

Council will hold hearing on Phantom jet impacts

By JERRY BIER
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Although it will have little say in the matter, the City Council Tuesday agreed to hold a public hearing on the Air National Guard's plan to replace its 18 F-106 jet fighter-interceptors at the Fresno Air Terminal with the noisier F-4D Phantom jets.

The council set the hearing for Monday at 7:30 p.m. in the Wine Room of the Convention Center Exhibit Hall.

But Mayor Daniel K. Whitehurst noted that while the council can listen to public opinions about the noisier aircraft, "the feds are going to make the decision."

Although the city will not have a voice in whether the Phantoms begin flying out of Fresno, it may be able to negotiate with the Air Guard "to come up with community support to minimize the noise."

While the council may not have an official voice, it didn't stop council members Ted C. Wills and Chris Petersen from expressing personal views about the importance of the defense base in Fresno.

Wills noted that many of the improvements made at the air terminal have been made because the Air National Guard was located at the base. Those jet aircraft and the Guard, Wills said, are here for one reason "and that's for the protection of the United States," adding that the Guard serves a "very vital purpose as far as this community is concerned."

But Petersen responded that putting a defense installation in an urban area can make that area "a target for a missile" and by spending money on military uses in a community "you keep sucking money away from other programs."

If you followed Petersen's logic, Wills snapped, then the Boeing plant

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should be moved from Seattle and other urban military installations should be closed with the resulting impact on local economies.

"If that's your feeling, I'm sorry," Wills said. "You are living in a dream world."

Councilman Les Kimber stepped into the debate saying that arguments over the military machine were not before the council, "what we need is some basic information in order to make a decision beneficial to our citizens."

Kimber made the motion to hold a public hearing to allow Fresnoans a chance to comment on the change in aircraft.

Councilwoman Karen Humphrey also expressed support for a public hearing, because "I don't think the

people of Fresno have had a chance to be heard."

Several people spoke in support of the Air Guard; one person spoke against the use of the noisier planes.

One of those supporting the Guard was former airports manager Wilmer Garrett, who detailed the improvements at the Fresno Air Terminal that came about because of the Guard's presence in Fresno.

The F-4Ds have been tested in Fresno, and tests by both civilian and National Guard analysts agree that the jets will leave a noisier "footprint" over Fresno.

The council members also expressed disappointment that representatives of the Guard were not present for Tuesday's council discussion. Acting City Manager James E. Aldredge said Guard officials were aware that the topic was on the council agenda.