

# West Coast Action Alliance

A forum for the preservation of quiet skies, healthy seas, and quality of life

---

☰ MENU

---



## WCAA web site destroyed + intimidation

SEPTEMBER 10, 2018

*Updated November 8, 2018 ~ Web site destroyed, intimidation, and a “revenge flight.” This account is long and disturbing, but so is the story.*

**The West Coast Action Alliance’s extensive web site** was taken down and completely destroyed in July 2018 without our knowledge or consent. It contained more than four years’ worth of legal analysis, reporting, and whistleblower materials on the US Navy’s unprecedented expansion of warfare activities that are affecting communities in western Washington’s Whidbey Island, the San Juans, and the Olympic Peninsula.

While some readers who are Navy personnel or Navy supporters may rejoice, we remind you that the First Amendment is among the freedoms that many Americans have defended with their lives.

**The good news** is the web site can still be found (minus many of the large files) by going to the [Wayback Machine](#), typing in westcoastactionalliance.org, clicking on “browse history,” and choosing the most recent version from July 2018.

The West Coast Action Alliance is part of a large citizen network, but we are also part of a small cadre of people who for years have been doing the tedious detective work of analyzing the Navy’s thousand-page Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) and Environmental Assessments (EA), all of which claim none of the Navy’s extraordinarily loud and disturbing activities in our region will have any “significant impacts” on wildlife, habitat, our communities, our drinking water, or our economies.

Analysis, commentary and suggestions for letter-writing are the kinds of information we shared on this web site. It also served as a law library on this issue. The other good news is that all of these materials still exist; they have been shared with some of the active groups mentioned at the end of this post.

**1. What we know about how the web site was destroyed:** Despite our annual subscription fee for web hosting being fully paid with six months left on it, not only was the entire web site destroyed, the backup file was also quickly dispatched. When asked for an explanation, a web host company representative said the reason, despite our fully paid subscription, was because of a separate, overdue “support” charge of \$7.19, of which we were not aware. The company has still not coherently explained what this additional “support” charge was for, nor why we weren’t notified that it was due.

In early 2018, this web host, [land1.com](http://land1.com), reduced by 75% the amount of time a backup would be made available, from thirty days to seven. In addition to failing to notify us of this, they also failed to notify us that the destruction of our web site was imminent because of this overdue \$7.19 “support” charge. Despite thorough searches of our files, no email or other notifications of termination of service from land1.com have ever been found.

**The destruction of the web site happened coincidentally** while the person who maintains it and writes a lot of its content was away from home for an extended period. The termination date arrived, the web site was scrubbed, and after seven days the backup copy was destroyed. It has

taken weeks of sleuthing to discover the details about what happened, because land1.com has been uncooperative, shunting us repeatedly to a call center in a foreign country. Actually, we still aren't sure why it was destroyed.

This could be one gigantic screw-up by an irresponsible and unresponsive web host, or possibly a **net neutrality issue**, or there could be other reasons of which we are not aware. Regardless, it's puzzling and disturbing. **We make no conclusions that cannot be supported by facts; nor are we suggesting that the takedown of the West Coast Action Alliance's web site was connected to the following incidents, which happened at around the same time that land1.com was preparing to take the web site down. We simply wish to apprise our readers of what we know, and what happened over a short period of time.**

**2. Intimidation campaign:** A few months before our web site was taken down, the person who maintains it and wrote much of its content was subjected to a disturbing series of events. After learning of the Navy's plans to conduct "realistic" combat training in state parks and residential neighborhoods along more than 250 miles of western Puget Sound shoreline, (in addition to a 400 percent increase in Growler flights) she made public appearances in several communities. Opinion pieces were written and sent to three local papers, and one was published in March. This resulted in some heavy trolling by a retired Navy pilot, who let our WCAA member know via a third party that he "knew all about her," including where she lived. He then began trolling her by email, sending her a creepy photo of himself and demanding an apology for her statements that were critical of the Navy's activities. He also (quite

illogically) blamed her for the increased presence of Navy Growlers on the Olympic Peninsula, saying if her approach had been “more reasoned and less dishonest,” that “there is a good chance the flying might have been prevented.” Coming from a former Navy pilot, that’s quite an indictment of the Navy, although we’ve seen plenty of emails from Navy personnel threatening to “punish” people who speak out with extra noise.

This man also threatened to build a web site and online campaign to discredit her, and concluded rather ominously that he “looked forward to resting among his brothers and sisters at Arlington National Cemetery.” His trolling escalated to stalking after she saw him peering into windows and fiddling with an entrance to a property she owns. She recognized him from the photo he’d sent, but while he was there she happened to be standing outside, a couple hundred feet away from the property and speaking with a friend, so she decided to watch rather than confront him, because she was frightened.

At the same time, the local paper published a series of letters to the editor from this man, along with letters from other Navy supporters, including one from the president of the Navy League on Whidbey Island, that used false information to publicly criticize her. While she has been bullied before, this seemingly coordinated campaign was unnerving. We have no concrete evidence to connect these events with what happened next, but we list everything here for your information. Should the stalking continue, the police will be notified.

**3. Revenge flight?** On March 29 in late morning, not long after her article was published and the intimidation campaign started, pilots twice flew a

US Navy MH-60 Blackhawk-type helicopter painted in search and rescue colors around her house at very low altitude, after hovering briefly over the back of her property. She was inside at the time, and heard the first circling, very loud, but did not go outside to observe it because she is tired of military aircraft noise in this once-quiet town and prefers to not respond to it anymore. Unfortunately, after the first circling of her house, the helicopter hovered near the back, shaking the building in the intense noise. Thinking a crash was imminent, she ran outside and was astounded to see the Navy's helicopter there. It moved away to make one more circle around her house and block at extremely low altitude. It then climbed, hovered briefly in clear view of her, and continued northeast toward Whidbey Island.

If it wasn't a *we know where you live* message from the US Navy, no plausible alternative explanation has ever been offered.

She has had experience estimating distance and height of objects from many years of navigation as well as at shooting ranges, and she observed this helicopter to be flying well below the minimum required altitude of 500 feet. At times it was as low as 200 to 300 feet above ground level while circling her home. Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Section 91.119, General Operating and Flight Rules specifies a 500-foot minimum altitude, especially over congested areas.

The Navy's logo was clearly visible on the helicopter, as were the people inside it at times. It was tilted sharply enough toward her as it banked that she could look right through its windows and open side door. Multiple witnesses said the helicopter had flown low and straight over town while

appearing to make a beeline for her neighborhood, where it circled twice, then left.

Immediately after the incident, she emailed the Navy's public affairs officer Mike Welding to politely ask for any information on why this incident may have occurred. Her email said:

*Hi Mike,*

*I'm wondering if you can tell me anything about a Navy helicopter that came to Port Townsend, hovered over my house, and flew two circles at low level around it at about 11:40 this morning. It was, as they say, "extremely loud and incredibly close." It would appear that pictures were being taken, too.*

*I would appreciate any information you might have about this disturbance and why it happened.*

*Thank you.*

Mr. Welding responded right away:

*Our Search and Rescue (SAR) unit gets numerous calls to conduct medical evacuations, rescues and searches throughout this area every year, particularly during inclement weather conditions. Last year they performed well over 60 such missions and transported more than 70 local civilians to higher medical care. Some of those medical evacuations are done from the hospital in Port Townsend which does not have a helicopter*

*pad large enough to accommodate the Navy's MH-60 helicopter. If we are called for an evacuation from the Port Townsend hospital, there is a parking lot that needs to be cleared so they can land there. If that isn't possible, then the hospital must evacuate the patient to the Jefferson County airport. As part of the training process for new pilots, they conduct flights to identify the hospitals in the local area and become familiar with the procedures. This morning, one of our SAR crews conducted a familiarization flight approach to the hospital in Port Townsend for a newly assigned pilot, going no lower than 500 ft. above ground level, nor did they go into a hover or fly slow. They also did a familiarization flight to the Jefferson County airport shortly after that to give the pilot familiarization with an approach there as well.*

*At no time did anyone in the Navy helicopter take pictures. They also would not know who you are or where you live.*

**She felt relieved. But when she called the hospital** in Port Townsend to confirm that this was indeed the case, they responded that they were not aware of the Navy being in the area, because the Navy had not contacted them, and they were also unaware of any parking lot designated for clearing. She called the East Jefferson Fire and Rescue Service to ask whether they had held joint exercises or been notified about the Navy helicopter, and they were not aware of it being in the area, either. Further, the hospital representative stated that there had not been a Navy medical evacuation from Port Townsend hospital in at least the last two years, since she'd worked there, and both she and the EJFR representative said they use an air ambulance service, not the Navy. Regardless of the obvious merits of preparing a new Navy pilot, these statements contradicted



Welding's.

For the next three days, Navy helicopters made 5 swift and very loud passes over her house at about 500 feet altitude. Then they stopped.

Our WCAA member's house is not near the hospital or the airport, and there is no place to land a helicopter this large in her congested residential area where it was circling. It is not on any flight path to and from the base and the hospital, or between the hospital and the Jefferson County Airport. So there is no reason for such a large "Blackhawk" style military helicopter to be there, and if there was a reason, the Navy owes these residents an explanation.

**FAA complaint ignored:** She first filed a police report containing three signed affidavits from people who had witnessed the Navy helicopter's low flight and circling of her home and block. Local police have no jurisdiction over the Navy, of course, but she wanted it on record. She then filed a report with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which oversees air traffic and has historically had the authority to revoke any pilot's license if necessary, for infractions of public safety or other reasons. In the past, this authority extended to military pilots. However, FAA refused to respond to her complaint, and without telling her, shunted it back to the Navy's Mr. Welding. A Navy commander stationed at FAA called her to say that neither FAA nor the Navy would be responding to her concerns. When she persisted in asking for a response from FAA, they sent her a letter quoting Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

**Letters to Congressional Delegation ignored or brushed off:** Our WCAA

member then filed comprehensive reports with Senators Cantwell and Murray, and with Congressman Kilmer. Senator Murray's office neither acknowledged receipt of her report nor responded to it. Senator Cantwell's office did not respond except to send a form letter asking her to state the nature of her complaint in the small block provided, to release additional private information and personal details, and to sign a privacy release form. No reasons were given as to why this extra personal information and privacy release authorization were being required or how the information would be used or who would see it, but the form letter warned, unless these conditions were met, congressional staff could not investigate her complaint.

There was an email contact address on the form, so she wrote to Senator Cantwell's office to ask why, after receiving such a detailed complaint, did they want it re-stated in a tiny, two-inch block on a one-page form letter. She also asked them why so much personal information was needed in order for them to be able to investigate her complaint, and who would see it and what would they do with it. Cantwell's office never replied, so we must assume they ignored her complaint. To require so much unrelated personal identification details, along with a privacy release of that information from a constituent, as a **precondition** to investigate a complaint, is utterly unprecedented, unless perhaps it's the constituent herself who is to be investigated. Obviously she did not sign the privacy release.

**Homeland Security Investigation:** Unfortunately and we hope coincidentally, a large commercial bank holding the accounts of a small respected environmental group with which our WCAA member is

affiliated informed them that due to Homeland Security policies put in place to identify terrorists, drug dealers, and mafia organizations, major corporate banks are now “randomly” selecting accounts to identify the nature of the business, the source of income, and disbursement of such income, to ascertain there are no money laundering schemes, etc. They did not say how this group was selected. The bank (US Bank) proceeded to act as agent for the federal government and behaved in an extremely aggressive and unreasonable manner. For example, they refused to divulge policy or other source documents related to their choice of investigating this particular environmental group under the DHS directive, and they demanded reams of records under extremely short deadlines, including the private personal identification information of all board members, of which she is one. They threatened to shut down all accounts if their demands were not met. They even refused to write down the list of demands when asked. Most of their communications were by phone, not written. Being a bank and not the federal agency it was acting on behalf of, US Bank was not subject to FOIA or other avenues of public redress that the federal government is subject to. Information surrendered to the bank was presumably supplied to the Department of Homeland Security. The bank then informed the group that they were “cleared.” The group no longer banks there.

**More than two months after the helicopter incident,** the Military Legislative Assistant from Congressman Kilmer’s office called our WCAA member. His condescension, interruptions and inflexibility reminded her of the stern tone an adult adopts with a petulant child who is going to be overruled regardless of circumstance. When she pointed out the contradictions between Mr. Welding’s email and the fact that the hospital

and Fire Rescue Service had said they were unaware of any Navy “coordination” with them or even of its presence in the area, he gaslighted her, saying Welding’s email hadn’t said what it did. She was so astonished that she did not press the point; it was clear this aide did not want to be on the phone with her discussing this. When she tried to point out these irregularities later in the conversation, he said, “I get it. I hear ya.” The phone call left her angry and upset.

Weeks later he called her again to say he’d investigated the matter further. His tone was much friendlier, but he had no new information for her. She told him that a GPS record exists for every flight, and that the details of that flight, which was surely not classified because it was a search and rescue familiarization flight, should be available. She added that the reasons for the circling of her house should also be available upon request from Congress, but the aide replied that the Navy had refused to release the information to him, or give him any explanation. She asked him if he considered this a satisfactory conclusion to a congressional inquiry, that the Navy, which is supposed to be civilian-controlled, could refuse such a request to a Member of Congress. His reply was noncommittal.

**There will likely never be an answer** as to why these things happened, because it would probably embarrass people in positions of power. Was it a “revenge flight?” Probably. They have certainly been documented in other communities around the country. The point is, if intimidation of an outspoken elderly woman was the US Navy’s intent when circling her house at such threateningly low altitude, it would represent a most despicable abuse of power, not to mention conduct unbecoming. We hope that most military members would agree this was inappropriate and

dangerous behavior. That the Navy, FAA, and Members of Congress have refused to respond to her well-documented and reasonably worded complaint makes it more difficult to refute the conclusion that it was a deliberate revenge flight, especially coming so soon after her published article and concurrent with the other intimidation. If there was any intent to restore her confidence in the openness and integrity of our government, all of these public servants have failed miserably.

**4. Accountability:** The Navy received 4,300 **substantive comment letters** in opposition to expanding Growler flights by 400 percent. These letters came from a well-informed public, and it looks like the Navy ignored them all, because their decision was not modified. Whistleblower documents we had posted on this web site and personally delivered into the hands of Congress show public funds being routinely committed, contracts let and aircraft and other deliveries being made before public processes were ever begun. This is illegal. We even have an internal memo from a Navy attorney showing how the law can be circumvented. In any other situation, an attorney submitting or approving such advice would have easily been disbarred for such conduct. But not the Navy. All of the whistleblower materials were ignored by Congress.

These acts and omissions by the Navy are part of a systemic pattern of multiple, chronic violations of environmental, public safety and administrative law over years and years; yet no matter how many times they get sued and lose, the violations continue because it's business as usual. People in this region have complained for years to Congress about Growler noise, sonar, and explosions, (and they've written tens of thousands of letters,) but they've either been ignored, fobbed off with

platitudes, or received token, insubstantive form-letter replies. In one example, a local elected official who had extensively helped Senator Patty Murray's campaign tried to speak privately with her about the Navy Growler noise, and was not only summarily dismissed by the angered Murray, but also found all access to the Senator cut off, permanently.

It's like the third rail—touch it and you die, politically at least.

For the Navy, and evidently for Congress too, the public process that ordinary citizens depend on for a voice is just window-dressing, a retrofit for decisions already made. The Navy does not appear to be accountable to anyone. Think about it—if any other federal agency outside the Department of Defense consistently **failed to pass a financial audit** since a law requiring it was passed in 1994, wouldn't you think the public might object?

Since the Navy can apparently stiff-arm our congressional elected representatives, and since evidence suggests that these elected officials dare not question the Navy too closely, what does that say about who controls the military? Those of us who grew up in households of World War 2 and Korean War veterans were keenly aware that our military was civilian-controlled; it was once a matter of pride. We never imagined whole communities with great swaths of public and private lands, and even a renowned national park, being designated as an "electronic warfare range," in other words, a sacrifice zone, in the complete absence of recourse from the officials we elected to represent us in Congress.

**Now that US citizens, including children,** are to be unwillingly used as

“proxies for the enemy” during [covert military training exercises](#) in our local state parks and neighborhoods, (confirmed in those exact words by a Navy spokesman at an open house in February 2018 in Port Townsend) and now that there is to be a [400 percent increase in Growler flights](#), not to mention the ongoing [poisoning of Whidbey Island’s drinking water aquifer](#), it’s clear that until more people across this region stand up, the few who have spent years fighting militarization of our communities, with no congressional support, will continue to be intimidated, or worse. If the Navy wants to show Americans why the US military is so unpopular in so many places throughout the world, it could not do a better job than it is doing on Washington’s Olympic Peninsula.

**Free speech is a First Amendment right.** Dissent via factual, evidence-based argument is how many Americans who believe in civil discourse exercise their citizenship. That’s what we tried to do on our web site. That’s what we tried to do in writing articles, and in getting our two Senators to at least *acknowledge* the disruption of our lives, which they have never done. On the Olympic Peninsula, Whidbey Island and the San Juans, the view from under the bus is dismal.

We are appalled at the destruction of our web site. We are ashamed of the Navy for its contemptuous and dangerous behavior toward surrounding communities, and the way they’ve continued to send their neighbors a giant digitus impudicus, once even in the [form of sky-writing](#). We are ashamed of our elected representatives who will not help their own constituents, who instead ignore or even insult them, and always take the side of the Navy no matter what proof they’re shown. We are ashamed of our government for its abdication of civilian oversight on a military that is

apparently beholden to no one.

Even though the Navy appears to be all-powerful and does what it wants to communities and individuals who are in its way, without much accountability and regardless of harm, citizen groups have made considerable progress in raising public awareness and a reservoir of public antipathy about militarization of civilian areas. However, until a lot more of you stand up and join, there won't be much progress in restoring peaceful skies, healthy seas, and local economies.

**We are not rebuilding this web site.** Instead, we recommend that you check out the very active [Sound Defense Alliance](#) and read the web sites of the [National Parks Conservation Association](#), [Veterans For Peace](#), [Coupeville Community Allies](#), [Citizens of the Ebey's Reserve](#), [Save the Olympic Peninsula](#), [Quiet Skies Over San Juan County](#), and the [Peaceful Skies Coalition](#). We also recommend that you watch (or host) one of the screenings of the film [Plane Truths](#). Then join a group near you, or form your own. You can also subscribe to the [Salish Sea News](#), which covers general environmental topics with a focus on marine ecology (and they cover Navy stories.)

*If you see flags flying with this logo, you'll know what they mean.*

**The considerable volume and number of files that we compiled and wrote** on this web site still exist, and are being shared with these other groups. While we are taking steps to reduce our exposure to personal threat, the resistance to militarization of our communities and public lands ***is not***



***going away*** until the intense Growler noise, underwater explosions, and massively increased sonar stop. And until we as a nation stop waging and paying for endless wars.

Sincerely and with best wishes,

The West Coast Action Alliance

---

PROUDLY POWERED BY WORDPRESS  
THEME: PENSCRATCH BY WORDPRESS.COM.