

Regional MIRR report provides resiliency solutions to state's military bases and their communities

BY SOPHIA HERNANDEZ



Photo by: FL24

In Florida, we aren't strangers to natural disasters. Across our state, local communities have been making strides to implement various resiliency efforts, like seawalls in Fort Lauderdale.

But what about South Florida's military bases and their surrounding communities?

There's a first-of-its-kind report that provides collaborative solutions to keep national security and resiliency at the forefront. It's what's known as a Military Installation Resilience Review.

Conducted by the South Florida Regional Planning Council, they have partnered with the South Florida Defense Alliance and Jacob's Engineering to focus on four military facilities in Key West, Doral, Homestead and Dania Beach.

The goal? To come up with a regional approach to become more resilient. And it's not just the sites themselves but the areas around them.

"What they realize is the base is not an island, and the community around the base is very important to the resilience of the base. So, this program is really designed to look at what are those investments that need to be made outside of the fence line that will bring resilience to the installation itself," explained Isabel Cosio Carballo, the executive director of the South Florida Regional Planning Council.

Through a federal grant, the team conducted community outreach to figure out the needs of the surrounding area, what was already being done and how they could come in and help.

Their report shows they looked at climate threats such as storm surges, lightning and extreme heat.

But they also looked at issues like land management, housing and staff retention.

While each of the bases may share similar areas of improvement, like utilities and roadways, their plans for what needs to be done and could be done look very different.

Rick Miller, a retired U.S. Navy captain and executive director of South Florida Defense Alliance, gives an example of the wastewater treatment plant in Key West.

“It’s the city plant, but it sits on base property on the tip of one of the islands. It serves the city of Key West as well as the military team and the base. And so, potential risk of flooding there, they are looking at how they increase resilience of that facility to harden it to be a benefit to both the community and the base,” he said.

The council is currently working on another draft report and said their focus now is on gaining additional funding to help local municipalities get started.

“This was never meant to override any local government activities,” said Cosio Carballo. “This was meant to identify needs and supplement resilience investments that are already ongoing, and there are a lot of them here.”

This MIRR report is the first of its kind in the nation to be done regionally. Miller explained it’s due, in large part, to the fact that these four sites work in tandem.

“All four of these installations and the major commands that sit on them rely on at least one or more of the other four installations for mutual support for hosting subordinate command as a basing option, mission support in a variety of different ways, communications, linkages and other things,” Miller said.

Yet the work at each of the installations will happen independently, not only improving the site itself but also the community.

“National security economy in Southeastern Florida in our region represents annually about 16 billion dollars and over 150 thousand jobs into the region every year,” Miller said. “The fastest growing region from a defense economic region has been our Southeast Florida region.”

While there is no timeline for the rollout of these plans, the team is hoping once they get this next draft approved, starting the work should not be far behind.

Read more: <https://www.abcactionnews.com/news/state/regional-mirr-report-provides-resiliency-solutions-to-states-military-bases-and-their-communities>