

Fresno Air Guard general will leave command early

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The commander of the California Air National Guard wing in Fresno will leave his post July 1, two months ahead of the date that had been set after an intensive investigation earlier this year.

Brig. Gen. Edward R. Aguiar will be assigned to special projects at Air Guard headquarters in Sacramento until his retirement Sept. 1, according to Brig. Gen. R.S. Johnson, chief of staff.

Johnson said a new commander for the 144th Fighter Interceptor Wing, Aguiar's command, is expected to be named next week.

Most frequently mentioned as a

successor is Lt. Col. Robert "Bo" Boehringer, operations commander.

Lt. Col. Bernard Hollenbeck had been considered a serious contender until the investigation and subsequent internal politicking, according to high-ranking guard sources. Hollenbeck has been closely associated with Aguiar, often serving as acting commander in the general's absence.

Johnson would not comment on why Aguiar is being reassigned. He said it has not been determined what special projects Aguiar will be assigned to.

Details of the investigation have never been revealed, but it is known that the Air Guard command reviewed dozens of allegations

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involving abuse of authority and minor improprieties.

The investigation, which began in January, was sparked by a complaint filed by former Col. R. Michael McCoy, a commercial pilot and part-time guardsman who left the Air Guard late last year.

According to several sources, investigators focused on incriminating remarks made by Aguiar in a tape-recorded telephone conversation with McCoy.

Government officials and high-ranking Air Guard officers said Aguiar considered but decided against seeking criminal charges against McCoy for secretly recording the conversation.

McCoy has declined to comment.

Aguiar's status at the Fresno base has shifted repeatedly since the investigation ended.

His staff was told May 17 that he had been placed on "terminal leave" and would retire by August. The top command in Sacramento reversed that decision in May, however, after state Sen. Ken Maddy, R-Fresno, Fresno City Councilman Ted C. Wills and other politicians made inquiries on the general's behalf.

In a compromise, Aguiar agreed to retire in September, six months ahead of his planned retirement.

Aguiar, a former combat pilot, assumed command in Fresno in February 1982.