

October 22, 2012 - Sebring, FL & The Runway Cafe

The last thing that a pilot wants to see is one of these outside of his airplane window. And yes, I did take this actual picture, but



not in the context of this article. Generally a pilot might encounter an F-18 Hornet this close and personal if he violates any of the numerous TFR's that are cropping up, almost daily, during this political season. The TFR is a Temporary Flight Restriction geographic area which may be associated with a visit by the President. Because of the big Boca Raton debate that is taking place this evening very large sections of airspace around south Florida are being closed to general aviation for a 24 hour period. While commercial airlines, the military and law enforcement can continue to operate within the TFR, smaller planes, such as mine, will find it easier to simply park and wait it out until the TFR expires tomorrow. However I wanted to get a quick trip in before the 12:45 PM start of today's restriction.

I had planned to fly over to nearby Sebring airport, home of the 24 hour endurance race and the annual Light Sport Aviation Expo, both of which are held each winter, for breakfast at JR's Runway Cafe. I figured that if I got into the air by 9:30 AM I would have enough time for the 45 minute flight over, breakfast, refueling, and the 45 minute return trip, with time to spare.

Flying to the West out of my home base, I traverse alongside Lake Okeechobee. It is the largest lake in Florida, measuring some 35 miles from top to bottom, and 30 miles across at its widest point. I had only one occasion, a few weeks ago, to have to overfly its center when thunderstorms along the safer overland route precluded my reaching my home airport any other way. However today I was going to travel along its northern boundary in pretty clear blue skies with no chance of rain.

My entry to runway 36 at Sebring took me mid-field, giving a good view of both the terminal building, where I was going to eat, and the race course just beyond. Races are generally held only on the weekends, so it was quiet today. Even the normal student pilot take offs and landings were at a minimum. I was soon on the ramp in front of the terminal's restaurant and I had the lineman take the affirmation photo of me with the plane. Since it was such a nice day, I chose to sit outside on the patio and enjoy my breakfast of eggs and corn beef hash. And sure to my schedule I was able to get back in the air by 11:30 which had me on the ground at Indiantown well before the 12:45 deadline for the TFR to become active. So, today I saw no Hornets, either buzzing around inside my cockpit, or outside of my plane.



Lake Okeechobee and its northern terminus



Sebring Regional Airport and race course beyond



Parked in front of the terminal building restaurant



Waiting for my breakfast of eggs and hash