

New jets for Air Guard requested

City Council wants quieter aircraft

By CHARLES MCCARTHY
See staff writer

The Fresno City Council has asked Congress and the Department of Defense to replace 1966-vintage F-4D Phantom jets at Fresno Air Terminal with newer, quieter aircraft as soon as possible.

And officials of the Air National Guard at the Fresno airport say they would welcome a more environmentally adaptable airplane.

The City Council approved a resolution last week. Councilwoman Karen Humphrey, who proposed the resolution, sent a copy to Rep. Tony Coelho, D-Merced. In her letter to Coelho, she cited F-16s or F-20s as possible replacements for the 20 Phantoms now assigned to the 144th Fighter-Interceptor Wing in Fresno.

Humphrey wrote that during the conversion process from F-106s to more modern F-4Ds in late 1983 and early 1984, Brig. Gen. Edward R. Aguiar, then-wing commander, said that Fresno's Phantoms would be replaced with newer, quieter aircraft within three to four years.

"We are halfway down the road and there is still no indication of the progress toward quieter aircraft," Humphrey said. "In fact, it appears we may be farther away from that goal."

concern about noisy airplanes was motivated by its support of the Air Guard's continued use of the Fresno Air Terminal.

Col. Allan W. Boone, wing vice commander, said the Air Guard would welcome "a more environmentally adaptable, state-of-the-art interceptor."

Both the General Dynamics F-16 and the McDonnell Douglas F-15 are considered state-of-the-art fighter planes, but Congress has held appropriations for those planes to a minimum supply for regular Air Force units.

Northrop's F-20, touted as more economical to operate and much less costly than the F-15s or F-16s, would also be welcome in Fresno, Air Guard pilots said.

The F-20 has the same electronic "black boxes" more expensive jets have and has the climb rate necessary in a fighter-interceptor role. But Northrop built only three F-20s, and two have crashed in testing and demonstrations to possible customers. Not one F-20 has been ordered.

When the F-4Ds were assigned to Fresno in September 1983, the National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C., called them "a short-term replacement for the F-106."

Regular Air Force F-106s stationed at Castle Air Force Base near Atwater were replaced late in 1983 by F-15s.

The F-15, F-16, and the F-20 all are quieter than the F-4D Phantom. The newer jets also leave less smoky exhaust than the Phantoms.

In praise of Guard

Regarding the article [Sept. 7] on the Air Guard investigation:

It seems Aguiar and Sebra "protesteth too much."

If the 1984 investigation which resulted in Aguiar's being forced to retire and Sebra's being transferred were made public we might have a better insight into why these men are trying to cause trouble for the Fresno Air Guard.

As for bad-mouthing the weekenders, the Guard could not function without them. They are what the Guard is all about. The recruiting and training of these young men and women to be ready to serve on command make the Guard a credit to our country and our community.

I thank the Fresno Air National Guard for being there.

ANNA MAE LUMSDEN.
Fresno.

'Freedom's ring'

In regards to Marjorie Knight's letter about airport noise [Aug. 29] I wish to say that I empathize with her. As a student at Fresno State I know there are times when we have to have a "moment of silence" as the F-4 Phantom jets kick on their afterburners as they skyrocket to the heavens. There is no point even attempting to talk over the din. After a moment or two, the jets are gone and we continue with the business at hand.

But does Ms. Knight know that down at the air terminal there are men who sit on vigil with helmets within reach, their jets on the flight line, fueled, armed and waiting? These posts are manned 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. They are manned by men who stand their watches because they care about you and me, our children and our children's children to come.

When the calls for action ring, these men are ready. As they 'scramble into the jets they do not know if it is another drill or the "real thing." They only know that in four minutes they will be over the Pacific in aging jets ready to risk their lives for us.

Thomas Jefferson once said, "The tree of liberty must, from time to time, be watered with the blood of patriots." The fliers of these instruments of war, of death and destruction, are willing to risk their blood to water this most beautiful tree that grows in our own land and spreads its limbs to other lands to offer shelter.

If these men, as well as all the men and women in the reserves and on active duty, are willing to offer up themselves as the ultimate sacrifice, I wonder if Marjorie Knight would be willing to offer up a small one: The next time fighter jets catch you in the storm of their ascent, revel in the blissful noise. For if you listen very carefully, you will hear in the din the bright peal of freedom's ring.

SEPT 86
HENRY COLE STAGE,
Army ROTC.

SEPT 86

'Be thankful' for Air Guard jets

Most of us get up every morning and love to sit down at breakfast reading the morning newspaper. But how many of us have to read some type of criticism about our job, something we believe in, every day? The members of the Air National Guard have to.

People complain about the "jet noise," particularly that due to ANG jets. Those people should be thankful that those ANG jets are ours, and not the Soviets'.

The Air Guard not only flies jets to protect our coast, but they're also there whenever there's a national or state emergency requiring immediate attention and support. This includes everything from floods, fires, and earthquakes to civilian aircraft emergencies.

Another thing people don't consider is the economic contribution the local ANG base has made to the city of Fresno. In a conservative estimate, this amounts to over \$20 million every fiscal year. That's not including the money that goes out on food that the members buy, the taxes they pay, or the cars or homes they buy.

I would think that the people of Fresno would be proud to have the ANG base here. For those people who live near the base and hear the noise — the ANG jet noise and the

airline jet noise — the base was established here in 1955 and the airport was built here in the 1940s. At the time the base was built, there was nothing but acres and acres of vineyards in the surrounding area.

Personally, I get very upset when people don't appreciate the things the Air Guard does. My husband flies the F-4, fighting beside other men for something he believes in, and, I hope, the rest of Fresno believes in. He and all the other ANG members have volunteered to put their lives on the line for our great country, should it ever come to that. It's too bad the only recognition the ANG gets is a bunch of nasty letters in the newspaper. It's pure selfishness!

I'm a proud member of the Air Guard myself, and I hope that the selfish complainers of this city realize that the base serves a very important purpose for the city, state, and country and cannot be moved just because they personally want it to be moved. So if there is still a complaint, tell it to the realtor who obviously showed you the house either on a Sunday or in the fog, when the jets aren't flying. I just say, be thankful that the stars on those jets are white and not red.

TAMMIE GAEDICKE.

Clovis.

Air Guard at FAT

Gordon Knight [letter Dec. 30] states that the Air National Guard is exempt from local regulations. The truth is that the Guard cooperates with the local civilian authorities to the greatest extent possible while still carrying out its mission of protecting our nation.

Mr. Knight's plan to have the fighter-type aircraft of our Fresno unit operate out of Castle AFB would not work in a national emergency due to the difference in operational problems and logistics involved in getting huge bombers and small fighter-type aircraft airborne and to their respective battle positions while attempting to use the same airfield. Also the matter of dispersal is important for survival of enough aircraft and crews to be able to do their job. Perhaps Mr. Knight should study what happened on Oahu Dec. 7, 1941.

Mr. Knight suggests flying our firefighting tankers out of another airport. Where does he expect to find the necessary runways and ground support facilities for this fine endeavor aimed at preserving our beautiful forests? We also need the civilian helicopters at FAT that protect our crops that are the backbone of our valley economy.

He talks about the proliferation of the private aircraft sector. He needs to check his facts because the number of private aircraft has been declining for over a decade.

Mr. Knight wants to limit the operations of the Army National Guard helicopter station at FAT. We need the helicopters available and in good condition in case of war, or local or national emergency.

It is to Fresno County's great advantage that Mr. Ralph Tonseth is carrying on the great program of airport expansion which was started and nurtured since the late 1940s by retired airport supervisor Wilmer Garrett.

The fine men, women and officers of our National Guard deserve our support and respect in their endeavors to protect our nation, and Mr. Knight's right to complain.

Remember, it will be time to worry when we can no longer complain or hear our local "minutemen of the air."

NORMAN "SUNNY"
SUNDSTROM.

Fresno.

Air Guard role *mod 87.9*

To make the analogy between the plight of the homeless and the dollars spent by the Fresno Air National Guard is ridiculous!

A citizen of Afghanistan, Czechoslovakia, or Poland would never be permitted to question the distribution of funding by the government.

The letter written by Mr. Robertson [March 8] only reinforces the fact that the mission of the ANG is to defend his right to believe whatever he or any citizen chooses.

To say that the threat of an air strike, or a strike by any method, no longer exists is laughable. I think that it's ludicrous for Mr. Robertson to assume that the men and women of the ANG train for meaningless reasons. The threat against the American way of life always exists, whether we are at peace or at war. This is, to me, a far from meaningless reason for the daily flights of aircraft from the base over my home.

It is the responsibility of the ANG to insure that the rights of all our citizens, rich, poor, homeless, or sheltered, be defended at all times regardless of circumstance.

PATRICIA M. CROW

Fresno.

ANG and F-16s

I wonder where the Fresno Air National Guard and fellow Fresnoans are receiving the information that it will be the first ANG unit in the nation to receive F-16 fighter planes [expected early in 1989]. I am a former member of the Vermont Air National Guard. In July 1986 the Air Guard base in Winooski, Vt., began to replace its F-4s with the remarkable new F-16s.

I am curious to know the source of this misinformation about the Fresno ANG. Doesn't this make pro-military people a bit skeptical of the nation's defense mechanism? In what other areas is the United States Air Force feeding American people with false information?

Fresno. LISA Y. LIMOGE

Fresno unit not 1st to get updated F-16s

By CHARLES MCCARTHY
Bee staff writer

The Fresno-based Air National Guard 144th Fighter-Interceptor Wing will not be the first Air Guard or Reserve unit to get F-16A and F-16B jet fighters, but it will be among the earliest units, Pentagon officials said last week.

Rep. Charles "Chip" Pashayan, D-Fresno, had announced last month that the Fresno-based 144th Fighter Interceptor Wing would be the first unit of its kind to receive the refurbished and updated F-16 air defense fighters, beginning in fiscal year 1989.

Last week, Air Guard officials said that information was technically correct but could have been misunderstood. During a Fresno news conference last month announcing

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F-16s

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the changeover, Pashayan referred to a letter he received early in February from Air Force Secretary E.C. Aldridge Jr.

In his letter, Aldridge assured Pashayan that: "The Air National Guard is planning for the 144th Fighter-Interceptor Wing at Fresno to be the first ANG air defense F-4 unit to receive the F-16 air defense fighter. We expect to complete converting all ANG air defense F-4 units by the end of 1992."

A National Guard Bureau spokesman said last week that two Oregon Air Guard units flying older F-4Cs will get F-16s ahead of Fresno. Fresno probably will be the first unit using F-4Ds to convert.

The 1960s-vintage McDonnell-Douglas F-4s in various modifications and models have been maintained in both U.S. and allied air

forces in both fighter-interceptor and tactical attack fighter roles. The last F-4 rolled off the St. Louis production line in 1979, but Mitsubishi in Japan was building updated F-4s for the Japanese Defense Forces as late as three years ago.

One Air Guard tactical fighter unit in South Carolina has been flying the General Dynamics F-16A and F-16B models since 1984, and at least three more tactical fighter units have been scheduled to receive F-16s in the next two years. An Air Force Reserve tactical fighter unit at Hill Air Force Base near Ogden, Utah, also operates F-16s.

Tactical fighter units' primary mission is air-ground attack — "mud shooters," fighter-interceptor pilots joke. (In F-16 jet designations, a B model is a two-seat pilot training version with the same performance and control characteristics as the single-seat A model.) Maj. John Smith in the Pentagon explained this week that Guard air defense units, which act as fighter-intercep-

tors, will get F-16s specially updated for fighter-interceptor missions. The money for that updating has been budgeted, and the first units to get the F-16 interceptors will be training squadrons.

The Oregon Air National Guard's 114th Tactical Fighter Training Squadron at Kingsley Field near Klamath Falls is scheduled to get interceptor F-16s in the second quarter of fiscal 1989 — late in calendar 1988. The 142nd Fighter-Interceptor Group at Portland International Airport is scheduled for its F-16s in the fourth quarter of fiscal 1989.

A firm date for Fresno's transition hasn't been set in the Pentagon.

Smith called this scheduling "real loose ... a lot happens in budgets, year to year."

About the Klamath Falls squadron, Smith said, "That's the unit that hosts the pilots who come in and learn to be good fighter-interceptors."

Both Oregon Air Guard units fly F-4Cs, planes up to two years older than Fresno's F-4Ds.

Smith said that if Pentagon scheduling and budget announcement patterns continue unchanged, he expects a decision to be made in January or February 1988 on Fresno's exact F-16 arrival date. He reiterated that officials still expect Fresno's to be the first unit "of its kind" to get F-16s.

Air Force Secretary Aldridge's letter to Pashayan said: "The 142nd Fighter-Interceptor Group, parent organization for the ANG air defense training school, will be equipped first as announced on January 5, 1987."

The 144th's air commander, Col. Al Boone, said in Fresno that he understands "they meant the first unit after the first two." Boone understands that the two Oregon units will be the first F-4 units anywhere to get the updated F-16s.

He said other Air Guard units are now flying or soon will be operating F-16s. He also said he understands that Aldridge's letter to Pashayan was "not a formal commitment."

In Washington, D.C., Pashayan's executive assistant, Larry Adams, said last week that the congressman still stands by the letter he read in Fresno announcing the aircraft changeover. He echoed Smith's and Boone's explanation that two different kinds of Air Guard units figure in a controversy that has arisen in Fresno over which unit actually will be first with F-16s.

Adams said Pashayan and Fresno City Councilwoman Karen Humphrey "spent a lot of time with Air Force people back here" seeking assurances that Fresno would be high on the list of units receiving F-16s.

3 SEPT 87 Writer says Bee tries to discredit ANG

Over the last several years, the members of the 144th Fighter Interceptor Squadron have been subjected to a continuous series of attacks by the pen of Royal Calkins and others on your staff. The dedication and professionalism of our commanders, maintenance personnel, and air crew members have been questioned repeatedly, while the results of numerous investigations and routine inspections showing the unit to be an excellent one have been ignored or treated with extreme distrust.

The recent attempt [story Aug. 2] to malign the memory of two fine aviators goes well beyond the bounds of fair and decent reporting which your newspaper should be striving to attain, and demands a reply.

Your article presented an image of Capt. Wesley R. Deane as a careless and underqualified pilot whose alleged lack of training was hidden intentionally by some unknown person. This image could not be further from the truth. Capt. Deane was a skilled and relatively conservative pilot who enjoyed the respect of his colleagues in the squadron. All of us who knew and flew with him can testify to his abilities and dedication to his profession.

That error or series of errors were made is obvious; all accidents, on the ground as well as in the air,

can be traced to an error by someone, somewhere. Pinning a set of wings on a young man's chest does not make him infallible, as your treatment of him suggests you expected him to be.

The real tragedy is that you chose to publish an article condemning actions which you do not understand and in the process have forever cast a shadow over the names of two good men. Both Maj. John Jordan and Capt. Deane chose to devote their time and energy, and quite literally gave their lives, in the defense of this nation. The families and friends of these two heroes deserve the sympathy and respect of this community. They do not deserve to have the names of their loved ones dragged through the mud in a politically motivated attempt to embarrass or discredit the Air National Guard.

That two good men have died is a tragedy; that they have been denied the respect and honor due them is a greater tragedy still.

THOMAS W. WESTBROOK,
Fresno.

The writer of this letter is a captain and pilot in the Air National Guard. The story he challenges reported a finding by Air Force safety officials that training records at the Fresno ANG base had been falsified to exaggerate the amount of low-altitude training Deane had received.

2 SEPT 87 Placing blame for fatal ANG crash

I have had my fill of The Bee's irresponsible and insensitive coverage of the F-4D Phantom that crashed near Tucson on June 13, killing both the pilot, Capt. Wesley R. Deane, and the weapons systems officer, Maj. John Q. Jordan Jr.

Since that tragic accident there have been five articles in The Fresno Bee and two in The Modesto Bee and I have yet to find one of them to be totally accurate, let alone truthful.

Wess Deane was my friend, and it causes me, as well as those who knew him, an enormous amount of pain to read these garbled and accusatory reports concerning his qualifications and integrity.

Cindy Deane (his wife) was told at the time of the accident that the Air Guard feels this type of accident was caused by mechanical failure, not pilot error; but Cindy wasn't looking to place blame. She didn't want to sue anybody. Wess had always told her that the danger factor involved in flying fighter jets was all part of the military and they had learned to accept it.

But now the reports are trying to turn things around. The final investigation has not been completed, yet The Bee is already drawing their own implied conclusions. They are drawing attention away from the responsibility of the Air Guard and it appears that they are placing blame on Wess. The Bee has reported that "Air Force Officials say that Deane's training records had been falsified..." They protect themselves by not actually using any names but it looks as though they prefer not to look within — it's much easier and politically safer to place the blame on the 27-year-old kid pilot. Especially with all the at-

tention the movie "Top Gun" has generated, it's real easy to set Wess up as some hot-dog pilot who was cocky and had decided that the training regulations didn't apply to him.

Although none of this has been written in these exact words, the general idea has sure come through loud and clear. And you can bet that no matter what retractions may appear once the investigations are actually completed, the damage has already been done.

Those of us who knew Wess realize that there is no possible truth to those allegations — Wess Deane would never falsify or even exaggerate an official document. He was extremely honest and conscientious and he took his various roles in life seriously. He always believed in doing his very best, and as far as I can tell he did just that.

It saddens me that his family has to endure the added pain brought on by these inconclusive and accusatory reports. If only these reporters would put half the amount of integrity and pride into their work that Capt. Deane put into his perhaps the media wouldn't have the sleazy and unreliable reputation that it has today.

VICKIE THAXTER.

Fresno.

The Bee's story Aug. 12 made clear that Air Force safety officials did not indicate who was responsible for falsifying Capt. Deane's training records. The report faulted ANG management for not having a system to confirm that training missions took place.



An F-4D Phantom jet was on display Saturday.

Fresno Bee

Air terminal holds open house

Fresno's government went back to the basics of flying Saturday at a Fresno Air Terminal open house — Mayor Dale Doig and City Council members went up in a hot-air balloon.

"The most profound thing I can say is we all survived," Doig said after alighting from the wicker basket of the tethered balloon.

Councilwoman Karen Humphrey, whose district encompasses the air terminal, said she'd like to ride a balloon long distance, not just over the air terminal taxiway.

"That's when you campaign for president," said her husband, Ken Clarke.

"Cut the rope," said Fresno Airports Director Ralph Tonseth.

Not long after the members of city government had ascended and descended, the custodians of the Pacific Southwest Airlines balloon folded up their aerostat and departed. A misdirected blast of hot air had burned two holes in the fabric of the balloon.

Tonseth said the purpose of the open house was to give people a chance to spend time at the airport and to understand how it was run.

Shortly after the open house started, Tonseth estimated that several hundred people were wandering around the taxiway looking at aircraft on display, from the 1926 "Spirit of Fresno" to an F-4D Phantom jet fighter-interceptor.

Letters to the Editor

'Unite' behind air national guard

I am writing to voice my absolute disgust over the controversy surrounding the aircraft noise and possible relocation of the Air National Guard. A few outspoken individuals who basically only represent themselves have seen fit to share their ideas and solutions to what otherwise would not even be a problem. The letter by Jeff Covey [June 11] is indicative of the uninformed and ill-advised manner in which these few individuals operate. I will address the issues he raised:

Mr. Covey stated the Phantoms are difficult to see because of the camouflage.

Point of fact: The camouflage, green and brown, was used to disguise the aircraft during low-level missions from other aircraft at high altitude. When viewed from approximately the same altitude, or from below the dark colors actually are more visible in contrast to the light blue sky.

Mr. Covey stated approach and departure speeds are significantly greater than other aircraft operating at Fresno.

Point of fact: The approach and departure speeds are within 20 knots of most civilian commercial carriers.

Mr. Covey expressed concern over structural failures.

Point of fact: Statistically, the odds are extremely remote. Additionally, we at Fresno have the best maintenance on the North American continent. This has been demonstrated at the last two biennial William Tell Competitions where our crews were awarded "Best Overall Maintenance."

Mr. Covey expressed concern over a possible mid-air collision.

Point of fact: I share his concern.

The fact remains that in May the traffic count at the Fresno Air Terminal was 19,599. The Air Guard accounted for less than 600 of the 1,183 military movements. This represents approximately 3 percent of the total traffic. All F-4D traffic is handled under Stage II radar which provides the optimum degree of traffic separation. Additionally, the F-4 is equipped with an IFF interrogator which displays on the F4 radar the position of aircraft using a transponder.

The most significant degradation to safety is the large number of civilian pilots, student or otherwise, who fly around uncontrolled. Statistics of nationwide incidents and accidents will support this fact. In response to his remark regarding the flying of "heavily armed" aircraft, we do not routinely fly training missions with armament on board.

To Mr. Covey, Mr. Fischer and the remaining few, I would only add that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. I am calling for the City Council and the people of Fresno to "unite" behind the California Air National Guard and support its efforts to grow with the community.

MAJ. NELSON T. SEBRA,
California Air National Guard,
chief of training;
F-4D instructor pilot.

Clovis.

JAN 88 Thank them, instead

In regard to W.T. Harper's letter [Jan. 18] about the Air National Guard's usefulness at the Fresno Air Terminal:

Harper wrote that no part of the 144th Fighter Interceptor Wing has ever been called into a national crisis. All I can say is, thank God we haven't had an emergency in which they would be needed.

These men and women have been based in Fresno for a reason. They are here to prevent any foreign aircraft from straying into our airspace. So far they've done an excellent job, haven't they?

Harper went on to say we here in Fresno suffer from "ear-shattering noise" from these fighters when they leave on a "meaningless mission."

Although I don't live by the air terminal, I do live under the usual flight path. When I hear these fighters I don't think of them as being noisy. I think of it as maybe, just maybe, they are flying out to meet a formation of alien aircraft who are at that very moment heading toward the California coast.

As for "meaningless missions," you must understand that those pilots are going up to practice formation flying or sharpening up their dogfighting skills, both of which need many hours of flight time to master.

I want to ask a question of the people who live around the air terminal who complain about it being too loud: Was the Air Terminal there when they moved into that area?

Profitable or not, the Air National Guard is there to protect us. So instead of hassling the Guard, why not write a letter thanking them for risking their lives to protect us.

DENNIS BRUNO.

Fresno.

Ground him JAN 88

The photo of Councilman Chris Petersen [Jan. 15] standing, clipboard in hand, beside a National Guard Phantom jet could well be construed to indicate that he was preparing to take off on a lofty and important mission. One might speculate that Chris, bored, with the mundane issues at City Hall, ardently desired to confront whatever might be a meaty and decisive challenge, preferably something the electorate had rejected.

Providentially, it appears, in this same Bee there was something on Cloud 9 demanding attention and courageous action: It was proposed that Yalta be considered as the sister city of Fresno in a non-nuclear treaty. Shades of Munich and Potsdam! If there are readers to whom the names of said cities is insignificant, please join Chris in a review of World War II history. In a nutshell, Yalta was the place where FDR and Churchill gave the ranch to Stalin.

When one gets down to where we Fresnoans live, concern is not about low-flying aircraft, guided with peaceful intent, nor lofty utopian dreams without substance, but how the City Council can handle the challenges and the promising opportunities in one of the fastest-growing cities of America.

Council members should regroup and rejoin their wing commander down on the ground, good Fresno turf, and get their feet once again firmly planted on the earth. Thereby they may prove their worth.

GLEN BRADFORD.

Fresno.

JAN 88 Air Guard's mission

If ignorance is indeed bliss, then Mr. Harper [letter Jan. 18] must be ecstatic.

In the same amount of time he spent questioning "whether the Air Guard is of value to the defense of the nation," he might have easily learned that the Air Guard provides most of the air defense for the United States, and that the Air Force is turning over virtually all of the air defense to the Air Guard in the next few years.

Mr. Harper could also have learned that the Fresno Air Guard isn't a unit that must be "called up." The Air Guard already has an active mission, 24 hours a day. It performs North American Air Defense (NO-RAD) alert from its Fresno base and its detachment at George Air Force Base in Victorville. The area for which it is responsible covers thousands of square miles from the Mexican border near Yuma to the coast off of Monterey Bay.

When air crews are on alert and a scramble horn sounds, the air crews must be airborne immediately to intercept any unknown aircraft. The reason might be a lost aircraft, an aircraft in distress, or, worse case, a penetration of U.S. airspace by incoming enemy aircraft.

As the United States and Soviet Union sign treaties banning ICBMs, the potential threat from cruise missiles increases. The only defense against these cruise missiles is the Air Guard on their "meaningless missions" in their "outmoded aircraft."

Mr. Harper has done the Air Guard a great disservice. He should be glad to excuse the "ear-shattering noise" so that the Air Guard can protect him and his family, his way of life, and his right to voice his opinion, blissful as it may be.

Perhaps Mr. Harper and others concerned about the Air Guard's mission should take the opportunity, as I did, to tour the Fresno facility and learn the facts about what it is they do and why they do it.

JEAN-MARIE MUNDAY.

Clovis.

Jet-crash widow fights for answers

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By AMY PYLE
Bee Capitol bureau

SACRAMENTO — Grief arrived with two men in uniform who told Toni Jordan the Air National Guard jet on which her husband was a weapons officer had nose-dived into the Arizona desert.

But disbelief came two months later when Jordan learned through an article in The Bee that the jet's pilot — Wesley Deane of Modesto — may have lacked proper training for the mission, which an Air Force report blamed on poor management at the Fresno Air Guard base.

Ever since the June 13, 1987, crash, Jordan and her mother, Billie Minasian of Sacramento, have dedicated themselves to finding out why John Jordan Jr. died.

They say they have been repeatedly misled by the Air Guard, even after months of letter writing and appeals to everyone from Gov. Deukmejian to Rep. Robert Matsui, D-Sacramento, they still have not gotten any straight answers.

Last fall, they filed wrongful-death claims against the California Air National Guard, the Tucson-area Air Force base from which John Jordan flew the day of the crash, and against the state. The claims were rejected in January.

Now they have turned their anger toward trying to derail the appointment of a new state military services director — acting Adjutant Gen. Robert Thrasher.

Toni Jordan, 33, plans to testify against Thrasher at a Senate Rules Committee hearing Wednesday, adding an unusual twist to what would ordinarily have been a routine confirmation hearing.

"How can I not?" Jordan said last week of her decision to speak before the committee. "How can I sit back here and not let them know what's been happening?"

The state's military-services director oversees operations of more than 26,000 army and air guards, most of whom are part-time "week-end warriors." They train to back up the regular military forces in any attack on the United States and are called out during natural disasters,

Guard F-4 flights for the VIPs

By ROYAL CALKINS
Bee staff writer

One of the California National Guard's most effective public relations tools has been to invite the right people to ride in the back seats of F-4 Phantom fighter jets during training flights.

A number of F-4 passengers have described their supersonic flights as once-in-a-lifetime thrills.

Sacramento insurance executive Maynard Nelson said his view of the Guard before his recent flight was "that they were a bunch of guys who got together once in a while in the desert to drink beer." Now, he says, he respects the California Guard as a crucial and sophisticated component of U.S. defense.

But the public relations flights, also known as public affairs flights or VIP flights, are likely to be called into question this week when the Senate Rules Committee begins confirmation hearings for California's acting adjutant general, Robert Thrasher. Thrasher is Gov.

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such as the 1987 wildfires.

Deukmejian appointed Thrasher, 51, to the post last March, after he had served as assistant director for four years.

Jordan believes that as second in command, Thrasher should have known about the inadequacies at

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Widow

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the Fresno Air Guard base, which were spelled out in the Air Force report of her husband's accident.

The report found that the pilot, 27-year-old Wesley Deane of Modesto, was not qualified for the tricky low-altitude flight, but that his records in Fresno had been changed to make him appear more experienced. It concluded that his lack of recent training on the temperamental F-4 jets might have caused him to accidentally stall the plane, leading to the crash.

Guard spokesman Maj. Steven Mensik said Thrasher was too busy to return calls Friday and Mensik said that he could not comment on the Air Force report because it had not been officially released.

However, Mensik did dispute the assumption that records had been tampered with. He said Fresno pilots used to keep their own training logs and Deane might have made a mistake on his.

Even though the Air Force report is stamped as unclassified information, Jordan and Minasian were never able to get a copy of it through official Guard channels. But an unmarked copy arrived in their mail one day.

When she read the report, Jordan said, "Everything started to fall into place: why they hadn't returned my calls or my letters."

According to Mensik, strict protocol out of Washington, D.C., has prevented the state Guard from responding to all of Jordan's requests.

"Sometimes we have to say we can't release that information. We are forbidden," he said. "We look like we're trying to hide something, conceal something, but it's not true."

The Sacramento women's ordeal has been worsened by what they consider personal slights by Guard officials — a military chaplain who never followed up on promises to keep in touch, tardy letters of condolences, and discharge papers that said Jordan still could be recalled for service.

Then there was the military counselor who came to their home the day before John Jordan's funeral to do a psychological evaluation of his actions in the days leading up to the fatal crash. They said the counselor completed her interview with Toni Jordan by giving graphic descriptions of how the two men had died, a detail that still causes mother and daughter to cry.

Perhaps the hardest thing for them to accept is that at least two Fresno Guard members say they had alerted commanders to management and training problems months before the fatal crash.

Maj. Nelson Sebra of Fresno contends that in the fall of 1986 he told several commanders that operations and safety deficiencies at the Fresno base would lead to "an accident involving a younger air crew and that training would be a factor."

Jordan said her husband had hinted at similar concerns before his death. He should have known, she said. He had served in the Air Force full time for 12 years before going back to school at Sacramento State University and joining the Guard. He had been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross twice for service in Vietnam.

A 1986 National Guard investigation into charges by Sebra and the past commander of the Fresno base, retired Brig. Gen. Edward Aguiar, turned up several concerns about command and air-crew discipline.

Mensik said Thrasher was aware of Sebra's predictions, but described them as more lucky guessing than fact.

VIPs

Continued from Page A1

Deukmejian's choice to replace retired Gen. Willard Shank as commander of the state's Air and Army Guard.

Past and present Guard members opposing Thrasher's confirmation have complained to the Senate that there are too many flights and that the criteria for picking passengers are too vague.

Long-term statistics are not available, but Guard records for the past four months show eight such flights at the Air Guard unit at March Air Force Base near Riverside and two at Fresno's air unit.

The recent F-4 passengers at March were two members of Gov. Deukmejian's staff, former professional baseball player Steve Garvey, two executives of the California Angels baseball team, the director of the State Printing Office, a Guard member whose father is officially listed as missing in action in Vietnam, and Nelson, a past president of the Sacramento Chamber of Commerce.

The Fresno passengers were Clovis Mayor Garry Woodward and Madera developer Dave Berry. Woodward was on board when the Fresno unit performed a flyover during the Veterans Day parade in Clovis in November.

Lt. Col. James Arthur, spokesman for the Fresno base, said Woodward qualified "for obvious reasons," meaning his mayoral position, and Berry qualified because of his prominence in civic and charitable affairs.

Arthur said previous F-4 passengers from Fresno included City Councilwoman Karen Humphrey, Rep. Charles "Chip" Pashayan, R-Fresno, and The Fresno Bee's military reporter, Charles McCarthy.

Maj. Steven Mensik, spokesman for the California National Guard, denied the flights are arranged for political purposes or, as Thrasher critics suggest, to help Thrasher win Senate confirmation.

"These flights are for people who are supportive of Guard programs and who have or need a degree of understanding of our mission," Mensik said. He stressed that the flights are for educational purposes, not public relations.

Brig. Gen. Edward Aguiar, a past commander of the Fresno unit who has harshly criticized Thrasher in the past, is one who opposes the F-4 flights.

"These are tactical weapons, not pleasure ships, and when they have a civilian passenger, that means an officer is missing a chance for a training flight," Aguiar said. "If the idea is to build good will, hell, why don't they just give everyone a ride."

"I could make those same predictions based on statistics and know I'm right," Mensik said. "Will there be another crash? Yes. Will it be the result of a safety problem or a maintenance problem? No. Will a pilot make a mistake? Yes."

In addition to the accident that killed Jordan and Deane, two other air crashes occurred last year. One, involving another F-4, took two lives, and eight people walked away from a helicopter crash.

Sebra and Aguiar have told the Senate Office of Research they also plan to testify against Thrasher.

Aguiar was forced to retire in 1984 following an investigation into a long list of minor improprieties at the Fresno base. That investigation put him at odds with the Guard's top command, including Thrasher.

Aguiar said last week that weapons officers, who normally fly in the back seat of the two-person planes, have difficulty flying often enough to meet Guard regulations.

"Flight time is at a premium," he said.

Guard regulations on the subject are not entirely clear. They prohibit flights that are intended "solely to improve relations and increase good will," but do not appear to prohibit civilian passengers on flights that are considered training missions for the pilots.

U.S. Defense Department regulations, specifically adopted by the National Guard, state that "travel or transportation for public affairs purposes must be determined to be primarily in the interests of the Department of Defense. Travel which is designed to improve relations or increase good will does not meet the criteria for public affairs travel." Mensik added that the Guard is prohibited from arranging flights in exchange for any type of services.

He said he did not know why flights were arranged for Deukmejian's personal secretary, Laurie Barbian-Ward; Richard Davis, assistant to Deukmejian's chief of staff; or the men connected to major league baseball.

John Sevano, director of publications for the California Angels baseball team, said he and Angels publicist Tim Mead were given flights because they helped arrange for former Angels center fielder Gary Pettis to make public-service announcements for the Guard.

Sevano said he understands that Garvey, formerly of the Los Angeles Dodgers and San Diego Padres, was given a ride because he also made recruitment advertisements for the Guard. Pettis is scheduled to receive his ride in the near future, Sevano said.

"It's the Guard's way of saying 'Thank you,'" Sevano said.

Barbian-Ward and Davis could not be reached for comment.

Nelson, the Sacramento insurance executive, said he was given a ride because he had taken part in a Guard public relations campaign by touring a Guard road-building project in Honduras in 1986.

Don Male, who heads the State Printing Office in Sacramento, said he had expressed interest in a flight while meeting with Guard officials about production of a Guard publication.

"I told them I'd love to go up in a jet and they put me on the list," Male said.

But Jordan and the other critics face a mountain of support for Thrasher.

A number of state senators have served under Thrasher in the Guard and Rules Committee members already have received letters of praise for him from influential sources.

Besides predictable backing by the state National Guard Association, the Sergeant Majors Association and the Department of Veterans Affairs, Thrasher was lauded by the Office of Emergency Services for providing Guard assistance in fighting the 1987 wildfires.

Jet crash probe faults training

9 FEB 88

AMY PYLE
Bee Capitol bureau

SACRAMENTO — An Air National Guard investigation released over the weekend backs up earlier indications that the pilot in a Fresno Air Guard jet crash lacked sufficient recent experience to fly at low altitudes.

Pilot Wesley Deane, 27, of Modesto and weapons officer John Jordan Jr., 39, of Sacramento were consumed by a fireball last June when their F-4 Phantom dove into the ground during a low-altitude maneuver near Green Valley, Ariz.

Similar findings in an earlier report by the U.S. Air Force led investigators to blame lapses in Deane's training for the accident. That document has never officially been released, but was leaked to The Fresno Bee in August.

Guard officials on Monday were quick to discount the significance of their own investigation, saying that they believe the jet crashed because it stalled at a high altitude — above 10,000 feet.

"Where the aircraft fell into trouble, he [Deane] was

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well-qualified," said Maj. Steve Mensik. "Whether he was current or not in low altitude had nothing to do with that mishap."

Senate staff members said concerns raised by the new report and by Jordan's widow, Toni, were serious enough to prompt the Deukmejian administration to postpone until March 2 a hearing for the guard's top official. Originally the hearing for state Military Department director Gen. Robert Thrasher had been set for Wednesday.

Donna Lucas, the governor's deputy press secretary, described the date switch as merely a "question of convenience," primarily because this week Capitol attention is focused on the state treasurer's appointment.

In the new report, actually dated Aug. 20, the Air Guard disclosed that Deane had missed seven of 12 flight training weekends in the year before the crash. It said he was having trouble "keeping current" in both low-altitude and landing procedures because he had moved to Chicago to work as an American Airlines pilot.

"What he did was what we see all the time," said Col. Robert Boehringer in a sworn statement included in the Air Guard report. "A guy goes to the airlines [and] has a six- or eight-month period where he doesn't participate as much as we like."

Officially the Air Guard, which trains to help in natural disasters and to back up regular military in case of an attack, requires that its part-time members live within 55 miles of their base. However, exceptions to that rule are fairly common.

Another Fresno Guard official, Lt. Col. Al Tichenor, said he had learned of Deane's move to Chicago less than two weeks before the accident.

"I was concerned what was happening with his flying," Tichenor said.

The day before Deane was sent to Arizona, Tichenor said he "tracked him down" to talk about the situa-

reassured him that he could handle the Arizona mission.

Other statements from various Fresno and Arizona Guard officers explained that while Deane was "a darned good pilot," even his training at pilot school in the early 1980s had been short on low-altitude training.

It also found that Deane's flying logs made it appear that he was up-to-date in all uses of the F-4s, which the report blamed on poor record-keeping practices in Fresno.

"There was no internal control to ensure accuracy of log entries," the report said. "No provisions were made for matching events [logged] with those actually flown."

Two weeks after the fatal crash, the Fresno unit started a new process where a pilot's logs are checked by two other people. More recently, a computer cross-checking system was installed.

Toni Jordan and her mother, Billie Minasian, maintain that managers at the Fresno Air Guard base and at its umbrella organization, the state Military Department, knew about problems before the accident.

They repeat the complaints of Maj. Nelson Sebra, formerly stationed at the Fresno base, which led to a 1986 Air Force investigation of the unit. Results of that investigation were largely positive but the Air Force did point out several shortfalls in management and training practices.

Sebra also has said he was told that Deane's records were altered after the accident, to insulate Fresno Guard management from liability. However, the Air Guard report said it could not substantiate those accusations because "the alleged eyewitness would not reveal his identity."

However, witnesses did tell the Air Guard investigators that even though Deane's records were sealed within hours of the accident, they were reopened several times.

"They were unsealed several times as we added stuff to it," Boehringer said. "But they weren't touched to my knowledge by anyone."

'Tiresome' criticism

19 FEB 88
How long is this community going to beat a dead horse? The controversy over the Air National Guard and the noise generated by the F-4 is becoming tiresome and redundant. I'm referring to yet another letter [Feb. 14] written by Rosalie Rowe.

She asks why the ANG is stationed in the middle of a metropolitan area. The fact is and has been (if Ms. Rowe would read about the subject she so objects to) that the ANG has been at Fresno Air Terminal since 1959, long before any "metropolitan area" was anywhere near the airport. It was established years ago that communities tend to grow towards airports, airports are not put in the middle of communities.

As for the safety issues, the ANG is considered, and investigation proves this, to be extremely safety-conscious, and conducts its mission with that foremost. So come on, Fresno and Clovis, these jets and people help keep this country safe from any aggression that may come from the skies, which makes it essential to perform these "war games" once a month.

But most important they (the people who work for the ANG) are part of this community and are willing to sacrifice greatly for the "quality of life" that Ms. Rowe and others may feel is being destroyed.

PAT CROW.

Fresno.

Guard protection

19 FEB 88
Regarding Rosalie Rowe's letter [Feb. 12] "Protests Guard jets": that "dreadful noise" she is complaining about is peace and contentment to the majority of the people. It is a shame that she considers that it wipes out peaceful, quiet, quality of life. It is protecting the peace of all citizens, whether she knows it or not.

As for the "thousands of tax dollars," those dollars are well spent. To be good at any endeavor, one needs practice.

Feb. 6 was a practice operational readiness inspection and March 5 and 6 will be the real operational readiness inspection. And this means they are making sure the Guard is ready to protect Rosalie Rowe and everyone, if needed. I personally am thankful to be protected, and feel safer with the Guard up there.

GEORGE A. WIMER.

Fresno.

Who's first?

25-02-88
Living northwest of the airport, I was interested in the story on Rep. Pashayan's announcement that Fresno's Air National Guard unit has been chosen to be the first in the nation to get F-16 fighter planes. I hope it is true. However, when I was in Klamath Falls, Ore., around Christmas time, the local media were proclaiming that the Air Guard unit based there would be the first to have their F-4s replaced by F-16s. I believe the representative for that district was also claiming credit.

Now I wonder whether other communities with Air Guard units have received similar promises. Perhaps The Bee, or Mr. Pashayan, should look into this.

JOHN E. MAWBY.

Fresno.

Guard officials ignored Fresno mishaps

By ROYAL CALKINS
Bee staff writer

Newly disclosed findings from a 1986 safety investigation show that a special team of high-ranking officers found several potentially serious problems at the Fresno Air National Guard base — even though it was publicly announced that no significant concerns had been discovered.

An official report, written in September 1986 but not released to the public, says fighter pilots were not disciplined for mishaps caused by improper procedures and that jets were routinely allowed to take off in the fog when visibility was below normal Guard standards.

The investigative team — headed by Maj. Glen Osgood, the U.S. National Guard's liaison to the Air Force's Strategic Air Command — questioned the level of discipline following several incidents, including one in which a jet missed the runway in the fog, damaging the aircraft and runway lights.

The team expressed concerns about a jet armed with live missiles running out of fuel while the pilot was engaging in dogfight maneuvers, forcing a landing on a dry lake bed. The report says dogfighting while carrying live missiles violates Guard regulations.

In a later incident, that pilot landed in Fresno without lowering the landing gear of his F-4 jet. That mishap was blamed on a "thought pattern

interruption," and the pilot was not disciplined for either incident.

The report also mentions a pilot who flew a test flight, in bad weather, in a plane that had just completed major repairs. One of the two engines failed but the pilot did not report the problem until he was confronted several days later, after other pilots had used the plane several times.

From the report, it appears the pilot did not report the failure because he had broken regulations by combining the test flight with a training mission.

The investigation of Fresno's 144th Fighter

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Guard

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Interceptor Wing was conducted at the request of Rep. Charles "Chip" Pashayan, R-Fresno, after former base commander Brig. Gen. Edward Aguiar and training officer Maj. Nelson Sebra alleged publicly that safety problems were being covered up at the Fresno base.

At the end of the inquiry, officials of the Fresno unit and the California National Guard announced that investigators had turned up no significant concerns.

In an upbeat press conference on Sept. 6, 1986, California Guard officials released a brief, complimentary memorandum from Osgood of the investigative team.

"There is no reason to be concerned about the present management of the 144th," Osgood wrote. "As for the alleged violations, I would categorize them as simple oversight or a breakdown of communications, nothing unlike you will find in any flying operation." Brig. Gen. Harold R. Hall, commander of the California Air National Guard, told the press at the time that the allegations had been found to be "flat untruths."

"I'm completely satisfied," Hall said at the time.

Maj. Steven Mensik, spokesman for Hall and the California National Guard, told The Bee on Monday that officials had not meant to mislead anyone. Although the report is dated Sept. 11, 1986, Guard officials in California did not know until this month that the team had written a report, Mensik said.

It came as "something of a shock" when Guard officials in Sacramento learned of the report, Mensik said.

Officials of the Fresno base referred all questions to Mensik. Aguiar could not be reached for comment Monday and Sebra declined to comment.

A heavily censored version of the report was first obtained by The Bee and others last December. It was released by the National Guard headquarters in Washington in response to a federal Freedom of Information Act request filed by a Sacramento woman, Toni Jordan, whose pilot husband was killed when a Fresno-based Guard fighter crashed last June in Arizona.

The bulk of that report praised the Fresno Guard unit, but more than 1½ pages of the document was blacked out. A cover letter from the National Guard in Washington explained:

"Inter-agency and intra-agency memorandum which form an inter-

provided an uncensored report to Jordan at the request of Sen. Alan Cranston, D-Calif. The previously censored pages contain a number of criticisms and several suggestions for corrective action.

Much of the newly released information relates to the Fresno unit's apparent reluctance to stop flying when fog starts settling on the Fresno airport.

Fresno's wing commander, Brig. Gen. Paul L. Carroll, was asked in 1986 what types of concerns the investigators had explored. He told reporters: "They asked us questions about taking off when weather is below minimum [too cloudy or foggy], for example. We don't take off when the weather is below minimum." The report presents a different picture, however, and suggests local officials attempted to mislead the investigators.

According to the report, fighter pilots on training missions are not supposed to take off when visibility is below one mile.

The report says, "During our inquiry, we asked the commander, air commander, deputy commander for operations and fighter squadron commander if they knew of anyone ordering or had they ordered any pilot to take off when the weather was below training minimums."

"They categorically denied this. When we produced evidence to the contrary, they admitted they used Category A minimums during fog season" under some circumstances.

"Category A" means visibility is down to a half mile.

According to the report, the Fresno officials explained that takeoffs were allowed under those conditions only when Fresno pilots and planes were needed at other bases to relieve flight crews who were on alert status.

The investigators concluded that top command officers can authorize such takeoffs on a case-by-case basis, but that Fresno Guard officials had improperly granted a blanket approval.

The team checked four other Guard units and found that none allowed takeoffs in marginal weather when their pilots were needed to fill in elsewhere.

"We ask the unit to consider very carefully how they use this provision," the report states.

While describing the 144th as a "fine organization," the team recommended that officials "weigh very carefully any action which might be perceived as bordering on fraud, waste or abuse."

"We would also ask the unit to

Budget puts new fighters on 1989 course for FAT

By CHARLES MCCARTHY
Boe staff writer

President Reagan's military budget, announced today in Washington, provides for replacing 18 F-4D Phantom jet Air National Guard fighters now at Fresno Air Terminal with 18 technically advanced F-16 Fighting Falcon jets beginning in July of next year — earlier than many Guard and city officials expected.

In addition, the Air Force informed Rep. Charles "Chip" Pashayan, R-Fresno, late Wednesday

that it planned to spend \$2 million beginning in October of this year and an additional \$4.5 million in October 1989 to upgrade Air Guard facilities at the Fresno Air Terminal.

F-16s will be sent to Fresno beginning in October 1989, the Air Force said in a letter to the congressman, but an Air Guard spokesman in Fresno said the planes are expected to begin arriving not later than July 1989.

The F-16s are expected to be much quieter than the Phantoms they will replace.

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Fighters

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Fresno City Councilwoman Karen Humphrey, whose district includes the Air Terminal, said she was "just delighted. Nobody could say it was a done deal until it appeared in the budget."

After a City Council resolution asking the Defense Department to rush the planned F-16 conversion because of noise problems around Air Terminal, Humphrey carried the community's concerns to Washington early last year.

She was told that the Air Force intended to put F-16s in Fresno to replace the 1966-model F-4Ds but that the timing depended on when money would be available to upgrade the Air Guard facilities on the McKinley Avenue side of the Air Terminal.

While today's budget announcement means big changes at the Fresno Air Guard base, Lemoore Naval Air Station spokesman Dennis McGrath said he expected few surprises at the Kings County home of the Pacific Fleet Light Attack Wing.

Several weeks ago, the Navy announced it would cut one Lemoore-based F/A-18 strike-fighter squadron and send its aircraft to other Navy and Marine squadrons. Within a month, McGrath said, 155 of the squadron's 195 personnel will be reassigned at Lemoore.

Other cost-cutting already anticipated, McGrath said, includes early releases from active duty, delayed promotions and delayed transfers for the next four months. Flying hours also may be trimmed.

Castle Air Force Base near Merced is undertaking several cost-cutting measures, including reducing aircraft flying time, to accommodate a \$1.3 million reduction in its annual operations budget.

Other measures include trimming the number of civilian employees and lopping 30 percent from the annual budgets of the civil engineering and operations support supply accounts, according to base officials.

The civilian staff reduction, which will affect only 1.5 percent of the base's 375 civilian employees, will be accomplished through early retirements and postponement of hiring.

Air Force officials announced plans Wednesday to deactivate the 474th Tactical Fighter Wing at Nellis Air Force Base outside Las Vegas, Nev., which will slash nearly 1,500 jobs at the base.

About 12,500 people are either stationed or employed at Nellis, which is the home base for nearly 200 planes.

Air Force Secretary Edward "Pete" Aldridge Jr. said the deactivation will begin early next year. Aldridge said 48 of the 66 F-16 jets in the unit will be sent to reserve forces, while the remaining 16 will take the place of F-5 fighters currently stationed in a Nellis "aggressor" unit, which uses Soviet-bloc tactics in training exercises with Navy and Marine fighter pilots.

The single-seat F-16As and one or two F-16Bs — two-seat versions —

earmarked for Fresno's 144th Fighter-Interceptor Wing already are serving with Air Force squadrons. These Falcons will be replaced with newer models and returned to depots in the United States where they will be given updated radar and converted from fighter-bombers to fighter-interceptors.

The highly maneuverable F-16s first entered the Air Force inventory in 1979. The Navy now also has begun purchasing F-16s from the manufacturer, General Dynamics, for use in its aggressor squadrons.

Maj. Gen. Robert Hall, California Air National Guard commander, confirmed late Wednesday the timing of the F-16s' arrival in Fresno and the amounts budgeted for the conversion. Hall was informed about the presidential budget in a phone call from the National Guard Bureau in Washington.

Fresno Air Guard spokesman Lt. Col. James A. Arthur said Wednesday that although the Reagan budget anticipates F-16s in Fresno by October 1989, the first Falcons will be on the Fresno ramp soon after July 1. Arthur said much of the construction at the base over the past two years has been done with F-16s in consideration.

"The conversion process will actually begin three months before the announced conversion date," Arthur said. "As always, we will attempt to fly the F-16 utilizing the most effective noise-abatement procedures possible, and we believe the community will join us in welcoming the new aircraft."

Councilwoman Humphrey welcomed the F-16 confirmation, saying that it "confirms the reality" of the Part 150 noise-control program that assumed that the Falcons would be introduced at the Air Terminal before 1991.

"All our information indicates that they [F-16s] will be significantly quieter than the F-4," she explained.

In its late 1986 resolution, the Fresno City Council asked the Pentagon to send F-16s to the local Air Guard wing at "the earliest possible time."

Pashayan's letter from the Air Force carried some bad news, too.

Budget reductions along with the F-16s' arrival will strip three full-time guardsmen, 47 weekend military slots and 14 civilian jobs from the Fresno-based wing.

While the normal Phantom air crew includes a rear-seat weapons system officer, the F-16s use only a pilot. The two-seat versions allow experienced F-16 pilots to accompany newer pilots on training flights.

Phantoms have two jet engines. Falcons have only one engine and look like sleek supersonic darts beside the massive and noisy Phantoms.

Pashayan said residents around the Air Terminal should find the F-16 "significantly quieter than the F-4."

The congressman, who in 1986 rode in the rear seat of a Fresno-based Phantom on an intercept mission off the California coast, said the Falcon will bring Fresno "the pride of hosting a top-of-the-line fighter, increased federal investment in the Air Terminal and a more quiet aircraft."

Brouhaha among Guard brass a long time brewing

13 MAR 88
By ROYAL CALKINS
Bee staff writer

When past and present members of the California National Guard publicly exchanged insults in Sacramento two weeks ago, state legislators got their first close look at problems that have been bubbling for years at the Air National Guard base in Fresno.

The setting was a confirmation hearing for Brig. Gen. Robert

Thrasher as head of the state's National Guard units, both air and army.

Though members of the state Senate Rules Committee had been warned the session would not be routine, they watched in amazement as stern-faced generals called each other names.

Senators are accustomed to displays of dirty laundry but not when the laundry is olive drab and Air Force blue.

Thrasher supporters at the hearing called him a strong, honest leader. Detractors accused the general, a Gov. Deukmejian appointee, of incompetence, mismanagement and inattentiveness to safety issues.

Publicly, he replied, "The testimony you heard from most of the people in opposition to me are no longer in the Guard. By and large they're old complaints. ... I would have one expression for that and that would be 'sour grapes.'"

Privately, Thrasher and his associates accused his critics of much worse.

When committee members debated whether the Guard officers should take an oath before testifying, one senator argued that "officers don't lie."

But faced with conflicting testimony from officers, the senators put off a decision to give themselves time to rummage through the charges and countercharges. More wit-

nesses are scheduled to testify when the hearing resumes Wednesday.

The committee has an unenviable task. Even within the Guard, opinions are mixed on what sparked the controversy and on how significant it is.

From one perspective, the simple fact that internal disputes have become so public suggests serious flaws in the Guard structure. Of the thousands of rules in the military,

one stands out: A soldier stays within the chain of command.

But some in the Guard are attempting to minimize the conflict, calling it nothing more than a continuation of a bitter power struggle that started in Fresno.

If it is simply a power struggle, most bets are on Thrasher. He is a veteran member of the Guard's existing high command.

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well-entrenched and politically well-connected both in Sacramento and Washington.

Like the previous Guard commander Willard Shank, Thrasher has strong ties to the Deukmejian and Reagan administrations.

On the other side is a relative handful of disenfranchised officers and ex-officers, led by two retired brigadier generals — Raymond Hebrank and Edward Aguiar.

Hebrank is a former commander of the California Air National Guard. Aguiar is former commander of the 144th Fighter Interceptor Wing based in Fresno. Both were forced out by Shank and Thrasher.

Aguiar was ousted following a controversial investigation ordered by Thrasher. Hebrank contends he was forced out because he testified truthfully in connection with a lawsuit arising out of that investigation.

The infighting itself did not surprise the legislators. Internal politicking is normal in any large bureaucracy, and the California National Guard is a large mishmash of bureaucracies.

With the Guard operating as both a state agency and a component of the U.S. military, many of its 26,000 members are officially considered civilians on weekdays and military on weekends.

Top Guard officials in Sacramento answer to the governor, the state Legislature, the National Guard Bureau of the Pentagon, Congress, the U.S. Army and the U.S. Air Force.

What caught the senators off guard was that the squabbling had become so public and that retired officers such as Hebrank and Aguiar would publicly criticize the Guard command, opening their own reputations to counterattack.

Many of the senators didn't know that the tensions had been building for years and that this wasn't the first time the contestants had squared off.

By most accounts, the current controversy began in 1981 in Fresno as a combination of personality clashes and policy disputes.

The commander of the 144th Fighter Interceptor Wing at the Fresno Air Terminal then was Brig. Gen. James Kilpatrick, a veteran fighter pilot and sports car racer.

Kilpatrick had spent nearly 30 years in the 144th and had been commander since 1972. He was particularly popular with the pilots and many of the enlisted personnel.

Kilpatrick's boss at California National Guard headquarters in Sacramento was Hebrank, also a former fighter pilot, who had spent most of his career in Southern California and the Bay Area.

Kilpatrick, then 55, was nearing the Guard's mandatory retirement age. He wanted an extension. Hebrank wouldn't help, partly because he and Kilpatrick were at odds over the types of planes to be flown in Fresno.

The Pentagon wanted to replace Fresno's aging F-106 fighters with newer F-4s. Kilpatrick considered the F-4 inferior. He also knew that different maintenance requirements for the F-4 would eliminate some jobs at the Fresno base.

Kilpatrick lost the debate and was forced to retire in 1981. But before he left, he issued a sweeping set of promotions. He created more than 60 master sergeant positions, twice the number allowed for a unit the size of the 144th.

Hebrank chose a personal friend, Aguiar, to replace Kilpatrick.

Aguiar had been a commander in Fresno eight years earlier and later had worked with Hebrank at Moffett Naval Air Station.

One of Aguiar's first tasks was to cut back on master sergeant positions. It was a messy job. Men and women who had worked years for their sixth stripe were told to either give up one or leave.

Hebrank also instructed him to eliminate six pilot positions because of the changeover to F-4s and because the Fresno base traditionally had been overpopulated with pilots.

The base had one of the highest pilot-to-airplane ratios in the country. With too many pilots and too few planes, it is hard for pilots, especially junior officers, to get enough flight time to meet Air Force readiness standards.

Pilots had dubbed the 144th as "the Flying Club," and Aguiar set out to change the image.

Under Aguiar, Maj. Nelson Sebra was in charge of training pilots. Sebra is a full-time Guard officer who has been both praised and criticized for being a procedural stickler.

Another full-timer, Lt. Col. Bernard Hollenbeck, was in charge of evaluating pilots.

Because of the pilot cutbacks, other changes and Aguiar's sometimes-abrasive management style, tensions quickly developed. Sebra and Hollenbeck aligned themselves with Aguiar and found themselves constantly at odds with other high-ranking officers, particularly the weekenders.

The trio of full-timers accused the weekenders of unprofessionalism. The part-timers accused Aguiar and his supporters of arrogance and cronyism.

Even though Kilpatrick had left his command position, he joined the fight. He remained in close contact with base employees, and he was quick to point out what he saw as Aguiar's failings.

For his part, Aguiar was equally

quick to take potshots at Kilpatrick, even in front of Kilpatrick's many admirers.

A Kilpatrick loyalist, Lt. Col. Robert M. McCoy, came to lead the anti-Aguiar forces. A commercial pilot for Pan American Airlines, he was a fighter pilot and chief of wing operations on weekends.

Following a series of clashes with Sebra and Aguiar, McCoy angrily resigned from the Guard in August 1983.

In an open letter to the other pilots, McCoy said he was leaving because of the part-time, full-time rift. He charged that the military chain of command had dissolved because Aguiar had given the full-timers more authority than higher-ranking part-timers.

A month later, McCoy took his charges to Sacramento. Bypassing Hebrank, McCoy went to Thrasher, who was then the No. 2 man in the California Guard hierarchy.

Over Hebrank's objections, Thrasher and his boss, Shank, ordered a formal investigation of Aguiar, Sebra and Hollenbeck.

Thrasher appointed a three-man investigative panel headed by then-Col. William Bates, Hebrank's assistant at the time. Bates is now civilian commander of the state Air Guard.

In a recent letter to the Senate Rules Committee, Hebrank charged that Thrasher packed the panel with people friendly to him and unfriendly to Aguiar.

Citing the confidentiality of such investigations, members of the investigative team and other Guard officials have declined to comment on the inquiry or the report.

The investigators conducted a weeklong, closed-door hearing at the Piccadilly Inn-Airport in January 1984.

A confidential report of that investigation, recently provided to The Bee by an associate of Kilpatrick, shows that investigators considered 20 allegations and questioned 30 Guard members.

According to Hebrank, the only people questioned in addition to Aguiar, Hollenbeck and Sebra were from a list provided by McCoy.

Under Air Force and Army regulations, which apply to the National Guard, such an investigation is supposed to be conducted by the Air Force Office of Special Investigations.

The regulations also say that the subjects of an investigation have the right to legal representation, and if they are suspected of wrongdoing, the right to be represented by attorneys.

According to the report, Sebra, Aguiar and Hebrank were told that they were not suspects, were not represented by attorneys, were not

allowed to present their own witnesses and were not allowed to cross-examine people testifying against them.

Despite the flaws in the investigation — or perhaps because of the flaws — the investigation dealt a blow to Aguiar's credibility.

The panel dismissed seven charges, including allegations that Aguiar had improperly influenced aircraft repair contracts.

Among the sustained charges were that:

- Aguiar had allowed the rift between full-timers and part-timers to develop into a serious problem, undermining morale and the effectiveness of the wing.

- Aguiar had allowed two former Guard officers to take sunglasses, gloves and long underwear from a supply room.

- He had allowed a raffle in violation of Air Force regulations and had used undue pressure to sell base yearbooks.

- He allowed \$5,300 in recruiting funds to be spent on coffee cups commemorating the 35th anniversary of the unit and on lapel pins to be given away at a flight competition.

- He had authorized the purchase of overly expensive conference room furniture for his chief of maintenance.

- Hollenbeck had threatened associates of McCoy in an attempt to pressure McCoy into dropping the charges.

- Hollenbeck had signed minutes of a meeting that he knew had not occurred.

- Sebra had made an inappropriate remark about an enlisted woman.

- Sebra, while on duty as flight supervisor, left the base to attend a baseball game involving his son.

- Sebra misappropriated eight pairs of boots and eight sweaters from George Air Force Base.

Aguiar and Hollenbeck have denied all the allegations and have contended, along with Sebra and Hebrank, that the investigation was biased and improperly conducted.

Sebra acknowledged making the inappropriate remark and leaving the base while serving as flight supervisor. The investigators learned that it was common for flight supervisors to leave the base.

Sebra flatly denied misappropriating the clothing. He explained that he had simply transported the items to Fresno at the request of an Air Force supply sergeant.

The investigators sustained that allegation without questioning Guard members who supported Sebra's account.

One issue the investigators failed to resolve was McCoy's allegation that he had received threatening phone calls from Aguiar. He said

the general threatened to sue him and to arrange tax audits and personal investigations of him and his friends.

The investigators concluded that McCoy was justified in feeling threatened but that it could not be established whether the calls were, in fact, threatening.

The panel's overall conclusion was that the Guard command should consider removing Aguiar from command and that Hollenbeck and Sebra should receive letters of reprimand.

Thrasher decided to force Aguiar's retirement and to transfer Sebra from Fresno to March Air Force Base. Hollenbeck volunteered for a transfer to Norton Air Force Base, where he is now a safety officer.

Sebra responded by filing a federal lawsuit against the Guard. He contended that Air Force regulations prohibit disciplinary transfers.

Without ruling on the issues raised by Sebra, a federal court dismissed the lawsuit on the ground that it had no jurisdiction in a military dispute.

Since that lawsuit, Sebra has been under almost constant scrutiny by the Guard command, but he continues to receive excellent performance reviews, according to Hebrank and Air Force officials familiar with the controversy.

Sebra and Aguiar moved the fight to another arena the next year.

Aguiar wrote to a number of legislators, alleging that safety problems at the Fresno base were being covered up.

Sebra presented similar allegations to Rep. Charles "Chip" Pashayan, R-Fresno. At the request of the congressman, a panel of high-ranking Guard officials from outside California was appointed to investigate safety procedures and other matters at the Fresno base.

At the end of that inquiry in September 1986, Fresno Guard officials announced that they had been cleared of the allegations, which they labeled "flat untruths."

But a previously secret report from that investigation surfaced last month. It praised the Fresno unit in general but also corroborated a number of Sebra's allegations.

The report criticized the Fresno command for not disciplining pilots who had been involved in a series of mishaps and questioned the unit's policies for takeoffs and landings in foggy weather.

Base leadership has responded by denying the findings in the report, by denouncing The Bee for reporting on the controversy and by attacking Aguiar and Sebra — setting the stage for another round of verbal combat when Thrasher's hearing continues this week.

Committee Supports Thrasher

By AMY PYLE

Bee Capitol bureau 17 MAR 88

SACRAMENTO — After hours of conflicting testimony on two different days, the Senate Rules Committee recommended Wednesday that the Senate confirm the appointment of Gen. Robert Thrasher as commander of the State Military Department.

The state Senate usually follows the committee's lead.

But committee chairman Sen. David Roberti, a Los Angeles Democrat, said he was troubled enough to request an official audit of the department by the Legislature's auditor general.

"More questions have been raised than we could possibly answer in one confirmation hearing," Roberti said. "But I don't feel a case for [Thrasher's] culpability or personal negligence has been proved."

What prompted Roberti's action, he said, were accusations of poor management in the department's Air National Guard, Army Guard and other reserve organizations that arose Wednesday and at Thrasher's first appearance two weeks ago.

After the hearing, the widow of a Fresno-based Guard officer killed last June, burst into tears.

"They let him [Thrasher] get away with it," said Toni Jordan, whose husband, Maj. John Jordan, died last June when the F-4 Phantom jet in which he was a weapons officer crashed into the Arizona desert.

Thrasher, who has served as acting commander for the past year, said he would welcome the auditor general's review. He also said he did not think any flaws would be found in his department.

"I certainly have no objection to

See Thrasher, Page B3

Thrasher

Continued from Page B1

the audit," he said. "It may, in fact, be helpful."

Toni Jordan and her mother, Billie Minasian, have been working against Thrasher's confirmation for two months. They believe that poor management at the Fresno Guard unit led to Jordan's death and allege that a cover-up followed the fatal crash. They have used results of several Guard investigations to bolster their case.

Despite Wednesday's apparent defeat, Minasian said she would not give up her quest to bring about major change within the Guard.

"I'm going home to call Senator [Alan] Cranston right now," she said.

Jordan accused the senators of ignoring facts presented to them.

She mentioned reports of investigations into the accident completed by both the Guard and the U.S. Air Force that indicated that the pilot, Wesley Deane of Modesto, lacked sufficient recent flying experience for the type of mission that caused the crash.

The reports also implied that Guard management shared blame for the poor record-keeping that made Deane appear ready to fly.

However, in response to Roberti's questions about the reports during the hearing, Thrasher and Brig. Gen. Paul Carroll, Fresno wing commander, insisted that Guard commanders were not responsible. Instead, they said, Deane may have altered his own training records in order to appear qualified.

"To the training officer's knowledge, he [Deane] was current," Carroll said.

ANG's top ratings

Why does The Bee always print all negative news about the Air National Guard base in Fresno with bold print on the front page?

I believe that positive news of the Air National Guard should get equal billing. Reference your article about the Guard's passing its Operational Readiness Inspection. I had to look through the paper three times before I found it.

While I am on my soap box, let me also say I am tired of reading about all the problems that the top brass of the Guard both present and past are having. Why doesn't The Bee give credit and equal time to the people who really get the excellent and outstanding ratings for the unit? These people are the present members of the Guard unit in Fresno.

MANUEL J. MARTIN.

Fresno.

Guard audit narrowed to Fresno unit

By AMY PYLE
Bee Capitol bureau

SACRAMENTO — After Assemblyman Bruce Bronzan, D-Fresno, gasped at the vast task of auditing the entire California National Guard, the senator who had asked for the review revised his request to focus only on the Fresno Air Guard unit.

"Whether we go beyond Fresno depends on what we find in Fresno," said Bob Forsyth, press secretary for Sen. David Roberti, D-Los Angeles.

As chairman of the Senate Rules Committee, Roberti had asked for the Guard audit a week ago after complaints about Guard management dominated confirmation hearings for Brig. Gen. Robert Thrasher, the state's

Military Department director.

During two Rules Committee hearings — last week and two weeks before that — many of Thrasher's opponents focused on perceived management shortcomings in Fresno, which they said led to the fatal crash of an F-4 Phantom jet last June.

Toni Jordan, the widow of one of two officers killed in that crash, told committee members that after her husband's death the Guard had refused to release findings that the pilot was not qualified to fly that day. She also said they had tried to cover up the mixed results from past federal investigations of the Fresno unit.

Thrasher, who at the time of the crash was acting director of the Military Department, the Guard's umbrella organization, brought with him witnesses who countered Jordan's statements.

Various Guard and Air Force officials acknowledged that pilot Wesley Deane of Modesto lacked sufficient recent flying experience because he had taken a job with an airline.

But they said it was not until after the accident that they realized that Deane's records had been altered — probably by Deane himself, they said — to make it appear that he was ready to fly.

At the end of the two days of testimony, Roberti recommended Thrasher's confirmation and three of the other four committee members followed his prompting, forwarding the recommendation to the Senate floor. At the same time Roberti said he was concerned about many of the allegations made against the Guard.

"More questions have been raised than we could possibly answer in one confirmation hearing," Roberti

said before casting his vote. "But I don't feel a case for [Thrasher's] culpability or personal negligence has been proved."

The Senate vote on Thrasher is set for Thursday morning. While the full Senate probably will take the Rules Committee's recommendation, Forsyth said some heated debate is expected.

The Joint Legislative Audit Committee, on which Bronzan serves as chairman, will ask the Legislature's auditor general to begin the audit within a month, Bronzan said.

Bronzan said he was skeptical about the scope of Roberti's original audit request.

"When I first got the letter [from Roberti], I said, 'The whole Guard?'" Bronzan said.

Air Guard will spruce up Fresno base for F-16s

By CHARLES MCCARTHY
Bee staff writer

About \$3.5 million in capital improvements will prepare the Fresno Air National Guard Base over the next three years to accommodate 20 F-16 fighter jets now expected to arrive before September 1989.

Air Guard spokesman Lt. Col. James A. Arthur said a 36-person Air National Guard task force from Washington, D.C., finished a week-long planning session at the Fresno

Air Terminal base on Thursday.

"A total of 20 F-16s is tentatively scheduled to start arriving in Fresno next year, with all expected to be here by September 1989," Arthur said Thursday. "Actual flying operation will probably begin around midsummer."

The new dates are sooner than those tentatively announced earlier by the National Guard Bureau in Washington.

"The base is expected to complete the conversion and return to alert status in fall 1989," Arthur explained.

Planned construction during the next three years includes a jet engine test "hush house," or sound-

proof building; an air crew alert facility; and an electrical instrument and communications maintenance facility.

Work done at the base recently, Arthur explained, has been designed to accommodate either the presently assigned F-4D Phantom jet interceptors or the newer F-16s.

The visiting task force also studied on-base training requirements for F-16 air crews and maintenance personnel.

"This conversion will make the Fresno Air National Guard Base the first Air National Guard operational air defense unit to convert to the air-defense modified F-16," Arthur said.

An Air Guard pilot-training squadron now flying F-4s at Klamath Falls, Ore., is scheduled for F-16 conversion ahead of Fresno, but it's not considered an operational air defense alert unit, Arthur explained.

Since 1978, the manufacturer, General Dynamics, has sent the Air Force F-16s capable of either air or ground attack missions. For the single-role air defense mission, earlier-model F-16s will be renovated at Hill Air Force Base near Ogden, Utah.

Presumably F-16s will become available for refitting as their regular Air Force units get new planes.

Former Air Guard chief opposed to Thrasher

By AMY PYLE
Bee Capitol bureau

SACRAMENTO — One of the state's highest-ranking Air National Guard officials, retired Maj. Gen. Raymond Hebrank, has joined those opposing confirmation of a new state Military Services Department director.

In a letter addressed to the Senate Rules Committee, Hebrank said the leadership flaw of the acting director, Gen. Robert Thrasher, is that he surrounds himself "with sycophants who praise his every action. In return he gives them absolute loyalty and blindly overlooks their ineptness."

Because of that flaw, Hebrank charged, under Thrasher's command the Air National Guard's 1987 accident rate was the worst in 30 years. One of the three accidents last year involved an F-4 jet flying out of Fresno that crashed and burned in the Arizona desert.

"I have not said a word since I left the department. I have not complained about anyone, I have not written anyone," Hebrank said Monday. "When I heard about the hearing, I thought maybe it was time for me to say something."

Thrasher's confirmation hearings before the Senate Rules Committee originally were set for mid-February, but then were rescheduled for Wednesday afternoon after opposition began to grow.

Military Services spokesman Steve N. said Hebrank is merely bitter about losing his job after past department director Willard Shank and Thrasher "lost confidence in [his] ability to command."

From 1977 to 1986, Hebrank ran the California Air National Guard, which with the Army National Guard forms the Military Services branch. He was asked to resign by Shank and Thrasher, who was then Shank's assistant.

Mensik confirmed the large number of accidents last year, including one that killed the son of entertainer Dean Martin and a helicopter crash in the Sierra with no fatalities. But Mensik said each of the accidents was caused by unique problems and errors, not by overall management problems.

Mensik also said Hebrank's record was not pristine: In 1979 and again in 1980 Guard pilots died in crashes.

In his letter to the Rules Committee and again during a telephone

conversation Monday, Hebrank singled out four generals who he said "would have been relieved of command and definitely not promoted if they had been in the U.S. Air Force because they were responsible for training and adherence to flying regulations in 1987."

Those officers were Fresno Wing Commander Paul Carroll; Air Guard Deputy Commander William Neville, a former Fresno commander; the Guard's deputy director, William Bates; and Guard Commander Robert Hall.

Past performance reviews for Bates and Hall, signed by Hebrank, show he had rated them "well above standard" in every category. Hebrank said he endorsed those reviews under orders from Thrasher and Shank.

"I was told whom I could promote and whom I could not promote," Hebrank said, "and I was also told whom to get rid of and that if I didn't do that, then I'd have some problems."

Among those backing Thrasher are Guard officials: B.T. Collins, former chief of staff for Gov. Jerry Brown; and Emergency Services Department representatives.

Besides Hebrank, Thrasher's opponents include Lt. Col. Ezell Ware Jr., a highly decorated black officer who says he has been falsely accused of sexual and financial improprieties; members of the department's military health brigade who say they were unfairly forced to retire at 65; and Toni Jordan, widow of John Jordan, a Guard weapons systems officer killed in the Fresno F-4 crash in June.

Jordan says she blames Guard management both in Sacramento and at the Fresno Air Guard unit for the fatal crash because they ignored evidence of procedural problems reported as early as 1986.

Two probes of Jordan's accident — one completed by the Air Force and the other by the Air Guard — suggested that managers had allowed Jordan's pilot, Wesley Deane of Modesto, to fly even though he lacked sufficient recent experience for the tricky low-altitude mission.

To further their cause, Jordan and her mother, Billie Minasian, have been visiting the Capitol nearly daily to meet with legislators and their staff members.

"We're just exhausted," Minasian said Monday. "If this man gets in, the system doesn't work."

Report on deposed Guard chief surfaces

By ROYAL CALKINS
Bee staff writer

A 4-year-old report on the investigation that led to Brig. Gen. Edward Aguiar's removal as commander of the Air National Guard unit in Fresno surfaced Tuesday on the eve of confirmation hearings for a new commander of the California National Guard.

The report details numerous allegations against Aguiar, who is among the leaders of an effort to block Brig. Gen. Robert Thrasher's

appointment as state director of military services, the top National Guard post in California.

Most of the allegations relate to relatively minor improprieties such as allowing two retired former Guard officials to carry off bags of government-issued sunglasses and long underwear from the Fresno base.

The most significant conclusion was that Aguiar's management style had created a serious rift between full-time Guard employees and part-time "weekend warriors."

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Guard

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The high-ranking Guard officers of the investigative panel found that Aguiar was too close to two full-timers, Maj. Nelson Sebra and Lt. Col. Bernard Hollenbeck, who "are not held in high regard by a number of full-time and part-time unit personnel," according to the report.

The investigators ruled that Hollenbeck had attempted to intimidate Guard officers who had raised the allegations against Aguiar. The report also concludes that Sebra violated Guard regulations on one occasion by leaving the base to attend a softball game while he was flight supervisor, and that he misappropriated eight pairs of boots and eight sweaters that he was not eligible to receive.

The investigators recommended that Aguiar be removed from command, and that Sebra receive a letter of reprimand. Sebra was not reprimanded but was transferred to a Southern California base. He responded by suing the government on the ground that Air Force regulations prohibit regulatory transfers, but a federal judge ruled that the government is exempt from such lawsuits.

Sebra and Aguiar have been at the center of continuing controversy over alleged safety problems at the Fresno base. Their allegations led to a 1986 investigation that found a number of potentially serious safety problems, mostly related to pilots' disregard for regulations.

In the 1984 inquiry, investigators reached no decision on Lt. Col. Robert "Mike" McCoy's contention that Aguiar had threatened to retaliate against him for raising a number of the allegations against the general and others.

McCoy charged that Aguiar threatened to begin an Internal Revenue Service audit of him and his friends, and to file a lawsuit against him.

Following the investigation, McCoy taped a telephone conversation with Aguiar in an attempt to prove the general was making threats. The Fresno Police Department and District Attorney's Office later investigated McCoy for making an allegedly illegal tape recording, but charges were never filed.

The taped conversation, which was provided to California National Guard officials in Sacramento, is expected to be an issue during the confirmation hearing today.

Another of the more-significant charges against Aguiar was that he issued an order in 1983 prohibiting the enlistment of women who did not have prior military experience.

Recruiters for the 144th Fighter Interceptor Wing in Fresno testified that Aguiar was adamant on the point, that he was acting on orders from the Air National Guard command in Sacramento, and that he did not want the number of women Guard members in Fresno to exceed 10 percent.

Aguiar denied issuing the ban and, despite testimony to the contrary from three recruiters, the investigative panel found the allegation to be unsubstantiated.

Currently, women make up 11.5 percent of the 144th's full-time and part-time payroll of 1,018. Of the 354 full-time employees, 9.8 percent are women.

The investigation of Aguiar and the other Fresno officers was conducted by Col. William Bates, inspector general for the California National Guard, and two officers from the Army National Guard, including Lt. Col. John A. Dougherty, who in civilian life is the district attorney of Sacramento County.

In a recent letter to the state Senate Rules Committee, which will conduct today's hearing on Thrasher's appointment, former California Air National Guard commander Maj. Gen. Raymond Hebrank, retired, contended that the investigation of Aguiar was politically inspired and shoddily executed.

Hebrank alleged that the three members of the investigative team were close friends of Thrasher, who was in the midst of an intense political dispute with Aguiar at the time.

He also contended that the investigators only questioned people whose names had been provided by Lt. Col. McCoy, who had leveled most of the allegations against Aguiar.

The report on the investigation has remained confidential since the January 1984 inquiry but a copy was provided to The Bee on Tuesday by a former Guard member.

The California National Guard command in Sacramento provided a copy Tuesday to the Senate Rules Committee.

Jane Fonda offers apology on Hanoi

18 JUN 88
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NEW YORK — Actress Jane Fonda apologized in a television interview Friday night for any hurt she caused American soldiers by visiting Hanoi in 1972 and attacking U.S. conduct of the war from the enemy's capital.

The woman once labeled "Hanoi Jane" for her opposition to the war says she regretted making many controversial statements, including describing herself as "a revolutionary woman."

In an interview with Barbara Walters on ABC's "20-20," Fonda said she made those statements because "I didn't want to be thought of as some starlet."

She added: "I was trying to help end the killing, end the war. But there were times I was thoughtless and careless about it."

"I'm very sorry that I hurt them [U.S. soldiers in Vietnam] and I want to apologize to them and their families."

Fonda said that among the things she regretted was donning a helmet and being photographed sitting in the seat of a North Vietnamese anti-tank gun.

She also said she regretted branding as liars former U.S. prisoners of war who said they were tortured by the North Vietnamese.

"I know the power of images and to have put myself in the situation like that was a thoughtless and cruel thing to have done."

"I know the power of images and to have put myself in the situation like that was a thoughtless and cruel thing to have done."

— Jane Fonda, in television interview

Fonda insisted in the interview that her mistakes were her own and rejected charges that she was duped by the North Vietnamese.

The actress has been the object of demonstrations by veterans groups in Connecticut who oppose her making a film there because of her role in the Vietnam war.

Joseph Griggs, a spokesman for the Veterans Coalition Against Hanoi Jane, said Fonda must back up her words with action, such as returning to Vietnam to seek the return of prisoners of war still unaccounted for.

"I would have to say that's a very nice beginning," he said of her apology.

Another veteran, John Sarlo of Waterbury, Conn., said he thought the apology was genuine. "I guess that's something we can be grateful for and appreciate."

Acceptable ANG noise

I would like to make a couple of points on the Air Guard noise problem:

First, with no more flights than the Guard puts up on any one day, the noise is really minimal, especially since those fighters are only F-4s or F-11s and not '18s or '16s.

I don't think people appreciate how quiet it is even when they're going up every 20 minutes or so. I grew up in the flight path of Will Rogers Airport and Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City. When those 747 passenger jets would go over the whole house would shake from their being only about 400 feet up in the air. When the boys at Tinker would jump in their fighters, it wasn't just two at a time taking off. There were six or eight in 15-second intervals of each pair, and they put the throttle to its maximum there.

The last time I was back, they had just gotten new '16s, '18s and a B-1 bomber. Sure the noise level is high but the people have learned to accept it as a price of living there. Besides, Tinker AFB is one of the biggest employers in town, and a vital part of the defense of this country.

So before we run the Air Guard out of town, consider the impact moving it to Lemoore would have on those Guard part-time members and those full-time people who work on the planes and run the daily operations. How many of them would be forced to move out of town? And consider the impact of those lost dollars on our economy.

You've got a pretty good deal here.

ROBERT HODGES.

Fresno.

Noise, economics

Bob Fischer's letter "Why not the 144th?" [May 4] is trying to sell us one side of Rep. Chip Pashayan's bold plan to move Whidbey Island Naval Air Station to NAS Lemoore. There is another side to this story.

Does it not cross Mr. Fischer's mind that Mr. Pashayan is not as concerned about the noise at Whidbey Island as he is about valley economics? If Mr. Fischer's numbers are correct, 7,900 military jobs and 1,600 civilian jobs in the relocation would create job opportunities for valley families. In my opinion, Mr. Pashayan has the good political sense to see an opportunity when one arises.

I do not believe that our representative is allowing himself to be manipulated by a few. He understands that the noise, economic, and safety issues surrounding any airport are complex.

Mr. Fischer also refers to weekend pilots who are signed off for training missions they never flew. In a dramatic way he makes it sound as if all weekend pilots do this at the 144th Fighter Interceptor Wing. I do not have any personal information on the situation. However, I do believe that not all people are dishonest. I feel the people who make up the Air National Guard at Fresno try hard to be trained; to say that they do not follow proper procedures is a slap in their faces and an unfair statement about our community.

Mr. Fischer refers to the "nearly deaf" urban population. The meetings about noise I have attended have had approximately 50 people concerned about all aircraft noise and not just the noise coming from the jets of the 144th FTW. If Mr. Fischer [in urging that the 144th also be moved to Lemoore NAS] is so concerned about noise, why is he only waving a banner about the jet noise from the 144th and not about other types of noise problems in our city, such as the rock bands heard at Fresno State for city blocks?

V.S. PAPALEO.

Fresno.

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Military overflights

The Aug. 3 Bee editorial "The roar of contempt" hit the bull's-eye dead center. Those of us who visit national parks and wilderness areas are fully aware of military aircraft shattering the silence and sending wildlife fleeing in panic.

Let us hope that the military gets the message and ceases cavalier dismissal of complaints on the insistence that what they do is necessary no matter what the effect on our sensibilities or on the environment. The present military attitude is a direct consequence of unlimited spending during the Reagan years, elevating national defense above all else.

National park officials have spoken out against massive noise pollution, but here in Fresno no leader, public or private, speaks out for the poor abused citizen overwhelmed by the constant roar of Air Guard F-4s. We swallow the myth that our defense and safety depends on numerous daily missions screaming off the runways of an urban-centered civilian airport in search of the enemy near or far. So it makes no difference whether you live in Death Valley or northwest Fresno, you can't escape.

I, too, have seen the senseless bumper sticker "Pardon the Noise — It's the Sound of Freedom." Well, if freedom means submission to constant nerve-shattering noise, the end of peace and quiet, environmental destruction in wilderness areas and mindless support of costly military spending that undermines the economy and social fabric of the nation, then I fear we have abandoned the true meaning of freedom and are embarked on the road to disorder.

BERNARD D. LAWSON,
Fresno.

Applauds Air Guard

I read with utter amazement the letter to the editor Aug. 3 that stated that our Air National Guard units at Fresno are "unnecessary." In the letter, the writer complained of the "deafening fighter planes [that] race over our once-quiet neighborhoods." A statement such as this makes as much sense as a person buying a home in the desert complaining that it is too hot.

It must be remembered that those "once-quiet neighborhoods" were, in all likelihood, not even in existence when our airport with all its related activities was put into operation. Developers decide to build apartment complexes and homes around the airport and then renters and homeowners move into these developments, only to complain that aircraft are flying over their homes. It seems to me that if one doesn't like the music, one should not attend the dance.

The issue of whether the Air National Guard is necessary is, in my opinion, not worthy of debate. Our Air Guard not only trains pilots for the defense of our country, but also employs many other non-flying workers, which is a definite boost to the local economy.

I believe that the FAA, Air Guard, airport officials, and all pilots, commercial and private, should be applauded for bending over backwards to accommodate the encroaching public around the airport facility.

STANLEY R. SPOORS,
Fresno.

Keeping us free

As a relatively new resident of the Fresno area I have been absolutely appalled by the numerous ill-informed and uninformed comments regarding the Air National Guard Fighter Interceptor Wing stationed at the Fresno Air Terminal. These comments have been typical of small people with small minds who can't see beyond the confines of their own front door.

As anyone who knows anything about our national defense will tell you, these beautiful F-4 Phantoms fill a specific role in the air defense of this country. They are not redundant. The naval aircraft at Lemoore and other Air Force, Navy and Marine squadrons based throughout the state have an altogether different mission than those here in Fresno. Not to mention that the air crew and ground personnel of our Fresno Air Guard do what they do better than almost anyone else in the Air Guard, as shown in annual competition within the Air Force.

We all know that military personnel and their hardware are never popular in prolonged periods of peace. Maybe, just maybe, they are part of the reason we're at peace. Let's stop the Air Guard-bashing; and when we hear a couple of loud, smoky F-4s light their burners, let's remember the pilots in those cockpits are putting their lives on the line to keep us all free!

DON W. SOPER JR.

Sanger.

Air Guard training

In reference to The Bee article Aug. 30 concerning the Air National Guard I would like to make a few points clear.

First, Lt. Col. Stuckey is probably one of the finest military officers you could hope to meet. His integrity and judgment are beyond reproach.

Second, I believe that The Bee writer has taken some of Lt. Col. Stuckey's comments out of context. I received the letter that was the subject of The Bee article and I must say that my interpretation of that letter as a fighter pilot was significantly different than that of the Bee writer.

Third, no mention is made in the Bee article concerning an air crew ground school training session that took place a few days after the letter was sent out to air crews. During this training session Lt. Col. Stuckey restated and clarified the intent of his letter and his position concerning training to all the fighter air crews.

The bottom line of the letter and discussion during our ground school session as I perceived it was that we as fighter air crews are to make every effort to plan our training missions to safely and efficiently accomplish our training requirements and to accurately log our accomplishments so that training officers can monitor our training progress. If we falsely log training accomplishments our future in the Air Guard will be jeopardized.

Once again my conclusions from the letter differ somewhat from what the Bee writer emphasized in his article. I attribute this to the Bee writer's not having a fighter-pilot perspective in his interpretation of the letter and not having full knowledge of other communications that took place concerning the topic discussed in the article.

AMOS BAGDASARIAN,
Major,
California Air National Guard,
Fresno.

Air Guard receives 'unfair abuse'

SEPT 6 1987

Considerable attention recently has been given to the Air National Guard by The Bee in the form of a highly critical report by Royal Calkins on the management of the 144th Fighter Interceptor Wing [Aug. 12, "Guard pilot in fatal crash not qualified"]; a few derogatory statements by Councilman Chris Petersen directed toward the Guard within the context of the Part 150 study [Aug. 20, "2 city councilmen criticize new study on airport noise"]; and, finally, a blistering diatribe by Bob Fischer on the notion of safety and the ANG [letter Aug. 24, "Safety and the Air Guard lease"].

All of this is particularly bothersome to those of us who have been a part of the community for many more years than the self-proclaimed critics of an extremely valuable and beneficial program which has served this community well since 1955 — the California Air National Guard.

Mr. Calkins reported the findings of an F-4 safety investigation board in spite of the fact that both he and senior staff at The Bee knew that sensitive information was being leaked outside the boundary of normal and legal disclosure. More significantly, The Bee knew that the 144th could not legally respond to any question which referred to the investigation. The article was not meant to report the truth of the matter. The intent was clearly to create suspicion, doubt and mistrust at a time when the 144th was legally constrained from defending its reputation as well as from setting the record straight.

The Bee takes pride in the accuracy of its news reporting. We can only hope that at some future date Mr. Calkins and The Bee can be held accountable for the content and accuracy of their disclosure.

Both Mr. Petersen and Les Kimber [city councilman] more recently shattered the basis for the Part 150 study by suggesting that the airport be relocated. City growth, they suggest, is being stifled by continued — and unsafe — aircraft operation. Of course, the issue is neither noise nor safety. Commitment, integrity and trust are the key considerations. Land developers long ago acquired cheap land and are now

attempting to capitalize on their investment. The situation today is nothing more than the outgrowth of a profit motive.

Previous administrations have buckled under the pressures imposed by the building industry and have allowed urban encroachment to degrade and compromise airport operation. Many years ago, this community made overtures to the aviation industry to develop a profitable and thriving airport for the benefit of Fresno. We have such an airport today; however, a few of our City Council members do not feel bound to the promises and commitments of previous administrations.

Why would elected representatives give the impression to the business community that the promises made by today's administration may not be honored by subsequent administrations? Capricious and arbitrary political behavior discourages economic development.

Finally, Bob Fischer's anti-Guard letter is maliciously misleading. Mr. Fischer's hypothesis is that the ANG is unsafe. The U.S. Air Force is not about to sanction unsafe and life-threatening activity at the airport.

All of this leads to the real message of my letter. If certain news reporters, politicians and academicians would simply admit to their biases and prejudices toward the military, it would make it easier for those of us who must separate truth from fiction.

Noise, safety and environmental issues are effects, not causes. Let's blame the airport problem on the principal cause — faulty city planning. Rather than fuel the local political fires with misperception, innuendo and an occasional outright lie about the Guard, let's seek out rational, stabilizing, constructive, and, above all, feasible solutions to the airport problem.

The true irony is that the Air National Guard — and the military in general — continue to receive unfair abuse while defending the right of certain individuals within this community to be abusive.

R.A. RANDALL

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Air Guard crash remains puzzle

27 APR 89

By RAY SOTERO
Bee Capitol bureau

SACRAMENTO — Citing incomplete records and lack of cooperation from the U.S. Air Force, acting California Auditor General Kurt Sjoberg said Wednesday he could not determine whether the training, maintenance and safety rules were followed before a June 1987 crash that killed two members of the Fresno-based Air Guard.

Although the investigation into the Fresno Air Guard's practices ended inconclusively, the matter is officially closed unless surviving family members pursue legal action.

"There's no conclusive evidence that the guard was at fault," said Assemblyman Bruce Bronzan, D-Fresno, who was head of a legislative audit committee at the time the audit was ordered. "There's always the

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possibility there was pilot error. I think it's a sad situation that will remain sad."

Two members of the Fresno Air Guard unit — Capt. Wesley Deane, 27, and his weapons officer, Maj. John Jordan Jr., 39 — died in 1987 when their F-4 jet crashed near Green Valley, Ariz. during training.

Questions surrounding the crash and the Fresno unit's training and record-keeping practices reached the Legislature last year during confirmation hearings for Adjutant Gen. Robert Thrasher as head of the California National Guard. The

Legislature then requested the audit.

The 46-page auditor's report was the result of a yearlong, \$100,000 investigation into the performance, safety and record-keeping habits of the Fresno-based 144th Fighter-Interceptor Wing, a California Air National Guard unit that operates indirectly under the Air Force through state offices.

The report contains two major findings.

The auditor general concluded that the Fresno unit's record-keeping practices since shortly after the accident are correct and up to date.

But complete information on how the unit functioned at the time of the crash and earlier, including an Air Force investigation report, was

either missing or unavailable.

"We were denied access to prior records and an Air Force investigation report," Sjoberg said. "Those two limitations made it impossible for us to conclude as to what went on before."

The auditors said it was impossible to "independently verify the adequacy" of 2½-years worth of records that had been kept by air-unit officers and enlisted personnel. They said most of the paperwork was either incomplete or had been legally destroyed because it was more than 12 months old, as allowed by Air Force regulations.

Thrasher, in a statement released in response to Sjoberg's report, said Sjoberg's team was provided with "all [available] records and docu-

ments" connected with air crew training, aircraft maintenance and flight safety for the period between January 1985 and September 1987. The exception: "Those out-of-date materials which Air Force regulations require to be disposed of..."

Thrasher also said inspection teams at the time rated the unit's management and operations as "excellent."

The question of pilot training is crucial to Toni Jordan, the widow of one of the crew members who died in the crash. She charges that widespread sloppiness and lackadaisical record keeping allowed pilots to fly into situations for which they were not fully prepared or certified.

Toni Jordan, who was not available for comment Wednesday, has

said she has paperwork and documents obtained under the federal Freedom of Information Act showing evidence of at least eight complaints about falsified training records dating to 1986.

A report leaked to The Bee last year concluded that Deane, the pilot in the crash, was not "currently qualified" or certified for part of the mission he was performing in his F-4.

Sjoberg said his auditors were hampered because the Air Force withheld its investigation reports into the accident.

Thrasher, who could not be reached for comment, said in his statement that he pushed the Air Force to release the full "mishap safety investigation" report because

he could not legally do so on his own.

Said Thrasher in his prepared statement: "To our regret, the Air Force refused our request, citing executive privilege against release of these documents and a number of United States Supreme Court cases supporting this position."

The California Air National Guard did, however, provide Sjoberg's auditors a summary of its investigation. It did not cite a cause for the accident, but stated that Deane met the minimum flying requirements.

The Air Guard report noted that Deane was not up to date in his training requirements to fly a low-altitude maneuver that he apparently completed during the 1987 flight.

Widow charges Air Guard covered up cover-up

12 May 89

by RAY SOTERO
San Francisco Capitol bureau

SACRAMENTO — The widow of a man killed in a crash nearly two years ago calls a recent related investigation of the Fresno Air Guard a "cover-up of a cover-up."

California's top auditor, whose office oversaw the yearlong, \$100,000 inquiry, wishes Fresno military officials had not destroyed training and safety records crucial to the investigation.

And Senate Pro Tem David Roberts, D-Los Angeles, who called for the audit, said Thursday he is "totally dissatisfied" with the results of the investigation and wants it fol-

lowed with a related one.

"Someone should be held accountable," said Billy Minasian of Sacramento, mother of Maj. John Jordan Jr.

Jordan, 39, of Modesto, and Capt. Wesley Deane, 27, of Sacramento, died in the fiery 1987 accident when their F-4 jet plummeted into the desert near Green Valley, Ariz., during training.

Almost immediately after the crash, questions arose about the record-keeping practices of the Fresno-based 144th Fighter-Interceptor Wing of the California Air National Guard.

Those questions were prompted by reports of falsified entries into

safety and training records and the admission by Air Guard officers that Deane, the pilot, was "not currently certified" for part of the mission he was performing that day in his F-4.

Lawmakers, in response, ordered an investigation by the Auditor General's Office of California, an investigative arm of the Legislature used to double-check state budget and performance records.

A team of auditor-investigators, led by a retired Air Force officer, discovered that records covering the time of the crash and earlier were either missing or unavailable.

That's because military regulations call for certain records to be

destroyed, and the Air Force refused for confidential reasons to release a report on its own investigation into the accident.

The fact the training records weren't available gets to the heart of what's bothering Minasian and Jordan's widow, Toni Jordan.

Legislative calls for an audit began in March 1988, about eight months after the accident, during confirmation hearings for Gen. Robert Thrasher as adjutant general.

The requirement for keeping the safety and training records applies only to the current and previous six-month cycles.

That means the investigators missed by one month the period

covering the accident, Auditor General Kurt Sjoborg said.

"If we had another audit of the Air Guard, one of the first things we would do is ask them to save those records," Sjoborg said. "We're just not used to seeing such a short retention period. It was frustrating."

Toni Jordan took it harder.

"General Thrasher, knowing there was to be an audit, allowed documents to be destroyed," she said. "I was shocked that the state took so much time and spent so much of the taxpayers' money to come up with so little."

Roberts said he was sure that

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auditors did their best, but were thwarted. On Thursday he asked Assemblyman Elihu Harris, D-Oakland, chairman of the Joint Committee on Legislative Audits, which oversees Sjoborg, to audit Thrasher's office in the area of personnel policies and practices in non-Fresno Guard related areas.

Thrasher did not return calls for comment. His public information officer, Maj. Steve Mensik, said service members were simply following orders in destroying records.

"We did not know what the scope of the audit was going to be," Mensik said. "We proceeded with business as usual."

Military inspection teams rated Fresno Air Guard operations as "excellent," and Mensik emphasized that pilot Deane was qualified to fly but merely had not been recently

"checked off" on some refresher training.

"An aircraft accident is something we'll never be satisfied with," Mensik said. "But the reality is the pilot was qualified but not current in training."

In short, Sjoborg's auditors concluded it was impossible to "independently verify the adequacy" of two and a half years worth of records that had been kept by air-unit officers and enlisted personnel.

Auditors also concluded that the Fresno unit's record-keeping practices since the accident appear perfectly proper.