



**For additional details, contact:**

Amy Lewis  
Strategy Communications  
Phone: 619-713-0622 (office) (858) 752-1085 (cell)  
Email: Amy@scpublicrelations.com

---

***PRESS RELEASE***

---

***Naval Air Station, North Island: The Birthplace of Naval Aviation***  
***The San Diego Navy Base's Historic Journey***

**SAN DIEGO, September 16, 2009** – The small strip of “island”, a community of San Diego that we know as Coronado, consists of more than pristine beaches and world-class resorts. Coronado is also home to Naval Air Station (NAS) North Island, the birthplace of Naval Aviation.

The City of Coronado serves as the setting for the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Coronado Speed Festival. This Fleet Week event will feature 250 of the world's most unique and pedigreed racing machines at one of the most distinctive motor sports locations – Naval Air Station North Island. The event will be held on September 26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

This is the only Navy Open House on the West Coast. Naval Base Coronado is home to over 20,000 active duty military and over 4,000 civilian employees. The general public only gets a glimpse of the daily activities happening at the base. This is San Diego's opportunity to interact with the young men and women who defend our freedom. Climb aboard and tour an active Navy ship berthed at NASNI, visit command displays, watch flyovers and see military vehicles in action.

***Military FREE:*** And once again, all active duty, active reservist and their direct depend military ID holders will free admission to this year's event. Active duty military, active reservists and dependent ID holders DO NOT need tickets and will gain admission through a specially-designated entry gate. Admission is free for children 12 and younger. Thanks to our sponsors, the event will further its tribute to our nation's military.

**Read on for more details on the history of NAS North Island, and don't miss one of the most exciting events to take place on its tarmac: The Coronado Speed Festival!**

**The History of NAS North Island**

NAS North Island began its path to existence in 1886 upon the sandy, uninhabited flats of Coronado, when the area was purchased by a wealthy resort owner named J.D. Spreckels. Mr. Spreckels became the owner of the Hotel del Coronado and allowed his guests to use the grounds for hunting and horseback riding.

The leisurely hobbies continued until World War I when the land was put to use as a flying school, and in 1917 Naval Air Station, North Island was born. Around that time, Congress commissioned two airfields on the land for military purposes. The Navy and the Army shared the facilities for 20 years, until the Army left and then the Navy expanded throughout the island.

North Island derived its name from the original geography. Up until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was referred to as North Coronado Island, due to the fact that the Spanish Bight separated it from South Coronado Island until the early 1940's. In 1886, North and South Coronado Islands were purchased by a developer to become a residential resort. South Coronado became the City of Coronado, but North Coronado was never developed. Instead, Glen Curtiss opened a flying school and held a lease to the property until the beginning of WWI.

Along NAS North Island's journey, many of the major aviation milestones occurred within its borders. These monumental aviation firsts include the first mid-air refueling and the first nonstop transcontinental flight, both in 1923. As well as, the first parachute jump in the San Diego area, which was made by a ninety-pound woman named Tiny Broadwick, in 1911.

One of history's most famous aviation feats was the flight of Charles A. Lindbergh from New York to Paris in May 1927. His aircraft, The Spirit of St. Louis, was built in San Diego, and his flight originated at North Island on May 9, 1927, when he bravely began his first leg of his transatlantic journey.

NAS North Island has overwhelming amounts of rich history and landmark events, which make up its iconic image. Forefathers of today's "Blue Angels", the three-plane "Sea Hawks" of VF-6B, and the "Felix the Cat" squadron, were thrilling audiences with flight demonstrations as early as 1928. They demonstrated the training skill of Navy fighter and bomber pilots and on many occasions even flew their aircraft in formation with the wings tethered together.

In the early 1920s Naval Aviation took an important leap with the construction of the USS Langley, the Navy's first aircraft carrier. In 1924, Langley was homeported at NAS San Diego, which was the beginning of a continuous use of North Island as the home port for Pacific Fleet carriers, and North Island took on the duties of providing service and training to the personnel of these new components to the Fleet. By 1935, North Island was home to all four of the Navy's carriers: the USS Langley, USS Lexington, USS Saratoga and USS Ranger.

By 1948, the base moved into the jet age, when Fighter Squadron 52 (VF-52), based at North Island was designated as the Navy's first jet training squadron, flying the Lockheed TV-2 "Shooting Star" (now called T-33). In 1950, the North Island-based aircraft carrier, USS Valley Forge conducted the first nighttime jet landing.

Many other significant events have occurred at North Island, including:

- In 1967 the last Seaplane departed NAS North Island
- August 1969 the Coronado Bay Bridge opened
- February 1974 the first S-3 Viking Squadron stood up
- January 1983 HSL-41 received the first SH-60B helicopter
- November 1985 the first C-2 Greyhound aircraft arrived at NAS North Island
- November 2001 when the USS NIMITZ, a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier was found a home at this base

Today, Naval Air Station North Island is the home to the largest aerospace-industrial complex in the United States Navy. The island serves as host to 23 squadrons and 80 additional tenant

commands and activities, one of which, the Naval Aviation Depot, the largest aerospace employer in San Diego. With all of its ships in port, the population of the station swells to more than 36,000 active duty, reserve and civilian workers.

### **About The Coronado Speed Festival & Fleet Week San Diego**

The Coronado Speed Festival is Fleet Week San Diego's marquee event. The event features fast-paced, thrilling auto racing and exhibitions for car enthusiasts of all ages at one of the most distinctive race track locations - Naval Air Station North Island, the birthplace of Naval Aviation. Nowhere else can you see a variety of cars racing on a live runway used by the U.S. Navy.

Don't miss out on this annual celebration of speed. The Coronado Speed Festival offers something for everyone to enjoy so race on down to Naval Air Station, North Island on September 26-27 for the premiere racing event of the season. This event is free for active duty military and their dependants. For more information please go to [www.fleetweeksandiego.org/coronadospeedfestival](http://www.fleetweeksandiego.org/coronadospeedfestival).

*The Coronado Speed Festival is produced by San Diego Fleet Week Foundation and hosted by the Naval Base Coronado and the Morale, Welfare and Recreation Program (MWR) which benefits military personnel and their families. They in turn provide positive support for the active duty military community and their families through Quality of Life Programs including single Sailor Recreation Centers, Fitness and Aquatic Facilities and the Base Theatre Free Movies.*

###