Mini-Fortress Americaâ€¦

Description

Since retiring, I havenâ€™t lived in an area where there are military bases, except one, which has two major headquarters in itâ€¦.

I spent the last week on the road, and got back up into the Norfolk, VA area. Things have changed, boy, have they changed!

Of the five gates at Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, most were closed. Gate 3 has had the proscribed modifications for the security, and Gate 5 is closed, with barricades up around the massive construction. Inside the base gates, the number of ships, fro â€œthe old daysâ€• is quite reduced.

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Then I took a drive to the Naval Operating Base. I got a late start, having slept in from the long drive before, and making a few stops enroute. After a late lunch, I glanced at my watch and an involuntary shiver went up my spine, as the numbers 3:40PM stared back at me. OH, NO! BASE TRAFFIC! I decided to drive about the base anyhow, since I had other things to do later in the week. I turned into the massive gate at the â€œD&S Piers,â€• and began the drive west. There were no masts visible ahead of me, along the banks of the southern branch of the Elizabeth River. When I got about 3 blocks from the piers, and at the north and south ends of the piers, there were three CGs and four DDGs. When I drove closer, there were two subs.

The parking lot across from the piers, normally still overflowing at this time of day, was about 1/2 empty. I remember days when officers got tickets for parking in the CPO section, but enlisted in officer parking were left alone. It seems the base police were just about exclusively retired Chiefsâ€¦anyhow, it certainly made for some good sea stories and ribbing in the wardroom and/or the Goat Locker, butâ€¦no more.

The Carrier piers were similarly empty, but I did get a look at LPD-17, with itâ€™s enclosed mast.

About 4:30PM, I drove over to the NEX complex and looked at Hampton Blvd. I saw two cars heading east to I-64.

I recall the days when Hampton Blvd from I-64 to the base was two lanes of construction and rush hour was every bit as heavy as any other major city. I also used to wait and work an extra hour on the ship, if I couldnâ€™t get off the base by 1600, because I actually get home at about the same time, if I left about 1700.

In retrospect, the double strands of concertina on top of all the fences, the security measures at every gate, just made me think that the military members will be protected behind jersy barricades and pop up barriers, while those bases, when hardened, just push the adversary out to the places the general public will be, for those soft targets will still generate more publicity if they are attacked.

More on other stops of significance over the next few days.

Category

1. Military

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