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A Long and Varied Keys History

In 1815, the Spanish governor in Havana, Cuba, deeded the island of Key West, Florida, to Juan Pablo Salas of Saint Augustine, Fla. After Florida was transferred to the United States, Salas sold Key West to U.S. businessman John W. Simonton for \$2,000 in 1821. Simonton lobbied the U.S. government to establish a naval base on Key West, both to take advantage of its strategic location and to bring law and order to the Key West town.

On March 25, 1822, Naval officer Matthew C. Perry sailed the schooner Shark to Key West and planted the U.S. flag claiming the Keys as United States property. A naval base was established a year later at what is now known as Mallory Square.

Piracy in the Caribbean angered the American government, and the losses of American ships increased. President Monroe authorized the establishment of an anti-pirate squadron and on Dec. 20, 1822, Secretary of the Navy Smith Thompson appointed Captain David Porter "to command the vessels-of-war of the United States on the West India station...for the suppression of piracy." Porter organized his command and set out for Key West. His ships were referred to as the "Mosquito Fleet" due to the small and shallow-drafted vessels used. It allowed them to easily maneuver over the shallow areas and reefs in the Keys. He arrived here in April 1823 with steam ships, schooners, a transport ship, barges and sloops-of-war, and even a decoy merchant ship armed with hidden guns, as well as 1,100 men. He patrolled Caribbean waters and the Gulf of Mexico, striking pirates and escorting American ships to safety.

By 1860, illegal slavers were a serious problem and the federal government declared slave trading as piracy. Once again, the U.S. Navy was dispatched to Key West to patrol local waters and arrest American vessels taking part in the trade. During the short period in which they were active before the Civil War, the Navy squadron captured three ships and brought 1,432 captive Africans in to Key West - the closest American port. These people were freed and eventually sent to Liberia.

With the start of the Civil War, the Navy organized a blockade squadron in Key West. Dozens of Navy ships patrolled from here to prevent the import of Confederate war supplies from overseas ports. Army troops assigned to Fort Zachary Taylor also boarded Navy transport ships and launched attacks into south Florida to cut off Confederate supply lines. Key West was the lone southern port that did not fall under Confederate control. The Union's strategic hold on Key West is said to have shortened the war by several years due to the South's inability to maintain open supply lines.

The Key West naval base expanded more during the the Spanish-American War. In 1898, the battleship Maine sailed from Key West to Havana, Cuba, where it sank. The sinking of the Maine contributed to a United States declaration of war on Spain, and the entire U.S. Atlantic Fleet moved to Key West for the duration. Following the war, the naval presence in the Keys was withdrawn until World War I.

World War I brought greater expansion to the Navy footprint in Key West. Year-round ideal weather for training and the island's strategic location led to the establishment of a Navy submarine base at what is now Truman Annex. The nation's southernmost Naval Base also proved to be an ideal training facility for the Navy's fledgling aviation force. Naval Air Station Key West was established when ground was broken for construction of a small coastal air patrol station on July 13, 1917, at what is now Trumbo Point, on land leased from the Florida East Coast Railroad Company. The project involved dredging, erection of station buildings, three seaplane ramps, a dirigible hangar, a hydrogenerator plant, and temporary barracks.

On Sept. 22 of that year, the base's log book recorded the first naval flight ever made from Key West - a Curtis N-9 sea plane flown by Coast Guard Lt. Stanley Parker. About three months later, on Dec. 18, Naval Air Base Key West was commissioned and Lt. Parker became the first commanding officer.

Naval Air Base pilots flew seaplanes and blimps in search of German submarines resting on the surface to recharge batteries. Naval aviation anti-submarine warfare was born. From the first class of student flight officers on January 18, 1918, until the end of the war, more than 500 aviators were trained establishing NAS Key West as a premier training site for Naval aviators.

Following World War I, the air station and submarine base were closed and its personnel released. Most of the buildings on Trumbo Point were destroyed or dismantled and moved to other locations. A small Navy force maintained a radio wireless station at the Naval Station in Truman Annex and the remaining facilities were used only occasionally during 1920-1930 for seaplane training. International events and a growing German submarine menace in nearby waters began to revive Navy operations in the Keys during the late 1930s.

Seaplanes operating from Trumbo Point led to the reopening of NAS Key West on Dec. 15, 1940. Other satellite facilities were established in the local area to support the war effort. Meachum Field, which is now the Key West International Airport, was used to support blimps flying anti-submarine patrols. Monroe County provided a seldom-used county airport on Boca Chica Key for Army fixed-wing aircraft. Boca Chica Field was eventually transferred to the Navy and become a part of NAS Key West. Naval Station Key West reopened and the Navy established a Sonar School at Truman Annex. By the end of the war, Key West was a homeport for submarines, destroyers and aircraft squadrons.

After the war ended, NAS Key West was retained as a training facility. The air station's strategic location proved vital during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Reconnaissance and operational flights began Oct. 22, 1962, in support of the Cuban blockade. President John F. Kennedy visited NAS Key West afterwards to thank service members and their families for their contributions during the crisis.

As in the past, the naval presence in the Keys was reduced during the 1970s with the closure of the naval station and eventual sale of the former base property to local developers. However, the superior, year-round flying weather and strategic location of the southernmost air station was not overlooked. Despite rumors of closure, NAS Key West remained open and evolved into a state-of-the-art training facility for air-to-air combat fighter aircraft of all military services.

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Mission and Vision

Naval Air Station Key West's national security mission supports operational and readiness requirements for Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, National Guard units, federal agencies, and allied forces.

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[Home](#) > [About](#) > Tenant Commands

Tenant Commands

Naval Air Station Key West is home to more than 30 tenant commands. Only the major commands are listed here. Not all commands have their own Web sites. The ones that do are hyperlinked here and highlighted.

- U.S. Army Special Forces Underwater Operations School
- Fighter Composite Squadron (VFC) 111 - Sundowners
- Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 106 - Gladiators
- NAVAIR Detachment Key West, Atlantic Targets and Marine Operations, AIR 5.3.3
- Construction Battalion Maintenance Unit (CBMU) 202
- [U.S. Coast Guard Sector Key West](#)
- Fleet Readiness Center Det. Key West
- [Joint Interagency Task Force South](#)
- Naval Special Warfare Group Two Training Detachment
- Naval Research Laboratory
- Tactical Combat Training System (TCTS)
- Aeromarti

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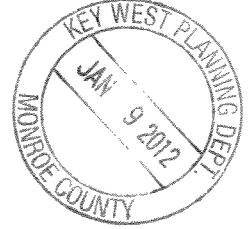
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Ashley Monnier

From: Demes, Ron A CIV CNRSE, N02
Sent: Monday, January 09, 2012 11:28 AM
To: Ashley Monnier
Subject: FW: NASKW Data



Attachments: NASKW acreage.JPG



NASKW
acreage.JPG (25 KB)

Ashley: This should do it for the acreage.

V/r, ron

R. A. DEMES
Executive Director/Business Manager
Naval Air Station
P. O. Box 9001
Key West, Florida 33040-9001
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305.293.2488 XD/BM desk
305.293.2230 Fax
305.797.0158 XD/BM Cell
mailto:ron.demes@navy.mil

-----Original Message-----

From: Knetge, William F CIV NAVFAC SE, PWD Key West
Sent: Monday, January 09, 2012 11:25
To: Demes, Ron A CIV CNRSE, N02
Subject: RE: NASKW Data

Sorry about that. Here it is as a jpeg.

R/

William Knetge, Architect- Planner

NAS Key West PWD

PO Box 9007, Key West, Florida 33040

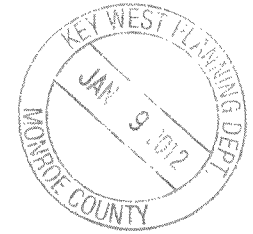
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-----Original Message-----



Navy property acreage within City of Key West boundaries	
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Demolition Key	24
Fleming Key Annex	322.93
Key West Cemetery Maine memorial	0.12
Navy Branch Health Clinic	15.23
Sigsbee Park Annex	351.91
Truman Annex	232.54
Trumbo Point Annex	137.43
Total:	1084.16 acres