

# Navy Furls Final Flag at Treasure Island

## 900 gather to say goodbye — S.F. takes over in fall

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And now there are none.

Treasure Island Naval Station, the last of the four big bases that made the Bay Area a naval power through much of this century, officially ceased operation yesterday as the sun hovered low in the west and the notes of a lone bugler's "Retreat" echoed across the waves.

About 900 veterans, sailors and officers gathered at the water's edge for an hourlong ceremony at dusk — but after a ceaseless series of similar farewells since the early 1990s wave of military shutdown orders began, it felt practically anticlimactic.

The biggest difference was that

this was the final goodbye, the Navy's true swan song to the bay.

"So this is it, huh? Sad, really sad," said 60-year-old Joe Kelly, a Navy electronics technician stationed at Treasure Island in the early 1950s. "Seems like this has been coming such a long time now, closing this place is not really a shock anymore."

He shook his head. "The Navy will just be a memory around here from now on, I guess."

A skeleton naval crew will stay at the base until September 30, when the island and the adjacent Yerba Buena Island are turned over to the city of San Francisco for good. But that's just detail. The Navy's true mission ended yesterday.

"The spirit, dedication and patriotism of the men and women who sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge in the service of their country is what we honor today, and what we will miss tomorrow," said Deputy Assistant Secretary of the

Navy William Cassidy Jr. He called the decade's wave of base closures across the nation "not a revolution, but an evolution of the American economy."

The bay's three other big Navy bases — Alameda Naval Air Station, Mare Island and Oak Knoll Hospital — all closed within the past year, as did several smaller support installations before them.

Two admirals and Captain Lynne Hanel, the base's final commander, sounded similarly somber tones. Then came San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown, who was positively gleeful at his city's impending takeover of one of Northern California's finest chunks of real estate, with its pristine view of the city and a perfect location in the middle of the bay.

"This is a very difficult day, particularly for the naval personnel, but it is a glorious day for those of us who live in San Francisco," Brown said. "We hope we are equal to the challenge that you

have entrusted to us."

Brown said the 403-acre island, built in 1939 to host the Golden Gate International Exposition and taken over by the Navy in 1941, gives his city's leaders a development opportunity that is "probably unequalled in the history of this nation."

The uses proposed for Treasure Island range from a theme park to fancy hotels and housing for the homeless — but, to the chuckles of the crowd, Brown focused on a plan to put the mayor's residence there. "I hope we have the good judgment not to spoil the view," he said with a big grin.

The Navy has had a power base in the Bay Area since 1854, when Commander David Farragut tied his warship here and set up operations. Through the years the presence grew, reaching its peak during World War II but staying strong with 30,000 sailors and officers as recently as 1993.

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