

# Air Guard allegations investigated

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At the request of Rep. Charles "Chip" Pashayan, a panel of senior officers is investigating allegations of safety problems and cover-ups at the Fresno Air National Guard base, The Bee learned Friday.

The panel members, all from outside California, took testimony Aug. 26 and 27 in Fresno from a number of officers, including two who raised the allegations, Maj. Nelson Sebra and retired Brig. Gen. Edward R. Aguiar, past commander of the Fresno base.

Aguiar publicly charged in June that safety problems at the Fresno base are being "covered up and swept under the rug."

Aguiar, who had been forced to retire in 1984, also called for an investigation of the National Guard leadership in California. He accused the Guard command of "gross mismanagement."

Pashayan, R-Fresno, who sat in on part of the testimony, said Sebra made similar allegations. Sebra, a pilot who has spent most of his career at Fresno, was involuntarily transferred from the Fresno base to Norton Air Force Base in Southern California last year.

Aguiar and other past and present Guard officers say the allegations cover such problems as

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abuse of the F-4 fighters at the base, unreported accidents and falsified repair records.

According to Aguiar, California National Guard officials also have attempted to influence the results of investigations into specific incidents.

Others called to testify before the panel include Maj. Gen. Raymond Hebrank, a former commander of the California Air National Guard, and several current officials of the Fresno base.

Hebrank, who remains on active duty, reportedly testified in support of Aguiar and Sebra.

According to reports circulating on the base, some local officers supported the allegations while others testified that the charges are false.

In a telephone interview, Pashayan said he called for the investigation at Sebra's request but the congressman stressed that he does not have the expertise to assess the accuracy of the charges.

"I just felt the allegations warranted an investigation by a team of impartial and experienced officers," he explained.

Pashayan added that the allegations may be the product of a "power struggle" that is being played out both at the Fresno base and at the state level in Sacramento.

Aguiar, Sebra, Hebrank and other career officers have been at odds with the California Guard's increasing use of part-time Guard members in command positions. Aguiar and others have complained that the Guard is becoming an amateur operation.

Aguiar's forced retirement and Sebra's transfer both were outgrowths of a 1984 investigation into allegations that Aguiar had abused his authority while commanding the Fresno base. Details of that inquiry have never surfaced publicly. Knowledgeable officers, including some who are critics of Aguiar, agree that the investigation stemmed from Guard politics.

Sebra has filed a lawsuit against the federal government in which he