60,000 to 90,000.

Those who are familiar with Camp Pen-

**EDWARD HANLON, JR.**  
 ▶ Gen. Hanlon is a major general with the U.S. Marine Corps. He is the commanding general of the Marine Corps Base at Camp Pendleton.



Register file photo  
**Marines engage in amphibious training exercises at Camp Pendleton in 1989.**

dleton's geography also understand that, due to the presence of mountainous terrain covering 80 percent of the base, in reality there's relatively little land on Camp Pendleton that's suitable for an airport. Furthermore, those areas of the base having topography more suitable for airport operations are, ironically, also those land areas most encumbered with stringent environmental restrictions.

Finally, when considering the presence of an existing large military airfield facility on Camp Pendleton, coupled with the existence of over 240 square miles of FAA-designated Special Use Airspace (which overrides the base to protect adjacent civil aviation operations against the hazards of live-fire military training), it's easy to understand why the notion of building an international civilian airport on Camp Pendleton is illogical.

As to Professor Graham's comments that "the Marines don't need big beaches anymore" and "beach landings haven't been used since the Korean War," I am afraid that he is out of touch with current national defense doctrine and the Marine Corps' mission as specified by Congress.

In today's world, as much as ever, the Navy and Marine Corps mission requires

that these two services be capable of projecting U.S. military power ashore from the sea whenever the protection of our national interests may require it. What makes Camp Pendleton truly irreplaceable is having the Pacific Ocean on our western boundary, as this affords Marine units direct access from the sea for the conduct of realistic amphibious training operations, including beach landings. Amphibious operations and beach landing capabilities will always continue to be a touchstone of the Marine Corps' national defense mission. To think otherwise is simply being out of tune with the real world of national security and military readiness today.

The Marine Corps has already contributed one of its former facilities, with the closure of MCA El Toro, as a potential site for operation of a commercial airport. And, I can assure you that there's no reason to believe the mission of Camp Pendleton will, in any way, diminish.

Should the professor continue to remain unconvinced, let me extend an invitation for him to visit this installation to see first-hand and close-up why Camp Pendleton will not work as a commercial airport site.

# CAMP PENDLETON INTERNATIONAL

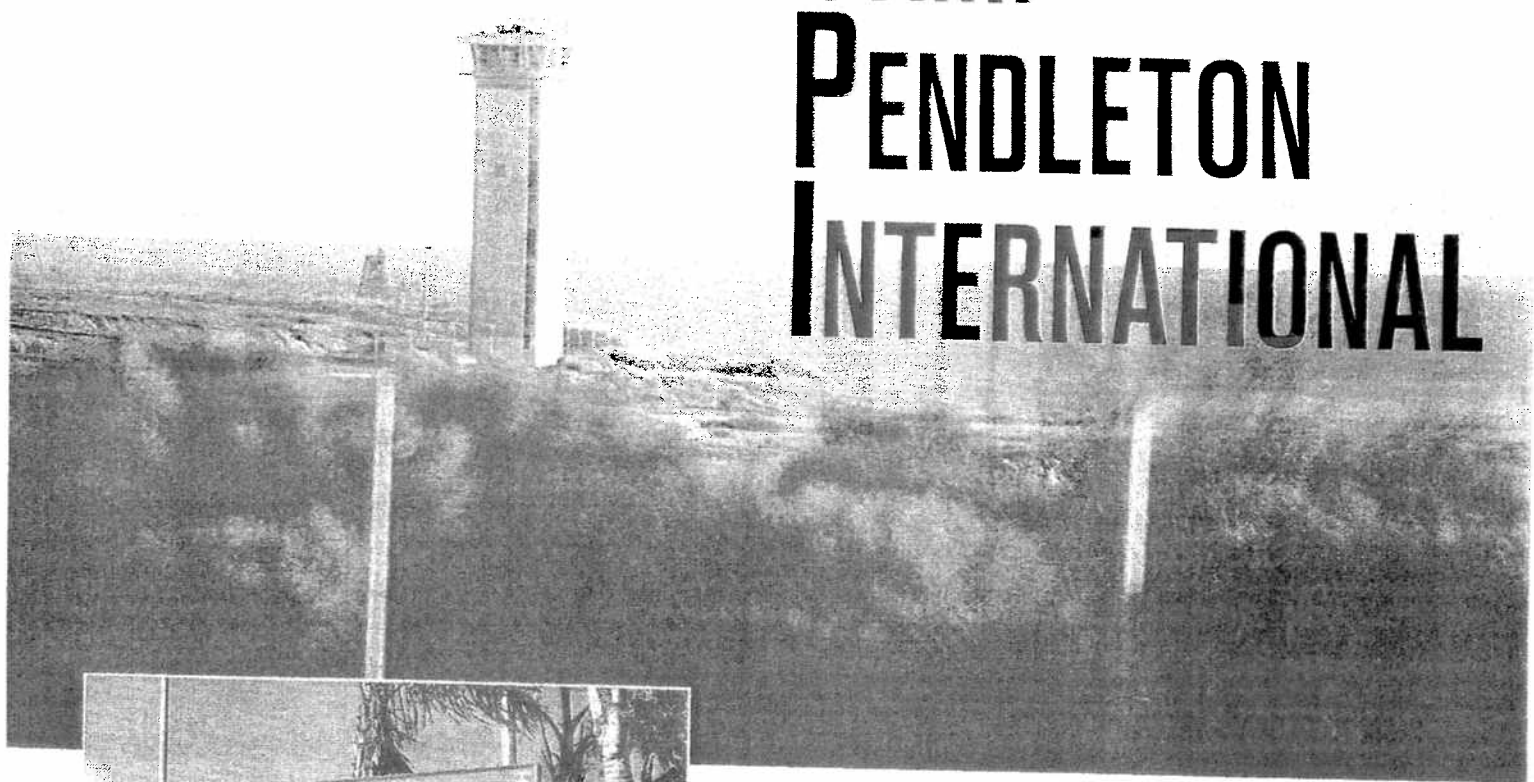


PHOTO BY GUYEN VI



A solution to the El Toro quagmire lies south of San Clemente.

**BY JOHN L. GRAHAM**

It was just something on television until I read the paper the next day. Even though I knew the Balboa Park neighborhood well where the planes went down, it still might have been another familiar disaster scene from a movie. The burning houses and other signs of carnage were just images coming from the box in my living room. The reporters described the collision of the PSA 727 and the Cessna 172 on that sunny San Diego morning in great detail. One hundred and forty-four people died in the crash, seven of them on the ground. The images became humans the next morning when I read the list of casualties – I knew one of the people on board Flight 182. I would never see that human being again.

All our opinions about airports are biased by our experiences and circumstances. For example, most folks simply don't want airports in their "back yards." You can't blame them given scenarios like that above. I personally don't like seeing planes landing or taking off over populated areas. Indeed, I won't miss the final approach to the old airport in Hong Kong. There was nothing like that final right-hand turn among skyscrapers before lining up with the runway that ended at the harbor. Those of you who have landed there know what I mean. So, one of my experiences pertinent to my position on Southern California airports is that PSA crash I watched unfold on the evening news in my San Diego living room back in 1978.

Other aspects of my background that influence my suggestion of southern Camp Pendleton as the best place for a new airport are eight years of living in San Diego, four years active duty in the Navy helping prepare beaches for landing Marines, a year or so of commuting between Del Mar and Union Station on Amtrak, more than 20 years of international travel and teaching international business at USC and UCI, and most recently listening to South County folks talking about the El Toro Airport. Now that I've revealed my own biases, please let me make the argument for Pendleton International.

Some El Toro Airport opponents dispute the notion that we need any new airport capacity in Southern California. All the demand studies refute that argument, including a report on future expansion at LAX released last week. Better yet, just talk to anyone who's stood in line at customs and immigration at LAX recently. Airports are crucial to international commerce; and as that commerce increasingly involves services rather than goods, airports trump seaports in infrastructure importance. Also, consider your industrious immigrant neighbors who wish to visit their relatives – the ones from most foreign countries will be traveling by air.

The debate about where to put the needed new airport is an old one. The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) has published reports of at least four

airport studies over the years (1972, 1982, 1990, and 1994) suggesting such alternatives as March, George, and Norton Air Force Bases, El Toro and Camp Pendleton. A runway made of floating concrete has even been suggested and the best offshore location debated. The curious thing about all the SCAG reports is that they are written as if San Diego with its own airport woes didn't exist.

An international airport at Camp Pendleton is a sound one because of its geographic centrality (that is, if you believe that San Diego exists), its distance from heavily populated residential areas, and its juxtaposition to an active rail line. So why haven't we heard more about this sensible option during the past 10 years?

A little research at the UCI Library provided some insight. The 1994 SCAG report (shelved at TL 726.3 C2 S68) explains that the Orange County Supervisors "emphatically rejected" Camp Pendleton from further consideration, but without explaining why. Reference to file #3055 in room 469 of the County Hall of Records solves that minor mystery. In June 1990, after written consultation with the mayor of Newport Beach, the OC Supervisors resurrected El Toro from the 1990 SCAG reject list while nixing other "better" options, including Pendleton. And so we have a decade of Supervisors trying to peddle a lemon to Orange County voters.

The good news is that on Jan. 4 Supervisors Cynthia Coad and Jim Silva put Camp Pendleton back on the table. Silva mentioned his conversations with the Commandant of the Marine Corps in Washington, D.C. about Camp Pendleton. Coad argued that the million dollar-plus lobbying effort by the County in Washington should consider Camp Pendleton as well as El Toro.

I am certain many objections could – and will – be voiced to a Dulles-like airport at the southern end of Camp Pendleton. Everyone's back yard is different. But, taking the long and broad view, Pendleton is the single best alternative we have in the region to handle the growing demands on our transportation infrastructure. Beach landings were crucial to the victory in World War II, and the military did us all a big favor by preserving 15 miles of Southern California coastline to support that tactic. But, in the 21st century, economic competition (thankfully not military competition) is the name of the game. Our Asian partners and competitors know this – a walk through the new airports in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Osaka is the best evidence. Hopefully, our policy makers in Washington, D.C. will recognize this new reality and support the conversion of a portion of Camp Pendleton into a crown jewel of international trade infrastructure.

Let us consider and answer some of the arguments against Camp Pendleton International.

1. The folks in northern Orange County see the El Toro Airport as an economic engine for OC. That is, airports mean jobs. However, creative labor contracts would include the train fares from places like the Santa Ana Depot to Pendleton International. This would yield a comfortable commute for clerks, cooks, controllers, mechanics, and pilots.
2. Those currently under the flight path of John Wayne will hold out against Pendleton because the only way to close John Wayne is to open El Toro. You can't blame them, but the reality is that South County opposition (as measured in Measure F and the most recent polls by both CSU Fullerton and UCI) precludes El Toro. But, a full-service Pendleton International will allow for reduced operations at John Wayne.
3. A state law exists precluding the development of Pendleton if closed by the military. Obviously, such a law can be changed. Moreover, the creation of Pendleton International doesn't necessitate the complete closure of the Marine base.
4. The Marines will never give up the territory. That's what they said about El Toro. Moreover, as Maj. Gen. Edward Hanlon, the Commanding General of Camp Pendleton, eloquently pointed out in his recent letter to me, "...the Marine Corps mission [is] specified by Congress." Newport Beach Congressman Christopher

Cox further explained in the OC Register the hierarchy in Washington: "The Navy [and Marines] is unshakable. So we get around that by passing a law." That is, the Congress and the president will decide whether or not a few of the 15 miles of Camp Pendleton coastline would be better used as an international airport than practicing obsolete, high-casualty beach landings.

5. San Diegans fear encroachment of Los Angeles and Camp Pendleton makes for the best buffer. Most of Camp Pendleton will remain. Moreover, the inadequacy of Lindbergh Field in San Diego prompted Dick Murphy, San Diego's new mayor to say back in October, "Now we're not talking about shutting down Camp Pendleton ... But the new airport [there] could be a joint venture with Orange County. Orange County has the same problems with John Wayne Airport that we have. I would envision that airport being primarily an international-transcontinental airport such as Dulles in Washington, D.C. So, basically, anybody out of San Diego County or Orange County or Riverside County who wanted to fly overseas or to Washington, D.C. could fly out of that airport." Dick Murphy is the kind of ally Orange County needs.

6. The folks in Vista, Fallbrook, and Oceanside will object. Yes, the first two cities are in the approximate east-to-west landing pattern for Pendleton International, but the population density and proximity is nothing like that surrounding El Toro. And, only the seagulls will have reason to complain about the over-water takeoffs. Finally, the existing rail line will dramatically mitigate traffic congestion.

7. The hawks in the Bush administration and the Republicans on Capitol Hill want to expand the military, not close bases. Indeed, these are the decision makers in the matter. But, President Bush and the Republicans also understand the importance of promoting trade and its multiplicative impact on both America's economic strength and ultimately world peace. Trading a tortilla-chip-sized piece of defense infrastructure for an entire enchilada of trade infrastructure will make sense in Washington, D.C. By the way, I did ask our congressional representatives how they saw the Pendleton option. Rep. Christopher Cox says he supports consideration of Camp Pendleton. Rookie Rep. Darrell Issa's (his Congressional district surrounds Camp Pendleton and he resides in Vista) office responded, "After reviewing your request and sifting through the masses of tasks that are involved in setting up a Congressional office, we've determined that it's not in the best interest of the Congressman to be involved in your article regarding an airport at Camp Pendleton."

8. Speaking of hawks, that is the flying kind, environmental issues are pertinent to the Pendleton question. Mike Armstrong, a regional planner at SCAG, reports on the southern Pendleton site, "It is adjacent to a pristine riparian habitat that supports a large number of rare and endangered plant and animal species. The grading that would be required to construct the airport, and ongoing runoff for the airport would likely destroy this habitat." I don't have an easy answer for this objection. Indeed, runoff-associated pollution is a problem we're facing along the entire coast. Careful creativity will be key.

As the debate about the future of El Toro proceeds, the Camp Pendleton International option deserves serious consideration. Camp Pendleton International would mean Orange County could enjoy the economic boost that an international airport would give the region while avoiding the congestion, pollution, noise and yes, danger, that flights towards Loma Ridge and the Santa Ana mountains would entail. The battle over an airport at El Toro could be put to rest and both pro- and anti- airport forces could legitimately claim victory. Camp Pendleton International would be a win-win solution for Orange County. **OCM**

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# Pendleton airport may be people's choice



**JOHN L. GRAHAM**

► Mr. Graham is professor of international business at the Graduate School of Management, University of California, Irvine.

Perhaps the general is right, that the 15 miles of southern Californian coast that comprises the western border for Camp Pendleton should be retained for training Marines for wars on foreign coasts. After all, Major Gen. Edward Hanlon, Jr., the current commanding general of Camp Pendleton, knows what he's talking about when it comes to military tactics and readiness ["Pendleton's mission precludes an airport," Reader Rebuttals, Commentary, Jan. 21]. Or, perhaps Pendleton is the panacea for one of the most divisive issues facing the people of Southern California — where to locate new airport capacity.

This argument is really part of a larger set of issues presently facing the entire country: How big should the military be? What missions should the military prepare for; What are the future foreign threats?

The good news about this Pendleton debate is that it is occurring in this newspaper and not behind closed doors at the Pentagon or the White House. I applaud the general's gumption for bothering to reply to my simple suggestion about Pendleton International Airport in the press. By doing so he educates us civilians on the issues.

Moreover, I would be the first to agree that such deci-

sions should be informed by our military and our intelligence officers. However, the ultimate decisions will be made by the people and their representatives. The general makes this point in his letter to me when he refers to "... the Marine Corps mission as specified by Congress." His point and mine is that the military serves the people and not the other way around. Indeed, readers should ask their congressional representatives about their positions on this matter. Congressman Darrell Issa, whose district surrounds Camp Pendleton, reports that it is "not in his interests" to respond at this time. My congressman, Christopher Cox of Newport Beach, supports considering Camp Pendleton.

Another point on which the general and I agree is the military's central argument for its retention of the base. He states in his commentary, "What makes Camp Pendleton truly irreplaceable is having the Pacific Ocean on our western boundary, as this affords Marine units direct access from the sea for the conduct of realistic amphibious training operations, including beach landings." The general is doing his job well. I have no doubt that he has been told by Congress and the president that he should spend great sums of money, time and infrastructure resources in pre-

paring for D-Day-like landings. However, the Pendleton/airport argument represents a much broader set of concerns. Beach landings are an obsolete military tactic. The Korean War was the last time American lives were spent on such bloody assaults. I was an officer in the Underwater Demolition Teams from 1970-74 (and 1974-79 in the naval reserves). My profession during those years was preparing beaches (reconnoitering them and demolishing obstacles) on which the Marines would later land. Everyone knew the tactic was obsolete then. Twenty-five years ago the politics of nightly-news-body-count-reporting precluded slaughtering 19-year-olds in that particular way.

Moreover, in the current century, the tactic has become even less palatable. "Saving Private Ryan" helped. Relatedly, Edward Luttwak, military expert at the Center for Strategic & International Studies in Washington, posits that because of shrinking fertility rates in affluent countries military responses to international problems are less likely. His point is that American mothers won't allow their only sons to die on foreign beaches.

Beach landings, the military tactic creating the "essential uniqueness" of Camp Pendleton as a defense infrastructure as-

set, are even more obsolete in the 21st Century than are the blimp hangars in Tustin.

I would guess that Gen. Hanlon has attended the Naval War College in Newport, R.I. There they teach our military officers about the bigger picture, including international relations. I wonder if the world trading system and trade theory have made it into the curriculum yet? Indeed, in the 1980s the Japanese showed both the Soviets and us that economic competition trumps military competition. Further, we know that trade causes peace. As international trade continues to grow, so do mutual understanding and economic benefits. China entering the World Trade Organization means that we will be fighting future battles with Chinese on trading floors rather than on beaches.

The decision about dedicating part of Camp Pendleton as an international commercial airport is ultimately a choice between defense infrastructure and trade infrastructure. I am confident that our congressional representatives and President George W. Bush understand that the highest value use of a few of the 15 miles of California coast comprising Camp Pendleton is an new international trade gateway. We will all be better served by landing 747s there rather than Marines.

**EL TORO AIRPORT DEBATE**

# Debunking flights of fancy over airport at Pendleton



**P**rofessor John L. Graham has just discovered four old Southern California Association of Governments reports evaluating Camp Pendleton as an alternative airport site ["Pendleton airport may be people's choice, Reader Rebuttals," Jan. 28]. He says that Pendleton is back on the table and represents the people's choice. He is wrong. Pendleton is not the Marine Corps' choice and therefore, it is not "back on the table" despite quoted comments by two pro-airport supervisors. The Marine Corps is "unequivocally opposed" to siting an international airport at Camp Pendleton.

Graham believes the Marine Corps mission of power projection from the sea is obsolete. Those whose business is to wage war realize full well that an op-

posed amphibious landing poses the risk of unacceptable casualties. Unlike past conflicts, today's maritime commanders have improved technology that allows them to choose lightly defended or unopposed areas of the shoreline to land troops. That's why Marines need the beaches at Camp Pendleton. You don't go into a big game without having a single practice. That's what Marines do at Camp Pendleton. Graham leads the reader to believe that an act of Congress changing the Marine Corps' mission is just around the corner. Congressman Darrel Issa, within whose district Pendleton lies, reports that it is "not in his interests" to respond at this time. And, it also should not be in Congressman Chris Cox's interest, whose district encompasses El Toro. The chances of Congress giving up part of

Camp Pendleton for an airport are slim to none.

It is reassuring, however, to note that Professor Graham agrees new airport capacity is needed. His only problem is where to locate it. He would expect Orange County's air travel demand to at least 40 miles from Irvine. It is OK for the minority populations of El Segundo, Hawthorne and others around LAX to bear the brunt of "environmental justice" with the LAX expansion. It is OK to let the people in San Diego County deal with Orange County's air traffic demand. Just let Orange County have the profits and the economic boom an airport at Pendleton will bring.

There is an easier solution, professor. It's called El Toro. It has been an airport for over 50 years and is ours for the asking. Opponents have inundated the public

with slick brochures full of misinformation. They claim El Toro is unwanted, unneeded and unsafe. El Toro is not unsafe. Its runway capability far exceeds that of John Wayne. John Wayne's single 5,700-foot runway and required noise abatement procedures are inherently more dangerous than operating from El Toro's four 8,000-10,000-foot runways.

Opponents assert that the surrounding terrain is unsafe. The capabilities of today's modern jet airliners disprove this claim. Commercial aircraft operate all over the world from airports with nearby rising terrain. The flight demonstrations conducted by the county in June 1999, using representative gross weights for landings and takeoffs, proved that commercial air carriers can safely operate from El Toro.

El Toro is needed. John Wayne

is approaching capacity and Orange County continues to grow. Air gridlock is near. A recent FAA study has concluded that more runways offer a quicker answer to air gridlock than any other technological advance. The attraction of El Toro is that you don't need to build new runways. They already exist.

El Toro is certainly wanted by air travelers. They are tired of traveling for two hours, or more, on congested freeways to get to LAX. They are tired of the limited choices and higher fares from John Wayne. Converting El Toro will reduce freeway traffic. It has excellent rail access via the Irvine Transportation Center and compared to any other major airport in Southern California, unparalleled tollway/freeway access. Forget Pendleton. El Toro is the airport of choice.

**General Art Bloomer, Executive Director of the Orange County Regional Airport Authority, a retired Brigadier General and Commanding General of MCAS El Toro**

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# Congress, not generals, will decide fate of Pendleton



**JOHN L. GRAHAM**  
Mr. Graham is a professor of international business in the Graduate School of Management at the University of California, Irvine.

Who represents the people? Ultimately that's the central question regarding airports in southern California.

Clearly Marine Generals Hanlon and Art Bloomer speak only for the interests of their Corps when they refuse even to consider a commercial airport at Camp Pendleton. As with all good Marines, "semper fi" is no joke. In fact, Gen. Bloomer in these pages on Feb. 18 expressed this sentiment quite plainly: "The Marine Corps is 'unequivocally opposed' to siting an international airport at Camp Pendleton." Then he went on to tell us that it was not in the "interests" of the Southern California congressional delegation to comment on the issue.

Who is in charge here, Gen. Bloomer? Gen. Bloomer accuses me of referring to "old Southern California Association of Governments reports" that suggest Pendleton is a viable airport site. The reason the reports are old is that the Orange County supervisors (after consultation with the mayor of Newport Beach) stopped all consideration of Pendleton in 1990.

Indeed, the last SCAG report that considered both Pendleton and El Toro specifically recommended in favor of the former and against the latter. That report can be found at the UCI library (shelved at TL 726.3 C2 S68).

Like so many Orange County folks with narrow interests in the El Toro airport, the

general apparently has not bothered to talk to San Diegans. He clearly implies that San Diegans aren't willing to help "... deal with Orange County's air traffic demand."

I suggest the general give newly elected San Diego Mayor Dick Murphy or San Diego County Supervisor Ron Roberts a call. Both advocated a Pendleton international airport during their mayoral race last year. And, my guess is that both carefully polled their constituents about San Diego's airport needs before they took a position in favor of Pendleton.

It's too bad we haven't had a recent county election here. The majority of our supervisors has been ignoring the sentiments of Orange County voters on crucial issues lately. Just juxtapose their positions on Measures F, G and H to the clear messages sent by voters on those issues. Supervisors Coad, Silva and Smith do not represent the people of Orange County on either the airport issue or on the use of the tobacco/health care funds.

In fact, the best measure we have of the current views of voters regarding the airport (if you ignore Measure F) are two independent polls taken by both UCI and Cal State Fullerton; and both show a strong

majority of the people in Orange County disfavor an El Toro Airport.

Who represents the people of Southern California on the issue of an airport at Camp Pendleton? Contrary to the generals' fancy, the Congress and the president do. At least that's what the Constitution tells us. Indeed, it will be interesting to see how the Marine Corps fares in the soon-to-be published "comprehensive strategic review" being produced by Andy Marshall and his colleagues at the Pentagon.

## WHO REPRESENTS THE PEOPLE OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ON THE ISSUE OF AN AIRPORT AT CAMP PENDLETON? CONTRARY TO THE GENERALS' FANCY, THE CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT DO.

As late as the 1970s the primary mission of UDT frogmen was to reconnoiter and prepare beaches for Marine landings. Vietnam proved that helicopters are better than landing craft for inserting troops. So, as the mission of the UDTs became obsolete they were decommissioned like old ships, and frogmen became today's Navy SEALs.

There is a very good reason Marines and ex-Marines get very uptight when someone like me suggests that beach landings are as outdated as the blimp hangars in Tustin. Recall their hymn, "From the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli."

The essence of the Marine Corps involves beach landings. Without that mission, what's the difference between the Marine Corps and the Army? Nothing but the uniforms. Both generals know this all too well. It will be quite interesting to see what Andy Marshall and Colin Powell think about beach landings. Recall that the latter is an ex-Army general.

Gen. Hanlon and Bloomer, please realize that the people of Southern California don't want all of Camp Pendleton - a couple of miles will do. What we're talking about here is trading a tortilla chip-sized piece of defense infrastructure for an entire enchilada of trade infrastructure, that is, a new international airport. Please, let's keep talking; and, please, let's keep Pendleton on the table.

longer needed by the Marines to practice beach landings.

Gen. Bloomer explains, "Unlike past conflicts, today's maritime commanders have improved technology that allows them to choose lightly defended or unopposed areas of the shoreline to land troops." He's right. That's precisely why in the 1980s the Navy decommissioned the Underwater Demolition Teams in which I served.