

Pashayan is high on Air Guard

Congressman says unit run safely, efficiently

By CHARLES McCARTHY
Bee staff writer

Rep. Charles "Chip" Pashayan, R-Fresno, slipped into the rear cockpit of an Air National Guard Phantom jet Thursday and took off in a cloud of dust to show his support for the Fresno Air Guard unit.

Pashayan, who was re-elected to his fifth term Tuesday, said he rode along on the routine 90-minute intercept mission 125 miles off the Big Sur coast to emphasize his conviction that the unit is run safely and efficiently.

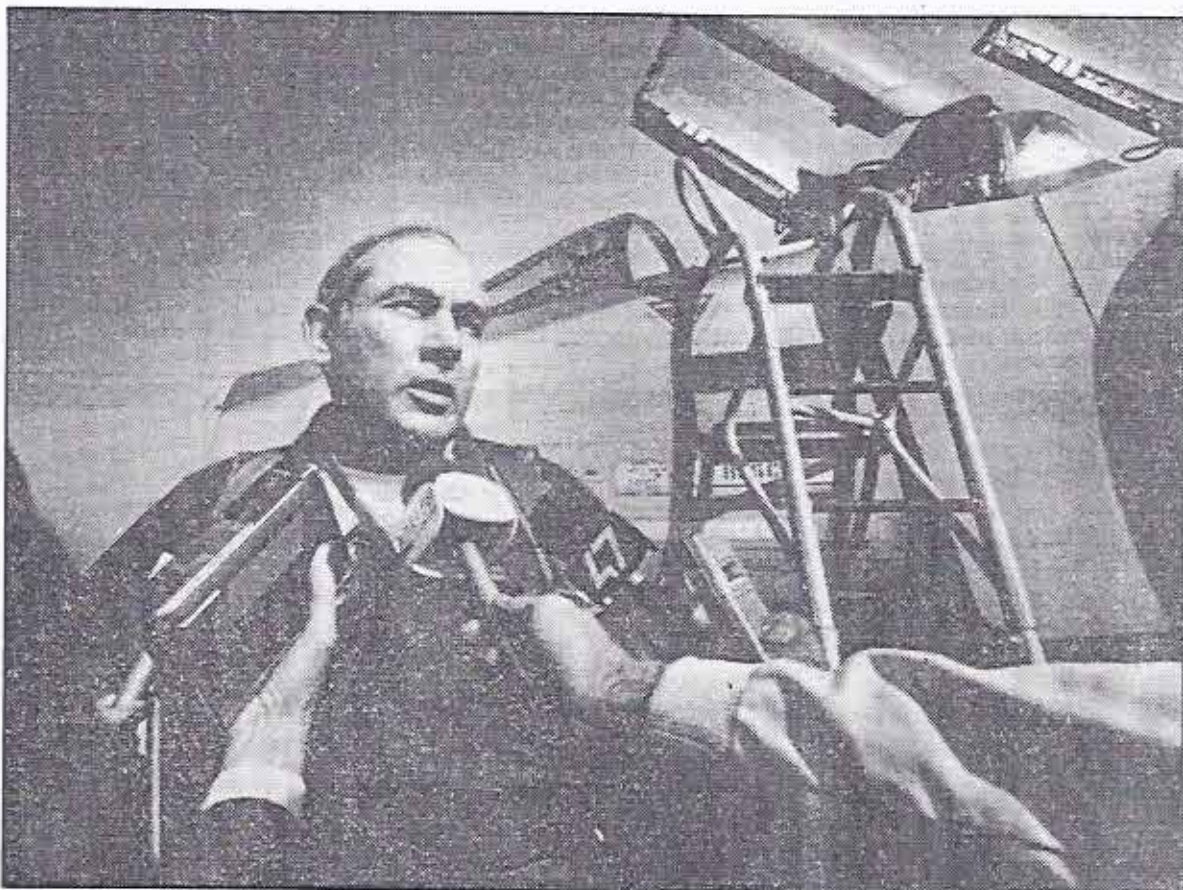
"There have been allegations made that this unit was being mis-managed and run contrary to safety and efficiency," Pashayan said.

Pashayan chaired a National Guard Bureau investigation of the Fresno-based 144th Fighter Interceptor Wing. Investigators heard testimony in Fresno Aug. 26 and 27.

The board's findings, which were released in October, said the alleged violations were caused by simple oversight or a breakdown of communications. Investigating officers found no evidence of willful negligence or cover-up.

"All the allegations were looked into and they turned out to be nothing more than standard routine events," Pashayan said before climbing into a 1966 model F-4D behind Fresno wing commander Col. Paul Carroll.

"This unit of the Air National Guard is one of the best in the country," he said. "It has been run well and safely and I'm taking a ride."



Fresno Bee/Bob Durrell

Rep. Charles "Chip" Pashayan took a ride in an Air Guard Phantom jet.

Pashayan said he sought the National Guard Bureau investigation after realizing he alone couldn't make a competent military investigation. He called the investigation "intense and thorough."

Maj. Gen. Glenn W. Osgood Jr., highest ranking officer on the investigating board, said in a report dated Sept. 11 that he had briefed Pashayan on his findings.

"He [Pashayan] stated his con-

cern was that he did not want any bad publicity on this unit because of certain local factions interested in the discontinuance of the Fresno fighter unit," he said.

Asked if the investigators looked into the command experience of California National Guard commander Army Guard Maj. Gen. Willard Shank, a Gov. Deukmejian appointee, Pashayan called Shank's military experience "irrelevant to

what is happening here."

After Pashayan was airborne, Guard officials said an inspection team from Tactical Air Command headquarters, Langley Air Force Base, Va., finished a three-day Fresno base and operations inspection this week.

They said the Fresno Air Terminal unit came through with an "excellent" rating.