

# Goodbye, Alameda NAS!

by  
Mike Prero

If you're from Northern California or are a Military collector, you're familiar with the Alameda Naval Air Station. It's been a feature of the San Francisco Bay area and part of naval air history for six decades, spanning just about everything from two-seater biplane trainers to computer-controlled Hornet jets, and over the span of years it has issued a number of covers. But, on June 30th, Alameda Naval Air Station closed, as part of the government's on-going efforts to trim down the number of military facilities around the country.

With due fanfare, the base closed on a hot Sunday afternoon. The end was marked with a final fly-off of planes, leaving in order of age—state-of-the-art jets leaving first and the bi-planes used at the beginning of the base's history going last.

Plans for converting the base to civilian life are undergoing environmental review, but parts of the transformation have already taken place. Last November, for example, Hangar 20 began a new life as a facility for building electric car components along with other alternative transportation technology. Another building is being used for movie-making under a short-term lease.

There are some concerns, such as the Navy's cleanup of toxic wastes that have accumulated over the years and just how much of the land should be set aside for some endangered California terns that have taken to nesting on the airfield runways. Nearly half of the base will be open space after conversion.

Some 750 civilian employees worked at the air station and nearby Naval Aviation Depot, down from a one-time high of nearly 6,000.

The base served as a launching pad for World War II, and the wars in Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf. In all, 65 squadrons and 17 aircraft support activities have been based at the 1,700-acre base.

Alameda NAS covers go from recent times back to the pre-war period. All of the 26 varieties I have are 20-strikes, in a variety of colors and designs. The only real set in the group is one put out by a credit union on the base. If there are any 30s or 40s, I haven't seen them...but, of course, that doesn't mean that there might not be some. Still, there won't be any more.

