This year's Jones Beach Memorial Day weekend air show, which draws about 400,000 people to the park to watch high-flying aerobatics, will not be headlined by a military precision-flight team for the first time since it began in 2004... The Air Force Thunderbirds team, which had been expected for its biennial performance, will be flying at an air show in Turkey instead. With other domestic and foreign military teams scheduled elsewhere, state parks officials have been scrambling to fill the vacuum since getting the news in December. The Air Force ***might*** send an ** F-22 Raptor stealth fighter ** , the military's newest jet. And the show will include a group of World War II-era bombers, including a B-29, which has not been included before.

alert: currently all F-22's have been grounded by the military due to problems with the aircraft's oxygen generating system. details click here

The event has been a major moneymaker for the state parks, which faces a 10 percent budget cut next year. Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) has written a letter to Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley asking him to reschedule the overseas trip. "Sending the Thunderbirds abroad on a day we celebrate our men and women in uniform is baffling, particularly in light of the popularity of this event, the economic benefit it provides to Long Island and the publicity it generates for our great military," Schumer wrote.

An Air Force spokesman, Lt. Col. Jack Miller, said the Thunderbirds troop usually makes a foreign trip every few years. This year it's a European trip with visits to more than 10 countries, so the coordination would not allow rescheduling, he added. Since the Navy's Blue Angels appeared in 2004, that team and the Thunderbirds alternate each year. "Because we're getting the F-22, which is the premier jet in the world, the parade of bombers - World War II planes are one of the most popular air show attractions - and the best civilian and military performers coming, we're hoping not to see diminishment in attendance at all," said George Gorman Jr., deputy regional director for state parks.

If it's any consolation to Long Island aviation buffs, both the Blue Angels and the Canadian Snowbirds teams have committed to appear at Jones Beach in 2012.

SAT - 5/28 SUN - 5/29 10AM - 3PM Admission Price: FREE Parking Cost: $10.00

Starring:
United States Armed Forces

2011 Performers Include: Military:

*F-22 Demo Team A-10 East Demo Team US Army Golden Knights

Civilian:

American Airpower Museum Geico Skytypers Team Oracle B-29 Superfortress Fifi

Static Display:

M4 Sherman, M8 Greyhound, a M 20 armored command car, Jeeps and other vintage weapons - American Airpower Museum**

MCAS MV-22 Osprey

Note: Performers are subject to change/cancel at anytime.
*** Aircraft/Performers may/will not launch out of FRG. Look at guide for details.*

†Centennial Tier 1 Event Of Naval Aviation

Airshow Information: http://www.nyasinfo.com

Twitter: http://www.twitter.com/nyasinfo

Get there early. In the past, this show has easily seen 200,000 people fill up the beach on a single day. It is not unusual for the parking lots to be filled by 11:00am (if not earlier). When this happens, the parkways are closed and people are turned away. So, it is probably a good idea to arrive before 10:00am, or as early as reasonably possible.

SUNSCREEN. Bring it. You will be in the sun for over five hours. Trust me, you will need plenty of it.

BAGS, BACKPACKS, AND COOLERS ARE OK (this is a beach you know), but keep in mind THEY WILL BE SEARCHED so don't bring too much stuff along with you. It will also get crowded near show-center, and extra baggage could make movement difficult. There is a nice fast-food style restaurant on the East end of the beach, and refreshment vendors will be located along the boardwalk. If you want to keep costs low, you may want to bring along your own drinks and snacks. There will be no bleachers or seating of any sort (with the exception of the VIP Chalets that require a separate entry fee purchased before the show), so bring a blanket to sit on, or a foldable chair. If you plan on sitting close to the water, you might want to bring a jacket or long-sleeved shirt. Even though the air temperature may be warm, the waters will still be cold and can cause the area right by the shoreline to be surprisingly chilly.

EARPLUGS are suggested for the younger viewers (under 3 years), but aren't a bad idea for some of the grown-up viewers as well. The jets can get loud, and you might get stuck next to some annoying guy who won't shut up about his cats.

Photography is always fun at an air show, but there are several things to keep in mind, and you should know the limits of your camera. Even though the planes will be close, they will still be far enough away that you will need a decent amount of zoom. The beach faces South, directly into the sun, so most everything will be backlit all day. Also, the air tends to get quite hazy, making it difficult to get a crisp shot. Don't let these handicaps prevent you from bringing your camera, however. You never know what kind of moments you will be able to capture.

KITES ARE PROHIBITED. They can easily distract the performers, and that could result in some rather nasty stuff. Please leave these flying machines at home.

NO PETS. Of course, this excludes animals that aid the handicapped. Unless that animal happens to be a ferret, and if you are using a ferret to lead you around everywhere, you will probably have trouble getting to the show in the first place.