

# P R E S S   R E L E A S E



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**Contact:** Alex Hernández  
Public Information Officer

**Phone:** (985) 652-9278  
**Email:** [ahernandez@portsl.com](mailto:ahernandez@portsl.com)

## **RESTORED BLUE ANGELS F-11 TIGER JET FIGHTER, ELECTRONIC MESSAGE BOARD TO WELCOME THE PUBLIC TO THE PORT OF SOUTH LOUISIANA EXECUTIVE REGIONAL AIRPORT**

RESERVE, LA.

Earlier today, Executive Director Paul G. Aucoin, alongside members of Port of South Louisiana Board of Commissioners, unveiled the refurbished Blue Angels F-11 Tiger jet fighter, which will be perched on the corner of Airport Road and U.S. 61, the entrance to Port of South Louisiana Executive Regional Airport. A special invited guest was U.S. Navy Lieutenant Hal Loney, U.S. Navy Blue Angels' 1967 team member #6 and, at the time, the 27 year-old pilot of this F-11 Tiger jet fighter. He had been selected for the team in February 1967.

On October 10, 1967, the jet fighter, an original that flew with the U.S. Navy flight demonstration team, suffered a malfunction during a flight demonstration at the Belle Chasse Naval Air Station New Orleans, known today as Joint Reserve Base, New Orleans. The aircraft lost power during takeoff and came to rest beyond the end of the runway. Fortunately, as an experienced pilot with 2,000 flying hours and 300 aircraft carrier landings under his belt, Lieutenant Loney was able to get out safely and the show continued. Although the fighter jet received significant though repairable damages, the Navy wrote it off as a complete loss. Rather than dispose of it or return it by truck to the Blue Angels' home base at NAS Pensacola, Florida, it was offered to NAS New Orleans to serve as an entrance display, where it remained for approximately 35 years until replaced by another more contemporary aircraft.

In the 1990s, the aircraft was acquired by a group of aviation enthusiasts from St. John the Baptist Parish, who were interested in constructing a military museum at St. John Airport. Unfortunately, the museum never materialized, but the aircraft remained permanently mounted on an elevated podium at the entrance to the airport. In 2010, the Port of South Louisiana acquired the airport and renamed it Port of South Louisiana Executive Regional Airport in 2015. Shortly thereafter, the Port of South Louisiana acquired the sponsorship rights to the aircraft from the National Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola, Florida, and in partnership with the National Naval Aviation Museum, restored the jet fighter to its former glory.

“We are so proud to have been a part of this process,” said Port of South Louisiana Executive Director Paul Aucoin. “Sitting on its pedestal at the entrance to our airport, this authentic Blue Angels fighter jet has become a landmark to the River Parishes community, especially our military veterans, including my brother Edsel Aucoin, who was a naval flight surgeon for 13 years.”

Airport Director Vincent Caire agrees with Aucoin: “It’s a landmark now, and for me personally, it’s wonderful to be able to be a part of a project that you know will mean a great deal to the community in which you live and work. My father was from Edgard and was a Naval Aviator, which gives me even more pride in completing this project.”

During the unveiling, Lieutenant Loney said that having the jet fighter restored “helps preserve history and bring awareness, especially to the youth of America, as to why we have the freedoms we enjoy today.”

Alongside the fighter jet sits the airport’s new electronic message board. The OPTEC CV/GV display will be used primarily to display public service announcements.



*Port of South Louisiana Executive Director Paul Aucoin (L) with Lieutenant Hal Loney during the unveiling of the restored Blue Angels F-11 Tiger Jet Fighter*



*Pictured L-R: Port of South Louisiana Executive Director Paul Aucoin, Port of South Louisiana Commission Secretary Stanley Bazile, St. John the Baptist Parish Sheriff Mike Tregre, Lieutenant Hal Loney, St. James Parish Sheriff Willy Martin, and Port of South Louisiana Commissioners Patrick Sellars and Judy Songy*



*Port of South Louisiana Executive Regional Airport Director Vincent Caire (L) with Lieutenant Hal Loney during the unveiling of the restored Blue Angels F-11 Tiger Jet Fighter*

**About Port of South Louisiana Executive Regional Airport**

The Port of South Louisiana acquired and completed improvements to the former St. John Airport (1L10) in Reserve, Louisiana, located approximately 20 miles west of Louis Armstrong International Airport (KMSY), just outside of congested, commercial Class-B airspace. Renamed Port of South Louisiana Executive Regional Airport, the airport welcomes users with a 5,150-foot runway paralleled by a newly paved taxiway, new lighting and AWOS systems, Jet-A and AvGas fuel, and a renovated FBO terminal building complete with crew lounge and conference room. For more information or for reservations, visit [portsl.com/airport/](http://portsl.com/airport/).

**About the Port of South Louisiana**

The Port of South Louisiana is a 54-mile port district on the Mississippi River between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, encompassing the parishes of St. Charles, St. John and St. James. The facilities located within the port's district consistently handle over a quarter billion short tons of cargo annually, ranking it the largest tonnage port district in the Western Hemisphere, the nation's greatest grain exporter, and the number one energy transfer port in the United States. Along the 108 miles of deep-water frontage on both banks of the river there are seven grain transfer facilities, four major oil refineries, 11 petrochemical manufacturing facilities and several other facilities for a total of more than 50 docks owned and operated by an impressive group of resident tenants such as ADM, ArcelorMittal, Dow, Cargill, DuPont, Motiva Enterprises, Marathon, Shell, Nucor Steel., Occidental, Valero, and Occidental Chemical. To learn more, visit us at [www.portsl.com](http://www.portsl.com), like us on [Facebook](#), and follow us on [LinkedIn](#).

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For more information about this particular topic or about the Port of South Louisiana, contact Alexandra "Alex" Hernández, Public Information Officer, at 985-652-9278 or [ahernandez@portsl.com](mailto:ahernandez@portsl.com).