

G. V. Sonny Montgomery Weekly Radio Show

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Audio begins at 00:23

Interviewer: This is Congressman Sonny Montgomery's weekly radio report from Washington. Defense Base Closure Commissioner Joe Robles spend 6 hours at Meridian Naval Air Station on Monday, you were with him. What kind of impression did he get from that visit?

Montgomery: I thought he got a very very good impression. I think. It was a beautiful day; it wasn't a cloud in the sky. The weather was wonderful, wasn't too hot, wasn't too cold and and he got to see the base. He stayed there longer than any other commissioner has ever stayed on Meridian Naval Air Station as you said he stayed there about 6 hours. And everything was shiny, painted, everywhere we went it was it was a new building, an old building had just been painted. The place was clean. They were doing their jobs. They they the planes were flying. We met with the instructors as well as students. And, uh, and then we we had that large crowd 12,000 people there, we we rode up from where the airplanes fly that's central up to the main base, about a mile and a half and as I said more people were standing there than I've ever seen even in '91 and '93 when we had a Base Closure Commissioners come to Meridian Naval Air Station and this was our largest crowd. Fact we even had 6 bands and about 10 cheerleader groups from the different schools around there and General Robles enjoyed it very much. He kept telling me "this is typical America, these are typical American people, this is what America is all about" so we impressed him. Let's just hope that three months from now when they get ready to vote that General Robles will take take the lead and and if he believes it that Meridian Naval Air Station should be taken off the Base Closure List. It's boiled down to this. We don't think that the Meridian Naval Air Station that they need our facility. That Kingsville Naval Air Station cannot do all the training of pilots to put 'em on carriers to teach 'em how to land and fly and fight on carriers. That all those those people can learn at one naval air station is Kingsville. They just can't do it and the numbers are there. Now if they Navy I would hope would maybe back off from that but I'm not sure they will, so it's really gotten down the Navy numbers vs the Meridian team numbers that we presented. We think our team is very good that made the presentation then they went on over to Tuesday went to Birmingham and they met where there we 6 commissioners there and I'm told it went very very well. We think we we're correct only 75% of the pilots that need to be trained in one year or the next 5 years to land on carriers that only 75% of them can be trained at Kingsville. So that leaves your 25% shortage and if the weather is bad, the students are not there, the planes are broken down, runway problems, they can't even make the 75% so you really still need 2 bases and that's that's our good argument. It's a beautiful base, its over 8,000 acres of land, it's not any subdivisions or any big buildings around the area there. It's safe flying and doesn't bother anybody so we're very proud of the base.

Interviewer: The people of East Mississippi really came through on Monday as your said more than 12,000 showed up. What was your reaction to that?

Montgomery: Well not on East Mississippi but West Alabama came over and General Heston at the Birmingham mentioned talking about Fort McClellan he did mentioned that we're proud of Meridian. It belongs to West Alabama too. I I was impressed. We had young and old out there. I mean just everybody that could make it came out there and looked around and and they they were sincere as I said earlier General Robles just kept telling me "this is what American's all about" so having those people down there really helped plus the base was in such good shape.

Interview: Thank you Congressman. This has been Congressman Sonny Montgomery's weekly radio report from Washington.

Audio ends at 05:04