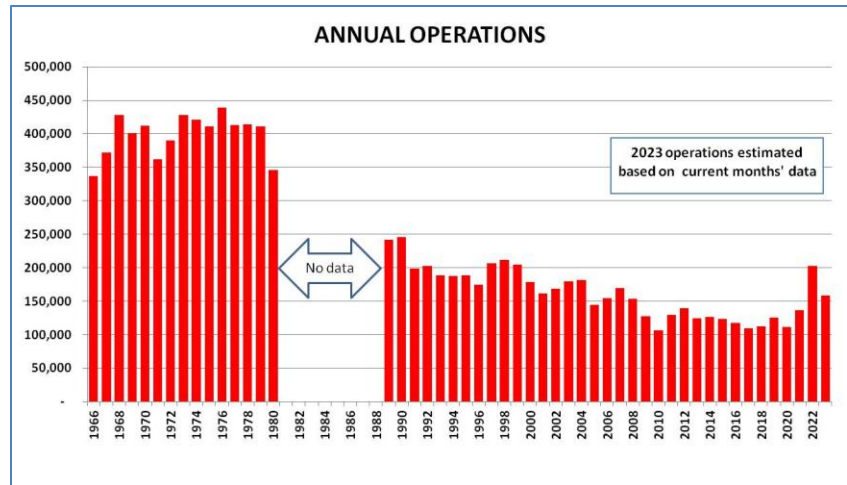


**Date:** 8/28/2023  
**Subject:** Unintended consequences  
**To:** Airport Commission  
**From:** Jim Gates  
**Copies:** City Council

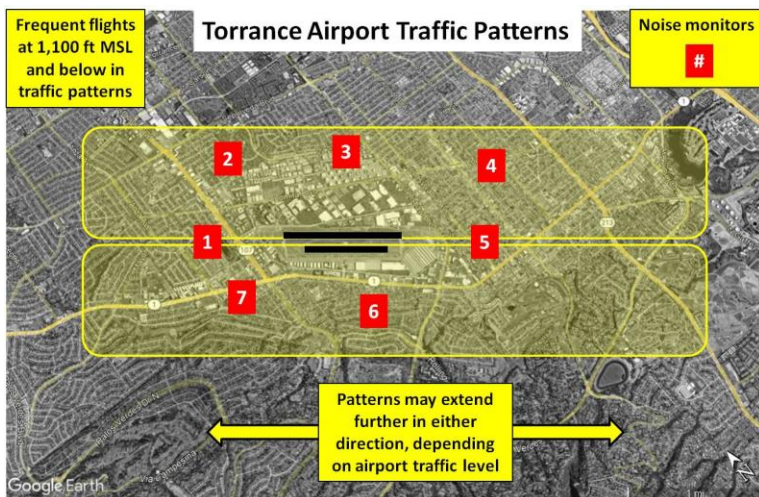
**Background**

For 80 years, Zamperini Field--Torrance Municipal Airport has been used for flight training. In the 1970s, according to the City of Torrance report on *Airport Noise Control and Land Use Compatibility* (November 1981), the airport reached over 440,000 annual operations--over twice the current levels. The report by the City's consultant (PRC-Speas Associates) strongly recommended that the City fully and publicly disclose the location of airport traffic patterns and the effects on resident beneath them. **That advice has been ignored for 40 years!** (Read the full report at <http://www.torranceairport.org>)



In early 2020, with the outbreak of the COVID pandemic, all airlines experienced a sudden decrease in demand and offered their more senior pilots early retirement. As the pandemic eased in 2022, airline passenger rebounded dramatically to levels higher than before the pandemic, causing thousands of cancelled flights due to lack of trained and current crews. Airlines then offered a number of rich incentives for new pilots and the flight training schools nationwide were swamped with students desiring to take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime career opportunity.

The Sling Pilot Academy opened its initial school at the Torrance Airport in 2020 with modern, very quiet aircraft that use unleaded fuel and following a curriculum that responded to the huge demand for airline pilots. Student response was dramatic. Torrance Airport operations (like those all over the country) have increased over the last two years as a result. But operations at Torrance Airport still remain far below the historical levels noted above.



Complaints about aircraft over flights and airport operations likewise increased and residents under the south traffic pattern demanded that the City force the Academy to stop using the south traffic pattern, although the City has no authority to enforce such a remedy.

**The "solution"**

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In late January 2023, after being threatened by City officials with imposition of landing fees and actions on their business license, the Sling Pilot Academy VOLUNTARILY ceased use of the south traffic pattern for touch and go operations (T&Gs) and adopted other operating procedures that reduced community impact and are safe and consistent with Federal Aviation Regulations.

Traffic patterns at Torrance Airport are operating near capacity, so moving Academy T&G operations from the south pattern to the north pattern only means that other aircraft will move to replace them in the south pattern--and these aircraft produce more noise than the Academy's very quiet aircraft. This effect was predicted by many in the aviation community.

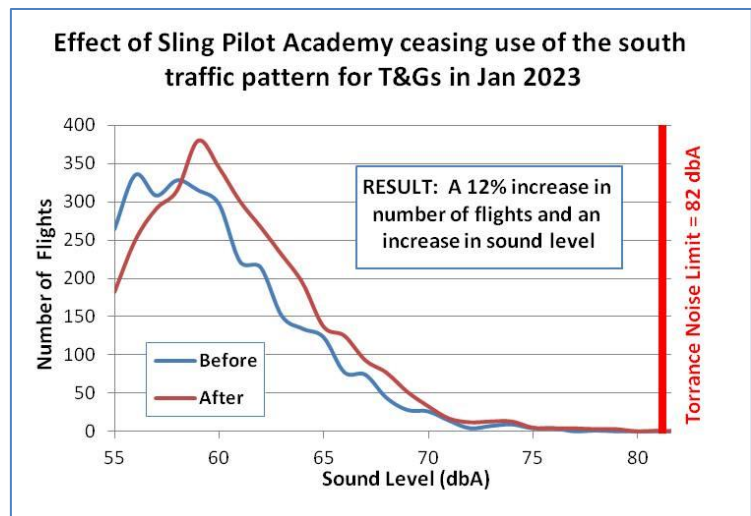
### The Study

In August 2022, the City's new \$640,000 noise monitoring system began operations. As shown in the above graphic, Monitor #6 is located to monitor aircraft using the south traffic pattern--the source of most complaints.

This new Casper monitoring system records the sound level of each aircraft that passes over each monitor. This made it possible to compare sound profiles recorded by Monitor #6 for the 4-month period before the Academy action was taken (September, October, November and December 2022--2983 flights) with a 4-month period afterward (February, March, April and May 2023--3348 flights).

This graphic depicts a comparison of the sound profiles before and after the Academy's decision:

- The sound levels increased due to increased use of the south pattern by noisier aircraft
- The number of flights increased by 12%--from a daily average of 24 flights to 28 flights.



The number of flights would be affected by the weather prevailing on each day, but that correlation is not readily available. Using a 4-month sample size will tend to reduce that effect.

### Summary

Although the City officials believed that complying with residents demands and forcing the Sling Pilot Academy to cease using the south traffic pattern for T&G operations would reduce annoyance for residents south of the airport, their lack of basic understanding about how airports operate resulted in the opposite result--one that was predicted by the aviation community.