

# Southern border, USA

## Jan/Feb 2018

With some spare vacation days left from last year and lots of sunshine in the weather forecast, I had a good reason to start 2018 with a last-minute spotting trip to the desert in the south western part of the United States. The goal of this trip was to combine the hunt for classic propliners with military hardware, which has been underrepresented on my previous trips. The area of operation would be near the Mexican border across four states: from El Paso, Texas, in the east via New Mexico and Arizona to El Centro, California, in the west. During this time of the year the temperatures are mild and the angle of the sun is low enough to prevent dark aircraft bellies on the photos.

I found a great deal on Expedia (600 EUR for a return flight Amsterdam-Tucson including luggage & meals plus a one-night stay at a hotel) and made the booking about four days in advance. This gave me just enough time to prepare the journey.

All aircraft that I logged on my previous trip are omitted, unless noted at a different airport. Moreover, all mm's mentioned in this article apply to a 1.5x crop camera. For more detailed information about the visited airports near Phoenix and Tucson, please look at my trip report of November 2017.

My solo trip began on a Saturday morning at Schiphol Airport with a two-hour delay, because the United Airlines B777 that was bringing me to Houston had a technical issue.

### 20 January 2018 Houston-George Bush KIAH

N619NK                      Airbus A320-200                      Spirit Airlines

Regular traffic:

\*[United Airlines](#): A319/A320/B777-200;

\*[United Express](#): Emb175.

Despite the delay and the usual CBP/TSA hassle in Houston, I still made my connecting flight to Tucson. My bag, on the other hand, would arrive in Tucson the next day around noon.

### 21 January 2018 Davis Monthan AFB KDMA

957	C-130H Hercules	Norwegian AF
69-6570	AC-130H Hercules	USAF
79-0479	C-130H Hercules	USAF
84-1265/AZ	F-16C	USAF
85-0035	C-130H-2 Hercules	USAF
85-0037	C-130H-2 Hercules	USAF
85-1368	C-130H Hercules	USAF
86-0245/TX	F-16C	USAF

### 21 January 2018 Tucson KTUS

N117BA	Robinson R44	
N151FE	Boeing 767-300F	FedEx
N444BC	Cessna 750	Berry Contracting
N585T	Cessna 750	Target
N650ZJ	CL-650	Zetta Jet
N709S	Boeing 737-500	Sierra Pacific
N787RR	Boeing 747-200B	Rolls-Royce
N883RA	Falcon 50EX	GHK
N900NH	Falcon 2000	

Regular traffic (seen during various visits):

\*[Alaska Airlines](#): B737-900;

\*[Alaska Horizon](#): Emb175;

\*[American Airlines](#): B737-800/MD-83;

- \*American Eagle: CRJ 900;
- \*Delta Air Lines: B737-900/MD-90;
- \*Delta Connection: CRJ 700/Emb175;
- \*Southwest Airlines: B737-700 (+ stored B737-300);
- \*United Airlines: A319;
- \*United Express: CRJ 200/CRJ 700/Emb175.

On Sunday morning I picked up my rental car, a VW Jetta, and bought a three-step ladder at the Home Depot. As I had some time to kill I went to AMARG before getting my bag at Tucson Airport. Finally I could start my road trip to the east.

### 21 January 2018 Benson KE95

N34AH Douglas DC-3S  
 N4405E Piper PA.44-180 CAE Oxford Aviation Academy

The small airport of Benson is located northwest of the town. At highway I-10, take exit 304, turn northbound on N Ocotillo Road and turn left on Aviation Drive. After a few miles you will arrive at the airport. There is not much to see except for the stored Super DC-3 and some light aircraft. The sun will be in your back for most of the day.

Via intermediate stops at the empty airfields of Lordsburg and Deming, I arrived at my final destination for the day: Las Cruces.

### 21+22+24 January 2018 Las Cruces KLRU

(12-)72252	UH-72A Lakota	US Army
84-23949	UH-60A Blackhawk	US Army
164790/UT-13	CH-53E	US Marine Corps
N211BD	Learjet 60	Discount Tire
N26WB/"N706ME"	Douglas A-26B Invader	
N2PV/"N7248C"	PV-2 Harpoon	Southwest Aviation
N310WJ	Cessna T310R	Aero-Graphics
N406SF	Beech E90	New Mexico State University
N421JC	Cessna 421C	
N671PC	Pilatus PC-12/45	Air Methods/Native Air
N6738T	Cessna 310D	Adventure Aviation
N679AM	AS350B3 Ecureuil	Air Methods
N8131	Piper PA.31-350	Aspen Helicopters
N8221Q	Cessna 414	Southwest Aviation

This General Aviation airport is located west of the city. At highway I-10, take exit 132 and drive northbound until you reach the field. There are three runways and all hangars and aprons are located along the south side, hence you will have the sun in your back most of the day. The stored Harpoon can be photographed best in the morning.

Southwest Aviation and Francis Aviation are the two FBOs; the latter is located inside the main terminal building and willing to grant airside access (I didn't ask or need it at Southwest Aviation). Just east of the Francis Aviation apron there is a hangar of the Army National Guard, which is no doubt the reason of the frequent military visitors. Due to the type of traffic at this airport, it is always a surprise if and what you will catch, but spending at least one afternoon here should be worthwhile.

### 22 January 2018 Alamogordo-White Sands KALM

03-05360	AH-64D Apache	US Army
04-03749	MH-47G Chinook	US Army
04-05427	AH-64D Apache	US Army
04-05458	AH-64D Apache	US Army
05-03753	MH-47G Chinook	US Army
07-05508	AH-64D Apache	US Army
08-03781	MH-47G Chinook	US Army
09-03786	MH-47G Chinook	US Army
..-20012	MH-60M Blackhawk	US Army

..-20015	MH-60M Blackhawk	US Army
..-20222	MH-60M Blackhawk	US Army
..-20246	MH-60M Blackhawk	US Army
131463/7K-225	SP-2E Neptune	US Navy
N831CY	Piper PA.46-600TP	

Neptune Aviation Services (tail code in brackets):

\*BAe 146-200A: N470NA (40);

\*P-2E Neptune: N203EV (142)/N96278 (05)/N9855F (06)/N807NA (07)/N410NA (14)/N1386C (44);

\*P-2H Neptune: N443NA (43)/N445NA (45).

Close to the spotting-unfriendly Holloman Air Force Base you will find the regional airport of Alamogordo, home of the Neptune Aviation Services fire bombers. All hangars and aprons are located on the west side of the runway. Views are limited from outside the perimeter, but apron access was not a problem here. The seven recently retired Neptunes were lined up perfectly, but unfortunately they all had covers on their cockpit windows. The other two Neptunes are stored in the southwest corner. The army was conducting an exercise at the airport, but on this morning none of the helicopters were flying and some were being worked on by mechanics. It took a while to identify all choppers as I wasn't allowed to get too close. Not all FY's were actually read.

**22 January 2018 Alamogordo-Gerald Champion Regional Medical Center**

N807LF	AS350B3 Ecureuil	Air Methods
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The hospital is located northeast of the town and the helipad is located on the west side of the main building.

**22+23+24 January 2018 El Paso KELP**

08-6203	MC-130J Hercules	USAF
12-00277	Beech C-12S	US Army
160438	UH-1N	US Marine Corps
160443	UH-1N	US Marine Corps
166481/YW-08	MV-22B Osprey	US Marine Corps
167912/YW-04	MV-22B Osprey	US Marine Corps
168244/YW-14	MV-22B Osprey	US Marine Corps
168470/NG-216	F/A-18E Super Hornet	US Navy
168619/YW-11	MV-22B Osprey	US Marine Corps
168656/YW-12	MV-22B Osprey	US Marine Corps
168659/YW-13	MV-22B Osprey	US Marine Corps
3D-JJM	Boeing 727-200	Sport Hawk International Airlines
N113	Boeing 727-30	US Marshals Service
N118RT	Cessna 501	ATI Jet
N122GS	Beech E18S	Supreme Air Cargo
N150PR	Beech C-45G	private
N204TX	AS350B2 Ecureuil	Texas Department of Public Safety
N285FE	Boeing 727-200F	El Paso International Airport
N285WN	Boeing 737-700	Southwest Airlines
N2RP	Piper PA.23-250	
N36673+ N577W	Beech 58	GTA Air
N381FL	Convair 5800	IFL Group
N3946A	AS350B3 Ecureuil	US CBP
N398QS	Embraer 505 Phenom 300	Netjets
N399BA	Learjet 35A	Royal Air Freight
N417JS	Piper PA.46-350P	CSJ Engineering Associates
N420TA	Beech 200	
N424AA	MD-82	American Airlines
N441US	Boeing 737-400	Swift Air
N4805C	Convair 580	
N4AZ	MD-220	

N503AS	Cessna 525A	Executive Airshare
N503RP	Gulfstream G150	Penske
N505FW	Bell 505	Bell Helicopter
N50GJ	Learjet 60	ATI Jet
N528PM	Pilatus PC-12/45	
N61SJ	Learjet 55	ATI Jet
N652GT	Boeing 767-200BDSF	DHL
N656QS	Cessna 560XLS	Netjets
N7252N	Bell UH-1N	US CBP
N744A	Piper PA.44-180	ATP Flight School
N761CK+ N762CK	Boeing 767-300ER(BD)SF	Kalitta Air
N824MG	Learjet 55	ATI Jet
N844L	Learjet 35	
N855RW	Embraer 170SE	United Express
N856BK	Cessna 402B	private
N866HA	HU-16B Albatross	
N87319	Embraer 175LR	United Express
N876CS	CL-300	
N885FD	Boeing 777F	FedEx
N905J	CRJ 900ER	American Eagle
N917FJ+ N920FJ	CRJ 900ER	American Eagle
N931WN+ N963WN	Boeing 737-700	Southwest Airlines
N941NA	Aero-Spacelines 377SGT-F	NASA
N947AS	Embraer 505 Phenom 300	All-State Industries

Sierra West Airlines:

\*[Fa20C](#): N283SA;

\*[Lj35A](#): N242DR;

\*[SA227](#): N5441F/N563TR/N564TR/N567TR/N63NE/N733BH.

With the limited spotting possibilities at Biggs Army Airfield, I spent one cloudy afternoon and two sunny mornings at El Paso International Airport. There are two main runways and a smaller one. Runway 04-22 was closed for maintenance, so this made runway usage quite predictable. On the north side of the airport near the threshold of runway 22, along George Perry Blvd, you will find the cargo area as well as the former FedEx B727 near the fire department. This plane can be photographed best early morning.

The main terminal is located at the southwest corner of the field. The (rental car) parking garage on the west side of the terminal might be a good spot in the morning when runway 04 is in use, but obviously I did not try this out. The Long Term Parking – North (Convair Road) on the east side of the terminal seemed like a terrific spot for the afternoon, however it was more or less closed (yet accessible) and the double fence prevented decent photos anyway.

Along American Drive and Boeing Drive you will find many hangars with limited viewing/photo possibilities in between. You can turn left on Shuttle Columbia Drive to see the Super Guppy. Just north of this iconic aircraft is the unofficial “military apron” where the six Ospreys were parked during a fuel stop. Light is best here during the morning. A little further down the road you will find the Atlantic FBO facilities which are also used by Sierra West Airlines. Spotting should be OK here if you keep low-profile. It is also a good place to view traffic on runway 08R-26L and its parallel taxiway, but heathaze will be a problem, especially during midday.

The amount of traffic at the airport can be compared to Tucson with a nice mix of airliners and General Aviation, but quality is rather high with frequent visits of classic airliners like DC-9s, DC-10s, B727s, Convairs as well as military aircraft. Besides, there are several unique aircraft stored here, such as the sole-built four-engine bizjet MD-220, a Convair, Beech 18 and a Swaziland-registered B727. The latter is currently being scrapped and another one (3D-BBQ) has already disappeared. The NASA Super Guppy is based here rather than in Houston due to the dry climate. Most of these aircraft were photographed under cold but perfect circumstances during a fantastic ramp tour on Tuesday morning.

### **23+24 January 2018 Santa Teresa-Dona Ana KDNA**

03-05363	AH-64D Apache	US Army
90-00309	AH-64A Apache	US Army
52-9089	F-84F Thunderstreak	War Eagles Air Museum
157455/AA-310	A-7E Corsair	War Eagles Air Museum
"32"	Tupolev Tu-2	War Eagles Air Museum
N26AB	Douglas A-26 Invader	
N27L	Cessna 500	private
N295CE	Cessna 441	
N321L	Douglas DC-3S	Nord Aviation
N3SJ	Cessna 525B	
N4618E	Aero Commander 560E	
N525MA	Cessna 525A	
N712BD	Cessna 550B	

Northwest of El Paso, a few miles across the state line, the Dona Ana County International Jetport can be found. As the name might suggest, quite a lot of bizjets are based at this airport. Most of them are parked inside the hangars on the east side. The museum and airport management office are located in the centre area, whereas the Francis Aviation FBO is located on the far west side. Apron access was not a problem here either and I used my car to check out the dozen rows of hangars. The Invader is stored on the east side, whereas the Super DC-3 can be found on the main apron. The three museum aircraft are parked on the main apron as well, in front of the museum building. The old Apache was stored right next to a hangar without rotor blades, while the new one was conducting some flight training on the runway.

### **25 January 2018 Silver City-Grant County K SVC**

N45014	Piper PA.31-350	Ameriflight
N478SS	Pilatus PC-12/47	Boutique Air

On Thursday it was time to head back toward Tucson. Rather than taking highway I-10, I made a scenic detour to visit a couple of remote airfields and enjoy the beautiful New Mexican nature. First stop was Grant County Airport, located just west of SR-180. There is one paved runway and all aprons and hangars are located on the south side. Apron access is OK here, although not really necessary as the parking lot near the main terminal provides good views too. The apron, including the firefighting base on the east side, was completely empty anyway before the abovementioned aircraft arrived less than half an hour apart.

Then I headed to Silver City's other airport: Whiskey Creek. It turned out to be a private airport and nothing of interest was logged here.

### **25+26 January 2018 Safford KSAD**

N210HD	Aero Commander 500S	
N389P	AS350B3 Ecureuil	PHI Air Medical
N45004+ N961CA	Piper PA.31-350	Ameriflight
N711PB	Aero Commander 690B	
N79BE	Aero Commander 690B	Precision Aeromedical Transportation

Back in Arizona, I stopped at the small airport of Safford, located northeast of the town. The FBO Ponderosa Aviation is specialized in MRO for Aero Commander aircraft. Because the main terminal building was completely empty, airside access was a matter of self-service. The helipad is located just south of E Aviation Way.

The next morning I went back to this airport in order to photograph the Ameriflight and an Aero Commander in perfect light conditions.

### **25 January 2018 Tucson KTUS**

83-1175/AZ	F-16D	USAF
86-0210/AZ	F-16C	USAF
86-0215/AZ	F-16C	USAF

86-0218/AZ	F-16C	USAF
86-0236/AZ	F-16C	USAF
86-0252/AZ	F-16C	USAF
86-0279/AZ	F-16C	USAF
87-0311/AZ	F-16C	USAF
89-2091/AZ	F-16CM	USAF
89-2163/AZ	F-16D	USAF
90-0715/AZ	F-16CM	USAF
90-0785/AZ	F-16D	USAF
95-00091	Beech C-12V	US Army
N175EM	Embraer 500 Phenom 100	
N42MW	Cessna 414A	private
N811QN	Boeing 737-300	
N898PA	Learjet 60	Air 7
N974AS	MD-83	
YR-BAJ+YR-BAK	Boeing 737-400	Blue Air

I spent Thursday afternoon at spot 8 of the Scramble Airfield Guide. Because the military were conducting night flying operations, it seemed like the action only started when I arrived around 2 PM. Once the runways were changed at the end of the day, I logged some additional stored planes at the Ascent Aviation apron.

### 26 January 2018 Fort Huachuca-Sierra Vista KFHU

N309AK	EC-130T2	Cochise County Sheriff
N31701	Beech 1900C	Ameriflight

After the do-over at Safford, I drove to the largest airport in the area between Tucson and the Mexican border. The mil/civ-shared field is situated just west of SR-90. Libby AAF is located on the south side of the runways. Unfortunately none of the based aircraft could be read. Apparently there is some sensitive stuff going on here, because even at the civil area on the north side people were uncomfortable about me wanting to photograph some aircraft.

The sheriff's hangar and a helipad are located on the eastern corner of the civil apron; take the first left when driving on Airport Avenue. Further along this road there are some more hangars before you end up at the main terminal. The Ameriflight Beech was parked next to the building. Once again the terminal was empty, so I called the airport manager to ask for airside permission. He was out and about running some errands, but he allowed me to take a quick photo of the Ameriflight plane anyway. So after getting rid of some orange cones, I got my first Ameriflight plane in the company's brand new livery.

### 26 January 2018 Davis Monthan AFB KDMA

65-10401/XL	T-38C Talon	USAF
67-14840/XL	T-38C Talon	USAF
68-8128/XL	T-38C Talon	USAF
70-1568/XL	T-38C Talon	USAF
79-0144/DP	A-10C	USAF
79-0177/ET	A-10C	USAF
80-0160/DP	A-10C	USAF
81-0939/DP	A-10C	USAF
81-0969/DM	A-10C	USAF
82-0647/DM	A-10C	USAF
82-0663/DP	A-10C	USAF

I was planning to spend the afternoon at DM, but unfortunately that turned out to be a disappointment. When I arrived, runway 12 was in use, but after just 45 minutes they switched runways. Before the switch I was able to log the abovementioned aircraft, but all photos were ruined by heathaze.

### 27 January 2018 Coolidge KP08

N7225R	Beech 58	Open Loop Energy
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I made a quick stop at Coolidge to photograph a Win Aviation Skyvan, which was now parked in a better position than during last year's trip. Besides I logged the abovementioned Baron.

### 27 January 2018 Phoenix-Mesa Gateway KIWA

00-3576/XL	T-6A Texan II	USAF
02-3671/XL	T-6A Texan II	USAF
64-13224/EN	T-38C Talon	USAF
65-10336/EN	T-38C Talon	USAF
65-10401/XL	T-38C Talon	USAF
66-4340/EN	T-38C Talon	USAF
66-8372/EN	T-38C Talon	USAF
67-14840/XL	T-38C Talon	USAF
67-14849/EN	T-38C Talon	USAF
67-14942/EN	T-38C Talon	USAF
68-8118/XL	T-38C Talon	USAF
68-8128/XL	T-38C Talon	USAF
68-8129/EN	T-38C Talon	USAF
68-8132/RA	T-38C Talon	USAF
68-8135/RA	T-38C Talon	USAF
68-8136/RA	T-38C Talon	USAF
68-8191/RA	T-38C Talon	USAF
69-7083/RA	T-38C Talon	USAF
70-1568/XL	T-38C Talon	USAF
99-3552/XL	T-6A Texan II	USAF
99-3565/XL	T-6A Texan II	USAF
164128/WL-21	AV-8B Harrier	US Marine Corps
164142/WL-22	AV-8B Harrier	US Marine Corps
164143/WL-20	AV-8B Harrier	US Marine Corps
164571/WL-08	AV-8B+ Harrier	US Marine Corps
165427/WL-04	AV-8B+ Harrier	US Marine Corps
165588/WL-10	AV-8B+ Harrier	US Marine Corps
N109LN	AS350B3 Ecureuil	Air Methods
N159H	Cessna 525C	McKesson
N211UT	SIAI S211	Aviation Performance Solutions
N267AM	AS350B3 Ecureuil	Air Methods/Native Air
N301NV+N302NV	Airbus A319-100	Allegiant Air
N308NV	Airbus A319-100	Allegiant Air
N333NV+N336NV	Airbus A319-100	Allegiant Air
N335QS	Embraer 505 Phenom 300	Netjets
N351AM	Learjet 35A	Angel MedFlight
N418TY	AS350B3 Ecureuil	Air Methods
N45VA	Learjet 45	Aviation Advisor
N480WB	Cessna 525M2	Sunridge Hotel Group
N533AM	AS350B3 Ecureuil	Air Methods/Life Net
N58QP	Beech 58	Quality Plus
N5FL	Cessna 525M2	
N601DL	Cessna 750	Gryphon Air
N654FC	Eclipse 500	U-Haul
N7176S	Gulfstream IV	Journey Aviation
N795HG	Cessna 750	
N829TX	Piaggio P.180 Avanti II	Baker Aviation
N97EM	Cessna 560XL	Cutter Flight Management
N9802A	Piper PA.44-180	ATP Flight School

During this weekend it seemed like Phoenix-Mesa Gateway got transformed into Williams AFB again. There was a lot of military hardware on the ramps: the Talons and at least two unidentified Goshawks were parked on the south ramp, whereas the Harriers and

Texans were parked in front of the GAS FBO. Almost half of the planes flew local training sorties throughout the day. That is the kind of military flying enthusiasm you won't encounter in Europe. Because the long-term parking lot near the control tower was closed, I spent most of the day on the "official" spotting place near the FBO.

### **28 January 2018 Casa Grande KCGZ**

N567WW Short C-23B Sherpa Win Aviation

Another do-over from last year's trip was the PHI Air Medical helicopter based at this airport. Besides, there were three grey Sherpas, but only one could be identified.

### **28 January 2018 Yuma KNYL**

164032/SH-300	F/A-18D Hornet	US Marine Corps
C-GEDA	Cessna 421C	
N20GM	Cessna FT337GP	private
N23ES/ "91620/TL-620"	T-28A Trojan	private
N299AM	Pilatus PC-12/45	Air Methods
N348PC	Pilatus PC-12/45	Valley Med Flight
N421Z	Cessna 421	
N511SL	Agusta A119	Air Methods
N639SC	Cessna 421A	private
N645SC	Piper PA.31P	private
N652SC+N653SC	Piper PA.31P	private
N68TA	Beech C99	Ameriflight
N893GT	EC-130T2	Guardian Flight
N900JT	BAe 125-700A	

My initial plan was to spend one or two mornings at Yuma to photograph some USMC traffic. Due to the northerly wind direction combined with the closure of runway 03L for maintenance, this plan was abandoned because photo opportunities for runway 03R are far from ideal. So I only made a brief lunch stop at the airport on a Sunday to explore the civil part of the airport.

The main terminal is located on the north side of the field along E 32nd Street and photo opportunities are limited here. The terminal is very quiet anyway because there are only a few American Eagle CRJ flights per day.

On the west side you will find the General Aviation area, where you will have the sun in your back during the afternoon. When coming from the main terminal, take the first road to the left on S Fortuna Avenue. This road will lead to the facilities of Air Methods/Care Flight. Unfortunately only photos from outside the fence were allowed. Besides you will also find a few stored bizprops here.

Back on E 32nd Street, take a left on S Arizona Avenue, left on E 36th Street, right on S Burch Way to end up at the Million Air FBO. At the dead end of S Burch Way there is another vantage point between some hangars.

Back on S Arizona Avenue, drive southbound and turn left on E 39th Street to reach the southern part of the apron with some more stored bizprops. Two Hornets were being refueled here as well, but only one could be identified.

Further to the southwest there are some remote aprons and a FedEx Ship Center, but photo opportunities are limited here if there is anything to see at all.

### **28 January 2018 Calexico KCXL**

N200XC Beech B200

I spent the remainder of this Sunday exploring some airports in Imperial County, California. First I went to a small airport located only 200 meters away from the border between California and Mexico (and yes, there is already a big wall). The main apron is located at the southeast corner. The parking lot adjacent to the apron (opposite of the shopping mall at Gran Plaza Circle) is an excellent spotting point for most of the day. The fence is low and views on the taxiway and runway are excellent. The only problem is the



lack of traffic. On the north side there are a couple of hangars along Animal Shelter Drive, but I did not bother to look here.

### 28 January 2018 Brawley KBWC

N902SF	Bell OH-58A	Farm Aviation
N941EM	AS350B3 Ecureuil	Reach Air Medical Services

Brawley is a small town located about half-way between the south side of the Salton Sea and El Centro. The airport is located on the northeast part of the town. There was nothing to see at the main apron (Ken Bemis Drive), but on the west side along N Eastern Avenue I noted two helicopters. The medical chopper on the right side of this road was an easy catch; light is best in the afternoon. The premises on the left side didn't seem very welcoming, so I just logged the Bell from outside the fence.

### 28+29+30 January 2018 Imperial KIPL

166319/SA-38	MH-60S	US Navy
167916/ML-401	MV-22B Osprey	US Marine Corps
168612/PF-04	MV-22B Osprey	US Marine Corps
168631/PF-13	MV-22B Osprey	US Marine Corps
N10NL	Learjet 45	O'Neal Industries
N164HA	Beech B99	Ameriflight
N300TN	Beech 300	International Farm Services
N363CA	Cessna 550B	Monterey Pacific Executive Charter
N370EA	Eclipse 500	Bailey Farms International
N37RX	EC-135P2+	Reach Air Medical Services
N476AF	SA227AC Metro III	Ameriflight
N8200E	Falcon 900	Emerson Electric
N820EC	Falcon 2000LX	Emerson Electric
N831H	Robinson R44	Imperial Valley Airborne Narcotics Enf.
N970NA	Pilatus PC-12/45	Air Methods
N983CH	Pilatus PC-12/47	

#### Regular traffic:

\*[FedEx Feeder Ce208](#): N771FE/N772FE/N790FE;

\*[Mokulele Airlines Ce208](#): N841MA/N862MA/N863MA.

A few miles east of NAF El Centro you can find Imperial Airport. Despite the close proximity of the NAF, military visitors are quite common at this airport (also during the weekend). There are two runways, but 14-32 seemed to be the main one. Most of the hangars and aprons are located on the east side of this runway, along N Imperial Avenue. When coming from the south, first you will see the Reach Air facilities, then the main terminal where the Mokulele Caravans are parked and finally the airport management office and a parking lot from where you can see most of the GA apron, runway and taxiway. Unfortunately airside access was denied (except at Reach Air), so in most situations you will have backlight here. Further north there are some more hangars. On the south side near the threshold of runway 32 (W Aten Road), there is a FedEx Ship Center which provides reasonable photo opportunities during the afternoon. Keep in mind that the arrival/departure times of the FedEx planes as posted on FlightAware are not always accurate.

### 29+30 January 2018 NAF El Centro KNJK

160472/NJ-72	Beech T-34C Mentor	US Navy
163439/1	F/A-18C Hornet	Blue Angels
163462/5	F/A-18C Hornet	Blue Angels
163464/7	F/A-18D Hornet	Blue Angels
163468/7	F/A-18D Hornet	Blue Angels
163472/AD-403	F/A-18D Hornet	US Navy
163485/3	F/A-18C Hornet	Blue Angels
163766/2	F/A-18C Hornet	Blue Angels
164061/AD-435	F/A-18D Hornet	US Navy

165676/AD-210	F/A-18F Super Hornet	US Navy
165806/AD-220	F/A-18F Super Hornet	US Navy
165894/AD-246	F/A-18F Super Hornet	US Navy
165931/AD-225	F/A-18F Super Hornet	US Navy
166434/AD-132	F/A-18E Super Hornet	US Navy
166619/AD-267	F/A-18F Super Hornet	US Navy
166974/AD-256	F/A-18F Super Hornet	US Navy
168515/SE-15	UH-1Y	US Marine Corps
168930/AD-254	F/A-18F Super Hornet	US Navy
169087/SE-48	AH-1Z	US Marine Corps

With its spotting-friendly reputation and the annual winter training deployments of the Blue Angels and other Navy units, NAF El Centro is well worth a visit, even without an airshow or photocall. It is highly recommended to contact the PAO in advance in order to avoid issues with security. The PAO will need some personal info including the details of your rental car. Also keep in mind that you should stay approximately 10 meters away from the fence and that photographing infrastructure is not allowed.

VFA-106 based at NAS Oceana was on deployment with their (Super) Hornets. There were three or four sorties each day. Flying started around 08.30 AM on Monday (a sunny day) and around 07.00 AM on Tuesday (a cloudy day). With runway 26 in use, I stayed at spot 3 of the Scramble Airfield Guide for most of the day. This spot is great for taxiway shots in the morning (300-400mm) and landing shots in the afternoon (400+ mm). A ladder is required though. Late afternoon I positioned myself a bit more to the east near the intersection with Silsbee Road, where the aircraft turn from base to final (400mm, no ladder needed). While the morning and late afternoon shots turned out great, I had to delete the photos taken around midday due to heathaze.

The Blue Angels flew several daily training sorties as well, but unlike the other Hornets they used runway 12-30. As mentioned on the Scramble Airfield Guide, there is a spot near the threshold of runway 30. Photography is not ideal, because unless there are some hay bales you can stand on or you have a very tall ladder, you will get the fence in the bottom of your photos.

Much to my surprise and disappointment, there was no flying activity on Wednesday morning except for the Blue Angels. So after I wasted more than two hours, I left around 9.30 AM and headed back to Tucson.

### 31 January - 2 February 2018 Tucson KTUS

1602	F-16D	Iraqi AF
1603	F-16D	Iraqi AF
1619	F-16D	Iraqi AF
1625	F-16C	Iraqi AF
J-018/AZ	F-16AM	Netherlands AF
J-366/AZ	F-16AM	Netherlands AF
02-05304	AH-64D Apache	US Army
04-05421	AH-64D Apache	US Army
04-05430	AH-64D Apache	US Army
09-05654	AH-64D Apache	US Army
09-05665	AH-64D Apache	US Army
79-0142/DP	A-10C	USAF
83-1183/AZ	F-16D	USAF
85-1514/AZ	F-16D	USAF
86-0238/AZ	F-16C	USAF
86-0239/AZ	F-16C	USAF
86-0292/AZ	F-16C	USAF
86-0296/AZ	F-16C	USAF
87-0301/AZ	F-16C	USAF
87-0361/AZ	F-16CM	USAF
88-0417	F-16CM	USAF
88-0427/AZ	F-16CM	USAF

88-0520/AZ	F-16CM	USAF
89-2002/AZ	F-16CM	USAF
89-2117/AZ	F-16CM	USAF
89-2135/AZ	F-16CM	USAF
90-0708/AZ	F-16CM	USAF
90-0716/AZ	F-16CM	USAF
90-0790/AZ	F-16D	USAF
N120SP	Beech B60	
N123BC	Beech 58TC	
N125TH	Cessna 750	Delta Private Jets
N205EL	BD-700-1A11 Global 5000	Richmor Aviation
N225BH	Beech C99	Ameriflight
N305LX	Cessna 560XLS+	Aero Charter
N319QS	Embraer 505 Phenom 300	Netjets
N327LX	Falcon 2000LXS	Dassault Falcon Jet
N353FX+N361FX	Embraer 505 Phenom 300	Flight Options
N361LA	BAe 125-800XP	private
N414SH	Cessna 414A	
N420EX	HA-420 HondaJet	Honda Aircraft Company
N452GH	Pilatus PC-12/45	
N461HP	Piper PA.46-350P	private
N46E	CL-605	Hunt Consolidated
N4817M	Beech 95-B55	Dick James & Associates
N500VC	Cessna 560	Jetran
N517LR	BAe 125-1000B	MAC Air Group
N525JJ	Cessna 525	Ahern Rentals
N533QS+N543QS	Cessna 680A	Netjets
N579QS	Cessna 560XLS	Netjets
N580FX	CL-350	Flexjet
N586JS	Embraer 500 Phenom 100	JetSuite
N615AR	DHC-6-300 Twin Otter	Twin Otter International
N650UA	Cessna 650	Universal Avionics
N668QS	Cessna 560XL	Netjets
N71BD	Gulfstream IV-SP	Delta Private Jets
N723GB	Embraer 500 Phenom 100	Executive Flight Services
N810JK	Learjet 40	private
N829TX	Piaggio P.180 Avanti II	Baker Aviation
N82AJ	Cessna 501	
N854FL	BAe 125-800XP	SC Aviation
XA-ARQ	Learjet 31A	Aeronor
XB-DBT	Cessna 550B	Danipili
XC-HMO	Aero Commander 690B	Government of Sonora

As it turned out, night flying in Tucson had ended, so when I finally arrived on Wednesday afternoon, most of the military action was already over. I caught a few F-16s before ATC switched runways. On Thursday I spent all day at Tucson: in the morning at spot 1 and 4 and in the afternoon at spot 8. Fortunately runway 11L was in use all day. Six Apaches (one unidentified) came in for a fuel stop and the A-10 made a low approach. On Friday morning I logged a few more planes while waiting for my flight to Chicago and then onwards back to Amsterdam.

Despite the rough start, I can look back on another successful spotting trip to the number 1 aviation country in the world. Quantity in terms of tail numbers and photos was less compared to my previous trips, but this was compensated by the high degree of variety and quality. Even though things did not always work out the way I hoped and the number of Mexican planes was below expectation, I could enjoy sunshine and blue skies for about 90% of the daytime. Even in the desert this is not very common for this time of the year. All in all it was a great start of 2018.